**Overwatch Prompts**

*Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org) at [http://archiveofourown.org/works/9767903](http://archiveofourown.org/works/9767903).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Teen And Up Audiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archive Warning:</td>
<td>Graphic Depictions Of Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category:</td>
<td>Multi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fandom:</td>
<td>Overwatch (Video Game)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character:</td>
<td>Angela &quot;Mercy&quot; Ziegler, Genji Shimada, Lúcio Correia dos Santos, Bastion (Overwatch), Hana &quot;D.Va&quot; Song, Junkrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Tags:</td>
<td>Hurt/Comfort, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, Action/Adventure, some dumb fluffy stuff, Romance, Slow Burn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stats:</td>
<td>Published: 2019-02-07 Updated: 2020-01-04 Chapters: 124/? Words: 193796</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Overwatch Prompts**

by [NiteWrighter](http://archiveofourown.org/users/NiteWrighter)

**Summary**

Overwatch Related Writing Prompts I receive on Tumblr!

Now in chronological order!

Newest Chapter: Chapter 30: Gency, New Year's
Fareeha had been put in bed and Ana and Sam were exhausted enough to go to bed themselves, but they had resigned to slumping against each other in a half-asleep haze on the couch together. Their holovid screen was casting dancing blue lights on both of them. They knew the smart thing was to go to bed, but with Fareeha in her demanding toddling years, they hardly got much time just to be together alone like this. Neither of them was paying particular attention to what they were watching, but the stream was pleasant background noise.

At 10:37 it was cut short by a blaring beep, so loud and grating that it jolted both Sam and Ana awake.

“This stream has been interrupted by an emergency broadcast,” an automated voice blared from the holovid screen as Ana seized the remote and turned down the volume, “Please stand by.”

Both Sam and Ana’s phones started buzzing with a spill of messages. Their group chats with various colleagues around the world were suddenly bursting to life, messages of “Are you okay?” “I’m fine.” “I can see the smoke!” “Has anyone gotten in contact with Fatih? I can’t get a hold of him” “How close were you to the first attack site?” stacking on top of each other down the phone’s screens. The holovid screen cut to a news reporter, shivering in smoke and snow flurries as a column of fire.

“Oh no,” Ana said quietly.

“I’m here live in front of the site of a devastating series of drone strikes that have caused yet-untold damages to the Detroit-Windsor area. Authorities are still evacuating the area and—”

“A terrorist attack?” said Sam.

Ana put a tense hand on his shoulder and he fell quiet. She could feel his eyes flicking between her and the holoscreen.

“Satellite imaging indicates that the drones were short range, likely within the Detroit area.”

“What—Why would the states strike us and themselves?” said Sam.

Ana glanced down at her phone. “What did they mean by ‘First attack site?’” she said aloud.

Sam looked over at Ana, then changed the holovid channel where a news reporter was speaking urgently in Korean, subtitles translating is words rapidly in a red line underneath him.

“Just minutes ago Busan suffered a—”

Sam changed the channel again.

“London has not seen an attack of this scale since the second World War—”

He changed it again.

“As favelas do Rio estão no caos enquanto as autoridades lutam para entender—”

He changed it again. Ana’s stomach lurched at the sight of the familiar scroll of arabic at the bottom of the screen, and at the skyline of her own birthplace.
“Cairo was not equipped to handle an attack of this magnitude,” the reporter was saying, “We’re looking at a strike of unimaginable destruction. The human death toll is–”

Ana broke her eyes away from the screen and Sam turned it off.

“…they’re going to ask for you to come back, aren’t they?” his voice was quiet.

“They’re going to need me,” said Ana, her voice strained.

“We need you,” the words fell out of Sam and he instantly regretted them, “I’m sorry–” he added quickly, “I know it’s…” he took a deep breath.

“I know,” said Ana.

Sam clasped a hand around hers.

The next few hours were spent anxiously watching the news reports and desperately calling and texting friends and family, bouncing between stories of devastation from all around the world. The attacks were indiscriminate—striking global population centers hard and fast. It was 3 AM by the time Ana and Sam were finally able to tear themselves away from the screen and catch a few hours of light, dreamless sleep—a sleep that was more about keeping exhaustion at bay than getting actual rest. The next day they told Fareeha they were going on vacation, loaded up the car, and left Vancouver, heading for Sam’s cabin up north. It only took watching the news for a little while to know they had to get away from the cities and fast.

The call came a few days later. The flight back to Cairo was all prepped, they were even sending a car for her, Ana only needed to ready herself. Ana didn’t have much to bring with her aside from some photos of Fareeha and Sam, her old fatigues, and a handful of toiletries and other necessities. She was a minimalist like that.

“But you said when we’d go back to Egypt, we’d all go together,” Fareeha pouted.

“And we will, Ḥabībti, one day, when it’s safe,” said Ana.

“Are you going to be in trouble?” Fareeha’s small hands were wringing the fabric of Ana’s fatigues.

“Mummy’s going to be saving people” said Sam, kneeling down to Fareeha’s level.

Ana dropped down to one knee as well. “Fareeha, I’m going to be gone for a long while,” she said riffling through her pockets, “I’ll talk to you and your father through the holo every chance I get, but you have to promise me you’ll be strong, all right?”

Fareeha’s pout turned into a tense, thin-lipped expression, weighing Ana’s words. “How long?” there was a shake to her voice.

Ana stroked the side of Fareeha’s face with her other hand. “I… I don’t know yet. But I’ll come back to you and your father the first chance I get.”

Fareeha looked down.

“Ḥabībti,” Ana spoke gently and brought a hand up under Fareeha’s chin, “I have something for you.” She pulled four gold beads from her pocket and pinched a lock of Pharah’s hair between her fingers. Ana couldn’t cook worth a damn, but when it came to braiding hair, she was almost as good a braider as a sniper. Her fingers worked quickly. “These were on a necklace of your
grandmother’s,” said Ana, tying off the gold beads at the tips of Pharah’s braids, “It fell apart when we moved up to Vancouver, and I couldn’t bring myself to throw it away, but I think that must have happened for a reason.” Fareeha’s hair was so soft and thick between her fingers. Ana tried not to think of how long she would go without touching it, without brushing it. Without brushing her teeth next to her daughter in the morning with foam running down Fareeha’s chin. She tied off the last braid. “Our ancestors believed that gold was divine and indestructible, that it was the light of the sun and the flesh of the gods made tangible. That the gods would bless and protect the kings and queens who wore it. When you miss me, I want you to look at these and know that no matter how far I am from you, I will do everything in my power to protect you. Do you understand?”

Fareeha’s small hand went up and felt at the beads, still warm from her mother’s touch. She gave a hesitant nod. Ana was littering her daughter’s face with kisses as the jeep pulled up to take her off to the airfield.

Fareeha was hugging at Ana’s knees when Sam took her in his arms and kissed her.

“There’s gotta be a better way than this,” said Sam, tucking back Ana’s long black hair.

“The second I find a better way, I’ll let you know,” said Ana, kissing him on the cheek, “Keep her safe for me.”

“Always,” said Sam.

Fareeha valiantly stuffed back her tears for the last few goodbyes. Ana felt her stomach drop as the door of the jeep closed and they started pulling away down the cabin’s dirt road. Ana gave a shuddering breath and sniffled, stuffing down her own urge to cry as she turned and looked at the pines rolling past the jeep. She caught sight of something in the rearview mirror and her breath caught in her throat. Fareeha was running after the jeep, her face flushed and wet and the dust of the dirt road the jeep was kicking up sticking to her tear tracks. Sam managed to catch up to Fareeha and hold her and Ana could hear the wail of Fareeha’s cries. Ana bit the inside of her lip hard as both of them shrank into the distance behind her, before the road curved and they disappeared completely.
Battery Davis wasn’t meant to be a fort—well it had been, well over a century ago, but not these days. But for now it was all that was keeping the rain off of them, and all that was hiding them from the encroaching horde of OR14s and Bastions. They had managed to divert a significant force of the Omnics away from the city Jack and Gabe crouched in the cement tunnel and waited for the groan of metal and the binary roar of OR14s. The air was damp, heavy and cold and the sky was starless from the fog.

“Reasons to live—go,” said Jack.

“Pork banh mi,” said Gabe.

“Just… jumping to food right off the bat? No, ‘I’ve got kin back home,’ or…?”

“Jack, I’m fucking hungry,” said Gabe, “Also I should clarify: this is no ordinary pork banh mi—this would be a pork banh mi from the ‘Banh Mi Me’ food truck on La Brea.”

“Ah of course,” said Jack, “I guess… that’s still technically home.”

“What—you gonna start waxing poetic about your cornfields?” said Gabe.

Jack half-snorted half-scoffed. “You know I could never let myself stay there,” said Jack.

“Well… congratulations, you get to see the world. Welcome to fabulous San Francisco—you know if you get to the hill above the battery you can see the bridge… what’s left of it, at least.”

Jack huffed and smiled. “We’ll fix it later,” he said, smiling.

“You said that back in St. Louis. Jack, I really want to know, how the fuck are we going to get that arch back up?”

“I don’t know. My job is to keep shooting until we have time to figure that part out,” said Jack.

Gabe snorted. “Why couldn’t they shoot up Rushmore? Giant stone heads always freaked me out…” he trailed off and glanced over at Jack, “You still haven’t named yours yet.”

“Well if I say ‘my folks’ that’s going to sound guilt-trippy and corny now,” said Jack, “And if I say a food you’ll start going on about the horrors of Indiana cuisine.”

“Oh my god you have a food in mind.”

“I never said I—” Jack scoffed, “Sauerkraut Balls.”

“Sauerkraut what,” Gabe repeated.

“Well like—Fried pickles—they’re good, right?” said Jack.

“Yes,” Gabe said hesitantly.

“Well it’s… pickled cabbage, and you… roll it up in a ball with ham and cream cheese—”

“Oh my god—”
“...and you fry it.”

“Jack, we have been the lab rats of a government experiment that killed off two thirds of the participants, we have been fighting murderous robots for four months, *we could literally die here*, and yet that, that right there is the most horrifying thing I can think of.”

“There we go—Horrors of Indiana cuisine,” said Jack with an eye roll.

“Battery Team,” their CO sounded over the comm, “Scouts are finally getting movement from the OR14s. Need you moving to flank. Let’s keep these reinforcements from reaching the city.”

SEP operations were still black ops in those days. The military thought it was better to have them working behind the scenes, softening the blows on the main forces rather than making the subjects of a controversial super-soldier program front and center in the fight against the Omnis. Gabe brought down his night vision goggles and was able to make out some lights moving among the eucalyptus and cypress trees.

“Out of audio range,” said Jack, loading his rifle as they crouched low in the battery tunnel, “Think ours are still motion-based, or do you think they got the same update as the Detroit Omnium with the thermal vision?”

“Half the shit coming out of the Michigan front is unverified, Jack, you know that,” said Gabe, tweaking his goggles slightly.

An OR14’s head swiveled toward him.

“Shit. Thermal. They got thermal,” said Gabe as the OR14 let out a binary screech to its compatriots. Both Jack and Gabe leapt out of the way of the blaze of bastion turret fire that now filled the battery tunnel. “Any ideas?!” Jack had to shout over the roar of fire. There was a brief pause as one of the turrets had to cool down when Jack laid down some cover fire to keep them from heading through the tunnel.

“Keep ‘em busy, I’ll flank,” said Gabe, scrambling up the ice plant-covered hillside the battery had been dug into. Jack could feel the rain on the back of his neck mingle with a clammy sweat. Just stay calm. Trust that Gabe knew what he was doing and it would all work out. They’d done this before. Jack sometimes wondered if the SEP program had done something to their heads—maybe opened up some neural paths that only he and Gabe had access to, knowing each others’ moves like a well-rehearsed dance with only a few words and a knowing look. The SEP should have been lonely, considering how many people died during those first few trials. But not with Gabe. It should have been horrifying and it was, objectively, horrifying, but Gabe was there, so at the same time, it wasn’t. *This* should be horrifying, objectively it *was* horrifying, but all the same, Gabe was there, so it wasn’t. He leaned through the tunnel and laid down more suppressing fire. He gave a glance down to the ammunition indicator on the barrel of his pulse rifle, gradually dropping toward the red. *Keep looking at me*, he thought, *Keep your eyes on me.*

Then Gabe dropped in. One blast from his BLK001 shotguns to the right spot and the rudimentary processors used for bastion units were shut down. One bastion down. The OR14 turned toward him, giving Jack an opening to helix rocket it in the side of the head.

“How the hell did you— " Jack rushed down the tunnel to back him up as Gabe kicked out the coupling for the bastion’s main gun and puzzled over the mess of wires. Jack looked through the grove of cypress trees to see more lights from various omnic units. “We really need to get moving—” he started and ducked down as several shots from an OR14 whizzed past his head.
“Hey–wanna see me do something stupid?” said Gabe, gunfire just barely missing him as he bent over the bastion.

“Stupider than staying here when we’ve got more Bastions on our ass?” said Jack, taking out an incoming bastion mid-reconfigure.

“Yeah–” Gabe pried open a panel on his half-collapsed bastion and tore out some wires.

“What are you–?” Jack started but the broken bastion’s turret suddenly burst to life sending out hails of bullets.

“Christ, Gabe” said Jack, flinching away hard as the gun went off. The omnics suddenly reared back at fire from one of their own, previously thought dead.

“Help me with this!” said Gabe, holding the turret gun in place.

“Shit—” Jack shouldered his rifle and took hold of the rotary barrel next to Gabe. He could feel the gunmetal going red hot through his gloves as they both shoved their weight against the rapidly firing gun and threw its line of fire to the incoming omnic horde. They couldn’t even hear each other over the roar of the gun. Jack was screaming. Gabe was laughing. Then Jack was also laughing. Finally the rotary came to a spinning, smoking stop and Gabe and Jack were left standing on the collapsed remains of their commandeered bastion and the shelled out wreckage of numerous omnics strewn about the bullet-riddled eucalyptus and cypress trees.

“That was crazy,” said Jack.

“That,” said Gabe, elbowing him, “Was fun.”

“Remind me to try and give you a normal idea of ‘fun’ when this is all over,” said Jack.

“Tch. Like you want a normal idea of fun,” said Gabe.

“Morrison! Reyes!” Their CO’s voice crackled over the comms, “Where are those OR14’s?”

“Battery Davis is secured,” said Jack, touching his finger to his ear, “We’ll fill you in on the details I—”

“Incoming!” Gabe suddenly shouted.

Jack didn’t have time to think. He heard only the whir and clank of a bastion reconfiguring into a tank when Gabe tackled him hard from the waist and suddenly the ground right next to where they had been standing erupted in a spray of earth and fire and hunks of metal. The force of the blast threw them both several yards and they landed with a few painful bounces among the wreckage of the omnics they had just taken out. Jack covered his head as the ground exploded again several yards away from them and glanced over at Gabe, who was draped pietà style across the remains of an OR14, his face heavily bloodied.

“Gabe–!” Jack started. Gabe didn’t respond. Jack gritted his teeth and picked up his gun. He sprinted head on against the bastion, the ground exploding on either side of him as he barely dodged the shells of the cannon. With two jumps he launched himself airborne off of the broken frame of another bastion, just in time to see the bastion attempt to reconfigure itself back into recon mode. It was obliterated in a blast of helix rockets and Jack rolled across the ground, panting. He looked at the collapsed steel frame of the bastion and shot the bastion unit right in its flickering optic receptor for good measure before giving a sharp glance over his shoulder back at Gabe.
“Shit–” he sprinted back to Gabe, “Shit-shit-shit–” he cupped Gabe’s bloodied face in his hands and did his best to wipe some of the blood away, revealing several large gashes on Gabe’s face, “…Shit…” he said again, setting down a biotic field, “Come on–” he shook Gabe, “Get up! Hey! Gabe you are not dying from this, you hear me? Reasons to live, remember? You’re getting that stupid Pork bun thing from that food truck!”

Gabe suddenly coughed. “Banh Mi,” he said.

“What?” said Jack.

“Pork Banh Mi. Not Pork bun. it’s a sandwich—”

“Dammit, Gabe you scared the shit out of me,” said Jack, gripping Gabe’s shoulders.

“Wouldn’t be the first time,” Gabe coughed, he suddenly squinted his eyes, “Ah shit—” he wiped his own blood out of his eyes and looked at the blood smeared on his glove, “Jack–please tell me I’m still pretty,” said Gabe, his fingers tracing among the new gashes on his face.

Jack just huffed out a sigh, bent and touched his forehead to Gabe’s. “You’re goddamn beautiful, Reyes,” said Jack.
The scar was mostly healed at this point, but it still ached more in the cold. Overwatch told him they could replace his eye with a prosthetic but it didn’t feel right. He could adapt. He could adjust. It was a reminder of what he was here for. He looked at Balderich’s coin emblazoned with the Overwatch insignia and turned it over in his fingers and looked out the window of the transport. It was just a cloud bank below, but he could feel Germany behind him. Several snowy peaks thrust themselves up through the clouds. He wasn’t too far, at least. He looked at the massive steel crate which stored and cooled his armor, and then gave a glance over to his hammer. It could be disassembled for easy travel as well, but he didn’t like being too far from it. Not since Eichenwalde, anyway.

“Now arriving at Zurich Headquarters,” the ship’s AI announced. Reinhardt’s scar ached with his ears as the orca made its descent. Reinhardt gave one last glance to the Overwatch coin in his hands before pocketing it. The Orca touched down and Reinhardt undid the safety belt criss-crossing over his chest, rolling his shoulders as he rose to his feet and picked up his duffel. The sealed doors of the Orca opened to a somewhat cloudy sky and a broad tarmac and a chaotic scene of vehicles taking off and various crates being wheeled speedily and desperately on hover-dollies across the blacktop.

It was still the height of the crisis back then, and Zurich headquarters was little more than a glorified airport where a handful of UN members were still trying to corral international forces into an actual cohesive team. These were messy and chaotic days, and there was a few seconds where Reinhardt found himself stuck in place, watching the business and desperation of it all, There were a handful of uniformed, together-looking units making their way to transport vehicles, but for the most part it was a storm of vehicles and people, each somehow miraculously making their way to their intended place. He heard a sharp whistle and glanced down the door/landing ramp of the orca to see a stunning woman in a blue beret with long black hair, olive-brown skin, and a tattoo trailing down from her left eye. If he was being completely honest with himself, she was probably the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. His breath caught in his throat but he quickly maintained composure. Don’t gawk. Crusaders knew how to conduct themselves when it counted. Balderich would want him to make a good first impression. She wasn’t looking at him, but rather down at a tablet.

“First name Reinhardt, last name, Wilhelm–Is that right?” her accent was lovely and Reinhardt took a beat to try and readjust himself to english so he wouldn’t just word-vomit German when it was his turn to speak. “Did we enter that ri—?” she spoke after an assistant who was hurrying by but sighed and shrugged as he ran out of earshot just as quickly has he came. She paused as she glanced up from her tablet and found herself looking at a solarplexus where she expected to see a face. She corrected her line of sight and craned her neck upward to Reinhardt’s face. Her eyes widened.

“…Reinhardt Wilhelm?” she said, looking up at him.

Reinhardt cleared his throat and bowed. “Y-yes. Former First Lieutenant of the Crusaders, filling in for Balderich Von Adler. At your service.”

“Big…” Ana blurted out then caught herself, “Big help! I mean we’re sure you’ll be a big help, Lieutenant Wilhelm. I’m Ana Amari,” she held out her hand and he shook it, “Captain. Formerly of Egyptian Special Forces.”

“An honor,” he said with a bow of his head. Reinhardt glanced over his shoulder to see several
people had loaded the crate with his armor in it onto a hover dolly and was being laboriously pushed down the orca landing ramp.

“Don’t worry, we’ve all heard the stories. We’ll be sure your armor is well taken care of and ready for your first mission with us,” said Ana, already walking. Reinhardt quickly started walking after her, “Unfortunately we’ve only been officially commissioned by the UN for a few weeks, so you can imagine things have been…”

“Busy?” said Reinhardt as someone rushed past him.

“‘Busy’ is generous. I like ‘chaotic,’” said Ana, “We’ve still only mobilized a handful of those commissioned for the Overwatch Initiative. I’m afraid not everyone is as punctual as Germany. The States have thrown a lot of weaponry our way, but they’re being very mysterious about their manpower. We have a good deal of the EU backing us, which is good because the machines are already flooding into Switzerland—” there was a shout behind Reinhardt coming from the Orca and Reinhardt turned on his heel to see three men struggling to lift his hammer onto a hover dolly but clearly having a lot of trouble.

“Easy! Easy!” Reinhardt sprinted back up the ramp and grabbed the handle of his hammer and took it from them, “I can carry it. It’s fine,” he said, walking down the ramp with the hammer.

“Mish mumkin, what were they feeding you over in Germany?” said Ana, watching as Reinhardt carried the hammer with ease.

“…Food?” said Reinhardt, shouldering his hammer.

“…I’ll make a note for the commissary,” said Ana. She continued walking with Reinhardt following in suit as she tapped through her tablet. “We’ve tried to conduct ourselves as swiftly and secretly as possible for a global initiative but…” she huffed, “As you can imagine machines have an easier time organizing themselves than people. Judging by current movements we may need to send you out to Thun as early as 0300 hours.”

“I would be happy to crush as many bastion units as you need, Captain Amari,” said Reinhardt, “You need only name the time and the place.”

“I like your attitude, soldier,” said Ana, smiling, “And your beauty mark.”

“Beauty…?” Reinhardt spoke in question but Ana motioned to her left eye.


“It’s an eye of horus,” said Ana, “For protection.”

“Well… I hope I am able to serve you as well as your tattoo, Captain Amari,” said Reinhardt with a smile.

“Stick with me, Wilhelm,” she said, giving him a gentle punch in the arm as they walked, “I’ll get us home safe.”
The sky was light lavender, and the trees outside of Jack’s window were gold and red and orange. The office was new. The office smelled new. New paint, fancy ergonomic chair—too soft. Too clean. This place wasn’t lived in, but then again he wasn’t used to lived in spaces. The past few years he was stuck in makeshift bunkers that they could barely fortify against the assault of the omniums, and now they were here. He had taken off his dress uniform jacket. They still hadn’t dedicated the new headquarters—that ceremony was tomorrow. Then there were the press junkets and the dedication ceremony and gala for the new headquarters, and all the diplomats and politicians and god he was so tired. He was so tired and yet the world was rushing to rebuild itself after everything and it had every right to, and yes, it was a great honor that he was being called on to help with that rebuilding but... he gave a glance to the row of medals on the dress jacket resting on the back of his chair, then sighed and rubbed his temples. He just wanted to rest but he knew the world didn’t have time to rest. The door slid open and Gabe walked in and set a mug on the desk in front of him.

“Drink up,” said Gabe, motioning with a mug in his own hand.

“Coffee at 7?” Jack picked up the mug and sipped it, then winced at the burn of alcohol.


“You’ve gotten cozy with the promotions,” said Jack, chuckling and taking another sip.

“You know me. You know it’s not coziness,” said Gabe, “We need to take what little creature comforts we can get.” He stared into his own mug a bit, “You’ve had a long day.”

“Strike Commander...” Jack repeated the words but they sounded hollow. He looked up at Gabriel. “Gabe—I told Petras—I did say you had more experience... that you—”

Gabe scoffed and clapped Jack on the shoulder, “Look, at this point, I’m just glad I can get through a night without worrying that a bastion unit’s going to shoot me to a pulp.”

“...You still worry about that,” Jack said a bit quietly.

“Yeah well... that’s how it is,” said Gabe, looking out the window, “Nice view,” he said, “They’re sticking me in the freakin’ ‘Meanwhile at the Legion of Doom’ tactical intelligence room in the basement level. No windows. Lots of screens though,” he sipped his coffee, “Feels cool, really.” He snickered, “Y’know once that statue goes up you’re going to have an excellent view of your own ass.”

“They’re not putting up the statue,” muttered Jack.

“Oh they’re putting up the statue,” said Gabe.

“Well they sure as hell aren’t putting it up here,” said Jack, he rested his forehead in his hand before taking another sip of the heavily spiked coffee, “I’m not ready for all this,” he said, taking one of the medals they had pinned on his jacket off of it and turning it over in his hands.

“We did say someone’s gotta be there to pick up the pieces when all the fighting was over,” said Gabe, “I’ll be honest I was hoping they’d have someone other than us picked out by now, too, but...” he shrugged, “The way I figure it, it might as well be us. Someone else might mess it up.”
“You’re handling it a lot easier than I am,” said Jack.

“Not as easy as you think,” Gabe gestured with his mug. “Second cup,” he said flatly.

Jack snorted again then downed the last of his own coffee in a sharp, burning gulp. “I’m glad you’re here, Gabe,” he said quietly.

“Psh, yeah well you’d be pretty screwed without me,” said Gabe.

“Hey now, is that any way to talk to a CO?” said Jack.

“Don’t worry, I’m fucking the Strike Commander,” Gabe delivered the line with perfect deadpan while sipping his coffee.

This managed to get a longer more genuine laugh out of Jack which eventually faded into an exhausted chuckle. “…god, I’m terrified,” Jack said at last.

“Same,” said Gabe with a shrug, “But we got this, right?” he held his mug over to Morrison.

Jack grinned and clinked his own empty mug with Gabe’s. “Yeah. We got this.”
Ana was stuffing different tupperware containers and sippy cups into Gabe’s fridge.

“I can’t thank you enough for doing this, Gabe,” said Ana, rifling through a large bag, “With the usual sitter canceling and this mission–You’re a lifesaver.”

“Yeah you know when they asked me, ‘Gabriel Reyes, what do you plan on doing with your stellar black ops record’ I just told them, ‘Let me change diapers.’”

Ana snorted. “Fareeha’s not in diapers anymore. Just make sure you ask her if she has to use the potty every now and again and she should be fine.”

Gabe snorted and glanced over at Fareeha on the couch, repeatedly smashing a toy fighter jet into a toy Svyatogor. “I swear she’s grown a few inches since I last saw her.”

“Won’t be long ‘til she’s your height,” said Ana.

“You’re hilarious,” said Gabe flatly.

Ana just huffed a little and started pointing at different containers in the fridge. “The apple slices and peanut butter are for snack. The salatit zambadi and chicken polenta is for dinner. Fruit salad and yogurt for breakfast. Orange juice. Milk. Water.”

“No soda,” said Gabe.

“No soda,” Ana nodded, closing the fridge door, “And try not to have her watching holovids the whole time.”

“Sure thing,” said Gabe, following Ana to the door.

Ana exhaled. “Again, Gabe, you’re a lifesaver.”

“ Comes with the job,” said Gabe, shrugging.

“ Habībti,” Ana called. Fareeha slid off the couch and hurried over and hugged her. Ana broke out of the hug briefly, “You be good while I’m gone, all right?”

Fareeha nodded. Ana kissed her forehead.

“Ana!” Reinhardt called from the car to take her to the Orca.

“On my way!” Ana shouted back. She turned to Gabe, “You take care,” she said to Gabe. Gabe gave her a nod.

“You’d better get going,” he said.

Ana saluted him then blew a kiss to her daughter before rushing out the door. Gabe waved her off as she and Reinhardt drove away. Fareeha watched the car out the window, toy fighter jet and svyatogor clenched in each hand.

“She’ll be back,” said Gabe, ruffling Fareeha’s hair, “Anything you wanna do?”

“Arm day,” said Fareeha, instantly.
Gabe snickered, “Kid it’s not arm da–”

“Arm day!” Fareeha ran down the apartment hall to his bedroom, where a chin-up bar was installed in the doorway. She wedged herself in the doorway and started climbing up. Gabe followed after her and watched as she scrambled up to the chin-up bar and hung there, kicking her legs back and forth. “’s arm day!”

Gabe snorted. “All right all right—don’t kick me in the face,” he said, taking ahold of the bar himself. Fareeha grinned and dropped to the floor, then wrapped her arms and legs around Gabe’s waist as he lifted his feet off the ground. She cackled as he lifted himself up with her clinging onto him. He did a couple reps with Fareeha laughing and yelling “Arm day!” as he did so. He knew he could do a lot more with the SEP serum, but as he told Fareeha, today was not arm day. He lowered his feet to the ground and Fareeha dropped down then took off back down the hall again. Gabe snorted and walked after her. She was at the window again. She pointed outside.

“Yeah, sure kid, let’s get your shoes–” Gabe cut himself off as the sound of rain hitting the roof started, “Welp, I guess that’s not happ–”

Fareeha giggled loudly and started hopping up and down on her heels and pointing outside.

“Aw, come on, kid,” said Gabe, rubbing his forehead.

Please?” said Fareeha. She tucked her hair out of her face and looked up at him. She looked outside, then back at him, then pointed outside again.

“The face is not going to work, kiddo,” said Gabe, folding his arms.

“But Gabe—please?” said Fareeha.

“Yeah your mom’s gonna kill me if you catch a cold,” said Gabe.

“Please?” Fareeha said again.

Gabe’s brow furrowed.

—

“Fifteen minutes,” said Gabe, mostly to himself, watching as Fareeha ran through puddles on the watchpoint tarmac. She was screaming and laughing and smashing her fighter jet and svyatogor together and making explosion noises as she leapt into particularly large puddles. “Just fifteen minutes.” He had put one of the Overwatch emergency ponchos that were meant for adults on her, and it went down to her ankles and rendered her a small amorphous blob of bright yellow splashing through puddles.

“Gabe look! Look, Gabe!” she yelled at him and jumped into another puddle.

“I see you, kiddo,” he called over to her, “Try and take it easy, it’s a little–”

Fareeha tripped and fell face-first into a puddle.

 “…slippery. Shit,” Gabe rushed over and quickly picked her up, expecting crying but she just screeched and laughed, “You can take a tumble, huh?” He said, squinting at her face and making sure it wasn’t scratched up. Fareeha just laughed and smacked him in the shoulder with her svyatogor. “I think it’s time we head in,” he said, tucking a strand of wet hair out of her face.
“But Gabe!” said Fareeha. Thunder rumbled overhead and Gabe quickly stood up and put Fareeha on his hip.

“No buts,” he said, quickly walking back to the apartments.

—

Gabe used Jack’s hairdryer to dry Fareeha’s soggy sneakers as Fareeha splashed in the bath. “I’mma fight too,” said Fareeha, splashing her svyatogor into the water.

Gabe turned off the hairdryer. “What?”

“I’m gonna fight too, when I’m big,” said Fareeha. She then demonstratively smashed her fighter jet into her svyatogor and made an explosion noise.

Gabe sighed and set down the hairdryer, then dropped to one knee next to the bath and grabbed some of the shampoo Ana left. “Head back,” he said, and Fareeha lifted her chin up as Gabe worked the shampoo into her hair. “Hopefully you won’t have to fight when you’re big,” said Gabe.

“But I want to fight! Like you! And Mum! And Jack!”

“Well tough luck, ’cause we’re going to get all the fighting done before you can grow up,” said Gabe, taking one of the plastic cups floating in the tub and pouring water over Fareeha’s head.

“Pffft!” Fareeha sputtered under the water, “That’s no fair!”

“Well there’s lots of other stuff to do besides fighting,” said Gabe, pouring another cup of water over her head. He glanced at the svyatogor in Fareeha’s hand. “You could… be an engineer.”

“Engineer?” said Fareeha.

“Sure, you like cars and planes and mechs and spaceships,” said Gabe, draining the tub, “Engineers make all those things. Torbjörn’s an engineer.”

Fareeha gasped as she stood up from the draining water. “Will I get a beard, too?”

“Sure, kid,” said Gabe as he wrapped her up in a towel.

“Really?” said Fareeha.

“Yep,” said Gabe, “All engineers get beards when they become engineers. Not all of them wear the beards though. Torbjorn just wears his because he’s a traditionalist like that.”

“What’s a tradishlist?” said Fareeha.

Gabe snorted. “Let’s get your PJ’s on, yeah?” he said, giving a glance up to the ceiling as the rain started coming down harder on the roof and thunder softly rumbled.

—

Fareeha ate her dinner in her pajamas on the couch with a holovid playing. She finished pretty quickly and Gabe was washing her tupperware in the sink when thunder cracked and the power went out. Fareeha let out a half-scream half-squeal from the living room.

“Just–stay put, kid,” said Gabe, pulling his comm out of his pocket and using the flashlight function to get to his closet and pull out a tactical lantern, which he brought to the living room.
Fareeha whimpered and pulled the couch throw blanket up around herself, staring at the lantern. Gabe walked back out of the room and called up Bayless.

“Hey—Bayless—Power just went off in the residences,” he spoke on the comm.

“Yeah sorry about that, Reyes,” said Bayless, “Power surge. We had to use the residential generator to keep the Watchpoint security systems up. Everything all right with you?”

“Yeah, everything’s fine,” said Gabe, glancing back at Fareeha, “Just dark.”

“We should get it working again in a couple hours,” said Bayless.

“Good to know,” said Gabe, clicking out of the call.

“Well…looks like it’s dark until bedtime, kiddo,” said Gabe, plopping back down on the couch.

Fareeha furrowed her brow, then lighting flashed outside the window and she flinched, pulling herself deeper into the blanket.

“You doing all right?” Gabe leaned over to her.

He heard sniffling from inside the blanket. “I want Mum,” Fareeha’s voice cracked.

“And I’m sure Ana would love to be with you right now,” said Gabe, “She’s just busy saving the world, is all.”

Fareeha pouted, then glanced off and pointed. Gabe glanced over to where she was pointing, at his guitar in the corner. He scoffed a little, “You should be going to bed soon,” he said, folding his arms.

“Please?” said Fareeha.

Gabe sighed and stood up, grabbed the guitar, then positioned himself on the couch. He played “Blackbird” for her. The song was far too old for him to bother knowing or remembering the lyrics, but he hummed it a bit. She set her head down on his legs. Gabe was mostly watching his own fingers on the guitar, but he would give glances back to her to see her eyelids drooping. He was pretty sure she didn’t even make it to the end of the song when her breathing went slow and rhythmic. Silently, he set the guitar off to the side and tried to move a hand under her head so that he could get up. She grunted and frowned in her sleep as he attempted to move her, and he realized there was no way to move her without waking her. With this, Gabe just leaned back on the couch with resignation, pulled his beanie down over his own eyes, and slept.
“Come out, Reyes!” Morrison called, “There’s nowhere to run!”

“You’ll never take us alive!” Fareeha shouted, springing up from behind the rec room couch only to be yanked back down by Gabe as a hail of foam darts flew overhead.

“That was a warning shot, Habībtī,” Ana called, “You should know I never miss.”

“They’ll flank us,” said Gabe, his voice low.

“We can take ‘em!” said Fareeha in a loud whisper, pumping her foam dart gun, “We just need…” she paused dramatically, “The mech.”

Gabe pinched the bridge of his nose, “Kid, you’re getting a little too big for the mech…”

“I thought Mom said you were super strong,” said Fareeha, folding her arms.

“Well, yes but—”

“Is it ‘cuz you’re old?” asked Fareeha.

Gabe’s brow furrowed. “Fine. It’s mech time.”

—

“They’re being awfully quiet back there…” said Jack, giving a glance over to Ana as they kept an eye on the couch, “Think they’re discussing the terms of surrender?”

“When have you known Gabe or Fareeha to surrender peacefully?” said Ana, arching an eyebrow.

Jack smirked a bit and raised his blaster, “All right Reyes, come on out with your hands up and maybe we’ll go easy on you!”

“Oh now you’ve done it, Jack,” Reyes’s voice came dark and menacing from the other side of the couch, “You’ve forced us to use our trump card.”

“You don’t have a trump card,” said Jack with a roll of his eyes.

“Oh yes we do!” said Fareeha.

“A weapon to surpass the OR-14!” Gabe shouted as he suddenly stood up, Fareeha riding on his shoulders and brandishing both of their dart guns.

“Die! Die! Die!” shouted Fareeha as Gabe easily vaulted over the couch, shooting every which way.
“Get down!” shouted Jack as he and Ana both dramatically dove out of the way.

“Get behind me!” shouted Reinhardt, shoving past both Jack and Ana with a couch cushion, effectively shielding them but getting grazed slightly by a single foam dart. He reeled back, “I’m hit!” he looked over at Torbjörn, who avoided eye-contact from the rec-room table, “Torbjörn! I need armor!”

“For the love of—It’s a *foam dart*,” said Torbjörn, desperately trying to enjoy his coffee amidst the foam firefight.

“I can’t believe you’re leaving me here to die like this! My dearest friend! How could you!” said Reinhardt.

“I just want a normal lunch break,” said Torbjörn, very quietly to himself as he put creamer in his coffee, “Just one. normal. lunch break.”

“Reinhardt, no!” cried Ana as Reinhardt slumped to the floor.

“Avenge me, Ana…” Reinhardt gasped before flattening himself on the ground.

“Noooo!” Ana shouted.

“You’ll pay for this, Reyes!” said Jack, raising his plastic rifle.

“It’s nothing personal, Jack,” said Gabe as Fareeha fired off her dart gun. A single foam dart bounced off the standard-issue chest plate he wore beneath his usual blue overcoat and landed on the ground.

“Looks like you’re out of ammo,” said Jack.

Gabriel cleared his throat and pointed at the ground. Jack looked down and saw the dart. “Oh,” he said, and then, “OH!” And he staggered back as well, clutching his chest and making dying noises, “You got me! Ngh! You got me good!” he slumped against the wall, “Is this.. where it ends? Jack Morrison…struck down by the one he trusted the most…and also Gabe.”

“Jackass,” said Gabe with a smirk.

Ana sharply cleared her throat and Gabe caught himself. “Oh–uh—Sorry Fareeha. Forget I said that. Bad word.”

“’Kay,” said Fareeha.

“Lights…fading… everything… going black…” Jack Morrison was still sliding down the wall, “Make sure… my statue… doesn’t make me look stupid.”

“Too late, Jack,” said Gabe, folding his arms.

Jack made a very convincing death rattle before flopping limp against the wall.

“So I guess that just leaves…” Gabe started. Ana raised her own plastic rifle and Fareeha instantly dropped both of her foam dart guns to the ground and put her hands up. “Pfft. Traitor,” said Gabe.

“Smart girl,” said Ana, grabbing Fareeha off of Gabe’s shoulders and throwing her over her own shoulder as Fareeha giggled, “I think it’s time our little double-agent gets some snacks,” she said, heading out of the room.
“I was a double agent, too,” said Gabe with some mock obnoxiousness as Ana walked away.

“But clearly not the mastermind,” said Ana, the door sliding shut behind her.

Gabe scoffed and chuckled, then gave a glance down at Jack and Reinhardt, still sprawled out on the floor.

“So you two are… just going to stay like that, huh?”

“It’s called ‘committing,’ Reyes,” said Jack from the floor.

“Just… one normal lunch break. That’s all I ask,” said Torbjörn from the rec room table, rubbing his forehead.
One could see Shimada castle and most of the city from the Shimada family plot. It was a late, long-shadowed hour, with the angle of the sun glaring off some of the buildings’ windows. Hanzo was on one knee in front of the grave while Yuriko stood next to it, one hand on the headstone. It reminded Hanzo of the way she would touch his fathers’ shoulder when calling him away from dinner to address clan matters. Hanzo’s eyes flicked over to his mother’s headstone at the thought of it. It was older than Sojiro’s headstone, but only by a few years. Hanzo’s eyes finally trailed up from the headstone to the tall, dignified figure of his aunt. She was dressed smartly—collared dress shirt, high waisted pants and suspenders with a black and white haori resting on her shoulders. Yuriko’s gray-flecked hair was piled on her head in a pompadour-like updo, but it tumbled past her shoulders and down her back as she pulled a few pins from it, looking out at the city.

“How bad was it?” asked Hanzo.

“I’ve cleaned up most of the mess,” said Yuriko, shaking her hair out, “The Inago Gang is still grumbling, but Noriyuki trusts me. He’ll keep them in line. He knows what’s good for them in the long run.”

“Good,” said Hanzo, folding his arms against himself, “Good—”

“Not good, Hanzo. These are footmen. The hierarchy is supposed to be clear. If a gang as lowly as the Inago are raising this much hell, it shows how vulnerable we are to the other families.”

“The council—” Hanzo started.

“Continue to be very vocal in their doubts about the strength of the main branch as Clan leaders,” said Yuriko, “Hideyoshi can’t pacify them like he used to.”

Hanzo’s lips thinned.

“If the main branch loses power, it’ll be a vacuum. A bloodbath. We’ll collapse on ourselves,” Yuriko went on. She looked down at Sojiro’s grave and lifted her hand from Sojiro’s grave and put it on Hanzo’s shoulder. “We need to talk about Genji.”

“He’s grieving—” Hanzo started.

“There’s grieving,” said Yuriko, pulling out her phone, “And then there’s being a liability,” she showed Hanzo a picture of Genji—clearly drunk, surrounded by beautiful, laughing people.

“Genji was always…” Hanzo trailed off.

“Look closer,” said Yuriko, zooming in on a figure in the background of the photo. Hanzo noticed a koi tattoo creeping up the neck of a grim looking man in the background.

“Teiji Furukawa,” said Yuriko, furrowing her brow, “He’s not even avoiding having his picture
taken. The Furukawa clan wouldn’t send out a hatchet man this high up unless they wanted to send a message,” she withdrew her phone from him and sighed, “Genji isn’t just your problem anymore. He’s the clan’s problem. He’s been the clan’s problem, and neither of us have been willing to face up to that.”

“I’ll talk to him,” said Hanzo.

“You’ve been talking to him ever since Sojiro passed,” said Yuriko, “Whatever you’re saying isn’t sinking in. If he can’t step up to clan duties,” Yuriko took a breath and tucked some of her hair back, wearily, “Then there have to be consequences.”

Her hand lingered at her hair for less than a second. Hanzo’s eyes always flicked to the stub of her missing pinky when she tucked her hair back, even when his father had told him it was rude to stare.

Consequences. Hanzo’s stomach tightened at the word.

“There has to be a better option,” said Hanzo, “Perhaps exile—”

“And leave him vulnerable to act as an informant to law enforcement or our enemies?” said Yuriko, “You know we can’t allow that.”

Hanzo was silent, staring at Sojiro’s grave.

“Do you think saying this is any easier for me?” said Yuriko, “You and Genji are all I have left of my brother. All I have left of one of my dearest friends. But this is bigger than what I want. The interests of the clan must always take priority over our own feelings on the matter,” she sighed, “This is a mistake of Sojiro’s as well… We can’t make the same mistake. We have to rectify it.”

Hanzo kept his eyes fixed on the headstone.

“This isn’t a burden you should bear so soon after losing him,” said Yuriko, putting her four-fingered hand on his shoulder, “I know—”

“I know it is my duty,” said Hanzo, finally breaking his sight away from the grave to look at her, “Give me a chance to speak to him. Give him one last chance to take his place in the clan.”

“You are the scion,” said Yuriko, “You don’t need my permission. Ultimately how you carry out your duty is up to you.”

—

2 Days Later

—

It was a little after midnight when a sleek black car crookedly parked in a Hanamura parking garage and Yuriko emerged from it.

“Hanzo!?” Yuriko called as she slammed the car door shut and looked around the garage.

“Boss, are you sure we should be leaving the castle security this sparse—” an enforcer spoke in her earpiece.

“Finding the scion takes priority,” said Yuriko, keeping one hand on the tanto at her hip, as she
looked around the garage, “Stand by near the exits, and keep in contact with other search parties. Keep searching the city. Keep in contact with the Inago and Hikigaeru gangs and maintain our numbers on the streets. We need to keep this as quiet as possible. As far as the other gangs are concerned, everything is proceeding as normal for us.”

“Sure we shouldn’t get a cleanup crew on the bodies back at the castle?” said the enforcer.

“They aren’t going anywhere,” said Yuriko, “We’ll get them when we’re sure Lord Shimada’s back home safe.”

“Understood, Boss,” said the enforcer, clicking out of the comm.

“Hanzo?!” Yuriko called, her voice echoing through the cold garage, “Hanzo–where are you? Han–!? She cut herself off and cursed under her breath as she undid the buttons at the cuff of her dress shirt and shoved her sleeve up her arm, revealing a red dragon spiraling around her arm. “Ryū ga anata o mitsuke saseru, Shimada Hanzo,” she muttered under her breath as red light spiraled off her arm and then shot off down the dark parking garage, hanging in the air like a ribbon. She hurried after it.

The ribbon of red light faded away as she reached the second highest level of the garage.

“Hanzo?” she called again, but she fell silent at the sound of shuddering breaths off in the darkness. She followed the sound to see a figure hunched over next to a support column. Hanzo’s hands were bloody. His clothes were still torn from the skirmish, with several still-bleeding slashes in spots. His sleek hair was awkwardly chopped short in one spot. He was buckled over, shuddering. At his side was a sword, in-sheath.

“Hanzo…” Yuriko stepped next to him and dropped down to one knee, “Look at me.”

He shook his head.

“Han–” she reached a hand forward and Hanzo flinched back from her extended hand, she withdrew it only slightly. “It’s me,” she said softly, “It’s only me.”

Yuriko’s eyes fell on the sword at his side and she reached over and picked it up, she unsheathed it and saw the red staining the silvery steel.

“Oh, Hanzo…” she said softly. She moved to reach forward and comfort him but he flinched back at the sight of the sword. Yuriko’s eyes flicked down to the sword, then she stretched her arm out and set the sword down further away from him, out of his line of sight at least. He wouldn’t want to look at it now.

“He’s dead–I ki–I–” Hanzo’s shoulders suddenly bunched up and he retched. Yuriko flinched back slightly at the splash of vomit against cement, “I killed him,” Hanzo’s voice was creaking, “I killed him…He was my brother and I–” he gagged again. His hand flailed out and smeared blood on her shirt as he gripped her shoulder and pulled himself up slightly to look at her in the eyes. “How… how could I…?”

“You did what you had to do for our clan,” her voice was gentle.

Hanzo shook his head again. “No–No, that’s not—he was…”

“The weight you bear now is unimaginable,” said Yuriko, “But I promise you… it will get easier to carry.”
Hanzo’s breaths were still short and shuddering. “Will it…?” he looked at his hands.

“It will. No one can question your loyalty to the clan now, or your sense of duty,” said Yuriko. She looked around the parking garage, “This is no place to grieve. Come home, Hanzo. It’s where you belong,” Yuriko cupped her four-fingered hand to his cheek, “Our scion.”
Mercy felt queasy. Maybe it was the fact that the Blackwatch transport was smaller, more easily jostled than the Orca. Maybe it was the fact that she could feel this armor weighing down on her chest more heavily. She glanced down at her ‘adjusted’ uniform. The beret was red, not white, her hair tightly tied back and under it, and her nose, mouth and jawline were covered up by a gray and black mask that was somewhere between surgeon’s mask and pilot’s oxygen mask. Her valkyrie suit had been done up in Blackwatch’s black, red, and gray color scheme, more heavily armored. It didn’t feel right. The purpose of the valkyrie suit wasn’t just easy transport around the battlefield, it was supposed to be a symbol of hope, it was supposed to boost morale, and calm people down. Her face needed to be exposed—people had to know that it was a human looking after them, a doctor. That was the point. All this armor, all this secrecy, felt terribly grim to her. Her grip on her caduceus staff tightened and she pursed her lips, already feeling claustrophobic with the mask, but her unease only made worse by the jostling. She didn’t like this. She never got motion sick. Her body had all but been trained out of it with the Valkyrie suit.

“It’s tactical,” Reyes spoke from across the transport, as if sensing her discomfort. She brought her eyes up from her lap to him. “It’s not permanent,” Reyes went on, “Just for this mission. This was outlined in your contract when you signed on.”

“As were the non-disclosure agreements,” said Mercy, furrowing her brow slightly.

“That’s… kind of the definition of a Black operation, Doctor Ziegler,” said Reyes.

Mercy glanced from Reyes to McCree next to him, apparently half-napping with his hat brim pulled down, covering his eyes. Mercy craned her neck to look out the window of the transport. Hanamura glittered below, a city that had recovered more quickly than most after the crisis.

“Why were you so sure you would need a medic for this mission?” asked Mercy.

“We’re doing a pick-up,” said Reyes.

“So you’ve said,” said Mercy, “But Blackwatch has its own medics, doesn’t it?”

“We do, but… we figure since previous reports indicate there’s no way to tell how bad the damage might be to our pick-up, we’ve decided it’s wise to prepare for the worst,” he gestured at her, “By bringing in the best.”

“Your flattery is appreciated, Gabriel, but it’s a poor substitute for more details,” said Mercy, eyeing the three other blackwatch agents coming along as backup.

“This ain’t Overwatch, Doc,” McCree, apparently not as asleep as she had previously thought, lifted up the brim of his hat with his thumb as he leaned forward, “We run things a little differently here.” Reyes shot McCree a look and McCree cleared his throat and gestured at Reyes with his thumb. “He,” McCree said, correcting himself, “He runs things a little differently here.”

Mercy glanced back at Reyes and Reyes gave a reassuring nod. She rolled her grip on her staff and did her best to quiet the storm of Murphy’s Law thoughts that now clouded her mind.

The transport landed on the roof of an arcade and the team poured out and quickly descended a fire escape, with Mercy herself simply jumping off the roof and descending safely with the Valkyrie wings.
“Drone intel pans out,” said one Blackwatch agent, unfolding their tablet as they ran up a hill, “Most of the security is spread thin around the city. Some kind of manhunt, it looks like.”

The six of them came upon a massive wooden gate. Mercy paused, staring at the Emblem on the gate: two dragons, spiraling around each other. Her stomach dropped.

“Wait—” she started.

“Deadeye, take point,” said Reyes, “Remember—Non-lethal takedowns for any remaining hostiles.”

“Got it, boss,” said McCree running past the gate.

“Gryphon,” Reyes motioned to another Blackwatch agent, “Back him up.”

The agent, apparently codenamed ‘Gryphon,’ nodded and ran past Mercy after McCree.

“Reyes—” Mercy spoke through gritted teeth.

“We’re in the field. Codenames, Merce,” said Reyes.

Mercy rolled her eyes. “Prospero,” she said, her voice dripping with venomous disdain for the theatrical codename, “The NPA stated it wanted no interference from Overwatch in regards to Shimada Clan activities.”

“The NPA’s concern has been noted,” said Reyes.

“Courtyard secure,” McCree spoke over the comms, “One body, no other hostiles.”


“…noted and ignored,” muttered Mercy, following after Reyes as he and the Blackwatch agent moved through the courtyard. Mercy saw the body. It was far from the first body she had ever seen in her career as a combat medic, but somehow in the context of a Blackwatch mission, it felt… more wrong. They were in the den of one of the largest and most dangerous crime families in Japan, a part of her was mentally prepared for this at this point. His suit indicated him as one of the higher-ranked members of main branch security detail. Cause of death appeared to be a stab through the ribcage, followed through with a slash across the neck. The blood hadn’t even pooled around him, being instantly sucked up by the gravel of the karesansui beneath him, the weight of his body disrupting the ripples of the gravel. A sidearm lay uselessly by his side. Who brought a knife to a gunfight and won? she wondered. She shook her head then followed Reyes through the shadows of the wall surrounding the compound before they backed up against the wall of an interior gate that opened into a smaller garden filled with blooming cherry trees that looked silver in the moonlight. Reyes peered around the corner of the gate.

“Two hostiles,” McCree spoke over the comms, “Hold your position.”

Mercy, Reyes, and Daleth maintained their position for several seconds.

“Hostiles downed,” McCree said after a tense minute.

“Non-lethally?” said Reyes.

“One of ‘em, yeah. The other….didn’t really give us an option.”
Reyes sighed. “Gryphon, get the body back to the courtyard. Make it look like they were killed by the same person.”

A wave of nausea surged up from the back of Mercy’s throat. “Does Jack know about this?” she asked, her voice hushed.

“Would it make you feel any better if I said ‘Yes?’” returned Reyes.

Mercy fell quiet then.

“Deadeye,” Reyes brought a hand to his ear, “You almost at the target?”

“Almost there, Boss.” said McCree over the comms, “Inner garden is clear, moving to the interior of the main building.”

“Copy. Moving to the main doors,” said Reyes, as he, Mercy, and Daleth moved through the garden, past Gryphon carrying the body on their shoulders out to the courtyard.

“What happened here…?” murmured Mercy.

They walked toward a small garden pavilion just outside the main building’s front door and stopped short at the sight of three bodies, more Shimada family security guards. Mercy’s hand went up to go over her mouth in shock, but her fingers just ended up bumping dumbly against her mask. Bullet wounds, all of them, two in the head, one through the chest. The grass of the garden was muddy beneath them.

“A gunman?” said Mercy, examining the wounds, “Or—”

“Main building’s clear. One body–Oh shit–” McCree’s voice came over the comms, “Boss, I think we’re too late.”

“What?” said Mercy.

“Our esteemed Doctor will be the judge of that,” said Reyes. He looked at Mercy. “Get in there. Deadeye’s watching you from the upper balcony. I’ll watch your back at the door,” Reyes brought a hand to his ear, “Nero. Get the transport and wait for us at the north terrace off the main building.”

Mercy’s grip tightened on her staff as she peeked down the doorway and saw a large dimly lit chamber. A green and blue dragon circled each other on a tapestry. Then her eyes trailed down and her breath caught in her throat. There was a figure there, lying on his side on the floor, dressed in black and green. She pushed off the ground and shot forward on her valkyrie wings before reaching the side of a bloodied figure in the middle of the floor, her staff already activating its healing stream before she reached him.

An arm was gone. Both legs were gone. A large chunk had been taken out of his torso, and blood was staining the white tatami beneath him red. A bloody sword lay at his side and Mercy pushed it out of reach before getting to her knees next to him and getting to work. She acted quickly, stopping off the bleeding on his severed limbs with foam bandage-gel and trying to focus on the massive chunk taken out of his torso. “I need a hand over here!” she shouted, and Daleth ran up alongside her and took a medkit out of their pack and placed sensors on his torso, taking out their tablet to monitor his erratic heartbeat. A weak half-drowned sound escaped him and Mercy looked around, keeping the stream of biotics on him. There were no limbs or entrails scattered around him, and deep lacerations of varying width scored his torso and face. The most unusual lacerations on his face were along his jaw, what was left of it at least, with a clean triangular thumb-width
chunk, *bone included*, simply gone.

“Gabriel—” Mercy started and then caught herself, “Prospero,” she corrected herself with Reyes’ codename, “No human should be alive with injuries like this.”

“That’s why we’re picking him up, Doctor Ziegler. He’s not like any human alive,” said Reyes.

“Even from here it looks like it’s gonna take a hell of a lot more than a biotic staff,” said McCree.

“Just get him stable enough to move onto a stretcher and get into the transport,” said Reyes.

“I don’t understand,” Mercy muttered, keeping the biotic stream on him, “These wounds aren’t consistent with… with *anything*, I mean there’s some blade lacerations but whatever’s taken his limbs—it’s literally *taken* them.”

“Vitals are crashing,” said Daleth.

“What? No!” said Mercy. She pulled her staff up and grabbed a scalpel from one of the pouches on her hip.

“Set down a biotic field,” she instructed Daleth, who complied and the three of them were in a small circle of yellow light as Mercy jammed the scalpel between two plates of her caduceus staff.

“Merce, what are you doing?” said McCree.

“I don’t have a defibrillator on hand, and I don’t know if his torso could handle a blow like that, I’ll need to use the next best thing,” she said, prying off a plate and revealing the two chords which controlled both the ‘Damage boost’ function of her staff and the biotic stream, with a capacitator dividing them. Mercy jimmied the scalpel under the capacitator and pulled it out of the staff.

“Please work,” she whispered as she gripped down on the staff’s trigger, ‘CLEAR!’

Daleth flinched back away from the bright braid of blue sparks and yellow light that shot forth from the end of the staff. The usual soft chime of biotics suddenly loudened to a shriek, and the crackle of the damage boost a sound like thunder that had struck too close, causing the staff itself to shake and glow blue and yellow with unbridled power as the man spasmed from the force of the beam. A roaring scream escaped the bloody man.

“Wh–How is he conscious!?” Mercy shouted over the crackling and singing of her own staff and the man’s screaming. Her eyes widened as suddenly a green light started issuing out of his body. “What…?” she said, her voice hushed by awe as the green light shaped itself into a dragon above him. Daleth scrambled back away from the dragon, but Mercy was fixed in place, unsure of what she was looking at.

“Holy shit,” Mercy could hear McCree’s voice in her earpiece comm.

“That…. That’s not possible…” she said, releasing the trigger on her staff and staring at the dragon. It opened its maw and roared at her, blowing loose strands of her hair loose and blowing her beret off of her head.

The bloodied man’s eyes snapped open, glowing green, and suddenly his hand shot up and gripped her neck as the dragon spiraled around his arm, Mercy gripped his wrist.

“Shit–” McCree said again, “Boss, I have a shot—”
“Don’t shoot him!” Mercy blurted out, even with his hand squeezing her neck, he barely had the strength in his arm to grip it. The dragon had shrunk down to a brighter, more concentrated form, coiled around his arm, green light flushing off of it as if it were trying to lend the man his strength, and Mercy could feel it, his fingers closing on her throat.

She looked down at the man, into the his glowing green eyes, then glanced at the dragon glaring at her from around his arm, “You’re a part of him, aren’t you?” said Mercy to the dragon, her fingers gently moving under the man’s fingers on her neck, “If he dies, so do you.”

His eyes scanned her, squinting a little, unsure of what to make of her. Unthinkingly, she took her free hand, previously gripping her caduceus staff and undid the mask covering her nose and mouth. His eyes widened slightly at her face.

*That’s why the valkyrie suit doesn’t cover my face, Reyes, thought Mercy, People need to know there’s a human in it.*

“You have to trust me,” she said, “Please, let me help.”

His hand loosened from her neck, the dragon coiling around it disappeared like a neon green ink diluting in water. His arm dropped to his side and the green glow faded from his eyes, then his eyes rolled back in head and closed.

“...h-heartbeat stable,” said Daleth, looking at the tablet in their shaking hands, “For now.”

“Get him to the transport,” said Reyes, walking in and picking Mercy’s beret up off the floor, “Let’s get him back to Zurich.”

Reyes, McCree, Daleth and Mercy all eased the bloody mess of a man onto a Vishkar tech hard-light stretcher and brought him up a short set of stairs onto a large covered terrace, where Nero, Gryphon, and the Blackwatch transport waited. It took off into the night and Mercy watched out a window as glittering red lights pulled up outside the Shimada estate as they flew away. Mercy re-installed the capacitor in her staff and kept a steady stream of biotic energy on their pick-up. The transport was silent as they flew out and Hanamura shrank beneath them.

“So...” McCree said at last, “Helluva resumé you’re building, Doc.”

“What?” said Mercy, glancing up from the glow of biotics that she kept on the bloodied man.

Genji didn’t know what day it was. Or even if there was day and night. He remembered Hanzo, his face twisted by rage and grief and fear—so much fear. Genji remembered an inferno of blue and fangs, the wetness of his own blood on the tatami, the pain that blinded him to nearly everything… and then there was a face—big eyes, yellow-white hair. He remembered a voice. English, but not a native speaker. “You have to trust me. Please, let me help.”

And he was in darkness for a long time. Stale air, then too cold, hands, then a sterile smell, and shadows over him, lights rolling past overhead, the gentle hum of a hover-stretcher, and that voice, drifting in and out. Sometimes even talking to him. He wasn’t sure how much of it he was imagining or mistranslating from English to Japanese in his head, but the voice periodically flashed in his mind like a lighthouse beam, signaling his own consciousness like a distant shore.

“Stay with me.”

“Maintain intravenous dosages of…”

“Decrease sedation but maintain anesthesia…”

“Pupil constriction–Are–are you lucid? Can you hear me? Blink if you can…”

“Hang on… Just hang on…”

“Nerve endings still responding to stimuli….”

“No. Not yet. Tell Jack and Gabe that the patient will….”

“You may feel a slight pinch and–Oh who am I kidding you’re on enough sedatives to down a horse–”

He wasn’t sure how much time had passed before he could process sensation back into thought, but one gray morning he opened his eyes and found himself in what appeared to be a hospital bed. His eyes flicked to the window, where snow-capped mountains towered along the horizon. There was an intercom announcement—English he didn’t really have enough focus to bother translating in his head. Sojiro had insisted on an intensive education in multiple languages, and Genji was told his English was very good, but his head was fogged up with painkillers and his own disorientation from not knowing where he was or how much time had passed since Hanzo’s attack. He could make out “Doctor” and “report” and by then the message was repeating itself in German and French and Mandarin and Spanish. He wasn’t in Hanamura, he realized. He wasn’t even in Japan.

Pain ribboned around his body and there was a raw itch on his insides. There were things in him. There were things under his skin. His mouth tasted like blood and metal—or maybe he couldn’t tell the tastes of blood and metal apart. His eyes scanned around the room and he saw IV’s overhead. Blood? Saline solution? Painkillers? His eyes trailed down the thin plastic tubes and nearly reached his own arm when the door opened and a woman walked in. He recognized her. Big eyes. White-yellow hair. She was in a labcoat and black turtleneck and she looked exhausted. He had to say something. The woman said something in English and he half tuned it out. He managed to pick out the word ‘Awake’ as she walked over to his bedside.

“It’s all right,” she said quietly as his head readjusted to hearing English, “You’re safe.”

Safe? The concept seemed almost funny to him. He wanted to say something, but then with the
taste of blood and metal in his mouth he became aware of the numbness of his jaw and numerous patches of gauze in his mouth as well.

“You’re in the medical wing of the Overwatch Zurich Headquarters,” she went on, “I’m Doctor Ziegler. I’m here to help you.”

Overwatch. Zurich. He was very far from home, and worse, in UN custody. This was safe? His eyes flicked back up to the doctor’s face. He tried to say something but the gauze in his mouth made only slurring wheezing sounds come out. He moved to take it out but the doctor perked up. “Here–” she disinfected her hands with some sanitizer on his bedside table and gently brought her hand up under his jaw. He didn’t feel her hand though. He didn’t even feel her gently open his mouth, he didn’t taste the alcohol of the disinfectant on her fingers as she pulled a wad of pink gauze out from under his tongue.

“How are you feeling?” she asked, tossing the gauze into a wastebasket and disinfecting her hands again, “Any severe pains? We can up your painkiller dosage as much as you need—”

“No,” Genji managed. “Hhh…” he made a noise but his voice was not his voice. There was something ringing, metallic. “Hanamura…” he managed, “You…”

“I was the chief medic of the team that extracted you,” said Doctor Ziegler, “It’s been four days since your incident.”

“Incident…” Genji moved to look down at his body but Doctor Ziegler reached forward and put her hand on his shoulder, making his eyes flick back to hers. He remembered his brother. “Hanzo–” he started and nearly moved to get up, but she kept that gentle hand on his shoulder, still looking into his eyes.

“Genji, I need you to remain calm–your body is in a delicate state right now, if you start pumping yourself full of adrenaline, it could have adverse effects.”

“No–I have to–” Genji moved to take her her hand off his shoulder with his other arm, but no other arm came up. He looked down at the heavily bandaged stub of his shoulder. His breath went short and shuddering. The raw itch was clawing up his insides now. “No…”

She adjusted one of his IV’s and the worst of the panic subsided and the itch dulled. She took a steadying breath and tapped a few things into her tablet. “Genji, you’ve lost your right arm, both your legs from just above the knees down, and significant portion of your torso.”

She kept talking but for a few seconds her words faded into a haze of english he didn’t bother translating in his head. His arm. Gone. Both legs. Gone. Hanzo had taken so much. Hanzo had all but killed him. His own brother. That raw itch, those ribbons of pain running through him turned to fire, yet that sensation was splashing against the wall of numbness of the anesthesia. Hanzo had to pay. The clan–his family–no, not his family–They had to pay. To call him their son all his life and then…No. They would know loss as dearly as he had known it. He had to–

His train of thought stopped as he felt a slight squeeze from the doctor’s hand and realized she was still talking, then tried to focus on her words.

“…looking very promising. My biotics were able to stabilize and repair a a good amount of your injuries, but you’ll still need extensive prostheses,” Doctor Ziegler finished.

“Pros.. prostheses?” There was that not-his-voice, again. Hoarse, metallic. He hated it.

“Cybernetics,” said Doctor Ziegler.
“Overwatch is… giving me cybernetics…”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“Overwatch’s mission isn’t just peacekeeping, our developments in medical technology and its accessibility is just as much an important—”

“Why save me?” he managed.

Something in her face softened. “I’m a doctor,” she said, “For me, there isn’t a ‘Why’ about it. You do everything you can to save people.”

“I’m from the Shimada Clan. Overwatch made you save me,” Genji’s fingers on his remaining organic hand were sluggish as they moved to grip the sheets, “You are not Overwatch.”

“Well, we’re all Overwatch but—”

“What does Overwatch want with me?” Genji’s words were clearing up slightly, but still the ring on his own voice was horrifying to him. How long would it be like this?

“Genji,” she took a deep breath, “Overwatch had been viewing you as a potential asset since the death of Sojiro Shimada. Technically, by having you here rather than immediately handing you off to the Criminal Affairs Bureau, we’re actively undermining Japanese law enforcement. However, upon reviewing the reputation of the Shimada clan among the rest of Japan’s criminal underground, Commander Reyes decided—”

“That I would not last 10 seconds in a Japanese prison,” said Genji.

“That… yes, our custody would be safer,” Doctor Ziegler conceded.

“Because you want me alive,” said Genji, “Because you want me for something.”

Doctor Ziegler’s brow furrowed, but there was a sadness in her eyes. “My job is keeping you alive,” she said, a bit crisply, “But as I said, Overwatch sees you as a potential asset—we can help each other.”

“You need me to help take down the Shimada clan.”

Mercy’s lips thinned. “You’ll have to speak with Commander Reyes on the specifics of—”

“Just answer yes or no,” Genji’s eyes flicked up to her.

“Yes,” said Mercy, “That was… among the things discussed in—”

“I’ll do it,” Genji’s eyes were fixed on her.

She blinked in surprise. “Well—obviously there’s a lot that has to be done, both in regards to your recovery and installing you as an agent—”

“What do I have to do to see my brother’s head on the ground as quickly as possible?” said Genji.

Doctor Ziegler paled. In spite of all the anesthesia currently running in his veins, Genji realized that probably wasn’t the best thing to say.
“I—You can’t—” Doctor Ziegler took a steadying breath, “Well, before you do anything you need to rest,” she said, pushing her hair back from her face.

“I’ve been resting for four days,” Genji scowled, but his scowl softened as he watched the small gesture. He noted the dark circles under her eyes, the smell of coffee and antiseptic and sweat on her, and wondered when was the last time she rested in those four days.

“Genji, the trauma you’ve been through, both physically and mentally, is going to take a long time to process. I’m going to need to ask for your patience while we work towards your recovery,” she studied his face—the bloodshot eyes and the latticework of scars and the cold steel jaw implants they had put in clenched furious and tight. She sighed, “But,” she conceded, “I imagine being stuck in here is frustrating. I’ll see if I can’t get you a wheelchair and an attendant to get out of this room in the next few days. You can look around the headquarters, get your bearings. We can fit you with some prosthetics and begin physical therapy if you condition remains stable.”

“Thank you,” the words came out of him on reflex and she gave a nod.

“Just doing my job. I…. I have to get to some other patients, but if you need anything, don’t hesitate to call me,” she said, moving towards the door, “Again, please try to rest.”

“Understood,” said Genji. The door slid open and she walked out and he adjusted himself on his pillows slightly. His eyes flicked down to his legs, or lack thereof, hidden beneath a sheet. His jaw tightened slightly at the thought of being stuck in a wheelchair—no, prosthetics, she said they were building him state-of-the-art prosthetics. Yet he had said ‘Thank you’ on gut reflex and the thought suddenly occurred to him that he hadn’t thanked her for saving him—well, she had said that was her job, but still… He looked at his one remaining organic arm and the intravenous tubes trailing off of it. Am I grateful to be alive? he wondered briefly. He moved to curl his fingers into a fist and found his reflexes infuriatingly slowed by all the painkillers he was on. He huffed. He would thank her when he could walk again. He would thank her when he would grasp a sword again. He would thank her when he struck Hanzo’s head from its shoulders and Shimada Castle was in ashes at his feet. Then he would thank her from dragging him from death into this painful existence. It was only polite.
Prompt: Gency, Walking

It was four in the morning as Genji stared up at the ceiling of his room in the infirmary. He wasn’t healing fast enough—at least, not in his opinion. Doctor Ziegler kept saying things like ‘Oh your progress is coming along much more quickly than anticipated!’ But she never seemed to want to adjust that progress for what he could do. He could move his prosthetic arm just fine now. Sure, eating soup with it without spilling was difficult, and moving chess pieces without knocking some over was a headache, but he could move it.

He just needed to be able to move it more. He just needed to fight again, maybe bring the memory of his training back to the ghost limb trapped within that metal apparatus. But no. Doctor Ziegler was a stickler for safety, and if he didn’t know better, he’d say she was doing her best to keep Commander Reyes from his quarters as well. Why? He had spoken to Reyes only a few times, but he did get the feeling Reyes wanted Genji out in the field just as badly as he wanted to be out in the field. A bitter part of him wondered if it amused Doctor Ziegler to see him frustrated like this, but he knew she was just as exhausted by his constant goading to move forward faster in his physical therapy.

He gave a glance to the wheelchair parked next to the door to his room, maddeningly out of reach. Then, he looked to the IV next to his bed–only a slow saline drip so he wouldn’t get dehydrated in the night. Tomorrow’s—or today’s physical therapy would be in the stupid pool—with the stupid guided breathing exercises and him floating on his back, staring just as uselessly up at a ceiling and breathing as he was now–no. He could do more. He had to do more. Every second he was stuck in this damned bed he could feel Hanzo getting further away, more of the Shimada clan slipping into the cracks. He couldn’t stay in here. He whipped the sheets off of the two stumps of his legs and he huffed. Right—they tended to take his leg blades off for lights-out. Granted, he did sleep easier with them off, but it was also a precaution against him trying to get up and hurting himself. He knew he had a spare pair in the physical therapy center.

He looked at his IV stand and then to the saline drip running into his remaining organic wrist.

“Kuso…” he whispered under his breath as the thumbs of his prosthetic hand uselessly brushed up against the tape, “Come on–” he managed to peel up one corner of the tape, “Ha!” getting overexcited, he ripped off that corner of the tape, leaving the IV still in his arm. He huffed. It took him another minute to grab another corner of the tape and slowly peel it back before he took a deep breath and summoned all of his focus to keep his prosthetic steady as it pulled the needle from his arm. He brushed the little bead of blood at his wrist off on his hospital gown and took ahold of the IV stand with his prosthetic. It lifted off the ground surprisingly easily. A few twists and Genji was able to extend the IV stand to its full height. Steadying it with his organic hand, he reached across the room over to the wheelchair, wedged the hook of it in one of the spokes of the wheelchair’s wheels, and started pulling.

The brakes of the wheelchair were in place so it squeaked and groaned across the floor as he pulled it over. It surprised him a bit how strong the prosthetic was. He set the IV stand back upright, then adjusted the wheelchair next to his bed, propped himself up on his arms and pushed himself over into the wheelchair with a heavy exhale. His heart was thumping—the urge to move was still itching under his skin, but he was aware now that, as Doctor Ziegler reminded him virtually every day, less body mass meant easier fatigue. He took the brake off and wheeled to the door, taking the little clip-on ID badge off of the pocket of his hospital gown and holding it to the door’s panel.
“Not Authorized,” the door responded automatically and he swore again. Doctor Ziegler let him wheel all over the place during the daytime, but considering the fact that he would probably be in prison right now if Overwatch didn’t scoop him up, he couldn’t really blame them for not letting him sneak out at night. He glanced over at her desk in the corner, where a computer was keeping more detailed track of his vitals. He wheeled over to the desk and rifled through the drawers.

“There you are,” he said, pulling out Mercy’s ID tag. He had noticed she kept spare key cards ferreted away in certain spots around the Watchpoint—in case she forgot hers or needed to lend one to someone who forgot theirs… always thinking of others, that Angela. He held the key card to the door panel and the door slid open. Pocketing Doctor Ziegler’s key card, he wheeled out into the halls. It would have been eerie, but he found it peaceful. He could see the mountains from his own window, but there was something a bit more thrilling in seeing the mountains roll past as he wheeled through the hallway. Their white-painted peaks were blue in the moonlight. He knew the path to the physical therapy center well. He used Mercy’s key card to take the elevator up a few levels, rolled down a few more halls bordering the courtyard, and used Mercy’s key card to open a door leading out onto an open-air walkway. The night breeze of the mountains hit him hard and a huff escaped him as he wheeled quickly across the walkway to another door, opening that one with Mercy’s keycard, and rolling through as soon as it opened, closing it behind him.

“So…” said Genji rolling forward slightly in his wheelchair, “We meet again.”

He was addressing the two parallel bars that stood at roughly waist-height in the center of the physical therapy room.

“You’re not getting the better of me,” he said, to those bars, wheeling over to where his spare leg blades were in a locker (opening that cubby with Ziegler’s card as well), “Not tonight.” He strapped on his leg blades and wheeled back over so that his wheelchair was positioned between the two bars. He took a deep breath and set one leg blade against the floor, then another, then braced his hands down on the bars and with a grunt pushed himself up and out of his wheelchair. He was breathing heavily as he steadied himself with his arms.

“Okay,” his breath was huffing, “Standing. You can stand.” He knew his arms were doing most of the work here, though, “And if you can stand, that means you can walk.” He gritted his teeth and pushed his leg forward, “You… can… walk,” he told himself. He dragged one leg forward and shuffling, Shuffling wasn’t that far off. He moved between the length of the bars, putting the majority of his weight on his arms but moving forward.

“Hands forward. Hips between your hands. Hands forward. Hips between your hands,” he spoke the words as a mantra to himself as he moved forward until he reached the end of the bars, “HA!” his excitement was short lived as he realized he would have to turn around. Well that was fine. He was a pro at turning around at this poi–

He miscalculated in shifting his weight between and slipped. The floor was padded beneath him and he caught himself with his hands still on the bars, but still, he grunted. “Stupid,” he muttered, “You’re better than this.” He moved to haul himself back on his feet but found his arms shaking with weakness at this point.

“No–come on!” he tried to will more strength into his arms.

Well now you’ve done it, a bitter voice spoke inside of him, Maybe you should crawl back to your wheelchair and roll back to your room before any of the night nurses know you’re gone.

No. No, he didn’t roll all the way out here and probably put himself on probation with Doctor Ziegler and all of Overwatch just to crawl back in defeat. His hands still gripping the bar. He tried
to pull himself up again but just grunted and exhaled. He took a few steadying breaths, *Please*, he thought, *Please help me. I can’t do it without you.*

He opened his eyes to see green light spiraling around his arms, filling them with strength. Controlling his breathing, he hauled himself to his feet and braced both arms on the bars to stabilize himself. He looked to the green light spiraling around him. “Thank you,” he said very softly. A dragon’s head only as big as his thumb materialized on his wrist as if to give him acknowledgement before dissolving back into the ribbons of green light spiraling around his body.

*The clan elders would probably be going mad to see me stooped to using you like this,* thought Genji, looking at the light, *But then again, neither of us were very good at following their rules, were we?*

He pushed forward again, leg blade still dragging against the floor.

He pushed another leg forward. *We can do this,* he thought, *Lift up. Lift up one foot–*

He brought the leg blade up off the ground and his breath caught in his throat.

The door slid open and his head jerked up to see Doctor Ziegler in the doorway. Not even in her lab coat, she was in sweats and a holey university crew neck with her hair up in a lopsided top-knot. She looked like she had just sprinted out of bed—and she probably had. Genji could see the dragon’s light reflecting in those big eyes of hers as she stared at him, stunned.

“Doctor Ziegler, I can explain—” he brought his hands up off the bars and she gasped and took a few quick steps forward.

But he didn’t stumble. He looked down at his leg blades, standing balanced on the ground. His hands were shaking as the light of the dragon faded off of him.

“How did you find me?” he asked.

“My comm gets pinged if someone not matching my biometrics uses my keycard. I looked at the last place it was pinged and… How are you *doing* that?” she looked at him up and down as he put one hand on the bars to stabilize himself.

“You did say progress was coming along much faster then anticipated,” said Genji.

“I–I know but—even in the top percentages of recovery speed for injuries this severe, it should be weeks–months before you should be able to…”

“I don’t have weeks or months,” said Genji, still bracing his hands on the bars, but grunting a little as he pushed forward, closing the distance between them.

“Genji you don’t have to—” she took another few brisk steps forward and they all but bumped into each other between the two parallel bars. Genji had been so used to looking up at her from hospital beds and wheel chairs, it caught him off-guard to have her nose so close to his at this level. He also became acutely aware of how sweaty he was from all the strain of wheeling over here and struggling between the bars with her this close. Still, he tightened his jaw.

“I *do* have to,” said Genji, “I have to bring down the Shimada clan. I have to k–” he caught himself.

“…Kill Hanzo?” Mercy finished the thought and he huffed and glanced off.

“You have to let me do this,” said Genji, “I won’t know any peace cooped up in this infirmary.
You know that.

“You won’t find any peace in killing things either!” Mercy snapped at him, “The second you prove healthy enough for Reyes to put you on his team you’re going to—You’ll—”

“…do what I’m best at,” said Genji. He wobbled a bit where he stood and Mercy quickly and easily positioned herself to support his weight. “Whatever Reyes will have me do, it can’t be any worse than what the Shimada clan had me doing before.”

Mercy’s lips were pursed. “They won’t just be releasing you from my care, they’ll be putting you in with Blackwatch’s cyberneticists.”

“So I’ll get better legs than these ones,” said Genji, looking down at his leg blades.

Mercy looked down at the leg blades as well and pursed her lips. “Their methods…” she started but trailed off.

“Hey,” Genji spoke and she looked up at him, “I’ll be fine! I’m already fine! Look!” he brought his hands up from the bars.

“Be careful—!” Mercy started but Genji took a successful step backward from her and only wobbled a little.

“See?” said Genji.

Mercy pressed her hand to her forehead and pushed a few stray hairs from her topknot back. “Genji—I saw those lights earlier—I… I don’t understand what they are, but I do know last time you… brought that…that thing….”

“Dragon.”

“Dragon,” Mercy repeated, still feeling a little crazy every time she said it, “Last time you brought that dragon out, it was to keep yourself from dying. So you can understand my concern at you pushing yourself like this.”

“I wouldn’t be pushing myself if you weren’t holding me back,” muttered Genji.

“I’m not holding you back, Genji! I’m following normal medical procedure! You shouldn’t even be here! What if you hurt yourself?!?”

“Well it’s a good thing I’m in a fucking infirmary, isn’t it?!” Genji snapped right back at her. He wobbled and flailed for the bar but Mercy caught him easily. They were both short of breath, Mercy, holding him secure with one arm around his waist. Genji was gritting his teeth. She was silent.

“I’m sorry. I’m… I’m so tired, Doctor Ziegler,” Genji’s voice was taut, on the edge of breaking.

“Well, that’s why we have to take it slow, Genji, build up stren—”

“I just wanted to walk again,” Genji’s voice cracked a little. The reverberation of the cybernetics in his throat managed to catch the pitch.

“You’re doing incredibly well, Genji…” Mercy said quietly, “I know it’s frustrating and painful. But… you… you are probably the most strong-willed person I’ve ever met. And believe me, I know some of the most stubborn bastards in the world, working here. You will get better.
I know you will. But we have to work together for that.”

Genji’s eyes were shining. She couldn’t tell if he was holding back tears or if it was from all of his exertion just moving around to get here.

“We…” Mercy took a deep breath, “We can use the hydrotherapy session tomorrow–well, today, to rest up before we start you on crutch training. I don’t want you straining yourself too much after all you put yourself through here.”

“Crutch training?” said Genji.

“You’ll be on your feet more often. We’ll keep a wheelchair nearby, just in case,” said Mercy, “I am wheeling you back to your room, though. You know it’s nearly 5 in the morning, right?”

Genji huffed a little, “Understandable,” he said, still leaning on her. He looked over at the wheelchair at the other end of the parallel bars.

“I can help you—” Mercy started hoisting him up.

“Wait—” said Genji and Mercy paused. Genji pushed away from her only slightly, she braced his forearms in her own.

“Are you sure?” Mercy looked at his leg blades as Genji swayed a bit to get a better gauge on his weight distribution with them.

“Yes,” said Genji.

Mercy kept their arms braced together, she walked backwards as Genji stepped clumsily forward. They walked the length of the parallel bars together before Mercy helped Genji take a slumping seat back into his wheelchair.

“That was good!” she said, the most cheeriness in her voice he had heard all night.

“You think so?” said Genji.

“I don’t think you’ll be using the crutches too long,” said Mercy with a smile.

Genji smiled and eased up in the wheelchair as she turned him toward the door. “Oh–before I forget.” She held her hand out to him.

“What?” said Genji.

“Key card,” said Mercy.

Genji rolled his eyes and handed her key card over. She passed the card next to the door panel and walked him out into the night. She shuddered as a breeze hit them on the walkway, and quickly entered the other building where a long stretch of hallway laid out before them, all periwinkle in pre-dawn light.

“Hey…” said Genji, “Can you run really fast down this hall? Just… wheel me as fast as you can.”

“Genji, that is pointlessly dangerous and ridiculously immature,” said Mercy.

She took off in a run.
“And there’s no discomfort?” said Mercy, half walking backward and half sidestepping around Genji as he walked down the hall with his forearm crutches. She checked her tablet to try and figure out the level of painkillers they had him on now. He was being weaned to lower dosages, and Genji himself had been complaining about foggy-headedness, but the amount of cybernetics supporting his internal organs meant they couldn’t exactly go cold turkey.

“None more than usual,” said Genji, crutching alongside her with his head held high. His spirits seemed significantly improved since roughly a week back when he had snuck out of his room to try and force himself to walk in the middle of the night, “Or I guess I’m just excited to be on my feet out of the physical therapy room.”

“Well, just let me know if you’re getting fatigued,” said Mercy.

He huffed a little. “You worry so much,” he said, with a movement of his shoulders she couldn’t tell was a shrug or just adjusting for the crutches.

“Of course I worry,” said Mercy, rubbing at her eye under her glasses, “It’s my job.”

“Another late night, Doctor?” said Genji, as they rounded a corner.

“What makes you say that?” said Mercy, glancing out the window and squinting slightly at the glare of the cloud white sky and white-peaked mountains of Zurich.

“You wear the glasses when you want to cover up the under-eye circles,” said Genji.

Mercy’s brow furrowed, “That’s rude,” she said, turning her attention to the tablet.

“I prefer ‘Observant,’” said Genji, with a slight smirk hidden beneath his hospital mask made apparent only through the expression of his eyes.

“Which doesn’t mean it’s not rude,” said Mercy, waving her tablet stylus at him scoldingly before turning her attention back to her tablet as she continued walking, “Reyes keeps stalking at my door, waiting for the second you’re combat ready, but I still think we need to—” she glanced up, realized that she had dusted Genji with her own manic hospital walk a ways back, and stopped and turned around to see Genji towards the beginning of the hall, apparently staring at the wall. “Genji?” Mercy backtracked back to him and looked at the point on the wall which had his attention and her face dropped.

It was a poster of her, or well, Mercy, Overwatch’s Mercy, anyway, in the full combat medic gear with her staff in one hand and the other open and outstretched out toward whoever was viewing the poster, as if she was motioning to help them up. The sky behind her was pink tinged with the gold of dawn, to further highlight the blue of her combat medic uniform. It looked painterly, somewhere between Norman Rockwell, a Madonna Portrait, and Shepard Fairey—the kind of propaganda a soldier like Jack or Gabriel would approve of. The lettering on the poster seemed harmless enough—emblazoning the same words Jack used to bring her into this organization:

*Save Lives! Join the Overwatch Medical Research Division Today!*

There were a few other enticing text blurbs promising ‘On-Site Accredited Training!’ and ‘Full-Ride Scholarship Programs!’
The expression of her poster-self was rosy-cheeked and benevolent, with soft eyes and parted lips, an *imploring* expression.

“…wow,” said Genji.

“We should keep–” Mercy started.

“Is that you?” said Genji looking between her and the poster.

“…sort of,” Mercy said stiffly after a few beats.

“Or I assume, this is how you theoretically look with 10 hours of sleep,” said Genji, that same smirk in his voice. She smacked her tablet playfully against his arm and he chuckled. “I can’t believe it,” he said looking back at the poster, “You’re Mercy.”

“What? Really? I was in the full Valkyrie suit the night we brought you in,” said Mercy.

“…I didn’t know how much of that I dreamed or hallucinated after Hanzo…” Genji trailed off, “I thought I just kind of… conflated the two blondes in my head. I didn’t think Mercy was a real person.”

“She’s not,” Mercy said on reflex, flatly.

Genji broke his sight away from the poster and looked at her. Mercy caught herself.

“What I mean is–Reality is a lot more disappointing. Mercy is a–a–” Mercy scoffed and made a ‘jazz hand’ motion with her non-tablet holding hand, “*Beacon of hope,* or whatever it is that recruits people or brings in donations. Angela Ziegler, the flesh vessel Mercy has the misfortune to reside in, is in fact a bitter nagging crab running on 3 hours of sleep, 8 cups of coffee, and pure spite.”

“I don’t think you’re disappointing,” said Genji.

“What?” said Mercy.

“Well–It’s like you say–Mercy is just an image. Angela Ziegler is the one doing all the work.”

Mercy blinked a few times and cleared her throat before adjusting her glasses and tucking her tablet stylus behind her ear. “Yes–well…”

“But this *is* a good poster though,” said Genji, pointing at the poster.

Mercy huffed.

“Overwatch should make more like it,” said Genji.

“Oh this is plenty on its own,” said Mercy, dryly.

“I can see all the other posters now though,” said Genji, trying to pose as seductively and dramatically as he could with his crutches, “*Join Overwatch–It’s better than Jail!*” he struck another pose, “*Buy Overwatch Bonds–Jack Morrison needs a new office chair!*”

Mercy snickered.

“*Vaccinate your children! Mercy’s working too hard as it–’ Kuso–*” Genji got a bit overambitious with the last pose, wobbled and nearly lost his footing on his crutches but Mercy caught him and
stabilized him where he stood, “Okay I deserved that,” he said.

“A little bit,” said Mercy, smirking as she made sure he was stable, “…did you really mean that? About me not being…”

“I think everyone who just knows you for the poster is missing out,” said Genji. He continued down the hall on his crutches. Mercy watched him walk. Hobbling didn’t seem the right word for his movements. There was still a bit of marionette-like jauntiness in his movement from the suspension of weight the crutches granted him, but that was balanced out by the determination of his gait. He’s a bit like Mercy too, she thought, When he’s not brooding over the Shimada clan.

Genji realized she wasn’t walking with him, paused, and looked over his shoulder at her. “Are we still going to–?”

“Oh!” Mercy briskly walked up so she was next to him again, “Yes, yes we should go.”

They continued down the hall, leaving the poster to fade in the sun.
Moira Joins Blackwatch

“I don’t see why we’re doing this,” said McCree, frowning out the window.

“Sometimes being a part of Blackwatch is… acquiring or retaining assets Overwatch can’t use publicly, but can’t afford to let fall into the wrong hands,” said Gabriel.

“Like me?” said Genji, vacantly.

McCree shot Reyes a dark look as Genji mindlessly circled his organic hand over his cybernetic knuckles.

“No Genji,” said McCree, not breaking eye contact with Gabriel, “Not like you. You were a rescue op. This—Well what do we call this, boss? ‘One man’s trash is another man’s treasure?’”

“If you want to be an ass about it,” said Gabriel.

“Hm,” McCree turned his attention back out the window.

Now arriving in Dublin, the Blackwatch AI announced as the transport touched down in a depressingly empty parking lot.

“I’ll do the talking,” said Reyes, getting up, “You two stay back.”

“Sure,” muttered McCree as the transport opened and Reyes headed out.

Reyes took in the damp, cool Dublin air and gave a glance to the buildings in the distance as he turned his attention to a large laboratory building as a tall, skinny figure with short cropped red hair emerged from its front door.

“For covert operations, you certainly have a penchant for the dramatic,” said Moira, folding her arms.

“You know why I’m here?” said Gabriel.

“You can tell Strike Commander Morrison that I am not responsible for his misplacement of my letter of resignation,” said Moira, crisply, “It’s on his desk just like he asked. If he wants to continue dragging me through the mud to preserve Overwatch’s pathetic facade of ‘peace and progress,’ he’ll have to find another scapegoat. Have a good evening, Mr. Reyes,” she said, turning on her heel and walking toward her car.

“I’m not here on Jack’s behalf,” Reyes called after her and she stopped walking.

She looked over her shoulder at him.

“The world still needs you,” said Gabriel, “But it’s not ready for you.”

“Such is my curse, it seems,” a not-quite smile tugged at the corner of her mouth.

“We can help,” said Gabriel, stepping toward her, “You’ll have all the resources you need to work. Less red tape. Not sure how you feel about having less attention…”

“Some time out of the spotlight should do me some good,” said Moira, turning on her heel to face him, “But what do you get out of it?”
“I get the best geneticist in the world on my team,” said Gabriel.

“Ever the flatterer, are we?” she said, smoothing back her short-cropped red hair, “Does Jack know about this?”

“Jack knows as much as he needs to,” said Gabriel.

“May I ask what inspired this… magnanimous offer?” said Moira.

“The world wasn’t ready for the Soldier Enhancement Program. It turned out we were what the world needed though. I think there’s a lot of forces in this world like that, and we’re better off figuring out how they can help us rather than cowering in fear of them.”

Moira chuckled. “You and Morrison,” she said, stepping toward him, “Forged in the same fires, but not made of the same stuff, are you?”

“Jack has to be what the world thinks it needs,” said Gabriel, “I just fill in the gaps from there.”

“And there are so many gaps to fill…” said Moira.

“So the offer stands. You don’t have to answer right away—”

“I’m with you,” said Moira.

“…You’re that sure?”

“You say the world isn’t ready for me, true as that is, that doesn’t change the fact that I have much to do,” she paused, “We have much to do,” she corrected herself. She extended a hand, “Giorraíonn beirt bothar, Gabriel. I look forward to working with you.”

Gabriel glanced at her hand, withered gray and threaded with violet veins that seemed to choke up the back of it like ivy, then looked up at her eyes, sharp and discerning, half-daring him to rescind the offer yet knowing, knowing he wouldn’t.

“Welcome to the team,” said Gabriel, shaking her hand.

—

Genji and McCree watched the conversation from the opening of the transport, missing most of it over the thrum of the engines. McCree swallowed as Gabriel and Moira shook hands.

“Genji?” said McCree.

“Mm?” Genji’s red eyes flicked over to him.

“Please tell me I’m not the only one with a bad feeling about this.”
“It worked on the rabbit, it worked on you—I don’t see what the issue is here,” said Gabriel, pacing back and forth across the lab.

“It’s not that simple,” said Moira, frowning down a microscope.

“I gave you all my tissue samples. What’s it going to take—another spinal tap? Marrow sample?”

“The serum itself, Gabriel,” said Moira, “I can’t be sure there won’t be any adverse effects unless I can see what compounds were injected into you in their raw form.”

“It’s been a long time since the SEP program,” said Gabe, “If any records of it haven’t been shredded to hell, my looking into it will raise a lot of red flags on both me and Jack.”

“Seems to me that Overwatch has no issues undermining every other government except that of its commanders,” said Moira, pulling her eyes away from the microscope and rubbing them slightly. Gabe frowned and glanced off and she smirked that not-quite-smirk of hers. “You Americans,” she said with a shake of her head before turning her attention back to her microscope, “So touchy.”

“Moira,” Gabe rubbed his forehead, “You saw the tech we salvaged from the enemy on the last mission. You know what we’re up against.”

“The physiological difference between you and non-SEP humans is already very signifi—”

“And it doesn’t cut it,” said Gabe, “We need an edge. I saw what you did to yourself.”

Moira rubbed at the wrist of her withered hand a bit bitterly.

“And I saw what you can do as a result. We’ve seen it in a scientist. Let’s see what a soldier can do with it.”

“If there are unforeseen side-effects…” she trailed off and furrowed her brow.

“…How bad do you think the side-effects could be?” said Gabriel.

“There’s the gene itself, and then there’s the expression of the gene,” said Moira, holding up her own withered hand, “We shouldn’t take this step forward until we have a better grasp on what’s going to happen.”

“What happened to ‘I take risks others do not because I do not share their caution?’” said Gabe, briefly taking on Moira’s theatrical intonation and putting his hands on his hips.

“First of all—Never attempt to imitate my accent again if you know what’s good for you, secondly, I barely escaped my own ‘trial and error’ with my life,” she murmured, curling her graying fingers inward, before her heterochromatic eyes flicked back up to him, “I can take risks when I’m the only one I’m risking. You’re Commander of Blackwatch. You’re a different case, entirely. I mess you up and it could mean the end of all my work. We both know you haven’t told Jack about this.”

“Jack’s got enough on his plate as is,” said Gabe, glancing up.

“You’re changing your body, Gabriel. The nanites will affect you like a retrovirus, rewriting you bit by bit. The fight your body has against it could destroy you—Considering your… closeness…
there’s no way Jack won’t notice the changes,” said Moira.

Gabriel’s lips thinned.

“Oh please,” said Moira with a slight eye-roll, “As if half of Overwatch doesn’t know already,” she glanced off, “There’s no way Doctor Ziegler won’t notice either.”

“Angela won’t be a problem—there’s plenty to occupy her with,” said Gabriel.

“…You’ve thought about this a lot, I take it?” said Moira.

“A lot more than you give me credit for,” said Gabriel, “And I trust you.”

The statement gave Moira a start. For a few seconds she looked completely thrown off-guard. “What did you say?” she said, her brow crinkling.

“I said I trust you,” said Gabriel.

“…I can’t recall the last time anyone’s ever said that to me,” said Moira, looking off, still completely confused by the statement.

“Yeah that doesn’t surprise me,” said Gabriel, elbowing her a little, “I trust your skills, and I trust you to be you, at least,” he said with a slight smile.

“You had me worried there for a moment,” said Moira, before she combed her long fingernails through her hair.

“My point is, I know you can do this,” said Gabriel, “And, let’s be honest, we both know you really want to see what’s going to happen.”

“Oh so dearly,” said Moira, tilting her head back with an unsettling amount of longing and ecstasy. She caught herself and cleared her throat. “You’re sure?” she said, composing herself as she stood up and stepped over to a small freezer, where she pulled out a small black vial.

“I’m sure,” said Gabriel, as she pressed the vial into the palm of her hand briefly to warm it up.

“Here,” she handed the vial to him and he looked at it, it only took a few seconds in the warmth of his palm for the vial to go from solid black to having veins of violet running through it, as if it was moving itself around within the vial. “It’s going to be a series of four increasingly concentrated injections over 8 weeks,” she said, pulling out a sterile syringe from the drawers beneath her microscope and taking the vial from him, “We start with the first one and there’s no going back.”

“Hey, you’re not the first one who’s injected god-knows-what into me to turn me into god-knows-what,” said Gabriel with a shrug.

“You’re going to be brilliant, Gabriel,” said Moira, staring at the vial, “When I say we’re on the brink of the next step of human evolution—This is what I’m talking about—You… you’re what I’m talking about.” She stuck the needle of the syringe through the seal of the vial and pulled up the syringe’s plunger, filling it with a vividly swirling black and purple liquid. She flicked one of her talon-like fingernails against the syringe and her eyes flicked back up to him. There was a warmth in her face that Gabriel had never seen before as she looked at the syringe—a quivering smile and a wetness in her eyes. If Moira wasn’t…well, Moira, he’d almost say she looked like a mother looking at her child as she looked at the syringe. “We’re going to build a new world,” she said, her voice hushed.
Gabriel smiled. A few beats passed as he let her bask in the glow of her own undertaking.

Finally she sighed with some satisfaction as her eye flicked back up to him from the syringe. “All right,” she said, “Left arse cheek. Let’s see it.”

“What?” said Gabriel.

“Ventrogluteal injection, you understand,” said Moira.

“So the next step in human evolution starts in my ass,” said Gabriel flatly.

“It could start in worse places,” said Moira with a shrug.

Gabe snorted.
Hideyoshi sat unceremoniously and sipped a beer, watching the fireflies hover over the garden from the engawa of his home. Technically it was a summer villa for the main branch of the family, far away from the bustle of Hanamura, but Sojiro had put him up in it some years ago, with a small security team and some help to maintain the deceptively large house. It was a muggy night, the screech of cicadas and the chirp of frogs mingling in the heat of the thick air. A tiny electric fan whirred next to him. The heat would have been oppressive if he were a younger man, but he was happy to let the heat sink through to his bones, in

Hideyoshi Shimada was a figurehead. He knew that much about himself at this point. His word had some sway over the remains of the council, but he also knew loyalty wasn’t what it used to be in this family. Hanzo’s departure, his abandonment, had shifted perspectives. With Genji dead, the only remaining member of the next generation of the main branch was Hanzo, and if he had rejected the role of their scion, their head, what would that mean for the clan’s future? They had resources, obviously: ancient investments in land and hands deep in corporate pockets, drug and weapons trafficking, a few protection rackets for lower tiers in the organization, and even after all these years no one paralleled their assassins, but the dragons… the dragons were what set them apart from every crime family and every Yakuza ring in Japan.

“Hoo!” he heard a huffing exhale, the wood of the engawa creaked behind him, and he glanced over his shoulder to see a 30-something woman flapping the front of her blouse, unsticking it from the sweat of her torso and fanning it slightly with the fabric, “That’s all the laundry done,” she put her hands on her hips, “I’m heading off for the night. Need me to grab you anything before I go, sir?”

Hideyoshi shook his head. “You should get out of this heat, Chiyo.”

“It’s not a problem, sir, really,” Chiyo smiled. She pushed a sweaty strand of hair back from her face, “But you don’t need to tell me that twice. You take care of yourself, all right?” she said, smiling as she walked off toward the front of the villa.

Hideyoshi took another sip from his beer and the light flickered on him as a moth fluttered on it. “Touma,” he called.

A rather burly looking man, clearly suffering from the summer heat in his black suit jacket, stepped out onto the engawa. “Got a problem, boss?”

“See Chiyo gets to her car safely then take the night off,” said Hideyoshi.

“Boss, I don’t really think I should. The other council heads said—”

“How old is Kanna now, Touma? Eight?” Hideyoshi sipped his beer.

“Eleven, sir,” said Touma.

“Growing up fast, I see,” said Hideyoshi, “Before you know it she’ll be the one too busy for you. Take the night off.”

“But sir, with the recent—”

“I am aware of the situation, Touma,” Hideyoshi spoke calmly but firmly, setting the beer can down on the wooden boards of the engawa, “See Chiyo safely to her car and take the rest of the
night off. That’s an order.”

“I—Yes sir. Have a good evening, sir,” Touma bowed before walking briskly after Chiyo.

Hideyoshi continued watching the fireflies in the garden for a few more minutes. The screeching chirp of cicadas was a comfort to him, like white noise. A drop of condensation rolled down the side of his beer can and he sipped it once more and then gave the can a slight shake to assess the level of beer left.

“I know you’re out there,” he said, sipping his beer again.

Two red eyes glinted against the dark silhouette of a large maple at the edge of the property and a figure leapt down and landed soundlessly in the close-trimmed grass of the garden. At first Hideyoshi thought he was clad all in black and white and red, but as he stepped from the shadow of the trees and into the yellow and silver light of the porch light and moon, Hideyoshi saw that the black and white and red were not clothes, but mechanical parts. a steel faceplate glinted in the light, and two furious red eyes peered out between that faceplate and a forehead guard that seemed to be modeled on the Shimada clan’s own headbands.

“You’re the one, aren’t you?” Hideyoshi said as the figure walked toward him.

The figure gave a single nod.

“The others—Taken out by your people as well?” asked Hideyoshi.

The figure shook his head.

Hideyoshi studied the figure. “All you?” he said, gesturing at the figure with his beer can.

The figure gave another single nod.

“Well… I can’t say I’m not impressed,” said Hideyoshi, sipping his beer, “Can I get you anything? Sake? A beer?”

“You know why I am here,” said the figure, drawing his sword.

“You wish for death?”

“You mowed through the bodyguards of other clan members easily. Touma has a little girl. I didn’t want her to lose a father.”

“He knew the risks when he joined this organization,” said the figure, his grip tightening on the sword handle.

“But he is not the one you are here for,” said Hideyoshi.

“No,” said the figure, pointing his sword towards Hideyoshi, “No, he isn’t.”

Hideyoshi calmly finished his beer and set it down. “I know this means very little to you at this point, but I am sorry, Genji.”

A visible shake traveled down the blade of Genji’s sword. He quickly steadied the blade and his stance tensed further. “How did you know?” was all he said.
Hideyoshi calmly extended a hand and a greenish-blue light began spiraling around the tattoo up his wrist, “You forget I am of the main branch as well,” he said, a small teal dragon traveling up the length of his forearm, “Never as impressive as my brother or Sojiro’s, but where the dragon doesn’t lend strength, he lends wisdom. I have advised my brother, and your father, and my dragon advises me,” the dragon dematerialized, “But I didn’t need a dragon to know it had to be one of our own doing the assassinations. I was wracking my brain over who it could be for the longest time. But the dragon knew, though I feared the idea myself. As soon as you passed into this garden… we knew.”

Genji’s red eyes narrowed. “Well you will not live to speak it to another council member,” he snarled, touching the steel of his sword to the side of Hideyoshi’s wrinkled neck. In an odd way, the cool of the steel was a slight relief on the hot muggy night.

“Who did this to you, Genji?” said Hideyoshi, his eyes trailing up the red fibers of Genji’s prosthetic arm.

“You did,” the flat of Genji’s blade pressed insistently against Hideyoshi’s neck, “You. The council. Hanzo. You made this monster. What you see before you is every bit my choice. I am whatever I need to be to tear this organization apart from the roots.”

“This is my fault…” Hideyoshi looked down, “I thought by abstaining… I could shut the very notion down. I had hoped it would never come up in our meetings again. I assumed I had the same power I had when your father lead the clan… but I was wrong. The council was already turned in Yuriko’s favor… Genji, I—”

“No,” Genji replied.

The blade lifted from Hideyoshi’s neck and quick and smooth plunged itself cold and sharp between his ribs. Hideyoshi’s breath went shallow and wet as he felt the blood start spilling into one of his lungs.

“Don’t,” Genji shifted the blade and Hideyoshi felt the blade pierce the other lung, “Call this,” Genji wrenched the blade out of Hideyoshi’s side, tearing it through his brittle ribs and sternum, and sending blood spraying out onto the wooden boards of the engawa, dripping onto the grass and gravel beneath it, “A family.”

Hideyoshi only made some soft choking sounds—no screams, no words with blood-filled lungs. With the last bits of his strength Hideyoshi braced one arm against Genji’s organic shoulder, while cupping one hand to the steel of the cyborg’s faceplate. He felt the darkness closing around him before he could will the strength to pull Genji into an embrace. The pain dulled itself out to a screaming white noise, blurring his senses. Hideyoshi remembered two young boys in clad in blue and green playing out in the very garden he was in now, catching fireflies and laughing. Genji broke away from him and Hideyoshi’s torso buckled in on itself from the exit wound of the blade and he collapsed to the boards of the engawa. His last breath was not a breath, but air forced out of him by the blood flooding his lungs.

With that, Genji wiped the blood off of his blade and sheathed it once more, then pivoted on his
foot and clambered back up the maple to vault over the high wall of the garden. He landed easily on the other side and put two fingers to the side of his helmet, turning on his comm.

“–probably off brooding again like the goddamned drama queen he i–Genji! The hell have you been!?!” McCree’s voice buzzed with some feedback and Genji grunted in pain with the volume in his ear.

“I’m fine,” said Genji, “I was having some issues with my comm.”

“Well I’ve been holding down this stakeout without you,” muttered McCree, “Reyes has been this close to calling interpol on your shiny metal ass. You have any idea how hard it is imitating your accent and that reverb on your vocoder? Get your ass over here.”

“Understood,” said Genji.

Genji clicked out of the comm channel and brought his hand down from the side of his helmet. He caught sight of blood on his organic hand, then sighed and wiped it off before slipping off into the night.
Genji folded his arms in the front seat of the car as McCree frowned over the engine. He couldn’t really tell what he was doing to the engine with the hood up, but Genji figured McCree knew what he was doing more than he would. Mercy sat in the driver’s seat looking over a map and he realized he had never seen her in civilian clothes or out of a labcoat or scrubs before. Reyes and Morrison’s instructions were for them to keep a low profile, which Genji couldn’t really do with Genji’s whole… look. But with any luck they wouldn’t be pulled over. Besides, Genji was a ninja–his whole point was being unseen. Being stationary in a car though… it made him antsy. Even more so when the car wasn’t moving.

“This is a waste of time,” muttered Genji.

Mercy glanced up from the map. “You keep going on about taking the fight to the Shimada clan,” she said, raising an eyebrow.

“It would be better to strike at the heart,” he said, looking out the window at the desert, “The Shimada clan conducts many weapons and drug deals with numerous criminal organizations around the world. It conducts these deals in order to keep them in line. One petty motorcycle gang —”

“Deadlock ain’t just one petty motorcycle gang,” said McCree from outside the car, “It’s an organization with an iron grip on the whole southwest, and it’s lookin’ to expand. It might just be the Shimada clan’s way of keeping them in line, but this weapons deal goes through and we’re all in a helluva lot more trouble,” he tweaked at something under the car’s hood. “All right, try turning it over.”

Mercy turned the key and the car rumbled to life. McCree shut the hood and threw his hands up, “Hallelujah,” he said with a grin as he made his way around the car again, “Scoot das boot, Doc. My turn to drive.”

“You do realize you’ve just said ‘Scoot the boat,’ right?” said Mercy, still looking at the map, “And it’s not my fault your car broke down.”

“I realize this is a joint Blackwatch-Overwatch operation, which means yours truly’s in charge,” said McCree, thrusting a thumb at his chest with a grin before putting his hands on his hips, “Now come on, scooch.”

Mercy sighed and clambered between the driver and co-pilot seats into the back and Genji realized why he had been thrown off by seeing her in civilian clothes–it was the shorts. He had never seen Doctor Ziegler with bare legs before. It was always either pants or dark tights. Her legs were surprisingly muscled, but then again, considering a childhood in Switzerland and how she was practically on her feet all day, it made sense. He caught himself and quickly turned his attention back to the front of the car as Mercy plopped into the back seat and buckled her seatbelt muttering
“Scoot das boots” under her breath bitterly and unfolding the map again.

“The Orca would be quicker,” Genji said as McCree started driving down the road again.

“We send that thing into Deadlock airspace and they’re gonna clear out fast. We gotta take things easy,” said McCree.

“This location you’ve been speaking of isn’t anywhere on the map,” said Mercy.

“I’m the map,” said McCree. He elbowed Genji. “Loosen up. Both of you. It’ll be another 2 hours before we hit Gabe’s rendezvous.”

Genji leaned back in his seat slightly, but remained somewhat tense.

“So… not much of a driver?” said McCree, rolling his grip on the steering wheel.

“I am better with hovercycles,” said Genji. McCree’s face lit up.

“You shouldn’t have told him that,” said Mercy.

“Why not?” said Genji.

“Because he’ll want to race you,” said Mercy.

“You’re saying that as if it’s not an amazing idea,” said McCree, he glanced over at Genji, “But no kidding? Hovercycles?”

Genji nodded. “Back in Hanamura, we would have a driver. When I was old enough, I preferred riding among the hovercycle escorts,” he paused, “Easier to break off and go do other things.” He glanced out the window to see reddish-orange rock formations. “So this is where you grew up?” said Genji.

“Implying McCree grew up?” said Mercy, tucking the map away.

“In the vaguest sense of the word,” said McCree with a grin.

“It is beautiful,” said Genji, looking out his window as they drove past a lonely abandoned gas station, “In a desolate way.”

“Just like me,” said McCree and Genji snorted.

“Oh so you do have a sense of humor!” said McCree.

“That was not a laugh,” said Genji. He looked out the window again. “Do people still live here?” he asked.

“There’s some communities out here,” said McCree, “Omnic crisis shook everything up. They were targeting areas with big populations so some people fled out to the boonies, made cute little towns that wouldn’t be as big a target. I grew up in one of those towns. Not a whole lot to do except target practice with bottles on fences just in case the bots decided to come for you.”

“And you, Doctor Ziegler?” said Genji, glancing to the back.

Mercy suddenly broke her gaze away from the window. “What—Oh I was…” she seemed to force a smile and then tucked her hair back, “Well I certainly wasn’t shooting bottles off of fences.” She went quiet after that and Genji tilted his head and thought to question her further on it when
McCree suddenly pointed out the window.

“Oh hey! Terah! That town’s still standing!” he said as the drove past a sign.

“Still standing?” said Genji

“Well—you know how it is. Lots of people moved into the big fancy cities once the Omnic Crisis was over. But some people fell in love with the desert and stayed out here. Lot of ‘em were good people but…” McCree trailed off.

“They were vulnerable to the Deadlock gang?” said Genji, and McCree nodded.

Genji stared out the window, “The Shimada clan took advantage of the tragedy of the Omnic crisis as well,” he said, looking out the window, “In the panic of Omnic attacks on cities, we—I mean they would move in and wipe out their enemies.” McCree could see Genji visibly tensing further. “We had the resources to fight back against the omnics, to grant escaping civilians protection, and we only used the chaos to further our own power. I was only a child at the time. Father said looking after our own was what kept the Shimada clan alive.” He looked at his hand and then curled it into a fist, “But then…I was one of their own.”

He glanced up at the rearview mirror to see Mercy staring at him and he glanced off and uncurled his fist. Her brow was crinkled and her mouth was a thin line, like what Hanzo had done to him was somehow her fault. He never knew what to do when she made that face, so he simply straightened up in his seat and said, “So they have no true values, except in power. And they must be stopped.”

“Well… good thing we’re shutting down this weapons deal then, right?” said McCree. He elbowed Genji again. “You’ll get your chance, I know it. We do this, then we gotta do this right. Right?”

“Right,” said Genji. He glanced back at Mercy and found himself making eye contact with her through the rearview mirror. She opened her mouth as if she was about to say something, then seemed to think better on it and looked out the window again.

—

Mercy was asleep in the back seat less than half an hour later. Unsurprising—she had a tendency to nap when she could. Sunlight was catching in her hair.

“You should get a visor,” said McCree.

“What?” said Genji.

“A visor. Y’know, like on Reinhardt’s helmet. Wouldn’t get dust in your eyes when you’re rushing forward,” McCree smirked, “And you could probably get away with staring more.”

“Staring—!” Genji started but then looked off, “I was not staring. I was just thinking while I happened to be looking in a mirror where she was reflected.”

“Sure,” said McCree with a smirk and Genji’s brows furrowed, “Okay, I’ll bite. What were you thinking about?”

“Doctor Ziegler seemed… reticent when the conversation turned to the Omnic crisis,” said Genji, “Did I overstep? Or say something wrong?”

“Ah—that one’s on me,” said McCree, “I probably should have changed the subject before we got
too into that. You don’t know so she knows you wouldn’t…” McCree trailed off.

“Don’t know what?” said Genji.

“She’s a crisis orphan,” said McCree.

“Oh…” said Genji, “Was she there when it…?”

“Yeah. Bombs knocked the roof of her house in. Killed her parents. Messed up her spine something bad. She’s got spinal implants from the whole thing.”

Genji stared at McCree and glanced back at Mercy. “I had no idea,” he said.

“Well she ain’t in the habit of talking about it,” said McCree.

Genji leaned back in his seat a little then stretched his prosthetic hand out in front of him, “It’s strange—I believe I’ve spent more time with her than anyone at Overwatch, yet I hardly know anything about her.”

“To be fair you’ve been pretty focused on this ‘destroying my family who killed me’ thing,” said McCree. Genji folded his arms. “Which is fair!” McCree quickly added, “Hell, if I went through that shit, I’d probably be derailing every conversation into ‘Reasons why I must destroy my criminal empire family’ too.”

Genji’s eyes widened with some surprise and his shoulders shrank inward a little.

McCree sighed, “Okay it’s not derailing–I mean, we are on our way to stop a Shimada-Deadlock weapons deal.”

Genji looked thoughtful. “Now that I think on it, you have barely spoken of Deadlock at all this whole trip,” he said.

“What can I say? I’m focused on the present,” said McCree.

“The present concerns Deadlock,” said Genji.

“Well I guess I don’t like talking about it then,” said McCree. They hit a pothole and Mercy muttered something in German in her sleep before readjusting herself against the window again. “All this time I’ve known her and she still has the most fucked sleep schedule in the world,” said McCree.

“You’ve known Doctor Ziegler a long time?” said Genji.

“Yup,” said McCree, “Couple years now.”

Genji glanced back at Mercy, then over to McCree. “Have you and her ever…?”

McCree snorted, “Nah. She shut that shit down pretty much her first day here. But I’d keep getting the stuffing kicked out of me on missions or just sparring with Reyes so we’d end up talking a lot.”

“What would you talk about?”


“Gossip?” Genji repeated, looking up at the rearview mirror.
“Well that’s the best part about working with us,” said McCree, “No shortage of interesting people.”

“Hm,” Genji nodded in agreement.

“You’re staring again by the way,” said McCree.

Genji straightened up and then quickly turned his attention away from the rearview mirror and out the window. McCree snickered.

“You know something?” said McCree.

“Mm?” Genji glanced up.

“You know something?” said McCree.

“Mm?” Genji glanced up.

“I think that’s the first conversation we had that didn’t default to your usual ‘I must stop my criminal empire family,’ brooding,” said McCree with a grin.

Genji glanced off and scoffed. “Let us just get to the rendezvous point,” he said, looking out the window again.
She dreamt of them again. It wasn’t the usual ashes and rubble and blood dream, but simply herself, small, running as fast and as hard as she could to catch up with them, then looking up at them, only to find their faces blurred. When she woke she made a point of opening up her old (heavily neglected) social media accounts and scrolling back as far as she could through the photos. She hugged her knees at the sight of them both. She knew their faces. She knew they knew their faces, yet she remembered the tragic irony of memories that they are slightly affected every time they are recalled, like a photo of a photo of a photo increasingly losing definition each time it was taken. She clung to silly details in her mind. The fairy lights her mother had hung around her room, the hand-painted Gloriosa daisy pattern on the family’s china plates, the way her vision blurred when she tried on her father’s glasses.

She looked at the photo on her computer and something tugged at the corner of her mouth. Her mother’s hair was fair, like her own, thick, like her own, and fairly manageable in a heavy braid she would wear over one shoulder. Her father’s hair, however, was light brown and fine, and grew up and out. If he had lived to see more than the hair at his temples go gray, he most certainly would have looked like a mad scientist. Her own hair was a combination of the two, light colored, but wild and thick. Young Angela herself was standing between them, still small enough so that she had to hold her own hands at the level of her shoulders to reach their hands. Their faces were all wind-chapped, flushed from exertion, and they were wrapped up in brightly colored windbreakers. She could recognize Interlaken in the valley behind them. Mercy huffed and closed the photo. Closed the social media accounts, got her slippers on, pulled her robe around herself, looped the lanyard with her keycard over her head, and walked.

The Zurich headquarters themselves were pretty much the height of human ingenuity. They had a living roof featuring native Swiss plants for efficient insulation and water runoff, solar panels, labs featuring the most advanced technology available, state-of-the-art security, helipad, hangar bay, and as a memorial to those lost in the Omnic crisis, a courtyard garden, dubbed “Watcher’s Rest.” Ironically she had been coming here more and more on nights she couldn’t sleep. The garden itself was carefully curated and was one of the crown jewels of Ecowatch engineering in attractive, functional, and sustainable landscaping.

The garden was well lit, even at night, with lighted pathways, and lights illuminating the various statues and artwork around the garden. Irrigation for the garden was powered via a small decorative artificial waterfall built out of one of the garden walls, which flowed alongside a slightly oxidized bronze relief of Overwatch Agents bearing Overwatch’s flag in the midst of the wreckage of an Omnium. She stepped close to it. The agents in the relief weren’t meant to look like any particular individuals within Overwatch, Jack Morrison and Gabrielle Adawe had insisted so when commissioning the artist, but Angela could easily see the artist had heavily been inspired by Ana Amari’s black hair flowing out of her beret in the wind, and one of the soldiers on the left was a dead ringer for Liao. She smiled a little.

“Doctor Ziegler?” she heard a familiar, slightly reverberated voice behind her and turned on her heel.

“I thought that was you,” he said quietly, “What are you doing up at this hour? Trouble sleeping?”


“Working late… in your pajamas,” said Genji, glancing down at her robe and slippers.
Mercy pursed her lips. “I could ask you the same thing, you know,” she said. Then her brow crinkled in some concern. “The prosthetics—they aren’t making it difficult to sleep again, are they?”

“No, no—” said Genji, “Just… easy to stay awake, if anything…”

“You’re still thinking about what went down in the Southwest,” said Mercy. The words fell out of her. Genji had passed through the post-mission debriefings and psychological evaluations just fine, but she could only imagine how difficult it was finding out the person he had wanted vengeance on the most had left the Shimada clan, and on top of that, no one knew where he was.

“I…” Genji exhaled then gestured at his faceplate, “You’d think with this, I’d be a little harder to read…” he said quietly.

“That mission was hard on you,” said Mercy.

“I suppose it must come as some relief to you, though,” the words slipped out of Genji more bitter than he’d like.

“Excuse me?” said Mercy.

Genji’s eyes widened in surprise at his own tone towards Mercy and he drew into himself a bit. “I…” he huffed a little, “I know you don’t approve of… of what I’m doing.”

“I understand where you’re coming from,” said Mercy, reaching out and putting a hand on his shoulder, “I just… don’t think your approach to it is the healthiest.”

“I know there’s more to it than that. I’m spending nearly every waking moment obsessing over destroying my family, when you’ve had your—” Genji caught himself and Mercy’s eyes widened. “I’m sorry…” said Genji, “I shouldn’t have…”

“You know?” the words came out of her hushed.

“McCree told me,” said Genji, “I asked him why you went so quiet when the Omnic Crisis came up in conversation and he…I’m sorry. I should have asked you. I mean–probably not–that’s… inappropriate… I…”

“It’s fine,” said Mercy.

Genji exhaled again. There was a long period of silence, with the only sound being the running water through the garden.

“I dreamt of them,” said Mercy, “That’s why I’m out here.”

“Do you dream of them often?” asked Genji.

Mercy shook her head. “It… happens every once in a while, but when it does happen….” she forced a chuckle, “That’s probably why I work so hard, if I’m being completely honest with myself. If I can work hard enough, usually by the time I can finally sleep, I’m too tired to dream,” she half-laughed and half-scoffed at this, “Listen to me–I’m a terrible doctor.”

Genji was giving her a steady level look. Mercy huffed a little.

“I’m not trying to work that hard…” she chuckled a little, “With how busy Overwatch keeps me, I really don’t have to try….” she tucked her hair back and looked back at the relief.
“I understand,” said Genji, “It is… easier to have something to work for than to… just be stuck with yourself.”

“I suppose that’s what worries me about you,” said Mercy, “Eventually, all of the Shimada clan will end up in custody or… well… you know…” she shook her head, “I’m just worried about… what you’ll do with yourself when that happens.”

“Well it will have to happen first,” said Genji, folding his arms.

“Yes, I suppose it will…” said Mercy.

Genji looked at the relief Mercy had been examining. “In a way, I am a bit jealous, Doctor Ziegler. Overwatch will always need your abilities… but if in the end it is a peacekeeping organization, eventually they won’t need a weapon–”

“You’re not a weapon,” said Mercy, firmly. Genji broke his sight away from the relief and looked at her. “You’re not,” she said again, “You’re Genji. And… and I believe you will find out what you’re meant to do in this world and it won’t be killing.” This statement gave Genji pause, Mercy huffed. “I… I joined this organization because I believe in helping people. And… I’ll be honest with you, it’s disappointed me. They made a rifle with my biotic research. A rifle. Against my explicit wishes they weaponized my accomplishments, and I don’t know if I can ever forgive Jack for that but…” she huffed, “When… when we found you… I just…” she trailed off, “I can’t let you believe you’re a weapon. I can’t let everything Overwatch touches become a weapon. I know we’re better than that,” she smiled a little, “I know you’re better than that.”

Genji was silent for a long time at this. “I…” Genji rubbed the back of his neck, “I don’t know how to respond to that,” he said quietly.

“I’m sorry…” she said, “I… sort of went off on a rant there–”

“No, you made sense,” said Genji. He chuckled a little, “You can make a terrifying amount of sense sometimes, Doctor Ziegler.”

Mercy smiled, then rubbed at her eyes. “Well that’s a relief,” she yawned, “I’m surprised I’m making any sense at all right now.”

“You should… probably get some sleep,” said Genji.

“So should you,” said Mercy.

“Right,” said Genji. He gave a short bow. “I wish you a more restful sleep, then, Doctor,” he said.

“You as well,” she said, walking off. She tried to focus on walking back to her apartment in the Zurich headquarters, but she found herself looking over her shoulder, watching him fade into the night.
Gérard wasn’t sure how long he had just been asleep. He knew it had been three days since the incident had happened, but that time had been a near dream-like state. He remembered an intensive care unit in Rome, then darkness, then being put on a plane with several doctors looking over him, then darkness, then the medical wing at Zurich and Doctor Ziegler telling him he should make a full recovery, then darkness again. Even with biotics, healing after everything was an exhausting process. He wasn’t sure if it was the light on his face or the faint smell of lily, champagne, and pink pepper hanging in the air that made him wake up first, but his eyes opened.

He shifted his head slightly to see Amélie in a chair next to his hospital bed, reading. She looked a little jet-lagged, but stunning as usual. Her dark hair tied back in that tight, river-like ponytail that flowed over one shoulder, in a simple outfit of a black boatneck top and skinny jeans. His eyes flicked to the cover of her book, *Malone Meurt*.

“I don’t want to spoil you,” he said, looking back up at the ceiling, “But I think Malone dies in that.”

“Gérard!” She startled, the book flopped to the floor as she stumbled up from her chair and bent over him in his hospital bed. She gingerly touched her fingers to his still-bandaged face. “I flew over as soon as I heard what had happened in Rome—Well—I flew to Rome but you had just left and then I had to re-coordinate with them to fly here—and I’m sorry—I’m rambling, I’m just so—Are you all right? Are you in pain?”

He glanced down at her other hand on the bed to support the angle at which she was bending over him. It took some effort for Gérard to move his own hand over hers. “I’ll be fine. I’m on a lot of anesthesia, but I’m fine,” he said, squeezing her hand a little, “Doctor Ziegler said I should make a full recovery… unless I dreamed that.”

“No-no she, told me the same thing,” said Amélie, biting the inside of her lip, still brushing her fingertips at his bandages. “Oh Gérard…” his name escaped her in a helpless huff. It was hard seeing her like this—she always had that ballerina bearing and focus, he hated seeing her this frightened. He breathed in the scent of her wrist.

“You’re wearing the nice stuff,” he said quietly, “Expecting to go to my funeral?”

“Don’t joke about that!” she scolded, her jaw tight, she softened slightly, “It’s the same scent I was wearing the night we met.”

“I know,” he said with a slight smile. “Yvresse Penombre. I thought you ran out of the stuff.”

“I was saving the last few drops for our anniversary, but then you had to go and—and—” her shoulders were bunching up.

“If it helps, I didn’t do anything stupid. I was just standing in a building this time,” said Gérard.

“It does not help,” Amélie huffed, “What does this mean—? Blackwatch is supposed to be the covert ones, but apparently Talon knows enough about them to blow them up—blow you up and then they—they—”

“They what?” said Gérard.

“Gérard what if these people get you killed?!” Amélie pressed her fingertips to her temples with
distress.

“Amélie,” he winced slightly trying to sit up in bed more but squeezed her hand again to get her to look at him, “What did Blackwatch do?”

“You don’t know…” her voice was hollow but then she swallowed hard, “No–Doctor Ziegler said you have to focus on recovering—”

“Amélie,” Gérard said again, “Please.”

Amélie bit the inside of her lip and fished her phone out of her pocket, she only typed in a few things and then held the screen up to him. There was an Italian newspaper cover that featured a too-familiar silhouette and the article title “Overwatch Attaca.”

“Oh no,” said Gérard.

Amélie’s lips thinned and she swiped to the next image, an American magazine cover that featured a picture of Reyes facing away from the camera and the article title “Blackwatch: In the Shadow of Overwatch.”

“Reyes, what did you do?” Gérard said softly.

“They killed a businessman. Broke into his home and shot him in the face,” Amélie pulled the phone away and looked off.

“Antonio?!” Gérard’s eyes widened. He looked down, “No–no, that’s all wrong. We were in a position to pull out his organization by the roots. His investors—the lead in Monaco—with him dead we can’t—”

“Gérard, this wasn’t planned before you–?”

“No!” said Gérard, “This wasn’t my plan at all! I need to talk to Reyes–no, wait, Morrison–Is Amari available?”

He reached for her phone but she drew it back.

“Doctor Ziegler said—” Amélie started but Gérard was trying to reach for the phone.

“I’m out for three days and Overwatch manages to blow off its own bloody kneecap–! Gah!” Gérard winced hard.

“You still have to heal, said Amélie, gently but firmly pushing him back against the pillows, “I shouldn’t have told you—”

“No… If a civilian is the first person I’m hearing it from, that gives me a sense of how bad things really are,” said Gérard.

“A civilian?” Amélie folded her arms, “I am your wife, Gérard.”

“You know what I–” Gérard grunted in pain a bit, “I’m sorry. Okay, healing first. Overwatch can put out its own fires without me…” his shoulders slumped a little, “I hope…”

“You could resign,” said Amélie.

“What?” Gérard looked at her, shocked.
“You’ve given more than enough of yourself to Overwatch. You nearly *died* for them, and what do they give you in return?” she looked at her own phone screen, “In one night they undo months of your hard work and make themselves look like murderous tyrannical thugs in the process—and maybe they *are* tyrants—are they, Gérard? You would know better than me—I’m—I’m just a *civilian*.” Her voice was cracking but last word left her in a near hiss.

“Amélie, I would never sanction anything like this,” said Gérard.

“Then resign!” said Amélie, “You still have that offer with Helix Securities! You could get better pay, you wouldn’t be… called off to Mozambique or wherever in the middle of the night like with Overwatch, we could put more focus into having children like we planned—”

“I can’t,” said Gérard.

“But—” Amélie’s eyes were brimming with tears.

“If I step down after this, I’m letting Talon win. Someone needs to stand up to them.”

“You already stood up to them!” said Amélie.

“And if I go down after one hit, can we really call that standing up?” said Gérard, tilting his head.

Amélie’s lips were quivering. She squeezed her eyes shut to try and discourage tears but that just made one bud out from beneath her eyelashes and run down her face.

“Hey,” it took more strength than Gérard was willing to admit to lift his arm and brush the tear away from Amélie’s cheek, “It’s going to be all right. I promise.”

A chuckle that was a half-stuffed down sob escaped her. “Of course it will. You’re the hero Gérard Lacroix, aren’t you?”

“The one and only,” he brought her hand up and kissed her knuckles, “Somehow it still only sounds real when you say it,” he said smiling, “Although if I have to clean up a mess this big, they might have to change it to ‘The Janitor Gérard Lacroix.’

“Cleaning up crime, all over the world!” Amélie made a sweeping motion with her hand as if imagining the words all done up in lights.

Gérard snorted, laughing made his head ache, but if it was Amélie making him laugh, it was worth it.

“They don’t deserve you, Gérard,” Amélie said with a smile, though her eyes still looked tearstrained.

“Don’t worry. I remind them of that every day I walk into the office,” said Gérard.

Amélie snickered and another tear ran down from the corner of her eye. She leaned forward and kissed him on the forehead, between skin and bandage.

“Well,” Amélie huffed a little, “I may be ‘just a civilian,’ but if Talon wants to get to you, they’re going to have to go through *me* first,” she said with a smile.

“Oh you will strike fear into their hearts, ma chérie,” said Gérard, grinning right back at her.
“…and this is on us. No, obviously this is Overwatch's responsibility, yes, this is a failure of Overwatch’s character, but this is on us because we gave them this power to begin with. This has happened over and over again through history— You look at Caesar or Andrew Jackson—when a war ends, generals assume power, and we were all too happy to lend our so-called ‘heroes’ power after the Omnic crisis. And look where it’s gotten us.”

Mercy could hear the commentator through the door, her stomach twisting in knots. She took a steadying breath and opened the door to the nearly-empty rec room where a large flatscreen television displayed several news reporters and political commentators seated around a table while images of Blackwatch’s fiasco in Venice were displayed behind them. Genji was alone in the room, cross legged on the couch, red eyes fixed to the screen.

“Commander Reyes’s statement was that they proceeded unsanctioned by Strike Commander Morrison,” another commentator cut in, “It could very well be that a judgment call was made on Reyes’s part and—”

“At best, Reyes proceeding without command from Morrison indicates incompetence on Morrison’s part, but I highly doubt that’s the case…” a third commentator cut in.

“The question we have to ask ourselves now is that is Overwatch protecting the people, or is Overwatch protecting Overwatch?” the first commentator stated, prompting nodding and murmured agreements around the table.

“…Are you sure you want to watch this?” asked Mercy.

Genji’s gaze broke away from the screen only briefly to turn his head and look at her over his shoulder. He turned away and continued watching the screen.

“We should know what the world thinks of us, shouldn’t we?” he asked.

Mercy sighed and tucked her hair back, then took a seat on the couch next to Genji. “Just… you know how the 24 hour news cycle can be–they sensationalize. They’ll say whatever they have to to keep your atten–”

“What really worries me is that the bodies of Talon agents recovered from the mission showed signs of biotic decay,” the second commentator cut in, and Mercy cut herself off and looked at the screen as well.

“Moira,” Mercy’s brow furrowed and the name slipped out of her, a furious simmering growl in her throat. She would have to talk with Jack later.

“This means Overwatch is weaponizing biotics!” the commentator went on, “It’s time Overwatch gives the public full disclosure and tells us exactly what it’s doing in its science division.”

“Stuff like this, apparently,” said the third commentator, hitting a button on their tablet and bringing up a massive picture of Genji on the screen behind them.

“Good god I still can’t get used to that,” said the first commentator.

Dread was pooling in Mercy’s stomach and she looked over at Genji, his arms folded tight around him, the nails of his organic hand digging into the synthetic muscles of his prosthetic arm.
“I think we should turn it off—” Mercy started.

“No,” said Genji.

The image of Genji was half blurred by movement and yet still clearly terrifying. Sword a red slash of color, dripping in blood, red eyes glaring from behind a mask, loose wires dangling off of him. He was unrecognizable—most of the civilian footage recovered that night was shaky and blurry and that was a saving grace, though it sent the conspiracy theories online spiraling out of control.

“Look, I think we need to remember that in the wake of the Omnic crisis, prosthetics are fairly common-place—” said the second commentator.

“This goes beyond simple prosthetics,” said the first commentator, “This is taking—god, I don’t know how much of that thing is human—and affixing it to a weapon. Overwatch isn’t just weaponizing biotics. It’s weaponizing people. Are these the people we want touting the world’s ideals of peace and progress—”

Mercy grabbed the remote and turned the TV off. Genji showed little reaction.

“They don’t know,” Mercy said stiffly, “They don’t understand.”

…I think they understand completely,” said Genji standing up.

“Genji—” Mercy started.

“Even if they did know the whole story, what then? I was a killer before I was given this body. My enlistment into Overwatch undermined Japan’s government and law enforcement. Everything about what I am only confirms what they already know.”

Mercy’s mouth was hanging open. She felt like there should be a counter-argument to that, but any words were dying in her throat. Genji’s red eyes were boring into her, somehow both so angry and so numb. Finally he broke his gaze away from her. “I suppose you had a point earlier,” he muttered, “There’s little this news can tell me that I don’t already know.” He turned on his heel and began walking away from her, “If you have need of me, I’ll be in the training facility.”

“You’re not—” she finally blurted out and he stopped and looked over his shoulder at her. “…You’re not just what they say you are,” she said, “You don’t have to be.”

There was a long pause between them. Something had softened in those red eyes, shifting them from numb to questioning before he broke eye contact and faced away from her once again. “What I am is whatever is necessary to destroy the Shimada clan,” he said simply before walking off.

Mercy’s arms tightened around herself as the door shut behind him, leaving her alone.
Winston On The Moon

Chapter Notes

I headcanon that the Horizon Lunar Colony apes had a sort of “Planet of the Apes” deal where all the primates were fluent signers and it was a big deal when one of them transitioned from signing to verbally speaking.

It had been two weeks since the airlock incident. Horizon Lunar Colony didn’t sound the same. There were the hoots of gorillas, chimps, and a plucky capuchin, and maybe the odd hamster squeak coming from the ventilation shaft, but the only words that were heard were mainly automated announcements from the Colony’s AI system. The scientists used to play Mozart and Debussy over the lab speakers to keep morale up, but there was no such music now. Except on the observation deck. One gorilla kept the music playing, but kept it contained to the observation deck’s speakers. It made the earth prettier somehow, he felt.

Winston was tapping away at a computer on Horizon’s observation deck when the door behind him slid open and a gentle-faced bonobo lumbered in.

“You didn’t show up to Simon’s last two meetings,” Ellie signed.

“So?” Winston signed back.

“I know you’re still mad about how everything happened,” Ellie signed, “But regardless of how it happened, we’re on our own now. We need to work—”

“Simon’s meetings are about Simon, not about us,” Winston signed, “He’s a bully. You’re only following him because you’re afraid of him and Hypatia—”

“I was sick of it too,” Ellie signed.

Winston stopped working at the computer and looked over his shoulder at her. Direct eye contact was rare between lab subjects on the colony—one behavioral evolutionary hurdle many of them didn’t try to vault. They could note hands and expressions through their sign language, but sustained eye contact was unusual, confrontational.

“I was sick of it too,” Ellie signed again, “All the injections. All the tests. The way they looked at us. They made us but they didn’t know what to do with us—”

“They raised us,” Winston signed back, “They were the closest thing we ever had to—”

“That was you and Doctor Winston,” Ellie signed, “You both imprinted. It was different for you.”

“And Simon knew that. And he murdered him,” Winston signed, turning away from her.

Ellie touched his shoulder and he was forced to look at her again. “We’re still your family,” she signed, “You don’t have to come to Simon’s meetings, but at least come work with me in hydroponics—that way Simon won’t think—” Ellie stopped as she noticed Winston seemed to be clearing his throat, bunching up his shoulders a bit. “…Winston?” she signed, backing up slightly, afraid he might roar at her.
“No,” said Winston, the word was a near grunt, but the consonant and vowel combo was unmistakable.

Ellie’s hands froze mid-sign. “Did… you just…” her signing was slow, hesitant.


“You’re verbal,” Ellie signed. She bounced up and down where she stood, hooting and eagerly signing, “Winston, you’ve gone verbal!”

“Shhh!!” Winston’s ‘shh’ was half a raspberry as he clumsily stuck his finger in front of his mouth.

“Simon’s the only other gorilla on the colony who’s verbal!” signed Ellie, “Say something else!”

“Some… thing… else,” Winston’s voice was deep and croaking.

Ellie made an excited high pitched sound and Winston signed for her to quiet down again.

“Say another thing!” Ellie signed excitedly.

“Do you promise to be quiet if I do?” Winston signed back, furrowing his brow at her.

Ellie nodded, still bouncing up and down a bit.

Winston took a few steadying breaths. “N-nevurr. Never ax–Never accept th-the world… as… as it appears to be…” He looked over his shoulder at the earth past the observation deck telescope, “Dare to… see it for w-what it… c-could be.”

Ellie stared at him and stopped bouncing. “Doctor Winston?” she signed.

Winston nodded.

She looked off, now melancholy. “I’m sorry…” she signed.

“It… wasn’t… you,” said Winston.

“I know but…” Ellie signed and then trailed off, “Winston…” she signed, “You can say more than Simon. Much more.” she paused, “But that doesn’t make sense,” she signed, clearly attempting to negotiate her previous observations with what she was seeing and hearing now, “You scored below both Simon and Hypatia… significantly below them.”

Winston smiled.

“You flunked on purpose?!?” Ellie signed, shocked.

“Not… flunked,” Winston said slowly, “Just… ansa–answered the… r-right k-kuh-questions wrong.” He paused and then signed, “Didn’t trust Simon. Didn’t want attention from him. Didn’t want him to see me as competition.”

Ellie shrugged a conceding agreement. “But,” she signed, “If your genetic modifications were this successful, you could be the Silverback! You challenge hi–”

“No,” Winston said again.

“Winston, you said yourself he’s a bully!” Ellie signed furiously, “I’d back you up! We could get others to–”
Winston shook his head. “No… more… fighting,” he said firmly.

Ellie’s shoulders slumped a little, her signs were short and bitter. “If you won’t challenge Simon, and you won’t help me in hydroponics, then what are you doing over here that’s so—”

She looked over his shoulder at his computer screen, showing schematics for a rocket. Her eyes trailed from the screen to Winston.

“…You’re leaving?” she signed.

“I don’t… belong here,” Winston said slowly.

“All the parts and tools that have been disappearing around the colony… that was you…” Ellie signed.

Winston nodded.

“How much room is in your capsule?” signed Ellie.

Winston was silent.

“How much room!?” Ellie signed again.

Winston glanced off.

“So you’re leaving me too…” signed Ellie.

“The others… need you… here,” said Winston.

Ellie shrank a little where she stood.

“I’m… sorry,” Winston’s voice was low.

Ellie took a deep breath. “How can I help?” she signed.
Winston and Tracer: First Meeting

Lena Oxton’s last words were cut off.

“It’s fine,” she was saying, “I think it’s fi–” And then the radio cut out as the Slipstream slipped from existence in a bright blue flash. A silence fell over the air traffic control tower of Watchpoint: Pembrey for a solid two minutes. “It could be a fluke,” one of the air traffic controllers said, “The teleportation could have messed up her signaling. Give it another minute, let her reset her comms.”

Another minute of silence passed. The Overwatch Experimental Flight program was no stranger to collective anxiety, the flare of butterflies in the stomach from watching a new fighter take to the air, the way everyone seemed to draw a tense, shallow breath as a prototype drone banked a turn. But it was no stranger to failures, either. That was the point of experiments, after all–testing, failing, learning, getting better–they had been so sure this would work. It would be a wonderful, revolutionary thing–obviously it would be years before it could be developed for commercial use but in terms of immediate response to global incidents? It was brilliant. But as the air traffic control tower looked out over the waters of Carmarthen Bay, a chill seemed to gather in the room.

Something went wrong. Something had gone terribly, terribly wrong. Lena Oxton, young, bright, Lena Oxton, one of the faces of Overwatch’s future, was gone. And it was Overwatch’s fault.

The search efforts for her were an anxious formality–maybe only one or two of the experimental flight program really held out hope that the teleportation had been successful and something else had gone wrong and Oxton was forced to make a water landing. Everyone in the flight program knew but didn’t want to say it: the black box was state of the art. If it was gone, Slipstream was gone, and Tracer along with it.

It was three months of a PR nightmare. Several directors resigned and funding was gutted. Numerous engineers and scientists were fired or reassigned to less public, more out of the way work with other Overwatch science divisions. Watchpoint: Pembrey, the experimental flight division’s crown jewel, became little more than a gloomy airfield–mostly used for Orca maintenance and run by a skeleton crew of pit engineers and security. No one really wanted to work there after the Slipstream Incident—without its old crew of engineers and scientists, it felt broken. Everything there felt broken and off.

And on top of that it was haunted.

It wasn’t confirmed haunted—no hauntings ever really are, but several janitors working graveyard shifts had reported a figure made of bright blue light appearing in a flash, screaming, and disappearing again. The sightings started out short, erratic, nighmarish, but as time went on, and the blue figure’s sporadic appearances persisted, other witnesses reported odd behaviors. The blue figure would appear next to Lena Oxton’s old locker, trying and failing to get it open, its hands merely phasing through the lock. The blue figure would appear sprinting, on the shoreline path next to Carmarthen Bay where Tracer would go for her morning runs. The figure would appear in Watchpoint: Pembrey’s hangar, staring at where the Slipstream once was. In that time, the ghosts features became sharper and sharper—a sharp jaw, a small, slightly upturned nose, a head of spiky hair—everyone knew who the ghost was, but most dared not to say it.

Four months of random sightings passed, some within hours of each other, some weeks apart. In that time, a ramshackle rocket broke through the atmosphere and Overwatch recovered it, finding it had only one passenger. A genetically modified gorilla from the Horizon Lunar colony, carrying with him a head full of astrophysical and engineering knowledge, and a lot of bad memories. Winston’s scientific prowess proved invaluable, but the gorilla was quiet and kept to himself.
mostly. He apologized often for absentmindedness, offhandedly mentioning the loss of his father. Overwatch said he could work at any state-of-the-art Overwatch facility he so desired. He chose Pembrey—now a quiet and out of the way Watchpoint. Strike Commander Morrison briefly questioned his choice, but immediately recognized the grief that seemed to radiate off Winston, and was willing to give the gorilla the space he needed to grieve.

Winston had only been on Watchpoint Pembrey a week when he saw the ghost. She appeared when he was rifling through his locker, said, “What did you say about thermodynamics?” Winston could not recall saying anything to her about thermodynamics and then she disappeared again. She reappeared several weeks later, screaming while Winston was eating his breakfast, then disappeared again. He gave remarkably little reaction. She appeared again a few days later. “—fix it?” she said.

“What?” said Winston.

“Can you fix it? The thing you were saying yesterday. The time thing.”

“…time thing?” said Winston.

“You’re a super-genius, aren’t you?” she tilted her head.

“I mean… that’s being… very generous about it,” Winston paused, “You seem very calm about the fact that I’m a gorilla.”

“Well I’ve been seeing you around the watchpoint for almost a year now, I’m pretty used to you,” she said, smiling. Winston had only been on the Watchpoint for eleven days.

She reappeared a few hours later.

“You aren’t frightened?” she said.

“You’re not a ghost,” said Winston, he paused and then added, “It’s basic thermodynamics.”

“Basic thermo-what—” she started before disappearing again.

She reappeared two days later.

“Thermodynamics,” Winston said quickly, as soon as she appeared, “If you can’t interact with a ghost, it isn’t made of matter, and if ghosts aren’t matter, ipso facto, they are energy–however, in every thermodynamic system, energy is lost. Ghosts, by simple laws of physics, have nothing to sustain themselves on, and therefore cannot exist.”

“What are you talking about?” she said before disappearing.

It was four weeks before she appeared again. Winston was staring at the photo of his father again when he saw a glowing blue figure in the doorway.

“Is there a reason why you keep appearing to me?” said Winston.

“What kind of question is that? You’re my best friend!” she snapped before disappearing.

She reappeared 17 hours later and shouted, “OH MY GOD A GORILLA WHY IS THERE A GORILLA WHAT IS GOING ON” before disappearing.

She reappeared several minutes later. “If I’m not a ghost, what am I?”
“…someone who’s not experiencing time linearly,” Winston said.

“Can you—?” she started before disappearing.

Winston thought in silence for a few moments. “… fix it,” he said, remembering the second thing she had ever said to him, “‘Can you fix it?’”
Angela Ziegler looked exhausted, but that was nothing new.

“I’ve compiled my post-rescue observations with… the Blackwatch notes,” she said. Her voice tensed on ‘Blackwatch.’ She was still angry about Venice, Jack knew, still angry he and Gabe had let her go on so long not knowing Blackwatch had picked Moira up right where Overwatch had dropped her. Jack glanced over at Gabe. They had agreed that they couldn’t afford to let O’Deorain’s skillset fall into the wrong hands, and Gabriel had stated that her work was invaluable for Blackwatch operations, but her presence in Blackwatch had turned the Venice into that much more of a PR nightmare for Overwatch, and that much more of an internal relations nightmare when it came to Doctor Ziegler’s feelings on the whole thing. Jack broke his line of sight away from Gabe and looked through the one-way glass at the thin dark-haired woman sitting a bit nervously on an examination table. Gérard LaCroix was standing next to her, smoothing her hair, saying soft words to her in french. She was here, at least, she was alive. Jack had to admit this felt like Overwatch’s first win in a while.

“It’s all clear,” said Mercy, “No toxins, normal nerve responses, some residual traces of sedatives in her bloodwork which line up with her experiences of time loss in Talon custody and Gabriel’s theory of gaslighting. Behavior is well within the normal parameters for her trauma. Obviously she’ll need continued psychological evaluation but for now, the healthiest thing we can do for her is give her time to recover.”

“Still doesn’t feel right…” murmured Ana, “Obviously they were targeting Gérard through Amélie… but the way Gérard dogs them, you’d think they’d realize taking her would just make him work harder to take them down…”

“Talon doesn’t strike me as the most socially inclined bunch,” said Gabriel with a shrug, “So that’s your word, Doc? She can go?”

Mercy watched as Amelie lifted her hand and gently brought it up against the back of Gérard’s neck. He bowed his head slightly and put his forehead against hers. Her lips moved and a small smile tugged at their corners as Gérard took her other hand in his.

“Yes,” said Mercy, watching them, “With continued psychological evaluations, as I’ve said before.” She looked back at Amélie, “Nothing too strenuous, obviously,” she added.

“Good enough for me. In three days I want to debrief her again, see if there’s anything else she might remember from her time in Talon custody,” said Jack, “Contact our Liaison in Paris, see if we an’t post up one of our psych specialists in a Paris office for the time being.”

“You’re the Strike Commander,” said Gabriel.

“I’ll sign the release forms then,” said Mercy.

Jack and Gabe walked off, and Mercy moved to go back to her labs after them, but then paused and looked at Ana who was still watching Gérard and Amélie through the glass.

“Is everything all right, Captain?” she asked.

Ana didn’t respond for a few seconds at first then suddenly jerked to attention and shook her head, “Sorry, come again?”
"I said ‘Is everything all right?’” said Mercy.

“Yes just… thinking,” said Ana.

“…You don’t want me to sign those release forms,” said Mercy.

Ana shook her head. “It’s not that. I can tell you if I went through the same thing… I’d want the same thing too. It just… feels off, is all.”

“How so?” said Mercy.

“Talon has to have some idea of how Gérard operates at this point… and targeting the specific families of Overwatch agents is… unusual for them. They usually target high profile individuals, or have more generalized attacks. If they wanted to get Gérard off of their backs, they could have targeted me through Fareeha, and coerced me into taking him off the task force. But…” Ana put a hand to her forehead and shook her head, “I’m probably only projecting…” she looked at Gérard, “I can’t imagine the hell they’ve been through… we owe them some time to rest.”

“I agree, Captain,” said Mercy.

—

“Welcome home, Mrs. LaCroix,” Gérard said smiling as he opened the door to the apartment. Despite sleeping on the plane ride from Zurich, she still felt exhaustion deep in her muscles from everything. She stepped out of her shoes and her feet padded across the hardwood floor.

“…Forgot how much of a mess I left this place in,” murmured Gérard, hanging his coat up. Nearly all the tables in the apartment were covered in papers, multiple tablets and data drives were strewn about as well, and there were maps on the walls covered in sticky notes and newspaper clippings and lines of yarn and photos of suspects.

Amélie picked up a manila envelope with the Overwatch logo on it from a stack of papers. “Oh I see how it is,” she said with a smirk, waving the envelope in his direction, “You say you won’t bring your work home with you, but as soon as I’m gone, you turn this place into your second base of…” she trailed off as she looked at one of the photos on the maps on the wall, and saw it was a photo of herself getting out of a car, “…operations,” she said quietly. She stepped closer to one of the maps on the wall and looked at the newspaper clippings, “This is for me…” she said quietly, “You were looking for me.”

“Don’t tell Jack,” said Gérard, smirking and leaning against the table, “He’d tell me to go home and get some rest, and I would go home and then….” he gestured at another one of his map collages. “To be fair, I was doing it for very selfish reasons. It turns out it’s very hard to sleep without you around. So if I wanted to sleep, obviously I had to get you back.”

“Gérard,” Amélie walked over to him and ran her fingers through his hair at the side of his head, “You’ve been going gray, too…” she said softly, looking at his sideburns.

Gérard huffed a not-quite chuckle and then held her hand against his cheek, “I know. How tragically ironic that when we finally got you back, I’m too much of an old goat for you now.”

“Idiot,” she said with a smile before cupping her other hand against his cheek and kissing him. He wrapped his arms around her tightly, but gingerly at the same time, terrified of hurting her, terrified of her slipping from existence. He kissed her forehead and took in the scent of her hair.

“We have a lot of sleep to catch up on, don’t we?” she said, leaning her head against his chest.
“Yes we do,” said Gérard, smoothing her hair down her back.

—

Overwatch’s Paris offices were a lot brighter than the Zurich headquarters. Amélie could see flowers in the window box just past the glass, and saw a mother lark feeding her chirping young.

The evaluator was a bright eyed, curly haired brunette, seated across from her in an old-fashioned but not imposing desk. “Okay Amélie—Can I call you Amélie?”

“Yes,” said Amélie.

“Great. You can call me Elsie. So I’m going to say five words to you and you can repeat them back to me in any order.”

“Five words,” said Amélie, nodding slowly, her eyes trailed back to the birds’ nest in the window box. Four baby birds. one was still chirping, one was still screeching up to its mother for more food.


“Cause.” Amélie heard a voice in her head that wasn’t Elsie’s.

“Effect.” Amélie heard her own voice in her head but could not recall when she had said the word.

Amélie’s fingers twitched slightly and she heard a high pitched ringing in her left ear. “Flower. House. Red. Doll,” her eyes trailed back to the window box. The baby was still screaming and the mother lark was tilting her head at it with glassy indifference. Did the evaluator not see? Did she not hear the cries? “…Bird.” Amélie realized she hadn’t finished, “Sorry–I remembered I just… was distracted.”

“That’s fine,” said Elsie, “That’s totally fine. We can take all the time you need. Let’s do one more set, okay? Okay, five words, repeat them back to me in any order: Boat. Dog. Costume. Family. Moon.”

“Boat. Dog. Moon.” Amélie repeated watching the bird’s nest in the window box. What was the mother bird doing? Feeding the screaming chick more? Then she saw a bald pink chewed-gum shape fall over the side of the nest, fall over the side of the window box. The mother lark had pushed the screaming chick from the nest. They were on the third floor. “Costume. Family,” said Amélie, not missing a beat this time.

“There we go! Perfect!” said Elsie, smiling.

“Perfect,” she heard another voice in her head and the high-pitched ringing returned to her ear. It was loud enough to make her wince this time.

“Are you okay? It’s okay if you’re having an attack. This is a safe space,” said Elsie, leaning forward in her chair.

“My… my ear…” said Amélie, covering her left ear.

“It’s okay. Focus on the sound of my voice, and the sound of your breathing. This is normal. Tinnitus is a more common side-effect of trauma than people realize,” said Elsie.
“Mm…” Amélie gave a weak nod with her hand still over one ear. After about a minute, the high-pitched noise passed and Amélie sighed with relief and leaned back in her chair.

“Better?” said Elsie.

“Better,” said Amélie.

“So, your pre-evaluation notes said you were also getting nightmares, which, again, normal. Now, I’d be happy to prescribe you some medications to help you sleep better, however, since the source of your nightmares is an ongoing investigation from Overwatch, I’m obligated to ask if you remember anything more from your time in Talon custody. This information could help Overwatch significantly.

“I’ll do it. Please. I’ll be good. I’ll be perfect,” Amélie remembered her own voice.

“We know you’ll be,” she remembered another voice.

Amélie opened her mouth, “No,” she said, “I’m… I’m sorry. I wish I could help more.”

“That’s fine,” said Elsie, smiling, “I think right now the best way you can help is focusing on getting better–and we’ll be there to help every step of the way. That sound like a good plan?”

Amélie nodded.

The rest of the evaluation was tedious. Questions she could not answer and an MRI scan she knew would turn up nothing. Elsie was insufferably supportive and warm through the whole thing. Amélie was happy to step out of the Paris offices of Overwatch, but then her eyes trailed down to a line of ants across the sidewalk. She scanned across the line of ants and saw them swarming over a pink shape—too large to be a wad of gum–no… it wasn’t gum. She knew what it was. She walked off.

——

A week and a half. Another tedious psychological evaluation. Poor Gérard stretched thin between doting on her and tracking down Talon more obsessively than ever. A letter from the ballet conservatory, expressing its immense relief at her safe return and noting that she had a large window of time to rejoin them before the next theatrical season, nights made swift and dreamless by the pills Elsie gave her. The first week she felt as if she were in some sort of cocoon, sleeping, doing what she could to distance herself from what she couldn’t even remember back with Talon. The second week felt like a groggy morning, the light of her old life seeping back into it. She needed to dance again. She knew she had to.

The calendar marked two weeks since her rescue, and she found herself in the bathroom, staring at the two little pills in her hand. She looked at herself up in the bathroom mirror and then heard sighing grunt. In the reflection of the bathroom Mirror, she could see Gérard taking his shirt off in their bedroom. She watched the way his muscles shifted across his back, the way his scars from the Rome explosion danced on the sides of his ribs as he tried to stretch the aches of the day away. She looked at her husband, then down at her pills, then slipped the pills back into their jar with a slight smile and closed it. She didn’t want to knock herself out. Not yet. She slipped out of the bathroom and slid her arms around Gérard’s waist, kissing his shoulder.

“Hello,” he said, looking over his shoulder at her. She grinned, then slipped under his arm so that she was in front of him, then pushed him back onto the bed and straddled him, kissing him as his arms wrapped around her.
“Amélie—Amélie—” he started between kisses and she broke away to let him speak, “Are you all right?” he said, his thumb stroking the bottom of her ribcage.

“Ugh Gérard, I’m fine,” she said with an eye-roll.

“I…” he tucked some of her hair back, “I know you want to put what happened behind you… behind both of us, but you don’t need to push yourself, you can take your time.”

“I feel like a glass doll ever since I got back… All this fussing, all these evaluations…” said Amélie, glancing off, “I just… I want to be your Amélie again.”

Gérard smiled up at her, then gently put a hand on the side of her face to turn her to look back at him. He stared into her eyes. “You are,” he said, “And you will always be, my Amélie.”

He embraced her and they kissed and rolled back on the mattress then. They made love for hours and fell asleep in each other’s arms. She loved him. He loved her. She was Amélie. She was his Amélie.

And then she woke up.

And then she wasn’t.

There were no night terrors tonight. Just a high-pitched ringing that woke her up. She glanced over at Gérard, happily, comfortably sprawled across the bed. The ringing in her ears was deafening.

“I’ll be perfect.”

“We know you’ll be.”

She walked through the dark of their room into the bathroom, opened a drawer and pulled out Gérard’s straight razor. She remembered the dead baby bird with the ants swarming over it on the sidewalk. She remembered long drives through hills and down poplar-lined roads. She remembered a hand clasped in hers. The ringing in her ears drowned out everything. Drowned out every image. She remembered a gun in her hand and its barrel pressed against the black-bagged head of a stranger and even that faded to the din of the ringing.

“I’ll be perfect.”

She set the razor against Gérard’s throat.

“I’ll be perfect.”

She drew the razor swift and deep across his neck. He always kept it sharpened so diligently… he barely felt it. His eyes opened as he was bleeding out and he looked at her face. He didn’t even fully comprehend what was happening. The mattress was red beneath him already, the blood spilling out on either side of his neck and soaking into the pillows looked almost like red wings. She didn’t flinch away from his body as the blood saturating the mattress stained her knees. She bent and kissed him on the lips before walking out onto her apartment’s fire escape, still naked, still holding his straight razor in one hand. She ascended the fire escape to the roof of the apartment, not even shivering in the night wind. She stared up at the sky and watched as a Talon transport descended from the light-pollution-orange fog overhead. It turned as it descended, opening its bay doors to her which touched against the gravel of her roof. She stepped up into the transport and the door closed behind her as it lifted off into the sky. She watched the lights of Paris shrinking away beneath her.
“I’ll be perfect.”

“We know you’ll be.”
You know the tricky part was realizing that no one in Overwatch knew Amélie killed Gérard until her reappearance in “Legacy”—they thought she was kidnapped/died when she disappeared the night Gérard died.

Gérard LaCroix was dead. Overwatch’s ace in the hole. Overwatch’s shining star—one of the last few pegs holding up the Organization’s reputation in the wake of the Venice incident and Blackwatch’s revelation. McCree and Reyes were taking it hard, but then again, they had been in the organization longer than Genji had. Still, the scattered remains of the target bots in Zurich’s training area were riddled with shuriken. This organization was the best means he had of avenging himself, and now it felt like it was falling apart at the seams. He threw harder. Not fast enough. Not accurate enough. Nothing was good enough. He could feel his blood boiling, the thermoregulators at the edge of his prosthetics steaming.

“Gah! Ooh!” another training bot fell to his shuriken strike, but he heard a sound close behind him.

“Halt!” one of the training bots said in its goofy voice. He had let one get that close? Stupid. Distracted. Instinctively Genji turned and smashed his prosthetic arm through the training bot’s metal frame, then winced.

“Kuso…” he muttered, looking at the warping of the metal on his wrist plates.

He attempted to reload another knuckle-full of shuriken. The plate on his wrist slid back and jammed. He huffed. He had to get this fixed.

“End training session,” he called out.

“Ending Training Session,” the Watchpoint AI responded as he walked out of the training area.

He knocked his organic hand on the door to Doctor Ziegler’s office.

“Doctor Ziegler?” he called. No response. She was probably out at some other section of the watchpoint, he figured. She probably wouldn’t mind him coming in and grabbing a spare wrist plate. She had a few stowed away in there. He pressed the panel next to Doctor Ziegler’s door and it slid open.

Doctor Ziegler, was in fact, in her office, but she was slumped over her desk, her face buried in her arms and her shoulders shaking a little. Her head jerked up as the door slid open and she made eye contact with him. Her eyes were wet and bloodshot and there was a little bit of snot coming out of one nostril.

“Oh—I—” she started and then feverishly wiped her nose and eyes, “I—I’m sorry—”

“I can… come back…” Genji said slowly.
“No! I mean, you’re here for a medical reason—it would be,” she snorted and tried to draw a
steadying breath, “I can’t just let you go just because I’m—I’m—” she tried to draw another
steadying breath but it was cut off midway by a hiccuped sob.

“…Crying?” said Genji.

“Allergies—It’s—I have—there was a lot of dust in here so—so…” Mercy’s voice was
shaking, “What did you need?” she said, snorting up some more snot.

“I just…” Genji held up his wrist.

“Oh—I can…” Mercy briskly walked off and Genji heard another shuddering sob along with the
shuffling of cabinets in her closet before she walked back into the office with a spare wrist plate
and several miniature pistons and screws for good measure, “Let… let me see,” she said, leaning
against her desk.

She worked quickly. Her sobs seemed to quiet down once she had something to do with her hands.
Genji couldn’t help but marvel slightly. She was able to unscrew the old wrist plate in spite of the
jamming, replace one of the plate-shifting pistons for good measure, then screw in the new wrist plate
as fast as if she were in a pit crew. Genji noticed a shake returned to her fingers as she brought her
hands away from his wrist.

“Give it a… uh… try…” she trailed off.

Genji flicked his wrist slightly and easily loaded several shuriken between his fingers.

“Good, it… it works,” said Mercy, itching at her bloodshot eyes.

“Thank you, Doctor Ziegler,” said Genji, flicking the shuriken back.

Mercy nodded, her lips tight and shaking.

Genji moved to walk off but then paused.

“Doctor Ziegler,” he started.

“I’m fine,” Mercy’s voice was stiff, “Go–You should–Don’t mind me–”

“..Is this about LaCroix?” said Genji.

“i… I told you it’s allergies it’s…” she suddenly slumped back against her desk and buried her face
in her hands, sobbing, “It was my fault. It was my fault.”

“Your fault–?” Genji started.

“I signed those release forms. Ana said it didn’t feel right but I still signed those release forms. If
we kept Amélie in Zurich maybe we could have found out more… We could have kept an eye on
them… Maybe we could have stopped…”

“…it’s not your fault Talon took her again,” said Genji.

“They murdered Gérard!” said Mercy, “And now Amélie’s probably dead too if they aren’t
torturing her as we speak. There must have been something I missed—Some kind of tracker they
put in her—something…” Tears were dripping off her chin, “A part of me feels rotten, as if… as if
it’s far worse than anything I can imagine—”
“Doctor Ziegler,” Genji put a hand on her shoulder and and she rubbed her eyes and looked up at him.

“I’m sorry—” she said, “I’m so sorry—This is—I shouldn’t… You shouldn’t have to…”

Genji pulled her into a hug and she sobbed into his cybernetic shoulder for nearly a minute before she caught herself and broke out of the embrace.

“I’m sorry—I’m sorry—” she was saying rounding her desk and slumping into her seat.

“I’m sorry,” said Genji, “That was inappropriate—I shouldn’t have…”

“No—I was…I shouldn’t be…This is a mess,” Mercy pressed her fingers to her forehead.

“…you shouldn’t put it all on yourself,” said Genji.

Mercy broke her sight away from her desk to look up at him.

“You couldn’t have known… As long as I’ve known you, you’ve never used anything but the best of your judgment when it comes to people in your care,” said Genji.

“I… thank you,” said Mercy, rubbing her eyes.

“To be honest, I always wondered how you did it,” said Genji, “How you managed to care so deeply about so many people… seeing you like this… it’s a relief.”

“A relief?” Mercy had half of a huffing laugh, another tear trailing out of the corner of her eye.

“The guardian angel is human… somehow that’s more comforting to me,” said Genji.

Mercy smiled slightly.
“You said it was a routine mission,” said Genji, walking briskly alongside Jack and Gabe.

“Not to you,” said Jack, “You understand the point of compartmentalization, don’t you?”

Genji visibly bristled but Reyes put a hand on Genji’s shoulder. “Easy,” Gabe said, looking between them, “You know my squad’s been antsy since we’ve been benched.”

“There’s a difference between ‘antsy’ and ‘listening in on conversations that could compromise multiple Overwatch operations,’” said Jack, before glancing over at Gabe, “How many of my meetings and debriefings do you have him listening in on?”

“I don’t ‘have him’ listen in on anything! He gets around the base!” said Gabe.

“If you can’t control your agents—” Jack started.

“By all means continue talking about me as if I’m a child who is not here,” said Genji.

“Calm down—” said Reyes.

“Calm down!? Morrison is putting the appearance of Overwatch over the safety of its agents and you want me to calm down?!” Genji fumed.

“Reyes,” Morrison said his name in warning and Gabe breathed tensely through his teeth before giving Genji’s shoulder a ‘please shut the fuck up for both our sakes’ squeeze.

“There’s no guarantee you would have been able to do anything if you were on that mission,” said Reyes, looking at Genji in the eye, “Your being here is a privilege because Morrison recognizes that the wellbeing of Doctor Ziegler is very important to you. Your being here is against protocol, and it can easily be revoked if you can’t control yourself. Do you understand?”

Genji’s eyes narrowed and he glanced off, the fury in his face hidden by the metal plate of his mask. “I understand,” he said, his voice dull and hot like iron from a fire.

The three of them walked out to Zurich headquarters’ hangar. Several medical staff were already present with a stretcher as the Orca hovered in, flanked by several maintenance vehicles before settling on the floor of the hangar. Genji tensed as the door to the Orca opened and Reinhardt hurried out, closely followed by Torbjörn and Tracer. The front of Reinhardt’s armor was splattered with blood, and in his arms he was carrying a crumpled figure, her face obscured by a shroud of white-blonde hair and a red-flecked white beret.

“Angela–” Genji instinctively stepped forward but Reyes put an arm in front of him as the medics already in the hangar rushed forward with a stretcher. Reinhardt stooped and put her on it and she was briefly obscured by several medical staff. The medical staff seemed to be questioning Reinhardt and Reyes brought his arm down, allowing Genji to rush to the side of the stretcher.

“Angela–Doctor Ziegler–” he started, reaching her side.

Her eyelids fluttered but kept her eyes half lidded as one medic fussed with an I.V at her wrist.

“Genji?” her voice was hoarse and blood was all down the front of her blue combat medic uniform, “You’re… you’re not supposed to be on this mission…”
“You’re not on the mission, you’re back at headquarters—you’re safe—” Genji was stumbling over his words.

“Oh…?” Her eyes flicked around the hangar sleepily before they turned back to him, “The others… are the others…?” her eyes rolled back in her head and she went limp on the stretcher as her eyes closed.

“Angela?!” Genji said in alarm.

“Vitals are still stable—” said one of the medics, shoving Genji out of the way as they all swarmed the stretcher, pushing the stretcher out of the hangar and towards the medical wing. Genji would have followed after them but knew he would probably only get in the way. He looked over at Reinhardt. Reinhardt watched the stretcher be wheeled off in a grim, tense silence that was uncharacteristic of him before he turned on his heel and perked up to see Morrison and Reyes.

“Strike commander—” he started, looking at Morrison.

“You were captain on this mission!” Genji suddenly stepped in front of him, “How could you let this happen?!”

“Genji—” Reyes started.

“It wasn’t his fault!” Tracer darted between Genji and Reinhardt.

“Of course it was the rookie,” snarled Genji, turning on Tracer, “You overextend in training and you overextended here, is that it?! You never listened to a single word I said in CQC, did you?!”

“Genji!” Reyes said more harshly.

“Reinhardt’s shield went down! There was nothing we could do!” said Tracer. Her voice cracked a little.

“You can time travel and I’m supposed to believe there was nothing you could do!?” said Genji. Tracer winced at his words.

“You’ve got no business yelling at her when you weren’t even there!” Torbjorn snapped.

“No! Apparently I’m supposed to just be okay with the safety of Overwatch’s chief scientific and medical mind being left in the hands of the elderly and incompetent!” Genji fired back.

Torbjorn turned beet red with fury and opened his mouth to retort but was cut off by Reyes.

“Shimada! Stand down!” Reyes barked and Genji caught himself and looked over his shoulder at Reyes.

“Morrison and I will debrief the others,” said Reyes, “You came here to make sure the Doctor was still alive. She’s still alive. Now back to your quarters.”

“I—” Genji started.

“To your quarters,” said Reyes, his voice steady.

Genji drew a breath shaky with fury before turning on his heel and storming out of the hangar.
“You made her cry, y’know,” McCree said the next day as Genji sullenly hunched over his tablet in the Blackwatch intel center beneath Zurich headquarters, looking over the heavily redacted debriefing of the mission Reyes had given him.

“Genji,” McCree said his name and Genji glanced up. “I said you made Tracer cry. I saw it at breakfast this morning. She zip-zooped right out of the mess hall to try and hide it.”

“That’s not my problem,” said Genji, looking back down at the tablet.

“I know you’re upset over the Doc getting hurt but everyone cares about her just as much as you do. Everyone’s just as upset—” McCree started.

“If everyone cared maybe she wouldn’t have gotten hurt,” Genji’s voice was still tense.

“This shit happens, Genji. Reyes said she’s going to make a full recovery—”

“Maybe you can handle being stuck around Zurich like a useless pile of trash because that’s your natural state, McCree, but I can’t,” said Genji, standing up and pacing around.

A beat passed between the and it hit Genji how harsh his words just then were.

“…Jesus,” said McCree, after a beat.

“I–” Genji’s shoulders tensed, “I didn’t—That wasn’t—” he inhaled, “I’m sorry.”

“You’re messed up, Genji,” said McCree, “But I get it. You should apologize to Tracer, too.”

“I should…” Genji said quietly, “I mean I will but—I will.”

“Go take care of what you need to take care of,” said McCree, “Get your head right.”

“Mm,” Genji gave a single nod.

——

“It’s important that Doctor Ziegler not be disturbed at this time,” said the Omnic nurse posted outside Mercy’s room in the infirmary.

“I know,” said Genji, “I won’t wake her up. I just.. I need to see her. I’ll be short.”

“Well… you are on her list of approved visitors…” said the Omnic, stepping aside.

“I am?” said Genji, “I–I mean, thank you.” He pressed the panel at the side of the door and it slid open. He stepped in and it closed behind him.

Mercy looked a lot better than she had the previous night—of course, cleaning all the blood off of someone and putting them in a hospital gown would do that. Her hair was down, splashed around her head on the pillow like a halo.

“Our guardian angel,” an uncomfortably familiar voice spoke and Genji whirled on his heel to see Moira leaning against the wall in the corner of the room. She had taken to dressing a bit more casually since Blackwatch’s suspension, dressed in a quarter-sleeve boat-necked black shirt and high-waisted faded jeans. She stepped alongside Genji, looming over Mercy in her hospital bed. Moira clicked her tongue with pity, “The state of you…” she said to Mercy, with an almost theatrical sorrowfulness.
Genji flinched away from Moira. “You’re on the approved list of visitors?” he blurted out.

“The list of what now?” said Moira, folding her arms and tilting her head, “Oh–no. Well, probably not. But better to ask forgiveness than beg permission and all that. Considering I wouldn’t even be in Blackwatch without the efforts of our esteemed Doctor here.”

“What?” said Genji.

“I never told you?” said Moira, before she glanced off and muttered, “Of course I never told you, why would I tell you?” she caught herself and cleared her throat, “Ah, well… prior to your…” Moira gestured up and down at Genji. “Joining, of Overwatch, I was actually a scientist of great esteem. The position our dear Doctor Ziegler holds now? Well, once upon a time, that position was mine.”

Genji’s eyes narrowed.

“Once,” said Moira, stepping around Mercy’s hospital bed, “I had as many resources at my disposal as she does now. But then I make the mistake of publishing my findings, as any scientist worth their salt would do, and when other scientists were unable to replicate the results of my experiments, when other scientists decry my methods as ‘unethical,’ then everyone leaps for my throat. And then who should show up then but dear little Angela Ziegler? The Crisis orphan? The child prodigy? ‘I looked up to you once’ she says, and with only a few words to Morrison I am cast down from my position. My funding is cut and I am forced, for the sake of Overwatch’s reputation, to tender my resignation. But of course, I’m too useful to really be let go, so Morrison just lets Reyes scoop me right up from where he dropped me. Overwatch let my reputation and my grants burn, but still there is work to be done, so here I am.” She looked down at Mercy in the hospital bed, “Here I am,” she said once more, as if Mercy could hear her. “She’s easier to control than I was,” Moira said quietly, “I suppose Morrison likes that.”

“She is not ‘easy to control,’” said Genji, his hand balling into a fist at his side, “She’s a good person.”

“One’s willingness to be defined as quote unquote ‘a good person’ determines how easy one is to control,” said Moira with a smile, “We once let our morality be defined by people who burned anyone with a heliocentric theory of the solar system at the stake. Are we really willing to put our preconceived notions of morality above that of which we perceive with our own eyes?”

“You’re glad she got hurt,” Genji’s voice was dark.

“That’s not really the right word for it,” said Moira, unfolding her tablet and projecting a blue hologram of an artist’s mannequin-like model of the human body—a section of its back highlighted yellow, “I’m not glad she got hurt so much as I’m willing to make the most of it. You see, our dear Doctor Ziegler has these biotic spinal implants of her own design that she lets almost no one get a good look at. I was simply here to compile what biometric data I could about their design. I can’t exactly run a full MRI on her.”

“…Maybe she thought whoever had the design wouldn’t use it with good intentions,” said Genji, watching Moira squint at the hologram on her tablet.

“Science isn’t about good intentions, Genji,” said Moira, spinning the hologram around with a flick of her wrist, “Science is about truth. But Overwatch doesn’t care about truth. Overwatch doesn’t care about you or me or her,” Moira gestured at Mercy, “Overwatch cares about Overwatch. And I’m sure you realize that by now.”
Genji winced a little bit where he stood. “If you aren’t on Doctor Ziegler’s list of approved guests, you should leave,” he said, squaring his shoulders.

“Of course, Agent Shimada,” said Moira disappearing in a wisp of smoke.

Genji took a steadying breath where he stood before looking down at Mercy.

“You are a good person,” he said, just as much to himself as to her. He walked towards the door and pressed a panel next to it, opening it. “I’ll be here when you wake up,” he said, before walking through.
“No, mum, I’m not going to quit, it was just a mission that went a little rough, that’s all!” Tracer was talking into her phone as she descended the stairs. She huffed and held the phone away from her ear as a wail was let out on the other end. “Not ‘a little rough’ like the slipstream incident, no,” said Tracer, bringing the phone back to her ear, “It wasn’t even me that got hurt this time–No I didn’t get hurt back during the Null Sector Uprising–I mean I did but the doc–Mum, if you could just let me fini–MUM!” Tracer took a steadying breath as the ranting continued on the other end of the phone before saying, “I’m fine. My team is going to be fine. I–no, where did you hear that? I mean yeah there’s investigations, sure, but that’s part of being in a UN-sponsored organization. Every country has some concerns about something. It’s going to be fine, mum. I’m going to be fine. And stop watching that Clapham guy! You know he’s awful, and inaccurate, and he only stresses you out!” Tracer paused again, “I love you too, Mum,” she said quietly, “Take care.” She hung up and sighed, slumping her weight against the wall of the stairwell.

“Oxton,” Tracer heard a raspy voice and flinched hard, the chronal anomalies of a near-recall fizzing around her in a pale blue light. She whirled on her heel to see Genji perched half a floor above her in the stairwell. Tracer’s brow furrowed, “Y’know you can just walk up to people like normal. You don’t need to sneak up and scare them.”

“I wasn’t–” Genji started but then descended the stairs, “I didn’t mean to frighten you.”

“You don’t scare me,” said Tracer, stiffly.

“You just said–” Genji started then scoffed and tried to focus, “I–I wanted to apologize.”

Tracer blinked.

“I was… emotional. And I took it out on you. And you didn’t deserve that. Torbjörn was right. I had no right talking like that about a mission I wasn’t even on. So,” Genji straightened his shoulders, “I’m sorry.” He bowed, brisk and a bit stiff—not sarcastic in the gesture so much as someone who knew it was the appropriate gesture yet almost never bothered with it.

“Oh Genji,” there was a softness in Tracer’s voice that made Genji’s stomach tense.

“And I will continue training you in close quarters combat,” said Genji, “And–and you are getting better. You need a better idea of where your recall will leave you in relation to your opponent, but you are getting better.” He wasn’t making eye contact.

“McCree told you I was crying, didn’t he?” said Tracer, folding her arms.

“I… heard no such thing,” said Genji, “This was just the appropriate thing to do.”

“You don’t need to pretend about it,” said Tracer, “I know I’m–I’m too young, and I’m stupid, and I have this–this big stupid thing in the middle of my chest that I don’t even really know how to use —”

“No one would know how to use that!” said Genji, gesturing at the chronal accelerator, “Literally nothing like it or like you has existed before! Ever! But you know how to use it and you want to use it to help people and that’s–that’s…” Genji huffed, “I don’t want to… alarm you or make you worry, but I think Morrison would have given up months ago if you hadn’t come along. And if Morrison had given up, Reyes would have given up.”
“…no pressure then,” said Tracer.

“That was meant to be a compliment to you. You… you make people want to believe in heroes. It’s why they put you on the posters. It’s why they keep coming to you for commentary for the holovids. I know how to infiltrate. How to kill. I know how to fulfill my missions. You actually give people something they can trust. Something they can believe in.”

Tracer’s shoulders slumped a little. “Thank you,” she said, folding her arms under her chronal accelerator. “Y’know, there’s a lot of times where I wish you were on my team, too. I like Reinhardt and Torbjörn but… you’re a good teacher.”

“Thank you,” said Genji.

“Plus you’re all… cool and mysterious,” said Tracer.

“I–I am?” said Genji, bewildered. He shook his head. “You don’t have to–”

“What, you give me all that stuff about ‘Oh Reyes and Morrison would have given up without you’ and you expect me to just let you walk off like that? You’re a good agent, Genji, and I mean it when I say I want you on my team.”

“I wouldn’t want me on the team considering my behavior–” Genji muttered.

“If you were on the team you could at least say you did the best you could to keep Doctor Ziegler safe,” said Tracer with a shrug.

Genji visibly tensed at her words.

“That’s who this was about, wasn’t it?” said Tracer, smirking a little, “Rein and Torb and I–we’ve had missions go south before. And you’ve responded to those missions with about as much care as breakfast that morning. But the second something happens to the Doc you just—” Tracer snapped her fingers and Genji glanced off.

“She saved my life,” said Genji, “And–and she’s very important to this organization…” he trailed off.

Tracer tilted her head with a smile. It wasn’t pity in her eyes, but there was an ‘Oh you’ in her expression that made him bristle with frustration. She had no business acting all knowing considering she was about a decade younger than him.

“Are you going to keep giving me that look or are you going to accept my apology?” said Genji, stiffly.

Tracer just smirked. “Apology accepted,” she said, “‘Y’know, I could be an arse and say my acceptance is on the condition that you actually tell Doctor Ziegler how you–”

“Then I would curse you out, and make you cry, and then we’d be right back where we started,” said Genji, folding his arms.

Tracer just kept smirking. “Maybe I was too quick on the ‘cool and mysterious’ thing,” she said, putting her hands on her hips.

“I suppose you’ll just have to keep up your ‘hero’ thing for the both of us, Oxton,” said Genji. He paused, “I–Thank you. For accepting my apology.”
“Holding grudges is tiring,” said Tracer with a shrug, “I do hope the higher-ups find a way to get you off the bench, Genji.”

“Well, being an ass to you definitely isn’t helping things,” said Genji.

“Chin up,” she gave his shoulder a gentle punch, “It’ll turn out all right.”

“You really mean that when you say it, don’t you?” said Genji.

“Well yeah,” said Tracer with an eyebrow waggle as she continued on her way down the stairs, “Part of the hero job, y’know.”
Mercy stirred awake to find herself in a bed in Zurich Headquarters’ medical ward. Panic gripped her briefly—the others, had they made it? She remembered the feel of Reinhardt’s armored arms carrying her, the warbling feedback of Tracer’s chronal accelerator zipping about in a panic.

“You’re not on the mission,” she remembered Genji’s voice, “You’re back at headquarters. You’re safe.”

No, that couldn’t be right. Protocol wouldn’t have Genji down in the hangar when they touched down. She must have dreamed that. She moved to adjust herself in bed to press the button to call whatever nurse was on duty when she heard a rustle of paper. She glanced down to see a folded up piece of notepad stationery that read ‘From the desk of Jack Morrison’ at the top with ‘Jack Morrison’ scribbled out. She arched an eyebrow at the odd intimacy of the note’s positioning but then instantly recognized the handwriting.

Doctor Ziegler,

Genji. She rolled her eyes. Of course Genji would sneak notebook paper off of Jack’s desk. He was only getting more impatient with Blackwatch benched.

If you’re reading this, Reyes or Sojourn called me off before you woke up. Oxton, Lindholm, and Wilhelm are all fine (you were worrying about them before you passed out.)

Mercy breathed a sigh of relief, then tilted her head. So he was at the hangar that night.

I’ll be back as soon as I can–unless they put me on a mission! (That is a joke. They are going to keep Blackwatch locked down here forever—or at least however long the organization has). Please take it easy and get well soon.

Until next time,

Genji

She huffed a little at the poorly crossed-out sentence. “Oh Genji,” she said, with a sigh, pushing her hair back. The door slid open and Mercy instinctively shoved the note down under the sheet of her bed, as if it was a little girl’s note being passed around in class and the teacher had reached her desk. She immediately felt a little ridiculous with the action. It was just a get-well soon note, not really worth hiding aside from the fact that Genji had snuck the paper off of Morrison’s desk.

“Genji?” she leaned up in bed slightly but the man who came through the door was not Genji. It was Reinhardt. He was in full civilian clothes, which Mercy found odd—usually Reinhardt donned at least one emblem of Overwatch on his clothing with pride even when he was out of his armor. He had a bouquet of irises, sweet pea, and hyacinth. He flinched in the doorway as he made eye contact with her and she smiled a little.

“Oh—” he said, his voice quieter than normal and a bit stuffed up, “You’re awake.”

“It’s good to see you well, Reinhardt,” said Mercy.

“Yes, well,” Reinhardt cleared his throat and stepped over, placing the bouquet on the beside table next to her hospital bed, “It is a relief to see you recovering as well, Doctor Ziegler. I’m afraid I cannot stay long, though.”
“I understand,” said Mercy, as Reinhardt turned back towards the door, “Thank you for dropping by.”

Reinhardt gave her an oddly stiff nod as he paused at the door. “It… has been an honor being your shield, Doctor Ziegler.”

“‘Has been?’” Mercy repeated.

Reinhardt wasn’t looking at her.

“Reinhardt?” Mercy said his name in question but he didn’t say anything. He passed through the door.
“Oh for–” Mercy frowned, scrolling through the tablet as she walked down the hall of Zurich’s medical ward, “Who in anesthesiology approved this compound for post-surgery?”

“Well you insisted that the transition to the new prosthetics happen with as little damage to the patient’s remaining organic organs as possible,” said one of the Blackwatch Cyberneticists walking alongside her, “This compound is the safest for that.”

“Well, yes, but Mr. Shimada’s mental state is already delicate enough without these… side effects,” said Mercy.

“He’ll be fiiiiine, dude was probably doing mountains of coke and god knows what else back with the Shimada clan,” said another Blackwatch cyberneticist. Mercy shot that cyberneticist a glare and the first cyberneticist made a cutting motion next to her neck and shook her head.

Mercy just huffed. “The new prosthetics are responding to basic reflexes?” she said, looking at the first Cyberneticist.

“Yes. They’ll probably need some further calibration as he recovers more from the surgery, but we have nervous connection.”

The three of them paused in front of the door.

“We’ll leave you to it, Doctor Ziegler,” said the second cyberneticist. Mercy nodded as they headed down the hall and she opened the door.

She had to admit, she liked the new prosthetics–better than the old ones anyway. Taupe sarcofibers stretched across his torso and over the frames of his new prosthetic legs. More muscle-like movement, better shock absorption for how much he jumped around. It still was markedly different from organic flesh, certainly, but less jarring than the mass of black, white, and red metal and fibers and red and black wires which wracked his previous form. Lighter, too. They’d need him to go through the tedious process of going through different armors to protect the new prosthetics with the least amount of sacrifice to his movement, but the new prosthetics would be significantly lighter.

Genji was awake already. Sitting up in bed, even. She knew the biotic feed running into his organic arm would keep the new organ grafts from damaging themselves. She had noted in previous observations that he seemed to metabolize and burn through sedatives far faster than most humans. Her gut told her that it was something to do with the dragon, but she feared recording such things in Genji’s medical records might make him more of a lab subject than he already was.

She saw Genji was staring at his hands and her stomach knotted. She knew that the transition between prosthetics was easy to make him feel even more disconnected from his body. She stepped forward, ready to say something comforting, but noticed something odd about the way he was moving his hands. His pupils were completely dilated and he was slowly trailing his hands up and down in front of himself, his expression not disgusted, but almost awed.

“Genji?” she spoke softly, not wanting to startle him.

“My hands have ghosts,” he said, waving his hands up and down.

Aaaaand I’m firing that anesthesiologist, thought Mercy.
“How are you feeling?” she asked, smiling a little.

Genji blinked several times and looked up from his hands to her. His cybernetic jaw dropped. “Doctor Ziegler?” he said, eyes wide.

“Yes, Genji, it’s me, you may experience some disorientation with your current painkill—”

“You’re glowing,” Genji leaned dangerously far over the side of the bed towards her.

Mercy took a few steps forward and gently took him by his shoulders. “Your vision is also probably affected—strobing, doubles, more vivid colors, nothing too extreme— but I assure you, it’s temporary,” she said, re-centering him on the bed so he didn’t fall out.

“You’re so strong,” Genji said in awe, his hand trailed up toward her hair, “And yellow…” he reached a hand up toward it.

Mercy managed to put her hand over his and bring it down before he could touch at her hair. “You’re also experiencing some loss of inhibitions,” she said, pulling away slightly.

“Mm,” Genji nodded.

“So I’m just here to ask you if you’re in any pain and see how the prosthetics are treating you,” said Mercy, trying to get him to focus.

“Hmm,” Genji nodded.

“So are you in pain?” said Mercy.

“No,” said Genji.

“Good,” said Mercy, “And the prosthetics?”

Genji looked at his hands, then started slowly waving them up and down once more. He was quiet for a few beats before holding up his prosthetic hand and saying, “This one’s not real.”

“But does it work?” asked Mercy.

Genji curled and uncurled the fingers of his prosthetic hand, then suddenly loosely flailed it back and forth. “It doesn’t jiggle like the old one!” he said, eyes wide while still flailing his hand.

“The old one jigged?” said Mercy.

Genji stopped flailing his hand and pointed to the thumb joint on his prosthetic hand. “Here,” he said, “But not anymore.” He paused, “Was it your idea?”

“Well, I had been hoping to update your prosthetics for a while,” said Mercy.

“You’re so smart,” Genji flopped back against his pillows, “…and you… you look like that? All the time?”

“Well, as I’ve said, you may be experiencing some blooming and strobing with your vision right n—”

“You’re like the sun,” Genji went on, “…But… if you could actually look at the sun. And the sun was beautiful. And the sun has eyes. Kuso, your eyes are huge.”
Mercy snorted. While she was still miffed that the anesthesiologist would make Genji so disoriented, she had to admit, it was a bit of a relief to see him not obsessively brooding over the Shimada clan for once. The stream of compliments was, admittedly, disarming, but intel had said Genji had been more than a bit of a charmer back before losing his body... maybe his confusion was bringing that through. It had occurred to her that she had almost never seen him smiling until now.

Well I think you should be getting some rest, Genji,” she said with a slight smile.

“Your’e leaving?” there was a sadness in Genji’s voice.

Well I have other patients to get t–” Mercy opened the door to find McCree standing outside.

“…Doc,” said McCree.

“McCree,” said Mercy, furrowing her brows, “Reyes sent you?”

“Well, just to check on Genji…” McCree stepped through the doorway.

“And I’m guessing I wasn’t supposed to still be in here,” said Mercy, arching an eyebrow.

“Maybe,” said McCree glancing down.

“Well as you can see, Genji’s doing fine,” said Mercy, flatly.

“Look, Reyes was just concerned because you pushed through really fast with this surgery without much oversight from him–” He paused and looked at Genji’s legs, “You got rid of the calf blades?”

“If Reyes had his way, we would have been waiting until Genji went through catastrophic prosthetic failure before we replaced them,” said Mercy, folding her arms, “And yes we got rid of the calf blades. They were awful.”

“Well I mean, if it ain’t broke…” McCree started but made the wise choice of not finishing that sentence with Mercy glaring at him.

“Doctor Ziegler, McCree is here,” said Genji, who was slowly waving his hands around again.

“I can see that, Genji,” said Mercy.

“How you holdin’ up?” said McCree, smiling over at Genji.

Genji gave a thumbs up with his prosthetic hand and then pointed to it, “No jiggling,” he said proudly.

McCree noted the odd amount of relaxation in Genji’s expression and the ease with which he was slumped against the pillows.

“They got you on the good stuff, partner?” smirked McCree, arching an eyebrow at Genji’s I.V.

“Good stuff?” Genji repeated dreamily, looking at his hand again and turning it over.

“Yeah they got you on the good stuff,” said McCree.

Genji seemed to perk up at remembering something, “McCree–” he said in a loud whisper and motioned for McCree to come closer.
“Mm?” McCree leaned in a little

Genji motioned with his head at Angela. “Look,” he said quietly.

McCree glanced over at Mercy. “What?” he looked back at Genji, “The doc?”

Genji nodded.

“…what about her?” said McCree.

“She looks like that,” Genji gripped McCree’s shoulders and his voice dropped to a loud hoarse whisper, “All the time.”

“Yeeeup, that’s sort of how people work, Genji,” said McCree, gently pulling Genji’s hands off of his shoulders.

“It’s amazing…” Genji said quietly.

“Yeah I’m just going to let you sleep this off,” said McCree, grinning as he pulled away.

“Mm-hm,” Genji nodded and glanced out the window, staring for a few seconds before saying, “The mountains are breathing.”

“They sure are,” said McCree, stepping towards the door, “Oh I’m going to give him so much shit for this later,” he whispered to Mercy.

“Good bye, McCree,” said Mercy flatly.

McCree tipped his hat and headed out the door.

Mercy closed it behind him.

“I need to get going too,” she said, looking back at Genji, “Try to get some sleep.”

“Doctor Ziegler?” Genji spoke up and she paused in the doorway.

“Thank you,” said Genji. He gave his prosthetic hand a demonstrative flail. “No jiggle.”

Mercy smiled. “Call me if you need anything,” she said.

Genji nodded and looked out the window again.
Genji had set up a makeshift table of a wooden plank atop a crate of rum bottles. The hurricane rattled at the factory windows, but the two of them were oddly cozy despite holing up in the distillery of a Talon shell company as Sojourn and her people questioned Maximilien back at the sea fort. It had been hours—Overwatch had to scrub the sea fort and distillery, and a handful of blue-armored agents passed by here and there, poring over the offices and running scans on the distillery barrels. Genji and Mercy had finished their debriefing with Sojourn, but opted to wait for Tracer and Winston to finish their own debriefings before they would head back to the hotel. Tracer and Winston’s debriefings were taking unusually long though. And exhaustion setting in as it was, Mercy and Genji had taken to passing the time as best they could after a harrowing mission facing down hundreds of Talon thugs.

“Don Rumbotico,” Mercy squinted at the label, before her eyes flicked up to Genji, “I’m really not a rum person.”

“It’s got that sugary burning,” Genji agreed, “Almost cinnamon-y. Not clean like sake or gin.”

“Exactly,” Mercy gestured with her glass toward him before they both threw back a shot.

“Terrible,” said Genji.

“Terrible,” agreed Mercy.

They both refilled their glasses.

“I mean,” Genji shrugged, “Quality is quality, though.”

“So you’ve said,” said Mercy with a grin.

“This isn’t dinner by the way,” said Genji.

“Rum is not dinner, no,” said Mercy, tilting her head, “And you haven’t bought anything, we’re just compromising evidence.”

“To compromise,” said Genji holding his glass out. Mercy clinked her glass against his and both threw back another shot.

“What I mean is I’m still going to buy you dinner,” said Genji, clearing his throat.

“I figured as such,” said Mercy, resting her chin in her hand, “You’re very gentlemanly like that, did you know that?”

“Gentlem–I’m not–You asked me to buy you dinner,” said Genji.

“But clearly you’re holding yourself to a standard when it comes to that,” said Mercy.

“That standard is, ‘actual food’ and ‘probably takeout considering both our schedules.’ Believe me, if I could take you out to a restaurant with too-small portion sizes and candlelight and music, I would.”

“Why does the restaurant have too-small portion sizes?” said Mercy with a laugh in her voice.

“Because it’s nice. The really nice places always assume you’re there to look good rather than
actually eat,” said Genji, “We’d get an ice cream or a kosher corndog at a bodega afterward, obviously.”


“Romance?” Genji repeated.

“I–Well–you said candlelight—” Mercy stumbled over her words.

“Oh–I mean I just figured you’d like some atmosphere—”

“Yes well obviously it’s nice to get away from work—”

“But of course the whole thing would be—”

“Professional,” they said at the same time. Mercy briskly refilled both their glasses and both of them took a shot, avoiding eye contact.

“I mean, I would–if there wasn’t… all this,” said Genji his throat burning with rum, as he gestured around, “You know you’re… well… you’re… amazing. Whoever you choose to be with will probably be the luckiest person in the world.”

Mercy reddened. “I–” she forced a laugh, “Whoever I choose to be with will have to get used to absurdly late nights in the lab or infirmary and me just coming home and passing out.”

“Well, from my experience, spending all night with you in that lab isn’t bad at all,” said Genji.

A long tense pause passed between them as both considered the weight of what Genji had just said.

“We should hydrate—” Mercy started.

“Get something to eat—” Genji suggested.

“Has Sojourn called? Or Tracer?” Mercy feverishly began clicking through her comm feed.

“Should probably arrange for a ride back to the hotel,” said Genji looking around for what Overwatch agent would be best to talk to for that.

“This was silly—” Mercy started.

“Compromising evidence—” Genji agreed.

“One more shot?” said Mercy.

“I mean we did just find out Doomfist’s location after a life-threatening mission,” said Genji.

They refilled their glasses, interlocked their arms at the elbows and made eye contact.

“To the mission,” said Mercy, “To catching Doomfist.”

“To the mission,” said Genji, in agreement.

They threw back one last shot, then made eye contact once more, their arms still interlocked, still holding their glasses a few inches from their lips, mouths burning from rum.

A mad part of Mercy that she was desperately tamping back thought, I wouldn’t stop you if you kissed me right now.
An equally impulsive part of Genji thought, *If I was as much of an asshole now as I was three years ago, I would kiss you right now.*

But those thoughts fell muted off to the side as an overwatch agent buried in their tablet walked awkwardly close to them. Genji and Mercy both unlocked their arms from each other and shared an awkward laugh.

“…back to the hotel?” said Mercy, pushing her hair back.

“Yes. We… probably should,” said Genji, glancing off. He pinged the strike team’s comm channel for possible transportation and easy as that, a car was on the way. Another long pause passed, “I don’t think spending time with you is silly,” he blurted out.

“What?”

“It’s not silly. You’re fun. You think you’re dry and boring and people just… put up with you, but you’re not and they don’t. You’re passionate and funny and smart and you care *so much* and–and–and I’m going to stop talking before I make this weirder than it already is.”

Mercy smiled. “Thank you, Genji.”

“I’m happy to have your back, both on the mission and just being around the lab and–and I’m making this weird–I need to stop talking. This is why rum is terrible.”

“It is terrible,” Mercy agreed. She elbowed him a little. “But thank you.”
Mercy rubbed her eyes. It was getting to that point of the night where all the data lines were starting to look the same. She ran a hand through her hair. Greasy. How long had she been working? She had showered pretty much immediately when they got back from Havana, but had barely towed off when Overwatch’s labtechs started blowing up her comms as soon as they heard she was back from the mission. No time to even sleep off the Orca-lag, not to mention the exhaustion from the mission itself. She reached for her ‘self-medicating’ mug and found it was empty, then slumped back in her seat and sighed. She swiveled in her chair to look at the coffee pot on the left lab counter behind her and noticed it was about a third shorter than it should be. Her brows furrowed.

“Genji,” she said, not even turning around.

She only heard an obnoxiously loud sip in response. Cheeky. She swiveled to see Genji perched on the opposite lab counter, stolen mess hall mug in hand, stolen coffee in mug, mask off, and a large plastic bag with a carnation and ‘Thank You’ in red text on it on the counter next to him. They locked eyes and he sipped the coffee again, his scars only enhancing the smugness on his face.

“As I recall, ninja stealth skills are meant for missions, not sneaking around the base,” said Mercy, smirking.

“Must the two be mutually exclusive?” said Genji. He pushed off of the counter, picking up the bag with him and walking over to her. “How’s everything going?”

“I would say ‘It’s going’ but it would hardly seem to be doing that,” said Mercy, giving a glance back to her screen.

“Then a break wouldn’t hurt,” said Genji. He held up the bag, “You missed dinner hours at the mess hall. And you did say I owed you a dinner. Not exactly candlelit cuisine, but I paid a visit to that Kosher place you like.”

Mercy’s stomach growled from the very thought of food and the faint smell of Tzatziki and garlic coming from the bag. Oh right. You couldn’t replace every meal with coffee. That was not a doctorly thing to do.

“My hero,” the words fell out of her.

“Your gyro,” said Genji, holding the tinfoil-wrapped wrap out to her.

She snickered and took it from him, unwrapping it and biting into it before slumping back against her seat with a heavenly sigh as the first food hit her system in god-knew how many hours. Fats. Proteins. Starches. Vitamin C and sugars from the tomatoes. The appetite loss from her coffee buckled and fell away in the wave of ecstasy from consuming actual food. She briefly lost herself in the first few bites before managing to blurt out a “Fankf,” that was supposed to be a ‘Thanks’ with her mouth full that Genji just chuckled at while he ate his own gyro as well. She had taken down two thirds of the gyro when she finally slowed down and looked up at Genji.

“It’s a bit late for you too, isn’t it?” she said, wiping a bit of tzatziki off the corner of her mouth, “You should be getting rest, especially with the Doomfist mission coming up.”

“Probably the reason I’m still up, to be honest,” said Genji.
“And you’re usually still up at this hour,” said Mercy, arching an eyebrow.

“That too,” conceded Genji, “But… I know it won’t be over after this—there’s still so much we don’t know about Talon. It feels strange to finally get a bead on one of its leaders now. To have Maximilien just… hand him over to us like this…”

“It’s far from trustworthy,” Mercy agreed, “But Talon’s already been destabilized by Doomfist ascending its ranks, if we have a chance to take advantage of that…” she took a bite of her gyro, “We can’t let it flip—” she swallowed, “I mean, slip.”

“I know…” Genji sighed, “Talon has the advantage of being able to play a long game. It can let itself fade into obscurity—in fact, it benefits from its own obscurity. Meanwhile, we have to deliver results to the UN and the people of the world, let them know we’re keeping them safe. And we have to be transparent about it. We can’t attack from the shadows anymore.”

“Do you miss Blackwatch?” asked Mercy, before taking another bite of her gyro.

Genji glanced off “I don’t know…” he said quietly, “It’s hard to tell how much of my memories of it are distorted by my anger at the time. I want to say I feel like we, as in Overwatch, collectively, were getting more done when we had it… but Venice probably blew any progress we made with Talon out of the water and just ended up hurting Overwatch more in the end so…”

“But you were just a bystander,” said Mercy, gesturing at him with the remains of her gyro and grinning, “That’s what you said.”

“And if you can’t trust your ninja, who can you trust?” said Genji with a shrug.

Mercy just chuckled a little at this.

A pause passed between them as Mercy finished her gyro and Genji managed to make it two thirds into his. He chewed tentatively for a few seconds before saying, “We need to get this right.”

“Mm?” Mercy was dusting off flatbread crumbs from her lap.

“Doomfist,” said Genji, “Overwatch needs this. You’ve been saying that Reyes and Morrison have been arguing more and more and with Tracer’s strike team nearly getting reassigned when it’s only barely started…”

“I would miss working with you,” said Mercy, smiling a little.

“As would I,” said Genji. He didn’t really want to say his other concerns. You’re a doctor. The world will always need people like you. If Overwatch falls, where does that leave me? If I don’t even know if I’m man or machine—Not a Shimada Ninja, not an Overwatch Agent—

“You’ll get him,” Mercy’s voice cut through the fog of thoughts.

“Mm?” Genji perked up slightly.

“Doomfist,” she said, reaching forward and putting a reassuring hand on his arm, “You can do this. I have complete faith in you.”

Genji smiled. “Thank you, Doctor Ziegler.”

“Anytime, Genji,” said Mercy, “But you know now you also owe me a bag of coffee beans sometime, too. So you’d better come back from that mission safe.”
Genji chuckled. “Of course.”
The hospital wing that had been allocated for those injured in the attack was sunlit, bright and cheery, with children’s drawings covering the wall. They didn’t have intention of staying there too long. Eventually Mercy would have to get back to Zurich and Genji would go wherever Reyes needed him next, but in the meantime Genji’s injuries needed treatment, and they couldn’t exactly travel in the Orca with Tracer in the state she was in.

“How is she?” Genji wasn’t making eye contact, only sullenly looking down at the knuckles and fingers of his prosthetic hand seizing up as sparks ran over them.

“Well, she’s finally managing to stay in one spot,” said Mercy, “But she’s still… blinking in and out,” she exhaled, “Winston’s got that stabilizer working but I don’t know how stable the stabilizer is so all we can do is hope he finishes the repairs to the accelerator before the stabilizer explodes or Tracer shuts it down herself and gets thrown 20 years into the future or heaven knows what or—” Mercy caught herself and glanced back at Genji, who was giving her one of those long, steady looks. She stopped and exhaled, “She’s fine,” she said, briefly touching Genji’s shoulder, “She’ll be fine.”

Genji scoffed under his breath, “I should have rebound off of that car instead of slicing through it—broken his line of sight, maybe then she would have had a better opportunity to—” he huffed, “It was a stupid mistake. I–ngh!” Several sparks flew across Genji’s chest and he winced inward.

“Easy!” said Mercy, “Easy…” Genji looked up at her again. “It wasn’t a stupid mistake,” she said, hands gingerly reaching out to find the catches on his armor, “I watched as much security footage as they could pick up. You… reacted accordingly. Akande Ogundimu’s trained for years to recognize and counteract his opponents”—

“I know,” Genji cut her off. Mercy’s brow furrowed and her mouth drew to a thin line and Genji caught himself. “Sorry…” he said, glancing off, “I know you’re only trying to–ngh–” he suddenly gripped his shoulder as sparks flew over it, “I know you’re only trying to help.”

“So let me help,” said Mercy, gently moving his hand aside and working at the armor on his shoulder. She pressed one catch and the plate on his shoulder clicked off.

“Be careful,” said Genji, “I can’t tell when it’s going to—”

Green sparks ran over the surface of his armor and Mercy jolted back with a sharp gasp.

“Did it get you?” asked Genji.

“I’m fine, I’m fine,” said Mercy, “The sparking was supposed to stop when you pressed on the catches. I’ll get some people on that.”

“It feels like I only just got this armor and I’m already destroying it,” said Genji, glancing down at himself, “It is far more practical than my previous—” he glanced up and snorted, then quickly glanced down again.

“What?” said Mercy.

“Nothing,” said Genji, clearly trying to suppress a laugh.

“What—is there something on my—?” Mercy’s hand went up and she found all of her hair was
sticking out on end from the electrical shock. “Verdammt,” she sighed.

“It’s a good look,” said Genji with a chuckle before he flinched again from his own electrical shocks.

“We’d better get it off before it damages the prosthetics any further,” said Mercy, tying her hair back in a ponytail before pulling on a thicker pair of gloves. She removed the remaining plates with some ease.

“…You watch all my fights?” said Genji as she was clicking off his armor.

“What?” she glanced up at him.

“You said you watched all available footage of Doomfist’s capture. Do you watch every mission?”

A soft laugh escaped her, “You’re in Blackwatch,” she said, taking off his chest plate, “I couldn’t watch any footage of those missions even if there was and even if I wanted to. It’s mostly your training footage and your work in our more high-profile missions like this one. Just to make sure the prostheses are working properly.”

“…I looked foolish rushing in against him, didn’t I?” said Genji.

Mercy shook her head, “You were flanking him–it was a strategy anyone with common sense would go for. Granted, most couldn’t do it running on the side of a building, but If anything you were operating at optimal levels,” she said.

“I suppose I want to believe I made a mistake on this mission,” said Genji, “That there was something I should have done differently and he would have gone down much more easily and Oxton wouldn’t be…” Genji trailed off as Mercy got the last of his armor off.

“To be fair, you’ve been pretty focused on the Shimada clan and they don’t… exactly operate on Ogundimu’s level…” she smiled a little, grabbing her caduceus staff and administering a stream of biotics to him, “At least not anymore. You did well Genji. We caught him. We caught Doomfist. We’ve never been able to do that before.”

“Winston caught him,” said Genji, folding his arms.

“You helped,” said Mercy, grinning.

“I helped a little,” muttered Genji, then his voice dropped slightly, “And then I got thrown into the side of a car.”

Mercy huffed. She was still forcing the smile slightly, but Genji could tell it was fading. “It was still something,” she said, trying to press her bangs back down to her forehead, but still finding them sticking up, “No wonder Reyes hogged you all to himself in the beginning. I’d want you on my team every mission, too.”

Genji straightened up in his seat a bit, then rubbed the back of his neck. “I-I see,” he cleared his throat, “Thank you, Doctor Ziegler.” A long pause passed between them, filled only with the soft whirring chime of the caduceus staff. “I suppose I could say the same to you,” he said, smirking beneath his faceplate as he watched the stream of biotics, “That would make this far more convenient.”

Mercy snickered.
“Is this really necessary?” Genji muttered as Tracer straightened his tie.

The three of them were at the headquarters of the Adawe Foundation in Numbani, more specifically at the Adawe Foundation’s New Year’s Eve Gala, a celebration that heavily centered on Overwatch. The four of them were in a lounge-like waiting room just outside the restrooms of the higher offices. Enough to give them some privacy as they did some last minute prep before heading out into the Gala.

McCree had muttered something about it being a “Victory over Doomfist” party, and Tracer had teased that McCree was bitter that he didn’t get an invite, which didn’t exactly go over well considering Blackwatch was still suspended. Jack, however, was keen to emphasize that they had caught Doomfist in Singapore over two months previously and that this celebration was largely to maintain Overwatch’s mutual support with Numbani. They knew though. The whole strike team knew. Overwatch needed that win and now it needed to capitalize on it. Genji didn’t like the idea of being in the spotlight. Only a year or so ago newscasters were looking at blurred footage of him in the Venice incident like he was some monster, some horrific amalgam of Overwatch’s scientific sins, and now he was on the posters—all gleaming armor and glowing green visor. And now a tie.

“If I can handle a tie, so can you,” said Tracer. Genji just grumbled under his breath. When Tracer wore a tie, she actually pulled it off. She didn’t look like a jigsaw of machine parts juxtaposed on a human’s suit.

“As the new strike team, we do have a responsibility to put our best faces forward!” said Winston, daintily folding his own pocket square.

Genji hesitantly brushed his fingers along his own faceplate.

“Uh… poor choice of words,” muttered Winston.

“Lena!” Genji heard a disappointed voice on the other side of the room, “Really?” His head instinctively swiveled to the doorway where Mercy was standing in a short, sparkling gold dress and a black silk cropped jacket. Genji attempted to maintain as neutral a reaction as possible to the outfit that he had never seen the doctor in. “You said I wouldn’t be the only one in a dress!”

Tracer’s lips thinned and he laughed nervously, “Well–yeah, but then Em found this frilly shirt and–well–” Tracer was stammering over herself.

“Don’t bother,” muttered Mercy.

“Sorry, Doc,” said Tracer, straightening her bowtie, “Can’t help looking this good.”

“Well now everyone’s in black and I’m stuck—sticking out, and—” she glanced down at herself, then caught Genji’s visor out of the corner of her eye, then caught herself, folding her arms. “It’s fine. This is fine. I’m fine.”

She turned on her heel then, apparently all too easy with her patent leather black wedges, and paced out of the room.

“Oof,” said Tracer. Tracer looked at Genji, then at the doorway, then at Genji, then back at the door.
Genji looked blankly back at her.

“Talk to her,” Tracer mouthed, furrowing her brows and Genji nodded as if he totally knew what he would say to her (he didn’t) and he moved to follow her out the door when the door swung open and Jack walked in, looking more upbeat than he had in months. Mercy was right next to him, apparently caught right outside the door and now smiling her “maintaining-public-relations-while-dead-inside” smile.

“There’s my favorite strike team!” said Jack.

“Really?” Tracer said with a grin, “Are you sure we’re your favorite strike team?”

“Okay, second favorite,” said Jack, clapping her on the shoulder, “But really, I’m so glad you all agreed to this.”

“Who doesn’t like a party?” said Tracer.

I can think of two, thought Genji, glancing at Mercy. Maybe if the party wasn’t going to be four hours of stumbling through conversations with politicians Mercy might have the energy for it, but if something as little as being the only one in their group in a dress was already getting under her skin this much, it was going to be a long last night of the year. A few years ago he would probably already be drunk, hopped up on whatever party drug was fashionable at the moment, and embarrassing his entire family on the dance floor, but the dragon had burned that old Genji away. He rolled the thumb of his prosthetic hand over his knuckles as Jack and Tracer continued talking.

“And the Adawe Foundation represents some of Overwatch’s most critical ambassadorial work after the Crisis,” said Jack, “We couldn’t ask for a better crowd.” He gave a glance down to Tracer’s chronal accelerator. “Are you sure you’re all right with the–?”

“It’s been fine, Commander,” said Tracer, jamming thumb over her shoulder at Winston, “I had the big guy take a look at it special for tonight.”

Winston adjusted his glasses, “The accelerator is in optimum condition, sir,” he said, tucking in his pocket square.

“Hope you guys are ready for a lot of pictures,” said Jack, “Let’s move out.”

—

Sojourn greeted them as soon as they came out of the elevator. Mercy seemed relieved to see her in a dress—a striking asymmetrical scarlet number with her white dreadlocks swept off to one side.

“Lookin’ sharp, team,” Sojourn said, folding her arms with a smirk. Her eyes lit up at Genji, “And look at you!” She rapped a knuckle against Genji’s suit lapels, “Actual cloth? Amazing.”

“Gabriel helped find him one that fits,” said Jack.

“How’s he doing?” said Sojourn, looking at Jack.

“Gabe? Fine—he’s—fine,” said Jack, folding his arms, unsettled by the question, “He—you know, he… gets it.”

Genji felt Tracer, Mercy, and Winston’s eyes flick to him momentarily, as if he might have a better idea what was going on with Blackwatch, but the truth was he didn’t. All he really knew was that he was seeing less and less of Gabriel and Moira, and that just put McCree on edge, who was
already anxious considering Blackwatch was benched and his very position with Overwatch was probationary. Genji tried to read Jack’s face in that moment. He found that Gabriel and Jack were sort of emotional barometers for each other, problems in their minds settling similar lines across their faces. Even though Jack seemed to be puffing out his chest and pushing his ‘Heroic Commander’ persona as much as his receding hairline would allow him, there was an exhaustion in his eyes.

“It’ll be all right, soldier,” said Sojourn, patting Jack’s shoulder.

“Yeah–New Year, right?” said Jack as he and Sojourn walked towards the party’s main hall with the strike team in tow.

The party itself was thankfully not as exhausting as anticipated. The next three and a half hours were a slog though. The first hour was largely Jack and Sojourn walking them around the party, introducing the strike team as a group, before splitting up and leaving them to ‘mingle.’ A word Genji dreaded. Winston and Tracer managed to keep a lot of attention off of him, and what attention was on him was gradually buffed off by his own taciturn responses. Winston on the other hand could lecture more or less indefinitely on physics, and Tracer maintained her dizzying energy, blinking around different conversations of the party, giving little quips about time travel (which of course went over well considering it was New Year’s) and generally being the charming face of Overwatch Jack had been grooming her for. Mercy on the other hand….

Genji watched from across the room as Mercy was caught in a conversation with what looked like a circle of five different dignitaries. He was impressed with how gracious and at-ease she seemed in the conversation in spite of how frazzled she had been with Tracer earlier. She wasn’t Angela in that light, he realized. This was Mercy. Angela Ziegler was all messy buns and thoughtful thumbnail chewing and weary, snarky looks from behind black-rimmed glasses when they stayed up late in the lab together–Mercy was a mask and a shield, keeping people at a distance but dazzling them with her grace and dignity.

“You still gotta talk to her,” said Tracer, brushing past him and sticking two champagne flutes in his hand.

“What?” said Genji but Tracer was already slipping back off into the crowd to take pictures with Winston and a handful of younger Adawe foundation members, leaving him standing awkwardly with the two champagne flutes. He glanced back at the crowd of five that Mercy was caught in and was slightly alarmed to see that Mercy was no longer there. When did she get the chance to slip off? He circled through the party, and found that most left him alone when he was carrying two champagne glasses because they assumed he had somewhere to go, someone to meet, and in a sense they were right, but Genji himself felt aimless and a bit stupid. He couldn’t even drink one of the champagnes, anyway–that would require taking the faceplate off and no, he was not doing that with this crowd.

“15 Minutes to Midnight!” Tracer announced cheerily from the midst of the crowd, and Genji decided to ditch his champagne glasses before he was caught holding them like an idiot when the new year was finally rung in.

A lot of the tables at the party were occupied by chatting couples, so he couldn’t just drop off the glasses there, and it felt odd to trail after one of the waiters carrying trays to put full champagne flutes on their trays–the balcony, he decided. People forgot their drinks on balconies all the time. He stepped outside and saw a familiar figure in a gold dress slumped against the guardrail of the balcony. Mercy had kicked off her heels and was looking out over the city. The exterior of the party was only marginally cooler than the interior–Numbani wasn’t exactly known for cold climes,
after all. The city glittered all green and orange and gold beyond her.

“Angela?” said Genji and Mercy glanced over her shoulder at him.

“Oh,” she pushed up off of the guardrail slightly.

“I um… I got you, well, actually Tracer got you—here,” he held up one of the champagne flutes.

She smiled that weary smile and took it from him, “Thank you, Genji.”

“Is everything okay?” said Genji.

“I should apologize to Tracer,” muttered Mercy, “She looks better in a suit and it was a completely arbitrary thing to be upset about.”

“I think she understands,” said Genji.

“I should be the mature one here, not her,” muttered Mercy, “I mean–Of course she should be mature, she’s team leader, but I shouldn’t be the one getting upset over things as small as wardrobe changes, but she said she would and I would like it if people in this organization actually did what they said they were going to do–and–and–”

“It’s… not about Tracer or the wardrobe change,” said Genji, leaning against the balcony.

“I think… it’s new year’s eve. I know I’m supposed to feel like there’s a fresh start coming, but at the same time, so much feels out of my control,” she looked back over the city, “Overwatch put away one the biggest threats to world peace since the Omnic Crisis but I just… it feels wrong. It feels rotten.”

“…It feels too easy,” said Genji.

Mercy’s shoulders bunched up, “It wasn’t ‘too easy’–you were thrown into a car and Tracer had her chronal accelerator ripped off of her—”

“But Talon’s barely made any effort to restructure with him gone,” said Genji, “It operated so… complexly… before. I don’t think that Doomfist’s ascent to power would be so disruptive that it would destroy every contingency. You would think that they would be fighting harder to prove removing Doomfist doesn’t decrease how much of a threat they pose–like a wounded animal lashing out.”

“Oh thank god, you feel it, too. I thought I was just being paranoid,” said Mercy.

“Well… I’m paranoid too, so…” Genji shrugged and Mercy snickered.

She extended her glass to him, “To paranoia and the new year,” she said with a smile.

“To paranoia and the new year.” Genji clinked his glass against hers, she moved to sip her drink, then stopped, looking at him just awkwardly holding his glass.

“…you haven’t had a drink all night,” said Mercy.

“There’s a lot of politicians here. Someone should stay sharp,” said Genji.

“Genji I’m pretty sure this party has the most extensive and well-equipped security in the world. You can relax a little,” she smiled, but then her smile faded and her free hand went up to her own jaw, “Oh–your…”
“The faceplate, yes,” said Genji.

Mercy gave a glance back to the party through the and she leaned in a bit closely to him, “…Would you like to drink?”

“…yes, yes I would,” said Genji.

“Here,” Mercy set her glass down on the guardrail, then shrugged off her jacket and stepped around him, holding her jacket up and spread out as a shield between them and the party, “But you’ll have to be quick.”

Genji, seeing he was obscured from the party by the jacket, quickly clicked his faceplate off, clinked his glass against Mercy’s on the balcony, and with a quiet, “Kanpai,” gulped down his champagne. Mercy lowered her jacket as he clicked his faceplate back on and his visor slid back into place, lighting up green.

“You’ve rescued me again, Doctor Ziegler,” said Genji with a sight chuckle.

“Angel wings,” said Mercy with a grin, waving her jacket around slightly before pulling it back on. She sipped her own champagne and both looked out over the city. A pause passed between them, not uncomfortable, but both sort of navigating their own thoughts in the comfort of each other’s company.

“…it’s not that bad, you know,” said Mercy, after a while.

“Mm?” Genji glanced at her.

“Your face–the… the scarring’s not as bad as you think,” said Mercy, sipping her champagne, “I know, ultimately, it’s about what you’re comfortable with showing, and that’s what’s important–”

“And I’m a ninja,” said Genji.

“…and you’re a ninja,” Mercy conceded, grinning, “But… I like your face, Genji. I see it and I think, ‘Oh–there’s someone who has my back.’ Even with this on–” She mindlessly reached up and touched the faceplate and there was a sudden kssssh of Genji’s shoulder vents that made her flinch back. “Sorry–I shouldn’t have–”

“No, no, it’s fine, it’s fine–Numbani. It’s warm,” said Genji, tugging at his collar to release some trapped steam. He cleared his throat and glanced off. “Um… thank you. I… I like your face, too. It’s…” his shoulder vents steamed again with another ksssssh, “It’s a good face,” he managed to finish, “That wasn’t–This suit has no proper venting.”

Mercy chuckled a little. “I understand,” she said, smiling.

A din rose up from the interior of the party. “3 minutes left!” Tracer could be heard over the crowd.

“…Guess it’s getting to the final countdown,” said Genji.

“Yes,” said Mercy, her shoulders slumped a little, “We should probably head in, get the whole… strike team together for the photo-ops at midnight…”

“…right…” said Genji, not really wanting to subject himself to a flurry of camera flashes but knowing they couldn’t let Tracer and Winston down. He started moving across the balcony back to the door.
“Oh–umm before midnight—” said Mercy, catching his shoulder.

“Mm?” Genji glanced over at her.

She gave him a short, soft kiss on the side of his faceplate. “Happy New Year, Genji,” she said, pulling back, looking a bit too red for it to just be the flush of champagne.

*KSSSSHHHHH.* Steam flooded up and out of Genji’s collar, wilting it from its sharp tailored angles to a rumpled mess. “Ah–Um…” Genji stammered, “Happy New Year to you as well, Angela,” he said. He gestured a bit helplessly at his collar, “Venting–Numbani–You know~”

“I know,” said Mercy with a grin as they headed back into the party for the countdown.
Gency, Last Mission Together

Looking back, she wished she could have noticed more on that mission, maybe if she had, things would have ended up differently, but everything was coming apart in those days. The protestors around Zurich headquarters were particularly bad that morning, and what started out as a pre-mission briefing with Jack turned into a furious argument that trailed all the way to the Orca hangar before Jack had to break off to deal with some new PR crisis that was apparently more important than their latest mission. She was the last one to board the orca, plopping down in her seat with an angry huff.

“Protestors key your ride, too?” said Tracer.

Mercy’s eyes widened, “Oh Lena–No…”

“It’ll buff out,” said Tracer with a hand wave as the Orca doors closed and they lifted up into the air, “But what happened with you?”

“Just Morrison again,” muttered Mercy.

“Ah,” said Tracer, knowing not to inquire further into what the argument had been about unless she wanted Mercy’s rants to consume the entire orca flight. The fact that things are coming apart was an unavoidable topic though. Tracer glanced out the window at the protestors in front of Zurich Headquarters below, shrinking into ants with picket signs. “You’d think they’d have something better to do,” she quipped. It was meant to be playful, but Mercy was already on edge.

“It’s well within their rights,” Mercy’s jaw was tight, “As an organization we’ve failed them. Multiple times. We’ve betrayed their trust. They counted on us to aid in humanitarian crises, to protect them from threats around the world, and what do we give them? Inaction and corrupt bureaucracy, intel leaks and security breaches, Blackwat–” Mercy caught herself before she said ‘Blackwatch’ and her eyes flicked to Genji, who was staring out the window as well. She cleared her throat. “It’s not about them ‘not having anything better to do,’ it’s about what they believe in.”

“…well… I still believe in us,” said Tracer.


“We all do, right, big guy?” Tracer elbowed Winston next to her.

“I–uh–yes,” Winston adjusted his glasses.

“Genji?” Trace looked over at the ninja.

“Mm,” Genji gave a single nod without breaking his sight from the window.

“Doc?” Tracer smiled at her.

No, a quiet, bitter voice spoke from the back of Mercy’s mind, but she kept forcing that smile. “I believe we should be reading the mission briefings so we actually know what we’re up against,” she said.

“Of course,” Tracer said with a slight eye-roll before taking out a tablet and reading it.

Mercy glanced back at Genji, still staring out the window. He hadn’t been the same since the
Doomfist fight, and she doubted all the internal turmoil at Overwatch was helping much either. Mercy took out her own tablet and her eyes scanned over the mission’s intel.

“Orochi Hoverscycles…” Tracer scrolled down her tablet, her eyes suddenly widen and she looked up at Genji. “The Shimadas–”

“The Clan is mostly collapsed at this point,” Genji didn’t even look away from the window, “This factory is likely only money-laundering and a chop shop for one of the former branches.”

“Well, good thing we’re bringing you along, eh? I mean there’s bound to be ninjas,” said Tracer. Genji huffed, “Not likely.”

He was right. The mission itself was almost embarrassingly short compared to the Orca flight there, most of the security around the site immediately surrendering as soon as the Winston dropped in, and, after Tracer and Genji cut him off at the factory’s back exit, the head of the factory easily submitted himself to their custody but would say absolutely nothing until his lawyer was present, so they handed him over to the local authorities. No bloodshed, honestly the smoothest-running mission they had had in months, but hollow-feeling. *Something the local authorities could have handled on their own in due time,* Mercy thought.

She looked down at her Valkyrie suit, the blazing yellow wings, the halo biofeed, and felt a bit ridiculous just standing aside and watching the local police take care of things. Were they all flash and no substance out in the field at this point? She wondered how many other people wondered the same thing about them. She wondered how many other places she could be if she weren’t on-call with wherever Overwatch needed her to show up next.

Tracer tried to remain chipper about the whole thing as well, but Mercy could tell the hollowness of the mission was getting to her, too. Jack had been putting her on more and more PR-related tasks, this had been what she would describe as her first ‘Real’ mission in a frustratingly long time. Winston, it seemed was the most relieved, but then again he had been out in the field for the least amount of time. No one would blame him for wanting a smoothly-run mission. But still, he was troubled as well… he was aware that, as a gorilla, he naturally stuck out like a sore thumb, but Tracer was quick to comfort and distract him on that front.

And what about Genji? The only time Mercy had ever seen Genji come away from any Shimada related missions, he was *seething,* but that was also mostly back in the old days when he was in Blackwatch. There was a withdrawnness to him now, with so much of the combat of their mission simply not being there, he seemed acutely uncomfortable to be in public.

As they headed back to the Orca, Mercy noticed Genji lagging behind, looking at the crowd of squad cars outside the factory.

“Genji?” she put a hand on his shoulder and he gave a slight start. She withdrew her hand.

“Sorry,” he shook his head, “I wish I could say I was getting more closure from this. This factory was the last large out-of-country holding for the Shimada Clan. What remains of it now is little more than some protections schemes and petty theft.”

“Hanzo is still out there,” said Mercy. Genji tensed at the name but only briefly.
“But he’s left the clan,” said Genji, “And not a big enough threat to warrant Overwatch’s attention… not with things as they are. He’s not Talon.”

“Yes… well…” Mercy pushed her hair back, “The work we do is still important.”

Genji turned his head toward her, expression unreadable with his visor and faceplate. “How much do you believe that?” he asked quietly.

“What do you mean?” said Mercy, furrowing her brows, slightly.

“You’ve been arguing with Jack more and more,” said Genji, “You keep saying things like, ‘I joined this organization to help people’ like you…. like you don’t feel like you’re doing it any more.”

Mercy’s eyebrows raised. “I–I don’t think—I just think—”

“You’re one of the most brilliant doctors in the world, you don’t need Overwatch to help people…” he paused and looked over at Winston and Tracer, eagerly chatting at the Orca’s open door, “Are you just staying for the team’s sake?”

“Genji…” Mercy started.

“For mine?” Genji tilted his head.

Mercy’s eyes widened.

“Oi!” Tracer called to them from the Orca and they both broke out of the conversation that had seemingly dimmed out all other sound from the world, “We still gotta get back, you know!”

Mercy touched his shoulder. “We can talk more about it back at headquarters,” she smiled a little, “You know where to find me.”

“I know,” said Genji.

The flight back to Zurich was quiet. Mercy did her best to try and sleep off whatever jet-lag this whole ordeal might give her, so she could get right back into work back at headquarters to try and make up for what felt like a colossal waste of time of a mission. Tracer was debriefing with Sojourn over vid-com on her tablet, Winston was tinkering with his Tesla cannon.

One of the last times Mercy saw Genji before he left Overwatch was on that Orca, still staring out the window. If she had known that she wouldn’t hear from Genji for months as she watched him walk across the headquarter’s tarmac after they landed, she would have stopped him. But there was no way she could have known.

That night she was working late, as usual, and she brewed a fresh pot of coffee expecting her usual company and conversation. Around midnight she glanced up from her monitor to the door of her lab, and then glanced at the still half-full pot of coffee on the counter a ways away from her desk. She glanced at her watch.

_Probably training_, she thought to herself, _He seemed like he needed to clear his head after that mission. He’ll be here._

Only he didn’t come. That night, the coffee pot remained only half-drunk. In the morning, McCree reported that Genji’s footlocker was emptied, and Genji himself was gone.
“I don’t know what to tell you, Doc,” said Jack, folding his arms and looking out the window of his office, “With the completion of the Orochi assignment, Genji’s contract with Overwatch is completed. He’s free, so to speak.”

“Well yes, I understand that, but he wouldn’t just leave,” said Mercy, running a hand through her hair, “Security didn’t pick up anything unusual last night?”

“Nothing,” said Jack with a shrug.

“But there was the post-mission diagnostics—the follow-ups—Possible de-weaponization procedures to discuss—” Mercy was thumbing through an armful of files she was holding.

“Formalities mostly, more suggested than required,” said Jack, turning on his heel away from the window towards her, “You were never cleared for discussing those de-weaponization procedures.”

“Well—he wouldn’t be a part of Overwatch anyway….so would it really matter?” said Mercy.

“It’s best if he’s ready if Overwatch has need of his skills again.”

“But you don’t even know where he is!” snapped Mercy.

“Well yeah, but that’s mine and Gabe’s concern, not yours,” said Jack.

Her mouth tightened and she dropped her armful of manila folders onto Jack’s desk with an unusual amount of fury, “You let Torbjörn craft that—awful rifle with my technology but you won’t even let me help him!”

“All due respect Doc, but I think he’s the one not letting you help him,” said Jack, calmly gathering her files back up into a neat stack.

Mercy blanched and her brow crinkled and let out a short, sharp exhale. Jack looked up from the files as Mercy turned on her heel and walked briskly toward the door.

“Doc–your files–Doc?” Jack spoke after her but she shut the door behind her a bit harder than usual and he was left standing dumbly with a pile of her folders on the desk.

Mercy was hugging her knees atop the highest maintenance platform for the satellite launch tower, looking out over Gibraltar’s waters. She heard the metal ring of someone clambering up the ladder. She sighed. “I’m on my off-hours. If you need someone down in the infirmary, you can refer to one of my assistants,” she said loudly.

“I don’t need patchin’ up,” came the reply from down the ladder. Mercy got to her feet and walked
over to see McCree climbing up.

“Jesse?” Mercy called down to him as he grunted up several more ladder rungs, then pulled himself up onto the platform, panting.

“Gotdamn… how’d you get up here without breaking a sweat?” he said, plopping down into a seated position. He noticed Angela was wearing a familiar harness over her clothes and snorted then broke into laughter. “You’re telling me you used the Valkyrie wings just to come up here and sulk?”

“I didn’t tell you anything” said Mercy, folding her arms, “And I’m not sulking.”

“Well I mean… if you’re not sulking, you sure picked a good spot to sulk,” said McCree, looking out over the water.

“Was there something you needed?” Mercy spoke sharply.

“Nah—Heard what happened with Jack though,” said McCree, he tipped the brim of his hat back with his thumb, “Usually it’s me or Gabe throwin’ stuff around and storming out of that office. This Genji thing’s really bugging you, huh?”

“I just think we should all be a bit more concerned with one of our best agents simply disappearing without a word to anyone!” said Mercy. She quickly caught herself, “Sorry for snapping at you.”

McCree chuckled. “I’ll take that as a ‘yes’ then,” he said, looking back out over the water.

“Why isn’t it bothering you?” said Mercy.

“I’ve seen the guy on missions, Doc. He can take care of himself just fine,” said McCree.

Mercy’s mouth drew to a thin line, “I know but…” she paused a long while and then sighed, “These past few weeks he’s just… been talking less and less… and during diagnostic check-ups I would catch himself looking at his arms like…” she mindlessly ran a hand over her own wrist, “What if he hates me for what I did to him?”

“For savin’ his life?” said McCree, “Seriously?” Mercy looked down. “Hey Doc,” said McCree, prompting Mercy to glance up again. “There are days when I wake up and I hate this thing,” he held up his own prosthetic arm, “But I’m not gonna hold that shit against you.”

“But his was much more extensive—” Mercy started.

“Well yeah, because he needed it!” said McCree, “He wouldn’t be able to do any of the ninja stuff he does without all the work you put in. And he wanted to do all that ninja stuff because that was the only way he was going to get back at the Shimada clan for what they did to him.”

“But how do you know he doesn’t hate me?” said Mercy.

“Trust me, I’ve spent enough time with Genji to know that if he hated you, you’d know,” said McCree, “And I think you know him well enough to know that’s not the case either.” McCree exhaled “You wanna know what I think?”

Mercy pursed her lips and was quiet for a second. “What do you think?” she asked.

“I think he’s figuring his own shit out,” said McCree with a shrug, “He spent all this time obsessing over taking down the Shimada clan, and we did, and now he’s gotta figure out what to
do with himself.” He glanced over at Mercy, “And maybe he’ll come back one day. Maybe he won’t. In the meantime we got plenty of work to do.”

“I suppose that much is true,” said Mercy, tucking her hair back. They were both quiet for a long time, listening to the gulls and watching the water, “I just hope he’s all right,” Mercy said quietly.

McCree smirked a little, “You got it bad, don’t you?”

Mercy reddened. “Excuse me? I am—My concern is perfectly reasonable—I have—My feelings are completely irrelevant to—I’m not—Genji Shimada is an important—Stop giving me that look!”

McCree snorted and elbowed her playfully. “Don’t you worry, part of bein’ Blackwatch means you can keep a secret. Besides, I think he took more than a bit of a fancy to you while he was here.”

“I—” Mercy blinked a few times, “You think so?” she said, still bright red.

“Well to be fair, he’s a bit hard to read what with the whole,” McCree gestured up and down at his face, “But he’d get just as ruffled as you did when I asked him what he thought about you.”

Mercy scoffed. “You’re teasing.”

“I’m not. You know what a ruffled Genji Shimada looks like? The visor starts glowing and he starts literally steaming and he gets all up in your face but can’t complete a sentence, just like you did only half of it’s in Japanese.”

Mercy chuckled a little. “Do you miss him too?” she said, looking back out at the water.

“Sure I miss him. Good guy to have on your side in a fight. But if he’s gotta figure some stuff out well… I’m not going to stop him. Probably couldn’t if I tried.”

Mercy chuckled again, “Yes, I suppose that’s Genji…” she said. She was quiet a while longer. “Thank you,” she said.

“For what?”

“You came all the way up here when you heard I was upset,” said Mercy, looking over at him and smiling.

“Oh,” said McCree, awkwardly rubbing the back of his neck, “Sure. Yeah. That’s why I came up here.”

“How did you know I was up here?” said Mercy, then immediately noting his expression, “…You didn’t know I was up here,” she said flatly.

“I come up here to hide from Reyes sometimes,” said McCree, “If you head down before me, don’t tell him I’m here.”


“Anytime, Doctor Z,” said McCree.
Mercy had handed her letter of resignation in to Jack 11 days before. There was no arguing, no bargaining, no promises. She had threatened resignation before and he had managed to convince her otherwise in previous years, but they both knew this wasn’t the Overwatch she had joined anymore, and that there was nothing he could say to make her stay. He just looked to the letter and looked back up at her with an expression on his face that said, “This might as well happen.” The next week was spent more or less assuring that the science and medical division wouldn’t collapse when she left—showing her replacement the ropes, referring her last patients to new physicians, mountains of correspondence, and so on. The remaining four days were spent unceremoniously cleaning out her lab. Much of her research legally belonged to Overwatch, but she couldn’t trust what they would do with it when she was gone, so she was painstakingly grabbing everything she legally could. She was a ghost in the Watchpoint—people looking at her out of the corner of their eye but not making eye contact as she carried her boxes down the hall.

There had been a handful of colleagues talking about how they would miss her. Reinhardt took it hard, but Torbjörn was understanding. Genji was long gone, but as Jack had said, he had every right to leave now that the Shimada clan was eliminated. She had been sending him texts regularly, but with no response. That was fair, she supposed, it wasn’t as if Genji had a lot of good memories with Overwatch. McCree had disappeared to god-knows-where and now had a bounty on his head for violating his plea deal with Overwatch. In a way she sort of admired that—McCree had left sooner than she did, even if it meant going against the law. Still, she had come to peace with her own decision well before she handed her letter of resignation in. She had no regrets about it.

She walked a little brisker with the last box—technically she wasn’t supposed to take her caduceus staff, but Overwatch had the blueprints to it, and she had built this one herself. It was her most trusted model, disassembled into three parts and hidden beneath several paper files in the box.

It was a lonely evening in early autumn the last time she walked out of Zurich Headquarters. She was in the parking lot loading the last box into her car, about a hundred yards from the main building of the headquarters when it exploded.

It will pass, she told herself, pressing her hands hard to the side of her head, It will pass then you must act.

Ashes were already fluttering down in the air and she pulled up her black turtleneck over her nose and mouth to keep out the smoke, which stung her eyes. The emergency vehicles were already pulling up as she was desperately digging through the other boxes in her trunk, pulling out an untested prototype biofeed and re-assembling her caduceus staff.

“Ma’am——” a swiss policeman hurried up to her, “You need to get out of the area and let the first responders——”
“I am a first responder!” snapped Mercy, putting on the biofeed. She had been playing around with making a biofeed that was also a comm, and the result was a headband-like angled circle. She pushed it against her forehead and strapped her caduceus staff around her back.

“What?” said the policeman.

She pulled her turtleneck down briefly to show her face and pulled up her ID card. “I’m Angela Ziegler,” she said, “I need you to get me in that building.”

—

They gave her a jacket, helmet, heavy gloves and an oxygen mask, but what she wouldn’t give for her Valkyrie suit in that moment. She had been in burning buildings before with all her rescue work, but it was a whole different experience when it was the Zurich headquarters. She wasn’t running fast enough. The reduced oxygen made the Caduceus staff heavier in her arms, and despite the goggles of her oxygen mask, she could feel tears running down and pooling against the foam seal of the goggles. She had spent so much time mentally distancing herself from this place, and now that it was in flames, the thought popped up like a reflex, “Not here. Not my home.” But it was never her home—but there were still people here she needed to save.

“Survivors through there!” she said, seeing figures lit up green through the walls on her biofeed and pointing. A firefighter bodyslammed through the door and emerged carrying several heavily burned survivors toward the exit.

PRIORITY TARGET: GABRIEL REYES–CRITICAL HEALTH, blared in her earpiece as a cross symbol appeared in the corner of her vision.

“Oh no…” she said, turning on her heel and rushing down a hall toward the cross symbol.

“Doctor Ziegler, wait!” said a firefighter, hurrying after her. The hallway opened up into a high walkway in a large hangar where Orcas and jeeps underwent maintenance. Nearly all the vehicles were burnt out skeleton frames now

CRITICAL HEALTH, CRITICAL HEALTH, the biofeed blared in her vision as she looked down to a lone figure sprawled out on the cement floor surrounded by flames, the red and white icon hanging over him.

“Commander Reyes!” Mercy had to stop and remember that she wasn’t wearing the Valkyrie wings to keep from vaulting over the railing of the walkway to fly toward him. No guardian angel, here. She raced to the stairs and hurried down them with the firefighters still struggling to keep up with her. He was in full tactical gear so it was hard to see the full extent of his injuries, but smoke was trailing off of him. She dropped to one knee next to him. “Commander!” she swatted out some of the flames on his uniform. “Gabriel!” she shook his shoulder and his eyes opened blearily.

“Ange…?” Gabriel’s voice was gravelly from the smoke.

“Just hang on,” said Mercy, activating the biotic stream of her staff as two firefighters finally caught up with her.

“Thought you quit…” murmured Gabriel.

“I did,” said Mercy, “That doesn’t mean I’m leaving you to die.”

“Shit…” one of the firefighters said as they looked down at the blackwatch commander. Gabriel suddenly flinched and grunted hard as the biotic stream hit him.
“Nngh! Ange—don’t—!”

“It’s okay—the nerve endings react differently to biotics when it’s a burn injury,” said Mercy.

“Get Moira,” said Gabriel, his voice a growl.

“I don’t know where she is—Where’s Jack!?” Mercy suddenly looked around.

“Gone,” said Gabriel.

“What…?” Mercy’s eyes went wide. Suddenly a loud groan of steel beams buckling lowed down from the ceiling of the hangar as the fires spread and roared around them all.

“This place is coming down!” said one of the firefighters, “We need to get out of here!”

“Help me with him!” said Mercy, bringing her hands up under Gabriel’s arms and struggling to haul him up.

Mercy and the two firefighters managed to haul Gabriel out of the hangar and pulled him a fairly safe distance away onto the headquarters’ tarmac.

“Bring the EMT around to the tarmac! Get us a crash cart!” one of the firefighters barked into their comms as Mercy pulled off Gabriel’s armored vest and shoved up his hoodie to look at the injuries on his torso. She reared back at the sight of a void of black smoke crumbling upward.

“What—what is this–?” she said, her eyes wide.

“You should’ve left, Ange…” mumbled Gabriel.

“No–I’m not leaving you to die,” Mercy’s voice was thick from grief and fear and smoke. She activated the biotic stream but Gabriel only convulsed and groaned in pain under the biotics.

“He’ll crash faster if you keep that stuff on him!” shouted one of the firefighters as Mercy realized the same thing took the stream off of him.

“Moira–We need Moira—” Gabe was mumbling, closing his eyes.

“I don’t know where she is, Gabriel, and if I did there’s no way we could get her here in time!” said Mercy, “What happened here!? What happened to Jack?! Were we attacked?!

“You can still walk away…” Gabriel said softly

“I’m not doing that!” said Mercy.

CARDIAC ARREST IMMINENT, flashed on Mercy’s biofeed.

“No!” Mercy yanked off her oxygen mask and put it over Gabriel’s face, “Stay with me! Where is that EMT!?” she looked over at the firefighters.

“The west building collapsed, it’s blocking the road!” said one of the firefighters, holding his hand to this comm, “They’re finding a detour—”

“We don’t have that kind of time!” said Mercy.

“You can’t save everyone, Doc…” Gabriel’s eyes rolled back into his head.
“No! Stay with me!” said Mercy.

CRITICAL WARNING: CARDIAC ARREST blipped above Gabriel’s red and white cross icon on the biofeed.

“No!” Mercy gripped his shoulders, “Defibrillator! I need a defib—”

Gabriel’s red and white cross icon on Mercy’s biofeed blipped into a pale gray-white skull icon.

“No…” Mercy said quietly, “Commander!” she shook him, “Commander Reyes! Gabriel!” Tears streaked down the gray ash now staining her face. She cupped a hand over her mouth and stared at his body.

*Trace Post-Mortem Biotic Energies detected,* the biofeed stated, *Window of 10 seconds for Biotic Countershock Defibrillation.* 7….6…

Mercy’s eyes flicked to the caduceus staff at her side.

“Wait—” one of the firefighters started, “If it was hurting him before—”

“This is the only chance he has,” said Mercy, picking up the staff, holding it over Gabriel’s body, and setting the biotic output to maximum. “*Helden sterben nicht.***” she said quietly before holding down the trigger on the staff. Both of them were suddenly encased in columns of yellow light as the flood of biotics burst out from the staff. The yellow light faded and Mercy sat there, still gripping her staff. Gabriel was still on the ground, but he wasn’t registering on Mercy’s biofeed. Was she too late?

“Is he…?” one of the firefighters leaned over Gabriel.

Gabriel’s chest slowly rose in a shallow, rattling breath.

“Gabriel…?” Mercy spoke his name but her voice was half-muted by the crackle of the flames and the wail of sirens behind her.

Gabriel didn’t breathe out.

Gabriel screamed. He screamed and screamed and screamed and his back arched against the ground as his torso crumbled upward in smoke.

“What’s happening!?” shouted one of the firefighters.

“Oh! Mercy shrieked, flailing out a hand to him but his flesh eroded away before her hand could make contact, like the image of a riverbank collapsing sped up. His screams didn’t sound human. They were throttled, drowning and burning all at once.

And then, in a plume of black smoke he was gone.

“What…what was that? What was he?” said the other firefighter.

Mercy opened her mouth to speak, then a haze passed over her. Her vision darkened at the peripheries. Zurich Headquarters was burning. Gabriel was gone. Gabriel was dead.

Gabriel Reyes had died twice.

The second time was in agony.
The second time was her fault.

“Doctor Ziegler?” one of the firefighters.

The building. Headquarters was burning. She still had people to protect. She would have to grieve later.

“We… we need to find the other survivors before the whole building comes down…” Mercy moved to rise to her feet but her legs turned to jelly beneath her. Her vision went black. She didn’t feel herself hit the ground.

—

Mercy woke up in a stark white hospital room.

“You took off your oxygen mask in a smoke-heavy environment,” a voice spoke, and Angela turned her head over to see a black woman with close-shaved gray hair sitting in a chair next to her hospital bed, “Combine that with the… emotional distress…” she closed her eyes and rubbed her forehead.

“Under-Secretary Adawe,” said Mercy, sitting up in bed, but pressing a hand against her forehead as the blood rushed from her head.

“I’m retired and from what I heard, you resigned,” said Gabrielle Adawe, pushing a glass of water across the bedside table, which Angela took and drank deeply from, “No need for formalities here.”

“The survivors—” Mercy started, her voice raw from the last gulp of water, “Jack–?”

“Jack Morrison’s DNA was found in the blast site, but no sign of him… it’s… safe to assume that he died in the blast, and his body was destroyed along with the Headquarters,” Gabrielle trailed off, “I’m sorry, Angela.”

Mercy’s mouth drew to a thin line.

“I never thought Overwatch would ever be this successful,” Gabrielle said quietly, “…I never thought it would be this much of a disaster, either.”

“What happened?” said Mercy, “Were we attacked?”

“Reports are adding up to explosions on the interior of the building…” said Gabrielle.

“So infiltrators,” said Mercy, “Moles–Saboteurs—”

Gabrielle was silent.

“Or…” Mercy trailed off, “Or…” She had a sinking feeling in her stomach. Something worse. Something much worse.

“You should’ve left, Ange…” Gabriel Reyes’ gravelly voice echoed in her mind.

“If it was an infiltrator, it speaks to the current state of Overwatch’s incompetence… this is all the UN needed,” said Gabrielle.

“All the UN needed…?” Mercy repeated.
“They’re shutting Overwatch down. All of it. No suspensions. Complete shutdown. The Watchpoints are being mothballed. Anyone acting under what they claim to be Overwatch-sanctioned activities is now a criminal. I suppose you should count yourself lucky that you were already on your way out.”

Mercy pursed her lips. “Lucky…” she said softly.

“That’s not the right word. I apologize…” said Gabrielle, standing up, “I’m… a bit tired myself. I… I have a lot of families to talk to. But if you need—I can stay…”

Mercy shook her head. “I… I should probably rest,” she said, glancing off.

“I understand,” said Gabrielle, getting out of her chair and moving to the door of the hospital room. She paused in the doorway. “You gave so much to this organization, Angela. You deserved better from it than this.”

“I think we all did,” said Mercy.

Gabrielle huffed. “On that, we can agreee. I wish you the best of luck in whatever you do from here on out,” she said, walking out the door.

“You as well,” said Mercy.

The door clicked shut behind Gabrielle Adawe and Mercy glanced at the small pile of her effects on the bedside table next to the empty water glass. She reached forward and dug into it, pulling out her old Overwatch comm.

“Shutting down Overwatch…” she said, tracing her fingers over the Overwatch insignia on the comm. I suppose there was more than enough reason, she thought, but still her stomach turned slightly at the fact that it would no longer be there. She turned the comm on and it buzzed and she nearly dropped it in surprise. A Message blipped up on the screen of the comm.

14 Missed Calls.

4 messages.

She opened the calls. The name “Genji Shimada” appeared 14 times with the times of the calls listed and various voicemails left. He had been trying to get in contact with her.

She didn’t have the energy to make a phone call, she turned over to her text messages.

*Genji Shimada 22:06: Saw Zurich on news. Are you all right?*

*Genji Shimada 22:11: Doctor?*

*Genji Shimada 22: 21: I am fine I am sorry for falling out of contact. I was out of comm range.*

*Genji Shimada 22:33 Please write back, Doctor.*

Mercy wanted to text him. She had to let him know she was all right. But there were a few minutes where she just pressed her comm to her forehead and rolled up in a little ball in her hospital bed. She forced herself to look at her phone screen again. She had to let him know she was alive. Tears were welling in her eyes as her thumb shakily moved across the projected keyboard as if possessed.

*It’s all gone, she texted, It’s all burnt down. They’re both dead.*
Gabriel and Moira: Post-Zurich Explosion

The memorial service was held in the Court D’Honneur at the Palais des Nations, a fairly humble but dignified assembly with countless flags flying at half-mast. Gabrielle Adawe stood at a podium in front of a seated crowd, with Geneva’s Celestial Sphere a few yards behind her and her scarf wafting in the wind. She scanned the crowd and saw a few recognizable faces. Torbjörn Lindholme sat stone-faced, while Reinhardt was hunched over slightly next to him with people behind him still struggling to see past his shoulders. Angela Ziegler was there, looking on forlornly as Lena Oxton sobbed into the shoulder of Winston next to her. There were many international dignitaries, representatives of Numbani, Ministers of Oasis, and the families of those lost in the blast at Zurich making up for the bulk in the crowd, but the number of civilians at the margins was depressing. In many ways, they weren’t just commemorating those lost in the destruction of Zurich Headquarters—with the Petras Act now going into effect, this was a funeral for Overwatch the institution itself. And yet so few came. So few mourned. But who could blame them after Overwatch had lost the public’s trust? Gabrielle Adawe inhaled and folded her hands in front of herself on the podium.

“My appointment to the position of Under-Secretary of the UN was not what I had hoped it would be,” she said, speaking into the mic. “It was not an acknowledgment of my statesmanship, but rather, a gesture of necessity, with my predecessor having perished in the early omnic attacks on humanity. We were all terrified, desperate people in those days. In its conception, Overwatch was —, to use an American colloquialism, a Hail Mary pass. A pooling together of our best and brightest individuals and resources in our darkest hour. Even as I was picking out some of the most brilliant scientists and soldiers for Overwatch’s task force, my mind was filled with so many doubts as to the fate of humanity. Jack Morrison never had those doubts. For Jack Morrison, as long as Gabriel Reyes was by his side, there was no threat too great to face, no life too small to save.

“With Overwatch at the forefront of the fight, humanity was able to turn the tide against the omnics and end the Crisis, and in rebuilding our world from the destruction of the Omnics, there was a dream that they would serve as champions of peace and progress for the benefit of all humanity. In the end though, they were all only human themselves. Just as capable of harm and corruption as you or I. We have been disappointed, heartbroken even, by the scandals that shook Overwatch in its later years, and we were right to feel so. But we also love to forget that our heroes are human. We make them far more than we could ever hope to be, and far more than they actually are. For all their flaws, Jack Morrison and Gabriel Reyes were two men who only wanted to build a better, safer world. And in many ways, they succeeded. In the 20 years since the Omnic Crisis, we enjoy a markedly improved quality of life and technology elevated to heights not previously thought possible. They have built a better world, and it’s our job to see that it keeps getting better.

“With the ending of Overwatch, we must not think of this day as an ending to heroes, but a calling. We must be our own heroes now. We must live out the dreams of peace and progress Overwatch wanted for humanity. We must maintain hope in the face of adversity. All of these were principles Overwatch stood for, and in spite of Overwatch’s ending, they are principles we must continue to stand for. For the sake of our heroes and the sake of ourselves. All we can ever give this world is our best.”

A ripple of applause rose up from the crowd as the camera panned out and a newscaster spoke. “Speaking up next in the memorial ceremonies is acclaimed poet laureate and—”

“Turn it off,” a voice croaked across a dark room filled with the steady beeping of a heart rate monitor. Moira clicked the monitor off and walked over.
“The hell are you wearing on your face?” said the voice as Moira turned her head towards its source.

Moira touched her fingers over the metallic half-mask now extending from her forehead, over her blue eye, and ending past her cheekbone, “Souvenir from Zurich,” she said.

“Looks stupid,” muttered the voice.

“Could look worse,” said Moira with a shrug, before clearing her throat. “Well, lab results say you’re stabilized,” she said, flipping through some lab results on her tablet, “Structurally, at least.”

“It hurts,” said the voice.

“I got to you as quickly as I can, but your current pain level… it’s the best the other scientists and I can manage without knocking you out,” said Moira.

“What’s… what’s happening to me?” said the voice.

“Survival of an organism is contingent on two states: Homeostasis, the maintenance of an organism’s baseline equilibrium, and transistasis, the adaptation to one’s environment. I’m afraid these two states are far more… evident in you than in other organisms.”

“Mirror,” said the voice.

“I’m not sure that’s a good—” Moira started.

“Mirror,” the voice insisted.

Moira turned the camera on on her tablet and then stepped next to the bed the voice was coming from, and hesitantly held the tablet out. Two hands, grayed with death with black smoke streaming off of them extended and took the tablet.

“… I’m sorry, Gabriel,” Moira said as Gabriel Reyes looked at his own face in the tablet’s camera.

Gabriel’s breath shuddered and he ran a hand down the side of his face, chunks of it falling away into black smoke as one of his now-red eyes twitched. He looked like death. Blackened veins clawed up his grayed face, his scars were flaking away into smoke and ash, “No…” he said quietly, “No–this isn’t…”

“My working theory is that the explosion catalyzed some kind of…. trauma reaction in your SEP serum that ended up targeting the nanites of my treatments, attacking tissues of your body, including your heart, and that Doctor Ziegler’s biotic resurrection ended up cementing your cells into a permanent state of… I’m not sure what to call the processes they’re going through— Necrosis? Apoptosis? It’s unlike anything I’ve ever seen.”

“You have to fix it,” said Gabriel.

“I don’t know how to,” said Moira.

Moira was not a person who was in the habit of saying she was confused or that she didn’t know what to do. The sentence seemed unnatural coming out of her mouth and it made the world seem to crumble away from Gabriel. Moira herself was pacing, running her long fingernails through her short hair.

“It wasn’t supposed to be like this,” muttered Gabriel.
“It was bound to all come crashing down sometime…” said Moira, “And now that it has…”

“There’s going to be a power vacuum,” said Gabriel, “Overwatch gone. Lots of little organizations scrambling to rule the rubble. Going to be a bloodbath.”

“It’s all we can do to shut them down and keep them in line,” said Moira.

“‘We?‘” said Gabriel.

“*Giorraíonn beirt bóthar,* Gabriel,” said Moira, “I told you, I’m with you. But we’re both going to need all the help we can get.”

Gabriel huffed.

“And I’ll find a way to improve your condition, I promise you. It’s just as important to me as it is to you.”

“Taking all this in stride, as usual,” said Gabriel.

“Adaptation is key to survival,” said Moira, “We were never the people Overwatch wanted us to be. Not truly. Now’s our chance to be who we were meant to be,” she stuck her fingernail underneath the metallic half-mask on her face, peeling it off to reveal a crumbling lattice-like pattern of black and purple on her skin stretching over the portion of her face the mask previously covered, black smoke trailing off of her skin like the smoke trailing off of Gabriel’s own body, “Both of us,” she said with a smile.
Technically the assignment was Talon sub-leasing his contract to Vishkar. Mauga teased him about getting “cushy work” but Baptiste was just happy to get a combat medic mission that was more ‘medic’ than ‘combat.’ The mission site was a ruined village in the Seychelles. When he stepped off his transport, he would have guessed a hurricane whipped through the place, but looking at the smoldering remains of some of the buildings, he told himself maybe a gas main blew.

There were a handful of Vishkar employees there, tapping away at their tablets, surveying the area, but one woman seemed to be singlehandedly constructing shelters for the displaced people. She was a striking sight among all the refugees: Effortlessly creating beautiful little white geodesic dome tents with waves of her arms and dancer-like gestures of her fingers. Her probably-long hair was swept back in a glossy black bun. His own combat medic armor had ventilation, but wondered if she was hot in that long-sleeved uniform.

Baptiste had seen videos of Vishkar’s hard-light online, but it was a whole other thing seeing it in real life. He gave a glance back to his area of work, a canopy tent distinguished by a hovering medic’s cross over it, before looking back at the woman, still making tents with all the ease and focus that one might have folding paper cranes. He remembered a quote he read somewhere—“Technology, when sufficiently advanced, is indistinguishable from magic.” If there was anyone in this area who seemed like a wizard…

“I take it you made my medic tent?” he asked, tilting his head and her shoulders jerked in a flinching motion and she whirled on him, gold eyes veiled by a blue visor of light. He flinched back a little and brought his hands up in turn. “Sorry—didn’t mean to surprise you,” he said, itching between the plates in his combat medic armor, “Augustin. Reporting for duty.”

She forced a polite smile and resumed materializing tents, facet by facet. “I’m fine,” she said, “You may call me Satya. You are one of the subcontractors, are you not?”

“Yes I am,” said Baptiste, putting his hands on his hips, “I’m one of the medics.” He flashed a grin. “If you ever start to feel faint, just give me a call and I’ll come running.”

She arched an eyebrow at him.

“Not that you’re.. prone to fainting… it’s.. just… hot and… you’re… working…hard,” Baptiste made an awkward finger gun at her, “Stay hydrated.”

“I will. I believe there are locals in more immediate need of your services,” she said, finishing off the tent she was working on with a whirl of her wrist.

“Oh-yes—of course,” said Baptiste, heading into the medic tent. God, he was so glad Mauga was not around to see that. He would not hear the end of it.

It seemed most of the locals had managed to semi evacuate before the fires set in. There were some second degree burns at worst, they looked worse before you cleaned them, but with some biotics. It was crowded, but with Vishkar overseeing everyone’s treatment, people were having their injuries treated and being sent out to the tents with a near frightening efficiency. A Vishkar agent pointed him to where he could handle some overflow of patients, and he walked off in that direction. He approached a bench where two girls, apparently sisters, sat. The smaller girl, couldn’t
be older than 7, shrieked and hid her face in her sister’s dress. Her older sister spoke soothing words to her in Seselwa. The Creole threw him off briefly, like his own, but not quite. But he knew they could probably parse French from him, at least.

“Allô?” he offered, holding his hands up in a soothing motion while slowly closing the distance between them, “Tu es en sécurité. Je suis là pour aider.”

The older sister lifted her head and nudged her younger sister a little. “Ça va,” she said quietly, “Son casque est bleu.”

“Mon casque?” Baptiste’s fingers brushed at the the transparent blue of his combat medic head guard. The younger sister lifted her head from her older sister’s dress, her eyes tearstrained and defiant.

“Elle a peur. Les monstres aux casques rouges ont tout brûlé,” said the older sister.

“Monstres?” Baptiste repeated and his stomach dropped. Red helmets. He knew exactly what red helmets they were talking about. He shook his head. He had to see to their injuries now, worry about that later. He cleared his throat. “Les monstres sont partis,” he said, “Montre-moi où ça fait mal.”

The older sister nudged the younger sister again with more soothing words in Seselwa and sniffling, the younger sister extended her arm, ribboned with blisters. Baptiste’s stomach tied up in knots at the sight of it. He tended to their injuries, then a few more locals—the burned, the dehydrated, the delirious, those with chronic conditions that were exacerbated by the fires or the panic. He let the patients just be a whirl of injuries to be stitched up by his hands, let the work drown out the thoughts, the dread, the knowledge of who had done this to them. He had completely lost track of time when a Vishkar agent put a hand on his shoulder and he jolted back to awareness.

“It’s your break,” said the Vishkar agent.

“Right…” said Baptiste, “Right…”

He headed outside to see the golden-eyed woman from earlier frowning over a roughly table-sized 3-D hard-light projection of what looked like neat beachside residences laid out strategically across the island’s shoreline floating in front of her.

“Staying hydrated?” he called to her, and her head jerked up from the projection.

“Oh,” she said, smiling a bit more genuinely now, “It’s you. Saved the whole island, have you?”

“Well, I’m on break,” he looked over the projection, “You’re still working?”

“Oh, merely musing,” said Satya, tweaking the position of one of the residences on the projection.

“Vishkar’s planning a development here?” asked Baptiste.

“Well, nothing’s set in stone yet,” said Satya with a shrug, “The corporation made an offer before, but the locals refused,” she shrugged, “Stubborn. Unfortunate as it is, this attack has made Vishkar’s offer the best choice for the people here.”

“So it was an attack,” said Baptiste, more to himself than to her.

“A barbaric attack,” said the woman, shaking her head and looking back at the projection, “But things will be much better from now on. Vishkar will protect them against thugs and criminals like
Talon. We’ll give them all a better way to live.”

“You know it was Talon who did this?”

“Yes,” said Satya, “Despicable. Cowardly. But it’s because so many refuse to see the superiority of Vishkar’s order that Talon continues to thrive. If people were only willing to see…” she trailed off and folded her arms. “Talon needs chaos to survive. And Vishkar stands as a beacon against that chaos.”

*She has no idea,* thought Baptiste, watching her eyes as she talked. She honestly believed all this. She honestly believed she was building a better world, when in fact, Talon and Vishkar went hand in hand. Talon burning through obstacles to Vishkar, and Vishkar swooping in to be the heroes building a better world, all the more filling Talon’s coffers with the money it made in the process. He wanted to throw up a little, but he managed to keep a straight face as she continued talking.

“…don’t you agree?” she said and he was forced to snap out of his own train of thought.

“Pardon?” said Baptiste.

“I said ‘People must be willing to accept the truth if things are going to get better for any of us,’” said Satya, “Don’t you agree?”

“Yeah…” said Baptiste, looking back at smoldering remains of the village, mere skeletons of buildings standing stark like ghosts behind her perfect geodesic dome tents, “Yeah, I agree.”
Emily was hugging her knees on the couch. Her nose was stuffed and runny and her breath was shallow. Her hand was cupped over her mouth with her eyes fixed to the screen.

“–reports say shots were fired on the rooftops surrounding the area, though the assailants haven’t been found,” the newscaster on the screen was breathless as the crowd swelled and roiled around her with barely contained panic as event organizers and security tried to keep them contained. They were wailing. A blonde woman in a knit beanie was sobbing as her omnic partner embraced her and pressed their head against hers.

“We have no word on Mondatta’s status as of yet,” the newscaster continued on and Emily felt a sinking in the pit of her stomach, “We have been told that the Shambali’s own repair experts and several roboticists have been called in to examine the trauma to his head—”

Emily changed the channel.

“I don’t want to get people’s hopes up because the situation clearly is still very serious, but we’re talking a one in a million shot,” a commentator was saying gesturing to several diagrams of the interior of an Omnic’s head behind him, “Omnic Cerebral cores are basically as indestructible as airplane black boxes—this is why during the crisis, you’d see more outright destruction of Omnic chassis rather than precision disabling. Until we can hear from the Shambali and the roboticists, we can’t say for sure—”

He’s dead, a small voice spoke inside Emily’s head, He’s dead and they’re just trying to keep another riot from breaking out.

She didn’t want to believe it, but she knew that voice and she knew her gut. That little voice had kept her alive in King’s Row this long. It was hardly ever wrong. She felt the grief hit her, scooping out her insides and leaving her cold and heavy and hollow. She sneezed and pulled her blanket tight around her, tears brimming in her eyes, half from the sneezing, and half from the grief. She changed the channel again.

“—While shots are no longer being fired, several unconscious security agents were found on the rooftops surrounding the event, leading experts to believe this was a precision strike, and we are unsure if the assailant is still in the area—”

Lena, Emily suddenly stumbled off the couch, blanket still wrapped around her. The blood rushed from her head as she stood up and she swayed, but quickly shook her head and hurried over to her coat rack. Sickness be damned, she had to find Lena, she had to make sure she was safe. She pulled on her coat and hat. Tube’s probably blocked off while they’re trying to find the shooter, thought Emily, I can take the vespa, take the back alleys, bypass the police blockades—did it all the time during the worst of the riots, nothing I can’t do ag—

The door suddenly opened and Tracer stumbled in.

“Lena!” Emily rushed over to her. There was a faint smell of ozone around her.

“Em—Em I’m so sorry—“ Blue light suddenly whirled around her and suddenly Tracer looked like a warped VCR image, multiple semi-transparent copies of herself layering over the original. One was sobbing hard, another was hyperventilating, another was screaming and railing, “It’s my fault! I was so stupid! I thought it was like the old days and I treated it like a game and she killed
“Em, I’m sorry,” the original Tracer said again as the ghosts of herself railed around her, “I tried to stop her, I—I tried…”

“Lena—you’re alternating,” said Emily, cupping a hand to the original Tracer’s cheek, “Calm down and let me see it.”

“Alternating” was the shortest term they could come up with for it. Normally Tracer’s chronal disassociation just rendered her a living ghost, unable to actually interact with her environment, but with the chronal accelerator anchoring her to this time, a malfunction could create multiple illusory copies of herself reacting in different alternate ways. Winston said he still wasn’t sure whether the ‘alternates’ were how Tracer was reacting in different timelines, or if they were a result of Tracer’s psyche shattering through the Chronal accelerator itself. The original Tracer brought her shoulders back and two of the alternates quieted, though still warped and faded around her like images burned into an old TV screen, as Emily looked at the chronal accelerator, warped, broken, sporadically firing off sparks.

“We need to call Winston,” said Lena.

Almost as soon as she said it, a video call ring with the Overwatch emblem started sounding off from Tracer’s desktop and Emily hurried over and hit a key on it, bringing up a video feed of Winston.

“Tracer!” Winston spoke urgently, “I just got a news alert on the Mondatta speech and—-Oh… oh no…”

“He’s gone…” Tracer’s voice was thick, “I’m so sorry—the sniper from the museum—She…”

“It’s Talon,” said Winston, taking off his glasses and polishing them, his eyes flicked downward slightly and he frowned, “We’ll have to discuss it more later. For now, first priority is fixing the accelerator. Emily—“

“Repair kit,” said Emily, getting up, swaying a bit as the blood rushed from her head, then hurrying away, “Right.” She hurried off to their bedroom and hurried back with a small black leather bag with the Overwatch Emblem on it. She zipped it open and there, neatly organized were several tools, countless small parts, and one spare, glowing blue core.

“Lean in, let me get a better look at it,” said Winston.

Tracer bent over the desk slightly as Winston examined the accelerator more.

“Stabilizer seems to be intact, it’s the recall that’s malfunctioning,” said Winston.

“She’s alternating,” Emily said in agreement, before blowing her nose.

“So we don’t need to replace the core,” said Winston, “All right. We’ll start by disassembling the frame. Remember—“

“Not too much pressure, I know,” said Emily, taking a miniature screwdriver out of the kit, “I’ve repaired a decent number of Omnics at the shelter, Winston. I’ve got this.”

The repair work was a long and tedious process, taking two hours with Winston directing it, sometimes stopping to re-examine the accelerator, then nodding and continuing on. The alternates around Tracer faded away one by one, to one hologram-like shadow that blipped out of existence in
a blue flash as Emily tightened one last screw.

“And remember—"

“Give it a couple hours so I don’t recall it back to its damaged state,” said Tracer with a smile, “Got it, big guy.”

“Tracer…” Winston said slowly, “Between this and the attack on Gibraltar, we need to organize. It’s not enough sending the recall out—-we need more than just you and me.”

“Can we figure this out in the morning?” said Emily, smoothing Tracer’s hair back.

“Right—” said Winston, awkwardly, “Of course you’ve obviously been through—been through a lot. I’ll… You can call me back when you’re ready.”

“See you then,” said Tracer. Her voice sounded fragile, trying to pull itself together.

“And… I’m sorry,” said Winston, “I know Mondatta meant a lot to you.”

Tracer’s lips thinned and she only managed to nod before letting out a shuddering breath and clicking out of the video chat.

“You should be resting,” said Tracer, looking from the darkened screen back at Emily.

Emily suddenly embraced Tracer in a tight hug and kissed her on the cheekbone.

“It’s okay,” Emily said, “It’s not your fault. I know you did everything you could.”

“I’m fine,” Tracer’s voice was thick, “Winston’s right—we need to think of our next step—” she cut herself off as Emily kissed her on the forehead and pressed her forehead against hers, tears budding in her eyelashes.

“Easy,” said Tracer, “You’re going to get me sick you know— You’re… you’re all sweaty and—and snotty and—and—”

Tracer broke down crying into Emily’s shoulder.
“Take your time,” said Zenyatta.

Genji stood outside the Watchpoint. He took a deep breath and let the heat sinks in his shoulders click out and steam. He raised a hand to press the button on the intercom, hesitated, then immediately turned on his heel and probably would have walked back to the hovercycle had Zenyatta not gently (but firmly) put a hand on his shoulder and turned him around.

“Empty your mind,” said Zenyatta, “Clear away your guilt and your doubts. When you have done this, the task is simple: hit the button and speak.”

Genji raised his hand toward the intercom button once more, but again he withdrew it and now paced back and forth in front of the gate, “It is not simple,” he said, pacing.

“You chose to come here,” said Zenyatta.

“Yes,” said Genji.

“You know what you wish to do here,” said Zenyatta.

“Yes,” said Genji, still pacing.

“We have discussed what you are going to say,” said Zenyatta.

“Yes,” Genji said, pacing faster.

Zenyatta immediately picked up that these reminders were making Genji more anxious than reassured. “So…take your time,” said Zenyatta and Genji’s shoulders slumped a bit and he swore under his breath. Zenyatta watched as he paced a bit more and muttered before finally stopping in front of the intercom again.

“The task is simple,” he said to himself. He raised a hand toward the intercom, then heard a voice behind him.

“Hey–Private property. Y’all best clear out before–Holy shit.”

Genji slowly turned on his heel to see a large truck laden with what looked like the charred remains of a satellite. “Genji?” A familiar head stuck itself out of the window of the truck. McCree laughed a little and opened the door to the truck and hopped out, “Well I’ll be a dog in the manger–Is that Genji gotdamn Shimada?” said McCree, walking over.

“I–yes…” said Genji, “I…received Winston’s recall. I wish to help.”

“No shit?” said McCree, he glanced over at Zenyatta, “And your friend here?”

“Tekartha Zenyatta,” Zenyatta extended a hand and McCree shook it, “I wish to assist in my student’s mission.”

“Tekartha?” McCree’s eyebrows raised and he looked over at Genji, “Wait–Student?”

“It is… a long story,” said Genji.

“Seriously?” McCree tilted his hat back with his thumb, “Five years and that’s all you got?”
“Ah–well–” Genji started, “I–I realize it has been a long time—”

“Hey,” McCree gave him a gentle punch in the shoulder, “I’m messing with ya. It’s good to see you again. You look good.”

“Good?” Genji glanced down at himself.

“Yeah. The green’s a good look on you,” said McCree.

Genji’s visor brightened and McCree’s comm suddenly buzzed. He pulled it out of his pocket.

“Yeah?” he answered it, “Yeah I got it, Winston. Yeah—Yeah no, it’s in about as good shape as you’d think. Hey—Winston—you got the security feed for the front gate running?” McCree paused while Winston spoke on the other line, “Well I suggest you give it a look,” said McCree. He looked at Genji. “Give ‘em a wave,” he said, pointing to the security camera by the gate.

Zenyatta and Genji both waved at the camera. The steel gate rattled open and suddenly there was a flash of blue zig-zagging out of the slowly opening gate.

“Genji!” Tracer exclaimed, zipping around him, “Look at you! It’s been too long! And you!” She turned on her heel and zipped to Zenyatta and eagerly shook his hand, “It’s an honor to meet a member of the Shambali. Mondatta was an inspiration to me!”

Genji gave a glance toward Zenyatta, wondering if he should correct her on Zenyatta’s status with the Shambali, but Zenyatta waved him off, patted a beaming Tracer on the shoulder and said, “To me as well. I miss him greatly.”

Tracer gave a glance back to Genji. “You all right, love?”

Genji stood a bit awkwardly, “To be honest, I was not sure what I expected to return to here, considering how abrupt my departure was those years ago,” he gave Tracer and McCree a short bow, “Thank you, for welcoming me.”

“The world could always use more heroes,” said Tracer, smiling. She then elbowed him as well, “Plus, don’t think you’re getting off that easy. There’s still the vetting process for your friend here, and you’re going to have to tell us everything, and someone’s got to teach you a lesson for making Doctor Z worry so much when you took off!”

“Doctor Ziegler?” said Genji, “She’s here?”

“Yep,” said McCree, “Got here a few days before you did.”

“Where is she?” Genji blurted out.

“Last I checked she was with Torbjörn,” said McCree, “Something about getting the Valkyrie wings checked out.”

Genji immediately moved to rush into the Watchpoint, then caught himself and looked over his shoulder at Zenyatta, “Oh—the vetting process—” he said, looking back at Zenyatta.

“I will be fine,” said Zenyatta, “Go. Reunite with your friends.”

Genji didn’t need to be told twice. He rushed off through the Watchpoint’s gates.

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“You missed her,” Torbjörn said as Genji rushed down the stairs to his workshop. Genji skidded to
a halt.

“What?” said Genji.

“You came down here for Doctor Ziegler, right?” said Torbjörn, hammering away.

“I—-” Genji caught himself, “Well I am—I thought I should greet everyone. It has been five years after all,” he cleared his throat, “It is good to see you, Torbjörn.”

Torbjörn stopped hammering and turned around. “I’m going to take a wild guess and say, after five years of being away from everyone at the watchpoint, you didn’t pop back and immediately say, ‘Oh where is Torbjörn? I must speak to my dear friend Torbjörn!’”

“You don’t know. I could have said that,” said Genji.

Torbjörn rolled his eyes. “She’ll be in the training facility,” he said, gesturing up the stairs with his claw arm.

“The training facility!” Genji repeated, then caught himself and attempted to sound as casual as possible, “The training facility. Of course. I was just headed there next.”

“Sure you were,” said Torbjörn as Genji moved to rush up the stairs again.

Genji paused on the bottom step. “It is good to see you again, Torbjörn,” he said.

“Good to have you back as well,” said Torbjörn, resuming his hammering as Genji rushed up the stairs. As soon as Genji was out of earshot Torbjörn scoffed. “‘Just headed there next’ he says. It’s on the other side of the blasted watchpoint.”

——

She had to admit she had missed the wings. She couldn’t help but smile as she zipped through the fire of drones at different beacons hovering around the training room. She, Athena, and Winston had specially designed the beacon training program for the Valkyrie suit. There were ‘ally’ drones bearing beacons, and ‘enemy’ drones which would shoot at Mercy and her ‘ally’ drones, and would light up when their ‘health’ would drop.

A beacon lit up and she flew to it, just as a training drone fired a few shots at her, she turned in mid air with her caduceus blaster at the ready, aimed and fired. She wasn’t carrying her actual caduceus staff, rather, it was a gray training staff that was built with an indicator that would beep when she was within range to fire a (hypothetical) biotic stream. This would activate the ‘ally’ drones self-reparation programs, which were disabled for the sake of the exercise. She wasn’t in the full valkyrie suit either. She only donned the wings and the shock-absorbing boots along with the standard-issue gray and orange Overwatch training jumpsuit. Another beacon lit up and she pushed off of the last one with her feet and shot over to it until her training staff beeped. More training drone fire whipped past her and she let herself free-fall briefly while shooting at the training drone, letting her wings catch her just a few feet above the ground as the training drone shot apart with a few more shots from her caduceus blaster.

Genji stood in the doorway to the training floor and watched as she flew overhead and fired. He glanced over at the training drones and his right arm itched a bit, his fingers twitching with instinct from the hours he would spend in Watchpoint training rooms reducing training drones to scrap, but then his eyes trailed back up to her again. This was her session. This was her fight. And he was more than happy to just watch. It turned out he only caught the tail-end of her training session however, as Athena sounded off a loud buzzer and Mercy descended from the air. She wiped the
sweat off her forehead. “Athena?” she called out, “How was that one?”

“53% damage absorbed,” said Athena.


“Resetting exercise in two minutes,” said Athena and Mercy stretched her arms above her head and spread the Valkyrie wings out behind her as she made her way over to a duffle bag where she kept her water bottle. She saw a figure in the doorway of the training floor out of the corner of her eye, turned, and froze.

Genji found himself somehow rooted to where he was standing as well. He quickly attempted to remember what he had discussed with Zenyatta, all the help and advice Zenyatta had given him in preparing for this, but only found his mind a bright white haze.

“Genji?” Mercy tucked some strands of hair stuck to her forehead with sweat away from her face. He had to say something, but what could he say after five years? His scars itched beneath his faceplate, he rolled his knuckles. He had to say something.

“Yo,” said Genji, giving a small wave.

“Genji,” her face lit up and her voice cracked a little. The valkyrie wings brightened behind her and she rushed forward, feet not even touching the ground, and whipped her arms around him tight. The speed and force of her impact sent Genji rocking back on his heels and it took him half a heartbeat to register what was happening before he returned the embrace. He could feel the warmth of her even through his armor and she pressed her face into the point where his neck met his shoulder. His heat sinks clicked out and steamed, rifling her bangs a bit. He wasn’t sure how long they held each other, only that when she broke away, it didn’t feel long enough. “You—You’re here—” she said, looking up at him.

“I…” Genji paused, “I wanted to help,” he said.

“Good,” she said, “That’s—” she had a short breathy laugh, “That’s—that’s good. You…um… You seem well, Genji.”

Genji smiled beneath his faceplate and stood up a bit straighter, “I am a new man, now,” he said as he had practiced with Zenyatta, “I am who—”

He was cut off by the sound of Athena’s buzzer and suddenly the training floor was filling with pulse fire from the training drones all over again.

“Oh—” Mercy turned on her heel, “I—I have to—”

“I should let you— I should be getting back,” said Genji.

“Right—the others—the vetting process—” said Mercy. Pulsefire whipped past her head and over Genji’s shoulder and Mercy turned and fired her caduceus blaster at the training drone until it fell apart.

“Impressive,” said Genji.

Mercy blushed, “Oh well it’s just—” another drone started firing at her and she turned and started shooting at that one.
“I look forward to working with you again, Doctor Ziegler,” said Genji with a small salute, heading toward the exit.

Zenyatta floated in front of Athena’s screen, staring at a large projection of a group photo of the original Overwatch operatives all smiling and waving at the camera. He had taken an interest in looking more into the history of Overwatch, looking through at photos of its different members, how the organization had once been in its golden days. He was learning to put names to faces now. He hit a key and the photo changed to one of Singh, Mirembe, and Gabrielle all grinning in the Orca and looking scratched up enough for Zenyatta to assume the photo was taken after a mission. He hit a key on the keyboard and the photo changed to a photo of McCree and Gabriel Reyes at a bar with Dr. Ziegler, McCree giving Reyes bunny ears with the fingers of his prosthetic arm. The next photo, apparently taken seconds later, was of Reyes holding McCree in a headlock while Dr. Ziegler was yelling in the background. The photo after that was of a young Reinhardt hoisting both Ana and Jack over his head with ease while Winston had Reyes hoisted above his head and was clearly struggling a bit more with Tracer laughing off in the photo’s corner.

“Master?” Zenyatta heard Genji’s voice behind him and turned.

“Oh, hello, my pupil,” said Zenyatta, turning his attention to the next photo of Torbjörn and Dr. Ziegler at a halloween party, “Was there something you needed?”

“I am fine,” said Genji stepping up alongside Zenyatta and looking at the screen with him, “I could not find you by the cliffs or on the observation deck. I did not expect to find you in here.”

“I thought it appropriate to better understand Overwatch and those who have been a part of it if I am to join it,” said Zenyatta, gesturing at the photo. He hit a key again to a photo of Jack Morrison asleep at his desk with a pile of paperwork on it.

“McCree took that one,” said Genji.

“Mm?” Zenyatta flipped to the next one which was of Dr. Ziegler and Mei slumped against each other, sleeping while surrounded by lab reports and even more paperwork.

“Reyes caught him sleeping while he was supposed to be working one time and yelled at him. So he spent the next week going all over the Watchpoint and taking photos of Overwatch members napping on the job to prove a point to him. He called it ‘Sleepwatch’ though I always thought ‘Oversleep’ would be more appropriate.”

“How many did he take?”

“A surprising amount,” said Genji, “But it turned out the jet-lag from the Orca was actually heavily affecting on-Watchpoint activity, so it brought up an unaddressed issue concerning Watchpoint productivity and ended up helping a lot.”

Zenyatta clicked to the next photo, which was of Reyes napping on a sunlit bench with his hat pulled down over his eyes. Genji chuckled, “He got in a lot of trouble for that one.”

“Did he take one of you?” said Zenyatta, flipping through photos of Tracer asleep on top of Winston, Amélie and Gerard tangled up together on a couch, and even Ana napping in one of the training rooms with a sleeping Fareeha under her arm.

“He could never catch me sleeping,” said Genji, folding his arms cockily.

“I see,” said Zenyatta. He continued scrolling through different photos in silence, “There are very
few photos of you,” said the omnic, at last.

“Oh–” said Genji, “Well… I usually did not take the time to take them. I was quite fixated on vengeance back then.”

“Hmm,” Zenyatta continued scrolling through photos.

Genji sighed, “And… I had not yet adjusted to my… appearance.”

Zenyatta glanced over from the screen. “A shame,” he said turning back to the photos, “Your current form is quite appealing.”

“Well I did not think so when–what?”

“It is appealing,” said Zenyatta, “A harmonious and aesthetically pleasing union of the organic and the mechanical.

The heat sinks in Genji’s shoulders clicked out and steamed. He coughed and cleared his throat. “Yes, well… I was not of that opinion back then.”

“And now?” said Zenyatta.

Genji glanced down, “I am far more at peace with myself and my appearance than before.”

“Perhaps we should take photos then,” said Zenyatta.

“What?” said Genji.

“The old Overwatch took many photos and documented their friendship. Perhaps we should do the same.”

“I…” Genji paused, “I suppose that is true,” he said.

“Then we are in agreement,” said Zenyatta. He turned to the screen. “Athena?”

“Yes?” Athena’s icon lit up on the screen.

“Do you possess photographic capabilities?” asked Zenyatta.

“Yes.”

“Please take a photo of us,” said Zenyatta.

“Wait I’m not—” Genji started but the screen flash and then an image of Zenyatta looking perfectly fine next to Genji with hands blurred by motion appeared on the screen.

“Excellent,” said Zenyatta.

“No it’s not,” said Genji, “I made it blurry.”

“Repetition is the path to mastery,” said Zenyatta, “We will try again. Athena—”

“Wait—” said Genji, “Let me uh—” he put an arm around Zenyatta’s shoulders and threw up the “V” sign. Zenyatta threw up a peace sign as well. “Athena,” said Genji, “Take the picture.”

The screen flashed again and a much more well composed photo appeared on the screen. “A wonderful start, my pupil,” said Zenyatta.
“Start?” repeated Genji.

“Yes, we must take far more,” said Zenyatta.


Genji chuckled a little, “It would be a bit silly to just spend all this time using Athena to take pictures of ourselves, Master.”

“There are several portable cameras around Winston’s lab,” Athena chimed in, “Weather is optimal and the Watchpoint is very well lit this time of day, especially on the east side.”

Genji’s visor brightened in surprise. “Wonderful,” said Zenyatta heading out the door, “Come, we must document our new friendships.”

Genji moved to follow Zenyatta, then paused and gave a glance back to Athena.

“You’re not going to make him take all those photos alone, are you?” said Athena.

Genji scoffed and chuckled, then followed after Zenyatta.
The workshop was always warm, and the smoky-metallic smell was somewhat of a comfort to them. The crackle of Torbjorn’s welding torch was far enough away from them that they could hold a conversation without raising their voices too much.

Genji handled the halo biofeed gingerly, and Mercy watched the thoughtful way his fingers traced over it.

“I really did try to make it smaller,” she murmured, her chin in her hand, “But that shape was the only thing that gave it the maximum range of bio-data while still being practical and wearable. I didn’t intend for it to look like…”

“A halo?” Genji glanced up at her.

She snorted. “As if the wings weren’t bad enough already—I’m just adding fuel to the fire of god-complex doctor jokes, aren’t I?”

“I think it fits for you,” Genji’s visor shifted up from the halo to her, “I’ll miss the beret but… I like this.”

Mercy flushed a little and pushed her hair back.

“What—what I mean is—well, Overwatch was already using you as a symbol of hope and compassion…” he wasn’t sure if he was digging himself into a deeper hole now.

“To cover up for their clear oversteps of UN-set boundaries,” said Mercy, folding her arms bitterly. She blinked and caught herself, glancing up at him. “I mean you—Blackwatch was—”

Genji made a ‘don’t worry about it’ gesture with his hand. “I know,” he said, with a shrug. He turned the halo biofeed over in his hands, and then his eyes flicked up to her.

“May I?” his hand went up to his own visor.

Mercy nodded, “Of course,” she said, smiling.

Genji pressed a catch at the side of his helmet and his visor clicked upward, exposing his eyes but keeping his faceplate on. He clicked the halo biofeed at the catch and flinched a little as the bio-data flooded his senses. He could see Winston through three walls, a green-lit outline digging through a jar of peanut butter. He could see Pharah and McCree, small and distant as they were, at the makeshift training grounds of the watchpoint. He could even see Tracer’s outline, zipping along, running laps around the Watchpoint. His eyes flicked to Mercy and she was smiling a bit at the way his neck was craning to look at his teammates through the walls of the watchpoint.

“Doesn’t it get overwhelming?” said Genji, “If two teammates dip into critical status but they’re nowhere near each other…”
“I would know, yes,” said Mercy, “At that point it’s a judgment call: who do you keep alive to keep the whole team alive?”

Genji glanced off, a little afraid to press further on the issue. How often have you had to make that judgment call? he thought. Who on our team would survive that judgment call? But then as he shifted his gaze back to Mercy, he could see a little yellow light flickering in front of her, like a little candle flame suspended in the air. He wasn’t sure if it was instinct or impulse that brought his hand forward, but it simply phased through the light.

“…what is that?” said Genji.

“It’s the BDI—sometimes I call it the ‘Beady,’” said Mercy with a smile.

“…Beady?” said Genji.

“Biotic Defibrillation Indicator—if someone on my team slips into shock or cardiac arrest, I can use the biotics still present in their system from my staff to…revive them. The beady indicates if I can…still do that.”

“Did you do that with me?” asked Genji.

“The biofeed wasn’t nearly that advanced back then and since you didn’t have my biotics present in your system….” Mercy trailed off with a shrug. “With you I just yanked off my staff’s capacitor and… it was sort of a defibrillation? Considering the state of your injuries you were holding on much more strongly than was… well…”

“Than was what?”

“Than was thought humanly possible,” said Mercy.

“Father did always say the dragon gave our clan an unusual amount of resilience…” Genji said quietly. He paused, “So these little lights…” he phased his hand through the little candle-like light in front of Mercy again, “Mean the difference between life and death for your team… and you call them ‘Beadies.’”

“I mean… not out loud,” Mercy said, reddening slightly. She rolled her eyes. “Gabriel called them ‘souls’ and obviously that’s being very overdramatic about it and in the heat of the moment, well…. ‘Beady’ is less…. stressful than ‘Soul.’”

“That’s fair,” said Genji. He huffed a little. “Reyes would call them souls.”

Mercy grinned, “He would,” she said, and then her smile faded, “…it… it isn’t always accurate,” she said quietly, “The beady.”

“Mm?” Genji was distracted by phasing his hand through the little light again.

“Sometimes it will tell you that you can revive someone when… when you really shouldn’t…. Mercy’s fingers curled into a distressed fist, her thumb running over her knuckles with anxiety, “I just… hope I can make the right calls this time.”

Genji’s eyes softened on her. He reached over and put his hand over hers. “Angela,” he spoke gently, “I have complete faith in you. You’re the best medic I’ve ever known, and you probably keep one of the coolest heads under pressure that I’ve ever seen. Whenever we’re teamed up I–” he itched at the point where the halo had clicked onto his helmet, “I feel safe. Because you’re there.”
“You mean that?” a smile lit up her features.

“I mean it,” Genji gave her hand a slight squeeze, “I feel it…” he paused, “Deep in my beady.”

Mercy snorted hard.
The box shook the desk a bit as it landed. Mercy rubbed her forehead and pushed her hair out of her face as she sorted through it. Empty biotic canisters from the old days, some reusable, some not, some she had marked with a black felt pen to be cannibalized into other biotic distributor prototypes. Some old files featuring alternate designs for the caduceus staff, and even some old designs for the valkyrie suit itself. Mercy felt her spinal implants itch a bit. A part of her longed to wear the wings again, and that was one of the reasons why she came back, wasn’t it? No one could pilot it like her. No one could help people like her. It was the same reasons she had joined Overwatch when she was barely grown years ago, only now she hoped she would not make the same mistakes.

“Doctor Ziegler,” Athena’s voice suddenly came from a pocket in Mercy’s labcoat and she rifled through them and pulled out her comm.

“Yes, Athena?”

“If you desire, the dining hall has recently become operational, and will be serving dinner in 15 minutes.”

“A bit early for dinner isn’t—” Mercy glanced at the time on her comm display, “…Oh. Thank you Athena,” she moved to set the box aside, “You know in an odd way, I’ve almost missed Overwatch’s terrible, salty RTE—” she glanced down at the comm to see Athena’s icon was gone already. “AI’s work is never done I suppose,” murmured Mercy. She straightened the collar of her labcoat and headed toward the door of the infirmary lab when suddenly a spray of droplets hit the window. Mercy sighed, then glanced over to the side of the door to see a red umbrella covered in cobwebs tucked into a lonely corner. She scoffed a little. Five years. Five years and that umbrella had been here the whole time. Still, it was a bit serendipitous. She grabbed it, dusted it off and opened it up, then headed out the door.

It wasn’t a particularly heavy rain, just one of those odd, humid small downpours that would sometimes find their way in off the sea, with thick clouds somehow easily punctured by sunlight and an almost eerily low amount of wind. She made her way across the watchpoint and walked past a figure on a rock, then paused and turned on her heel. It was Genji, meditating on a rock facing the sea. She walked over and he showed about as much reaction to her as the rock he was sitting on. She stepped closer and waved a hand in front of his face. Again, no reaction. She thought to speak to him, but then he seemed very deep in his focus that she couldn’t really bring herself to disturb him.

She watched as the rain plinked down on his helmet and dripped off of his visor. Her brow furrowed a bit and she took her umbrella off her shoulder and then held it out slightly so that it would keep them both dry. She wasn’t sure how much longer he planned to be out here, but she had a few minutes before dinner. She watched patches of sunlight move over the water and listened to the rain hit the canvas of the umbrella for a few minutes. No wonder Genji would pick this spot on the Watchpoint to meditate–even in the rain, the view was lovely, though with the visor she couldn’t really tell if his eyes were open. She pulled out her comm and started scrolling through her schedule for tomorrow. Stopping today she could allow herself another two hours tomorrow to finish getting the lab back up, then there would be a check-up on Winston (which she knew he would probably try and put off but five years without a checkup had to catch up with him sometime), then McCree, of course, that would be a whole mess in itself—

“Doctor Ziegler?” Genji spoke and gave her such a start she nearly dropped the umbrella. His hand
flew out and caught it but not before it tilted and sent a splash of water onto his head.

“Oh—” Mercy dropped her comm and her hand flew over her mouth, “Oh my–Genji I’m so sorry–”

“It is fine–” he managed, then glanced at his hand over hers on the umbrella’s handle, then withdrew his hand, Mercy’s own grip righting the umbrella’s angle.

“Does your master always make you meditate out in the rain?” said Mercy with a slight smirk.

“No. I chose this time for myself. To be honest, I had not really noticed,” said Genji glancing upwards.

“Hadn’t noticed?” said Mercy, a slight laugh in her voice. Her face suddenly dropped. “Wait–You didn’t feel it at all? Have your sensations been dulling? Do i need to run a diagnostic on your nervous–”

“I can feel it, Doctor Ziegler,” Genji quickly assured her, “I suppose my mind was simply on other things.”

“Oh…” Mercy tucked her hair back, a bit embarrassed that she had started worrying so quickly.

“However, that begs the question of what you were doing out in the rain,” said Genji, folding his arms.

“I was…” Mercy’s mind went blank briefly before her stomach growled and she went, “Oh–Dinner. I was on my way to get some dinner,” she paused, “You’re welcome to join me, if you wish.”

Genji considered this briefly. “Very well,” he said, getting to his feet off of the rock. He glanced down then bent over and picked up Mercy’s comm which she had dropped and held it out to her, “You probably shouldn’t leave this behind,” he said.

“Thank you,” said Mercy, taking the comm. She held the umbrella up slightly so that he could get underneath it and both walked to the dining hall.
The orb of harmony hovered over a shoebox as Zenyatta kept his hands reaching forward to keep it levitating. Normally the orb would be able to sustain its levitation with slight repulsion technology around its target, but the bird’s mass wasn’t large enough to sustain that equilibrium. Bastion looked on anxiously, occasionally reaching forward to gently lift the lid of the box to peek under, and chirping in quiet concern. Zenyatta withdrew the orb of harmony and sighed. He didn’t really have lungs to sigh with, but had picked up the sound from humans who had visited the Shambali monastery who had made that noise when expressing sadness, resignation, or relief. As soon as the orb was withdrawn Bastion’s head jerked up from the box and the siege unit beeped in alarm at Zenyatta and raised its maintenance arm and gestured at it as if Zenyatta had forgotten what he was doing.

“I am sorry, my friend,” said Zenyatta, “Sometimes the greatest battle is acceptance of things beyond our power.”

Bastion opened the lid of the box and looked sadly at the small bird. Bastion was silent for a while before it suddenly perked up, made an arching movement with its arm around its head, and then beeped with the same cadence of Mercy’s cry of ‘Heroes never die!’ Ganymede flapped his wings enthusiastically to further illustrate Bastion’s point.

Zenyatta looked hopeful, but then remembered a polite but firm Mercy telling Bastion, who had brought in a pigeon with a missing foot several weeks back, that she could not ‘fix’ every injured animal he brought to her. He did not doubt Doctor Ziegler’s compassion, but perhaps the situation could be handled more delicately than with a notoriously fretful siege automaton. It was then that he heard a voice.

“Master?”

Zenyatta glanced over his shoulder to find Genji.

“Both of you missed Winston’s briefing,” said Genji, holding up several papers, “I had Athena print out a transcript for you.”

“How thoughtful, my student!” said Zenyatta, taking the papers. “Hmm, it seems now that we must review these briefing notes, we will need someone to run this box up to Doctor Ziegler.”

Genji tilted his head. “What box?” he said, leaning around Zenyatta to see a shoebox with Bastion staring into it. “Not another one…” said Genji, folding his arms.

“I believe it’s quite serious this time,” said Zenyatta, picking up the box and pushing it forward towards Genji, “I realize Doctor Ziegler is very busy, but perhaps if she believes you found it….”

“I do not like lying to her,” said Genji, taking the box, “And why would I convince her any more than Bastion?”

Zenyatta tented his fingers and was silent. He gave a glance over his shoulder at Bastion, who shrugged. “…you have known her longer,” said Zenyatta, at last. Genji glanced down at the box skeptically and Zenyatta went on. “And I believe deep within you is a wellspring of compassion for all small creat–”

“Fine—I will bring it to her,” said Genji, glancing under the lid of the box before turning around.
“You found this?” said Mercy, glancing into the box.

“Yes,” said Genji, “It must have hit a window,” he added, watching as Mercy pulled on gloves and gingerly lifted the bird out of the box to look over its injuries. “…Or perhaps a cat got it?” Genji itched at one of the plates in his arm.

“Bastion found it,” said Mercy, flatly.

“Bastion found it,” Genji conceded.

Mercy scoffed and smiled a little, set the bird gently down into the box and then started rifling through her cabinets.

“Why not simply use the staff?” said Genji, as Mercy looked through the cabinets.

“It doesn’t really have a setting for organisms that small,” said Mercy, “But I’m pretty sure I still have some biotic applicators that were designed for lab rats–here!” she pulled out what looked like a pen-sized version of her caduceus staff, but all gray rather than with the white plating. She smacked it against her palm a few times and it weakly glowed yellow. She then gently scooped up the bird and began streaming biotics onto it. Genji leaned over her shoulder as she worked. There was something calming in the way her hands moved. He remembered the sight of her fingers testing the plates and catches on his arm years ago, but he remembered something different about her hands back then.

“Bandages,” he said mindlessly.


“Oh–Nothing—I was just—” he suddenly became acutely aware of how close he was standing to her and took a step back, “Back when you were working on me, your fingers would sometimes be bandaged up. You would keep it covered with gloves but…” he paused, “Was it from my armor?”

Mercy smirked a little and glanced up at him, “You know, when I was doing the final examinations on your prosthetics, I really wish they had told me beforehand what it was your right arm could do. Jack knew I would probably have given him hell for that. Still, one does not usually expect a shuriken loading mechanism built into the forearm.”

“They were trying to match it to my Shimada gauntlets,” said Genji. He glanced at his arm and the plates slid back briefly, “They did excellent work.”

Mercy’s mouth drew to a thin line.

“I am sorry if it harmed you,” Genji added.

Mercy just huffed a little, “It’s fine. I’m sorry Overwatch built that into you” she turned her attention back to the bird, “You know…if you ever need a prosthetic that… doesn’t do that… you can come to me, right?”

“But this arm serves my purposes,” said Genji.

“If that’s what you want,” said Mercy.

“I want to protect my friends,” said Genji.
Mercy smiled, but there was some trace of sadness still in her eyes. Suddenly the sparrow fluttered in her hands and she flinched back in her seat a bit as the bird suddenly took flight around the room. “Oh—” she said and Genji quickly opened a window which the bird shot out of.

“Not even a thank-you?” said Genji, watching as the bird took off over the Watchpoint. Mercy snickered then pulled off her gloves, washed her hands off in the sink, then pulled out a small box of bandages and laid one over her palm. “What happened?” said Genji.

“Oh just a scratch,” said Mercy, “For such a little bird it had some surprisingly sharp claws.”
“Come on—get under there you stupid—” Hana was tucking her hair up under a baseball cap, the brim of which was already tilted up at a somewhat 80's-looking angle from being forced over the majority of her hair in a bun. When she finally managed to get her hair under it, she stood back and put her hands on her hips with some satisfaction. She was wearing a baggy printed tee and high-waisted shorts with sneakers. She pulled on a slightly oversized letterman jacket to complete the look. and struck a pose. “Cute!” she said, turning around and tugging on the socks of her sneakers. She grabbed her phone and snapped a selfie then nearly posted it, but then stopped herself and set her phone down. “Nope. No posting until you get back,” she said to herself in the mirror, before making finger guns at herself, “Hana Song is just going to have a normal night out!”

She popped in a fresh stick of gum and grabbed her bag, pulling her hat down as much as she could as she made her way out of her room and through the watchpoint residences. She was nearly out the door of the rec room when she heard a familiar voice.

“Oh, sneaking out, are we?”

D.Va turned on her heel to see Tracer leaning against the couch.

“Don’t worry, I won’t tell on ya,” said Tracer, grinning. She squinted and leaned in, “You’re not wearing your little stripes. Going low-profile?”

“No!” said D.Va, she then paused and fidgeted with some loose hair before trying to tuck it back under the cap, “…yes,” she said quietly.

Tracer smiled. “Here then,” she said, reaching into an interior pocket of her jacket and pulling out a small case. She popped it open and handed D.Va a pair of aviator sunglasses, “Gotta complete that undercover celebrity look, right?”

“Oh thanks!” said D.Va, taking the sunglasses and putting them on.

“You take care now luv, you hear?” said Tracer.

“Got it,” said D.Va, heading out the door.

—

It was simple enough getting into town, call MEKA, fly low, dismiss MEKA. Finding the venue wasn’t too hard either. It was the line that was the hard part. She was used to being able to walk pretty much wherever she wanted since she was, well, D.Va. She probably could get VIP seats if she wanted, but she knew that would turn the night into a whole thing. Hana was wearing her thumbs down on her phone playing a mobile version of 16-Bit Hero. Someone muttered something about the line moving behind her and she stepped forward, not looking up from her phone’s screen. She bumped into someone in front of her. “Oh–” she glanced up, “Sorry, I–” she heard an explosion noise in one of her earbuds and glanced down to see her player icon in a 16-bit explosion. “Dammit–” she said and then glanced up again but then saw the person she was apologizing to had turned away. “Oh–I didn’t mean you–” D.Va pulled down her shades, “Wait, Lū–?”

He quickly turned on his heel and made a cutting motion with his hand next to his neck and D.Va’s eyes widened. “You too?” she said with a sly grin.
Lúcio smiled and nodded a little.

“Geez, I almost didn’t recognize you,” she said, pocketing her hands in her jacket.

“I could say the same. I almost miss the little…” Lúcio trailed off and pressed his fingertips to his cheeks in the same spot where D.Va had her stripes.

“Almost?” said D.Va.

“I mean, don’t get me wrong, you look great with them, like, really great—I just–This is a good look, too.”

She snickered, “Thanks…” she looked him up and down, “So why are you dressed like a dad?”

Lúcio glanced down at his outfit which was noticeably more bookish than his usual clothes, “What—seriously?”

“Who wears argyle to a concert?” said D.Va, a slight laugh in her voice.

“Hey, the Electric Sheep are acoustic. Cut me some slack,” said Lúcio.

“Uh huh,” said D.Va folding her arms.

“I mean, if you don’t want people to notice you, you don’t dress in your usual style. And it’s worked pretty well for me so far,” Lúcio said with a slight shrug. He itched at the low bun he had tied his hair back into, “See, I thought it was less ‘Dad’ and more ‘Hot Professor.’”

D.Va gave him another glance up and down and shrugged. “Okay, I can see it. Where’d you get the glasses?”

Lúcio pressed the tortoiseshell glasses up the bridge of his nose. “Actually… these are mine.”

“No way,” D.Va said in awe.

“Well the visor I wear on-mission is prescription, and I usually wear contacts in the off-hours so…” Lúcio shrugged, “Yeah, makes sense why you’ve never seen these.”

D.Va worked on tucking some loose hair back under her cap, “It uh… It works for you.”

“Thanks,” said Lúcio. The noise from the line swelled briefly as feedback was heard inside the club. “Sounds like they’re setting up,” said Lúcio. He glanced over at D.Va, “So… big Electric Sheep fan?”

D.Va laughed a bit awkwardly, “I’ve uh… never heard any stuff by them. Mostly I just saw they were playing tonight and wanted to get away from the Watchpoint.”

“Fair enough,” said Lúcio. He dropped his voice a bit, “Okay, real talk? The only album I have by them came out like, four years ago. I don’t know any of their new stuff.”

“Freedom fighting keeps you busy, huh?” said D.Va, folding her arms.

“Yeah, hence the low profile,” said Lúcio as the line moved forward, “That and the other thing.”

“The other thing?”

“Same reason you’re wearing that hat,” said Lúcio, “It gets tiring, sometimes. Being…” he looked
around and then spotted a poster across the street and gestured at it. It was a soda advertisement featuring a winking D.Va, “Being that,” he said.

D.Va huffed a little, looking at the photo of herself. “That shoot took forever,” she muttered.

“You don’t have to be that with me, you know,” said Lúcio.

“Huh?” D.Va glanced up.

“I mean like… D.Va’s really cool, but I wouldn’t mind hanging out with Hana Song, either.”

“They’re one in the same,” said D.Va, folding her arms smugly.

“All right, that’s fine too,” said Lúcio. He snickered, “It’s just—for me, there’s Lúcio,” he gestured at himself, “But also there’s Lúcio, you know?”

“So who am I dealing with right now?” said D.Va, grinning.

“Well as far as everyone else is concerned?” said Lúcio, glancing around at the crowd, “You’re just dealing with a random guy you just met.”

D.Va gave him a playful punch in the arm. “A random cute nerd I just met.”

Lúcio chuckled. “Seriously though, we should hang out more. I mean, you’re free to play as much Starcraft in your room as you want, but if you ever want to chill, give me a call, all right?”

“Aww, you care about me,” said D.Va, batting her eyelashes with a saccharine voice.

“Hey, Freedom fighters and war heroes aside, Overwatch newbies gotta stick together, right?” said Lúcio.

D.Va paused, then smiled, “Yeah. Okay.” The line moved forward again and Lúcio pulled out his phone and started checking through his messages.

“Okay so, I haven’t heard any of these guys’ music,” said D.Va.

“I’ve got one of their old albums on my phone,” said Lúcio, rifling through his pockets and pulling out earphones. He plugged them into his phone and offered her an earbud. She took it and put it to her ear. Lúcio hit play and Hana let the music make the world blur and fade around her as they waited for the line to move forward.
The interior of the room had been rendered his own personal solar system, or even galaxy, of a sorts. Papers and books drifted around him in wide ellipses, not hitting the walls. He was the sun, or the black hole at its center, his bare feet not touching the tiles as he frowned at the whiteboard which hovered off the floor closest to him—presumably the object of the greatest mass in the room. They had let him change from the orange jumpsuit of his previous holding facility to a slightly more dignified set of teal scrubs with a gray long-sleeved undershirt.

“So. We brought a bomb back to base,” said Sombra, folding her arms as they looked through the one-way glass.

“Not a bomb,” said Akande.

“Yeah yeah, bombs explode, he implodes—let’s be pedantic about it,” said Sombra, “The point is, he’s one skipped xanax or one too-strong coffee away from turning the base into rubble.”

“So he’ll fit right in,” said Reaper.

“I love you, Gabe, but I’ve never seen you crush a guy like a beer can with your mind,” said Sombra, “The guy needs help. Like help-help or this could end up blowing up in our faces…. or imploding in our faces.”

“Nonsense. He has to have some control if he can keep it contained to the room,” said Moira, leaning close to the glass, “I don’t believe the human brain yet has the architecture to shoulder what he’s been burdened with. But if anyone could grow to understand it, to control it… it’s him.”

“He merely needs an environment to foster that growth,” Akande agreed, “And we will provide it.”

“Wow, we’re so charitable,” said Sombra, flatly.

“Talon stands for the advancement of humankind, Sombra,” said Akande, “Our friend here has been gifted with something great, and how did his government treat him for it? Imprisonment, isolation, sedation… is this how we treat the next steps in human evolution?”

“So, who’s going to be the first to un-isolate him?” said Sombra, putting her hands on her hips.

Moira briskly stepped over to the door into the room.

“I was only being half serious,” said Sombra.

“You’re right. He needs someone to talk to. To help him acclimate,” said Moira, sipping her coffee.

“Not to rag on your bedside manner but—” Sombra started but Moira put her hand on the panel next to the door. It slid open and she walked in.

Sombra looked between Doomfist and Reaper. “So we’re just letting her do this?”

“Yes,” said Doomfist, putting a weighty hand on Sombra’s shoulder in a ‘Settle down’ motion.

“She knows what she’s doing,” said Reaper, “…most of the time.”

Sombra gave a deep inhale through her nostrils.
“Doctor De Kui—” Moira started and then flinched as her feet drifted off of the ground. Her feet flailed beneath her briefly but she saw she was caught up in the same ring of revolution as several books and a few loose sheets of paper. The furthermost ring of the room from him. She suddenly gripped her coffee cup with alarm, expecting the liquid to float out from it.

“Your coffee should be gyroscopically contained to your cup,” said Sigma, observing his own mug as it drifted by. He took it and sipped it. Decaf, of course, but there was still an equalizing element about it.

“Thank you,” said Moira, glancing down at the liquid spinning in her cup as she neared her first complete revolution of the room, “Well—I certainly don’t like floating against my will, but thank you for not spilling my coffee.”

“My apologies for any inconvenience,” said Sigma, not even looking up from his whiteboard, “I think better like this. I would have to rearrange everything to keep you on the ground, you understand.”

“Typical man in STEM—everything has to revolve around you,” said Moira, tilting her head.

Siebren glanced up from his whiteboard to her, watching as she floated by. She was smirking.

“I recognize you.” There was a flicker in his eyes, fear, maybe. “Moira O’Deorain.”

“…you read my paper,” said Moira.

“Everyone read your paper,” said Sigma, “Unfortunate… what followed after.”

“Unfortunate? You believe my findings?” Moira arched an eyebrow.

“I’m living proof that you can follow an experiment model to a ‘T’ and not get the expected results,” said Sigma, “Is it fair to label someone a pariah simply because you can’t replicate their experiment results?” He looked at his own hands, “Do you think anyone would try to—no—” he shook his head, “No. They wouldn’t. They shouldn’t.”

“Siebren,” Moira spoke his name and he seemed to compose himself again.

He glanced over at her. “That’s not why I recognized you, however. You and the others—you were at the facility.”

“I wanted to see your condition for myself,” said Moira, “A very interesting case, yours… The Dutch government claimed you died on the space station, and yet… there you were. There had been reports of certain phenomena in the area so… we investigated. And we liberated.”

“‘We,’” Sigma repeated the word and then gave a glance to the glass. He couldn’t see through it of course, but he frowned. “They’re watching us now, aren’t they? Your associates?”

“For our safety, yes,” said Moira.

“Safety—” Something seemed to flicker in Sigma’s expression again, “How long has it been since I was last sedated?”

“With the dosages of your old facility?” Moira glanced off in thought a moment, “I’d say… 22 hours.”

“Twenty-two!” Sigma repeated with some horror, “No—no—It’s not—you shouldn’t—”
Just stay calm,” said Moira.

“But at the facility—to keep everyone safe they had to— they had to—” Sigma pressed his fingertips to his forehead, “I can’t control it—”

Moira looked down to see the liquid in her coffee cup floating upward in a liquidy cloud. The objects in the room previously caught in a leisurely planetary revolution around Sigma began shuddering. He was losing control.

—

“Should we do something?” Sombra was close to the glass, watching the objects shudder around Sigma as he pressed the heels of his hands to his forehead, “She’s in there! She could be—!”

“She can handle herself,” said Reaper.

—

“Siebren,” Moira spoke his name but he seemed to hardly hear her, inhaling sharply and erratically, “Siebren,” she said again, more harshly this time. She released her coffee cup and faded, turning to smoke and shooting through the other rings of objects floating around the room until she reformed and took ahold of Sigma’s shoulder, “Siebren!” she barked.

He startled at her touch and the objects shuddering around the room froze.

“You’ve been in control,” said Moira, “But your control isn’t going to improve if we keep knocking you out. The people at your old facility were wrong, Siebren. They were afraid. They didn’t understand what they were dealing with. They kept you from your work.”

It was as if those last six words flipped a switch in Sigma. He blinked. “My work…” he said quietly and then looked back at his whiteboard, “Yes–my work–they wouldn’t let me…” he trailed off, “They didn’t understand,” he said softly, before looking up at her, “Do you understand?”

“We want to understand,” said Moira, “But we believe the first person who’s going to understand this, if anyone, is you.”

Sigma’s eyes seemed to light up and the objects floating around the room suddenly dropped to the ground with various thumps, flutters, and clatters. Moira herself stumbled as her feet met the floor, then she flinched at the sound of both hers and Sigma’s mugs shattering on the tiles.

“Oh…” Sigma looked around the room, now a complete mess without everything revolving around him in neat ellipses, “My apologies–”

“We’ll clean up in here in a bit,” said Moira, “Maybe you should get some fresh air while we do that.”

“Beg pardon?” said Sigma.

“Outside,” said Moira.

“Outs-out–No–no that’s not… I shouldn’t…” Sigma glanced down.

“When was the last time you saw the sky?” asked Moira.

Sigma’s eyes flicked up to her. “I… I remember seeing the earth from the space station…” he scratched at his temple.
“I’d say you’re overdue, then,” said Moira smiling.

—

“This is fine,” Sombra was pacing back and forth on the Talon headquarters airfield, “This is fine. This is good. Great, in fact. I am super glad we’ve got Captain Gravity out here surrounded by dropships he can just chuck at us with a thought.”

“You’re working yourself up,” said Reaper, “Just give them space.”

“Look. Look. Here’s the thing, okay? I can plan around virtually everyone’s abilities. You and O’Deorain’s weird vampire nanobot cloud thing? Sure! Hacked into those schematics years ago. This guy’s augmentations?” Sombra gestured at Doomfist, “What am I, five? I know them like the back of my hand! That guy?” she gestured over at Sigma, floating and staring upward at the sky a few dozen yards away, “I don’t know what that guy’s limitations are. Or even if there are limits. That is what’s freaking me out.”

“This is probably healthy for you, then,” said Akande with a smile, “You know there’s only so much you can control.”

“Oh ha-ha I feel so healthy,” said Sombra, folding her arms tight across herself.

“I think we’re making a good impression,” said Akande, gesturing as Sigma chuckled at something Moira said a ways away from them.

“Because Moira making the good impression isn’t worrying at all,” said Sombra, still keeping her arms folded.

—

“They’re talking about me, aren’t they?” said Sigma, still staring up at the sky.

“Well, in their defense, you’re very interesting,” said Moira.

“There’s more to it than this, isn’t there?” said Sigma, “There’s more to it than understanding my condition. There’s more to it than helping me control it.”

“Oh naturally,” said Moira, “The world we lived in would have all your friends and family believe you were dead, Siebren. It would have you drugged and strapped down to a table. That’s not a very good world, is it?”

“….No, no it isn’t,” said Sigma.

“We become scientists to change the world,” said Moira, following his line of sight up to a cloud drifting by, “Talon just… helps us do that.”

“Talon?” Sigma looked at her.

“Your new friends,” said Moira, “I think you’ll do quite well here.”

“Well…” Sigma opened his palm and allowed two hyperspheres to form, “There is much work to be done.”
Sombra kicked her legs over the edge of the building, her fingers moving idly as she lazily hacked her way to stealing Lúcio’s latest yet-unreleased album. She glanced back at Widowmaker, staring down the scope of her rifle to the outside of a restaurant below, and then Sombra brought her legs up and turned around so she was sitting cross-legged on the edge of the building.

“He’s on a date, you know,” said Sombra, “It could take a while.”

“I hate this holiday,” muttered Widowmaker.

“I don’t think it’s all bad,” said Sombra, bringing up another screen with a swipe of her hand to several feeds of data she had running of numerous politicians, corporate leaders, and military officers. “Illicit affairs, suspicious purchases, sudden mysterious dips in public funds… You could say Valentine’s day is harvest time for blackmailers. Any movement?”

“Perhaps they moved toward the back. No word from Reaper on whether we’ve been compromised.” Widowmaker brought down the infra-sight on her recon visor, “Personne n’échappe à mon regard.” She frowned at she looked at all the red bodies moving through the restaurant below, only to see the target in that same corner booth as a waitress approached them and placed what Infra-sight was picking up as what must have been a pot of coffee on the table.

“Well?” said Sombra.

“They’re getting coffee,” Widowmaker scoffed. “Que c’est banal,” she said, bringing her eye away from her scope and dropping into a seated position. Sombra chuckled a little.

“What?” said Widowmaker.

“You know you get twice as bitter when the target is out on a date—and you’re twice as happy taking them out,” Sombra paused and looked at Widowmaker, “Or… you know, however close to ‘happy’ you get.”

“Hmph,” Widowmaker brought up her gun again and looked through the scope.

“When was the last time anyone took you out?” said Sombra, lying on her stomach on the edge of the building and putting her chin in her hands.

“No one has taken me out. I am still here,” said Widowmaker.

“Haaaa,” Sombra wagged a finger at her, “I knew there was a sense of humor somewhere in that 3-beats-a-minute heart, amiga. You know what I mean.”

“I do not ‘go out,’” said Widowmaker, bringing her rifle down.

“Well not with that attitude, you don’t,” said Sombra, “We should go out.”

Widowmaker looked at her incredulously.

“I’m serious!” said Sombra, sitting up, “What about dinner?”
“My metabolism has slowed to the point that food is ash in my mouth,” said Widowmaker.

“A movie?” said Sombra.

“You see every film before they are even edited.”

“A show.”

“A screaming crowd in the dark and music blowing out my eardrums. *Comme c'est délicieux.*”

“*Dancing!*” Sombra said, exasperated.

“I do not dance,” said Widowmaker.

Sombra grinned and brought up a video of a young Amelie LaCroix on stage and en pointe, “I’ve got a few videos that say otherw—”

“Sombra,” said Widowmaker and Sombra immediately closed the video screen. Widowmaker brought up her rifle again and looked through the scope, bringing down her recon visor again.

“Ugh,” muttered Widowmaker, watching the target, “Another pot of coffee.”

Sombra sighed and got up from the edge of the building and walked across the roof. “I am ze Widowmaker,” she said, imitating Widowmaker’s whispery voice and accent as she brought up several screens with a wave of her fingers, “I ‘ave been a leeveeng weapon ev-air seince all ze fun was sair-gically removed from my ‘eart. C’est la vie. *Omelette du fromage.*”

“I can hear you, you know,” said Widowmaker, glancing over her shoulder to see Sombra actually looking busy and not cavalier, “What are you doing?”

“Bringing up the city power grid,” said Sombra, her brow furrowing, “Let’s ruin this guy’s date.”

Widowmaker chuckled a little and then watched as Sombra’s fingers worked a completely separate screen, causing apparently random lights to turn off in buildings in the skyline opposite the restaurant. “What are you doing there?”

“Focus on the restaurant front,” said Sombra and Widowmaker nodded and brought up her rifle. Right on cue the lights went out in the restaurant and there was a hissing noise and Widowmaker smirked as people started pouring out of the restaurant front, their clothes and hair wet. Sombra had activated the fire sprinklers. Widowmaker peered through her rifle’s scope. The thing about bodyguards was they made it remarkably easier to pick the target out of a crowd. Always with the sunglasses and the black suits. The target walked between them, his date wringing out the bottom of her dress. Widowmaker smirked, exhaled, and squeezed the trigger. The target fell. His date screamed as the bodyguards scrambled to drag him out of the line of fire, not that it would do him much good at this point. Widowmaker brought her rifle down and turned on her heel. “We should get going,” she said as sirens started sounding in the distance, but then she noticed something off about the skyline. Most of the lights in the office buildings were off, however lights in rooms across a row of office buildings had been strategically turned on. Reading across about 8 different skyscrapers, one could make out the word “COFFEE?” spelled out of strategically lit up rooms on various floors. Widowmaker’s brow furrowed but she smirked.

“*Incroyable,*” she said looking at Sombra.

“What?” said Sombra, coyly. Widowmaker gestured at the buildings and Sombra looked over and gasped. “You’re asking me out to coffee?”
“Wh—You did that!” said Widowmaker.

“This is so unexpected!” said Sombra, her hand flying over her heart.

Widowmaker would have protested further but then heard the sirens getting louder. “Fine! Allez! But you’re buying.”

“Whatever you say,” said Sombra and she laughed a little. She couldn’t remember the last time she paid for something with her own money. Widowmaker hurried to the edge of the building and Sombra ran over after her. Sombra wrapped her arms around Widowmaker’s waist and shoulders as Widowmaker fired her grappling hook onto another building and then leapt off and swung with Sombra holding onto her, the two of them disappearing into the night.

Chapter End Notes

Sombra: -gets Amelie to agree to a date-
Sombra: I’m in.
“Are you all right?!” Tracer was leaning close to the laptop screen.

“Lena, honestly, I’m fine,” said Emily, folding her arms, “I live here. It’s nothing I can’t handle.”

“Well–yeah–but the news—” Tracer nervously ran a hand through her hair.

“It’s a couple of broken shop windows and some flaming trash cans. We’ve gotten worse shite after football games,” Emily frowned, “The news really sensationalized the whole thing though. The ‘Bot Lover riot,’” Emily scoffed, “There’s one human-omnic marriage on Valentine’s day and everyone suddenly decides, ‘Oh we should start looting!’” Emily grabbed a wineglass from offscreen and sipped it with a furrowed brow, “Bastards.”

“So the shelter—?” Tracer said, hugging herself.

Emily paused, then sighed, “Okay the shelter got molotv’d.” Tracer’s mouth dropped open. “But it’s nothing we can’t handle!” Emily insisted before sighing. “No one got hurt. We were able to put out the fire before any real damage got done,” Emily lifted up her laptop so that Tracer could look over her shoulder to see an Omnic on the couch, “But uh–Cindi here didn’t feel safe heading home so she’s crashing on the couch tonight.”

“Hi, Cindi,” Tracer said, waving. The omnic waved back but had a blanket draped around her shoulders and kind of tucked into herself more.

“I should be there,” muttered Tracer, “You don’t have to act all tough, you know,” she said to Emily.

Emily scoffed a little, “Who says I’m acting?” she said, folding her arms, “We can’t let a bunch of rotten…hooligans scare us into stopping our work. We can’t let losing Mondatta–” Emily stopped herself and rubbed her forehead, “Lena–” she laughed a bit bitterly, “You’re part of a renegade international task force trying to stop a shadowy terrorist organization. You don’t have time to fuss over me.”

“Oi, time does not tell Lena Oxton what to do!” said Tracer, gesturing at her chronal accelerator, “I’ll fuss as much as I want!” Emily snickered at this and Tracer was finally able to laugh a bit, too.

“So–How’s Greece?” said Emily, and Tracer easily picked up on Emily’s desire to change the subject.

“You know what, forget what I said about me being there—” said Tracer, looking out the Orca’s window at Ilios’s lights, “You should be here! We could go shopping, and see the ruins, and hit the beach—”

“I’m pretty sure I’d be red as a lobster as soon as I stepped off the plane over there,” said Emily.

“Yeah, also Talon’s supposedly here…” murmured Tracer, rubbing the back of her head. She sighed. “I’ll be home soon. I promise.”

“I know,” said Emily. She fidgeted with her hair a bit, “It’s…two hours later over there. I should let you get some sleep.”
“Yeah,” Tracer rubbed her eyes, “The apartment’s locked?” she said, still a bit worried.

“Doors and windows,” said Emily, “Curtains lowered, and I’ve got the—”

“Cricket bat next to the bed,” Tracer and Emily spoke at the same time and Emily smiled.

“Get some sleep,” said Emily.

“I love you,” said Tracer.

“Love you too,” said Emily, clicking out of the video chat.
Widowmaker could feel Sombra’s eyes on her from across the table as she used her fork to carve out a ladylike bite of pear tart. They sat in an outdoor cafe, both wearing sunglasses. Sombra was in a pale lacy pink blouse with wide-leg high-waisted gray trousers, and Widowmaker in a lavender A-line dress and Grace Kelly-style headscarf. Widowmaker knew Sombra was smirking. She could feel her smirking. Widowmaker glanced up. “What?” she said.

“You’re a liar, Araña,” Sombra said with a grin.

Widowmaker arched an eyebrow.

“’My metabolism has slowed to the point that food turns to ash in my mouth,’” Sombra leaned back in her seat dramatically, imitating Widowmaker’s whispery voice.

“It’s an expression,” said Widowmaker, picking up her coffee and sipping it, “You’ve seen me eat before. The difficult part is enjoying it.”

“Taking enjoyment of food away from the French…” Sombra’s eyes widened, “Truly Talon is something to be feared.”

Widowmaker huffed a little and took another bite of pear tart while making eye contact with Sombra as if to prove a point. “Is everything a joke to you?” said Widowmaker.

Sombra blinked a few times and returned to a bit more normal seating position. “No, but someone’s gotta lighten up this bunch.”

Widowmaker sipped her coffee. “We are trying to start a war,” said Widowmaker, “We do not need to make light of anything,” she paused, “But… you never joined because you believed in that, did you? You have a different goal, and we are a means to an end for you to reach it.”

“Are we doing this?” said Sombra.

“You asked me out,” said Widowmaker, gesturing at her with her coffee cup.

Sombra’s brow furrowed and she sipped her coffee. “War as an end in and of itself is good enough for Akande,” she said, “What I’m looking for is information which, is a very hot commodity as is today and will be even more so in war so…good for Akande and me but…” Sombra suddenly looked around and Widowmaker followed her sight.

Sombra knew Reaper was keeping tabs on her. She knew Talon itself gave her flexibility in her operations. She had definitely pushed things back with Katya Volskaya, but thankfully with Akande wrenching power back from Vialli, Talon was with her in the opinion that Katya Volskaya was of more use to them alive. Reaper knew she had her own agenda, and concordantly Akande knew she had her own agenda, and until it became an inconvenience to her, she didn’t mind. There was another watcher she feared, and at this point she was pretty sure it wasn’t within Talon.

Apparently satisfied, Sombra leaned forward and dropped her voice a bit. “There’s a bigger picture.”

“There is always a bigger picture,” said Widowmaker.

“I mean there’s a force that goes beyond Talon, beyond Overwatch, beyond nations,” said
Sombra, “And I’m going to find it.”

Widowmaker looked unconvinced.

Sombra huffed, “Well… you asked,” she said.

“I didn’t ask, I stated,” said Widowmaker with a slight smile. She leaned forward a bit in her seat, “So is this to further your goals?” she gestured at the pear tart and coffee between them.

Sombra smirked and sipped her coffee, “This is to make sure I don’t go crazy while furthering them,” said Sombra.

“You asked out an unfeeling killing machine,” said Widowmaker, “Are you so sure you’re not already?”

“But the unfeeling killing machine said ‘Yes,’” said Sombra, booping Widowmaker on the nose with the word ‘Yes,’ “So I’m pretty sure I’m on the right track.”

Something like a smile tugged at the corner of Widowmaker’s mouth and she took another bite of pear tart.
“What about, ‘There’s a party in my pants and you’re invited?’” said McCree.

“No,” Genji shook his head.

“See I think that one’s hilarious,” said McCree.

“It will not work,” said Genji, folding his arms, “Firstly, it is inappropriate, and secondly, I do not wear pants.”

“Y’know, most people don’t pair those two reasons together,” said McCree. Genji just sighed.

“I do not think any of them will work. Doctor Ziegler is… too clever,” said Genji.

“Well it’s not about them ‘working’ per se,” said McCree, “It’s more like… they’re so stupid they throw people off-guard and they’re a way to show you’re interested without getting…” McCree gestured vaguely, “vulnerable.”

“That makes it seem sneaky,” said Genji.

“I don’t know how to break this to ya, Genji, but you’re literally a ninja,” said McCree. He suddenly perked up. “Look sharp!” he said, slapping Genji on the back.

“What?” said Genji, and he looked down the hallway to see Mercy coming out of a door at the end of it. “kuso,” he swore under his breath, “What do I say?” he turned around but McCree was walking off. “McCree!” Genji hissed under his breath and McCree briefly pivoted on his heel to flash Genji a thumbs-up but continued walking away, “Jesse!” Genji whispered, “Don’t–” McCree already disappeared around a corner and Genji was left alone, mind blank, feeling utterly helpless.

“Good afternoon Genji,” said Mercy, walking past him.

Genji attempted to lean against the wall and look as casual as possible, “Good afternoon, Doctor Ziegler.”

“Mm,” Mercy gave him a nod and kept walking.

Genji drummed his fingers on the wall for several panicked seconds as she kept walking before suddenly blurting out, “Oh–Doctor Ziegler?”

“Yes?” Mercy stopped and turned around.

“I…had a question,” said Genji. Then McCree’s voice suddenly flashed in his mind, “Genji whatever you do, do not use the ‘Did you fall from heaven’ line. I made that mistake when I was seventeen. I made that mistake once. Just once. And since then I’ve known–never again. Never use that line.”

“Of course,” said Mercy, “What is it?”

“I…was…wondering,” Genji started slowly.

“Yes…?” Mercy said, clearly confused by how hesitant he had gotten.

Genji’s mind started rushing. I do not wear pants. I do not wear a shirt. All I have is—Genji
suddenly perked up. “I had a question about my exoskeleton.”

“Oh–yes?”

“Yes, exactly what was it made from again?”

Mercy laughed a little, “We’ve been over this before, Genji, It’s a combination of carbon and titanium alloys specially engineered for lightness, durability, and reduced friction.”

“Hm,” Genji nodded, before looking thoughtful, “Strange…”

“Strange?” said Mercy.

“Well I was running manual scans on it last night and the scans revealed another element in the alloys,” said Genji.

“Another element?” Mercy looked surprised then started going through her tablet for Genji’s files with a furrowed brow.


Mercy froze, hand still on the tablet screen. She was quiet for several seconds before she slowly looked up from her tablet. She opened her mouth then closed it, before finally scoffing. “That is… very serious. I suppose I shall have to arrange another appointment for you,” she said, glancing back down at her tablet.

“Appointment?” Genji could only dumbly repeat the word after her.

“Yes, let’s say, tomorrow? 11?” said Mercy, “We don’t have the materials at this facility, so it will have to be Off-Site at Cafe Verdi.”

“But that is a—” Genji started, “Oh.”

“I’ll see you then,” said Mercy, patting his shoulder and walking past him.

“Yes, Doctor Ziegler,” said Genji, watching as she walked down the hallway. As she disappeared around the corner, the heat sinks in his shoulders clicked out and steamed.
Prompt: Spiderbyte, Chateau Guillard

Widowmaker’s ponytail whipped around behind her as the boat sped across Lac Du Guillard. To Widowmaker’s left, Akande was looking out over the lake, his tablet in his lap quietly chiming from numerous notifications from his company and from Talon informants. To her right, Sombra was stretched out, sunning herself with her feet propped up on the back of Reaper’s seat. Reaper himself was up front with Maximilien, slightly hunched over in the southern French sun, his arms folded.

“I’ve had my people hard at work on restoration and preparation for your arrival,” Maximilien rolled his mechanical fingers on the steering wheel of the boat, “Vialli’s interests, as always, were more fiscal. He was using the place almost entirely as a wine cellar for the vineyard one of Talon’s shell companies owns over the hills which... while it looks very glamorous on the label saying the wine comes from a chateau’s cellars, I believe we can do him one better. I’ve diverted some of the profits from that company over to Guillard’s restoration,” he glanced over his shoulder at Widowmaker, “My gift to you, Madame,” he said with a nod before pulling the boat into the boathouse that would lead into Chateau Guillard’s cellars.

“You can’t give someone something that was theirs to begin with,” Sombra said with a smirk, giving Reaper’s seat a slight nudge with her foot and prompting a growl out of Reaper.

“Ah but of course! Forgive my presumption,” said Maximilien, stepping neatly out of the boat and tying it off, before offering a hand to Widowmaker, “Welcome to your home, Madame Guillard,” he said with a flourishing bow as he took Widowmaker’s hand and helped her out of the boat.

“Madame Guillard,” Sombra repeated the title with mock gravitas as she, Reaper, and Akande got out of the boat as well.

Several Talon agents gave them nods as the four of them made their way up from the cellars of Château Guillard. Widowmaker picked up one of the countless wine bottles lining the walls of the cellar in racks, and frowned at the label before putting it back while Sombra brought up several screens as they ascended the stairs.

“Your guys got my specs, right?” she said, tapping at several screens, and bringing up several sheets of information.

“The hardware was installed several days ago and we put the finishing touches on your wireless security infrastructure a short while later. Your connection to the various data channels around the world should be as good here as at any of Talon’s major facilities,” said Maximilien. As they entered the main halls of the chateau, they could see several Talon agents acting as security, while a handful of painters and construction workers and cleaners were hard at work, fixing the place up.

“Is that so?” said Sombra, taking a few swift steps to catch up with Widowmaker, then grinning at her, “Looks like I have a new favorite hideout,” Sombra said, grinning.

“We still need you in Castillo to oversee the assets we planted within Lumérico,” Akande said behind her, and Sombra sighed.

“Fine,” she said with a sigh.

“What about security?” said Reaper, looking around.

“Geographical location and the lake make entry into the Château very difficult as-is,” said
Maximilien, “Considering our other facilities, it is hardly a priority target for those that would wish us harm, still, security systems are in place, and I’ve taken the liberty of installing jump pads to give the lady of the house an extra edge in dealing with unwanted guests should she not have her grapple on hand.”

“You know me well,” said Widowmaker with a smile.

Reaper gave a “hm,” that indicated that this response was passable.

“But of course, Madame,” said Maximilien, “Your room and salon has already been completely refinished to the preferences you outlined in our correspondence,” said Maximilien, gesturing up the stairs of the chateau to higher floors.

“Merci,” said Widowmaker with a nod.

“I will leave you to get settled in. Monsieur Ongundimu, if you’ll join me, we still have much to discuss regarding Vialli’s other assets,” said Maximilien.

“Of course,” said Akande.

“I’ll do a perimeter check,” said Reaper.

“I have several of my best agents maintaining the—” Maximilien started but Reaper gave a sharp glance over his shoulder and Maximilien cleared his throat, (an unnecessary gesture for an omnic) and he gestured at Reaper, “By all means, Monsieur,” he said as he walked off toward the dining room with Akande.

“Guess that leaves us to do the housewarming!” said Sombra, elbowing Widowmaker playfully.

Widowmaker smirked and began ascending the stairs.

“Can’t believe you’re like… a princess or something,” said Sombra, looking out the window of the stairs onto Lac Guillard.

“Comtesse, not princess,” said Widowmaker as they reached the next floor.

“Comtesse,” Sombra repeated the word, grinning as they strolled through the salon to Widowmaker’s bedroom, “Yeah that seems more ‘you,’ Araña.”

Widowmaker chuckled and Sombra’s eyes widened as they entered the bedroom. “De pelos,” she said, looking around. Her eyes fell on a table where a chilled bottle of Provençal Rosé sat on a table with two glasses set next to it. Sombra snorted. “If I didn’t know better, I’d say our friend Maxi has a thing for you,” said Sombra as Widowmaker stepped over to an antique record player and turned it on, softly playing La dernière valse.

Widowmaker just chuckled as she uncorked the bottle, “He’s an omnic,” she said, “He can’t drink wine.”

“Then why—?” Sombra started but then saw Widowmaker pouring out two glasses.

“As you said—housewarming,” said Widowmaker, holding a glass of wine out to Sombra as she was stepping out to the bedroom’s balcony, “He did say he had the room set up to my preferences.”

Sombra’s eyes brightened and she took the wine glass and stepped out onto the balcony as well. She and Widowmaker clinked their glasses together before both taking a sip.
Sombra sipped at a sour, smoky cocktail of mezcal and Lapsang Souchong, leaning against the railing of Vialli’s luxury barge and looking out over Singapore’s waters. The night air was warm, muggy, and salty. The city glittered on the coast, looking like jewel-toned flames springing up from the red embers of the red lanterns lining the streets below. Sombra herself was dressed for the occasion in a black cropped silk jacket over a long red and gold dress. Not her usual color scheme, but one she could pull off pretty well and one that conveniently covered up most of her spinal implants. She had parted her hair to hide her neural implants as well. She knew the party was at least 90% Talon allies with the remaining 10% being those who were likely to be brought into the fold, but still, for her, you could never be too careful.

“I’m surprised you’re not in there,” a smooth and deep Irish accent cut through the mugginess as Moira stepped up alongside Sombra, towering over her almost comically, “Personal data being exchanged, secrets being loosened by drink, compromising situations just waiting to happen… I imagine that’d be a buffet for you.”

“Max said we weren’t working tonight,” said Sombra, smiling a little and sipping her drink.

“Ah but the work is never finished for us, is it?” said Moira, swirling her whiskey in its glass. Sombra didn’t dislike Moira—sure, the geneticist cut a pretty spooky figure, but there was a combination of aggressive independence and professionalism about her that Sombra could respect. Honor among thieves, she supposed. Moira was looking a bit more feminine than usual tonight in a violet qipao.

“Never is,” Sombra agreed before clinking her glass against Moira’s.

“Start any wars lately?” Moira quipped—subtle ego stroking, Sombra didn’t mind, but it wasn’t anything that would bring them any closer. Moira probably knew that.

“I’d have to check my schedule,” said Sombra, “Start any plagues?”

“Well they won’t be plagues until they’re released on the general populace, you understand,” said Moira with a smile before sipping her own whiskey. Sombra didn’t really want to know if she was joking, not tonight. She gave a glance back at the interior of the barge—air conditioned, she was sure, otherwise with how crowded it was in there, more people should have been flooding out where she was.

“It’s been a good year for us,” Moira went on, leaning against the railing, “I hope you realize we owe no small part of that to you.”

“I try,” said Sombra with a shrug.

“You do a lot more than that. I feel there could be a lot of mutual benefit having someone with as great a command of information as you in the inner circle.”

Sombra was quiet at this, giving a tentative sip to her drink. The work really never was done with Moira—not even Talon’s inner politics.

“New year, new opportunities,” Moira spoke a bit airily, swirling her whiskey again, “Just something to consider.” She sipped her drink.

Buttering it on thick, aren’t you? thought Sombra. “You offering me a seat at the table?” Sombra
arched an eyebrow.

“That depends on if you’re inclined to accept,” said Moira, bringing the glass down from her lips, her voice a bit husky with the burn of whiskey.

Sombra wasn’t inclined. She knew Akande’s special little club with their big table in Venice would only put more eyes on her, only slow her down. She knew Talon was pulling a lot of strings, and she wouldn’t mind getting her own hands on some, but gut instinct told her Moira was not the way to do that. If she ever did make it to the big kid’s table, she wouldn’t want to be carried there in someone’s pocket. Moira was the last person you wanted to owe favors to, as well.

“I’m a little busy with my own stuff right now,” said Sombra, examining her nails.

“To be expected,” said Moira, “Well the offer stands,” she pushed off of the railing and headed back towards the doors to the interior of the barge, “And if you change your mind, you know where to find me.”

“I know where to find anyone, it’s kind of my thing,” said Sombra with a grin.

Moira gave a soft chuckle, a narrow silhouette against the light of the barge’s window’s behind her. From the inside of the barge, a swell of music was muted by the window glass, but Sombra’s eyes flicked from the shadow of Moira to two figures past the glass. Widowmaker was walking past, her arm hooked in Doomfist’s. Sombra’s eyes widened at the sight of her. She knew Widowmaker was no stranger to fashion—her number at Maximilien’s casino a few months back was proof enough of that, but this look blew the Monaco dress out of the water. Ornate and body-hugging, the aubergine cheongsam featured a daring slash up the front of her thigh, and bared the spider tattoo on her back. Her earrings were dripping with rubies and her hair was done up in an intricately looped updo pinned in place by a hairpin sporting a large, dangling blood-red mystic knot of silk. And stockings—of course the Parisian had to be sporting lacy sheer black stockings.

Sombra brought her martini glass to her lips to try and hide her staring but one glance at Moira and she knew it was obvious. Again, she didn’t dislike Moira, but she didn’t like Moira knowing a lot about her. She didn’t like most people knowing a lot about her. She didn’t like anyone knowing anything about her but Moira smiled a bit, following Sombra’s line of sight to Akande and Widowmaker.

“Talon’s crown jewel,” Moira said, looking admiringly on Widowmaker. Some part of Sombra’s stomach knotted. Sombra wasn’t sure how much involvement Moira had in making Widowmaker…. well, Widowmaker—She wasn’t sure how many records of that time had been destroyed. And Moira was still in Blackwatch then…No. Not the time to fixate on that.

“Seeing a pattern between this and Monaco,” Sombra said, glancing at Akande as he spoke to Maximilien with Widowmaker on his arm, “They’re not…”

Moira laughed a little. “Do you honestly think she’s even capable of those kinds of feelings?” she said, looking back at Widowmaker, “No. We made her perfect. But you know Akande–Likes to make an entrance.”

The music thrummed against the wood and glass and Maximilien took Widowmaker’s free hand. He bent and kissed it (Well kissed it about as much as an omnic could manage) and then gestured to the dance floor. Sombra’s brow furrowed and her lips pursed as Widowmaker broke away from Akande and disappeared into the crowd of the dance floor with Maximilien. Sombra started briskly walking toward the doors.
“Play nice, Sombra,” said Moira, clear amusement in her voice as Sombra pushed past her for the door.

Sombra suddenly gulped down her Lapsang Souchong cocktail, “Oh, I’m playing nice,” she said, and tossed the martini glass over her shoulder, over the ship’s railing where it splashed soundlessly into Singapore’s bay. She pushed through the doors and entered the crowded interior of the party. Sombra knew how to move through a crowd. She knew how to be the person no one looked at. Despite the mezcal now burning in her solar plexus and hazing her senses slightly, her footing was sure and direct. Her heels clicked across the wood until she stepped out onto the barge dance floor. She only had to scan the crowd briefly to see Widowmaker and Maximilien dancing.

A socialite, a rich suit with a face she couldn’t be bothered with recognizing right now, one of the 10% and therefore, probably an idiot, blocked her vision briefly.

“Where have you been all ni–” he started with charm but Sombra completely ignored him and walked past him.

The music was a combination of east and west–Big band compositions rendered atmospheric and romantic by the erhu and guzheng, and the singer of the band giving a lovely Malay cover of Sinatra’s “Strangers in the Night” while piano dripped in and out. Widowmaker’s tattoo bobbed through the crowd as Maximilien danced her across the floor. Between the multiple couples to push through, it took Sombra a good couple of seconds to reach them. It didn’t really occur to her that maybe this wasn’t a good idea until she tapped Maximilien on the shoulder. He turned his head and looked at her. Widowmaker lifted her chin slightly to look past her shoulder and there were maybe three seconds where Sombra remembered, Right. Big kid’s table, as she looked at Maximilien.

“Can I help you?” Maximilien said, looking down on her. For a brief second Sombra wondered if her need to take down or control all the corrupt systems of the world were a part of a Napoleon complex, but one glance at Widowmaker’s eyes and she stared into the red glare of Maximilien’s eyes without fear. She hadn’t been afraid of a man in a suit in her life, and she wasn’t about to start now.

“I was hoping I could cut in,” said Sombra, extending a hand toward Widowmaker.

Maximilien managed to make a waltz position look statue-still as he looked down at Sombra. “That would depend on Mademoiselle,” he said, giving a glance over to Widowmaker. This isn’t about Amélie, Sombra realized immediately, This is about power. Big kid’s table. This was about her knowing her place in the organization. About Amélie knowing her place in the organization. Sombra made eye contact with Widowmaker, wondering if she could see the same, wondering if she knew the same, wondering how much was behind those yellow eyes.

Moira’s voice echoed in her head. Do you honestly think she’s capable of those kinds of feelings?

Bad idea, Sombra realized, Bad, bad, bad idea. You’re counting on the favor of someone who was literally brainwashed to have no preference. But Sombra couldn’t pull out. She couldn’t say, “You know what, you look you’re having fun, I’ll leave you alone,” because then Maximilien would know that she would back down where Talon wanted her to, and she couldn’t have that. She just had to brace for the humiliation of Widowmaker’s rejection. That was it. No one knew who she was at this party. It didn’t matter. Sombra was a ghost. A shadow. Her shield. It would all just go right through her. Maximilien–well she could deal with Maximilien later.

A long pause passed between the three of them, the other bodies on the dance floor still shifting.
and gliding to the music around them.

“Well—” Maximilien started after a few beats.

“Mademoiselle accepts,” said Widowmaker, breaking away from him and taking Sombra’s hand.

“What–I mean, well of course, as you wish,” said Maximilien, pulling away from them with all the grace he could muster.

“Oh–” said Sombra as Widowmaker took her hand and put a hand on her hip. Her hands were cool—not cold, Singapore was too warm for their usual clamminess, but the coolness was a comfort that Sombra could feel through the silk of her dress.

“I’ll lead,” said Widowmaker, “I’m taller–is that all right?”

Sombra nodded dumbly as Widowmaker stepped into a dance. At that point, the last song ended and a Malay cover of “It’s Only a Paper Moon” started. Widowmaker knew how to dance—she knew how to lead. Sombra could feel her face burning and the mezcal still burning in her gut. She knew she could hold her liquor better than most but she was hyperaware of any misstep she could make now, but Widowmaker looked down at her.

“That was bold,” said Widowmaker after a minute or so of dancing.

“Psh,” Sombra bunched up her shoulders, “You think just because he’s got a chair in Venice that I’m scared of him?”

“You should be scared.”

“Don’t have to be scared if I’m smart,” said Sombra.

“Stepping on the toes of Talon superiors is not smart,” said Widowmaker, flatly.

“Well sorry for figuring you didn’t want to spend the night as someone’s hood ornament,” said Sombra.

Widowmaker smirked a little. “I can handle myself,” she said with a smile.

“I know you can,” said Sombra as Widowmaker twirled her, “But it’s New Year’s. I figure you’d want to have fun.”

They swayed to the music a while longer.

“Tell me something,” said Sombra.

“Mm?”

“Would you want a chair on the council?” asked Sombra, “Y’know… Venice?”

Widowmaker looked thoughtful. “I wasn’t made to lead,” she said after a long while, “I was made to kill.”

A part of Sombra wanted to debate the terms of Widowmaker being ‘made’ but she knew that was a whole other can of worms, so instead she simply proceeded in the same line of the conversation. “But if you lead, you could direct Talon so it kills better,” said Sombra.

“I don’t want to leave the field,” said Widowmaker, her eyes scanning across the crowd on the
“I had more than my fill of the politics in Monaco.”

“Akande likes you, though,” said Sombra.

“Because I do my job,” said Widowmaker, a barb and a smile in her voice.

“Mean,” said Sombra.

“I know,” said Widowmaker.

Widowmaker just smirked and swayed Sombra across the dance floor. “You do know how to make a night interesting,” she conceded. Widowmaker studied Sombra for a moment. “You changed your hair,” she said after a beat.

“Yeah well… you know these parties,” said Sombra, with a shrug, “It’s not bad, is it?”

“I almost didn’t recognize you,” said Widowmaker. She tucked a bit of Sombra’s hair back, revealing one of the metallic nubs of her neural implants, “There–”

Sombra instinctively brought her hand up and tucked her hair back over the nub. Widowmaker’s hand pulled back slightly.

“Sorry,” Sombra glanced off.

Widowmaker shook her head, “I understand,” she said after a beat. They danced a while longer. Widowmaker smelled good—Perfume didn’t really trail off of her the way it should with her lower body temperature, it took the warmth of the room for it to occasionally bloom off of her as she and Sombra glided towards other bodies. Sombra would only get occasional bursts of labdanum and peony.

“So you… uh… like dancing?” Sombra managed.

Widowmaker chuckled a little, “I like dancing,” she said, dipping Sombra, the movement making Sombra curse an uncountable amount of times in her head while feeling her face burning as Widowmaker stooped over her before bringing her upright again, “I also like seeing people like Maximilien brought down a peg or two…” she swung Sombra around so that she could see the bar, where Maximilien was bitterly ordering a glass of Glenwales organic oil. Sombra snickered a little as Widowmaker swept her across the dance floor, “And I like that you make a living of doing just that.”

A nervous chuckle escaped Sombra, “Yeah well… You got anyone in mind, you just let me know, you know?” she said as Widowmaker pulled her out of a dip again.

“I will keep that in mind,” said Widowmaker, smiling.

Sombra could hear the distant pop of fireworks from Singapore’s shores as they kept dancing, but she didn’t feel particularly inclined to go watch them. Not just yet.
Genji examined the heart-shaped box and gave it a skeptical shake, then tried to check the nutrition and ingredient info on the back of the box for its manufacturing location. It was the last of its brand in a largely picked-clean aisle, but it featured a small Swiss flag on the box so things seemed hopeful. He heard a giggle and looked over his shoulder, to see… nothing.

“Hm,” he moved to turn his attention back to the box when suddenly there was a flash of blue and the box was gone from his hand. He heard more giggling and glanced up to see Tracer perched on top of the shelf, chocolate box in hand.

“Gonna have to be quicker than that, Genji!” she said, waving the box within his reach, but then pulling back when he snatched for it.

“Oxton!” He said grabbing for the box but only to see Tracer disappear in another flash of blue light. He made a frustrated noise and looked down the aisle. There had to be another box of Swiss chocolates, right? He hurried down the aisle to find another box. Not heart-shaped, but red, just as big as his first choice, featuring a Swiss flag on the sticker sealing it.

He grabbed for it, but then another hand grabbed it at the same time. He gave it a small yank. He really didn’t want to be rude but to be fair, he was very quick and had probably made contact with the box first, right? The hand held on to the box with an iron grip and Genji’s eyes trailed upward first to some very impressive biceps and deltoids, then to the face of none other than Aleksandra Zaryanova.

“…Hello…” said Genji.

“I will break you,” Zarya said without hesitation, holding onto the box of chocolates.

Genji immediately released the chocolate box. He could not give Angela chocolates if he was dead. He watched as Zarya walked off with the chocolate box, then glanced back over his shoulder at the rest of the aisle, largely picked clean. Somewhere near the cash register of the store he could Junkrat going “Mine! Mine! Mine! This is my chocolate!” and a high pitched laugh. He sighed, but out of the corner of his eye he could see one last lonely red box all alone on the shelves. He walked over to it. It was small, yes, smaller than all the other boxes of chocolate but it had a small sticker on it that said “Product of Switzerland.” He reached for it, when another hand grabbed it first. He glanced up into the face of Ana Amari, and Ana looked up at him.

“Genji,” she said with a slight smile, “Enjoying the cheap candy?” she held up the box.

“Captain Amari,” Genji paused and then cleared his throat, “I must ask you for that box of chocolates. I believe they are the last Swiss chocolates in the store—”

“Oh, they are,” said Ana, dropping the chocolates into her shopping basket. Genji’s heart sank a little and his shoulders slumped. ”Genji,” Ana said with a slight chuckle, “Valentine’s day is over.
It hardly matters at this point.”

“Yes but—” Genji cleared his throat, “You see, Ange–Doctor Ziegler got me Swiss chocolates, and I… I had completely forgotten to get her anything for Valentine’s Day, so I wish to make it up to her.”

Ana seemed genuinely moved by this. “That is very sweet of you,” she said, “Angela is very lucky to have someone willing to go through such efforts for her.”

“I–thank you,” said Genji.

“Unfortunately these candies are for Reinhardt,” said Ana, turning around.

“But–” Genji started after her.

“Nām,” said Ana and Genji suddenly felt a brief sharp pain in his side, then everything went black.

When Genji awoke, a store clerk was poking at him with the butt of a broom.

“Buddy–hey–you dead? My manager will be really pissed if someone died in the store–buddy–”

Genji woke with a start causing the store clerk to flinch back and swear. He quickly sat up and got to his feet. “My apologies,” he said with a bow to the store clerk. He turned on his heel to look at the candy aisle, only to find the shelves completely barren. “…How long was I unconscious?” he said slowly.

“I’unno,” the store clerk said with a shrug.

“Are… Are there any chocolates left? Any at all?” said Genji.

“I’ll go check the back,” said the store clerk, turning around. Genji was waiting for several minutes when the store clerk came back with one relatively plain black and white striped box with a red ribbon. “I was kind of saving these for myself, but honestly it was like… super-depressing watching you fail to get a single box of candy.”

Genji turned the box over. “Are they Swiss?”

“Nah, man, San Francisco. The good shit.”

“Hm,” said Genji. He gave the box a shake. The chocolates inside sounded troublingly small.

“Trust me, Bridge Mix is like crack. It’s better than the tacky red boxes anyway,” said the store clerk.

“I will trust your judgment,” said Genji, looking at the box.

“Whatever, man, just don’t pass out in the store again,” said the clerk.

“Understood,” said Genji, “Thank you.” With that he headed to the cash register.

—


Mercy glanced up from her paperwork and looked at the box. She quickly picked up on Genji’s
self consciousness about the whole thing and then sighed theatrically, “I suppose it will have to do,” she said, before looking up at Genji and smiling, causing him to loosen up slightly. “Thank you, Genji.”
Prompt: Gency, Dancing

Mercy had all but tuned the music out as she scrolled through the agendas on her phone, trying to figure out how much tonight would set her back. There was still the forms and filing on the civilian cases from the Hollywood incident, post-mission check-ups with all members of the team, and countless emails from scientists all over the world on ethical applications of biotic technology. “The lab will still be there when you get back,” Winston had said as she frowned at different dresses D.Va had picked out for her, yet still she was compelled to at least get some of her scheduling done while she was at this silly party.

She only glanced up from her phone to do a bit of people watching. She had to admit, Hal-Fred Glitchbot threw a great party. D.Va and Lúcio, well-adjusted to fame and flash, were taking pictures with Thespion 4.0 and Hisao Takahashi, grinning and eagerly chatting with each other. Winston had managed to get into a private conversation with Dr. Al-Shahrani (the Dr. Al-Shahrani!) and was discussing lunar geology over a shared banana bread pudding. McCree was surreptitiously hoarding hors d’oeuvres to take home with Pharah running interference for him (or maybe she was just flirting with the waitresses while he swept half the canapes into a doggie bag–it was hard to tell), and Tracer and Emily were tearing it up on the dance floor. She glanced back down at her phone when someone stepped alongside her.

“Surely you are not working tonight of all nights, Dr. Ziegler?” Mercy glanced up from her phone to see Genji standing in front of her. His appearance was so sudden she fumbled and nearly dropped her phone but Genji easily caught it. She gave him a brief glance up and down. She thought her first words to him would be “Hello Genji” or “Enjoying the party, Genji?” but instead she just incredulously blurted out “You’re in a suit.”

“And you are in a dress,” Genji said, gesturing at her slightly. He was in a black suit with a gray waistcoat and green tie, while she donned a backless amber-gold dress with a grecian collar. When she was a young girl, she remembered hating the appearance of her spinal implants, yet after her time in Overwatch, she couldn’t care less.

“Oh—” she glanced down, suddenly far more conscious of how much skin the dress was showing than before, “Yes—Well—Hana helped me pick it out.”

“She has good taste,” said Genji.

Mercy suddenly flashed back to Hana practically hopping her heels as Mercy stepped out of the dressing room, going, “Yes! That’s the one, Doctor Z! Rock that cleavage! Own it!” and she reddened at the memory.

“Thank you,” said Mercy, then she cleared her throat, “I mean—her—thank her. I mean, I’ll have to thank her.”

Genji held her phone out to her and Mercy glanced down a bit more confusedly before she remembered nearly dropping it and him catching it and then she said, “Oh–thank you,” and took her phone back. She glanced up at Genji and smiled a bit. “I would have expected you to be working as well,” she said, putting her phone away in her clutch bag.

“Really?” said Genji.

“Patrolling the perimeter or something like that,” said Mercy.
Genji chuckled a little, “Perhaps I would be doing that several years ago…” he glanced out at the people dancing, “I did not permit myself much enjoyment back then, perhaps none at all—I suppose my new body made me look upon my younger self as foolish, hedonistic even.” He turned back and looked at her, “It took me a long time, but I feel I have come to find balance, even in enjoying myself. My master has helped me much in that regard.”

“Where is Zenyatta?” said Mercy, smiling.

“He asked Mr. Glitchbot to show him the set for…Six Gun Killer, I believe the movie is called?” Mercy snorted. “Really?”

“He is a fan of Mr. Glitchbot’s work. Particularly ‘They Came From Beyond The Moon.’” Mercy raised an eyebrow then laughed a little, “I would not have expected that.”

“He is full of surprises,” said Genji, looking back at the dance floor. They both watched as Tracer spun Emily around and lifted her, Dirty Dancing style. Emily was sputtering and giggling while Tracer had a carnation from one of the table vases between her teeth.

“They seem to be having fun,” said Mercy.

“Mm,” Genji nodded. A pause passed between them as they continued watching the dance floor. “Would you like to dance, Doctor Ziegler?”

“What?” said Mercy.

Genji held out a hand to her, “I said ‘Would you like to dance?’”

“Oh,” Mercy reddened but glanced over at the dance floor and gauged the tempo, then hesitantly took Genji’s hand, “I’m… not very good with the fast songs,” she said.

“You will do fine,” said Genji, heading out to the dance floor with her following after him. The music was much louder on the dance floor and a bit overwhelming at first but she attempted to move her shoulders and hips to the rhythm. She glanced over at Genji to see him moving with far more grace and confidence than she could have possibly anticipated. Her dancing slowed a bit as she watched and Genji looked at her.

“Are you all right?” said Genji.

“Yes,” said Mercy, “You’re–” she cleared her throat, “You’re very good.”

“Thank you,” said Genji, “You are…” he glanced at her awkward bobbing and shimmying, “… also dancing.”

Mercy’s brow furrowed but then she laughed a little.

“Do you need help?” said Genji.

“Help?” said Mercy. Genji took her hand and twirled her, then pulled her into a dip. “Oh,” said Mercy. The song ended and a much slower song started. Genji quickly brought her back up to an upright position and cleared his throat.

“Well,” said Genji, “Thank you, Doctor Ziegler. Would you like me to get you a drink? Something to eat?”
“You’re stopping already?” said Mercy, glancing over her shoulder at the other couples slow dancing.

“Yes—I mean, no—I mean—Ah,” Genji trailed off and Mercy took his hand in hers and then interlaced their fingers. She brought his hand up slightly, then placed her hand on his shoulder. He recognized the positioning of her hands and his hand went toward her waist, then hesitated, hovering just above it. Genji rolled his fingers then Mercy briefly took her hand off his shoulder to place his hand against her waist.

“Closed position,” she said, putting her hand back on Genji’s shoulder and pulling him towards her slightly. The heat sinks on Genji’s shoulders steamed, but since he was wearing a suit, the steam was forced out of his collar and the cuffs of his sleeves. Mercy giggled a little and Genji glanced off. The tension in his shoulders loosened up as he and Mercy started moving in time with the music.

“I thought you said you couldn’t dance,” said Genji, as he glanced down at his own feet to make sure he wouldn’t step on hers as they danced.

“I said I wasn’t good with fast songs,” said Mercy, grinning.

Genji chuckled a little. “It would seem you are also full of surprises, Angela.”

“Angela?” repeated Mercy.

“I mean—Doctor Ziegler,” said Genji, suddenly straightening up a bit as Mercy helped pivot them into a turn.

“Angela is fine,” said Mercy.

Genji’s visor brightened. “Very well…Angela,” he said as they continued to dance.
Prelude to Volskaya (Gency)

Genji sat cross-legged on the highest maintenance platform overlooking Gibraltar’s sea, though he could not really say he was meditating, more mulling. He couldn’t even keep his thoughts in order in the usual spot where he meditated, so it seemed a simple matter to find a different spot for a change in perspective. The view was nice, and for a brief moment he wondered why he never came up here, but the question easily answered itself:

1. It was a satellite launch tower and therefore not exactly readily accessible during his days in the original Overwatch.

2. When he was stationed here in those days, he was more or less blinded by rage and pain, as well as being constantly away from the Watchpoint while trying to take down his family’s crime empire.

He shook his head. His mind was wandering again, doing anything to avoid what he had come up here to figure out. *Empty your mind, focus on the task at hand,* he repeated the words in his mind.

*I love you.*

No, that wouldn’t work. He couldn’t just walk up to her and say that. You don’t just drop that on someone.

*Doctor Ziegler—*

No. Too stilted, too formal.

*Angela, can we talk?*

Well that was a start.

*For a long time I’ve—*

“Genji?” Genji heard a voice behind him and visibly flinched and turned around. Angela was on the rungs of the ladder behind him.

“Ah–Sorry–I didn’t know you were here. I’ll let you—” Mercy moved to go back down the ladder.

“No–no, it’s fine!” Genji said quickly, and Mercy paused, “I mean… It’s a beautiful view. I would not mind the company.”

Mercy smiled and pulled herself up onto the platform, then took a seat next to him.

“I suppose my secret’s out,” she said with a smile, looking out over the water.

“Your secret?” said Genji.

“This spot,” said Mercy, she paused, “Well, come to think of it, it isn’t secret. McCree used to come up here to hide from Reyes back in the old days, and now Lúcio comes up here to write music…”

“And why would you come up here?” said Genji.

“Oh–I…. The question seemed to give her pause, and she fidgeted with her hair a bit, “To think,”
she said, looking out over the water, “To just… give myself some space to breathe.”

“I can only imagine,” said Genji, looking out over the water. A pause passed between them. “It’s beautiful here,” said Genji, at last, “I could never appreciate it before.”

Mercy smiled, “I… don’t know if I’ve told you this before but… I’m glad you’re here, Genji,” she said, following his sight out to the sea, “You didn’t have to come back, but… I’m glad you did.”

“I wanted to,” said Genji, “If I cannot use my abilities to help others then everything I’ve gone through, everything Zenyatta taught me, will be for naught.” He glanced over at Mercy, watching the sea wind rifle through her hair. “But… that was not the only reason. There was another reason I came back,” said Genji.

Mercy’s eyebrows raised, “What?” she said.

“Doctor Ziegler—” Genji started, then caught himself. No, he wasn’t going to start it like that. The inside of Genji’s faceplate felt hot, stuffy even. He clicked the catch at the back of his helmet and pulled his faceplate off. He exhaled and felt the wind against his scars, “Angela,” he turned and looked at her, and noticed her eyes were wide. His hand went to his scars, “Sorry—” he said, “I should—” he moved to put the faceplate on again but Mercy reached out and stopped his hand.

“Don’t—” she said, then paused and glanced off, “I mean… you can if… if that makes you more comfortable but—” she looked back up at him, “I hardly ever get to see your eyes,” she said, a shy smile spreading across her face, “They’re lovely, you know.”

Genji reddened and the heat sinks in his shoulders clicked out and steamed. “Oh…” he said. He glanced down at her hand, still on his, and she noticed it too and moved to withdraw it.

“Sorry—” she started.

“No, don’t be,” he let his faceplate clatter to the platform and clasped her hand in both of his. Genji inhaled, then exhaled. “What… what I was saying was… The other reason I came back was…”

“Yes?” Mercy leaned toward him.

“It—” The words seemed to be catching in his throat. She was close enough so that he could feel her breath on his scars. “The reason was…” The world seemed to be fading to gold around him, it would take so little to close the distance, “It was…”

“Genji!” Tracer’s voice suddenly went off far too loudly, with some feedback in the comm built into the side of his helmet.

“Ow! Tracer!” his hand went to the side of his helmet, his ear ringing.

“No–” said Mercy, leaning back.

“No–” said Genji, trying to turn the volume down in his helmet’s comm, “No– Just– my comm went off. Sorry, that wasn’t what I was saying– what I was saying was—”

Genji’s comm went off with feedback again. “Genji this is an emergency! I need you down at Athena’s main monitor right away!” said Tracer.

Genji glanced down at Mercy’s hand still clasped in his own. “…can it wait?” he asked.

“No, it can’t wait! That’s what ‘emergency’ means! Do you know where Doctor Z is?” said
Tracer.

Genji looked up at Mercy. “Yes,” he said flatly.

“Good. Bring her too,” said Tracer, “Now hurry!”

Tracer clicked out of the comm channel and Genji released Mercy’s hand and pinched the bridge of his nose. “Kuso…” he muttered under his breath before he picked up his faceplate and clicked it back on.

“I take it we need to get going,” said Mercy, tucking her hair back.

“It would seem so,” said Genji, clicking his visor back down and getting to his feet. He held out a hand and helped Mercy get to her feet as well, then glanced down at her hand in his. “I…ah…” he trailed off then let go of her hand and rubbed the back of his neck. “We’ll talk later,” he said.

“I understand,” said Mercy with that slight smile.

Genji cleared his throat then walked past her and started going down the ladder back down to the watchpoint, muttering bitterly under his breath in Japanese as he did so. Mercy gave one last look out over the sea before quickly following after him.

Whatever reason Tracer was calling them in now, it had better be a good one.
Volskaya Incident Part 1

Chapter Notes

This chapter's a three-parter.

Mercy was shaken from a nap by a slight jostling of the Orca. Her eyes flicked to the viewport, where they were still heading through a gray, pre-dawn sky. She heard chattering and glanced up into the cockpit at Tracer, who had Emily on a voice channel. She then glanced across the Orca at Genji, whom she was pretty sure had just been asleep himself but was now sitting up in his seat and gauging his environment. He glanced over at her, gave a small wave, then moved to settle back into his seat to rest more when the orca shook again.

Tracer could be heard from the cockpit, saying, “Hang on, Em. We’re hitting turbulence. I’m going to need to call you back.”

Angela then heard a soft metallic sound, and glanced back at Genji, whose wrist plate was clicking back into place. She looked to his hand to see that he had only drawn one shuriken from his wrist, which he held between the tips of his fore and middle fingers. She watched as with a slight tilt of the wrist, he let the shuriken roll back to his knuckles. He then let the shrunken drop and flip over his knuckles with the shifting of his fingers. Down, then up, then down again. She snickered a little, and he glanced up from his hand.

“Doc Holliday,” said Mercy with a smile.

“Pardon?” said Genji.

“McCree can do the same trick with a coin,” said Mercy, “I asked him about it, and he said he learned how to do it because of Doc Holliday.”

“A coin doesn’t seem as impressive,” said Genji. His face was completely covered by his visor and helmet, but Mercy could hear the smile in his voice.

“But how impressive are shuriken if that hand can’t be cut by them?” said Mercy, grinning.

“Fair point,” said Genji. He flicked his wrist upward and Mercy reflexively looked up, expecting to see a shuriken embedding itself in the Orca’s ceiling, but there was nothing. Her eyes flicked back to Genji, who, with no lack of smugness even with his face completely covered, rolled the shrunken back up to its original position between the tips of his fingers. “Made you look,” he said. Mercy snorted.

“Arriving at Volskaya Industries,” Athena announced over the Orca’s speaker system.

“Roger, set her into autopilot for the landing” said Tracer, stepping out of the cockpit.

“Of course,” said Athena as Tracer bound down the steps in front of Genji and Mercy.

“Right then,” Tracer cleared her throat and stood up a little straighter, “So…” she clasped her hand together, “Distress call. Svyatogor gone haywire. Volskaya’s own security forces are doing their best to keep it contained at the factory, but if that thing breaks loose and hits the city, there’s going
to be a lot of people in a lot of trouble. The big problem is that it’s a prototype that represents a significant amount of Volskaya Industry’s time and resources, and the fact that it’s working with a prototype power cell means that it’s too risky to try and destroy the whole thing outright, so we need to move in and shut it down,” Her lips tightened a bit and Mercy gave her an encouraging smile and Tracer pushed her hair back from her face, “Anyway, “I know we’re a bit shorthanded right now with Reinhardt and Torbjörn off in Eichenwalde, but we’ll have plenty of backup from Volskaya’s own security forces. Doc, you’re on relief and evac. See injured civilians and personnel get out of there safely.”

“Understood,” said Mercy.

“Genji—” Tracer looked to him, “You and me are on this bot.”

“Right,” said Genji, “It should not be too hard, should it?”

“Svyatogor in sight,” Athena announced, “Left window.”

Genji looked out the window and saw the Svyatogor raging in one of the shipping yards of the factory, standing nearly as tall as the factory itself with gunfire sparking across its metal frame.

“…Ah,” said Genji.

“Athena–I don’t think coming at this thing from the ground level’s going to be an option,” said Tracer, “Drop us off on the nearest roof.”

“It will definitely notice the Orca,” said Genji, watching the Svyatogor, “We need a distraction, something that can—”

A beam of pink light cut past the Svyatogor’s shoulder, forcing it to turn its head.

“That works,” said Tracer, “Athena!”

“Bringing you in,” said Athena as the Orca swept low over city rooftops. The main door of the Orca opened, bringing in a rush of wind and a flurry of snowflakes with it.

“Doc! You get to those guards and get the injured out of there! We’ll be in contact!” said Tracer.

“Be–” Mercy started but Tracer had already zipped out the door, leapt, then tucked and rolled across the roof of one of the buildings bordering the Volskaya factory. Genji moved to rush after her but Angela put an hand on his upper arm and he stopped. “Be careful,” she said to him, “Both of you.”

“I will, Doctor Ziegler,” said Genji. He glanced down at her hand on his arm, and unthinkingly brought his own up to touch hers, but she withdrew it before he could do so. He covered this up with small salute before leaping after Tracer.

—-

“Personally I think I’ve outdone myself,” said Sombra, feverishly working on several projected screens and watching from a safe distance on the factory roof as the Svyatogor picked up one of the trucks in the factory yard and sent it flying into the line of Volskaya security guards, who were forced to scatter.

“Sombra, focus,” Reaper spoke over the Comm.
“Wow Sombra,” Sombra dropped her voice into something imitative of Reaper’s guttural rasp, “Good job bypassing all of those encryptions and firewalls to reprogram and take control of the most locked-down mech in the whole Volskaya factory. Now we can attack from the shadows.”

Reaper just growled on the comm.

“Oui, Sombra,” Sombra went on, in Widowmaker’s whispery voice and accent, “Merci for doing what literally no other hacker could. C’est magnifique. Whatever would we do without you? Mon dieu, I am so attracted to you right now.”

“Really?” Widowmaker spoke over the comms.

“Awww come on, you know you love me,” said Sombra. Widowmaker just scoffed in response.

“Just keep security busy while we find that GMS Omnicell,” said Reaper.

“I could find Katya Volskaya—” Widowmaker started.

“Talon’s priorities have shifted,” said Reaper, “Katya Volskaya is no longer a priority. The Omnic tech she’s been dealing in is.”

“Hmph,” said Widowmaker.

“Still sore about losing that kill, eh, Araña?” said Sombra.

“Just focus on your silly little robot puppet,” muttered Widowmaker.

“With pleasure,” said Sombra, spreading her fingers and grinning as the Svyatogor shoved a crane into the Volga. She heard the hum of engines and frowned and looked up. “Mierda…” she said, suddenly activating her thermoptic cloaking as the Orca flew overhead. She watched as it landed, “Gabe,” she spoke over the comms, “Looks like we’ve got a bit more company.”

“Let the bot take care of them,” said Reaper, “We’ve got more important work to do.”

Sombra watched as a pink beam hit the Svyatogor full-on in the chest. “And her?” said Sombra.

“Not a priority,” said Reaper.

—

Jack and Ana were tucked away on a crane platform that offered them plenty of vantage over Volskaya Industries’ shipping yard. Ana peered through the scope of her rifle and fired a shot at a limping guard being supported by his comrade as they ran from the rampaging Svyatogor. He flinched from the shot, his hand went to his leg, then he began running.

“Katya Volskaya is off-site at this point,” said Jack, watching through his tactical visor, “Security around her has quadrupled. Talon’s intel had to have told them that much,” he paused, “So why come back?”

“They are a terror organization,” Ana said, setting her gun to her side and unscrewing the top of a thermos full of tea.

Jack shook his head. “Reaper doesn’t need a Svyatogor to terrorize people.”

“It’s a distraction, that much is obvious. Loose a bot into a city whose primary export is the destruction of bots,” said Ana, sipping her tea then closing the thermos before picking up her biotic
rifle again, “Creates a big enough stir. Injures,” she looked through the scope and fired another biotic round at one of the injured guards moving away from the area, “Maybe kills enough people to be a legitimate threat, but in the end, it’s controlled.” She watched as the Svyatogor seized a barge out of the icy river and brought it down on top of a building, “Well… sort of.” She glanced at Jack.

“He could just be trying to lure us out,” said Jack.

“Not everything is about you, Jack.” said Ana. They both fell silent at the sound of engines passing by.

“What is that?” said Jack. But he knew. He knew it instantly. “Goddammit, Winston,” he muttered as he glanced over his shoulder to see the Orca landing a ways away from the factory.

“To be fair, this is the kind of threat we would deal with in our day,” said Ana.

“It’s still our day,” grumbled Jack, “That’s their mission. We can focus on our own.”

“Do you think Fareeha’s with them?” there was something hollow and distracted in Ana’s voice.

“Ana–” Jack started.

“No—,” Ana shook her head, “She’d be in the air already.” She took a calming breath. “They don’t know, Jack. They don’t know Talon’s here.”

“We can’t compromise ourselves,” said Jack.

Ana furrowed her brow at him. Jack sighed. “We can provide cover fire, but the first sign of Talon and we go back to our mission,” said Jack.

—

Screaming. Mercy was used to having to think while people were screaming. The key was knowing what and when to tune out.

“Hold him still–if he keeps flailing he’ll bleed out,” she said to one of Volskaya’s security forces as he held his compatriot down as she focused her caduceus staff on his grisly-looking abdominal wound. She glanced over her shoulder to see a blue flash tracing its way up the torso of the Svyatogor. Well, Tracer was alive, she could tell that much. She squinted for a few more seconds until silver armor caught the sunlight briefly before disappearing again. Genji was alive too. Please be safe, she thought, though she knew that was a difficult thing to wish for the two of them scaling a rogue Svyatogor. She inhaled and turned her attention back to the guard. She made eye contact with him and his struggling slowed as she kept a steady healing stream of biotic energy on him. He glanced over at his fellow guard holding him and said something in Russian.

“What did he say?” said Mercy.

“He is asking if he is already dead,” said the guard.

Mercy scoffed a bit and pushed her hair back from her face, then intensified the biotic beam. “You are not dead,” she said, furrowing her brow and smiling wryly, “Not if I have anything to say about it.”

“Doctor!” one of the guards shouted, “Look out!”
Mercy glanced over her shoulder to see the Svyatogor’s arm crash into the upper corner of a building, sending a shower of rubble into the shipping yard and onto her and her charges. Immediately she moved to grab the injured guard beneath her and fly to safety as fast as she could, but instead she found herself and both guards surrounded by a pink bubble as the roar of a particle beam sounded and shot past them and overhead, reducing the rubble into a shower of pebbles.

“Are you all right, Doctor Ziegler?” a husky Russian-accented voice called out over the din of alarms and shouts and explosions as the bubble shielding faded off of Mercy.

“I’m fine, I—oh…” Mercy found herself staring up at an enormous muscular woman with pink hair and an X-shaped scar above her eyebrow, “Yes, I’m fine,” said Mercy. She glanced back at the guard she had been healing. “Are you all right?” she said.

“Zaryanova…” the guard said in awe, staring at the pink-haired woman.

“Zaryanova?” repeated Mercy, “As in Aleksandra Zaryanova?”

“‘Zarya’ will do just fine,” said Zarya, hefting up her particle cannon. She looked at the guard. “Ты можешь идти?” she said.

The guard stared at Zarya then stammered out, “да.”

She looked to the other guard. “Get him out of here. We will handle this,” she said with a smirk. The guard nodded and helped his formerly injured coworker to his feet before both ran out of range. Zarya fired her particle beam at the Svyatogor again.

“I thought Volskaya didn’t want the Svyatogor destroyed?” said Mercy.

“There has been a change in orders,” said Zarya, furrowing her brow. Mercy’s eyes widened. “Wait—” she said. Zarya ceased fire for a moment. “I didn’t come alone,” said Mercy, “My friends—They’re attempting to scale the Svyatogor and shut it down from the inside.”

“Your friends sound like madmen,” said Zarya.

“If we can buy time and keep the mech from heading to the city, I’m sure they can shut it down,” said Mercy.

“I can keep it from moving,” said Zarya, with a grin, “But tell your friends to hurry. They have four minutes before my particle beam pierces that armor.”

Mercy’s eyes widened and she quickly put a hand to her ear.

—

The chirrup of Tracer’s pulse pistols met with the groan of metal as she attempted to shoot the locks around the Svyatogor’s maintenance hatch open. This was taking far longer than she would like. Gunfire from the guards below sparked across the Svyatogor’s outer shell and they rang off of Genji’s sword as he stood in front of Tracer and deflected them as she continued trying to get it open.

“What I wouldn’t give to have Torbjörn here…” said Tracer as she finally shot off the last lock and hauled the hatch open. They dropped down into a narrow corridor, only wide enough for them
to move through in single file. Mercy came on the comm as soon as they were inside.

“I’ve lost visual on both of you, are you inside?” said Mercy.

“Yeah, Doc, we’re in,” said Tracer. She reached into the interior of her jacket “Activating hacker drone,” she said, pulling out the small drone they had used during the King’s Row uprising. “This little guy should—” The drone was shot down and Tracer looked up at the sound of humming. Her eyes widened as the hovering interior drones that were used for maintenance and security started shooting down the hallway towards them. “Aw, rubbish.”

“Are you all right?” Mercy asked.

“We’re fine,” said Genji, taking down several drones with his shuriken, “But—there’s been a complication…”

“Hacker drone is down! We’re going to have to do this manually!” said Tracer. Tracer downed several with some pulsefire.

“You need to find the center of that thing quickly. The orders around the Svyatogor have changed. If we can’t shut it down in the next four minutes, they’re destroying it,” said Mercy.

“Simple enough,” said Tracer, moving forward, “Starting a timer now.”

“You are unharmed as well, Doctor Ziegler?” said Genji.

“Yes, we’re mostly okay down here,” said Mercy, “The injuries aren’t nearly as bad as I thought they would be, which is surprising considering the damage and there don’t seem to be a lot of medics within the area of incident.”

“Guess we should count our blessings,” said Tracer, continuing to move down the corridor and shooting down more drones as she did so.

“I thought the energy core for this mech was a prototype?” said Genji, “One that hadn’t been fully tested and might cause more damage if destroyed?”

“I suppose the city has taken priority,” said Mercy.

“Hm,” Genji was skeptical, though a part of him wondered if he was only skeptical out of bitterness since they had gone through the trouble of getting into the Svyatogor, “Well… keep us updated,” he said, “We will shut the mech down.”

“Keep moving!” said Tracer, rushing forward, shooting a path for herself through the drones with Genji following close behind. Torbjörn had been able to remotely provide them rough schematics of the Svyatogor from Eichenwalde during their ride over on the Orca, so they had a decent idea of where they were going. The Svyatogor would shift at random, however, throwing them into walls or off their balance. At one point the Svyatogor shifted again and corridor they were running through suddenly turned into a deep shaft that they found themselves tumbling down, stopping from dropping only by Genji plunging his sword into one of the walls and grabbing Tracer’s wrist. They both hung until the passage righted itself again. Still, the two of them were probably the quickest members of Overwatch, and in spite of being randomly tossed about in the Svyatogor’s interior, as well as several attacks from maintenance and security drones, they were able to make their way to the central heart of the mech. The door slid open to reveal a surprisingly roomy chamber with a large circular projection in the middle of it. The projection consisted of a violet beam shooting straight up from the center of the floor and numerous arcs and half circles of violet light rotating around it. Genji stopped dead.
“Right then,” said Tracer, glancing at her timer, “We’ve got about 90 seconds to figure out how to shut this thing down or get out of here.” She brought up the projection of the Svyatogor Torbjörn had sent them on her comm and zoomed in on the heart of the machine along with some notes Torbjörn had given them on shutting it down. “Oh this isn’t good—this doesn’t look anything like the schematics Torbjörn sent. Maybe if we—Genji?” She gave him a gentle shove in the shoulder and he snapped to attention. “Genji? What’s wrong?”

“This is omnic,” said Genji.

“What?” said Tracer.

“This is omnic,” Genji said again, walking around the beam, “Or a very good imitation of it. We had the same generator in the sanctum back at the Shambali monastery. But something’s wrong—it’s not supposed to be this color—”

“Genji, I don’t mean to rush you, but we’ve got no hacker drone and we only have—” Tracer checked her timer, “A minute!”

“Right—shutting it down—We can shut it down—” said Genji, rushing over to a monitor.

“Are you sure you can shut it down?” said Tracer.

“Blackwatch had their fair share of tech work. You pick things up,” said Genji, typing in several commands. “This, however—I’ve worked with this before in Nepal—” he feverishly typed in more commands. Tracer moved over to help him, but soon found herself covering him with her pulse pistols as several maintenance drones flew into the chamber.

“What is your status?” Mercy spoke on the comm.

“We found the main generator for the Svyatogor, but there’s a bit of a complication,” said Tracer, shooting down a few more drones.

“Another complication?” said Mercy.

“Doc, it doesn’t look like Torbjörn’s schematics at all. We need you to buy us more time.”

“I’ll see what I can do,” said Mercy. There was a pause, and suddenly the entire chamber rocked and Tracer had to brace herself against the wall while Genji gripped the monitor to keep from falling himself.

“I thought you said you’d buy time!” said Tracer into the comm.

“Zarya is using a graviton surge on the Svyatogor to hold it in place. With the nanoboost from my staff we might be able to sustain it for longer than usual, but you need to shut it down now, or get out of there!”

“Gotcha!” said Tracer, “Genji? Any luck?”

Genji was working as fast as he could. He never could read binary as fast as the omnics at the monastery. “I’m trying,” he said, “In Nepal we’d just use the generator to keep the village and monastery heated—powering a mech like this is—” A purple skull icon suddenly flashed on the monitor and then a lock icon appeared. “What?” said Genji, hitting several keys, but finding the monitor unresponsive, “Kuso—No–no–no—”
“Nice try,” said Sombra, tapping a few things out on her violet screens, “Well. not really.”

“Sombra,” Reaper spoke over the comms, “We need you.”

“I thought I was the distraction?” said Sombra, tapping out a few things on her screens, “Can’t be in two places at once, Gabe.”

“We’ve hit a block,” said Reaper, “Abandon the Svyatogor and get on the factory’s security network.”

Sombra sighed, “Fine, but we’d better move quick. That distraction won’t last very long without me.” she said, typing out a few automated command sequences into the bot to keep it going as long as it could without her puppeting it.

“We’re sending backup to your position,” said Reaper.

Sombra scoffed. “I don’t need Talon rookies slowing me down.”

“Well maybe if we had killed Katya Volskaya like we were supposed to, I wouldn’t think you need backup,” said Reaper.

“Ugh,” Sombra closed the comm channel and activated her cloaking advice before running to look for a factory terminal.

—

“What’s the holdup?” said Tracer, shooting down a few more drones.

“I don’t know—,” said Genji, still attempting to get the monitor to respond but finding the lock icon on it unchanging, “It worked back in Nepal—”

“This isn’t Nepal!” said Tracer. The Svyatogor rocked again.

“It’s breaking loose!” said Mercy over the comms, “You need to get out of there, now!”

There was the roar of a particle beam again, and the Svyatogor rocked once more. Then there was a long agonized groan of metal.

“The outer hull is pierced,” said Mercy, “I’m sorry, but you need to get out of there.”

Tracer glanced over at one of the walls of the chamber, now going red hot with the heat of the particle beam. “That’s our cue to leave,” said Tracer, grabbing Genji and half-leading half-dragging him away from the monitor. They rushed back down the passage, moving back toward their exit as drones bore down on them. Tracer blinked past a handful of drones and turned on her heel to shoot them.

“Go!” said Genji, taking down some drones after her, “If you stay too long, they’ll flank you! I’ll catch up!”

“But—” Tracer started.

Genji drew his wakizashi and sped forward, taking down several drones as he did so before drawing his shuriken and taking down two more. “Go!” he repeated. He broke past the line of drones and was in close pursuit of Tracer when they saw the light from their exit up ahead. Tracer glanced over her shoulder to see Genji close behind when she grabbed the rungs of the ladder out of the maintenance hatch. At this point the pink particle beam was cutting through the wall behind
them as they continued sprinting forward. Tracer made it to the exit and zipped up and out of it in a 
blue flash. She looked to a nearby rooftop and leapt, nearly missed the ledge, then blinked forward 
and rolled onto the roof. Genji scrambled after her and nearly made it to the outer shell of the 
Svyatogor when a drone slammed into him and knocked him back. He grunted and stabbed 
the drone through with his wakizashi before regaining his footing when the Svyatogor rocked again 
and he was thrown into the wall behind him. He heard a cracking sound and an alarm blaring that 
immediately cut out, then felt heat from his right side. He glanced over to see fire rushing down the 
corridor. Well... that wasn’t good.

—

“Their time is up, Doctor Ziegler. Tell your friends to clear out for their own safety,” said Zarya as 
the Svyatogor struggled against the graviton surge.

“But—” Mercy started.

“Doctor, I have to think of my city. I have to think of Russia,” said Zarya, letting her particle 
cannon cool down for a few moments before raising it again.

“They can do this!” said Mercy, keeping her nanoboost on Zarya, “They just need—”

The Svyatogor tore loose and slammed hard into one of the factory warehouses. Instantly Mercy’s 
hand was at her ear. “It’s breaking loose! You need to get out of there, now!”

The svyatogor sent another shower of rubble onto them and Zarya quickly put down a particle 
barrier around them both, her particle cannon’s core brightening as rubble dissolved around their 
barriers before she fired. The highly charged particle beam collided with the Svyatogor with even 
more force than before. Mercy saw a blue flash zip out of the back of the Svyatogor then dart onto 
a rooftop, then squinted, before putting a finger to her ear.

“Tracer, I just got visual on you, where is Genji?”

“He was just behind me!” said Tracer.

“Oh no…” said Mercy.

—

Genji scrambled up the ladder rungs to the maintenance hatch as the drones behind him were 
consumed by fire. he dove off to the right of the hatch as soon as he was out and fire burst out right 
where he had been only a heartbeat before.

“Genji!” He heard Tracer’s call and looked up to see her on a nearby roof. He ran toward her, 
moving to leap off of the Svyatogor’s shoulders and onto the roof when the Svyatogor rocked 
beneath him. He looked to Tracer, who was taking a few steps backward before running forward. 
He immediately understood what she was doing and rushed forward as well. Jump. Grab Tracer. 
Let her Recall and pull you both to safety. The Svyatogor was already collapsing beneath his feet. 
He knew he couldn’t clear the jump but if he stayed on the Svyatogor he would die. He leapt. 
Tracer leapt. Her hand flailed out toward him, he reached out to grab her hand. An explosion burst 
out from the Svyatogor behind him and Tracer instinctively recalled to avoid the blast as Genji was 
thrown through the air like a ragdoll from its force.

There was heat and panic and dull pain and the world was spinning around him. Falling. He was 
falling. Tracer’s voice was drowned out in the wind rushing around him. He couldn’t die like this. 
He didn’t survive Hanzo, and go through all that pain only to die like this. He couldn’t. He looked
around desperately for something, anything to grab onto, but there was only crumbling rubble to his left and a burning and collapsing svyatogor to his right and the rush of empty wind on all other sides. Then he heard a cry of “Genji!” and saw a flash of yellow in the periphery of vision and suddenly Mercy practically tackled him out of his fall, her impact sending them both spinning for a few seconds before the valkyrie wings righted themselves. “I’ve got you,” she said, half to him, half convincing herself, “I’ve got you.” As soon as Genji was able to orient himself, he realized Mercy was holding him bridal style as her Valkyrie wings let them both slowly and safely descend. They were both panting from the panic. “Are you all right, Genji?” she asked.

Her eyes were wide and her face was flushed and her breath was short and in that moment he could not remember ever having a stronger impulse to yank off his faceplate and kiss her. His rescuer. His angel. His Mercy. But instead he sat, still stunned from the fall, and just managed a, “Yes, I’m fine.” He winced and gripped his side and Mercy quickly activated the healing stream on her caduceus staff with her thumb. Genji eased up in her arms a bit. “Thank you,” he said. They watched the Svyatogor collapse as they descended.

“What happened in there?” said Mercy, watching as the Svyatogor dropped to its knees, its metal frame groaning.

Genji remembered the flash of the violet skull icon on the monitor in the heart of the machine. “I don’t know,” he said, “But… I don’t think it just went haywire.”
It didn’t take them long to descend to the ground. Genji would have worried about her arms getting tired between holding him and her caduceus staff, but she seemed to be in about as good spirits as she could be after saving him from falling to his death.

“Genji! Genji are you all right?!” Tracer’s voice came over the comms as Genji and Mercy were descending.

“We’re fine,” said Genji, putting his hand to the side of his helmet.

An audible sigh of relief came on the other end of the comm.

“What’s your status?” said Mercy.

“Some scratches from the drones and debris, but nothing I can’t handle, Doc,” said Tracer, “If the blast hurt me, I think the Recall undid that.”

“Good,” said Mercy,

“We still need to regroup,” said Tracer, “I’ll see you two at rendezvous point A?”

“Understood,” said Mercy and Genji at the same time. They exchanged glances, then both looked off. Being held bridal-style was a new experience for Genji. Back in his Blackwatch days McCree or Reyes could both haul him into a fireman carry if he was injured on a mission, though he remembered his cybernetic limbs were heavier back then, but this was different.

“Has anyone ever told you you’re remarkably strong for your build?” said Genji as Mercy’s boots touched down on the ground.

“Oh,” Mercy blinked a few times, “Well... years of biotic treatment and the demands of the Valkyrie suit... I mean, to your credit your prosthetics were designed to be pretty lightweight.

Genji chuckled a little. “I’ve been thrown around enough to know that much is true,” he said.

That got a grin and a slight laugh out of Mercy. “I’m just glad you’re all right,” she said.

“Thanks to you,” said Genji.

Mercy smiled and a pause passed between them, the only sound being the groans of metal and the sparking cables of the fallen svyatogor, and the soft chiming whir of Mercy’s own caduceus staff.

“You...uh...” Genji cleared his throat, “You can put me down now, Doctor Ziegler.”

“Mm? Oh!” Mercy reddened and set him down, “Sorry, I didn’t mean to---I don’t know what I was---”

“It’s fine,” said Genji, “There are worse places to be.”

Mercy could hear the smile in his voice and her blush brightened as she pushed her bangs back from her face.
“Doctor Ziegler!” Zarya called and hurried over. She looked at Genji, then back to Mercy, “Your comrades...they escaped?”

“Yes,” said Mercy.

Zarya huffed with some relief, then looked Genji up and down. “An omnic?” she said, brow furrowed.

“No,” said Genji, “Just... extensive prosthetics.”

“Hm,” said Zarya.

“Genji--What did you mean earlier---it didn’t just go haywire?” said Mercy.

“Oh--yes,” said Genji, “There was some kind of... skull icon on the screen in the machine’s core. I... I think the mech was being controlled.”

“Controlled,” repeated Zarya, skeptically, “That is not possible.”

Genji rubbed the back of his neck, “Well I didn’t think Omnic generators could be hacked either but---”

“Omnic?” said Zarya.

“Yes,” said Genji, “The mech’s core was clearly Omnic.”

“And how would you know what Omnic tech looks like?” said Zarya, arching an eyebrow.

“I... spent several years among the Shambali,” said Genji.

“So I’m supposed to trust an Omnic sympathizer,” said Zarya.

“I think we’re getting off-track,” said Mercy, “If the mech was being controlled-”

“Volskaya industries does not use Omnic technology---It is devoted to defending Russia against the scourge of the Siberian Omnium,” said Zarya.

“Do you want me to dig among the wreckage and point it out to you?” said Genji, putting his hands on his hips.

“Genji---” Mercy put a hand on his shoulder, picking up on the frustration in his voice. Zarya brought her hand to her ear and spoke in Russian (“Все ли вне пределов досягаемости?”) and the heat sinks in Genji’s shoulders clicked out and steamed in frustration.

“I think that would be inadvisable,” said Zarya, bringing her hand down from her ear and looking at the wreckage of the Svyatogor.

“Inadvisable?” said Genji.

Zarya pointed her gun at Genji and Mercy. Genji flinched and instinctively stepped in front of Mercy and braced himself, but then he found them both encased in a pink bubble. “What---?” Genji poked at the bubble and watched as Zarya encased herself in another bubble from her gun. “What is thi--”

The wreckage of the Svyatogor exploded. Genji looked around, feeling a spike of panic then some slight confusion as the flames rushed up against the pink glow of the bubble he and Mercy were in.
The flames died down and the bubble faded around them.

Genji looked around at the now smoldering wreckage of the Svyatogor. He was pretty sure at this point, if he could have proven that the heart of the machine was omnic before, he couldn’t prove it now.

“As I said,” said Zarya, “Inadvisable.”

“Thank you,” said Mercy, “For the shielding.”

Zarya just shrugged. “We know what we’re doing here,” she said, resting her particle cannon on the ground and leaning against it.

Mercy exhaled and stepped forward, “Look,” she said, “Ommic technology or not, I’m sure there are plenty of safeguards in place to prevent this sort of thing from happening to begin with. So something had to cause it.”

“Perhaps some new remote attack from the omnium,...” said Zarya.

Genji folded his arms.

“Or something different!” Mercy added quickly, “We should probably look around to see if there's anything unusual.”

Zarya scoffed a little, “I am not about to let two members of a renegade task force wander around a factory in a city I am sworn to protect.”

Mercy pursed her lips and glanced off.

“...Unsupervised,” said Zarya after a long pause. Mercy’s eyes widened. “You saved many lives on the Siberian front, Doctor Ziegler,” said Zarya, “And you helped protect many people today. I would be remiss not to put your concerns at ease.”

“Well... we have another friend coming along. We’d better get to our rendezvous point,” said Mercy, smiling slightly.

---

“Seems like the Russians have this well-handled,” said Ana as they watched the Svyatogor go down from one of the moving platforms of the factory.

“Well of course they did,” said Jack as the platform drifted away from the sight of the wreckage, “It was only a diversion after all.”

“Hm,” Ana fiddled with her shrike helm a bit before putting it on. There was the roar of the explosion from the yard, “I hope they’re all right,” she said softly.

“If they want to throw their lives away attempting to rebuild something the world doesn’t want, they’re welcome to do so,” said Jack. He felt a sharp glare from Ana even from behind her shrike helmet.

“They’re not our responsibility,” Jack said firmly, “And if they’re smart, they’ll get out of here before the UN realizes they’re here.”

“But Reaper is here,” said Ana, “They may not be his priority, but if he has a chance to kill more former members...”
“Well then we’d better stop him first, shouldn’t we?” said Jack as the platform moved deeper into the factory. Ana said nothing, but loaded another biotic cartridge into her rifle. They heard yelling as they reached the interior. There was a guard on a stretcher. Ana peered through her scope at the scene. The Svyatagor attack was meant largely as a distraction for Talon, she knew that much, but naturally for it to be a big enough threat, people had to actually get hurt. She had a short window before the platform moved too far for her to fire. She and Jack had a job to do, she knew this. Volskaya had their own medics, she knew this as well. But it was a panic out there, they were still scrambling to get the facility secure again. Who could know if he could receive the proper treatment in time? They had a mission. She knew they had a mission.

---

“Well?” said Reaper as Sombra worked at a panel next to the door.

“There’s some new hardware since our last infiltration,” said Sombra, “Nothing I can’t crack though.” She glanced over her shoulder at the handful of Talon agents they had to bring along with them this time and rolled her eyes.

“They wouldn’t be here if you had done your job last time,” said Reaper. Sombra shot him a sidelong glance as he flicked his comm on again. “Widowmaker,” he spoke, “How is our perimeter looking?”

---

Widowmaker brought a hand to her ear from her perch. She brought down her visor and watched a blue streak race across the factory yard.

“Are you sure they are not a priority?” she said, bringing the scope of her rifle up to her eye.

“If you can make the shot without compromising the mission, I won’t stop you,” Reaper spoke over the comm, “What do you see?”

Widowmaker frowned as she stared through her scope at Tracer racing through the yard. “An annoyance,” said Widowmaker.

“Widowmaker?” Reaper spoke over the comm. Widowmaker said nothing, her eye and scope slowly narrowing in on Tracer’s blue streak as she moved across the yard.

“Forget about what happened back in Numbani,” said Reaper, “Focus on the mission.”

Widowmaker rolled her eyes and brought her recon visor down.

“Well without the alarm trip of last time, we shouldn’t have a———“ she caught sight of two figures on one of the moving platforms of the factory, “Merde.”

“Report,” said Reaper.

“If I report, can I trust that you will stick to the mission?” said Widowmaker, arching an eyebrow.

“Widow,” Reaper’s voice was a growl.

“The Shrike and the Soldier,” said Widowmaker, “I would know those guns anywhere.”

Reaper audibly scoffed on the other end. “Regular family reunion, isn’t it?”

“They did not seem to be engaging the Svyatogor like the others,” said Widowmaker, “I believe
they’re operating independently,” she paused, “Perhaps they are here for you.”

“Keep them busy for now. I’ll deal with them in a bit,” said Reaper.

“I could deal with them for you,” said Widowmaker.

“They’re not yours to kill,” said Reaper.

“Akande was right. You are getting sentimental,” said Widowmaker.

“I don’t have to explain my reasoning to you. Kill them if you must, but only as a last resort.”

“Tch,” Widowmaker gave a glance back to Tracer, “And the annoyance?”

“She makes it through those factory doors and she’s all yours,” said Reaper.

“Very well,” said Widowmaker with a shrug.

—-

“You catch that?” said Reaper, bringing his hand away from his ear and turning to Sombra.

“I got it,” said Sombra, moving past the final encryption on the door’s security code. The doors slid open. Just past the doors was a workshop where a single engineer was taking notes on the glowing core of new prototype a particle cannon. He looked up at them, made eye contact with Reaper, immediately turned on his heel and raced to grab his comm and raise the alarm when Reaper fired and the engineer slumped over his table, his blood pooling around his tablet screen.

“Not much for conversation, are you?” said Sombra, stepping into the lab and gingerly around the blood puddle.

“Not much to say,” said Reaper, walking in after her. He stopped at the corpse, turned it over, and grabbed the keycard from around its neck.

Sombra looked around the lab, then brought up a couple screens up. “So this is their top-secret workshop…” she said, scanning around at the numerous projects and screens around the room, “Particle tech prototypes, graviton generators, Svyatagor plans for the next decade…Aw Gabe,” she said, elbowing him, “You know me.”

“We’re not shopping,” growled Reaper.

“Ugh, you’re no fun,” muttered Sombra,

Reaper said nothing, but scanned the keycard he took off the engineer in front of another door, and it opened to reveal a comparatively plain room with a single bright spherical object floating a few inches above a magnetic stand at the center of it.

“Hm,” Sombra put her hands on her hips, “Probably booby-trapped. Got any bags of sand?”

Reaper scoffed and moved forward.

“Oh come on—that movie’s from your time, right?” said Sombra.

“I’m not that old,” muttered Reaper, “Scan for additional security on it so we can grab it and get this over with.”
“Yeah, we should probably have you in bed by 6, right?” said Sombra, bringing up several screens.

“Sombra,” said Reaper.

“Kidding!” said Sombra.

She tapped at her screens, “Hm… tricky. By the looks of this system I may need to shut down power to—” An alarm suddenly started blaring and Sombra’s eyes widened.

“What did you do?” said Reaper.

“Don’t look at me!” said Sombra,

---

“There’s only a limited number of areas of the factory I can show you,” said Zarya, “I assure you our own guards are investigating the matter deeply, but perhaps a fresh pair of eyes can—”

The alarm started blaring and Zarya’s brow furrowed as several announcements came over the factory loudspeakers in Russian. Zarya swore and hefted up her particle cannon.

“What did it say?” said Mercy.

“The Shrike has been spotted,” said Zarya.

“The what?” said Mercy.

“Terrorist, vigilante, spy, angel, no one knows what its motives are, or even if it’s human or Omnic. But it’s armed with some kind of sniper rifle and unauthorized and frequently in places it’s not supposed to be. It’s become a bit of a ghost story among the factory workers here,” said Zarya, “It’s been months since it’s shown up though.”

Mercy pursed her lips and felt a buzzing on her comm. She brought her hand to her ear.

“Doc! What’s with the alarms?” Tracer’s voice buzzed in her ear.

“There’s an intruder in the factory,” said Mercy, “A sniper called ‘The Shrike.’ Do you think you can scout ahead? Don’t engage unless necessary, see if you can chase them down and corner them. We’ll move our rendezvous point to the interior of the factory and be right behind you.”

“Gotcha, Doc!” said Tracer. Tracer clicked off of the comm.

“She’ll need backup,” said Genji.

“She’ll get backup,” said Mercy, “But we stay together.”

---

“To be fair, I did tell you I was on the watchlist here,” said Ana as she and Jack crouched behind several crates as someone shouted at them in Russian through a megaphone, his voice half drowned out by the alarms.

“We said we weren’t going to compromise our position,” said Jack.

“What was I supposed to do?” said Ana, “Let that guard bleed out?”
“Let their medics handle it,” said Jack.

“I made a judgment call,” said Ana with that weathered determination of hers, “I honestly thought I was out of sight enough for him,” she huffed, “Either they’re getting better at their jobs or I must be getting old…”

“Tell me you at least have enough sleep darts for all of these guys,” said Jack.

Jack couldn’t really read Ana’s face with the Shrike mask, but the silent look she gave him was message enough. “Fine,” said Jack, activating his tactical visor and looking around the factory. He looked off to the side of the guards and saw several pipes of what his visor recognized as coolant leading up to the skeleton of a half-formed Svyatogor. He fired on the pipes and they released a blast of freezing vapor, forcing the guards back and breaking off visual contact, allowing him and Ana to sprint away from them. Ana skidded to a halt in the direction of the fire, laying down suppressing and retaliatory fire. That wasn’t a guard, Jack realized as he and Ana dove behind a large support beam for cover.

“That wasn’t a guard,” Jack realized as he and Ana dove behind a large support beam for cover.

“It’s her,” said Ana, turning her head to see a figure in the shadows grappling across the upper walkways of the factory.

“Reaper can’t be far,” said Jack. Widowmaker was moving, already trying to circumvent their cover. “Go!” he said to Ana, “Get a vantage point! I’ll cover you!” Ana nodded and ran off as Jack fired his pulse rifle in the direction of Widowmaker.

---

Tracer was sprinting forward, pulse pistols in hand, when she reached the large open doors of the factory and heard the automatic fire. She blinked forward and dodged off into a room that had several screens displaying the various statuses of the machinery on the svyatogor assembly lines, then peeked out of the doorway slightly. Tracer barely made out the faint red glow of Widowmaker’s recon visor before she had to pull her head back in as sniper fire blazed past it.

“Oi, Doc,” Tracer brought her hand up to her ear, “There’s no ‘Shrike’ here, but we’ve definitely got trouble.”

“We’ll be there as soon as---” Mercy started.

“That’s a negative,” said Tracer, “We’ve got a sniper. Widowmaker.”

“Talon?” repeated Mercy.

“She’s the only one I’ve seen so far,” said Tracer, “She was more or less working alone back in King’s Row, but keep an eye on the skies. She’ll probably have a pickup coming.”

“Understood,” said Mercy, clicking out of the comm.

“Of course it’s you again,” said Tracer with a frustrated sigh as she gave a glance up to Widowmaker, “All right then,” she furrowed her brow and spun her pulse pistols on her fingers, “Rematch.”

---

“Shut it off,” said Reaper, as Sombra rapidly tapped through numerous screens.
“I’m trying,” said Sombra, “The alert isn’t localized to this area of the factory. We should be fine as long as we don’t—”

The lighting of the room suddenly shifted to red and Sombra looked over her shoulder at Reaper, who was holding the Omnicell.

“Are you kidding me?!” said Sombra, opening up a new screen to stop the lockdown procedures but the doors were closing rapidly.

“Apagando los luces!” Sombra shouted and an EMP burst off of her spinal implant. The lights shut off, the doors froze, shaking in their place with currents of electricity running over them. The alarms in the room went silent, though the other alarms could still be heard in the distance of the rest of the factory. Reaper grunted, his own nanites almost disrupted by the pulse, “I could have hacked it if you gave me the time!” snapped Sombra.

Reaper tossed her the Omnicell. “We don’t have the time,” said Reaper.

She glanced down at the Omnicell in her hands and noticed it was completely unaffected by her EMP. “Woah…” she said quietly.

“Don’t get distracted,” said Reaper, grabbing her by the back of her coat’s collar and hoisting her off her feet.

“What—” Sombra started but Reaper all-too-easily tossed her through the doors. She stumbled but didn’t lose her footing.

“Gabe—!” she called after him as her EMP finally wore off and the doors started closing again, but Reaper turned to smoke and slipped through the narrow gap, the doors closing behind him. Sombra huffed. “I have a translocator, you know,” she said, angrily straightening her jacket as she looked at the omnicell.

“You’re going to use your thermoptic cloaking to take that to the roof for pickup. Widow and I will be rendezvousing with you shortly.” He motioned to the three silent Talon guards and picked one out from the group. “You, go back up Widowmaker,” he picked out another, “You. With me. Watch my back. Stay out of my way,” he picked out the final one and motioned to Sombra, You. Make sure she gets to the roof.”

“I can take care of myself,” said Sombra.

“We can do without you going off-mission this time,” said Reaper.

“Where are you going?” said Sombra.

Reaper cocked one of his guns. “Hunting,” he replied.

---

Circumventing the main entrance of the factory took a while, and involved running across one of the barges on the nearby river to one of the fire exits, which Zarya scanned a key card to enter. Zarya, opened the door, which lead down a dark stair. “You wanted an entryway into the factory that would give you coverage from a sniper,” said Zarya, “These maintenance tunnels can take you anywhere in the factory,” she paused, “You have fought with Talon often?”

“We’ve had... brushes,” said Mercy as they headed down the stairs into the dimly lit tunnels, lined by tubes of electrical cables and coolants. It was almost claustrophobic, the three of them forced
into single file with Zarya leading, Genji following shortly behind her, and Mercy bringing up the rear. “Smaller scale operations that we were able to shut down, but not much that gives us a lot of information on their movements.”

Zarya huffed. “We have held off an attack from them before. I did not think they would be stupid enough to try the same thing twice, particularly considering Katya Volskaya is not here right now.”

“You were brought in after that attack, were you not?” said Genji, as Zarya scanned her key card through a checkpoint.

“I was informed that there were threats to Volskaya industries beyond the Omnium. If Volskaya Industries falls, my soldiers have no Mechs to back them up in their fight and Russia’s cities will be left virtually defenseless against an omnic air raid. Russian forces are the only thing keeping whatever woke up the Siberian Omnium from spreading to the other Omniums across the continent. I do not see what Talon means to gain from such destruction.”

“Many people stand to profit from war,” said Genji, remembering his own clan using the confusion of the Omnic crisis to take out rivals and further its own power. He paused. “Perhaps if Russia was willing to work with peaceful omnics, there might be a way to---”

“‘Peaceful’ Omnis?” Zarya repeated the word incredulously.

“They exist,” said Genji, “The Shambali believe---”

“Machines do not ‘believe,’” said Zarya, “Machines adapt. If their continued existence is dependent on the humans’ belief that they are peaceful, then they will say they are peaceful, but one needs only look at the Siberian front to see what Omnis are really built to do.”

Genji’s heat sinks steamed and he moved to speak when Mercy spoke up.

“We’re getting off-topic,” said Mercy, desperately trying to quell the rising tension between the two of them, “Our focus here is Talon.”

“Agreed,” said Zarya, stepping toward a set of elevator doors at the end of the hall. She scanned a key card and hit a button, “After you, Doctor Ziegler.” said Zarya.

Genji folded his arms a bit sullenly, trying to remember what Zenyatta had told him about keeping his anger in check. He felt Mercy’s hand on his shoulder as she walked past him into the elevator. He sighed.

---

“Open this door, Sombra. Hack the Svyatogor, Sombra. Stop hacking the Svyatogor and open this door, Sombra. We’re not shopping, Sombra. Take the glowy priceless omnic thing to the roof, Sombra. Sombra--the door,” Sombra imitated Reaper’s guttural snarl as she tapped through several screens featuring security footage from around the factory while walking along one of the upper walkways next to her escort Talon agent.

“Reaper’s orders were to---” the Talon agent started but Sombra shot him a sharp sidelong glance with a slight tug at the corner of her mouth that said, ‘Please, by all means, tell me what to do and see where that takes you’ and the agent quickly shut up.

“Someone needs to be prepared for when all his ‘careful planning’ doesn’t pan out,” Sombra did finger-quotes around the words ‘careful planning’, the footage feeds on her screens changing with the twitch of her finger quotes. She glanced back at her screen, saw Genji, Mercy, and Zarya all in
an elevator together and blinked a few times, “Oh so there you are,” she said, her eyes widening, “But where’s the cavalry...?” she glanced over at another screen and saw a bright streak break across the video feed. She shifted the camera on the factory floor and caught sight of Widowmaker grappling through the air, “Ah. Well, my Araña has it handled,” she glanced back at the screen that featured Genji, Zarya, and Mercy, “You however, might be a problem.”

“Maybe drop the elevator?” said the Talon agent behind her, “Take care of all of them?”

Sombra gave him a look that was half-amused, half-pitying.

“Can... can you do that?” said the Talon agent feeling more than a little vulnerable by the way she looked at him.

“Elevator emergency stops are analog,” she said turning her attention back to the screens, “I’d need to hit the elevator with an EMP to properly drop it, but then I’d have to be on top of the elevator and--I don’t know why I’m explaining this to you. You’re not worth it.” she turned her attention back to the screen, “No, all it takes is timing and we can divide and conquer. Though, when the time comes, I’ll need you to do something for me.” She glanced over at one of the unoccupied construction mechs used for putting Svyatogor plating on on the assembly line.

---

The three of them were awkwardly silent in the elevator. Mercy rolled her grip on her caduceus staff, looking between Zarya and Genji.

“I’ll take point,” said Genji as the elevator moved up.

“I’ll take point,” said Zarya, folding her arms.

“I’m faster,” said Genji.

“I have particle barriers and I know the factory,” said Zarya.

“I’m sure you’re both very competent, it doesn’t really matter who takes point,” Mercy said with some clear exhaustion in her voice.

“Yes it does,” Genji and Zarya said at the same time. Mercy rubbed at her temple with the fingertips of her free hand, trying to keep a headache from emerging. The biofeed of her halo was sending her a steady feed of Genji’s, and now Zarya’s vitals. Heart rates were elevating—they were on each other’s nerves, that much was obvious. She sighed and brought her hand to her ear. She hoped Tracer was handling the sniper all right while they were taking this route.

“Tracer, what’s your status?” she spoke into the comm.

“Still---” Tracer’s end of the comm filled with static, “--nned down,” static cut across the audio again, “Going to try---- see if----”

“You’re cutting out,” said Mercy and she glanced up at Genji, “Genji, try and hail Tracer on your comm.”

Genji brought his hand up to the side of his helmet, waited for a few seconds, then shook his head. “Only static,” he said. Zarya’s eyes widened and she activated her own comm, speaking Russian into it before she frowned.

“It must be Talon interference,” she said, “We should move quickly.
The elevator chimed and came to a stop. Both Genji and Zarya quickly stepped out, who was taking point was still not established, but Mercy hung back for a brief second, trying to adjust her biofeed halo to bring up Tracer’s current status when she heard a distorted dial-up like sound. She glanced over at the display of what floor the elevator had brought them to, and saw not the number of the floor, but rather a purple skull icon.

“Genji,” she spoke, and Genji stopped and looked over his shoulder at her. Mercy moved to step out of the elevator, “What was it you said about a skull ico--” the doors of the elevator suddenly slammed shut on her before she could exit. Genji was at the elevator door in a heartbeat.

“Doctor Ziegler?!” he said in alarm.

“I didn’t do that! It’s not opening!” said Mercy, from the sound of it apparently trying to get the doors open from the other side.

“Hold on!” Genji braced one foot on the doorway and tried to pry the door open, but couldn’t get a proper grip on the doors.

“Genji---there was a skull icon---didn’t you say---?” Mercy started from the other side of the door.

“Just hang on, we can---” Genji looked over his shoulder at Zarya, “Can you override it?” Zarya tossed him her keycard and Genji quickly swiped it through a slot at the side of the door. Nothing happened.

“There’s a manual override several floors up,” said Zarya, “We can probably reset the system, knock whoever’s controlling it out of the system for a few seconds to get her ou---”

There was a series of loud mechanical clanks overhead and Zarya looked up. “Move,” said Zarya.

Genji was still prying at the door. “What?” he said.

“Move!” Zarya shouted.

Genji looked up and then scrambled out of the way as a large construction mech dropped down from one of the upper assembly lines. They only had a second to see a Talon agent at the controls of it.

“How did they---?” Zarya started but with one swipe of a massive mechanical arm, she was knocked hard off to the side and slammed hard into a wall.

“Miss Zaryanova!” Genji blurted out, but then the mech advanced on him. He drew his wakizashi and with a flick of his wrist had three shuriken at the ready. He stepped back slightly, but then found himself practically with his back to the elevator doors. He could hear Mercy clanging around inside. This really wasn’t a fight he wanted to get into without a medic. He moved to spring into an attack against the mech when suddenly a pink blast hit it from the side, the force of it sending the mech sliding across the floor, sparks flying under its steel treads as it did so. Genji looked over to see a heavily bruised Zarya, holding her particle cannon at the ready. Zarya spat out some blood and hoisted up her particle cannon. “Get to the factory overrides,” she said to Genji, “Get Doctor Ziegler out of that elevator. I will show our guest what happens when you steal a Russian mech.”

“But---” Genji started.

The mech fired a large molten bolt as big as Genji’s forearm at Zarya, who encased herself in particle barrier from her gun. The core of the particle cannon brightened as the bolt dissolved against Zarya’s barrier. “The room at the intersections of walkways P and 12! Bypass code:
‘7714!’ Go!” she shouted over the roar of her cannon as its beam barreled into the Mech.

Genji gave one final glance to the elevator door before dodging off to the side of the mech and racing past it, scrambling up a nearby wall and rebounding off of it, grabbing the edge of one of the upper walkways and pulling himself up onto it. He gave one final glance below at Zarya shouting, “Come on!” and charging the mech, particle barrier blazing before he raced off down the upper walkway.

---

Widowmaker reached the second walkway and turned on her heel, her ponytail whipping around her in the drafty factory as she switched her rifle to automatic and fired on them when she saw that familiar blue streak out of the corner of her eye. The shrike had already broken off from the soldier. Fine, she could deal with the Shrike later. Only now the annoyance and the soldier were here, but as to whether they were working together, she could not be sure. She turned and saw a lick of dark hair poking out from behind a doorway, and fired on it. A warning shot more than anything.

“Patience,” she said, though she knew Tracer was far out of hearing range, “I’ll deal with you soon enou---” she turned to fix her scope back on the soldier when she saw several helix rockets hurtling towards her. She grappled to a moving platform, laying down suppressing automatic fire as she went, the rockets exploding behind her. As soon as she reached the moving platform, she dropped down to one knee and looked through her scope at the soldier. She fixed the crosshairs on his head. “One shot--” she started.

“Oh no you don’t!” there was a flurry of pulsefire sparking along Widowmaker’s platform, and she looked up to see Tracer charging toward her in a blue flash from one of the upper walkways of the factory. Tracer leapt down from above, pistols blazing. Widowmaker turned her sights on her. Widowmaker fired on her and Tracer recalled and disappeared to dodge the bullet. Within that heartbeat of Tracer’s disappearance, Widowmaker fired a venom mine at her own feet. Tracer reappeared, still mid-fall as Widowmaker grappled away to another walkway. Tracer’s eyes widened as the venom mine detonated when she was only a few feet above the platform, spraying her with a noxious vapor.

“I see you’re finding new ways to make the same mistakes, cherie,” said Widowmaker as she took her position on the walkway. She would have had Tracer in her sights again if the soldier hadn’t fired another spray of pulsefire at her.

Tracer coughed heavily, her carefully calculated leap turning into a tumble as she fell, bounced painfully off of the platform, and landed on the ground. She grunted but then found herself coughing and gasping for breath again when something seized her by the arm and dragged her under the awning of the walkway. She heard gunfire. She would have fired on whoever grabbed her if it weren’t for her own struggle to stay conscious amidst the poison of the venom mine.

---

Don’t get involved, Jack had told himself, They can take care of themselves. But now he was here, and he and Tracer only had seconds before Widowmaker repositioned and got them in her scope again. Tracer was gasping and coughing on the ground next to him and he set down a biotic field. Tracer’s coughing slowed slightly as the biotics healed her.

“Breathe slow, get stabilized,” he said to her, activating his tactical visor, “I’ve got your back.

Tracer coughed as Jack’s tactical visor searched the environment before honing in on its target.
Widowmaker was in the midst of using her grapple to get to that new vantage point. He thought he would have that split second as he squeezed the trigger on her as she zipped through the air, but then, in mid-air, her rifle clicked back into sniper mode and he realized she already had an angle on him. He was struggling to get back down when the sniper fire cracked past the face covering on his visor. He fired his helix rockets to force Widowmaker to change position again, and because his tactical visor was no longer doing him any good with its internal circuits destroyed. His sight was briefly obscured by a multitude of warnings in various languages flashing all around the periphery of his vision. He yanked off the visor, then realized his face was wet. He wiped at it and glanced at his hand, seeing the wetness on his face was in fact blood. He felt at his face, found that the damage to the face covering of his visor had managed to leave a gash on his cheek. He dropped down into the glowing golden circle of the biotic field. He was feeling the wound on his cheek close up and keeping an eye out for Widowmaker when he heard Tracer speak up behind him.

“...Commander?” she said. He froze.
Tracer was staring at him, her eyes wide. She coughed one more time from the venom mine, then immediately she looked down at her chronal accelerator and over her shoulder at the back of it, apparently checking to see if it was damaged.

“You’re not…” Jack started and she looked back at him, “You’re in this time. The accelerator’s not broken,” he sighed, “It’s me. Here and now.”

“I was about to say, you look terrible,” said Tracer.

“Zurich took its toll,” said Jack, wiping the blood off his face but still feeling the two diagonal scars from Zurich there.

The red dot of Widowmaker’s sight passed along a nearby wall, and both Jack and Tracer remained crouching low.

“Five years,” said Tracer, quietly.

“I know you’re upset,” said Jack, peering out and looking for Widowmaker, “I know you’re confused. But it’s going to have to wait—"

“It’s waited five bloody years!” said Tracer, “I mourned you, you absolute toser! We all did! And now—”

Sniper fire dented the wall several feet behind her but only an inch above the small barrier they were hiding behind but that didn’t seem to cut Tracer’s fury in the slightest.

“And now you show up and–where the hell were you during that fight with the Svyatogor? Where were you during the Recall? Where have you been all this time!?”

“Tracking down Reaper,” said Jack flatly, “We’ve tracked him here.”

“Reaper!? Reaper’s here?!” said Tracer, “I need to warn Genji and the Doc—I need to—” she stopped herself, “Who’s ‘We?’”

It took Ana longer than she would have liked to find the stairs leading to the upper walkways. A few deft shots of her sleep darts and whatever guards she ran into on her way there were downed. She pulled them out of the line of fire from the walkways. They have their own backup for that, she thought to herself, I’m losing too much time. And yet she still did it. She found her perch though, and though Widowmaker had clearly moved position several times by the time she was able to reach her first vantage point, Widowmaker was still well within her scopes.

“Ana, We’re pinned,” Jack spoke over their comm channel, “What’s your status?”

“Ana?! As in Ana Amari?!” a high pitched voice snapped on the other side.

“Tracer—please,” said Jack.

“I thought you said we weren’t getting involved?” said Ana.

“There’s been some unforeseen developments,” said Jack.
“Of course there have,” said Ana, smiling a bit beneath her mask.

Widowmaker was looking down. Ana knew the biotic rifle didn’t work the same way as regular rifles. At this point she preferred it that way. If she were working with the same rifle she had in the Omnic Crisis, this would be over by now, but it wasn’t the Omnic Crisis. She would subdue Widowmaker, buy time to actually put her down without drawing attention to herself.

“I’m giving you an opening,” said Ana. “Nāmī.” She fired a sleep dart and it hit Widowmaker. The sniper collapsed. With Widowmaker downed though, it made shooting her considerably harder. Still, it would buy Ana a short while to get to a new vantage point and finish the job or at least for Jack to get his own vantage point and take her out, if he could. She was already moving to a higher point on the walkways when she suddenly heard a clanking noise behind her. Ana turned to see one of the assembly mechs had dropped off the line and was currently engaged in a fight with a pink haired woman—she recognized her from a dossier on Volskaya—Zaryanova? Was that her name? She glanced back at Widowmaker. She had to focus. She had to end this. Sniper logic—kill one, everyone goes home safe. She heard a pained grunt from behind her and turned around to see Zaryanova had been thrown back from the force of the mech.

“Jack,” she spoke over the comm, “You’ll need to finish the job. I’ll be with you shortly.”

—

Zarya’s shielding was flickering around her as the mech moved in. She wiped the blood off of her mouth and hauled up her particle cannon, when she felt something impact the back of her left shoulder. Something ricocheted off the armor of the mech that wasn’t from her, and Zarya gave a quick glance over her shoulder to see an indigo-clad figure in a mask and hood with a rifle fixed on her.

“The Shrike…?” she said to herself before having to leap out of the way of another molten bolt from the mech.

“I’ve got your back!” The Shrike shouted to her.

Zarya didn’t have time to argue, she pointed her particle cannon back on the mech and fired.

—

Sombra only followed to watch the svyatogor drop down to Genji and Zarya briefly before slipping away before her cloaking wore off. The grunt she had piloting the mech had a name, several years of piloting and industrial machinery experience—enough to buy her time to get to the roof. She made a point of compiling information on everyone she was about to do a mission with beforehand, but you wouldn’t catch her dead addressing any of the main Talon forces by their names. Didn’t want to build up any familiarity and give them the wrong idea. She kept a screen open and tapped away with it at one hand, while carrying the Omnicell under her other arm. She brought up factory blueprints and detoured slightly to the main factory controls. It would be faster to do what she needed there than to attempt to hack it without using a direct terminal. Gabe still wanted her to get to the roof, but with the Shrike setting off the alarms, they now had three Overwatch agents on their backs as well. By Akande’s standards for mission success, that was way too many variables introduced, and now that they had the Omnicell, they didn’t have time to engage in combat with them. The best option was divide and conquer.

She glanced at her screen and thumbed through several security feeds of the factory, but stopped on the one that had previously had Widowmaker on it. Widowmaker was not there. Sombra’s eyes widened and she switched to several different security feeds of the same area, to finally find one of
Widow downed. Sombra’s breath caught in her throat. She put her hand to her ear and rang up the
frequency of the Talon agent that Reaper had sent as Widowmaker’s backup.

“Status?” she said.

“En route to Widowmaker as per Reaper’s orders,” came the reply. Most Talon agents had vocal
distortion built into their masks. They weren’t high-profile like Reaper or Akande or Widowmaker,
and thus benefitted from anonymity. Sombra still thought it sounded a bit ridiculous though.

“I’d pick up the pace,” said Sombra, “If anything happens to her, I will find you, and then no one
will find you. Do you understand?”

“I…yes. Moving as quickly as possible.”

“Better be,” said Sombra, clicking out of the channel. She scrolled to a security feed of the elevator
and smirked at Mercy managing to knock off a panel and then puzzling at the wires within.

“Don’t kid yourself,” muttered Sombra, “You’re a doctor, not an electrician,” she paused, “Though
I suppose you’re not doing much good just stuck there.” She heard a blipping sound and brought
up another screen. The transport was en-route. Sombra frowned “Hm…” she brought up another
security feed and saw Genji racing down the walkways in her own direction, then another feed of
Reaper making his way out from the workshops toward the staircases. “Still hunting, huh Gabe?
Okay,” she said, interlacing her fingers in front of her then stretching her arms out, cracking her
knuckles. “I think I’ve got a plan.”

Widowmaker hated the familiarity of sedation. When she first felt the prick of the sleep dart in her
arm there was simply the thought of “Oh,” And then darkness swallowed her up. She felt another
needle prick and her eyes flicked open and instinctively her hand went out and gripped the throat of
a figure standing over her. In one swift movement she had seized her rifle and with her other hand
had it against his temple. The talon agent choked under her grip and she released him. “How long
was I out?” she said.

“Not long,” said the agent, “We have orders to regroup on the roof.”

“Reaper?”

“Making his way up. He sent Sombra on ahead with the Omnicell.”

“…And he seriously expects her to stay on mission?” muttered Widowmaker, getting to her feet.
She scoffed. “We need to move.”

There was a warping sound and a flash of blue light in the corner of her vision. She brought down
her visor and watched as Tracer’s infrared signature darted up stairs. “Now,” said Widowmaker,
firing off her grapple, “We move now.” She shot one of the coolant tubes near where they were
standing, sending out a dense, freezing fog to give them cover as the Talon agent ran and
Widowmaker retracted her grapple, flying through the air.

Genji was racing, his mind repeating Zarya’s instructions almost like a prayer. The room at the
intersections of walkways P and 12. Bypass code: 7714. He passed a walkway labeled ІІ and a
dread rose in his stomach that Mercy and Zarya could die as a result of his grip on the Cyrillic
alphabet being tenuous at best. Focus, he had to keep telling himself, Just focus. He tried to hail
Mercy on the comm but found it was still filled with static. They were essentially running blind in regards to each other’s locations. Still, with his speed it didn’t take long to reach the intersection of walkway P and walkway 12, where a small box-like room sat.

Genji remembered Zarya had a keycard and wondered if he would have to run all the way back to grab it, but found the only door leading into the maintenance and control room for the factory was already open, with the key card screen at its side displaying a violet skull icon rather than the typical keycard display. He knew the skull icon. He had seen it on the Svyatogor. Genji’s stomach dropped and with a flick of his wrist he had three shuriken at the ready as he peered into the room.

The room seemed to serve as a major security channel feed, with multiple screens on every walls, as well as several monitors displaying power stability levels and other displays of basic factory power grid statuses. What was concerning however, was that half of the screens seemed glitched out or frozen, and displaying that same skull icon. Then there was one screen at the center of it all, displaying the face of a woman who looked to be a few years younger than himself.

“Hola,” she said. Her tone was casual, almost cheerful. Genji held onto his shuriken then warily drew his wakizashi.

“Yeah. You. I’m talking to you,” she said from the screen, “Come in here.”

*It’s a trap. It could not more obviously be a trap,* Genji thought to himself.

“I mean… how else are you going to make sure your friends don’t get killed?” she asked. Then suddenly one of the skull-displaying screens flickered and displayed Zarya getting knocked back by the mech. “I know you want to help them. I want to help you.”

*It’s a trap. It’s a trap. You know it’s a trap,* Genji thought. Still, with Zarya and Mercy in danger, he had little choice. He exhaled and stepped into the room.

“You were the one controlling the Svyatogor earlier,” said Genji.

“The one and only,” she said with no lack of smugness.

“So you’re with Talon,” said Genji, his grip tightening on his blade.

“Well… yes. To an extent,” she said with an airy wave of her hand.

“So why help me?” said Genji.

“I think we can help each other,” she said, smiling.

Genji scoffed. “I doubt that,” he said.

“Okay but hear me out,” she said and the screens suddenly clicked off.

“What—?” Genji started but felt a finger tap on his shoulder. He turned on his heel to see the woman from the screen standing there.

“Hey there,” she said, smiling.

He raised his Wakizashi and she crossed her arms over herself as if flinching when suddenly a bright violet light erupted off of her in all directions and the visual receptors in Genji’s helmet were scrambled. His limbs were unresponsive, his head was buzzing with only her words of *EMP Activated* filling his ears and his head and all his senses. His sense of balance told him he was
falling forward, though with most of his nervous receptors scrambled, he only felt the impact of the floor as a numb jolt through his limbs.

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Sombra stepped back as the cyborg ninja fell flat in front of her. “Huh. So I was right,” she said, pulling the Omnicell out of her coat. She had expected the omnicell to amplify the EMP, but not to this extent. She had even had her machine pistol at the ready, expecting Genji to still be able to move after her EMP. “No wonder Akande wants this so bad,” she said stuffing it back into the interior of her coat. She glanced down at Genji and nudged him with her foot a little. “Hey. You still alive? I still got business with you.”

___

“Come on–just—” Mercy had given up on the panel behind the buttons and was now jabbing up at the emergency exit shaft at the top of the elevator with her staff. She very well wasn’t going to sit in a locked down elevator while Genji and Tracer and Zarya were all in danger. She managed to shove the shaft open just in time for the elevator to shudder back to life. “Finally!” She said, pressing the door-opening button. The panel didn’t respond. “Ach du lieber—” she said, turning back to the shaft, when the elevator shifted beneath her feet, then started moving up.

“What? No—” Mercy was pressing for the floor she assumed Zarya and Genji were still on. “Don’t—” The elevator chimed, and the doors opened. Mercy glanced at the floors. It had apparently gone above the main factory floors, above the walkways and assembly lines, to the administrative offices. The doors opened, and there was a single Talon agent looking around, casually waiting for the elevator. He made eye contact with her, and Mercy reacted. He raised his gun. With a long swipe of the caduceus staff, she knocked his gun upward as he fired, one shot grazing her arm and the rest riddling the ceiling of the elevator as she drew her caduceus blaster and fired four shots to his chest, knocking him down to the ground unconscious. Maybe two point blank shots to the face and that could probably kill him, but the Caduceus blaster was designed more around self-defense than lethality, and Mercy didn’t have to kill him now. Still, she couldn’t stay here. She had to find a way back to the others, and she wasn’t willing to take a chance with how much time the elevator might cost her if whoever was hacking Volskaya’s systems affected it again. She raced out of the elevator. Stairs, she thought, Find stairs. Find the others.

She found the stairs.

Reaper was on the stairs.

There was a beat. She knew the stories. He knew of her. For the past five years they had experienced each other as distant opposing forces, Reaper creating terror and chaos wherever he went in his work with Talon, Mercy doing everything in her power to undo that in her relief work. To Mercy’s knowledge, this was the closest they had ever been to each other. To Reaper’s knowledge, this was the closest they had been in five years. He raised a gun.

She turned and ran and a section of the wall shattered from a shotgun blast behind her as she sprinted behind it. Reaper followed her, pausing at a fusebox at the top of the stairs and shooting it. The hallways went dark. He was harder to see in the dark, she stood out like a lit candle. He knew this, and he pursued.

___

“You’re not getting away!” Tracer shouted after Widowmaker as she zipped after her, with Jack desperately sprinting behind her. The talon agent sent to escort her up to the roof was easily
downed in a volley of pulsefire, Tracer wouldn’t even let him slow her down.

“Slow down!” Jack shouted after Tracer, “You don’t know if she’s leading you into an ambush!”

“You know what would have been nice to know?” said Tracer, “That you and Captain Amari were alive and hunting down one of the most dangerous men in the world! That Talon was here and this wasn’t just a case of a Svyatogor gone haywire! But no! You couldn’t trust us! You had to pull this vigilante nonsense and let everyone believe you’re dead for years!”

“You shouldn’t have rushed in with insufficient intel—” Jack started.

“It was a giant robot smashing the factory!” said Tracer, “You expect us to just stand by!?”

“This really isn’t the time—” Jack started.

“Time does not tell Lena Oxton what to do!” snapped Tracer.

Tracer skidded to a halt in time to see Widowmaker grappling away again. Widowmaker was moving upward, Tracer realized, but she wasn’t looking back and firing on them. She was escaping.

“The roof,” said Tracer, “We need to get to the roof.”

Jack brought up the schematics of the factory Ana had lent him on his visor. “This way!” He said, turning sharply.

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Most of Genji’s sensory receptors came back online in time for him to feel a nudge of a foot. He struggled to spring to his feet, to raise his wakizashi. His own voice came to him, distorted. “What did you do…?”

“You’ll live,” she replied.

Genji snarled and continued struggling to get his limbs to work.

“Aw, pobrecito,” Sombra squatted in front of him, resting her chin in her hand. She reached forward and drew Ryū Ichimonji from the sheath on his back.

“That’s not yours!” He snapped as she nonchalantly tested the weight of the sword in her hand. His legs not were responding to him, his remaining organic arm was straining against his own armor, his head was still buzzing from the EMP.

“Don’t worry, it’s not my style. It’s a little low-tech for me,” said Sombra, running her thumb across the fuller of the blade. Sombra extended her hand toward him and with a few waves of her fingers, made his prosthetic arm and legs go numb again. “Always thought you were funny like that—Given the most advanced prosthetics in the world, yet you still insist on fighting with weapons that no one uses anymore.” Genji felt the tip of his own sword beneath his chin and was forced to lift his head up to look at her. “I think I can work with you, though,” said Sombra.

“Work with me…?” Genji repeated the words and Sombra pressed the blade a bit more firmly under his chin.

“To be honest, I figured the space ape would be the one coming,” she said with a shrug, “But you’ll do.”
“What makes you think I would ever work with someone like you?” said Genji.

“I take it you’re going to want this back,” said Sombra, giving top of his helmet a slight bonk with the flat of the blade, “And,” she brought up several screens, “You’re probably going to want to help your friends.”

Genji’s breath caught in his throat as he saw her display the feeds from several security cameras. One was of Zarya fighting the factory mech, another was of two figures racing up a stairwell, Genji could recognize the glow of Tracer’s chronal accelerator but couldn’t make out the face of the man running alongside her, then finally, there was a dark screen featuring Mercy, hiding alone, visible only by the faint glow of her valkyrie wings. She seemed safe, but then a white shape emerged from the shadows near her. A bone white mask. Reaper. Mercy turned toward him and pointed her caduceus blaster at him, then Sombra closed the screens.

“Let me go,” the words fell out of him, more instinct to them than thought. Sombra smirked.

“We have some terms and conditions we should work out before that,” said Sombra, “We’re going to be very good friends.”

“I’m not working with Talon,” said Genji.

“You’re not working with Talon, you’re working with me,” said Sombra. She brought up a photo of a busy street, “And I happen to be very good to my friends.” Making a frame shape with her fingers she zoomed in on a single figure in the crowd.

“Hanzo…?” Genji squinted at the figure she had zoomed in on. He had changed his hair but Genji would know his brother anywhere.

“But my friends have to be good to me,” said Sombra, closing the screen, “I get the feeling you’re very interested in knowing your brother’s whereabouts—it would be a shame if that information found its way into the hands of the Shimada clan. I’ll do you two solids: I let you go so you can save your pretty doctor friend and be the hero,” she did a ‘jazz hand’ motion with her fingers on the word ‘hero,’ “And I’ll give you everything I have on your brother’s whereabouts—for whatever that’s worth—but, in return you’ll owe me two favors. Not Talon favors. Me favors. Seems fair enough, right?”

“And if I refuse?” said Genji.

“Well I could shoot you,” said Sombra, “Seems a waste though, especially after our doctor friend worked so hard to keep you alive,” she brought up that same screen of Mercy, “Nah, I’ll probably just EMP you again to keep you stuck here for a few minutes so you don’t kill me while I head to my extraction point. Thing is, though… I don’t think Doctor Ziegler has that long,” she closed the screen.

Genji’s hand was still twitching from the EMP, but he managed to curl his fingers into a fist. “Two favors,” he said.

“So we have a deal?” said Sombra.

“Yes, now let me go,” said Genji.

Sombra set his sword down in front of him, stepped back and waited.

“You don’t have a way to make it work again?” said Genji.
“You know what they say about time healing all wounds?” said Sombra as sensation slowly returned to his limbs.

Genji was struggling to his hands and knees. He didn’t have time. Mercy didn’t have time. Zarya didn’t have time. Rage was boiling out from the pit of his stomach, and he hoped, somehow, that that rage might help return the sensation to his limbs faster. Some dark, furious, part of him that he hoped he had left behind in Nepal, snarled from the pit of his throat. “I should kill you.”

“You won’t,” said Sombra, examining her nails, “You’re a man of your word. And what’s more is, you don’t have time.” She dematerialized in a semi-pixelated flash of purple, and Genji suddenly heard the click of his comm activating in the side of his helmet.

“I’ll leave you with this though,” she said in his comm, and suddenly blueprints of the factory swallowed up the whole of his vision receptors, with one bright orange dot, only two floors above him, was clearly labeled: Angela Ziegler. He struggled to his feet and grabbed his sword, his legs somehow both numb and aching at the same time, and took off in a run.

—

Mercy fired the caduceus blaster. Again and again. The first shot hit him in the hand, knocking his gun from it. He moved to grab it and she fired a second shot in the shoulder and he grunted, “Still going for the nonlethal points, huh Doc?” said Reaper. Another shot hit him in the chest and he dropped to one knee with a sharp rasping exhale, letting his other gun clatter to the side while gripping his chest.

“Stand down and step away from your weapons,” said Mercy.

“Don’t kid yourself,” said Reaper, “Without your comm, you’re all alone here. You know what you have to do to survive this.”

“I said stand down,” said Mercy. Her brow furrowed and she raised the gun slightly, aiming it at his head.

Reaper chuckled. “But we both know you’re not going to–”

Mercy fired. The blaster fire cracked off his mask, his head jerking back in a spray of black smoke as several bone-white shards fell to the ground. Mercy’s breath was shuddering as he slumped over, one hand gripping his face. She kept her gun fixed on him and reloaded, her hands shaking around the gun. Then he brought his hand away from his face. Then she lowered her gun.

“Gabriel?” her eyes were wide.

“In the flesh,” he said, large chunks of the skin on his cheek falling up and away into black smoke, “For whatever that’s worth.”

“What happened to you?” the question came out of her hushed and horrified.

“You tell me, doc,” he replied. In a swift and fluid motion he picked up his gun and fired. She almost didn’t feel it when it hit, her initial shock was so great. Gabe. It was Gabe. Gabriel Reyes was alive. Gabriel Reyes was Reaper. Reaper had shot her. Her world was half a blur between the current moment and nightmares of Zurich. The world slowed then quickly sped up and she realized she was falling backward. Pain. There was pain and pain and pain and pain. The force of the shot sent her sprawling on her back. She coughed, feeling blood soaking through both the front and back of her valkyrie suit. Her hand was still gripping the caduceus blaster. She had to fight. She had to
live. Her work wasn’t done. Her work wasn’t safe from those who would use it to harm people. The others needed her. Genji—She still hadn’t told him.

Gripping her wound, she raised her blaster at him again. He dropped, his movement half a fall and his own breath ragged from the shots she had fired on him, and he gripped her wrist as she squeezed the trigger. The shot hit him in the shoulder and he jolted from it but still managed to wrench the gun from her hand. Surgeon’s instinct, he realized, she’d release the gun before he could break her fingers. But then she smacked him hard across the face with the Caduceus staff with her other hand and he reeled for a second before seizing it from her hand, then, with as much strength as he could still manage to eke from his SEP serum and nanites, snapping it in two. Her breath caught in her throat as he tossed the two halves of the caduceus staff aside.

“You were dead,” Mercy’s voice was hollow and strained as her other hand uselessly tried to keep pressure on her wounds, “You died—twice—I watched you—I tried—”

“I know you tried,” he said, “I know you were only trying to help. That doesn’t change what happened.”

“I’m sorry—” Tears were welling up in those big war orphan eyes of hers, “I’m sorry.”

“I know,” said Reaper, still gripping her wrist, “It’s okay. I’m just going to need you to patch me up one last time.”

“What…?” her breath was still ragged.

“It won’t hurt too long,” said Reaper, black smoke bleeding out from the interior of his hood, “Just breathe, let it take you.”

Mercy saw the smoke run up her arm and over her body and her breath suddenly caught in her throat. Then the pain hit and it hit hard. She screamed.

“I want you to remember this, Doctor,” said Reaper, his breath getting less ragged as the smoke ran over her, she could barely hear him through the haze of her pain or the sound of her own screams, “I want you to know that this is what I’m going through every waking moment. This is what you saved.”

She kept screaming, her back arching and blood dripping out from beneath her. He kept her still with one hand on her shoulder to keep her from bleeding out too fast as his nanites leeched the biotic energy from her body. She didn’t have the SEP serum. It wouldn’t take too long.

—

Zarya was gritting her teeth as she fired on the mech as the Shrike lobbed what looked like a grenade at the mech. Zarya flinched back as the grenade didn’t explode, but rather shatter on the cockpit of the mech, prompting a cry from the Talon agent piloting it. Zarya fired a particle blast at it while the agent seemed distracted, but he managed to activate the mech’s shielding and fire off several molten bolts at both her and the Shrike. One grazed her leaving an ugly smoldering scar on her side. Zarya winced and gripped her side, then felt several shots from the back and felt the pain ease heavily. She looked behind her to see the Shrike giving her a thumbs up. “Just a scratch! You’ll be fine!”

“Any ideas?” said Zarya, doing her best to roll out of the way of the bolts as they pelted the walls behind her. She couldn’t move out of the way of another and had to activate her shielding, brightening the core of her particle cannon. The Shrike looked around, then pointed upward at one
of the walkways. “Can that gun cut through steel?”

“Any suggestions that *don’t* require destroying the factory?” said Zarya.

“It’s just one walkway,” said the Shrike a bit more cavalierly than Zarya liked as they both hurried out of the way of the mech’s limbs and bolts, “It’s a factory. You can make more.”

Zarya took a second to consider, then found herself running out of the way of more molten bolts, some being absorbed into her shielding, further strengthening the cannon, which sped up her decision. “Черт возьми!” she said, pointing her particle cannon upward and cutting two ragged lines across a section of the walkway above. She stopped running then and the mech advanced on her. The walkway overhead collapsed, landing squarely on the mech. The shielding of the mech fizzled out and Zarya hit it with a fully charged particle blast, leaving little more than a blackened shell. She looked to the Shrike.

“Why did you help me?” she said.

“We can speak later. The others are still in danger,” said the Shrike.

“Well,” Zarya turned back toward the elevator, “Perhaps by now we can get the Doctor out—” she stopped and saw that the elevator had stopped several floors above at the administrative offices, “Вот дерьмо,” said Zarya. She pressed a button and miraculously, the elevator responded. Whoever was playing with them earlier must have moved on. The elevator opened and Zarya walked in, with the Shrike walking in after her. The door closed and the elevator went up several floors.

“Are you with Overwatch?” said Zarya as the elevator went up.

“That’s a bit complicated,” said the Shrike.

Zarya’s eyes narrowed a bit.

“I take it I’m still not off the Watchlist,” said the Shrike.

“No,” said Zarya folding her arms, “You are not.”

The floor chimed at the administrative levels and opened. They heard a scream down the hall.

“Doctor Ziegler!” said Zarya in alarm.

“Find the Doctor,” said Ana, turning to Zarya. Ana pulled what looked like a small syringe gun from the interior of her coat. “I’ll give you a head-start.”

Before Zarya could protest, the Shrike shot her with some kind of syringe and Zarya suddenly felt something, like joy and fury and lightning running through her veins.

“Go!” said the Shrike. Zarya took off in a sprint, leaving Ana in the dust. Ana followed after, somewhat regretting the burst of speed that came with the nano-boost.

——

Mercy’s world was dimming at the peripheries, everything was swallowed and muted by smoke and shadow and pain. She felt a sharp pain in her leg and somehow that woke her up slightly and helped her breath return to her. Her eyes widened a bit to see a slight lavender-pink glow several inches above her. Reaper reared away from her and turned on his heel only to face a particle
cannon blast that forced him away from her. She struggled to try and sit up slightly but only felt more blood fall out of her from the effort and flattened herself on the ground. Zarya. She knew it was Zarya. She had to stay awake.

—

Genji was sprinting. He had to make it in time. He scrambled through the Svyatogor assembly line, clambering on the massive frames of the mechs, hauled himself up onto moving platforms, sprinted along walls until finally reaching a staircase that would bring him up. The light of his visor glowed in the darkness as he raced through the halls.

Genji came to a sudden halt as he reached the corridor. His heart dropped into his stomach at the sight of Mercy bloodied on the floor and he glanced up at the dark figure standing near her. Zarya was standing in front of Mercy, a glowing particle barrier around herself. Genji looked back down at Mercy in horror then noticed her chest rising and falling erratically. Still alive. She was still alive, though he couldn’t be sure for how long. Genji threw several shuriken to draw Reaper’s attention off of the two of them and give Zarya an opening. Reaper turned and faced him. Genji saw his face. Genji froze. Reyes. But it couldn’t be Reyes. Reyes died in Zurich. Reaper raised his guns.

Deflect, Genji’s mind was screaming at him, Raise your blade and deflect. He felt his own hand hesitate. Reaper pulled the trigger. Genji knew he couldn’t bring the blade up in time. His eyes flicked to Mercy. Angela, he thought, No, I can’t— then suddenly there was a warping sound and Genji found himself engulfed in a sphere of light.

“You’re covered!” Zarya shouted before blasting her particle cannon at Reaper, “Go!” Genji didn’t need to be told twice.

“Ryūjin no ken o kurae!” he drew Ryū Ichimonji and leapt forward and slashed at Reaper. Reaper raised his gun but Ryū Ichimonji cut it through at the barrele as Reaper desperately tried to move back, but Genji’s rage was not sated by the destruction of the gun and he leapt forward and slashed again. The blade actually hit something solid this time and Reaper grunted and stumbled back, black smoke trailing up from the slash across his torso. He snarled but Genji dashed forward, the light from the Shimada dragon trailing behind him in a green streak as he slashed past Reaper. Reaper coughed and gripped himself barely holding together after the strike.

Everything Reaper had sapped from Mercy had been for naught as he gripped his front, not bleeding, but trailing upwards and away from him like smoke. He looked up just in time to see Zarya had fired an explosive particle charge at Reaper. Reaper wasn’t dealing with that. He disappeared in a wisp of smoke. Zarya swore and then looked at Genji, who now half stumbled to Mercy’s side. Something in her face softened. The ninja had, up until now seemed fairly contained onto himself, but there was a definite desperation about him now that seemed just as human as any one of her troops on the Siberian front.

“I’ll take point,” said Zarya.

Genji looked up at her.

“I know the factory better,” she said.

Genji nodded and Zarya took off in pursuit of Reaper, shouting orders in Russian into her comm as she did so.

The glow of Zarya’s shielding faded off of Mercy. So much of her valkyrie suit was stained red.
Genji realized his hands were shaking as they hovered over her wounds, unsure which one was bleeding the most and would require pressure most immediately. This looked bad. It looked really bad. He put his hand behind her head so that it wasn’t against the ground. “Angela?” he said.

“Genji…?” her voice was weak, “Are you…?”

“I’m here,” said Genji, “Stay awake.”

“You came,” said Mercy.

“You’ve lost a lot of blood,” said Genji. Her biotics should be healing her. Why weren’t they healing her? Her staff, he had to get her staff. He looked up and saw the front half of it, then scrambled over and grabbed it.

“You need to go,” she said, “Head him off at the exits—You can still catch him before he—”

“That’s not important right now,” said Genji, struggling to get the staff to work. It looked so effortless when she used it, why couldn’t he? No, he had to figure this out. He couldn’t lose her.

“It’s broken—Genji, there’s no time…you can…he’s wounded…the mission—” Mercy started.

“Our mission was to stop the svyatogor. It’s stopped,” said Genji, setting the staff aside and putting pressure on one of the wounds on her stomach, not wanting to touch her ribs for fear they might be broken from the force of the shot.

“Genji, it’s Gabe—It’s Reaper—We can’t just—“ Mercy shifted in his arms then suddenly winced and cried out.

“Easy!” said Genji, holding onto her to keep her from moving and bleeding out more, “Easy…” he said a bit more softly this time.

“You have to…” her breath was going ragged.

“I am not leaving you,” he said, “Save your strength. Stay awake. Please.” He glanced down at the wound he was keeping pressure over, “Please stay with me.” He brought a hand to the side of his helmet and hailed Tracer’s frequency on the comm, then sighed with some relief as he found the comm channel was finally working again.

“Tracer—”

“Genji! Oh am I glad to hear you! What’s your status—?”

“I’m fine but Ange–Doctor Ziegler is severely injured. Reaper he—we were able to drive him off but–her biotics aren’t—I can’t leave her. I can’t. She could—I can’t let her—”

“I understand,” said Tracer.

Genji took a steadying breath. “Zarya’s taken point. If you rendezvous with her you may still be able to get Reaper before he gets away.”

“Roger. Stay with the Doc.”

“Understood,” said Genji, clicking out of the comm channel. He gave Angela a slight shake and her eyes opened blearily. “Just stay awake. Please.”
There was a rush of guards running through the administrative levels, all converging on Zarya’s location, apparently, and Ana was forced to slip into darkness or risk being taken into custody without Zarya to vouch for her. She was about to move toward the corridor when she heard a rasping cough and turned to look into the stairwell, where shadows were forming themselves into a vague humanoid shape. Ana pointed her biotic rifle at him.

“It’s been a while, Gabriel,” she said. Reaper was hunched over, smoke streaming off of him from where Genji slashed him with the dragonblade. He made eye contact with her and turned to smoke again as she fired on him, his wraith form trailing up the stairs with her in hot pursuit. He managed to get a shotgun blast off that littered the wall of the stairwell, buying him several seconds to put more distance between them.

“You don’t have time for this,” Reaper rasped, his voice somehow broken across the smoke, “Doctor Ziegler doesn’t have time for this.”

“You’re bluffing,” said Ana, “Her biotics—”

“Are destroying themselves against my nanites. She can’t stabilize. Not on her own. You saw it.”

Ana lowered her rifle from her eye.

“The man or the mission, Ana?” said Reaper, his voice drifting away in the darkness.

—

Tracer exhaled as Genji clicked out of the comm as she and Jack rode one of the industrial lifts up to the higher levels of the factory.

“Your team…” Jack started to say.

Tracer’s lips tightened, “Doc’s hurt,” she said.

“She’ll be fine. Stay focused,” said Jack.

—

Sombra was busying herself with opening and closing various doors and strategically shutting down elevators around the factory from the roof, keeping an eye on the security feeds when Widowmaker finally emerged from where the Svyatogor assembly line exited the building.

“Araña!” Sombra looked up from her screens, “I knew you’d make it.”

“Our extraction vehicle should be here by now,” muttered Widowmaker. Sombra bent down, picked up a small pebble from the roof, and threw it hard. There was a flash of faint blue light and the pebble dropped to the ground as if its arc had been abruptly stopped.

“Cloaking,” said Widowmaker, “Well, Vialli did always have expensive tastes…”

“Shame he left due to creative differences,” said Sombra, tapping at a few more screens, “Sure was nice of him to leave all those assets though…”

Widowmaker chuckled.

“They’re lifting the cloaking as soon as Reaper gets—” Sombra cut herself off as a black smoke poured out of one of the rooftop vents of the factory and formed itself into Reaper, on his hands and knees, panting with smoking streams of nanites trailing off of him.
“Mierda,” said Sombra, stepping over to Reaper, “So…how’d hunting go?”

“Do you still have the omnicell?” said Reaper, not even looking up at her.

“Yep,” Sombra withdrew the omnicell from her coat, “Y’know, if Akande’s decided he’s got bigger fish to fry, I’d be happy to hold onto i—”

“Sombra,” Reaper’s voice was a croak.

Sombra cleared her throat and stuffed the Omnicell back into her coat. “Right. Anway, we should go.”

Reaper exhaled and clicked a beacon on his comm and the cloaking on the extraction vehicle lifted, revealing a dark wedge-shaped aircraft. Widowmaker readied her grappling hook and Sombra casually wrapped her arms around Widowmaker’s waist.

“You do realize you have a translocator,” said Widowmaker.

“Aw come on, Araña, you know you love me,” said Sombra arching an eyebrow.

Widowmaker scoffed, then fired her grapple at the opening hull of the aircraft. Sombra snickered as Widowmaker retracted the grapple and they both glided through the air to the open hull of the extraction vehicle. Reaper did a simple weary shadow step to the interior of the vehicle, looking over his shoulder just in time to see Jack and Tracer burst out onto the roof from the main door.

—

“We’re too late!” said Tracer, watching the hull doors of the talon ship closing.

“No we’re not,” said Jack, activating his tactical visor. The shot was narrow, but he could make it. He could take out Reaper.

“Wait—” Tracer started.

“I’ve got this,” said Jack.

“Jack,” Tracer said more urgently, watching as the ship’s guns fixed on him.

“Just let me end this—” Jack started but Tracer suddenly tackled him from the waist just as the ship’s guns started firing. Bullets riddled the roof of the factory where Jack was standing as both he and Tracer took cover behind one of the rooftop cooling vents.

“I had that! Why did you—?” Jack started.

“I just found out you’re alive! I’m not about to let you change that!” snapped Tracer.

The words gave Jack pause and he glanced over their cover to see that the doors to the hull had closed completely, but Tracer didn’t seem done yet. She pulled a pulse bomb from the interior of her jacket.

“Stay back,” she said.

“But—” Jack started.

“You’re not strike commander anymore,” said Tracer, darting out from behind their cover. Jack covered his face as Tracer blinked across the roof, the guns of the talon ship kicking up gravel
behind her before she threw the pulse bomb and then recalled back to her spot behind him and covered her head. The pulse bomb detonated in the line of fire, blowing off one of the ship’s guns. The ship’s airborne state seemed compromised for several panic-filled seconds, but it regained its bearings and shot off, away from the factory. Tracer was panting. She pushed her goggles off her face and slumped against their air vent. Then rubbed her eyes. “I’m sorry,” she said, “I was pretty sure it wouldn’t take down the whole thing but… I mean.. I guess I still hoped…”

“That…” Jack was borderline speechless, “That was good. You did good.”

Tracer half-huffed half-chuckled. “We… we should get to the others,” she said, running her hands through her hair.

—

Mercy’s breaths were still ragged. Genji wondered if her lungs were filling with blood.

“Genji…” her hand weakly went up and touched the side of his faceplate, “If I…”

“You are going to make it,” said Genji.

“Don’t let them use my research to hurt people,” said Mercy.

“You’re going to be fully capable of protecting your research yourself,” said Genji, “You’re going to live.”

A small smile lit up her face and he felt her affectionately brush her thumb on his faceplate. “So determined,” she said. The gesture gave him pause, and he wanted to bring up his own hand to touch hers, but he had one hand supporting her head and the other keeping pressure on the wound so he couldn’t.

“Angela,” his voice was low, not quite hushed, “I—I need you to stay awake. I need—I should have told you…so long ago. I should have opened and ended every letter with it. I should have told you the second I saw you in Gibraltar. I should have—” he stopped himself. She was staring up at him, eyes wide. He took a steadying breath, “Angela, I lo—”

Some force suddenly hit Mercy in the chest and she grunted and convulsed hard in his arms. Genji’s breath caught in his throat. “No!” he said. She coughed then suddenly drew in a sharp breath and coughed again.

“Biotics–” she said, her eyes wide.

“What?” said Genji looking down at her. The sight of so much blood on her made his stomach tie up in knots, but there was no new wound with the shot–

“It’s biotics–,” she said and he lifted his hand from the wound on her stomach to see the bleeding had slowed.

“They’re working again,” he said, “Okay–You can stay awake until we get you back to the Orca, then—”

“Genji, that’s not what I mean, I mean—”

Her body rocked with the force of another shot and she grunted again and her breathing steadied more.
“We need to get her out of here,” a voice spoke and Genji glanced up to see a cloaked figure in some kind of helmet with three triangularly arranged lights on the visor.

“The shrike…” Mercy said softly.

The Shrike pointed a rifle at Mercy and instinctively he bent over her and held his wakizashi toward the figure, ready to deflect.

“I don’t know who you are,” said Genji, “But I suggest you lower your weapon and—”

The Shrike lobbed something at the ground and it shattered in front of him and Angela. Genji flinched back but felt the pain in his shoulder gone and heard a familiar sort of whirring chiming sound.

“Biotics…” he said.

“Ttook you a moment to catch on,” said the Shrike, lifting their rifle and shooting Mercy again. Genji flinched over her and the Shrike scoffed. “We don’t have time for this,” they said, shooting him. Genji winced but then glanced down at himself. No wound. If anything the residual pain from Sombra’s repeated hacking of his prosthetics had faded. “Do you understand now?” said the Shrike.

“I–yes…” said Genji.

“I know your voice…” murmured Mercy, her brow furrowed, “That rifle… they told me they only made one of that rifle… how did you…?”

“You’ve lost a lot of blood, dear,” said the Shrike before turning to Genji, “As I’ve said, we need to move.”

“R-right,” said Genji. He bent over Mercy then gently eased her into his arms, shifting her weight against himself so her head would lean on his shoulder.

“Do you need help?” asked the Shrike.

“No,” said Genji, rising to his feet, holding Mercy bridal style. He glanced down at her. “Am I hurting you?” he asked.

“No. No more than I was before,” said Mercy.

The Shrike shot Mercy again and Genji felt panic spike in his gut again before remembering the rifle wouldn’t hurt her. “Do you have to keep doing that?” he said, walking out of the factory with the figure walking alongside him.

“It’s the fastest way,” said the Shrike.

Genji huffed a little and turned back to Mercy. Her eyelids were slowly closing.

“Angela,” he spoke her name and she blinked several times and shook her head a bit, struggling to stay awake. “Stay with me,” he said. He forced a chuckle, “Try not to doze off like you always do.”

Mercy smiled. They made it to the elevator and took it down to the main floor of the factory.

“Full circle,” Mercy managed to say.
“What?” said Genji.

“I carry you, you carry me,” she said.

Genji smiled beneath his faceplate, “To be fair, you’ve saved me many times over, Doctor Ziegler.”

Mercy glanced over at the Shrike. “They shouldn’t have that rifle,” she said softly.

“What do you mean—?” Genji started.

“Genji!” The call came from across the factory yard and Tracer raced toward them in a blue streak, before coming to a short stop in front of Genji and Mercy. “Oh no…” Tracer’s hand went over her mouth.

“It’s…” Mercy winced a little in Genji’s arms, “Not as bad as it looks.”

“Oh Doc…” Tracer’s voice was cracking a little, “I’m so sorry—I should have—If I hadn’t—”

“It’s fine, it’s fine,” said Mercy, “You did so well. You—” Mercy cut herself off as her sight fell on a figure hurrying up behind Tracer. “Who…?” the question died out in her throat as the figure became clear to them.

“Oh…” Tracer glanced over her shoulder at Jack Morrison, “I… I uh… There’s someone you should…”

“Jack,” said Mercy.

“Jack…?” repeated Genji.

Jack Morrison cleared his throat and gave a small wave, “Uh… hey.”

Mercy’s mouth was hanging open, “But you—you were—they said you—I—but—you—you’re…” Her eyes rolled back and shut and she suddenly went limp in Genji’s arms.

“Angela!?” Genji glanced down at her in alarm.

The Shrike stepped forward and put two fingers to Mercy’s neck. “She’s fine. She’s only fainted.”

“We… probably could have planned that better,” said Jack.

“Good to see you can still make the ladies swoon, Jack,” said the figure in the mask, shooting Mercy with another biotic cartridge.

Genji looked to Tracer. “Morrison is alive,” said Genji.

“Yeah,” said Tracer.

“Strike Commander Jack Morrison, thought dead for the past 5 years, is alive,” said Genji.

“Mm-hmm,” said Tracer.

“Commander Reyes is alive. Reaper is Commander Reyes. All this time Reyes has been the one hunting down former members of Overwatch and he nearly killed Ange—” Genji caught himself, “Doctor Ziegler. He nearly killed Doctor Ziegler. And now Strike Commander Morrison is alive. Is there anything else earth-shattering I need to know?”
Jack instantly looked at the Shrike and Tracer followed his gaze. Genji glanced over at the Shrike as well. A long pause passed between all four of them. Genji then looked back at Jack and Tracer. “I’m getting on the Orca,” he said, attempting to sound determined but his own voice coming off as exhausted even to himself. He glanced down at Mercy, “We’re getting on the Orca. And I’m finding biotics that don’t require shooting anyone.”

—

Zarya was waiting by the Orca when they reached it. She gave a glance to Mercy in Genji’s arms, then back up at Genji.

“She will live?” said Zarya.

Genji nodded. He knew she would be alright, between the biotics on the Orca and the Shrike’s rifle, but his stomach was still in knots, the panic still hadn’t quite left his blood in spite of his own exhaustion.

Zarya gave a single nod and folded her arms. “I am coming with you.”

“What?” said Genji.

“Security footage shows that Talon has stolen something very important from Volskaya Industries. I do not fully understand what it is they have stolen, but I know there is no way they have anything good planned for it. I cannot permit them to do harm with Russian technology. If you are taking the fight to them, I am coming with you.”

“We’ll get it back,” said Tracer, “Promise.”

Zarya gave a wary look to the Shrike, then squinted at Jack slightly. He looked familiar but she could not be sure from where. She then turned back to Tracer and gave another nod. They boarded the Orca.

—

Mercy would have looked almost heavenly if it weren’t for all the blood staining her Valkyrie suit as she laid there with the biotic fields glowing around her. Genji sat next to her, cross-legged next to her pallet. The Orca was humming all around him and there was still the slight shake of turbulence from the snow.

“You need to rest,” said Tracer. Genji looked up at her. To be honest at this point he was so exhausted he hadn’t even noticed her walk over from the cockpit.

Genji shook his head. “Something Reaper did was interfering with the biotic distributors in her spine. Someone needs to stay with her to make sure there are no further complications.”

“You need to take care of yourself too,” said Tracer, folding her arms.

“I can manage,” said Genji.

Tracer looked at Mercy, then back to Genji. She sighed. “All right,” she said, walking back toward the Orca’s cockpit. Jack was waiting for her there.

“He hasn’t left her side for a heartbeat,” muttered Tracer, taking her seat.

“The biotic fields should keep her stabilized until we reach the Watchpoint,” said Jack.
“So there’s a ‘We’ now?” said Tracer.

“I thought it would be safest staying out of each other’s ways—but I see now operating independently of each other makes us liabilities to each other. We need to be on the same page if we’re going to take down Talon. If I had dropped Winston an anonymous tip…” Jack shook his head, “For a long time, Ana’s and my anonymity meant your safety, with this mission, that’s clearly not the case any more.”

Tracer folded her arms and shot him a look.

“And… I’m sorry,” said Jack.

“Sorry for…?”

“Sorry for not seeing that until we were all in danger.”

Tracer’s arms remained folded and her glare remained.

“And I’m sorry for the past five years,” said Jack. He sighed. “I’m sorry, for what I put you through. What I put everyone through.”

“There’s a start,” said Tracer.

“You need to understand, I had to do it for your and everyone’s safety,” said Jack, “Overwatch was already imploding—the best chance everyone had was…”

“Letting it collapse,” there was something slightly choked in Tracer’s voice.

“There was no going back after Zurich,” said Jack, “Even if I let everyone know I was alive after the explosion, that was the final push the Petras Act needed to pass. There wouldn’t have been anything I could do.”

“You don’t know that,” said Tracer.

“As strike commander, it was literally my job to know when I was pushing my people into a losing fight. Trust me. I knew,” said Jack.

Tracer pursed her lips, then pushed her goggles up to her forehead and rubbed at her eyes. Jack couldn’t tell if she was tearing up. She exhaled sharply.

“I know I can never make it up to you,” said Jack, rising to his feet, “But if you and Winston would have me, it would be my honor to fight alongside you.” He saluted.

Tracer almost sniffled but seemed to catch herself. “Well, Commander,” she said, a slight shake in her voice as she stood up as well, “The world could always use more heroes.” She saluted back. They both stood there in the cockpit, Tracer still saluting, until she snorted and broke into a short, wry laugh that sounded like she was still stuffing down the urge to cry. “It’s good to have you back, sir,” said Tracer.

“I take it I’m not getting off that easy,” said Jack.

“Oh no,” said Tracer, “No you’re not.”

“Fair enough,” said Jack.
Genji didn’t know how long he had dozed off but he woke with a start. It couldn’t have been more than a few minutes, judging by one of the screens monitoring the Orca’s location. He quickly glanced down at Mercy and looked over her, but saw her condition was the same as usual. He exhaled and clicked off his faceplate and visor and rubbed his eyes, then glanced up from Mercy and was startled to see Zarya sitting across from him on the other side of her. Instantly his hand went up to his scars and he cleared his throat.

“Sorry—I should—” he moved to put his faceplate back on but Zarya gave a smile, dismissive wave, and a huff that was almost a chuckle.

“If that is what makes you comfortable, but I do not mind,” said Zarya, “You think I have not seen my share of scars?” She pointed at the X-shaped scar above her eyebrow, “This was given to me by an Eradicator in Kemerovo. I gave it a bigger one. We held the line. Lost a lot of good soldiers that day.”

“I’m sorry,” said Genji.

Zarya shook her head. “I am sorry,” she said, “It was not fair of me to judge you so harshly. Many of my soldiers have had to replace limbs, but… never to such an extent. That along with being an… I suppose ‘Omnic Sympathizer’ is not the right word….”

“I was assuming all Omnics were like the Shambali,” said Genji, “I had not considered your fight or your losses.”

Zarya glanced down at Mercy and smiled a bit. “You know, they still tell stories of ‘The Angel of Yakutsk’ on the Siberian Front. It is an honor to have met her, I only wish the circumstances were better.”

“I suppose that’s how it is with Ange—Doctor Ziegler,” said Genji, “We did not exactly meet under good circumstances either. I was nearly dead. She saved me. I would have died many years ago or many times since then if not for her.”

“So how long have you been in love with her?” said Zarya. Genji’s head jerked up from Mercy. Zarya asked it casually, like it was a question about the weather or how his day was.

The heat sinks in Genji’s shoulders clicked out and steamed. “I’m— Doctor Ziegler and I aren’t— I mean…. we haven’t….” he trailed off, “I’ve… always respected her and her work.”

“Oh I see,” said Zarya, clearly unconvinced. She rolled her shoulders. “Well, you should get some rest. I have some questions for the Shrike.” With that she stood up and walked off. Genji wondered if he could explain it to Zarya without sounding ridiculous. He looked at those last few snow flurries outside the viewport of the Orca. He wondered how seriously Zarya would take him if he compared his feelings for Angela to snow, small fleeting things that somehow pile up and change everything about how you see the world. He didn’t say anything. He glanced down at Mercy, took a deep calming breath, and maintained his vigil. Her fingers twitched and she murmured something in her semi-consciousness. Genji unthinkingly reached out a hand and wrapped his fingers in hers. They would reach the Watchpoint soon. Angela would be all right then.
The room Jack had picked out for himself was more or less a converted office. He wouldn’t have been able to relax on the on-site apartments, and the Watchpoint dormitories were too exposed… well they weren’t *that* exposed, but the spaces themselves were too big. Maybe the soldier he was back in the Omnic Crisis would have been able to sleep there, but not the man he was now. He didn’t need too much anyway. A cot and a footlocker were the most he was comfortable with after his years of vigilanteism. Plus this was close to Athena’s mainframe, he could get to her faster than anyone else on the Watchpoint, which would make the hunt for Reaper much easier. Jack wondered if maintaining some illusion of impermanence for himself was a coping mechanism, a means of him keeping the rest of the team at arm’s length for however long this crazy idea might go on. He carefully tucked in the sheets on his cot and looked over them with some satisfaction. He heard a knock at the door and glanced up.

“Y’know, there are still Watchpoint apartments still open,” said Tracer, “The Captain’s taking one—”

“She’s not your captain anymore, Tracer,” said Jack, looking up from his cot to her, “This isn’t the old Overwatch. Amari and I aren’t going to just… come in and assume our old ranks—”

“I know—Force of habit,” said Tracer, folding her arms.

“Winston needs to continue establishing himself as the leader, and I have no intention of disrupting that,” said Jack.

“People are going to look to you, though,” said Tracer. “Winston included. You ran this show longer than anyone—”

“They’ll look to you, too,” said Jack.

“Me?” Tracer’s eyes widened.

“You were one of the last strike team leaders back in the old Overwatch, and you were the first to answer the recall,” said Jack, “As it stands in this organization? I’d say you outrank me.”

Tracer paled for a few seconds. “Oh—I–yeah, I guess that’s true, isn’t it?” she said, pushing her goggles up off her eyes.

“This is good, Tracer,” said Jack, putting a hand on her shoulder, “It’s what we wanted for you back in the old days.”

“Y’know you could have stood to discuss what you wanted for me more back then,” said Tracer, her eyebrows furrowing.

“I know,” said Jack, “We were putting a lot on you in a short amount of time. But it was only because of what we saw in you.”

“What you saw in me?” Tracer repeated.

“We were jaded, the world was changing and we weren’t sure how we were going to fit into it. Then you came in—you had all that hope that we had back at the end of the Crisis. You said you fought to survive, and were willing to fight for the world, too. You wanted to make the world a better place, and what was more was that you believed it could be done. To your credit you were
also incredibly competent, and charismatic to boot. You were a good face for us. Better than my old mug, anyway.”

Tracer’s mouth was hanging open slightly, unsure of how to respond.

Jack just huffed a little. “I should have told you all this back in those days. Let you know how much you meant to us.”

“Would have gone straight to my head–” Tracer started with a wry smirk.

“And… I guess I saw the flames on the ship. It wasn’t your fault Overwatch went down… I didn’t want to put you in a position where you would ever think it was.”

Tracer’s lips thinned. “Because feeling helpless about it is so much better,” she muttered.

“It was my mess. A lot of this still is my mess,” said Jack, looking around.

“Our mess, Comman–” Tracer started and caught herself.

“Jack,” said Jack.


“You were right. Every bit of it,” said Jack, “I let the team mourn me. I left you and a handful of whoever was willing to pick up the pieces. It wasn’t fair.”

“Okay,” said Tracer, the word leaving her in a relieved breath. “Glad we’re on the same page there.”

“And now that you outrank me, I’m at your disposal–Ana and I will be continuing our search, but ultimately this is yours and Winston’s show,” said Jack.

Tracer paused for a bit. “Any advice?” she asked.

“You outrank me and my Overwatch went down in flames, are you sure you want it?” said Jack.

Tracer nodded.

“Keep the people you trust close. Listen to their advice. I wouldn’t have been able to do anything without Reyes and Amari watching my back,” said Jack, “Winston’s going to be counting on you. The whole team is. I knew you could do this back in the old days, and I know you can do it now.”

“…You’ll be looking out for me, too?”

“Always,” said Jack.

“I’ll be doing the same for you,” said Tracer, smiling.
Chapter Notes

I wasn't sure whether to post this, because the little updates to the map hinted at maybe Ana and Pharah reuniting soon in canon, but I had gotten a couple of requests for it, and decided to go for it.

When Ana arrived on the watchpoint after the Volskaya Incident, there was a moment. Pharah was out on the watchpoint tarmac. Tracer had called her ahead of time, told her of the situation. Pharah knew her mother was alive…. well… sort of.

Two years previous Ana had sent her a letter. As far as Pharah had known, Ana Amari had been dead for four years. But then the letter arrived and she wasn’t… or at least she had been alive for the past four years and died in the few weeks it took for the letter to be delivered. Who used snail mail anymore, anyway? So Pharah had the letter.

My dearest Fareeha,

Every Mother hopes for a better life for her daughter. I was willing to fight and die for it. I taught you that there is nothing more important than protecting the ones you love—

The words of the letter ran through Pharah’s head as the door to the orca opened onto the watchpoint Tarmac, but then, Ana stepped forward, Pharah made eye contact with her, and for a moment the air was still. Mercy was being rushed off of the Orca, with Genji and Zarya in tow, desperately heading toward the Watchpoint infirmary, but Ana stood there in the Orca, staring at Fareeha, stunned. One brown eye staring into two. Pharah stared at her, gave a brief glance to Mercy being rushed off to the Watchpoint infirmary, then turned and walked away. No rushing embrace, no tears, no ‘I missed you’ or ‘It’s been so long.’ Nothing.

Three days.

There was three days of silence.

“So the captain’s back on the watchpoint—” McCree would start as he and Pharah were about to get into their daily sparring session. Pharah would stop, make sharp eye contact with him, then walk off.

Pharah dropped by Mercy’s bed in the watchpoint infirmary. Genji would be at her side, as always, sometimes worrying over her, sometimes sitting in a chair next to her bed, arms folded, unclear whether he was sleeping because of the visor. Pharah left a bouquet of flowers but didn’t get much chance to talk to her. Figured it would be best to let her rest anyways.

“Fareeha—” Ana would approach her at the Watchpoint shooting range. Pharah would walk off.

“Fareeha—” Ana would approach her in the watchpoint rec room. Pharah would walk off.

“Fareeha!” Ana finally managed to corner her in Winston’s lab, “You can’t just—keep doing this!”

“You did it for years,” said Pharah, “I can’t imagine it’s that hard.”
“..What?” Ana’s voice was hushed.

“You let me think you were dead for years,” said Pharah, folding her arms.

“Fareeha it wasn’t that simple~” Ana started.

“Yes it was! It was the simplest solution! It was the easiest thing to keep me from looking for you or worrying about you! It was wretched and it was heartless but it was the easiest! Just admit that!” Pharah snapped.

“Fareeha, there was nothing easy about it! You were a hole in me! Not a single day passed that I didn’t miss you more dearly than any food or water or any comfort I could ever have!” Ana said, reaching her hands toward Pharah, but Pharah flinched back hard. Ana stood, one arm still extended toward her daughter.

Pharah was already walking off again.

“Habibi~” Ana started and Pharah paused in the doorway. “…I’m sorry,” said Ana.

Pharah looked over her shoulder.

“You… you didn’t deserve that. I was willing to make… so many sacrifices…and yet… I only thought of how they would affect me. It wasn’t fair to you. It wasn’t…”

Pharah passed through the doorway and Ana sighed, pressing a hand over her eyepatch. An old wound aching.
This dialogue is part of a longer fic I have planned and also references another ficlet I wrote called "If I Only Had A Heart.

The setup is Mercy recovering after a run-in with Reaper, and learning Reaper's true identity.

Mercy opened her eyes at him, blinked several times and looked around the room, trying to understand where she was, before looking back at him.

“You’re in my spot,” she said with a smirk. Genji glanced down at the seat he was in and she chuckled a little. “I mean… usually it’s the other way around,” she said, looking at the IV’s taped to her arm.

“You need to rest—” Genji started as Mercy moved to sit up in the bed but she gave him a wave to indicate she was fine before sinking against propped-up pillows.

“I’ll be fine,” said Mercy. She brought her arm up, examining the old scars that had reopened, “It’s slow-going, but… my biotic systems are gradually rebuilding back to their previous levels,” she looked up from her arm, “Genji,” she said, looking at him, “Thank you for saving me.”

“It was Miss Zaryanova who saved you,” said Genji, “I just…” he trailed off and his hand curled into a fist, “I’m sorry you had to see me like that.”

“I was barely conscious,” said Mercy, smiling a little, “If Reaper hadn’t seen you like that, I’m not sure he would have…” the smile instantly faded from her face and she trailed off and looked down.

“Doctor Ziegler,” said Genji, “We will find him. We will stop him. I promise you.”

Mercy closed her eyes and furrowed her brow. “That’s not…I—,” she sighed, “It’s him. It’s been him all these years and I don’t know if I’ve been too scared or too stupid to not even entertain the possibility—”

“We all thought he was dead,” said Genji.

“I know,” said Mercy. She glanced out the window of the infirmary, “But I made him.”

“You did not ‘make’ him, Doctor Ziegler,” said Genji, folding his arms, “You did everything in your power to save him, as you always have. You could not have anticipated that explosion… changing how his serum reacted to your biotics,” Genji glanced down at the scars on Mercy’s arm, “Changing how he could affect biotics,” Genji sighed, “If I had gotten there sooner—”

“Genji—” Mercy reached forward and put her hand over his, “You shouldn’t put so much on yourself. You were fighting for your life, too.” He glanced down at her hand over his and she seemed to catch herself and withdrew it, tucking her hair back, “I would not be alive without you.”

“Well,” Genji rubbed the back of his neck, “I could say the same for you many times over, Doctor
Mercy smiled, “You know… sometimes I wonder if—” she suddenly stopped and winced.

“Angela?” Genji leaned forward.

“I’m fine,” said Mercy, “Just—nnh—” she winced again and her hand went to her side and she sharply exhaled. Genji waved down an omnic nurse who adjusted Mercy’s IV’s.

“Vitals are fine. We’re upping the painkiller dosage,” the nurse said, adjusting the IV’s. Mercy seemed to relax a bit with the increase in medication. The nurse glanced at Genji. “She still needs rest,” the omnic said, and Genji nodded and the Nurse walked off.

“Better?” said Genji.

Mercy nodded and smiled. “You called me ‘Angela,’” she said. The increase in painkillers in her bloodstream lent a slight dreaminess to her voice.

“Oh…” Genji said, and he fidgeted a bit, “Yes… I did.”

“You called me ‘Angela’ back in Volskaya too,” said Mercy.

“Yes, well…I was…yes,” said Genji.

Mercy sank into the pillows of her hospital bed, smiling. Her brow furrowed briefly. “I’m having trouble staying awake,” she said, rubbing her forehead, “McCree was right—we do have good painkillers.”

Genji chuckled a little. “I will leave you to rest then,” he said, standing up. He suddenly paused. “Oh—I—uh…” he rifled through a bag he was keeping next to his seat, “They said you will likely be in the infirmary for observation for the next few days so I…” he pulled out a green worn-down hardcover book with gold leaf letters on the cover and held it out to her, “I thought you should have something to read.”

“Is this…?” Mercy sat up a little and took the book from him, she laughed a little, “You kept this?”

“I happen to be quite fond of it,” said Genji.

“Such a silly book…” said Mercy, sinking into the pillows, her eyelids becoming heavy, “I can’t believe you would hold onto it…”

“I liked the story,” said Genji, “It was nice…when I was traveling, to have. To not just be alone with my thoughts the whole time. It was nice to have something that reminded me of you.”

“I don’t know what I was thinking when I got it,” Mercy murmured, turning on her side, one hand on the book.

“Actually you had a very good reason,” said Genji, “I had been complaining about things not feeling real with the prosthetics…and… it was my birthday, and you said people liked regular books because they felt more real.”

“You… remembered all that?” Mercy’s voice was hazy and slow now.

“Yes,” said Genji, “It was important to me.”

“I… think I was falling for you when I got it,” Mercy said, struggling to keep her eyes open at this
“What?” said Genji. Mercy reached out and brushed her knuckles on his faceplate. She smiled a bit before withdrawing her hand.

“I don’t think I ever stopped,” Mercy said. She closed her eyes and her breathing went slow and rhythmic.

“Doctor Ziegler?” said Genji. Mercy didn’t respond. “Angela?” he said a bit more quietly. No response, just more soft breathing. Genji put a hand on her shoulder but knew he shouldn’t wake her, and doubted he could. He picked up his bag and moved to walk out the door, but then paused and turned around. Shouldering his bag, he removed his faceplate with a slight hiss of steam. He mindlessly ran his thumb over one of the larger scars on his face, then he tucked a bit of Mercy’s hair behind her ear, and bent and kissed her on the temple. “I never stopped either,” he said, drawing himself back up to his full height and putting his faceplate back on, “Sleep well, Angela,” he said, walking out the door.
Genji extended a hand toward the door to Mercy’s room in the infirmary but hesitated before knocking at the sound of arguing on the other side, withdrawing his hand silently and rolling his knuckles nervously. *Don’t eavesdrop, it’s rude,* he told himself, but no matter how much he tried to will his feet to move, he was stuck listening to the conversation like watching a crashing plane.

“…Our safety? Our safety!?” Mercy’s voice was muffled through the door, “Reaper was picking off former Overwatch agents one by one for five years and it didn’t occur to you *once* that maybe we’d stand a better chance together!?”

Jack’s voice was quieter, harder to hear. “It’s not as simple as—”

“Oh it never is, is it? You’d tell me to my face ‘Don’t worry, Angela, I’ve asked for Moira’s resignation’ but couldn’t stand to mention *Blackwatch* picked her up right where you left her. The Biotic rifle? That wasn’t that simple either, was it? Letting us bury you, letting us mourn you, leaving us to pick up the pieces after Zurich—not that simple, I take it?”

If Jack said anything to that, Genji couldn’t hear it through the door.

“I gave the best years of my life to this organization, to your organization,” Mercy went on, “I poured every bit of myself into my work for Overwatch, and what has it gotten me? You said we would make the world a better place, you *said*—ngh—!!”

At the sound of a pained grunt from Angela, Genji flinched a little where he stood and it took nearly all of his impulse control to resist the urge to suddenly burst through the door and see if she was alright.

“Doc—You’re still healing, you need to take it easy,” Jack spoke calmly. He paused, “I should have given you more time—”

“Five years wasn’t enough?” said Mercy.

“…We’ll continue this another time,” said Jack.

“Good to see you’re picking up right where you left off, Strike Commander,” Mercy said bitterly.

“Get well soon, Doc,” said Jack. Genji heard footsteps toward the door and quickly sidestepped so he wouldn’t be seen in the doorway as Jack walked out of the infirmary room. The door closed with a click behind Jack and Jack let out a weary exhale, pinching the bridge of his nose with his thumb and forefinger before his shoulders suddenly gave a jerk at the awareness of another human presence and he glanced over his shoulder at Genji standing nervously next to the door. Jack gave a glance to the door to Angela’s room, then gave another glance to Genji before huffing again and saying, “Good luck,” under his breath and walking off out of the infirmary.

Genji was left standing there for a few beats. Genji gave a glance to the door, then moved to walk off. Angela probably needed her space right now.

“I know you’re there, Genji,” Mercy’s voice came through the door. Genji froze in his tracks.

“…It’s fine,” she said after a beat, “Come in. Please.”

Genji took a deep breath and opened the door. “…how did you know?” he said quietly.
“It’s four o’clock,” said Mercy with a shrug, “You’ve been showing up pretty reliably after your training, you know.”

“Ah…” Genji rubbed the back of his neck. Mercy fidgeted with the sheets of her infirmary bed slightly.

“…how much did you hear?” asked Mercy.

“ ‘Our safety’ and on,” said Genji.

“Oh,” Mercy huffed with some relief, “Only the tail end of it then.”

*Only the tail end of it?* Genji thought with some fear and wonder, *How bad did it get?*

“If you need to talk, I’m here but… I… I can come back if you need time, or space,” said Genji.

“…would you stay?” said Mercy, sitting up in her infirmary bed and hugging her knees a little.

“Of course,” said Genji, pulling up his usual seat next to her.

They were both quiet for a few moments.

“It’s all right, you know,” he said, “To be angry. I mean—not that you need my permission to be angry—I mean if anyone is entitled to their anger you—what I’m saying is–”

“I understand,” Mercy said, still looking down.

Genji ran his thumb over his knuckles thoughtfully, “My Master told me ‘In anger, you defeat only yourself,’” a smile tugged at his mouth beneath the faceplate, “Back when he first took me under his wing, nothing would get me more angry than when he said that. I didn’t understand until later: To overcome anger is not to deny its existence, but to maintain ourselves in the midst of it.”

Mercy sat in her infirmary bed. She said nothing, only blinking and pushing her hair from her face, thoughtfully.

“…do you regret what you said to Jack?” asked Genji.

Mercy glanced down. “…I can only imagine the pain he must have gone through in all this time. All that bitterness, all that loneliness,” she was silent for a few beats, “But no. I don’t regret it. I needed to say it. I think he knew I needed to say it.” She sank against her pillows, “It feels a lot better when you put it in that perspective,” she said quietly. She stared out the window of the infirmary before looking at Genji, “You’ve come a long way from that angry man in Blackwatch, haven’t you?”

“I like to think so,” said Genji, pressing on the catches at the back of his helmet, pulling up his visor and pulling away his faceplate, revealing his heavily scarred face and cybernetic jawline. Her eyes softened at the sight of his face, and a smile pulled up the corners of her mouth. Somehow making direct eye contact with her without the visor shook him, and he broke his eyes away, glancing down. “This organization wasn’t fair to you. I… I wasn’t…fair to you.”

“It wasn’t like—you don’t need to apologize to me,” said Mercy, “With everything you’ve been through—”

“I left this organization without a word,” said Genji, “I went dark for months.”

“That’s different—there’s a difference between a strike commander letting everyone believe he’s
dead for five years, and a conscripted agent finishing his contract and leaving after this organization took advantage of his pain to take down a major crime ring,” Mercy bit the inside of her lip, “I mean… a ‘Goodbye’ would have been… it would have made things easier.” She looked up at him. “…why didn’t you say goodbye?”

“I nearly did,” said Genji, slumping forward in his seat a little, “I tried writing a note but… the words didn’t seem to come. Nothing seemed right. You were in your office, working late again, and I was right outside the door, and… and I nearly knocked—” he exhaled, “And then… I realized if I saw your face again, I might not have the strength to leave. So I walked off. And that was that.”

Mercy was staring at him. “Genji…” she said.

“I love you,” he said, staring at his hands in his lap. He brought his eyes up to meet hers. “I love you, Angela,” he said again, “I’ve loved you for a long time, but I knew even then, that if that love was ever going to mean anything, that I had to understand who I was. What I was. What I was meant to be. You told me once that you can’t let everything Overwatch touches become a weapon— that there was more to me than being a weapon, that we were better than that. I wanted that to be true, but I knew if I was going to find out my place in this world, it wouldn’t be by staying here.”

He felt a hand on the side of his face. Angela’s. His eyes flicked up to hers again. Her eyes were brimming with tears. “Angela…?” he said her name softly and she cupped her free hand to the other side of his face. She drew a short breath and a tear budded at the corner of her eye.

She kissed him. Soft, quick, impulsive yet tentative at the same time but instinctively he leaned into it and it deepened, his arms finding their way around her and pulling her close, as if suddenly she might slip from existence.

“I love you too,” she said, as they caught their breaths between kisses, her lips flicking against his with her words, “I love you too.”

He brushed one tear away from her cheekbone with his thumb as she bowed her forehead against his visor, a short nervous laugh escaping her with her arms about his shoulders.

“…that was overdue, wasn’t it?” said Genji.

Mercy just snickered and kissed him again, harder this time. He had to grab the sheets of her bed just to keep his chair from toppling over.
Prompt: Gency, Nightmares

“The day after tomorrow, then?” said Genji, sitting in his usual spot next to her infirmary bed.

“If I had my way I’d be getting out now,” said Mercy with a slight smirk, folding her arms, “But it’s going to take a day for the lab work to confirm all the nanites are gone, and… I suppose it is the safest decision.”

“I’m glad,” said Genji, looking around, “I can only imagine how frustrating being cooped up here must be.”

“I’m pretty sure you can do more than imagine,” said Mercy, folding her arms.

It took Genji half a beat to catch her drift and he chuckled. With all of the work and maintenance for his prosthetics, he had all but lost track of how much time he had spent in Watchpoint infirmaries and labs. “In any case, I’m looking forward to seeing you back on your feet again,” he paused, “What are you going to do first? When you’re out, I mean.”

Mercy huffed. “Well, since everyone insisted on taking my tablet away so I could ‘rest’ I’m likely woefully behind in all my labwork and correspondence at this point, so that will probably eat up a lot of my time. Ana and Jack will need appointments—Goodness knows how long they’ve been keeping themselves going with those canisters and that rifle… with how few resources they’ve been operating with, I wouldn’t be surprised if they’re terribly malnourished and of course Jack will be a stubborn old fool about it and I’ll have to—” she caught herself and looked at Genji, “I—I’m sorry that’s probably not what you meant.”

Genji shrugged. “That’s… probably the best thing to do…” he conceded.

“Did you have an idea?” said Mercy with a smile.

“Nothing very specific,” said Genji, giving a glance over to the window. It was dark now, and while he had been avoiding looking at the clock for a long time, he knew he would have to leave soon to let her rest. “I just thought… Volkskaya was so cold and cloudy, and as soon as you got back you were stuck in here, maybe you’d like to go somewhere. Get some sunlight. Not too long, just an afternoon or—Oh.” He felt fingers brush up against his faceplate and turned and found Mercy was sitting up more in her bed, leaning towards him.

“I would like that,” said Mercy.

Genji had a short, almost nervous chuckle as her fingers trailed up along his jawline to the back of his helmet. His hands went up and guided hers to the catches to his faceplate and he loved the feeling of her fingers pressing down on those points, releasing his visor and faceplate with a slight hiss of steam. She was already moving in but by the time he got the visor off, she stopped, her eyes widened, and she drew back slightly. “Genji, you look terrible,” she said.

Genji was caught off guard by this for a moment. He forced a chuckle and rubbed at his scars. “I—I’m afraid I’ve looked like this for a while, Angela—”

“Ach du—You know that’s not what I mean. You look exhausted.”

Genji’s eyes widened slightly. “Ah… yes… I suppose… that’s finally catching up with me.”

“Finally–? What are you talking about?”
Genji gestured vaguely, “Just… some trouble sleeping. Nothing new. It happens with the prosthesis sometimes—”

“Genji,” she was staring at him straight in the eyes. He always did feel more vulnerable with the visor off.

“It’s just some bad dreams,” he said quietly, glancing down.

“Of Volskaya?” said Mercy. Genji looked up.

“Yes,” he said. Mercy’s face softened and a pause passed between them.

“I get them too,” said Mercy at last, sitting back a bit and hugging her knees, “Most of my time here they’ve had me on enough painkillers so that I don’t dream at all but these past two nights…” Her lips thinned, “I keep seeing his face, and that brings back Zurich and I hear him screaming again and the world is all burning and collapsing on me and then that brings me back to my parents and they all just fall into each other and—” she exhaled sharply, then forced a bitter chuckle, “And it’s a mess.”

“I dream of you,” said Genji.

Mercy’s eyes widened.

“I dream I don’t get there fast enough,” he went on, “I dream that Zarya’s not there when Reaper raises his gun and shoots me and the last thing I see is the light going out of your eyes. I dream we’re able to defeat Reaper but Ana doesn’t get there in time and you still…” he brought a hand up to the side of her face and tucked her hair back with his thumb, “There were a hundred ways I could have lost you that day and my mind keeps running through all of them when I sleep.”

“You didn’t lose me,” she said softly, putting her hand over his. Genji’s hand slipped from her face and she suddenly found herself in a tight, yet gentle embrace from him. His head was at her collarbone. She wondered if he was listening to her heartbeat, as if he needed the additional confirmation that she was here.

“I know,” said Genji, “I know I didn’t but…” he trailed off and she bent kissed the top of his helmet, then leaned back in his arms a bit. His embrace loosened with some hesitation.

“Here,” she said, scooting over in her infirmary bed and patting the space next to her. Genji blinked a few times. “I—I shouldn’t. You need your rest. You shouldn’t worry about…”

“Genji,” her voice was warm and she smiled a little.

“Are you sure?” said Genji.

She nodded. “You’re always going on about how I’m not sleeping enough,” she said with that same slight smile.

Hesitantly, Genji edged onto the bed. He couldn’t really go under the sheets in his armor since that ran the risk of overheating, but his armor thermoregulated—he didn’t have too much trouble getting comfortable. She kissed his forehead as they wrapped their arms around each other. She liked being a bit more propped up against the pillows, but Genji was happy just to curl into her, his head against her collarbone like earlier. He fell asleep listening to her heartbeat, trying to match the words in his mind to that beat. *We’re here. We’re here. We’re here.*
“We shouldn’t be here,” Jack was pressing his forehead against his hand.

“So dramatic,” said Ana, pulling her infuser out of her teapot and giving it a couple shakes before setting it aside. They sat out on one of Gibraltar’s observation decks, watching the handful of new members spar and practice with targets below.

“I’m serious,” said Jack.

“When are you not?” said Ana, pouring tea into the cup in front of him and then filling her own. Jack frowned and his brow furrowed as Ana delicately lifted her teacup and blew on it to cool it. “What scares you more,” said Ana, looking into her tea, “The parts where it’s like the old days, or the parts where it’s not?”

Jack looked down to watch D.Va shooting at one of the target dummies while Lúcio cheered her on. “You know there’s a million ways for this to go wrong. I was there for the first time it went wrong in a million ways.”

Ana sighed and sipped her tea. “So we’re operating illegally. It’s not that different from what we’ve been doing in the last 5 years.”

“We were doing that on our own,” muttered Jack, picking up his tea and sipping it, “Re-organizing in direct violation of the Petras Act is something completely–” he paused and looked down at his teacup, “What’s in this, vanilla?”

“Assam as usual but I’ve been experimenting with adding honeybush,” said Ana, sipping her tea.

“It’s great,” said Jack, and Ana smirked and gave a little nod.

Jack cleared his throat, “As I was saying, violating the Petras Act is something completely different.”

“And without a reformed Overwatch, how do you suggest we stop Talon?” said Ana. Her voice dropped a little, “How do you suggest we stop Gabe?” Jack’s mouth drew to a thin line and he was silent. Ana reached across the table and put a hand over his. “We can’t do this alone, Jack. We’ve been acting like it’s our mess to clean up, but none of these people would be here if they didn’t have a stake in this fight.” She stood up from the table and leaned on the railing of the observation deck.

“Do you ever wonder if we still belong here?” said Jack, picking up his cup of tea and leaning against the railing and watching the new Overwatch members alongside her.

Ana scoffed and grinned. “What kind of question is that? Who else is going to keep these kids from getting themselves killed?”

Jack chuckled and elbowed her a little. “Well I guess if someone’s gotta do it, I’m glad I’m doing it with you.” He sipped his tea and looked out over the Watchpoint, “It’s an honor as always, Captain Amari.”

Ana squinted and leaned in a little bit. “Either I’m going senile or I think I just saw a little bit of Commander Morrison in there just now.”
Jack just grinned and sipped his tea.
Prompt: Spiderbyte, Pining

Chapter Notes

This chapter functions on my headcanon that Widowmaker requires regular treatments from Talon to maintain her slowed heartbeat and low body temperature and often goes through periods of heavy sedation in order to keep the effectiveness of the brainwashing.

It was more of an apparatus than a bed. Talon wasn’t big on comfort. Widowmaker was strapped down to it with several IVs running into her arm, EEG diodes all over her head, a mask over her nose and mouth, and scanners running lights down her body, feeding information into screens just ahead of Sombra of Widowmaker’s vital signs. Her eyes were closed.

It was the heartrate that was the hardest to watch. The pause between beats was so long Sombra felt a rising surge of dread with each gap that was only resolved with the next beep of the monitor. Sombra glanced over at the tank that Widowmaker’s mask was connected to, then stood, listening to that agonizing silence between beats for several minutes before stepping forward. The room was so cold she could see her breath.

“Hey there,” Sombra said with a small wave. She looked around the room, “So uh… Back here again, then.”

Widowmaker, as was expected, remained unconscious.

Sombra looked around. “Talon sure likes that dark and spooky look, huh? I mean it wouldn’t hurt to hire an interior decorator or something.” Still, no response from Widowmaker, without any surprise from Sombra. Sombra cleared her throat and rifled through a bag at her side before pulling out a book. “I got your favorite—Or…you know… i guess… it was her favorite,” Sombra’s lips thinned as she glanced down at the book, “It’s stupid, I know. It’s not going to do anything. I know you can’t hear me in there.” She cleared her throat, “Anyway…” she ran a finger down the page, “We last left off…here.” Sombra cleared her throat and started reading aloud to her, “The feeling of remorse at this remembrance smote him like the thrust of a dagger, that he should have lived for five and twenty years a king, and in the enjoyment of every happiness, without having bestowed a moment’s thought on the misery of those who had been unjustly deprived of—”

“And you call me creepy,” a rasping voice came from behind Sombra and she turned on her heel to see Reaper leaning against the wall behind her. Sombra quickly moved to translocate, but nothing happened. Reaper held up the sparking and shattered remains of her translocator and Sombra’s brow furrowed. “Word of advice: Get more than one exit strategy.” He tossed the translocator aside.

“I have more than one exit strategy,” said Sombra, drawing a hand over her face and disappearing. Reaper suddenly seized her by the front of her coat and held her until her cloaking wore off.

“We need to talk,” he said, still gripping the front of her coat.

Sombra huffed and shoved his hand off of herself, “This doesn’t have anything to do with you, Gabe.”
“You don’t know what you’re getting into,” said Reaper.

Sombra snorted, “I know exactly what I’m getting into,” she said, bringing up several screens featuring pictures of Amelie LaCroix. She brought up a final photo of Gerard LaCroix’s corpse on the floor of his apartment. “Don’t underestimate what I know.”

“Amélie is gone, Sombra. You can’t bring her back,” said Reaper, looking over Sombra’s shoulder at Widowmaker.

“I’m not trying to bring her back,” said Sombra.

Reaper snatched the book from her hands, “So what’s this for?”

“It’s—” Sombra trailed off and scoffed, “I don’t know. It doesn’t feel right just… hanging out above while she’s down here like…” Sombra glanced over her shoulder at Widowmaker, “Like that.”

“We’re not here because we do things that feel right,” said Reaper, shoving the book back into Sombra’s arms, causing her to flinch before grabbing it. “Focus on the next step. Don’t lose yourself and maybe we’ll make it out of this alive.” With that he disappeared in a wisp of darkness, leaving Sombra alone, holding the book.

Sombra frowned and her brow furrowed before she turned on her heel and walked back over to Widowmaker. “‘Don’t lose yourself,’” she imitated Reapers rasping voice as she walked, “Psh. Please. As if you haven’t built your entire existence around a nasty breakup.” She stopped when she was standing over Widowmaker. She was still unconscious, her heart still beating that unnervingly slow beat. Sombra tucked a loose strand of Widowmaker’s hair away from her face. “Don’t worry,” said Sombra, tucking the book back into her bag, “I’ll figure something out. You just hang in there, okay?” Sombra kissed two fingers and then lightly touched them to Amelie’s mask, “Boop,” she said, forcing a smile, before walking out.
Genji woke up first. That’s just how it was with the cybernetics. He woke up with Angela’s back to him, still bandaged up in some spots from Volskaya, her spinal implants shifting slightly with her breathing. He unthinkingly reached out and ran the knuckles of his remaining organic hand along her back, tracing a path in the soft skin between the bandages and the implants. He wondered, briefly, if he was making sure she was real. He hadn’t thought she was real the first time he saw her, but that was easily chalked up to blood loss and organ loss and leg and arm loss and the fact that death seemed imminent and it seemed within death’s nature to warp his reality. But he didn’t die. And here he was, years later. And she was here. And she was real. And warm. She murmured something sleepily and he instantly drew his hand back from her skin.

The touch only half-woke her, the sunlight gradually filling the room did the rest. She pushed some hair from her eyes and shifted herself slightly and realized he still had his cybernetic arm draped over her. Not quite holding her. Still, knowing he was awake from the touch, she glanced over her shoulder at him.

“Good morning,” she said, smiling, then turning around beneath his arm to face him.

“Morning,” said Genji

Mercy reached forward and ran her fingers through his hair. “I’ve missed this,” she said, grinning, “I hardly ever get to see it any more.”

Genji snickered a little, loving the feeling of her fingers against his scalp.

“I thought you hated Blackwatch’s prostheses?” said Genji, still grinning.

“This is not Blackwatch’s prostheses,” said Mercy, ruffling his hair, “And furthermore it was a liability letting you run into battle with loose wires hanging off of you, ‘intimidation’ be damned.”

“Still so adamant about that,” said Genji, furrowing his brow playfully.

Mercy just scoffed and rolled her eyes. “Well if you still had the Blackwatch prosthetics, I wouldn’t be able to do this,” she said, rubbing her leg against his.

“An excellent point, said Genji, as her fingers traced down from his hair and ran along the point where the scarred skin on his face ended and his cybernetic jawline began. He pulled her against him and turned a bit so that she was resting slightly more comfortably on top of him. Sunlight was catching in her hair as she looked at him. She was beaming, but then her smile shrank a little, “Genji…” she started a bit hesitantly.

“Are you all right?” he asked, genuinely concerned.

Mercy snickered, “I think you’ve asked me that about 200 times in the past 12 hours,” she said, smiling a bit sadly and stroking the side of his face.
“You’ve always fussed over me,” said Genji, putting his hand over hers, “With what’s happened—” he cut himself off and shook his head. He didn’t want to think of that now. He looked back into her eyes, “Sorry—What were you going to say?”

“I love you,” she said. There was a certain seriousness in the way she said it, a certain determination.

“I love you too,” the words fell out of him easily.

“I mean *I love you,*” she said, as if he somehow hadn’t gotten the point the first time she said it, “I don’t mean it like ‘I love you, please make love to me until I need a biotic field to walk right,’ I mean—I *would* like to do that—”

“It seems like a very good idea,” Genji agreed.

“But what I mean is…” Mercy exhaled a bit then slumped her weight against him more, holding onto him tightly, “I love you, and I don’t want either of us to walk out the door and not know what to do with ourselves or not know what this is so—I want to be with you. I want to do this again. I want you here. I want you in my life.”

“I know,” said Genji, his hand gliding up her back to hold her, “I want you in mine.”

A relieved sigh escaped Mercy as she gave him a squeeze and kissed him on the cheekbone. “I have no idea how we’re going to do this,” said Mercy, “With… everything going on,” she said, glancing off.

“We’ll figure it out,” said Genji.

“I suppose we always have,” said Mercy.

Genji chuckled. “We’ve… we’ve kind of been putting this off for a while, haven’t we?”

“‘A while’ would be putting it lightly,” said Mercy.

A grin tugged at the corner of Genji’s mouth, crinkling his scars together as he pulled her close against him, kissing her neck and shoulder. “What was it you said earlier?” he said in-between kisses, “‘Until you need a biotic field to walk right?'”

Mercy scoffed, then smiled, then kissed him, hard and happy, on the mouth. They were wrapped in each other tightly, a tangle of organic and cybernetic limbs. He loved the weight of her against him.

And then the comm went off.

“No,” Mercy groaned, pressing her forehead against Genji’s chest as Genji reached over to the comm. “It’s not a mission,” she said the words almost like a prayer, her voice half muffled by Genji’s skin and half bouncing off of the cybernetic parts of his torso, “It’s not a mission. It’s not a mission. It’s not a mission. Please say it’s not a mission.”

“It’s a mission,” said Genji, looking at the comm.

“Verdammt,” muttered Mercy.

Genji kissed her forehead. “Well… we said we’d figure it out, right?” he said, tucking a bit of her hair back from her face. They stared at each other for a few moments. They both knew she still
wasn’t cleared for field missions after Volskaya. She would be stuck behind on the Watchpoint. She kissed him again, and again, and he nearly lost himself in it, until his comm buzzed once more.

“I…” Genji cleared his throat, “I still need to go,” he said, playing with her hair.

Mercy adjusted herself so that he could get up. “Be careful out there,” she said, pulling her bedsheets up around herself, “Please?”

“I will,” he promised as he got up and started pulling on his clothes and picking up bits of his armor off the floor.

It didn’t take him long to get into his armor. Mercy saw him off, still wearing the light blue bed sheet around her shoulders.

“Genji,” she spoke his name and he paused at the doorway, about to put his faceplate on.

“Mm?” He glanced over his shoulder at her.

She reddened and tucked her hair back, then took a few determined steps forward, wrapped her arms around his shoulders and kissed him. She hadn’t bothered putting anything on under the bed sheet, and the warmth of her against him made having to leave all the more frustrating. Her lips broke away from his, “Come back safe,” she said, and he felt her breath against the scars of his face, “And don’t forget– ‘Until I can’t walk right.’” She grinned and ran her thumb along his jawline.

The heat sinks in Genji’s shoulders clicked out and steamed. “Understood,” he said with a slight smile. They kissed one last time before he left.
Widowmaker rapped sharply on the door and folded her arms, waited for several seconds, frowned, then knocked again.

“Sombra—” she knocked on the door, “We’ll be late for the briefing. You know how Reaper gets.”

A moan came from the other side of the door. “Go on without me. I’ll just hack the cameras and watch it from here.”

“There are no cameras to hack,” muttered Widowmaker, touching her fingertips to her forehead in irritation.

“Psh. ’No Cameras,’ good one,” said Sombra. She laughed a little, but it sounded terrible, then the laugh was interrupted by a coughing fit.

“You’re not fooling anyone, you know that?” said Widowmaker, opening the door and stepping in.

The apartment was messier than usual, with balled up tissues on nearly every surface and the smell of eucalyptus and lemon in the air. Widowmaker glanced over at the couch to see several purplish screens projected above it. Then she heard a cough and a sneeze and the screens scrambled for a moment, the content on them abruptly changing with each cough. A weak “Mierda…” came from the other side of the couch. Widowmaker stepped around the couch to see Sombra huddled in a fuzzy robe with a blanket draped over her legs. She was clutching a tissue box, hair a mess, bags under her eyes, some dried snot under her nose, and there was a humidifier steaming nearby. “Hey,” said Sombra, bringing up a screen.

“You look awful,” said Widowmaker.

“Thanks,” Sombra said flatly, bringing up another screen but accidentally closing it as soon as she sneezed again, “When you get to the briefing, you can tell Gabe that I am never going to Canada again. Overwatch can have it.”

Widowmaker scoffed. “Why don’t you just go to the Talon medics?”

“Yeah,” Sombra stretched, “Well–I’ve seen their work and uh… corpse blue is not my color, amiga. No offense.” Widowmaker’s brow furrowed as Sombra was shaken by another fit of coughing. “And I am not letting them touch my neural implants,” she said, pointing to the glowing violet lines scoring her undercut. She sneezed hard and then leaned back and groaned. She frowned and reached underneath herself and pulled out a hot water bottle. Her eyes flicked over to Widowmaker and she slid a screen featuring the image of a prominent international stockbroker in front of her.

“I’ll wire $10,000 from this guy’s account into an anonymous Cayman Islands account accessible only by you if you fix me some sopa de lima.”

“I’m not making you soup,” said Widowmaker, folding her arms.

“I can’t believe you’re leaving me here to die like this,” muttered Sombra, closing the window then tapping through her other screens.

“Pour l’amour de–You have a cold!” said Widowmaker, throwing her hands up.
“I have a virus,” Sombra’s eyes widened and she looked past her screens toward her ceiling in some quiet horror. She splayed herself over the arm of the couch dramatically. “I can’t believe it. In the end it was Mother Nature herself who hacked me. Tragic irony.”

“You are not dying!” said Widowmaker, exasperated. She heard a buzzing outside the apartment window and turned on her heel to see a delivery drone hovering just outside.

“Oh—can you get that?” said Sombra. Widowmaker raised an eyebrow then walked over to the window and opened it, allowing the drone in. Sombra tapped something on one of her screens and it glided over to her, and Widowmaker saw it was carrying a quart soup container suspended beneath it. Sombra grabbed the soup container and opened it and breathed in the steam. She glanced at the drone and gave it a wave, and it flew right back out the window, which Widowmaker closed behind it.

“…you hacked a takeout drone,” Widowmaker said slowly, “To bring you soup.”

“Well you weren’t being any help on that front,” said Sombra, blowing some of the steam off the top of the container and sipping the broth. She glanced over at Widowmaker, “Don’t you have a briefing to get to?”

“Yes,” said Widowmaker, moving to walk out the door, but she paused and gave a glance at the apartment, still littered with tissues, then swore under her breath, grabbed one of Sombra’s waste baskets, then quickly walked through the apartment, throwing away all the loose crumpled up tissues she found laying about. She then walked back to Sombra and picked up the cold hot water bottle up off of Sombra’s coffee table, walked over to the kitchen where Sombra had a water heater plugged in, replaced the hot water and capped it, then brought the hot water bottle back to Sombra and shoved it under her blankets.

“Aw, I knew you loved me,” said Sombra as Widowmaker quickly got to her feet and started heading to the door again.

“You are a liability to Talon in this state. I was simply prioritizing the mission,” said Widowmaker.

“You looove me,” said Sombra before she sneezed again.

Widowmaker scoffed. “Get some rest,” she said with a frown before stepping out the door.
Spiderbyte, Touching the Ground

Widowmaker had her sight fixed down her scope when she heard the soft warping ‘sshhvv’ of Sombra’s translocater. It flashed but no body appeared. Sombra’s voice was there though, and Widowmaker looked away to see the lines of the rooftop and the city behind her distorting through her thermoptic cloaking.

“Police comms are scrambled,” said Sombra, cracking her knuckles, “You’re welcome.”

Widowmaker smiled a little but said nothing.

“Rooftops,” Sombra said with a sigh, “It’s always rooftops with you…” the gravel of the roof beneath her invisible feet shuffled slightly as her voice floated up next to Widow.

“That is the point of being a sniper, no?” Widowmaker put her eye back to her scope.

“I got a question for you, Araña–How many cities do you think we’ve been to since we started working together?”

Widowmaker brought her eyes away from the scope for a second and thought. “I cannot say,” she replied.

“Well let’s just name a few we remember,” said Sombra, “Belize.”

“Prague,” said Widowmaker.

“St. Petersburg–both the Russia one and the Florida one, mind you.”

“Sydney.”

“Narita.” The city names were falling out of her. Widowmaker still had dream-like memories of the ‘Word-and-response’ they made her do back when Amélie was still fighting hard. She wondered if this almost game-like conversation was making her react unconsciously. She wondered if the fact that she couldn’t see Sombra made the reaction more unconscious.

“San José. Both the Costa Rica one and the California one.”

“You’ve really kept close track of this, haven’t you?” said Widowmaker.

“I know you can name more,” said Sombra.

Widowmaker thought. “Johannesburg.”

“Quito.”

“Winnipeg.”

“Ugh, I caught that nasty cold in Winnipeg–not worth it,” there was a rueful chuckle in Sombra’s voice.

“Is there a point to all this?” said Widowmaker.

“My point is, Araña,” Widowmaker felt Sombra walk her fingers up her back, ”How many of those cities have you actually walked on the streets?”
Widowmaker rolled her eyes and didn’t flinch at the tickle of Sombra’s fingers on the bare back of her catsuit. Widowmaker just ‘Hmph’d’ in response.

“You can’t say, can you? I’d put the number at… maybe one in six if we’re being generous.”

“I’m an assassin, not a tourist,” said Widowmaker,

“Well yeah but I think we can agree there’s a difference between being mission-focused and just depriving yourself. Which is why I was thinking after you paint the walls with this guys brains, we drop down to Stroget for some—ah.”

A red spurt suddenly materialized out of thin air and splashed against Widowmaker’s shoulder. Widowmaker looked at the red now running down the ‘W’ insignia on her shoulder guard and then back at Sombra, fading out of her thermoptic cloaking. Sombra was shaking. Her hand went to the exit wound at the front of her shoulder running red all down her jacket.

“Huh…” Sombra brought her gloved hand away from the exit wound, the gray and purple turned wet and red.

Widowmaker noted the rough trajectory of the shot from Sombra’s exit wound and tackled her from the waist as another shot pocked the rooftop behind her.

“Owww,” Sombra’s voice was half a moan.

Widowmaker grabbed her hand and put it over the exit wound.

“Keep pressure,” said Widowmaker, ducking low behind the parapet wall.

Sombra kept pressure on her wound with one hand while bringing her other to her ear.

“Rooftop’s compromised,” Sombra grunted, “We need a cleanup crew on the…nngh… Araña?”

Widowmaker frowned and scanned her scope across the buildings the shot had come from. She instantly narrowed in on a shifting curtain. “Northwest brick building. Second from the corner of Eskildsgade.”

“You heard her,” Sombra’s voice was woozy, “Second from the corner… of… erskildergen… street…”


“s’all Danish…” Sombra mumbled, “Wow, that’s a lot of red.”

Something flickering and bright in Widowmaker was clawing at the edges of her focus. A shrill sharp presence going, Help her, help her. But her training quieted that. The best way she could help Sombra was by killing whoever shot her. That was how they left this roof alive. Another ripple in the window curtains of the brick building.

You’re going to look again, Widowmaker thought, You saw blood through your scope. You think your shot is better than it is. You’re going to look again.

The black shape of a sniper barrel pushed through the curtains and out the window.

Not yet, Widowmaker’s breath stilled, Not yet.

A human figure pushed through the ripples of cloth to look through his scope.
Now.

Widowmaker fired and her own shot made a spiderwebbing pattern of fractures through the glass of the window as the head of the enemy sniper jerked back, red painting the curtains behind him as he slumped against the glass.

“Araña, stuff’s… spinning… where’s Baptiste?” Sombra’s voice was muted by exhaestion, “Make ‘im… fix it…”

“Pressure, mon coeur,” said Widowmaker, pressing her hand over Sombra’s over the exit wound, “Baptiste left some time ago,” her voice was soft.

“He did?” Sombra’s head flopped lightly to look at Widowmaker, “Of course he did… ass…”

“We need an extraction,” Widowmaker put her hand to her ear.

“Is the target eliminated?” Reaper’s voice rasped over her comm.

“Do you want a third of Talon’s intel to bleed out with our hacker, or do you want me to just kill the target next week?” said Widowmaker.

There was a pause on the other end. “Keep her stable. We’ve got a dropship incoming.”

Widowmaker helped Sombra keep pressure over Sombra’s wound until the Talon dropship faded out of cloaking. Widowmaker scooped Sombra up in her arms as the door opened to them.

“Mmnnnhh…” Sombra moaned in Widowmaker’s arm, “We can’t…”

“There will be other windows. The medics will fix you up,” said Widowmaker, stepping up into the dropship.

“That’s.. not it Araña…” Sombra mumbled.

“Mm?” Widowmaker looked at Sombra, all clammy in her arms.

“We didn’t touch the street,” said Sombra.

Widowmaker just readjusted Sombra in her arms as the dropship door closed.
Lúcio’s knee was bouncing up and down as he and Pharah sat across from each other in the Orca.

“Nervous?” said Pharah, folding her arms.

Lúcio took off one ear of his headphones. “What?” his knee stopped bobbing.

Pharah smirked. “Never mind,” she said.

Lúcio glanced out the window of the Orca and shuddered a little at the gleaming white city below.

“You are nervous,” said Pharah, leaning forward.

“Eh, this place just always creeped me out when I had concerts here,” said Lúcio, “I mean any place called ‘Utopaea’ has got to have some messed-up stuff under the surface.” He glanced back out the window, “I mean even from here it’s like…It’s too clean. It’s too bright.”

“Well most of it is hard-light constructs,” said Pharah.

“So who are we supposed to be picking up again?” D.Va piped up, glancing up from the game she was playing using her MEKA’s projection screen.

“Satya Vaswani,” said Pharah, picking up a tablet and scrolling through it, “And we aren’t really picking her up, just making sure she has some security on her flight to Oasis.”

“Wait–Vaswani?” said Lúcio leaning forward.

Pharah turned the tablet around to show Lúcio the photo of her.

“Symmetra,” said Lúcio, his brow furrowing.

“Sym–what?” said Pharah.

“That’s like, her supervillain name,” said Lúcio glancing up from the tablet.

“Her what?” Pharah sat back in her seat, “Lúcio–She’s an architech.”

“Obviously you’ve never met her,” said Lúcio. He looked thoughtful, “I should probably just hang back and make sure the perimeter’s safe. She uhhh…probably won’t accept our help if she sees me.”

“Wait-wait–You’ve met her before?”

“Well… to use the term ‘met’ loosely…” said Lúcio, rubbing the back of his neck.

“She tried to stop him when he was taking back some tech that Vishkar stole,” said D.Va.

Pharah’s eyes widened. “You didn’t think to mention this at the briefing?”

“I wasn’t at the briefing,” said Lúcio, shrugging, “I’m only here because you needed someone to–”

“To fill in for Doctor Ziegler, yes,” said Pharah. She glanced down.

“Reaper really did a number on her, huh?” said Lúcio.
“She’ll recover. And it’s important for you to get out in the field,” said Pharah.

Lúcio huffed a little, “It’s okay, y’know?” he said, “I know you’re more used to her as your medic. Look, if we had time for her to give me a whole tutorial on how to use that Valkyrie suit of hers, I’d probably be wearing it right now and looking amazing.”

Pharah snorted. “According to your last mission report, you can handle yourself just fine in those hard-light skates.”

“Well I don’t like to brag,” said Lúcio, interlacing his fingers behind his head and leaning back.

“Yes you do,” said D.Va.

“Okay yeah, little bit,” said Lúcio, smirking.

“Preparing to land in Utopaea,” Athena announced.

“Look sharp,” said Pharah, putting her helmet on

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It was a bit of a wonder how anyone knew their way around Utopaea. Rather than simple stoplights, entire sections of the streets would dematerialize with perpendicular roads materializing in their place. It hadn’t been as bad from the Orca but down on the street levels it was almost blindingly white. There were also walkways stretching overhead that would shift, change direction, sometimes dematerialize altogether. It didn’t take long for the team to realize that these shifts in walkways and vehicular byways were automatic, though there was an architech here and there gesturing at a building or street utility to shift its location or design. In a sense it was a city constantly tweaking and perfecting itself, and the people who lived there just rolled with these updates accordingly.

“I dunno how anyone can know what’s going on with Vishkar changing everything around here all the time,” muttered Lúcio.

“I dunno,” said D.Va shrugging, “I kind of wish we could build stuff this fast in Busan.”

“Well yeah, Vishkar wants you to want that. It’s how they get in,” said Lúcio, pocketing his hands, “Good luck trying to get them out though, and saying no to them? You don’t want to see Vishkar when someone’s said ‘No’ to it.”

“Try and stay focused on the mission,” said Pharah, walking ahead of them.

They reached a large apartment building with several walkways materializing and dematerializing against it at different levels.

“You two,” Pharah glanced over her shoulder at D.Va and Lúcio, “Maintain the perimeter. I’ll go check on the architech.”

Glancing at the mission specs on her comm, Pharah stepped into an elevator which shot up numerous floors and exited out at the top level. She stepped out of the elevator and walked down a gleaming white hall to a door. She knocked on it, “Miss Vaswani?”

Several small spherical objects affixed to above and alongside of the door suddenly sprang to life and fixed on her, glowing bright blue and humming a bit menacingly.
“Identify yourself,” a voice came from the other side of the door.

Pharah nearly grabbed for her sidearm but calmed herself and turned her attention to the door. “My name is Fareeha Amari. You were told Overwatch would come to protect you.”

“And how do I know you’re with Overwatch?” the voice was clipped, yet still somehow melodic, aristocratic almost.

_The passphrase_, Pharah realized, _I had a passphrase_. She grabbed at her comm and quickly looked through it for the passphrase until she found it. “Laiṭu āph ceyyadāniki,” she said, reading off of her comm.

There was a pause and spheres affixed around the door stopped humming and their glow faded. “Your accent is terrible,” the voice came from the other side of the door and the door opened.

Pictures in newspapers and dossiers had not done her justice. Maybe it was just the way everything was far too bright in Utopaea, but Satya Vaswani in the flesh was breathtaking, if not a bit intimidating. She held some kind of three-pronged object at the ready like it was a gun. “I’m not leaving the door open,” said Symmetra, “Come in quickly.”

Pharah stepped over the threshold and into the almost unsettlingly neat and clean apartment. She looked around for possible bugs or listening devices, but only found spherical objects identical to the ones that had been posted outside, hanging at various angles and on different walls and in corners. She looked over at Symmetra, who was looking at her intently. “Hi,” Pharah blurted out, then caught herself and saluted, “Greetings,” she said, straightening up and saluting. “I’m Faree—”

“You have already given me your name,” said Symmetra, folding her arms.

“Right—” said Pharah, “Right…”

“I will tell you what I told your ‘Nīḍa,’” Symmetra spoke the name as if Pharah would know who she was talking about, “I have no interest in associating with an organization that is renegade at best, criminal at worst. I am perfectly capable of defending myself. You can report back to your superiors and tell them I have no need for their big, barbaric…” she gestured up and down at Pharah, apparently searching for a word for her that wasn’t insulting, “…enforcers.”

“Barbaric?” Pharah put her hands on her hips “Look, I don’t know who this ‘Nīḍa’ is, but according to our intel, Talon put a hit out on you, and word is, Vishkar’s no longer protecting you. Overwatch is sworn to stop Talon on every front.”

“Oh well they did an excellent job of it 5 years ago,” said Symmetra, rolling her eyes before furrowing her brows at Pharah, “Nīḍa said they were your friend,” she glanced off, “Or Overwatch’s friend at least.”

Pharah paused, “Is… Nīḍa the reason you’re leaving Vishkar?”

“I make my own decisions,” said Symmetra, frowning, “But I will say thanks to certain… revelations by Nīḍa, I have made the decision to leave Vishkar.”

“Oh,” said Pharah, “Well–Look, if Vishkar isn’t protecting you, just let us—”

“Pharah?” D.Va’s voice came over the comm, “We’ve got company.”

“Evacuate the civilians,” said Pharah, “We’ll be right down.”
“‘We?’” repeated Symmetra.

“Yes, ‘We,’” said Pharah, “I’m getting you out of here.”

“I have countless sentry turrets up in this building for just this occasion,” said Symmetra as a red dot appeared on her shoulder and started trailing up her neck, “I do not require your—”

Pharah suddenly tackled her to the ground as sniper fire hit the wall right behind where her head had been. Rather than shatter, the window of the apartment, which was made of hard light, dematerialized.

“What was—” Symmetra started.

“Sniper,” said Pharah, “We need to get you out of here. Please come with me.”

Symmetra pursed her lips and furrowed her brow. “Very well,” she said in a slight huff.

“Come on!” said Pharah, grabbing her wrist, “And keep your head down!”

Symmetra was still gripping her photon projector as Pharah ran low across the floor of the apartment, gripping her wrist.

“Wait—” said Symmetra as they reached the dematerialized window and Pharah took her around the waist, “What are you—”

Pharah leapt. Symmetra screamed. They free-fell for 16 stories, sniper fire whizzing past their heads, before Pharah activated her jump-rockets and stabilizers and recovered in mid-air, still holding Symmetra.

“Are you all right?” said Pharah, descending.

“You expect me to answer ‘yes’ after that!?” said Symmetra.

“Are you shot!?” Pharah snapped at her.

“No, I’m not shot!” Symmetra snapped back. Another round of sniper fire barely missed Symmetra’s head.

“Cover your ears,” said Pharah, taking out her rocket launcher.

“Don’t drop me,” said Symmetra, taking her arms off from around Pharah’s waist to cover her ears.

“I won’t,” Pharah fired her rocket launcher in the direction of the sniper fire.

–

“Merde,” said Widowmaker as she saw the rocket hurtling toward her. She grappled away just in time to see her perch blown to bits behind her. When she was able to reposition herself, she brought the scope up to her eye only to see both the target and her apparent rescuer dodge out of sight into the interior of the building. She put a hand to her ear. “Reaper,” she spoke, “I’ve lost visual contact on the target. It’s up to you.”

“I have to do everything around here,” Reaper muttered over the comm.

Widowmaker scoffed. “So dramatic,” she said, turning the comm off.
Symmetra was shaking a bit as they ran into the garage of the apartment building, but was still managing to set up several small sentry turrets on different support pillars.

“We’re on our way to your location!” Lúcio spoke over the comm, “Oh–Visual contact–”

“Great, we could really use D.Va’s…” Pharah glanced up away from Symmetra and turned on her heel to see Lúcio skating up toward them with a barely-conscious and worse-for-wear-looking D.Va riding piggyback on him, “…MEKA…” Pharah stepped toward them and looked at the scratches, bruises, and scorch marks on D.Va, “Talon–?”

“Taken care of,” said Lúcio, he forced a smile and looked at D.Va, “Thanks to D.Va here!”

“So what…” Pharah looked at D.Va.

“Got clipped by my own self-destruct sequence,” said D.Va, pressing her face into Lúcio’s shoulder, “Scrub move.”

“You did great,” said Lúcio, smiling at her.

“Dos Santos?” Symmetra spoke up and Lúcio glanced up from D.Va.

“It is you,” said Symmetra, her brow furrowing.

Lúcio was silent for an awkward gap of time before giving her a small wave, “Uh…hi.”

Symmetra turned and looked at Pharah, “Overwatch is associated with this–this–ruffian?”

“Yeah, also he’s right here,” said Lúcio.

Symmetra’s mouth drew to a thin angry line and she started pacing back and forth. “So assassins are after me, my only means of rescue is association with–” she gestured angrily at Pharah, Lúcio, and D.Va, “With you!”

“We can leave if you want,” said Lúcio, furrowing his brow, “You’re welcome to deal with these guys on your own.”

“We’re not doing that!” snapped Pharah. She glanced over at Symmetra, “Do you know another way out of this garage?”

Symmetra thought. “Do you have transport nearby? I could open a teleporter on it.”

“The Orca,” said Pharah. She tossed Symmetra her comm. “Its coordinates are on here.”

Symmetra looked at the coordinates and nodded, then brought up a projection out of her prosthetic hand and dialed some of the new coordinates into it. There was the sound of gunfire and suddenly a hologram of one of Symmetra’s sentry turrets appeared out of her prosthetic. “Intruder detected,” said Symmetra.

“Just get the teleporter set up!” said Pharah. Symmetra nodded and drew up a projection of the teleporter. Her prosthetic flashed a red light again. “Sentry turret destroyed,” she said.

“Just–” said Pharah. But with a flourish of her hand, Symmetra set the teleporter up.

“You–” Pharah pointed to Lucio, “Get D.Va out of here.”
“But—” Lúcio started.

“That’s an order,” said Pharah, “I’ll be right behind you.”

Lúcio nodded and headed through the teleporter with D.Va on his back.

“Miss Vaswani—” Pharah glanced up to see Symmetra setting up a few more sentry turrets, “You need to go,” said Pharah.

“I know,” said Symmetra, setting up the last few sentry turrets, “I’ll see you on the other side,” she said, before disappearing into the teleporter.

Just as Symmetra disappeared into it, Pharah moved to go through it as well but there was the sound of gunfire and the Teleporter collapsed and dematerialized. Pharah turned on her heel. “I could use another teleporter,” she said into her comm.

“My prosthetic needs time to generate enough hard-light to make a sustainable path,” Symmetra replied, “I’ll have one up as soon as I can.”

“Nice armor,” said Reaper.

Pharah’s brow furrowed and she aimed her rocket launcher at him. Reaper glanced up at the low ceiling, “So… the wings won’t do you much good here. Plus I don’t think that thing will serve you too well in close quart—”

Pharah blasted forward with her raptora wings and delivered a swift kick to Reaper in the gut. Reaper slammed into one of the cars in the garage and grunted.

“That was from Genji,” said Pharah, “For Volskaya.”

Reaper lifted his gun at Pharah and Pharah seized it by the barrel and punched him in the face as she wrenched it from his hand. and smacked him across the face with it and threw it off to the side.

“Let me guess,” Reaper rasped, “That was from Doctor Ziegler?”

“No. Me,” said Pharah. She moved to punch him again but it was then that Reaper managed to block her strike with one arm and get a shot from his other gun in with the other. The blast clipped her, catching most of her helmet and shoulder and knocking her back. She grunted on the ground and then gripped the edge of her helmet. It broke away easily and she rolled over to her knees and coughed, feeling blood running down the side of her face. She found herself staring down the barrel of his gun. She looked up at him and he hesitated.

“Ana?” the name fell out of him and then he quickly caught himself, “No--” he aimed the gun at her again, but she swiped his legs out from under him and caught him with a rocket-boosted uppercut, thrusting him upward where she moved to kick him in the torso again but he turned to smoke and her leg phased through him. She caught another shotgun blast, in the chest this time.

“Raptora structural integrity compromised,” the voice of the armor automatically sounded off in her earpiece, “Retreat and repair.”

Pharah grunted and moved to get up but Reaper put a boot on her chest and shoved her down to the ground. “Ana had no business dragging you into this,” said Reaper.

Pharah coughed. “My mother didn’t drag me into anything,” she replied, “Someone has to stop Talon. Someone has to stop you, Gabe.”
The name seemed to shake him, coming from her, but it didn’t stop him from pointing his gun at her. “Part of me almost wishes I taught you better,” he said. He pulled the trigger but his gun clicked empty. He snarled and tossed the gun aside.

“There was one thing you taught me,” said Pharah. She raised her arm. “Clearing the area,” she said, her brow furrowed. She fired a concussive rocket from her wrist. Reaper turned to smoke and it phased through him easily. He returned to physical form and pulled out another gun to aim at her when the concussive rocket hit the car behind him and detonated. Pharah covered her face as Reaper was sent flying over her into the wall behind them, where he was caught in the beams of several of Symmetra’s sentry turrets. A sound that wasn’t really human escaped him and he dissolved into a wisp of shadow and disappeared. Pharah flopped flat on the ground, panting as her Raptora armor continued beeping in alarm and going on about compromised structural integrity. She then heard the whirring, chiming sound of hard-light forming and glanced off to the side to see a teleporter opened up.

“Thank you, Satya,” she said softly.

She let out a huff of a laugh, a bit painfully, and struggled to her feet. Gripping her shoulder, she walked into the teleporter.
Oasis was compromised, that much was clear. Symmetra frowned at her messages on her hard light tablet. Her eyes flicked up to her ‘rescuer,’ peeling off pieces of her armor and talking to Lúcio while Hana was curled in a corner with Lúcio’s sonic amplifier set to ‘Heal.’ Symmetra shrank into her seat, into herself a bit more. Where to go? She had options, sure. Vishkar had many competitors that would be happy to take her in and get their own hands on hard-light technology and a fully-fledged Architech. She looked at her prosthetic arm. Vishkar designed. Vishkar provided. She wondered if Vishkar could send company men to rip it off of her with her defection. No. The first step had to be to take down Vishkar. She had information. She just needed to get away from these criminals long enough to bring it to the proper channels.

And then there was Talon. How long until they found her again? It had been so easy to get that sniper into position, had Amari not been there…

Symmetra glanced back to Pharah, now wearing a fitted black shirt but with her legs still armored. She didn’t have quite the same presence as she did when she first showed up at Symmetra’s door. Before she had seemed like an arsenal crammed into a suit of armor, but here, she was finally seeing that there was in fact a person under all that metal. She was tall, athletic but sleekly muscled. Her clothes were sticking to her back with sweat. Exhaustion had thrown her posture into contrapposto, highlighting the curve of her spine.

Like a hero, the words slipped into Symmetra’s mind, Or a goddess. She blinked several times and bit the inside of her lip at the words, even if they were themselves thoughtless.

The several gold hair beads in Pharah’s hair clicked against each other at her jawline as she spoke to Lúcio only just out of Symmetra’s earshot.

“You okay?” Lúcio asked, cleaning the blood from the side of Pharah’s face. Even without the Raptora helmet she was over a head taller than him. She huffed a little.

“I can handle it,” said Pharah.

“Look…D and I are still new here, but Winston told us about Reaper. About what he was before. Who he was before.”

Pharah shrugged. “You found out the same time I did.”

“That’s not what I mean,” said Lúcio, “You knew the guy when you were a little kid—you said the original strike team was like your family. Knowing someone like that and then finding out that he’s…” Lúcio trailed off, “You sure you’re okay?”

“I said I can handle it,” said Pharah, “Mum being alive that kind of… overshadowed things for me,” she rubbed the back of her neck and glanced down. She looked back at Lúcio and scanned the look on his face. “Go take care of Song,” said Pharah, taking the cloth Lúcio was using to clean up the blood with from his hands, “You don’t need to worry about me.”

“What about her, though?” said Lúcio dropping his voice and giving a slight nod of his head to Symmetra in the corner opposite D.Va. Pharah glanced over at Symmetra and realized the former Vishkar Architech had her eyes fixed on her. As soon as Pharah made eye contact, Symmetra quickly glanced off and looked down. “…Our job was just to make sure Talon doesn’t kill her,” said Pharah, breaking her own eyes away from Symmetra,“But with Oasis compromised…”
“…I’m still figuring that out,” said Pharah.

—

The Orca touched down in Gibraltar. Hana went to the Infirmary, and Symmetra was greeted on the tarmac by… a gorilla. There was a lanky woman with spiky hair standing beside him as well, Symmetra could swear she recognized her from the old posters. Symmetra stepped down the ramp of the Orca as Lúcio helped Hana toward the infirmary with Pharah following behind.

“Winston, Astrophysicist and logistics manager for…” he cleared his throat, “Our… operation.” He held out a hand and Symmetra shook it.

“He’s just being modest,” said the woman next to him, “He’s our leader. I’m Lena. Lena Oxton,” she stuck her own hand out and Symmetra took it and Tracer shook it so warmly and eagerly that Symmetra was jostled slightly and had to circle her wrist and make sure her prosthetic was still properly calibrated.

“I suppose I can’t exactly complain seeing as I would be dead if not for your efforts,” said Symmetra, tucking her hair back, “…you will have to give my regards to Miss Amari. She was… very… committed to the mission.”

“That’s our Pharah!” said Lena, proudly, putting her hands on her hips.

“So…” Symmetra looked around the Watchpoint, “I am now in the custody of an illegally operating splinter group of a UN peacekeeping organization, what now?

“Well… It’s going to take a day or two to… properly coordinate with local authorities to get you to another safehouse,” said Winston, pushing his glasses up his nose, “We’ll be sure you won’t have to stay here any longer than you have to, and you’ll probably want to take your findings about Vishkar to the proper authorities as well.”

“We could do a hell of a lot with that information ourselves though,” said Tracer.

“It’s not fair to ask her to risk herself by further associating with us,” said Winston.

Symmetra’s eyes widened. “That is… very considerate of you,” she said.

“We’ll do what we can to make sure your time with us is comfortable,” said Winston, “Tracer here can see you to your room.”

“Right this way! We’ll get you settled in!” said Tracer with a cheerful salute.

—

“So… you’re based… out of a launch facility?” said Symmetra, eying the launch tower as they made their way through the watchpoint.

“Well, yes,” said Tracer, was they walked into a large hangar.

“Built more around engineering than defense, I see,” said Symmetra.

“Well luckily it’s the watchpoint where all of us currently here were stationed at one point back in the old days—I mean besides Pharah.”

“Amari?”
“Yes,” said Tracer, “She had her mother’s comm when Winston sent the Recall out. She was one of the first people to join us. Well, first there was Reinhardt and Mei, but Mei had all that business with… being… frozen for the past 9 years and Reinhardt’s well… Reinhardt.”

“Frozen for—?” Symmetra brought a hand to her forehead, “So are all of you here because you had nowhere else to go?”

“Well… a lot of us had options. It was tougher for Winston, being a gorilla and all… but I think Pharah’s the bravest one for coming here,” said Tracer, “She always wanted to join Overwatch, but she also had a whole career—distinguished commendation in the Egyptian army, Helix Securities, she could have worked her way up and set herself up perfectly legal and cushy in security—but she chose us.”

“She chose criminals,” said Symmetra, flatly.

“She chose the people doing something,” said Tracer, who then caught herself, “Look—I’m… not going to pressure you or anything—”

“Then don’t,” said Symmetra. There was a beat and Tracer’s brow furrowed.

“But you know about Vishkar,” said Tracer, “You know what Vishkar was doing. You know now that what it was doing was wrong, but how much could the law do to stop it?”

“Vishkar was careful,” said Symmetra, crisply, “If the proper authorities receive my information, then we can begin to act against it.”

“…against a multi-billion-dollar global corporation that likely has lobbyists and influencers in every government of every country it works in. Taking down a company that good at covering its tracks could take months, years, even,” said Tracer, “How effective do you think the ‘proper authorities’ are going to be?”

“You’ve been speaking to Dos Santos, I take it?” said Symmetra, arching an eyebrow.

“I think you should speak to him too,” said Tracer.

Symmetra stopped walking. “Miss Oxton,” she said, “Understand that I am on the run from an organization that has told me, over and over again that it’s making the world a better place—I’m not exactly eager to jump into the arms of another one.”

Tracer’s eyes widened and she folded her arms a bit awkwardly, “Right,” she said, “Gotcha.”

They headed down some stairs to a room filled with simple beds, “Here’s our dormitories. Not much, I know, but it’s only temporary. Dinner’s in the mess hall at 6, Athena can direct you there.”

“Athena—?” Symmetra started but then a voice chimed over the speakers.

“Welcome, Guest Satya Vaswani,” said Athena. Symmetra recognized the voice from the Orca.

“I see,” said Symmetra, “A watchpoint AI, then?”

“Yep!” said Tracer. Something suddenly beeped at Tracer’s side and she put a finger to her ear, “Oh—I gotta take this, feel free to call on Athena if you need anything!”

There was a bed in the corner with some clothing set down on it. Symmetra walked over and found that the clothing was a probably-too-large tee emblazoned with a massive Overwatch symbol, and
a pair of also-probably-too-large black sweats with ‘OW-WP-G ’ written down the side of the left pantleg in bright orange. Symmetra frowned at the clothing and then realized that aside from the clothes on her back, all of her clothes were back in Utopaea. These were probably the only clothes they had on hand for her.

“Unsightly,” she said, unfolding the tee and staring at it.

She folded it back up, set it down in the pile with the pants, and sat down on the bed. She wove her tablet back into existence from her prosthetic, and began looking through all the data she had taken with her upon leaving Vishkar. Vishkar was careful in its language as well. “Convince,” not “Blackmail” or “Coerce,” “Neutralize” not “Kill,” “Make an example of” not “Beat a man to near death while his friends and supporters watch in horror.” It was a rabbit hole of regret. Every step to creating a better world had seemed so worth it at the time, but now, standing on the outside of it…

Satya found herself laying down on top of the sheets of the bed and staring at the ceiling and suddenly the exhaustion from everything that had happened in Utopaea caught up with her. She set her prosthetic to wake her up for dinner and closed her eyes.

When 6 came she ate alone.

—

The next morning Symmetra frowned down at the massive Overwatch insignia on her shirt. Her own shielding had kept the smoke and gunpowder off of her dress but the sweat and the panic from the previous day was another matter entirely.

“Athena, where do I go to wash my clothes?” said Symmetra, fixing her headpiece and activating its hard light visor.

“Laundry is adjacent to the dormitory,” Athena replied, lighting up several hallway lights. Symmetra carefully put her dress into what looked like the most functioning washer, and then folded her arms. She listened to the hum of the washer and thought for a while.

“Athena?” she said at last.

“Yes, Guest Satya?” said Athena.

“I would like a tour of this facility,” said Symmetra.

“Of course, Guest Satya,” said Athena.

—

“This is Winston’s Lab,” said Athena as Symmetra walked through the doors, “The conference holo-table at the center was initially designed for astrophysical engineering simulations, but has, since the Recall, been repurposed for mission logistics.

“Interesting,” said Symmetra, moving a hand toward the hologram, but it turned red and shut down.

“I am afraid you are not currently cleared to look at our agents’ current locations,” said Athena.

“I see…” said Symmetra.
“Above you will see a satellite pod prototype used back in the golden days of Overwatch and—”

“Why is there a giant hole in the glass up there?” said Symmetra quickly ascending the stairs.

“It was broken during Reaper’s— that is Gabriel Reyes’s breach of Watchpoint Security.”

“Overwatch seems to have a lot of problems with Reaper,” muttered Symmetra.

“It is my understanding that Overwatch poses the greatest threat to Reaper and Talon, in spite of our current numbers.”

“And disregard for basic workplace and architectural safety,” said Symmetra, taking her photon Projector out from her side.

“Guest Vaswani—” Athena started.

“Believe me, I’m doing you a favor,” said Symmetra. She used her photon projector to even out the edges of the hole in the glass, then with a swipe of her hand, filled in the hole with transparent hard-light. The difference was apparent, unsightly, but at least safe. Symmetra walked on. “Do you know which point of Watchpoint security Reaper penetrated?” she asked as she walked.

“We believe he and his strike team dropped in via the air. Talon’s aerial vehicles have proven very difficult to spot and counter and another Overwatch Agent described a similar operation on a hypertrain, so such a strike on a stationary watchpoint should be easy. This way, Guest Vaswani.” Something beeped in Symmetra’s headpiece and she brought up her prosthetic, which now projected a miniature map of the watchpoint. Athena had highlighted a path for her.

“So how much safer am I here than I was in Utopaea?” said Symmetra, frowning as she walked.

“Significantly safer,” said Athena as Symmetra walked over to a different hangar than the one housing the dormitories, and up a flight of stairs to a walled off walkway with windows that seemed to be some kind of interior observation deck, “If not by the structure of the facility, then by the personnel within it,” said Athena.

Symmetra heard a grunt and looked out the window of the walkway and saw a large area of the hanger had been cleared and cordoned off. Within it, two individuals were sparring.

“The Zurich headquarters housed a state-of-the-art training center,” Athena explained as Symmetra watched the figures sparring below, “Of course we’ve had to improvise with our own training, but repurposing this portion of the hangar has served us well so far.”

“I… I see…” said Symmetra, mesmerized by the swift movements of the figures below. Symmetra blinked and leaned close to the glass, realizing one of the figures had dark hair, and a bandage on the side of her head.

“You sure you’re good for this after that mission?!” said Jesse, ducking to the side as Pharah’s fist barely missed his face.

“Don’t start going soft on me,” said Pharah, swiping at his legs.

“Look, you held your own against him, you gotta let yourself rest—” Jesse threw a punch and Pharah caught his prosthetic fist in her hand.
“You’re going soft,” said Pharah, disappointed.

“You realize this thing could have broken your arm doing that if I wasn’t going soft, right?” said McCree, wrenching his prosthetic from her grip.

“You’re just proving my point!” said Pharah, throwing another punch. Jesse dipped out of the way.

“Fareeha, I get it—it’s been a weird time for everyone since Volskaya. I’m just sayin’—” Jesse caught a fist in the solarplexus and made a hollow gasping sound, doubling over. “Maybe…” he rasped, “Maybe you should talk to your ma?”

Pharah’s brow furrowed. “…I need more time,” she said, resuming a fighting stance as Jesse staggered back up.

“It’s only gonna get harder the more you put it off,” said Jesse.

Pharah’s brow furrowed. “I asked for a fight, not for cowboy psychotherapy,” she said, throwing a kick for his face. McCree caught her ankle.

“I’m good at multitaskin’,” he said before throwing her on her back. Mid-fall, she swiped out his legs from underneath him and knocked him on his back as well. By the time he hit the mat she had already recovered and pinned his own prosthetic against his neck.

“Got you this time, Jesse,” said Pharah.

“…I was definitely going soft on you that time,” said Jesse.

“Sure you were,” said Pharah.

“Hmph,” Jesse breathed a little easier as Pharah let him out of the pin and he sat up.

“Same time tomorrow?” said Pharah, rolling her shoulder.

“If my internal bleedin’ aint too bad, sure,” said McCree, rubbing at his solarplexus.

Pharah felt eyes on her and glanced up at the observation deck. She saw a figure behind the glass. Then, the figure, seeming to notice that Pharah was now looking at them, quickly moved away from the glass. Pharah made out black hair trailing behind them.

“What you looking at?” said McCree.

“Not really sure,” said Pharah, squinting.

—

“Guest Vaswani, there are still parts of this hangar that I think might be interesting to—” Athena started.

“No thank you,” said Symmetra, walking very briskly with her face burning. She saw her. How long had she been staring? How long had Amari known she had been staring? The best course was to obviously get away from the hangar as quickly as possible for plausible deniability. She hurried down a flight of stairs and was making for the exit of the hangar when she bumped into a tall man who was putting on a cowboy hat.

“Jeez—” he turned on his heel and looked at her.
“My apologies,” she said, sidestepping him and then walking right into Pharah, “Oh—I’m—” she cleared her throat, “I’ll just—”

“No, I wasn’t looking—” Pharah started and then they began that awkward shuffle of both trying to step out of the others’ way. Pharah had her hair tied up. She looked good with her hair tied up. She was wearing the orange and gray Overwatch training jumpsuit, and while Symmetra herself was still adjusting to the industrial orange and black color scheme, she had to admit it fit Pharah very well... as did the jumpsuit. McCree sidestepped them both with a wave.

“Same time tomorrow,” he said with a wave to Pharah.

“Same time—” Pharah said and then glanced back to Symmetra, “Right. Were you... up on the observation deck earlier.”

“I was just—on a tour with Athena and I saw—You were very—You were sparring and it was—that is—” Symmetra was tripping over her words before drawing herself up to her full height and composing herself, “You fight very well,” she said.

“I hope so,” said Pharah, with a slight grin.

“I um... I never thanked you, for... Utopaea,” said Symmetra, “I would not be alive if not for your efforts.”

Pharah gave a slight smile and a small salute, “Just part of the job,” she said, “I wouldn’t be alive if it weren’t for those turrets of yours.”

“My turrets?” said Symmetra.

Pharah nodded.

“Yes... well... I’m glad they... um... functioned as well as they did,” said Symmetra.

“Guest Vaswani—” Athena spoke and Symmetra flinched in surprise, “Do you wish to continue on with the tour?”

“Touring?” said Pharah with a grin.

“Yes,” said Symmetra, her face burning and walking away from Pharah, “Yes I should probably get going.”

—

Symmetra was staring at her tablet again in a seat of hard-light as she waited for her clothes to dry. She switched to a newsfeed on her tablet and searched ‘Vishkar.’ ‘New Development Approved in Hyderabad,’ ‘Development proceeding in spite of inquiries,’ ‘New partnerships opening up for Hard-light development in Oasis,’ ‘Sanjay Korpal secures breakthrough deal for Vishkar Developments in Uruguay.’ Her lips thinned. How long would it take to bring Vishkar down? When every moment, every day they were bending so many to their will? When every day they still had the resources, to cover their tracks, to outmaneuver? She had been thinking like Vishkar had wanted her to for so long—careful, wait for the counsel of your betters, know your place, wait, wait, wait, and do as you’re told,—ways of thinking that would make her predictable for them should she ever break through their indoctrination, doubtless.

If she was going to outmaneuver them, she would have to do something they wouldn’t expect.
The drier beeped and Symmetra took a deep breath. She would sleep on it.

—

The next morning Winston was tapping away at his computer when Symmetra walked up and knocked at his doorway.

“It’ll still be a few hours before we can get you to the rendezvous point that will take you to your new safehouse,” said Winston, “Again, sorry for any inconvenience. Also, thank you for your work with the window, Athena told me you—”

“You can cancel that transport,” said Symmetra, walking into the room.

“What?” Winston broke his sight away from his monitor.

Symmetra strode in to the office and constructed a seat of hard light and sat down across from Winston.

“I believe we have much discuss,” said Symmetra, “About Vishkar, and your security here as well. I believe we can help each other.”

Winston blinked several times and adjusted his glasses, “Well… I’m listening,” he said.
Satya could hear the grunts and the blows landing before she rounded the corner to the Watchpoint training area. Pharah more or less ignored her as Satya made a frame shape with her fingers and expanded a large rectangle of shock-absorbing but cushy hard light, which she set down, perfectly symmetrically on the floor. Pharah’s fists were wrapped, blow after blow hitting the punching bag, the beat of fists underscored by the outward puffs of breath and the slight rattle of the chain suspending the punching bag. Satya regarded her for a few seconds before putting on Chopin’s Polonaise No. 7 on her headpiece, and assuming Extended Child’s Pose.

Each continued in their respective workout, Pharah beating the hell out of her punching bag, and Satya more or less doing what looked like a graceful, seamless alternation between Yoga and Pilates. Pharah would occasionally hear a slight chiming sound and look over her shoulder to see Satya had made a hard light resistance band, or a hard light exercise ball, or a hard light barre. It was all very… routine. Like something she had been doing for years. Pharah’s blows against the punching bag slowed as she watched the ritual-like focus of Satya, completely in her own world, eyes shut as she spun this block or that bench in and out of existence with only a few gestures of her hard-light projecting prosthesis.

_I should probably start punching again_, Pharah thought to herself, absently. She knew if she stood still too long, her workout watch would beep shrilly to indicate she was falling short of her cardio goal, but her heart rate seemed about the same as Satya entered Downward Facing Dog.

In Satya’s headphones, Polonaise No. 3 was cresting to a rollicking climax then transitioned into a Nouvelle étude for her cooldown. Pulling out of the near trance of her routine, she glanced over to see Pharah staring at her from across the training area. Satya brushed some sweat from her hairline, cleared her throat and pulled off her headset. “My apologies–Did you need the space to yourself?” she asked.

“No–No, it’s just–No, it’s fine,” said Pharah, rubbing at the back of her neck, “Just… your routine is really…”

**Beautiful,** Pharah thought.

“Interesting,” Pharah managed.

“Ah…Yes, well, Vishkar’s physical training was designed around maintaining flexibility and muscle strength with little risk of injury,” said Satya.

_of course it’s Vishkar,_ thought Pharah, but she couldn’t really judge Satya on that. She noticed that it was the first time she had seen Satya without the headset (And without the heels… she seemed so much shorter now). “Wait—” she looked at the headset, “Can you not hear with that on?”

“No, I just had music playing,” said Satya, “Well I mean, the headset allows for certain amounts of noise filtration if I get overwhelmed…” she trailed off.

“Overwhelmed?” Pharah tilted her head.

“I’m autistic. I… have aversions,” said Satya, “Crowds, loud noises, strong smells…They just make me—” she trailed off again, pursed her lips and folded her arms, really not wanting to describe the feeling. “It made growing up in Hyderabad difficult. Vishkar never bothered categorizing it too closely. They were able to recognize that it also gave me unique spatial reasoning that was perfect
for their Architech program. So they… accommodated me,” she glanced down, “They had the resources to accommodate me better than my own family could.”

“I’m sorry,” said Pharah.

“Why? This was long before I ever met you,” said Satya.

“Sorry, I mean—I know that’s hard, when you can’t get what you need from your family,” Pharah tucked the two beaded locks of hair at her temple back, “Am I the first person you told?”

“Winston knows,” said Satya, “It was brought up when we were discussing my conditions for staying here. Dietary needs and so forth.”

Pharah snorted, “So that’s why the watchpoint dorms smell like disinfectant now,” she said.

“Which is better than before, I assure you,” said Satya with a slight smirk. She put the headset back on and her visor flickered into existence over her eyes. She seemed to ease up a bit more with it on.

Pharah’s smile shrank as she looked around the training area. “Guess this is all pretty far from what you’re used to, huh?”

“I can adjust,” said Satya with a shrug, “For a while I was dreading what life without Vishkar’s structure would look like, but this place has given me no shortage of things to occupy my focus. Repairs to be made, cleaning to be done, security matrices to be set up and maintained, learning more about Vishkar’s corruption and trying to deploy countermeasures…” she looked around the ceiling of the hangar a bit disapprovingly, “…and so many loose panels and cables…”

Pharah followed her line of sight up to the ceiling. “I could probably get you up there, if you need,” she said, putting her hands on her hips.

“I-in that armor?” said Satya, looking at Pharah.

“It’ll be a much smoother flight without Talon shooting at us, don’t worry,” said Pharah, grinning.

“Hm,” Satya looked back up at the ceiling, “I might just take you up on that offer, Miss Amari.”
Widowmaker put her hand on the panel next to the door and it slid open, where the sound of metal crushing metal and the faint crackle of electricity could be heard. She stepped into a state-of-the-art observation room where a handful of Talon doctors and scientists, as well as a handful of specialists from Ogundimu Prosthetics were poring through lines of data, while some looked down into the training center below as Doomfist seemingly effortlessly smashed a training drone into a wall with his gauntlet before pumping a round from his hand cannon point blank into the visual receptor panel of another drone, which collapsed in a heap as a loud buzzer sounded. One of the Talon scientists pressed an intercom and spoke over the training center’s speakers. “That marks the end of round 23. Do you want us to reset the exercise, sir?”

Doomfist rolled his shoulders and cracked his neck, “Has Lacroix arrived?”

The talon scientist gave a glance over his shoulder to Widowmaker before responding, “Yes sir.”

“Then that will be all for today.”

“Your observations on the updates—?” The scientist questioned.

“Confirmed,” said Doomfist, walking to an elevator that would lead up to the observation room. There were a few brief seconds of silence before the elevator in the observation room opened and Doomfist stepped out. “Handcannon is definitely handling easier—there are some delays in building up a charge for the gauntlet now, however 23 rounds should give you sufficient biometric data to re-calibrate accordingly.”

The scientist adjusted his goggles, “Yes there were some… anomalies in the data, but we didn’t think they would be observable in the aspect of overall performance.”

“It’s observable,” said Akande flatly, and despite having most of his face covered, the scientist looked horrified that his work was not up to standard.

“Yes–Understood–we’ll get on that right away,” said the scientist as Doomfist casually took off his gauntlet and rolled his shoulder in its socket. An Omnic assistant quickly came up with a large, neatly folded zip-up hoodie and Doomfist took it and put it on.

“Walk with me, Lacroix,” he said, stepping toward the exit of the observation room. Widowmaker followed.

“I saw the results of the mission in Utopaea,” said Akande, “Our dealings with Vishkar were old news, not exactly the highest priority, but still worth reminding Vishkar that we’re on the same page.”

Widowmaker exhaled, “We did not expect Overwatch to arrive before us,” she said quietly.

“Figures as such,” said Doomfist as they reached his office, “There’s been a leak.” The door slid open and Akande walked in. “Katie–can you replay the findings from the Vaswani apartment bug, keyword ‘Nīḍa?’”

“Processing request…” The AI voice on Akande’s computer chimed.

“’Katie?’” Widowmaker arched an eyebrow.
“All credit where credit is due to our AI infrastructure programmers but ‘Hecate’ is a bit… grim, wouldn’t you say?” said Akande, leaning against his desk.

“Mm,” Widowmaker shrugged.

Satya Vaswani’s voice came over the computer’s speakers. “...I will tell you what I told your ‘Nīḍa, I have no interest in associating with an organization that is renegade at best, criminal at worst.’” the voice cut out and switched to the next clip.

It was Fareeha Amari’s voice this time. “Look, I don’t know who this ‘Nīḍa’ is, but according to our intel, Talon put a hit out on you, and word is, Vishkar’s no longer protecting you.”

Then there was Vaswani’s voice again. “Nīḍa said they were your friend, or Overwatch’s friend at least.”

Amari spoke again. “Is... Nīḍa the reason you’re leaving Vishkar?”

“I make my own decisions, but I will say thanks to certain... revelations by Nīḍa, I have made the decision to leave Vishkar.”

“End playback,” said Akande and the speakers shut off, “Nīḍa is a Telugu word,” he said, folding his arms, “It means ‘Shadow.’”

“Sombra,” said Widowmaker. The name fell out of her.

“She’s getting sloppy,” said Akande, “Either that, or she wants us to know it’s her.”

Widowmaker folded her arms. “So you want her dead?” she said, looking at Doomfist.

Doomfist shook his head. “Her current work is helping us out immensely, and as is usually the case with Sombra, I figure this little project of hers warrants observation before we act too hastily. But I think it’s worth establishing that we are on the same page in regards to her. Gabriel tells me she cares about you.”

Widowmaker scoffed. “She flirts, but that is one of her own many little jokes she has with herself. ‘Flirt with the woman who feels nothing,’ it’s funny to her. She never tells me anything more than she would tell you or Gabriel,” said Widowmaker, “She has her own agenda—things she wants to find out on her own, but I figure you already know that.”

“I do,” said Doomfist.

A pause passed between them.

“So we observe for now,” said Widowmaker, “And if she steps too far out of line...?”

“Then I suppose you’ll be doing what you do best,” said Doomfist.

Widowmaker was quiet for a while. “Very well,” she said.

—-

It was 3 or 4, Widowmaker didn’t really care, when she knocked on Sombra’s door. She folded her arms and waited, hearing muffled bitter muttering in Spanish on the other side before the door slid open. Sombra was in a baggy tank top and boy shorts and rubbing the sleep from her eyes and yawning in the doorway.
“Of course the one night I actually decide to sleep…” she was muttering half in Spanish as she mindlessly scratched at her neural implants, she blinked sleepily and smiled at Widowmaker, “What is it, Araña?”

Widowmaker stepped over the threshold into Sombra’s room and the door slid closed behind her. She suddenly whipped her arms around Sombra and squeezed her close.

“Whuh..?” Sombra blinked a few times.

“Your EMP,” Widowmaker’s voice was hushed and cool against Sombra’s neck.

Sombra didn’t even question. “Apagando Los Luces,” she said softly and the EMP unfolded off of her in a purple flash. Sombra’s screens blinked out and went black.

“You know I spend half my time here debugging my own room,” said Sombra, “I’d know if they planted new ones,” she said.

Widowmaker still looked around the room before turning back to Sombra. “What kind of game are you playing?”

“What?” said Sombra.

“With Overwatch. Nīḍa. You gave Overwatch the information that allowed Satya Vaswani to live.”

Sombra’s brow crinkled, “I didn’t give them that information,” she said. She paused, “Unless…”

“Unless…?”

Sombra shrugged, “Look, I’ll handle it, don’t worry about it.”

“Sombra,” Widowmaker’s brow furrowed.

Sombra sighed. “I like making friends, okay? I have someone in Overwatch who owes me a favor. He used to owe me two favors, he must have somehow gotten the information on Vaswani while we were doing favor number one. That’s all.”

Widowmaker’s eyes narrowed. “Who,” she said.

“I’m not at liberty to say,” Sombra said, pushing her hair back, “It’s just a contingency plan.”

“A contingency plan?”

“When you’re in an organization trying to plunge the world into inescapable war, I figure it’s kind of common sense to have one, you know? And… there’s the other thing.”

“The other thing?” said Widowmaker.

“They’ve been putting you under for longer and longer, Araña,” said Sombra, bringing up a screen of Widowmaker’s medical records with Talon, “…don’t you ever wonder how long your body can take these treatments?”

Widowmaker’s eyes widened then she angrily stuck a hand through the screen and waved it, forcing Sombra to close it. “I don’t need you risking yourself out of guilt for me!” she hissed.

“I’m not doing it out of guilt, Amélie,” said Sombra.
The name caught Widowmaker like a barb and she seized Sombra’s shoulders, digging her nails in. Sombra’s face remained perfectly calm at this, not even her usual playfulness or smugness. “You—” Widowmaker seethed, “You are foolish and deluded woman and you think you’re so clever and all these games you play and deals you make—all they will ever do is get you killed!”

“Yeah I’m pretty aware of the risks already,” said Sombra calmly.

“You’re trying to save me,” the words fell out of Widowmaker and her eyes widened. She squeezed Sombra’s shoulders tighter and gritted her teeth. “There is no saving me. There is nothing to save,” she said.

“Yeah Gabe more or less told me the same thing,” said Sombra with a shrug, “Then again I never was good at following directions.”

“You keep going after this and you’ll die for nothing,” Widowmaker.

“Aw, do you care about me?” Sombra finally saw an opportunity to retreat back to her smug playfulness but the smug grin faded from Sombra’s lips as she noticed something had shifted in Widowmaker’s face. Something was sparking in her eyes. Something terrified and furious. “You okay Arañ–?”

Widowmaker suddenly yanked Sombra forward by her shoulders and kissed her, hard and heartbroken, on the mouth. There was maybe two heartbeats of Sombra attempting to figure out what was going on before she quickly surrendered to the kiss. Widowmaker kissed her, again and again, holding her tight. She kissed her on the mouth, on the cheekbone, the mouth again, the jawline and the neck. Sombra felt Widowmaker’s cool hands tracing up underneath the back of her tank top, edging at the base of her spinal implants.

“Permets-tu?” Widowmaker’s voice was on Sombra’s neck again, but something had softened in it.

“Yeah…” Sombra said after Widowmaker kissed her again, “Yes…”

They practically collapsed onto Sombra’s rumpled bed. By now the EMP had more than worn off and the screens of Sombra’s monitors were filling the room with a bright violet light. Sombra dimmed them with a wave of her hand.

——

The window in Sombra’s room was filled with that gray pre-dawn light when Widowmaker untangled herself from Sombra’s arms and legs. She glanced down at Sombra asleep with love bites blooming on her neck and breasts and the inside of her thighs. Widowmaker smiled a little before getting out of bed and pulling on her own clothes.

She thought to leave the room as quickly and silently as possible, but instead found herself lingering next to the bed where Sombra still slept. Widowmaker bent and kissed Sombra between the pink lines of the neural implants scoring her undercut and Sombra made a small sound before Widowmaker pulled a sheet up and over Sombra’s naked frame and Sombra pulled the sheet around herself with a contented sigh.

“Sleep well, mon coeur,” said Widowmaker before slipping out the door.
“And the prosthetic?” said Mercy, tapping through her tablet.

McCree curled the fingers of his prosthetic hand inward before spreading them. “Stellar, as usual.”

“Excellent,” said Mercy, smiling more brightly then usual.

McCree glanced at the time on a nearby monitor and then glanced back at Mercy, who seemed to be cheerily humming as she took down notes on her tablet. “Huh…change your coffee, Doc?” he asked.

“Mm?” Mercy glanced up from her tablet.

“No, that’s not it…” said McCree, furrowing his brow a bit as he scanned her face.

“What’s not it?” said Mercy.

“Nothing you just seem a little…” McCree trailed off.

“Seem a little…?” Mercy gestured for him to continue.

“You just seem to be in good spirits,” said McCree.

“Am I not allowed to be in good spirits?” said Mercy, with a smirk and an arched eyebrow.

McCree shrugged. “Well, knowing your sleep schedule and considering how long I shoved this off… It’s a nice surprise, is all,” said McCree, “I guess I expected you to chew me out.”

Mercy snorted. “I can if you really want me to.”

“That won’t be necessary,” said McCree.

Mercy gave him a slightly bemused look before shrugging and glancing back down to her tablet, smiling to herself. It was too early for her to be in this good of a mood. “Well now with your inoculations all in full effect, I’d say you’re cleared for that Giza mission,” said Mercy. She walked over to the monitor. McCree couldn’t help but notice a shift in the way she carried herself, then his eyes widened with some realization. Mercy, looking at her monitor, didn’t notice. “Next time, try not to put this off until the last mini–”

“Holy shit—you got laid,” McCree blurted out.

Mercy stood upright from her monitor, “Excuse me?!”

“Sorry, I just—” McCree rubbed his forehead, “Jeez,” a laugh shook his voice, “It really happened, didn’t it?”

Mercy went bright red. “Jesse McCree—How dare you insinuate—not even insinuate—Of all the unprofessional—You have no right to—First of all that is none of your business and second of all I—I—Must you continue making that infuriating face?!”

McCree was smirking. “Like I’ve always told you,” he said adjusting himself in his seat, “Blackwatch. Good with secrets. No judgment here. Always thought you could stand to—” McCree felt a glare coming on from Mercy and caught himself and cleared his throat, “I’m happy
Mercy sighed and pressed her hands to her forehead. “Is it obvious? What gave it away?”

“Nah, not obvious. I’ve just known you a long time,” said McCree, leaning forward in his seat and grinning, “Spring in your step, sway in your hips, and you’re humming, Doc. Humming before 8 AM. On top of all that, I thought you’d be noticing this on your own but… you’re walkin’ funny.”

Mercy’s face was still bright red and her mouth drew to a thin line.

“You had a good time, huh?” said McCree.

“Don’t you have an Orca to Giza to catch?” said Mercy, furrowing her brow.

“Sure thing, Doc,” said McCree, pushing himself up and out of his seat and strolling toward the door. “Oh, and uh… give my regards to Genji.”

“Best of luck in Giza, McCree,” said Mercy with a clear edge in her voice.

McCree just snickered and tipped his hat to her as the door shut behind him. Mercy groaned and pressed her tablet against her forehead. “Ach du lieber…” she muttered.

—

At the Watchpoint’s target range, Genji arched his back and stretched his arms over his head, then brought them down and rolled his shoulders. He watched the sun glint off of the metal of his knuckles and sighed contentedly, before glancing away from the targets and out over Gibraltar’s waters.

“It’s a beautiful morning, is it not?” he said.

The high pitched chirping noises of Tracer’s pulse pistols ceased. “You feeling all right, Genji?” said Tracer, glancing up from her target.

“I feel wonderful!” said Genji.

“All right, well…I’m asking because that’s the third time you’ve said some variation on how beautiful the morning is,” said Tracer.

“Well it is beautiful,” said Genji.

“Aaaand that makes four,” said Tracer, “Honestly, Genji, did you hit your head last night or something?”

Genji seemed to think seriously on this. “I do not believe I did,” he said.

Tracer’s eyes narrowed. “Something’s different about you,” she said, pulling up her goggles.

“Different?” said Genji.

“Yeah, different!” said Tracer. She zipped from about ten feet away to about an arm’s length away in the blink of an eye and a blue flash and paced around him. “Yeah, definitely different.”

“Different how?” said Genji, glancing down at himself.

“Can’t put my finger on it,” said Tracer, “I wouldn’t say you’re more out of it but you’re definitely
a bit… loosened up? Like I know Zenyatta helped you sort out a lot of stuff but you always were a little tightly wound and now it’s like—” Tracer’s eyes widened and her face dropped.

“What?” said Genji.

A wide grin spread across Tracer’s face.

“What?” said Genji a bit more wary this time.

“Oh I think you know,” said Tracer.

“I don’t,” said Genji.

“Oh but you do,” said Tracer, putting her hands on her hips. She gave him a playful punch in the arm.

“I wish I did,” said Genji.

Tracer scoffed and rolled her eyes. “Sex, Genji. Shagging. Fucking. Getting your rocks off. There’s a lot more dirty euphemisms but I’ll spare you. Point is: You had sex last night.”

“Oh—well…” Genji trailed off and the heat sinks in his shoulders clicked out and steamed, “Well I was—we were—it was….yes.”

Tracer snorted and gave him another punch in the arm.

“Is it obvious?” said Genji, rubbing his arm a bit.

Tracer seemed to think on it for a while. “’Obvious’ I don’t think is the right word,” she said, “Clear—well… yes, to someone who’s known you a long time. And I’ve known you a long time.” She paused and her eyes lit up, “It’s Doctor Z, isn’t it?” Genji flinched a bit and Tracer snickered. “You don’t have to say anything,” she said, folding her arms.

Genji rubbed the back of his neck awkwardly. “I had hoped I was at least a bit discreet,” he said quietly.

Tracer scoffed and snickered again and gave him another playful punch in the arm. “Don’t worry about it. It’s about bloody time, anyway.”

“’About bloody time?’” Genji repeated. A chuckle shook his voice a bit. “I suppose that’s one way of putting it,” he said.

“Oh? And how would you put it?” said Tracer.

Genji paused to think for a while again. “A step forward?” he said at last.

Tracer snickered. “If that’s a step, I’m a little scared to ask what running looks like.”

Genji scoffed and folded his arms. “Don’t ever change, Oxton,” he said.
Genji stood awkwardly with an untouched glass of champagne in his hand as he handed a champagne flute over to Mercy. She took it from him and sipped it, leaning against the wall with her brow furrowed slightly. Genji picked up on some uncomfortable aura around her and then looked out at the crowd of doctors and scientists.

“So these were your peers and associates before Overwatch?” said Genji, looking around and fidgeting a bit with the collar of his shirt.

“Well… to use ‘peers’ loosely,” said Mercy, sipping her drink.

“Oh because you were a prodigy so you were…” Genji trailed off. He shrugged. “Well.. we only have to be here as long as it takes for McCree to grab the intel. You were not fond of these people?”

Mercy shrugged and sipped her drink. “It wasn’t that bad,” she said, “A bit lonely, I suppose but—” she seemed to notice someone in the crowd and immediately turned her shoulder to the crowd.

“What?” Genji looked at the crowd, “Talon infiltrator?”

“Don’t look,” Mercy put a hand on his shoulder and turned him away from the crowd.

“What?” said Genji.

“I said don’t look! Don’t make eye contact and—” Mercy glanced up and her eyes widened and her mouth drew to a thin line, “Oh no,” she looked off and attempted to sip her champagne as casually as possible. “He sees me. Just look casual and we should—”

“Angela?” A man broke out from the crowd and laughed, “Is that little Angela Ziegler! Look at you! I almost did not recognize you without the back brace!”

“Mein gott he’s coming over,” Mercy whispered through a gritted smile as he made his way over, “What have we been doing these days?” she said under her breath to Genji.

“What?” said Genji.

“He’s going to ask what I’ve been doing these days and I can’t exactly say ‘Violating the Petras Act’ so—Lukas! So good to see you!” said Mercy, forcing a smile and tilting her head.

“What?” said Genji.

“This is Genji Shim—” Mercy caught herself and cleared her throat, “Genji…”

“Genji Shimazaki,” said Genji, putting a hand forward. Lukas glanced down at his hand and reached forward and shook it so warmly and eagerly that Genji was being jostled slightly.

“A pleasure to meet you! And how do you know Angela?” said Lukas, releasing Genji’s hand.

Genji circled his wrist and glanced over at Mercy, “Doc–Angela and I are…”

“Married,” blurted out Mercy, quickly hooking her arm in Genji’s.

“Married?” said Genji. Angela gave his arm a quick squeeze and Genji quickly caught on.
“Married. Yes. We are married.”

“You got married?” Lukas said incredulously. “Angela! How could you not tell me?”

“Oh it was a small ceremony. Very intimate,” said Mercy with a hand wave.

“Garden ceremony,” said Genji, “In spring.”

“Oh yes, beautiful,” said Mercy, grinning at Genji.

“And here I thought little Angela would always be married to her work,” said Lukas, sipping his champagne. Genji almost snorted at this but caught himself. “So this is why you’ve been quiet ever since the Petras Act?” said Lukas, swirling his champagne in his glass.

“Family has that effect,” said Genji. Mercy’s mouth dropped open.

“Family?” Lukas repeated and looked at Mercy, who quickly regained face and leaned her head on Genji’s shoulder, “You have children?”

“Three,” said Genji.

“Three!” Mercy repeated incredulously, then caught herself and smiled, “Three!” she said cheerily, “Isn’t it wonderful?”

“Congratulations,” said Lukas, “How old are they?”

“Ethel is four now,” said Genji, “Rei and Satoru are both two. Twins.”

“Twins!” said Lukas, looking over at Mercy, “I can’t believe it!”

“Neither can I,” said Mercy, glancing sidelong at Genji.

“Sounds like quite a handful,” said Lukas.

“Oh yes,” said Genji, “They get it from my side of the family.”

“Of course they do,” said Mercy, taking a gulp of her champagne.

“Yes, we hardly ever go out anymore,” said Genji, unhooking his arm from Mercy and wrapping it around her waist, pulling her in closer, “It has been our most magical evening in months, has it not?”

Something like a smile tugged at the corner of Mercy’s mouth and she chuckled a little. “Magical,” she conceded. She kissed Genji on the side of his faceplate, which gave him pause, as if he didn’t fully comprehend what had just happened.

“Well,” said Lukas, “Far be it from me to keep you from the rest of this party. It has been wonderful catching up with you, Angela.”

“You as well,” said Mercy and Lukas walked off. As soon as Lukas disappeared into the main crowd of the party, Mercy exhaled hard and slumped against the wall behind her and steam hissed out of the collar and cuffs of Genji’s shirt. Genji wordlessly handed her his untouched champagne flute, which she quickly downed, then exhaled again before turning to Genji. “Three kids?”

“And a dog,” said Genji with a shrug, “If it came up.”
“A dog,” said Mercy, setting the champagne flutes aside. She smirked, “And you came up with all that on the spot.”

“I am very good at thinking on my feet,” said Genji, folding his arms.

“Of course you are,” said Mercy.
The sun was setting, and Mercy’s windbreaker rippled hard in the Patagonia winds, her face partially protected by sunglasses, hood, and a balaclava but her long blonde bangs wildly whipping around in the breeze. Her voice was nearly drowned out by the wind as well. “And according to the GPS, Watchpoint Agostini should be…” she clambered over a butte and stopped. “Oh it’s beautiful.”

Genji clambered up behind her to see the facility that rested on the Agostini Fjord. ‘Beautiful’ was an interesting word for it. The fjord itself was beautiful, but the Watchpoint was practically half a ruin, with only one of its wind turbines turning slowly and creaking in the breeze and the other tilting hard with its blades littered around it, one jutting upward from the ground.

Winston’s voice crackled over the comm. “You find it?”

“Yes, several kilometers south of your estimated coordinates, but yes,” said Mercy watching as Genji slid down a gravelly slope to the Watchpoint.

“Congratulations, Doctor Ziegler, you’ve found the ghost Watchpoint,” said Winston, and Mercy smirked a little and made her way down the gravelly slope as Genji walked around the perimeter of the Watchpoint. “Now we should be bringing the Orca to your coordinates in a little bit, that should give you plenty of time to find what you’re looking for. Hopefully your retinal scan should still work.”

“If the power grid is still working,” said Genji, nudging at one of the fallen wind turbine blades with his foot.

“The backup generator for this place was designed to last for 40 years,” said Mercy, walking up to the chain link fence that surrounded the Watchpoint, throwing her backpack over it, and starting to clamber up it. Genji easily cleared the fence while Mercy was still awkwardly swinging one leg over it.

“Do you require assistance?” said Genji and Mercy just grunted in response. She leapt off from the fence and stumbled a bit on the landing.

“Is it that much more difficult without the Valkyrie suit?” said Genji, cocking his head and Mercy just snorted and elbowed him playfully as they walked toward the entrance to the watchpoint. She placed her hand against a palm scanner and there was a great metallic groan as a screen next to the door flickered to life, the projection on it distorting and flickering in and out.

“Identification, please?” a distorted voice issued for the from the screen.

“Ziegler, Angela,” said Mercy.

“Stand by,” said the voice. Mercy took off her sunglasses and turned her head slightly as two perpendicular lines were projected on her face and then centered their intersection over the pupil of her left eye.

“Ziegler, Angela. Welcome back to Watchpoint Agostini,” said the voice and the two steel doors jerked open but jammed too narrow for a human to slip through. Genji gave the doors a small smack with his fist which managed to jerk them open wide enough to go through. Once inside the Watchpoint and out of the wind and sunlight, Mercy took off her hood and balaclava and looked around as small lights lit up among the walkways. Mercy felt among the walls to a large switch
and turned it on. Several overhead lights turned on and flickered eerily, but many were broken. There were cracked glass screens and examination tables, mechanical apparatuses where robotic limbs were suspended, incomplete and skeletal.

“So you were stationed here?” said Genji, looking around.

“Yes, this was before you joined Overwatch,” said Mercy, looking at one of the mechanical limbs suspended over an examination table, “Before even the Valkyrie suit was created. It was one of the only places in the world where Overwatch could develop nanotechnology resistant to the influence of Omnic and God AI’s. After the Omnic Crisis, we continued using it for more secretive R&D under the direction of Dante Medina.”

“And the reason why it was so hard to find is the reason why we are here?” said Genji, attempting to remember the briefing. He picked up a binder and attempted to read it, but found all the paper inside sodden and rotting.

“There’s an anti-omnium scrambler somewhere in the main processors for this facility. Winston thinks he can repurpose it to better protect Athena from Talon hackers,” said Mercy. “Check your comm.”

Genji took his comm out. “No signal,” he said.

“The thing that’s disrupting that signal, that’s what we’re here for.”

“Hm,” Genji set down the rotten binder and walked around one of the suspended prosthetic limbs, “They did good work here,” he said, looking at the wires of the arm.

“They were one of the best,” said Mercy, heading upstairs, “Unfortunately after Talon assassinated Dante, the Watchpoint was abandoned and most of its technology and research was wrapped up and brought to the Zurich Headquarters…” she sighed, “It was too remote to keep in good condition like Gibraltar. They just let nature reclaim it.”

“But the anti-omnium scrambler is still here,” said Genji.

“They didn’t want the Omnics claiming this place, and after the crisis they stored more covert science projects here,” said Mercy, trying a door but finding it locked. “The only other scrambler was in Zurich and that was destroyed with the headquarters.” She threw her weight against it and grunted but Genji put a hand on her shoulder and she stepped aside as he kicked the door down.

“Danke,” said Mercy and Genji gave a small salute. They walked into a room full of softly humming processors. It didn’t take Mercy too long to root out and deactivate the scrambler. “Winston,” she brought up her Comm, “We’ve obtained the scrambler. Ready for extraction.”

“Well, we have your location, I’m afraid there’s been a bit of a complication with the—” there was a popping and crackling sound in the background of Winston’s comm and Torbjörn could be heard swearing. Winston sighed. “Orca’s grounded for the next few hours. We need to perform some—” Winston was interrupted by more Swedish swearing from Torbjörn, “…maintenance. We should be there by daybreak. Will you two be all right?”

“We’ll manage,” said Mercy,

“The Watchpoint is stable enough to serve as shelter. Doctor Ziegler has her pack and my armor thermoregulates. We will be fine,” said Genji.
The initial plan had been to just lie down on the beds in the Watchpoint’s dormitory, but the
dormitory was even more empty and cold than the entryway and processors. The mattresses must
have been repurposed or donated, Mercy figured. With the Watchpoint on backup power, there was
no heat. Mercy had been able to see her breath since arriving in Patagonia, but now, huddled across
from Genji while wrapped in her sleeping bag, she watched it fog out in front of her in the lantern
light. Genji had started out in a cross-legged meditative position, but was now hugging his knees a
bit as they listened to the wind rattle the windows. Mercy followed Genji’s line of sight back to the
prosthetic arm which hung suspended over a work table.

“Did you make that?” said Genji. Mercy shook her head.

“This place was still in operation a few years after I was in Zurich and the front lines,” she said,
bringing her sleeping bag around her. She glanced over her shoulder at it. “More of a model than an
actual functioning prosthetic,” she murmured.

“How long were you in Overwatch before I joined?” said Genji.

“Four years, I think,” said Mercy.

“You know, I never gave much thought to it,” said Genji, “You were very young to have so much
responsibility placed on you,” said Genji.

“Oh, I got that a lot,” said Mercy, smiling a little. Her smile faded. “I don’t think anyone gave it
that much thought at the time…how young everyone was. I suppose no one thought much on it
after the Omnic Crisis. I think people know the young are easily blinded by that—being told
they’re brilliant so they bend themselves until they break to keep that true because if they are not
the best well… then what are they?” She stared into the light of the lantern, then seemed to catch
herself and shook her head. She then glanced up to see Genji staring at her. Somehow even with
the faceplate she knew what that steady look meant. She huffed and smiled, “Oh don’t you worry,”
she said, readjusting her sleeping bag.

“I’m here because I worry,” said Genji, a slight chuckle in his voice.

“You’ve been worried ever since Volskaya.”

“This is your first field mission since Volskaya.”

“I can handle myself,” said Mercy, smirking a bit.

“I do not doubt your strength. I simply believe there are burdens you should not have to bear
alone,” said Genji.

Mercy glanced down, smiling, then looked up at him again. “So speaking of burdens to bear—how
is the thermoregulating holding up?”

“Thermoregulation is optimal,” said Genji.

“Oh so you won’t want to share this sleeping bag,” said Mercy, airily.

“I did not say that,” said Genji. Mercy could hear the smile in his voice.

Mercy unzipped the sleeping bag. “Well come on, then,” she said, “It’s freezing in here. I’m not
keeping it open for long.”
Genji stood up and stepped over to her.
Ana had to admit, the whir and smell of exhaust from the orca was welcome and nostalgic. She looked out over Ayutthaya. A sweet earthy smell of the jungle mingled amidst the exhaust in the air. She heard a grunt behind her and looked over her shoulder to see Reinhardt already on the Orca’s interior, pulling off his helmet and sweeping his silver hair back.

“You’d think the youngsters would be here first,” he said, detaching his lion buckler from his gauntlet and rolling his wrist before pressing at another catch at the interior of his elbow to pull off the gauntlet as well.

“Hmm,” Ana nodded and then put her finger to her ear, clicking into the comm channel.

“Shimada, Ziegler—What’s your status?”

“Apologies, Captain,” Mercy sounded a bit harried on the other end, “We’ll be there as quickly as we can.”

Genji’s voice clicked onto the comm as well, “Ange–I mean, Doctor Ziegler just wanted to check the statuses of a few civilians for concussions and venom mine poisonings”

“How are the civilians? Do you need another medic?” asked Ana.

“A minor concussion, but I believe they’re in good enough condition for us to leave them to the local medics. We’ll be rendezvousing shortly. Over and out,” there was a click on the other end and Ana walked over to Reinhardt to help get the massive chestplate of his armor off.

“That Angela,” she said with a sigh, “Making up for lost time I suppo–”

“Are you all right, Angela?” Genji’s voice crackled in Ana’s ear.

“Genji, you don’t have to keep asking that,” Angela’s voice crackled back.

“I know–It’s just… first combat mission since…” Genji trailed off.

“Ana?” Reinhardt looked over, “What’s—?”

Ana made a shushing gesture and pointed to her ear. Reinhardt’s eyebrows immediately raised and he picked up his own helmet and held it to the side of his head like listening to the ocean in a conch shell.

“I know you can take care of yourself, I just don’t want you pushing yourself too hard too soon,” Genji’s voice sounded over the comms.

Reinhardt immediately brought his helmet down from the side of his head. “They left their comms on?” he whispered.

Ana nodded.

“We should just click out,” Reinhardt whispered, “It would be rude to eavesdrop.”

Ana nodded in agreement again. Neither clicked out. Reinhardt brought his helmet back up to the side of his head and both continued listening in silence.
“You didn’t seem to have a problem with me ‘pushing myself’ last night,” there was a slight chuckle in Angela’s voice.

Ana’s eye widened and she looked over at Reinhardt. Both very much knew that there was no way Angela would say that if she knew they were listening, and that the polite and proper thing to do would be to click out of the comm channel, and yet both kept listening.

There was a slight ksssh sound and Genji spluttered, “A-Angela! That was–The situation was—That is—There wasn’t an immediate threat—”

There was another snicker on Angela’s end. “I’m just teasing, Genji–Sorry–I just…I’m fine. We’ll get better at this… we’ll go on more missions and…Well hopefully we won’t have to go on a lot of missions…”

“But there always seems to be some peril, somewhere,” said Genji with a smile in his voice.

“One day we’ll have to take the fight to Talon though…we can’t keep clashing like this with civilians in the crossfire. When that day comes…” there was a tentative pause, “Genji–I don’t want to seem—I just…Could you take off your mask?”

“The Orca’s not too far—”

“I know but it will be hours before we’re back on the Watchpoint and alone–Just for a moment—”

Ana and Reinhardt heard a slight clicking sound over the comm and both immediately exchanged equally alarmed glances. They hurried to the entrance of the Orca and looked out.

“Do you see them?” mouthed Reinhardt as Ana squinted and looked around the ruins.

Ana unslung her biotic rifle from her back and looked through it, panning across the ruins until she caught two figures wrapped up in each other in her crosshairs. If she was being honest, she wouldn’t have bothered looking if it were anyone other than Genji stealing a moment like that–but she hardly ever saw the ninja without his mask, and she wasn’t going to miss an opportunity like this. His back was to her crosshairs, though, and his broad shoulders were all but blocking Mercy out. She couldn’t see his face, or Mercy’s really. Ana could make out the cream-colored tuft of Mercy’s ponytail and the gleam of her halo biofeed in the sun past Genji’s armor, and her slim strong arms wrapped tightly around Genji. Ana brought the scope down from her eye and motioned to Reinhardt with the rifle. Reinhardt stooped down too look through the scope. He smiled.

Then he sneezed. Loudly. The two distant figures instantly broke apart.

“What was that–?” Mercy’s voice sounded over the comm.

“A sneeze–?”

“Mein gott the comms are on—THE COMMS ARE ON!!”

Ana could hear Mercy’s distant voice outside of the comms and both she and Reinhardt slipped away from the entrance of the Orca.

“It’s fine, Reinhardt always takes his helmet off after the mission–they probably didn’t even hear —”

“Okay. Okay. Right. Calm. I’m calm–”
“The longer we delay the more they’ll wonder, though,” said Genji.

“Right,” said Mercy. “Oh your mask—” There was another click over the comm line.

Ana and Reinhardt did their best to act as if nothing had happened when Mercy and Genji got back to the Orca. Genji’s mask was back on. Both were attempting to look as casual as possible though Ana could see stuffed-down panic in Mercy’s eyes and a flush that clearly wasn’t entirely due to the humidity of Ayutthaya.

“Sorry for the delay,” Mercy said with a nervous smile.

“Got slowed down by some more civilians on the way back,” Genji added quickly.

“Oh it’s not a problem,” said Ana, calmly, knowing that was bullshit, “Not a problem at all.”
“It is good to return,” Zenyatta said a little distractedly as the Orca touched down on the outskirts of the Shambali monastery’s village, “But am I still welcome here?”

“I suppose we’ll find out soon,” said Genji, stepping to the window alongside his teacher.

“I’m sure it will be wonderful,” said Mercy, smiling at Zenyatta as she pulled on her thick parka, “Genji wrote such lovely things in his letters about this place. I’ve wanted to visit for ages!”

Genji and Zenyatta exchanged a brief glance and Mercy quickly noticed it. “What?” she said.

Zenyatta quickly looked back at Mercy and attempted to perk himself up, “Oh–nothing! Just… you will probably be the most welcome one here.”

“Surely you couldn’t have left this monastery on that bad of terms with your brother?” said Mercy, wrapping a scarf around her neck.

“Considering that was the last they saw of me before Mondatta’s death…” Zenyatta trailed off and Mercy put a mitted hand on Zenyatta’s shoulder in a comforting gesture, before she felt Genji’s hand clapping down on her own shoulder.

“You’re a more diplomatic presence than you realize but–You did say you wanted to come here–so it’s a win-win!” said Genji, giving her shoulder a slight squeeze.

“The Shambali wanted you to be a diplomat too, didn’t they?” said Mercy.

Genji huffed a chuckle as the door to the orca opened. “Maybe I have a chance to practice,” he said, as snow flurries whirled in.

The three of them stepped out of the orca and into the snow. A small crowd had gathered at the edge of the village, a mix of human and omnic wearing an equal mix of western synthetic parkas and windbreakers and more traditional woolen robes. Mercy felt the sting of cold wind on her face, but put on a smile as her boots crunched into the snow and she moved forward. She heard a hauntingly familiar chirrup that made her stomach tense and her hand instantly went for a sidearm that wasn’t at her side. Genji caught her wrist in the motion and her eyes flicked up to his.

“It’s fine,” he said, “They’re fine.”

Mercy’s mitted hand squeezed around his as the slicers ran up alongside them, darting and prancing around them like sniffing dogs. Their Null Sector purple had been painted over with gold and orange and yellow, One rubbed against her leg affectionately and Mercy shrank back with some surprise.

“The Shambali allowed for amnesty after the King’s Row Uprising,” said Genji as the slicers circled at their ankles and then ran off back toward the crowd, “Some were… repaired. They found new life here. It wasn’t as if they knew any better with their old one. They’re hardly as smart as dogs.”

“To be generous,” said Zenyatta, stroking a hand along the back of a slicer before it ran off.

“Master Zenyatta?” a voice spoke up and the crowd parted to reveal two omnics in Shambali robes. One seemed to be of a far older model, stooped, a large cyclops-like light on his head, and a bit
bulky, the metal of his chassis smooth and polished, but with a sort of wear that indicated rust that had been buffed away. The other was tall, clearly of a newer make and heavily self-modified with floral and shambali binary etchings all over their limbs and head. Seven lights were on their forehead, with straight lines etched between the lights in a star-like pattern with a mandala-like flower etched at its center. Zenyatta floated toward the older Omnic and clasped hands with him with a bow of his head.

“It is good to see you again, Master Zenyatta,” said the older omnic.

“Chophel,” said Zenyatta, “I am no Master here.”

“Your presence is a comfort in a time of sadness and upheaval, that is mastery enough,” said Chophel.

Zenyatta bowed his head in acceptance before glancing over his shoulder at Mercy and Genji.

“This is Chophel—he is the Shambali’s master of records. These are my companions–Doctor Angela Ziegler and, of course you remember Genji.”

While both of the two shambali omnics’ focus seemed to be on Zenyatta, the etched omnic’s head suddenly jerked in Genji’s direction with recognition. Genji seemed to perk up with the glance as well.

“Yes,” said the etched omnic, “Who could forget Genji?”

Genji seemed like a deer in the headlights for a few brief seconds before the etched omnic stepped over to Mercy and took her spare hand with a slight bow of their head.

“Doctor Ziegler, the Shambali are very familiar with your work and honored by your presence. I am Tau–I am tasked with welcoming guests and new acolytes.” Their gaze seemed to flick to Mercy’s other hand still squeezing Genji’s before they released her.

“Pleasure to meet you,” said Mercy.

“Master Zenyatta,” said Chophel, “While I wish we could spend more time with pleasantries, there are many matters pertaining to the will and effects of Mondatta that we must discuss. Tau can see to your companions, but these matters are off-limits to the uninitiated.”

“Will you be all right, Genji?” said Zenyatta, looking over his shoulder.

Genji gave a brief glance to Tau before looking back at Zenyatta and blurting out, “Of course. It will be nice to catch up.”

“I’d be happy to look around the village,” said Mercy with a smile.

——

“You kept my room?” said Genji, looking around the humble little space decorated with a Shimada robe, a bookshelf, and a screen.

“Well, it didn’t seem right to throw it all out,” said Tau, “And if we did, what would we decorate it with? More tapestries? Prayer flags and chimes and the like? No–It serves better as a guest room.”

Mercy picked up a framed picture of Genji and Hanzo from the dresser before setting it down.

“You look well,” said Genji as Tau straightened up around the room, “I would have thought you
would still be on your pilgrimage.”

“Well, I had to cut it short when Mondatta was killed,” said Tau, pushing some books together on a shelf.

“Oh..” said Genji glancing off.

“What sort of pilgrimage?” said Mercy.

“It wasn’t a pilgrimage that was really traditional to the Shambali–I decided to travel the world, to visit the now-ruined Omniums and meditate on our origins. Genji saw me off.”

“So you two know each other?” said Mercy, looking between Genji and Tau.

“You could say that,” said Tau with an easy head-tilt and a sidelong glance at Genji.

“I met Tau back before Zenyatta left the Shambali,” explained Genji.

“Genji was the last acolyte Zenyatta brought back here before he left us,” said Tau, “He never mentioned me in his letters?”

“Well–no,” said Mercy, tucking her hair back.

“Odd,” said Tau, looking at Genji, “One would think with all you wrote, the time we spent together would factor in somewhere.”

“Well there was a bit of a gap in the letters,” said Genji, looking at Mercy, “There was a point where Angela was off the grid in her relief work so…”

“I suppose that’s the hard part of being organic,” said Tau, looking out the window, “Well, completely organic, in your case,” Tau glanced at Mercy, “If you were Omnic, you could find each other through the Iris.”

“You can interface with the Iris?” said Mercy, glancing at Genji.

“He could, with the right modifications to his cybernetic enhancements,” said Tau, “He can experience it in a… peripheral and physical sense through an omnic interfacing with it.

“Physical?” Mercy repeated a little helplessly.

“No that it really matters since you’re…” Tau gestured up and down at her, “Organic.”

Mercy’s shoulders stiffened and the corners of her mouth shrunk inward.

“Yes well… these days, when it comes to experiencing the Iris, I’m willing to take Omnics’ words for it,” said Genji.

“And content yourself with being a brain in a metal box–but–” Tau caught themselves, “We have to respect that. Organics will use technology to replace, to make more efficient, perhaps, but never ascend.”

“We like our squishy parts!” said Genji, desperately trying to inject some humor into the room which now had an increasingly chilling atmosphere.

“So you do,” said Tau, they looked over the etchings on their own limbs, “I made these to meditate on the connection between software and hardware–of course the base chemical impulses of squishy
parts are to protect said squishy parts, so I may never understand,” Tau gave Genji a steady look, one that made Mercy feel as if she didn’t even exist in that moment. “But I do wonder what you might have seen, sometimes,” they said.

“Well… having Zenyatta as my teacher, I’ve learned that there is enlightenment to be had in one’s experiences,” said Genji, he looked at Mercy, “Helping others, healing others–The Iris isn’t the only path to it.”

“Mm,” Tau broke their sight away from Genji, “It’s a path that can avoid a lot of pain,” they said a bit more quietly before straightening their shoulders, “Is there anything else you require of me?”

“No,” said Genji, “We should manage from here.”

“Dinner will be as usual—1800 in the refectory,” said Tau, moving to the door.

“It has been good to see you again, Tau,” said Genji.

“It is good to see you in good health as well, Genji,” said Tau. They looked at Mercy, “Doctor Ziegler,” was all they said before they headed out the door.

About two minutes of silence passed before Genji said, “That was really uncomfortable, wasn’t it?”

“I didn’t want to say anything, but yes,” said Mercy.

“They really are a lot more nice than that, usually–” Genji started.

“You and them—That ‘physical’ comment– ‘

“It was brief, but yes. We were together,” said Genji.

“Them? Really?”

“They usually are nicer than that!” Genji insisted, “Seeing me with you probably reopened some old wounds though.”

“‘Not that it matters since you’re organic,’ Mercy mimicked Tau’s timbre, while scowling out the window, “Organics can never ascend. Organics have base chemical impulses and squishy parts.” Her shoulders bunched up, stuffing down fury. “They do know you’re organic, right?” she said, whirling on your heel.

“…They know to an extent,” said Genji rubbing the back of his neck

“They were right though. You—you never mentioned them in your letters,” said Mercy, folding her arms, tightly across herself.

“I know,” said Genji, “Like I said earlier—you remember that three month gap between letters where you had pretty much dropped off the grid?”

Mercy pushed her hair back. “Right…”

“Things started out pretty well, then about a month in, they suggested that I get neural implants that might let me interface with the Iris. I told them I’d rather learn to accept my body without sticking things into my brain. Zenyatta agreed, but Tau said plenty of Omnis got tactile modifications for human partners, so why was this such a big leap? I… realized then that they were taking our relationship a lot more seriously than I was. So I broke things off before I could hurt
them too badly. By the time we got back in contact, I just… wanted to focus on getting better.”

“Well, for all the Shambali’s preaching about detachment, they’re definitely not over you,” said Mercy, her mouth drew to a thin line, “Why wouldn’t you tell me about this?”

“Because it was 3 years ago and there’s no nice way to say, ‘Hey, I think of you when I’m fucking this person.’” said Genji, “It wasn’t fair to either of you. It was stupid. I was stupid. I went through this same cycle with McCree back in Blackwatch. I mean I wasn’t thinking of you when I was fucking McCree but—I mean not to say you weren’t on my mind at the time but—Okay that’s beside the point. I ended things with them as soon as I realized I was falling into an old habit. At the time I—I…” he looked down, “I loved you. I knew I loved you. But I guess I just kept assuming you would find someone better than me. Someone… respectable. Not a criminal. Not Overwatch’s….” he tensed up, “…lab experiment. Someone… real.”

Mercy stepped forward and clasped his hand in hers—the prosthetic one. She brought it up and kissed his knuckles. “You are real, Genji—and I know I’m fussing a lot over something that happened before we were really together.”

“And I don’t blame you. We still had a… thing.”


“More of a thing than this thing, believe me,” said Genji, he paused, “They are a good person. But they deserve better than what I can give them. And they deserved better than what I was giving them back then. I honestly thought they’d be well over me if they were even still here but… Shambali. Lots of ‘destiny has drawn me here’ going around.” He gave Mercy’s hand a slight squeeze. “Can I be obnoxious for two seconds?”

“I have a feeling it’s going to be more than two seconds,” said Mercy.

“I don’t like the fact that this is stressing you out. Just getting that out of the way. I don’t want you to feel like my time with the Shambali was a reflection of what you couldn’t do.”

“And it’s… not healthy to assume that was all my job in the first place,” said Mercy, glancing off, “People can heal themselves. People should heal themselves. I have to trust that they can do that.”

“At the same time though…” Genji half-trailed off.

Mercy arched an eyebrow.

“I just… I haven’t had people fighting over me since before…” Genji gestured up and down at his cybernetics.

“Ach du scheisse—we are not fighting over you!” said Mercy with a huffing, exasperated chuckle.

“I know—I know—“ said Genji, bringing his hands up, “It’s nice to know that you would fight for me.”

“I don’t know if that’s a good idea,” said Mercy, her mouth turning up in a half smile, “Didn’t you hear them? I have squishy parts.”

“I like your squishy parts,” said Genji, bringing an arm around Mercy’s waist.

“I like all your parts,” said Mercy, draping her arms around his shoulders.
“I know,” said Genji, running his prosthetic hand down the side of her face, “I’m very grateful for that.”
Lucio gets some nice letters!

“Didja get my card?” said D.Va, laying on her stomach on her bunk and kicking her feet back and forth as Lucio dug through his locker.

“Yeah I got it,” said Lucio. He dumped his locker over and countless cards spilled out.

“Woah! Look at Mr. Popular over here!” said D.Va.

“You literally have a live chat channel running of all your fans confessing undying love to you,” said Lucio.

“Mm?” D.Va glanced up from her handheld game and over at her MEKA, where numerous texts in different languages were popping up on the projected screen. “Oh shoot, yeah,” she said She took out her phone and snapped a quick selfie with a kissy face and posted it, causing an influx of even more emojis and messages to fill her MEKA’s screen. “It’s exhausting, but you gotta give ‘em what they want,” she said, returning to her handheld game. Lucio snorted and started sorting through his mail.

Winston made sure to mark most snail mail with an offshore stamp, so it was easy to separate most fanmail with actual internal memos and notes. About 75% of the pile was fanmail, requests to come to Spain, to Numbani, back to Brazil, some very devoted fans in Ottawa, and then finally he was left with several letters, not even stamped. One of them was D.Va’s note, already opened with her signature pink bunny stationery, but there were a few others. He was first drawn to the largest, an awkwardly folded and taped piece of printer paper, (or was it fax?), undid the tape and glanced over it.

“Uh…” his brow crinkled.

“What?” D.Va glanced up from her game and Lucio held up the letter for her. It was written completely in binary save for some scratched ink marks at the bottom. D.Va squinted at the ink scratches. “I think I have an idea of who this is from,” she said, taking the paper from Lucio’s hand. She walked over to her MEKA and hit a few buttons, “MEKA scan and translate,” she commanded. The MEKA shot out a green light which scanned over the paper then immediately the words popped up on its screen.

FRIEND LUCIO

GOOD FRIEND.

THANKS FOR GOOD FRIEND.

E54

“Bastion,” Lucio and D.Va said at the same time.
“And the bird,” said Lúcio, pointing at the ink scratches at the bottom.

“What about that one?” said D.Va, pointing.

“What one?”

“That one,” D.Va pointed to what looked like a piece of crumpled, stained, and partially burned garbage.

“…that’s a letter?” said Lúcio.

“Well do you normally keep bits of partially burned garbage in your locker?” said D.Va. Lucio shrugged and picked it up and uncrumpled it. It was covered in scratchy doodles of fire and explosions and pointy things and Lucio could barely make out the handwriting.

**Jumpy Doof Guy—**

We don’t talk much. Thank u for not letting me die. Need me to off anyone, just say the word.

—J

“Hm,” Lúcio’s brow furrowed and he set that letter aside.

He pulled out an unnaturally sharp, square, white envelope, marked with his name. He almost felt bad getting it open, like he was ruining it somehow. He pulled out the letter within.

**Lúcio,** it was written in handwriting that was so straight and perfectly kerned it may have been a font.

There are still many things I am still coming to understand, and I know it will be a long while before I gain the same trust here as you have. I realize we do not get on well, but we both wish to see good done in this world. This world is constantly changing, and we can never fully control that change, but we can direct that change towards brighter futures, and protect this world against greater evils. I am coming to terms with the idea that disorder is a part of humanity that will always be there—as to how much disorder we can permit, I am still learning. Thank you for your patience. Thank you for your willingness to work with me. Also thank you for helping me back in Oasis.

—Anonymous

**PS:** You can keep the technology you stole from Vishkar

**PPS:** I suppose it was never rightfully Vishkar’s to begin with. Nor is it my place to grant you permission to use it. Ignore previous Post-script.

**PPPS:** I respectfully ask that you do not breathe a word of this to anyone.

Lúcio re-read the letter a few times.

“You okay?” D.Va’s voice broke him away from the letter.

“What?” said Lúcio.

“You’ve been really quiet for a while,” said D.Va.

“Yeah,” said Lúcio, stuffing the letter in his pocket, “Yeah I’m fine.” He stretched, “I think that’s
enough fan mail for now. Wanna get something to eat?”

“Yeah!” D.Va sprang to her feet. Lucio stuffed the rest of the letters back in his locker and followed D.Va out to the commissary.
Genji turned on his heel and grabbed a pan off of the stove, and ran a spatula around the edges to release the omelet from it, then grabbed a second pan off of the stove and scooped out some fried rice onto the omelet and folded the omelet over this.

“You know, when I said you could help yourself to breakfast, I expected just grabbing the muesli in the fridge,” said Mercy, turning on her coffee grinder.

“I saw you had some leftover takeout,” said Genji, cracking another two eggs into the pan then stepping over to a cutting board with scallions on it. The kitchen knife moved quickly and easily over the scallions and reduced them to thin circles of white and green.

“Of course you’re good with a knife,” said Mercy, grinning. Genji smirked, causing the scars on his face to crease into each other, then gave the knife a demonstrative spin with a flick of his fingers before setting it down. Mercy giggled a little and watched as he worked. He was still wearing her old holey oversized university sweatshirt, which made her smile.

He grabbed a small handful of sliced scallions and scattered them over the top of the omurice and put Mercy’s plate on the kitchen table and put a squiggle of hot sauce on it before quickly stepping back over to his pan with his own omelet and preparing it the same way. Omelet, rice, scallions, hot sauce.

“Cream or sugar?” said Mercy, pouring out coffee into two mugs.

“Both,” said Genji.

“Of course,” said Mercy with a smile, preparing his cup. She set a mug in front of him and sat down at the table next to him, sipping her own coffee. She set her mug down and took a bite. Her eyes widened. “Mm!” She looked at Genji and swallowed. “Genji--” she gestured down at her plate with her fork, “This is wonderful!”

Genji snickered. “It is simply egg and leftovers,” he said with a shrug.

“I can’t remember the last time I had a hot breakfast,” said Mercy, taking another bite.

“Perhaps I should stay over more often, then,” said Genji, sipping his coffee.

Mercy reddened, mouth full of omurice, then swallowed and sipped her coffee. “Yes--well...” she paused and then her eyes brightened a little, “Yes. You should.” She poked a bit at her omurice with her fork, “How long have you been cooking?”

“I almost never cooked for myself back in Hanamura,” said Genji, taking a bite, “And after....” he trailed off and gestured at his scars, “After what happened... eating was...”

“Difficult,” said Mercy, tucking her hair back.

Genji nodded. “However--In Nepal, among the Shambali, there were many human pilgrims and acolytes who came to visit the monastery, and the journey was often very difficult. Master Zenyatta, his brother, all of the Shambali believed they had a responsibility toward the wellbeing of those who wished to be one within the Iris, so we provided food for them. Everyone had to cook, and those who could not, had to learn.” Genji chuckled and Mercy smiled as she was scraping the last bits of Omurice onto her fork. “Just as well I could not simply take pills and intravenous
nutrition like I had been doing in Overwatch,” he poked at his own omurice with a fork, “And of course, you need a sense of taste if you are feeding others,” he took a bite, “It was difficult at first--learning to eat again--but... it was rewarding. I had not realized how much of my life had been spent destroying until I had to make something.”

Mercy reached over and touched his arm. “You also saved a lot of lives in your time with Overwatch.”

“I know,” said Genji, “I am sure we did good work but... it was not important to me back then. I was... consumed by anger,” he looked up at Mercy and smiled a little, “You know... when I really started getting the hang of cooking---I would watch people eat and wonder if I was feeling what you felt.”

“What I felt?” said Mercy.

“To make something that helps people--I understand food is very different from radical nanobiotic technology but... Does it make you happy?”

“What?” said Mercy.

“To have made something that helps people,” said Genji.

“It hasn’t always helped people,” said Mercy, glancing down. Genji gently brought a hand up under her chin and tilted her head up to look at him.

“You are a good person, Angela,” said Genji. Mercy’s eyes flicked up to look at him and realized how close their faces were. She smiled a bit and moved to close the remaining distance between them. Genji leaned in as well. They were close enough to feel each other’s breath when both of their comms went off.

“Kuso,” Genji swore as Mercy giggled and pressed her forehead against his as she rifled through the pocket of her robe for her comm. She broke away and glanced down at the screen of her comm. “Well... at least we’re helping people,” said Mercy, as Genji groaned and pressed his face into her shoulder. She patted the back of his neck and read the briefing on the screen of her comm. “Looks like we should get going,” she said, getting to her feet. She brought her hand up under his chin and lifted his face up to look at her as he had done earlier. She smiled. “Thank you for breakfast, Genji,” she said, kissing him on the cheekbone and hurriedly clearing off the table. Genji sighed, then gave a glance at the briefing on his own comm, then swore again under his breath and quickly got to his feet and started getting ready as well.
Genji’s fingers were interlaced in front of him, his lips pressed to his knuckles as his eyes scanned down Athena’s monitor. She had a clock in the corner of the screen, but he was afraid to look at it at this point. He perked up slightly at the whoosh of the automatic doors behind him, but didn’t look around. He could tell who it was just by the hesitation of footsteps at the door’s threshold.

“How long have you been staring at that screen?” asked Mercy, leaning in the doorway.

Genji looked over his shoulder at her. “Angela,” there was hesitation in his voice and Mercy stepped over to him and looked up at the screen.

“You’ve been very quiet since that mission,” she said, looking up at the screen, herself, resting her hand on the seat back. She read the name on the screen, “Hideyoshi Shimada…” she read the name aloud, “Status: Deceased. Last known base of operations…” she paused, “Hototogisu Estate, Kantō.” She blinked, “Our last mission…we were right there–you didn’t say anything—”

“My great uncle,” said Genji.

“And a member of the Shimada Clan’s council of elders,” said Mercy, her hand dropping from the seat back to Genji’s shoulder, “Did you…?”

“Yes,” said Genji, “It wasn’t in a Blackwatch raid. It wasn’t even ordered. I… I snuck away from a stakeout to do it. But I still wonder… there was nothing happening in the stakeout. McCree could handle it just fine alone. It was too close to that estate… Reyes had to have known… and he knew I would…” Genji leaned forward in his seat and pressed the heels of his hands to his forehead, “But I didn’t have to.”

“Genji,” Mercy knelt next to the seat and took his hands in hers, “He was one of the people who ordered Hanzo to kill you.”

“But he wasn’t,” Genji’s voice was strained, “He abstained from voting on that council’s decision. He didn’t have any say at that point–they made their choice but I still… I still….”

“He abstained rather than argue that you should live?” Mercy’s brow crinkled.

“It–It’s complicated–with the council you can’t just outright–I knew he couldn’t just outright–” Genji’s breath shuddered and Mercy rose up on one knee and took him into an embrace. He buried his face in her shoulder. “He was one of the last of the main bloodline, one of the last bearers of the dragons…” his voice was muffled slightly against her collarbone.

“Have you spoken to Zenyatta about this?” said Mercy, gently stroking a hand down the back of his neck.

Genji tilted his face up slightly to look at her before glancing down again, “Yes but… it was never about any individual member of the council. His felt different. He knew I was coming. He knew it was me. He sent his bodyguards away rather than let me kill them to get to him. He wouldn’t tell me where the other council members were though… said they were still his family. Said I was still his family… or at least… he tried to… before I…” He pulled out of her embrace slightly and looked at her, “How was I any better than Hanzo or any of them? I was their family, and they destroyed me, so I repay them with destruction as well. Kin-slaying repaid with kin-slaying.”

“Zenyatta could probably phrase this better than me but… they were killing a lot more people than
just you,” said Mercy, cupping a hand to the side of his face, “They weren’t a family to the rest of
the world, Genji–they were assassins, extortionists, arms dealers …They needed to be stopped.”

Genji brought a hand up over her hand on his face, pressing it slightly harder against his scarred
skin as he leaned into it.

“But Overwatch—we were wrong to use your rage against them like that, and I’m so sorry for that,”
said Mercy.

“You were against it from the start,” said Genji, a weak smile tugging at the corners of his mouth.

“I was against a lot of what Overwatch was doing back in those days, but the Shimada clan needed
to be stopped… and you were…” she trailed off, “I suppose Reyes saw it as the most expedient
solution. You deserved better, but I couldn’t come up with anything better.”

“Not with my criminal record,” said Genji, glancing off.

“I can only hope we’re doing better now,” she bowed her forehead against his, “But you’ve come
so far from that angry man.”

“I’m sorry I’m still dealing with this–I’m sorry I’m asking you to–”

“Genji,” Mercy kissed his temple, “I’m still dealing with a lot too. But it means the world to me to
share the weight with you. Please don’t apologize for it.”

“It’s still been months since I confronted Hanzo back in Hanamura,” said Genji, picking up her
hand and kissing her knuckles, “But every time I wonder if I’m ever going to know what having a
loving home and family will feel like again, I think of you and Zenyatta. Winston and Tracer and
the others, too. I think that means something, doesn’t it?”

“Yes,” said Mercy, squeezing his hand slightly, “I think it does.”
McCree lay in the infirmary bed, eyes closed and hat resting on his stomach. The heart rate monitor beeped steadily. Brigitte couldn’t sit down without bouncing her knee anxiously, but she couldn’t stand still either. It wasn’t pacing so much as just… moving. She would pause in place for a while, looking at him, then feel like she wasn’t doing anything, then move so it would feel like she was doing something (she knew it wasn’t doing anything), and stop because she didn’t want to fall into the nervous rhythm of pacing.

“He’ll be fine,” Doctor Ziegler had assured her, “He’s bounced back from a lot worse than this. At this point he just needs rest.”

The Doctor had gone to her own Watchpoint apartment at this point, usually a workaholic herself, but at least able to recognize when there wasn’t much else to do.

‘Fine isn’t wrapped in that many bandages, thought Brigitte, looking at the bandage wrapped around McCree’s forehead, making his hair stick out in random awkward tufts.

She gave a slight start as the door slid open. She was used to doors opening and having no one be there, then having to look down to see her father.

“Hej, Papa,” she gave him a slight wave as he stepped up next to McCree’s bed.

“Cowboy went and made a fool of himself again, did he?” said Torbjörn, frowning over McCree’s bandages.

“It was my fault—Ana had only lost visual on us for a few minutes, I thought I could…” Brigitte pinched the long lock of brown hair running down from her temple and twisted it with her thumb, “I thought…”

“Don’t start with that,” said Torbjörn, “He’s your senior. He should have had better judgment. You got him back alive. That’s what matters.”

Brigitte folded her arms tightly against herself, still looking at McCree anxiously. Torbjörn sighed and hauled himself up onto the chair next to McCree’s bed.

“You chose a much harder path than I did,” he said, looking at her steadily.

Brigitte broke her sight away from McCree to look at him.

“If a machine breaks down, you fix it. It’s simple. It’s your machine, it’s your design. It’s all on you. People are a lot messier,” he looked at McCree, “I can keep the team armored, but what they do with that extra bit of protection is up to them. You… you chose to be so many things at once—medic, mechanic, Crusader… It makes you put a lot on yourself.”

“…You don’t think I can do it,” said Brigitte, looking down.
“Don’t think you can—!? Why of all the—Dumheter! I think you’re the only one who can do it!” said Torbjörn, indignantly, “You’re my daughter aren’t you?”

Brigitte huffed and smiled a little. Only Torbjörn could manage to cheer someone up by getting pissed.

“Thanks for the vote of confidence, Papa,” she said, tucking her hair behind her ear.

Torbjörn sighed and rubbed at his forehead. “This fight was never meant to be yours,” he said.

“Ana says the same thing to Fareeha,” said Brigitte with a shrug.

“Well she’s right!” blustered Torbjörn, “We’re supposed to fight so you don’t have to! I knew I couldn’t stop you from tagging along with that oaf, and I’m glad you kept him alive all that time, but you…” he trailed off, “You’re…”

“I’m the baby,” said Brigitte with a lopsided grin, putting her hands on her hips.

“And just as stubborn as me,” muttered Torbjörn, “All your older siblings had the good sense to take after your mother, but you take after me, and worse, Reinhardt dumps all of his glory day stories on you.”

“It…” Brigitte glanced off, “It’s a lot to live up to.”

“A lot to live up to?” Torbjörn looked at her, “You’re already just as much a crusader as Reinhardt was in his heyday, and just as handy with a wrench as I was in mine.”

“…You really think that?”

“I’m an engineer,” said Torbjörn with a thump to his chest, “It’s not a thought, it’s an empirical observation.”

Brigitte snickered a little before her eyes trailed over to McCree and her smile faded.

“You are going to let people down though,” said Torbjörn, looking over at McCree. “I won’t lie to you about that. Sometimes there’s only so much you can do. It’s an inevitability in this life. But that’s why you learn. That’s why you get better. That’s why when Omnis take your life’s work and repurpose it to slaughter the very people you built it to protect, you tear that work apart, and build something better.”

Brigitte noticed Torbjörn’s knuckles tightening, and stepped over and put a hand on his shoulder. “You’re already far better than anything I could have ever dreamed of,” said Torbjörn, “You know that, right?”

“You could stand to mention it more,” said Brigitte with a smirk.

“And let you get an ego like Reinhardt’s? Pah!” said Torbjörn. He looked back at McCree. “You did all you could. You got him back here. He’ll heal. You’ll both learn. You’ll both get better.”

“Empirical observation?” said Brigitte.

“Empirical observation,” said Torbjörn.
Mei was in Gibraltar’s data center, resting her chin in her hands as she frowned at vector maps on her monitor, taking careful note of which wind scanners in which ecopoints had gone offline and when. She had missed years of data, so she knew she had her work cut out for her. She heard a crumpling noise behind her and turned around, only to find a piece of balled up piece of paper on the ground. She grumbled as she got up from her seat and stretched, walked over to the piece of balled up paper, picked it up, and tossed it in her recycling basket. She was heading back to her computer when something sailed over her head, then another crumpled up piece of paper bounced against her computer monitor and landed on her keyboard. Mei frowned, grabbed the paper off of her keyboard and tossed that into the recycling bin as well. She was typing in the data and sending Winston a memo on which Ecopoints would be first priority to re-activate when another piece of crumpled paper bounced off the back of her head. She balled her hands into fists, fumed, then suddenly picked up her cryo-gun.

“Ｙǒu běnshǐ jiù guòlái!” she called out as she blasted out an ice wall to the entrance of the data center. She had her cryo-gun at the ready for several seconds, then picked up the piece of paper and tossed it into the recycling bin. When the structural integrity of the ice wall gave out, there was no one there. She grumbled and returned to her work.

It kept happening, however. Mei arrived at the crew quarters to find several balled up pieces of paper on and around her bed, she would come back from getting a cup of tea to find a crumpled up piece of paper or two on her lab station or desk, and several even poured out of her overhead compartment on the Orca.

She was looking suspiciously around Gibraltar’s dining hall, frowning and squinting when McCree noticed her restlessness.

“You uh… doin’ okay there, Snowflake?”

“Someone is messing with me,” said Mei, still looking around and frowning.

“Messin’ with ya?” said McCree.

Mei nodded. “Someone keeps throwing garbage at me and leaving garbage around my bunk and locker and lab station and….” she folded her arms and hunched up her shoulders, “It just makes me so mad!”

McCree looked surprised and tilted the brim of his hat back with his thumb. “Seriously?”

Mei nodded.

“ Weird,” said McCree, “You’re the last person I’d expect anyone to have beef with in the whole Watchpoint.”

“I know!” said Mei, “And I don’t know who’s doing it so I can’t—”

Mei was suddenly cut off by the sound of a loud “Ugh!” from Symmetra who was eating two seats down from them. Symmetra was looking at a large piece of crumpled paper now floating in her carrot ginger soup. Symmetra rose to her feet, “I demand to know who threw that,” she said, addressing the entire dining hall. Mei and McCree looked at each other. Mei nodded toward the
piece of paper in Symmetra’s soup with a ‘See?’ expression and McCree nodded. The dining hall was dead silent. Symmetra scoffed and moved to storm out, quickly turned around and tucked her seat back into the table, then stormed out. Mei picked up her food.

“Where are you going?” said McCree.

“I don’t want dirty paper in my food either,” said Mei, “I’m going to go eat this in my office.” She nodded at the paper in Symmetra’s soup. “Can you throw that away for her?”

“Sure thing,” said McCree. McCree scanned around the dining hall as Mei exited in case another paper was thrown so he could maybe trace the trajectory. When Mei made it through the dining hall doors without a problem, McCree glanced over at the paper floating in soup, fished it out, shook off a bit of the soup, and un-crumbled it.

“Huh,” he said, looking at the un-crumbled paper.

–

Junkrat was drawing out his signature toothy-grinned, hollow-eyed smiley face on a pile of concussion mines when McCree knocked on the doorway to his workshop.

“Woah!” he nearly dropped a landmine and caught it in midair, “Easy mate,” he said, not looking up from his ramshackle worktable and uncapping a sharpie with his teeth, “Workin’ with highly volatile materials here.” He drew out another smiley face on the mine’s trigger.

“I need to talk to you,” said McCree. Junkrat flinched as soon as he recognized the voice, seized his ersatz grenade launcher and swung around in his swivel chair (Though he overcompensated on the spin a bit and ended up making a complete 360 before facing McCree).

Junkrat kept his gun fixed on McCree. “I thought we agreed no one was taking anyone in for a bounty,” he said, glaring at McCree down the barrel.

“It’s not about any bounties,” said McCree, holding up a piece of soup-stained crumpled paper. Junkrat’s eyes narrowed at the paper. “Whozzat?”

“Come on, Fawkes, we both know you wrote this,” said McCree.

“I dunno what you’re talkin’ about,” Junkrat swung around in his chair again, set his grenade launcher down, and then resumed drawing smiley faces on concussion mines.

McCree paused and glanced at the concussion mines. “Do you have to draw that creepy face on every one?”

“It’s called ‘branding,’” said Junkrat, drawing out another smiley face and setting the concussion mine aside.

“Yeah well your branding’s all over these pieces of paper that you’ve been throwing at Mei,” said McCree, folding his arms.

“How do you know it’s me and not someone copying it?” said Junkrat, scratching at a bit of rust on a mine with his thumbnail.

“Well I know it’s you because your aim, as usual, is shit,” said McCree, crumpling the paper, tossing it, and hitting Junkrat square in the back of the head.
“Aiming’s overrated,” Junkrat said airily as he spun around in his swivel chair again. He stopped himself mid-spin. “Wait–has she read any of them?”

“She’s been throwing them all away,” said McCree.

“What?!” said Junkrat, shocked and outraged.

“Well she thinks they’re garbage!” said McCree.

“Garbage?!” said Junkrat.

“You’re writing them on napkins and the backs of boba receipts!” said McCree, “What’s she supposed to think?!” McCree pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed, “Mei’s good people, okay? Can you at least try to be normal about this?"

“Strong words coming from a cowboy cosplayer,” said Junkrat, spinning around in his chair again.

McCree caught the back of the swivel chair in his prosthetic hand and turned Junkrat around to face him. “I’m not kidding around,” said McCree, “Stop throwing trash at Mei.”

“It’s not trash!” snapped Junkrat.

McCree blinked. “They were all…?” he trailed off, then laughed a little, “You got a funny notion of romance, you know that?” McCree paused, “…that probably shouldn’t surprise me. You got funny notions for a lot of things.”

Junkrat was hunched over his concussion mine. “You didn’t tell her, did you?”

“Nah,” said McCree, “But…you know she ain’t too warmed up to you, right?”

“I know,” said Junkrat, looking a bit sullen.

“Well just so you know, the trash love notes are putting you on the fast track to getting an icicle right between the eyes,” said McCree, “You’ll probably want to stop.”

Junkrat scratched the part of his head where his hair had been scorched off, “Well…what am I supposed to do?” said Junkrat.

McCree shrugged, “I dunno. Show her you care about the shit she cares about. You know what you’re doing now is technically littering. She hates littering. Don’t do that. Do something for the planet. Save some bees or something.”

“Bees?” Junkrat repeated after him.


“Gotcha,” said Junkrat, “Saving the planet. I can save the planet. ‘Swy we’re here, isn’t it?”

McCree patted Junkrat on the shoulder, “It’s a start. Stop throwing garbage at her.”

“Right,” said Junkrat.

Several days later Mei walked into her office to find a lovely pink envelope tucked lovingly
beneath her keyboard with a small daisy awkwardly taped to it. She opened the envelope and pulled out a matching pink letter.

Mei

*Do you like me?*

[ ] Yes

[ ] No

—?

*PS: Saving the bees is really important.*

“Whatcha got there?” said Tracer as Mei frowned at the letter during lunch.

“I…think it’s a love letter?” said Mei, handing the paper over to Tracer.

Tracer glanced over the letter. “Well… do you like them?”

“I have no idea who sent it,” Mei said flatly. Somewhere in the dining hall the sound of someone slamming their forehead down on a table could be heard.
Pharah found it easy to lose track of time when watching Symmetra work. It was usually Pharah who found herself in the position to tell her teammates that it was lunch or dinner time (not an easy task with so many scientists on the team willing to throw themselves into their work to the point of eschewing sleep or food), however since Pharah usually felt the worst about interrupting Symmetra while working, she usually called her to dinner last. This was hazardous in that, as previously mentioned, it was easy to lose track of time when watching Symmetra work. Between the graceful sweeps of her hands and the mesmerizing contours of hard-light formations being made and unmade and tweaked to even more appealing shapes, minutes could pass like seconds and several times Pharah would find that meal time was nearly halfway done by the time she would finally remember why she came down to Symmetra’s office in the first place. Pharah was leaning against the doorway again, watching Symmetra as she worked. Tonight however, she was not tweaking the designs of her sentry turrets, teleporters, or shield generators.

She first started by laying out a flat platform of hard light across her desk, then with upward sweeping gestures would materialize miniature skyscrapers and spires across it. A city planning commission, Pharah figured at first, but then she noted Symmetra’s face. She didn’t have her usual expression of intense focus, but rather one of idleness, possibly resignation, like she was doodling in the margins of a page rather than constructing a miniature city of hard-light. It was several minutes and nearly a dozen miniature skyscrapers later that Pharah finally recognized the skyline.

“Oh—It’s Utopaea,” said Pharah, and Symmetra was suddenly jolted out of her state of flow and pivoted in her hard-light seat to see Pharah. “It looks—” Pharah started and Symmetra stood up and clenched her prosthetic hand into a fist, causing both the seat and the miniature city to instantly dematerialize, “…good…” said Pharah. She cleared her throat and pocketed her hands, “So… feeling homesick?”

Symmetra raised an eyebrow, then glanced off and folded her arms. “Utopaea was not my home,” she frowned, “Like all machinations of the Vishkar corporation, its pleasing form housed more sinister intentions that I was blind to.”

“It’s still a city,” said Pharah, shrugging and leaning against the doorway, “You still lived there. There had to be some things you liked about it.”

Symmetra’s lips thinned, “I was… very involved with my work at the Architech Academy,” she said, folding her arms, “I did not permit myself many frivolities,” she paused, “Although there was an Omnic-run confectionary shop I frequented.”

“Seriously?” said Pharah.

Symmetra smiled a bit and nodded, “They had this jangiri that I would treat myself to after class. Their hands were much steadier than human hands,” she suddenly brought a projection of light out of her arm and with a few deft motions of her fingers, was able to shape it into a perfectly radially symmetrical spiraling flower shape, “It was…” she looked at the flower shape, “Perfect.” She closed her hand and the flower disappeared, “You almost felt ashamed about eating it if you didn’t watch them pump out so many so effortlessly.”

“I didn’t take you for having a sweet tooth,” said Pharah, grinning.

Symmetra straightened up a bit, “Yes,” she said, “Well… In any case I no longer live there. I am here. My loyalties are here now,” she paused, “Was there something you wanted of me?”
“Mm?” Pharah seemed confused by the question then remembered why she came down in the first place, “Oh! Yes! Winston’s hosting a movie night.”

“A…movie night,” Symmetra said, arching an eyebrow.

“Yes, everyone’s going to be there,” said Pharah.

“Oh…” Symmetra looked a bit pensive, “I do not think I will be wanted there.”

“Yes you will!” Pharah blurted out a bit more quickly and reflexively than she thought she would. She cleared her throat and squared her shoulders, “I mean…yes you will,” she said authoritatively.

Symmetra looked unconvinced and Pharah, feeling her face burning, held out an arm to her. Symmetra glanced down at Pharah’s arm, then back up at Pharah’s apparently very determined face. “What—” Symmetra gestured at Pharah’s arm, “What is this?”

“I want you to go to this movie with me,” said Pharah.

“I know. You’ve just said that,” said Symmetra.

“I mean with me,” said Pharah, moving her arm a little to indicate that Symmetra should take it.

Symmetra’s brow furrowed down at Pharah’s arm, then her eyebrows raised and eyes widened as she suddenly caught Pharah’s meaning. “Oh—You want—You mean—I see,” she just sort of stood there awkwardly, staring at Pharah’s arm.

Pharah’s face was still burning. “So…?” she said, still holding out her arm.

“Oh!” Symmetra said and hooked Pharah’s arm in her own. “Yes. Yes. Together. With you.”

With that they moved out of Symmetra’s office. As they headed down towards Gibraltar’s recreation room, Symmetra snickered a little.

“What?” said Pharah and Symmetra mimicked Pharah’s motion of holding her arm out while furrowing her brow, widening her eyes, and tightening her jaw. “Wh—Is that supposed to be me?” said Pharah and Symmetra’s ‘serious’ face broke as she fell into a fit of giggles.

“You’re not very good at romance, are you?” said Symmetra, still snickering.

“I’m not the one who took 40 seconds to process being asked out,” said Pharah.

They sat next to each other on the same couch while watching the movie. About half-way through, Pharah edged a bit closer, yawned, stretched, and brought her arm around Symmetra and pulled her in a bit closer. Symmetra scoffed and chuckled a little.

“Seriously?” she whispered at Pharah.

“What?” whispered Pharah.

“Contrary to popular beliefs, I do watch movies,” whispered Symmetra, folding her arms, “I know exactly what that was.”

“…did it work?” whispered Pharah.
Symmetra scoffed again but then positioned her head so that it was comfortably resting between Pharah’s neck and shoulder. “I am still not sure how, but yes.” Pharah chuckled and they continued watching the movie.
“So I’d like to thank Winston for getting the rec room set up, and everyone tonight for coming together to help prove my point,” said D.Va, holding up a holovid package proudly.

“They are not here to prove your point, they are here to choose for themselves!” said Reinhardt.

“Well yeah, but when they watch your movie, they’re all going to fall asleep and forget why they’re here,” said D.Va, tossing the holovid package over to Winston and putting her hands on her hips.

“You kids have no respect for the classics,” muttered Reinhardt.

“Remind me again the purpose of this?” said Symmetra, glancing up from her tablet on the couch.

“Three years ago, the horror movie ‘Raven Witch’ came out in Korea,” said D.Va.

“A shoddy remake of the German classic, ‘Nimmermehr,’” said Reinhardt, folding his arms.

“Uh no, it’s a vastly superior remake,” said D.Va with a roll of her eyes, “So, tonight’s movie night theme is we’re going to watch both and you’re going to vote on which is better!”

Symmetra gave a skeptical glance to Winston, who shrugged and said, “I don’t have time to pick a movie every week.”

“I think it’s a good idea,” said Genji. Symmetra shot him that same skeptical glance. “Well… we haven’t seen a horror film yet, have we?” he said.

“I suppose,” said Symmetra.

“Great! So we’re watching Raven Witch first!” said D.Va.

“No, no, we watch the original first!” said Reinhardt.

“You like horror movies?” said Mercy, glancing over at Genji as Reinhardt and D.Va bickered over the holovid player.

“I have not watched very many. In my youth, however, I happened to be very good at horror games,” said Genji, “And yourself?”

Mercy shrugged, “Never had much time for movies with medical school,” she said, tucking her hair back.

Genji chuckled and folded his arms. “Well, if you get frightened, just remember I am here.”

Mercy laughed a little as well. “I’ll keep that in mind,” she said as the lights dimmed and Nimmermehr started up. The room was dark as the sinister music started flooding in through the speakers. Symmetra cleared her throat then paused and cleared her throat a bit more loudly, at least Genji just assumed she was clearing her throat when Mercy whispered, “Genji,” and then pointed at the lights in his torso.

“Oh–sorry,” said Genji, dimming the lights in his visor, shoulders, and torso. The movie proceeded with most of the present Overwatch members watching with some enjoyment. Symmetra and Pharah were snuggled together easily, D.Va and Reinhardt were bickering over the quality of the
special effects and soundtrack of the film, their bickering eventually fading as the movie went on, and Mercy felt Genji’s arms wrap around her slightly.

“You’re not getting scared, are you?” whispered Mercy, grinning over her shoulder at him.

Genji scoffed. “Please, I’ve been in the Shimada clan and Blackwatch. It’s going to take a lot to—” his head abruptly turned back towards the screen, “Are they splitting up?” he said, referring to the characters on screen.

“Yeah one of them went missing,” said Mercy, taking the popcorn bowl as it was handed to her, and eating a handful.

“Wh–If one of them is missing, that is all the more reason to stick together!” whispered Genji.

“Shh!” said D.Va and Genji fell quiet for the next few minutes. He clicked off the visor and grabbed a handful of popcorn himself. He was getting better about taking the faceplate off with other people around, and since everyone was in the dark no one really noticed. The popcorn served to alleviate the tension somewhat until they passed the bowl on and Genji was once again stuck with the increasing rising tension of the film. He clicked his faceplate back on and wondered if he was doing so because of the others, or if because he felt slightly less vulnerable in the dark with it on. He glanced over at Mercy, who was curled into herself a bit protectively, but otherwise seemed to be enjoying the movie just fine.

He found that horror movies were a far different experience than horror games. With horror games, there was definitely a similar sense of tenseness at only knowing a certain amount at a certain time, however he found horror movies far more stressful in the fact that he was very aware that the characters themselves weren’t aware of the music stings, or even of the things that had been revealed to the audience, that, and the characters of the movie, while possessing decent survival instincts that hiked up the tension, were, still in the end, still characters in a horror movie.

“Is she seriously taking a shower at this time?” muttered Genji, as one of the female protagonists of the film made her third inadvisable decision is as many minutes. His stomach turned as the sound of crows came through the speakers, and the tertiary female protagonist was consumed, screaming, by black water coming out of the shower. One of the male protagonists charged into the bathroom to her rescue, only to find a tub full of black and red liquid. Don’t step near it. Don’t step near it. Don’t step near it, the words ran through Genji’s head as the male protagonist stepped close to the tub. Mercy flinched hard in his arms as the clawed hand of the film’s antagonist thrust out of the darkness of the water and seized the film’s protagonist by the throat, croaking the film’s tagline and her catchphrase, “Meine kinder hungern,” as she dragged him beneath the dark water as well.

Genji was glad the film finally got a start out of Mercy, though not for the reasons he thought it would be at the beginning of the film. Mostly Mercy’s own flinch in her seat served to hide his own breath catching in his throat at the scene.

He wondered if it was the fact that the film was in German that it was affecting him more strongly. He had been learning German, but like everyone except Reinhardt and Mercy, he was pretty much relying entirely on the film’s subtitles to know what was going on. Maybe it was the combination of the stress of half-translating something in his head, along with a sort of gut reaction to the sound of a frightened woman yelling something in German. But that was silly. Mercy’s english was strong enough so that if she could get into a situation where she needed help, she would usually use english to say so. And if she did end up falling back on German, it wouldn’t be panicked screeching, but rather a clear but urgent “Ich brauche hilfe!” Genji tore his mind away from the times she shouted that before the stress turned his stomach more, and attempted to pay attention to the movie as it drew closer to its climax.
“Meine kinder hungern,” the voice crept in through the speakers again, guttural and crow-like, and Genji felt a shiver go up his spine. The music cut out completely and Genji could feel his heart pumping in his ears. The character on screen had only a flashlight to protect her, and that made her more of a target in the dark than anything. No, Genji didn’t like this. Mercy clasped his hand in hers and Genji attempted to straighten up and appear nonchalant as much as he could.

“I’m fine,” he whispered as the movie went dead silent again.

A blood curdling scream sounded on the screen, paired with a jump-scare. Mercy gasped sharply and grabbed Genji’s shoulder. “Gah!” the cry escaped Genji and all of the lights in Genji’s body and visor flashed bright green in surprise as he nearly jumped out of his seat. Instantly everyone’s head turned toward him and Genji cleared his throat, “uh–leg…spasm…” he said, pointing to his leg. D.Va just snorted and the heat sinks in Genji’s shoulders clicked out and steamed in embarrassment. Mercy kissed him on the faceplate as the heroine of the film sprinted through the woods, screaming while pursued by ravens and crows and a massive black entity with a bird-like mask contorting out clawed hands at her. She was consumed into a vortex of claws and black feathers, screaming all the while until it suddenly cut short. The screen was black as the final survivor’s voice could be heard, in a similar dark croak to the film’s antagonist, “Meine kinder hungern.” Genji suppressed a shudder as the film’s credits rolled.

D.Va flicked the lights on. “Total snore fest, am I right?” she said, “Now we can watch something actually scary!” she said, popping in the next film.

“You know, if you don’t want to watch it—” Mercy spoke quietly.

“I can handle it,” said Genji, sounding a bit sore now.

Mercy shrugged and leaned her head on his shoulder. He adjusted in his seat a bit more to accommodate her leaning against him. He actually seemed far more relaxed this time, although Raven Witch was a lot gorier than Nimmermehr. He would give a bit of a start with some jump-scares and some music spikes, but for the most part he seemed pretty relaxed.

“You adjust quickly,” said Mercy, smiling a little.

“Well, it is only a movie,” said Genji. “And ninja are highly adaptable after all.” Mercy smiled but then gave a hard jump in her seat at one particularly brutal on-screen murder. Genji held her a little tighter and she smiled and leaned her head on his shoulder. “Well, I’m glad you adjusted,” Mercy whispered as the Raven Witch consumed her victims, “I don’t know if I can—…” Mercy cut herself off and leaned in close to Genji’s face, her eyes narrowing. “Genji,” her voice was low enough a whisper so that no one else could hear her, “Did… did you turn off the visual receptors in your visor?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Genji whispered back.

“Genji,” said Mercy, flatly.

“Maybe,” whispered Genji.

“Have you had them off this whole movie?” whispered Mercy.

“Not the whole movie,” whispered Genji, “Just…when they went down into the basement.”

“That was 45 minutes ago,” whispered Mercy. Genji shrugged.

“Just… tell me when it’s over?” whispered Genji, his voice equally low, “And…don’t tell D.Va.”

“Hm?” said Genji. Mercy leaned close to the side of his helmet.

“Meine kinder hungern,” Mercy whispered in that guttural voice. Genji’s breath caught in his throat and he shuddered heavily and his heat sinks clicked and steamed again.

“Now you’re just being mean,” muttered Genji, as Mercy giggled.
Vivi’s icon raced across the screen before immediately falling into a water-filled pit and getting eaten by a cartoon shark. Mercy narrowed her eyes at the controller before readjusting herself against Genji. “There must be something wrong with it,” she said with that clinical certainty of hers.

“There’s nothing wrong with it,” said Genji, grinning slightly with his arms around her waist.

“Then the gap is too wide,” said Mercy making the Vivi icon on the screen race toward the gap, “If it wasn’t too wide I would have made it by—\textit{verdammt!”} Vivi’s icon dropped, for the sixth time, into the water in the gap and was immediately eaten by the same cartoon shark. “Ugh!” said Mercy.

“Do you want me to make the jump for you?” said Genji.

“No,” Mercy said with deadly seriousness as Vivi started back at the beginning of the level, “No, I can do this.”

“So determined,” said Genji giving her waist a slight squeeze.

“What difficulty setting is this on?” said Mercy, frowning as she made Vivi jump up several platforms.

“…It’s Vivi’s Adventure. It doesn’t… really have difficulty settings,” said Genji.

“Well that doesn’t seem right,” said Mercy, frowning. She managed to get Vivi to clear the water jump and her face lit up.

“Yes! Finally!” she said, moving Vivi forward, “Now that that’s out of the way I can—” Vivi was then immediately eaten by a large green frog-like creature and Mercy’s mouth dropped open, “What—? What was that!?” she said angrily.

“Oh right the Frogoblins…” said Genji.

“Frog—What?!”

“Well until you can get Vivi’s slingshot, you have to jump on them,” said Genji.

“Jump on them?” said Mercy, frowning, “Can’t I just avoid them?”

“I suppose its possible, but considering your… skill level it would probably be easier just to squish them,” said Genji.

“Easier to kill,” muttered Mercy, “I thought this game was aimed at children!”

“It is,” said Genji, “Honestly I’m kind of confused that you’re having such a difficult time with it.”

“I am not—” Mercy made Vivi clear the water jump, “Having a difficult time—” She cleared several pitfall traps, “I—” she made Vivi squish several frogoblins with an amount of fury that didn’t seem possible for such a cartoon-like game, “am having \textit{fun}!” Her teeth were gritted on the word ‘fun.’ She then blinked and realized she had made it farther in the level then any of her previous tries. “Oh…” she said.
“You’re doing great!” said Genji as Mercy moved forward in the level. Mercy chuckled and cuddled up close to him, moving Vivi across the screen.

“I suppose I can understand why you would spend so many hours in that arcade when you were younger,” she said, making Vivi jump up several platforms, “It doesn’t seem that hard once you get used to the timing and—” A bird swooped down from the top of the screen and carried Vivi off. “What!?” Mercy was flushed red with fury, “How was I supposed to see that coming!?”

“Ah yes, that one’s tricky…” said Genji, “But look!” He pointed to the screen, “You made it to the checkpoint! A few more hours and maybe you can get to level 2!”

“You think this is hilarious, don’t you?” said Mercy, furrowing her brow.

“No,” said Genji, clearly attempting to suppress a laugh, “No–you’re doing fine. You can do this. It’s not like it’s surgery.”

“Surgery I actually know how to do!” snapped Mercy, furiously pushing Vivi forward through the level.

“Just… don’t overthink it,” said Genji, squeezing her a bit.

“Right,” said Mercy, still frowning at the screen. She managed to get Vivi even further, and even seemed to work into a good flow, squishing Frogoblins and managing to avoid the swooping bird. “There!” said Mercy, making Vivi squish another Frogoblin, “This isn’t very hard at all!”

“Mm-hm,” Genji kissed her on the side of the neck and she snickered, when suddenly the swooping bird returned and carried Vivi off. “Ah!” Mercy snapped back to attention at the game, “No! You did that on purpose!”

“Ah–Sorry–That wasn’t on purpose. I wasn’t really thinking,” said Genji.

“Hmph,” Mercy furrowed her brow and watched as Vivi started back at the checkpoint, “Don’t distract me!” she said, looking over her shoulder at Genji before turning back to the screen.

“Very well,” said Genji. He watched as Mercy cleared the jumps and squished the game’s enemies quickly and a bit more easily this time. It was nice seeing her so focused in a situation where no one was actually in danger, and, while he would never actually say this out loud, there was something really cute about seeing the brilliant and composed Doctor Ziegler get seething mad at a children’s video game. He watched the screen until Mercy seemed to have gotten Vivi to a fairly easy-looking series of platforms, then he leaned forward a bit and kissed the back of her neck. The metal of his chin, however, touched the base of her neck and caused a shudder down her spine which ended up making Vivi miss a platform and head down into a blue abyss.

“Genji!” Mercy snapped.

“I was seriously not trying to distract you that time,” said Genji.

“Oh I doubt that,” said Mercy, moving Vivi through the level, brow furrowed.

“Well if I were really trying to distract you, I think I’d do something more like this,” said Genji, tapping her shoulder. She turned her head and he kissed her on the mouth. Mercy fell into it for a few heartbeats before breaking away just in time to see that she had sent Vivi over a cliff. Her brow furrowed and she sighed before pausing the game and tossing the controller aside. “You’re really terrible sometimes, you know that?” she said turning around and wrapping her arms around him.
“I’ve just watched you spend an hour struggling through the first level of Vivi’s adventure, so who is really terrible?” said Genji, grinning.

“Ugh,” Mercy rolled her eyes before kissing him.
“I’m overdressed,” Satya’s voice was muffled behind the closet door.

“I’m sure you’re fine,” said Pharah, leaning against the wall next to the door, “Not to pressure you but—”

“I know we’re already late,” said Satya.

“They’ll understand. They said 7-ish. We’re still in the ‘ish’ territory. Plus, not to judge Angela but she’s usually late because she’s trying to do 10 things at once all the time,” said Pharah, picking some dirt out from beneath her fingernail.

“How do you dress when you know one of the attendees won’t even be wearing pants?!” Satya’s voice pitched up with desperation.

“Genji wears pants,” said Pharah with an eye roll.

“Does he?” said Satya.

“Yes, Satya, I’m sure you’re fine,” said Pharah.

“Okay. Okay. Yes. Fine,” Satya seemed to be trying to convince herself from behind the closet door, “Very well.”

The closet door opened and Satya stepped out with a click of heels. Pharah’s eyes widened. “Woah.”

Satya looked down at her form-fitting lotus-pink minidress with a tasteful cut-out section at her solarplexus. Satya immediately registered Pharah’s awe as a bad sign.

“It’s pink—” she said, looking down at herself, trying to make sense of her own decision, “You—you said wear something fun! Pink is… it’s fun! Isn’t it? I can be fun.” Satya’s face dropped, “It’s too much. I knew it. I’m overdressed.”

“Satya, you look amazing,” said Pharah, “Just… here.” Pharah took off her own leather jacket and swept it around Satya’s shoulders, “There. Now it’s more ‘double-date’ fun and less ‘clubbing’ fun.”

“But what about you?” said Satya.

Pharah shrugged, “I’ll be fine. Canadian,” she said, hiking up her pants slightly and unbuttoning a few buttons of her own shirt.

Satya pulled her arms through the sleeves of the jacket and adjusted the collar and made a satisfied, “Hm!” sound.

Pharah snickered. “You’re adorable,” she said, playing with Satya’s hair.

“What we are, is late.” said Satya, straightening Pharah’s collar.

—

Mercy and Genji were waiting for them outside of the restaurant—not impatient, just chatting. They
both perked up as Pharah pulled her car up and she and Satya walked out, arm-in-arm.

“We were about to call!” said Mercy, pushing off from Genji’s motorcycle and walking up to them, “You both still have time for this, don’t you?”

“I wasn’t about to cancel on our inaugural civvy night,” said Pharah.

“Civvy night!” Genji said with a slight fist pump as he walked up as well. Satya blinked in surprise at the sight of Genji’s face. Genji’s hand instantly went to his scars. “Oh–sorry–I just thought I should try–I have a spare face plate if it makes you more—”

“No–No it’s… I think this is the first time I’ve seen your face,” said Satya, “It’s… actually a bit of a relief. I’ve been trying to get better at reading expressions.”

Genji smiled, “Well it’s going to make eating tapas a lot easier,” he said, pocketing his hands.

Pharah gave a smug, ‘See? Pants,’ glance at Satya and Satya’s smile just tugged up slyly at one corner as they headed into the restaurant.

—I

“I can’t believe you wanted to go bowling,” said Pharah, sliding a bite of patatas bravas off of her toothpick.

“Who doesn’t like bowling?” said Genji.

“No one likes bowling! It’s just something people in their 20’s and 30’s agree on because they don’t know what else to do and it feels tacky to suggest a bar,” said Pharah with a snicker.

“I like bowling,” said Genji, taking a bite of a tuna deviled egg.

“You’re a ninja! Why would you like bowling?” said Pharah.

“Oh come on–It’s satisfying!” said Genji, “You have this big heavy ball, and you do that kind of dancer pose when you roll it, and there’s that nice clatter when it hits the pins. Angela, back me up here.”

“Surgeon’s hands,” said Mercy, putting her hands up, “I always get dreadfully nervous putting my fingers in those holes.”

“See?” said Pharah.

“I mean I used to like it,” said Mercy, sipping her beer, “There’s not that much that doesn’t get me nervous about my hands these days. It would probably be healthy to give it a try.”

“I’ve never been bowling,” said Satya, quietly.

The other three looked at her.

“Well now we have to try it,” said Genji.

“We don’t have to try it,” said Pharah.

“You are so prejudiced against bowling,” said Genji.

“Because it’s ridiculous and I really don’t like renting out shoes I know hundreds of other feet have
been in,” said Pharah.

A shudder rippled up Satya’s spine at the thought and Pharah made a ‘See?’ gesture at Satya while maintaining eye contact with Genji.

“…Could you make bowling shoes out of hard-light?” said Mercy in that brief beat of silence. Everyone looked at Satya again.

Satya suddenly felt put on the spot. “I–I suppose in theory,” she said, taking a bite of an eggplant roll, using the space of chewing to allow herself to think before swallowing. “I’ve made hard-light articles of clothing before. There are factors of arch support to consider, but I have plenty of experience in load-bearing structures from working in architecture–” Satya caught herself and glanced up, only to see that the other three were still looking at her intently, “I–I’m rambling…” she said quietly.

“You’re not rambling,” said Mercy, “Honestly, hard-light seems like such a magical technology to me–”

“You’re one to talk,” said Genji with a smile.

“What I’m saying is, I don’t mind hearing you talk about it at all. It’s very interesting, actually,” said Mercy.

Satya gave a glance to Pharah and Pharah just smiled encouragingly. Satya blinked a few times and straightened herself up in her seat with a slight smile.

“Well… Hard-light does allow for a large amount of variety in friction, weight, and density, as well,” said Satya thoughtfully, “Considering the variations of the textures of the floor, the mechanical components of sweeping out pins and cycling balls through, a bowling alley would probably be an incredible demonstration of the varying abilities of hard-light. I could even adjust it so that the noises would be optional for sound-sensitive people like me. Vishkar would never allow it though–” Satya caught herself, “My apologies,” she said quietly, “Sometimes I still…” she trailed off.

“We know you’re not with them,” said Genji, “It’s okay.”

“Vishkar wouldn’t allow bowling?” said Pharah.

“Sports and games in general were a bit of a… nuanced subject,” said Satya, “Vishkar understood their importance as a means of maintaining happy and occupied citizens within its developments but… Say there was a Vishkar development in Solapur and a Vishkar development in Hyderabad. Now, if those developments both had cricket teams, and those teams went into competition against each other…”

“People would identify more with where they lived than with Vishkar,” said Mercy.

Satya nodded and then sipped at her ginger ale. “It all seemed so enlightened when I was in it– Everyone who disagreed simply didn’t understand. And they would understand, eventually. People hanging on to how they lived before Vishkar–well they were fools, and they would see, soon enough. You just had to be patient. You just had to have faith you were building a better world,” Satya was quiet for several long seconds, “It can be very hard to understand others’ perspectives when you’re always being told you know better.”

Satya felt the weight of Pharah’s hand on her shoulder and looked up. Her eyes met Pharah’s. Deep, brown, steady, and understanding, and Satya pushed a bit of her weight against Pharah and
Pharah just kissed her temple.

“We—we should go back to arguing about bowling,” said Satya, looking back up at Mercy and Genji, “I really don’t mean to—I shouldn’t be…”

“It’s fine,” said Mercy, “I’m really glad to be getting to know you.”

“We both are,” said Genji.

“But this was supposed to be fun—” said Satya.

“It is fun,” said Mercy, “You are fun.”

Satya’s eyes lit up.

Mercy caught herself, “I mean—being conditioned from childhood by a totalitarian corporation isn’t fun but—that is—I mean—”

“I think she gets it,” said Genji with a soft smile.

Satya straightened up in her seat once more. “Thank you, for your support. It really does mean… very much to me. However, I—I would very much prefer if—if these—what were you and Genji calling it again?”

“Civvy Night,” said Pharah and Genji at the same time.

“I would prefer if these.. ‘Civvy nights’ did not turn into group therapy sessions every time,” said Satya.

“They won’t,” said Pharah, bringing an arm around her and squeezing slightly.

“I don’t know,” said Genji, “I feel like there’s a lot of issues to go around.”

“We can focus on Fareeha’s next time,” said Mercy with a sly smile.


“Then we can go bowling,” said Genji.

“You two are terrible, did you know that?” said Pharah.

“I like them,” said Satya, smiling at Pharah. She gestured at Genji, “He’s even wearing pants.”

“I am wearing pants,” said Genji, “We are all adults with our lives very much together.”

They all broke out laughing then and Pharah lifted her glass to the center of the table. “To civvy night,” she said, looking around the table.

“Civvy night,” they all said in unison, clinking their glasses against Pharah’s.
“So charming,” said Ana, straightening Pharah’s tie and collar. “Oh—hold on.” She grabbed a loose eyelash that was on Pharah’s cheekbone, then thumbed away the specs of mascara that were there behind it. She took a few steps back. “Okay, now stand up straight.” Pharah scoffed and smiled a little and straightened her back and struck a bit of a pose. Ana covered her mouth with her hands and her one remaining eye sparkled. “Oh ḥabībtā,” she said, and then gasped a little, “Reinhardt can you—?” Reinhardt was at her side in a second, handing her a camera.

“Mum,” Pharah said with a roll of her eyes, as Ana took pictures of her, “I’ve been on dates before.”

“And I’ve missed so many of them,” said Ana, taking another picture, “Let me be an old fool.”

Pharah snorted and folded her arms, “You keep making a big deal of this and you’re going to jinx it,” she said, with a grin.

“Fareeha—you don’t still believe in that silly curse, do you?” said Ana.

“Curse?” said D.Va as Reinhardt took his seat back across from her at the virtu-Chess board.

“Oh mum don’t tell them about the—” Pharah started.

“It started back when she was 14,” said Ana and Pharah slapped her forehead.

“I was talking to someone I really liked and I was about to tell them how I felt and…then a bird pooped on me,” said Pharah.

D.Va snorted.

“It was right on my head!” said Pharah, angrily, “How often does that happen? And it kept happening! Age 14: Bird poop. Age 15: my period starts 2 weeks early at a pool party my crush was at! Age 21: My date gets norovirus from the restaurant we were at and I had to spend an hour and a half in a movie theater bathroom while she cried and puked into our popcorn bucket. They call it two exits, no waiting.”

“Well at least it was your date that other time and not you,” said D.Va, moving a chess piece.

“That’s not the point! Every time there’s someone I really like, something goes horribly wrong and they never call me again! So thank you for reminding me, Mum!” Pharah huffed and folded her arms.

Ana just chuckled a little. “It’s going to be fine, ḥabībtā,” she said, dusting off the shoulders of Pharah’s jacket and then cupping Pharah’s face in her hands and forcing Pharah to stoop slightly so she could kiss her forehead.

“I guess…” mumbled Pharah, “Well… we did have the movie night and those other dates—if something could go wrong—it would have gone wrong already, right?”

Ana laughed and gave Pharah a playful punch in the shoulder, “That’s the spirit! Now you go out there and have a great time!”
“This is Fareeha Amari! Callsign ‘Pharah!’ Requesting backup at the Hassoun Gala!” Pharah barked into a comm.

“Jeez, Pharah, the date can’t be going *that* bad, can it?” McCree sounded over the other end of the comm and Pharah frustratedly held up her comm so that it could capture the sound of gunfire from beyond the overturned table she and Symmetra were hiding behind.

“Talon has hostages! Requesting immediate backup!” said Pharah.

“…You got it, kid, backup’s on the way,” said McCree.

“Of course,” muttered Pharah, reloading the gun she had gotten off of a felled security guard, “Of course Talon attacks tonight. Of course Talon attacks a fancy party thrown by fancy botanists and architects. Of *course* that happens!”

“…Are you all right?” said Symmetra, glancing up from setting up another sentry turret against the wall where they were entrenched.

“I’m fine,” said Pharah, peeking over the table’s edge but ducking down again as a hail of gunfire flew overhead.

“We must rescue the remaining hostages,” said Symmetra. She glanced at the fallen Talon agent her sentry turrets had dispatched and set up a teleporter, “If we can break through their main defenses, I can open a teleporter and get the hostages out of the building.”

Pharah glanced over the edge of the table. “They have a chokepoint set up at the ballroom doors,” she said, frowning, “What I wouldn’t give for my armor. Or at least my rocket launcher.”

“And this would be far easier with a photon projector, but none of those were gala-appropriate,” said Symmetra, dusting off her dress.

“At least we look good,” said Pharah, grinning. Symmetra arched an eyebrow, but then smirked.

Pharah grabbed the felled Talon agent by the foot and dragged him behind the table and wrenched the assault rifle from his hands. She held the sidearm out to Symmetra, “You know how to use one of these?”

Symmetra gingerly took the gun from her hands and frowned at the weight of it, “Positively medieval compared to a photon projector,” she pointed and aimed it, “But… yes.”

“Can you get a shield up?” said Pharah, moving into a crouched position. She watched as Symmetra waved a hand over her shoes and the intricate white straps running up her legs and her stilleto heels dematerialized, leaving a relatively plain white peep-toe flat.

“Yes. Give me the signal when ready,” said Symmetra, “Oh—and Fareeha?”

“Yes?” Pharah turned around and was met with a brief kiss on the lips and the light fingers of Symmetra’s prosthetic hand against her face.

“Do try and stay alive out there,” said Symmetra, breaking away.

“Oh…” said Pharah, “U-understood.” Pharah sort of sat there awkwardly for a few seconds.

Symmetra cleared her throat. “Give me the signal whenever you are ready,” she said.

“The signal—Oh! The signal!” said Pharah turning around, “Right…” she peeked out to see the
group of Talon agents positioned at the doors of the ballroom. “Hold position,” said Pharah. She watched as two of the guards manning the chokepoint moved to the interior of the ballroom, presumably to deal with an unruly hostage. “Now,” said Pharah, and both rushed out. Symmetra brought up a photon barrier with a wave of her hand as the remaining three guards fired on them, and Pharah ran and gave retaliatory fire, forcing them to the sides of the doorway, but not before Symmetra caught one Talon agent right between the night-vision goggles with a shot from her sidearm.

“Get down!” shouted Pharah and she rolled and downed two Talon agents with two short bursts while Symmetra dispatched the last one at the door’s chokepoint. Pharah pretty much tackled Symmetra to the side of the door as gunfire filled the air and Symmetra gasped hard.

“Fareeha—please tell me you’re still there,” Ana’s voice came over the comm.

“I’m fine, Mum, I—” she glanced over at Symmetra, who was gripping her side, her turquoise dress staining red beneath her hand, “Oh no…” She stumbled forward and helped Symmetra put pressure on the wound.

“I am fine,” Symmetra winced, “A minor setback.”

“Mum—we need a medic here,” said Pharah, taking off her jacket and placing it around Symmetra’s shoulders.

“We’re almost to you. I’m repositioning right now. Is Symmetra well enough to get that teleporter set up?”

“I am,” said Symmetra, struggling to sit up.

“Set it up now,” said Ana.

“But the hostages—” said Pharah.

“We got you covered. Set it up,” McCree said over the Comm. Symmetra inhaled, then flinched from the pain, then brought a projection out of her prosthetic and materialized a teleporter, then produced several sentry turrets around it for good measure.

“Teleporter online,” she said before slumping against the wall, “I…” she exhaled a shuddering breath, “I have opened the path.”

“Hey—stay awake,” Pharah leaned forward and put her hands on Symmetra’s shoulders, “You told me to stay alive so you have to—…”

“Fareeha—” Ana spoke over the comm.

“Mum, now’s seriously not the time—” said Pharah, tucking some of Symmetra’s hair out of her face and keeping pressure on Symmetra’s wound.

“Just move to the left for me, dear,” said Ana.

Pharah scooted to the left. “Why—” she started and then Symmetra suddenly gasped and convulsed as she was hit with a biotic cartridge.

“Just a scratch,” said Ana over the comm, “You’ll be fine.” Symmetra lifted her hand to see that her wound had stopped bleeding. “Sorry for shooting your girlfriend, Ḥabībtá,” said Ana.
“She’s not exactly my…” Pharah trailed off, and looked at Symmetra, who just smiled at her with a crinkled brow. Pharah exhaled. “Thank you, Mum,” she said.

“Don’t thank us yet,” said Ana.

“Us?” said Pharah. It was then that Reinhardt and D.Va emerged from the teleporter.

“Get behind me!” said Reinhardt, projecting his shield.

“You’d better get out of the way!” said D.Va, rocketing forward in her MEKA in a hail of Talon gunfire.

“Both of you get out of there,” said Ana, “We can take it from here.”

“But the hostages—” Pharah started.

“Gotcha covered,” McCree spoke over the comm, “Y’all know what time it is.”

“Thank you,” said Pharah, scooping her arms under Symmetra bridal-style and then leaping through the teleporter. In a blue flash they found themselves standing in a quiet garden, the Orca hovering nearby. Pharah carried Symmetra onto the Orca and laid her down on the bench there, then walked over and grabbed a MediKit from the opposite wall. She gave Symmetra a quick shot of painkillers to try and keep the shock from setting in, then checked for an exit wound (There was one, no worry about the bullet still being inside,) and began working on bandaging Symmetra up.

“I’m… I’m so sorry about all this,” said Pharah, laying down disinfectant on the wound, causing Symmetra to sharply inhale.

“Either I have lost far too much blood, or you are apologizing for a Talon attack,” said Symmetra as Pharah worked on bandaging her.

“It’s the curse,” muttered Pharah.

“The what?” Symmetra repeated incredulously after her.

“Oh—I—forget I said that. That was silly,” said Pharah.

“Tell me about this curse,” said Symmetra.

“Oh it’s nothing it’s just—” Pharah sighed and rubbed the back of her neck, “Every time I like someone, something goes terribly, terribly wrong. It used to be just silly, embarrassing things, but this is the worst it’s been yet.”

Symmetra scoffed. “You think this,” she gestured at her wound, “Is part of your ‘curse?’”

“…I said it was silly,” said Pharah, glancing off, but Symmetra placed her hand on the side of her face to make her look at her.

“You are not cursed, Fareeha Amari,” said Symmetra, “This was a party hosted by brilliant and affluent scientific minds. It makes sense that Talon would be enticed by it.”

“Well…yes…” Pharah said, pressing her hands against the gauze of Symmetra’s bandage, “But still…”

“Belief in curses only lends power to such negative thinking,” Symmetra said, “It becomes a vicious, self-reinforcing cycle.”
“…You’re saying that with a bullet wound,” said Pharah.

“Very little deters me,” said Symmetra and Pharah couldn’t help but smile at that.

“Well…” Pharah folded her arms, “I mean… the date was still ruined.”

“You gave me your jacket,” Symmetra pulled the jacket close around her with a grin, “Swept me off my feet…”

“Because you were shot,” said Pharah, “That qualifies as a date ruiner.”

“Perhaps,” said Symmetra, sitting up, “However—I assume you must watch over me until our teammates have secured the perimeter with Talon, yes?”

“That is protocol,” said Pharah.

“So we are together,” said Symmetra, “Technically, the date is still going.”

Pharah opened her mouth to argue, then blinked a few times and got to her feet. She grabbed a biotic field dispenser from the medkit and installed it, putting Symmetra in a ring of yellow light. Symmetra sighed in relief as the biotics further worked on her injury.

“Stay right there,” said Pharah, hurrying out of the Orca. She grabbed a handful of flowers from the Oasis garden, hurried back into the Orca, slammed them down on the table next to Symmetra, then hurried up the stairs to the Orca’s cockpit and hurriedly looked through the music files for the Orca’s speaker system. She swore to see that the playlist was almost entirely Jack and Reinhardt’s music, bit the bullet and hit ‘random’ on a ‘Best Oldies Love Songs’ Album, (Symmetra raised an eyebrow to hear ‘Ignition’ come over the Orca’s speaker system) and then hurried back down and fumbled through one of the cabinets near Symmetra and pulled out a few tea candles and a lighter, and lit them, positioning them a safe distance from the flowers, then dimmed the Orca lights. With that, Pharah plopped down onto the bench near Symmetra, and Symmetra adjusted herself so that she was laying across Pharah’s lap. Pharah slumped against the wall, exhaling. She glanced down at Symmetra.

“Are you feeling any better?”

“I am feeling far better than most with a bullet wound,” said Symmetra, smiling. She snickered, “Congratulations, Fareeha. You’ve broken your curse.”

“I thought you said I wasn’t cursed,” said Pharah, smirking.

“Well if you were, you’ve broken it,” said Symmetra. A long pause passed between them, filled only with the music of Reinhardt’s oldies album. “If you want though, we could give it another try sometime?”

“Yes,” Pharah said the word on reflex and Symmetra snickered again. Pharah bent and kissed her on the corner of her mouth and they listened to the music.
Genji stood in the doorway of the apartment—their apartment—well, it was about to be their apartment, before, it had just been her apartment, but now with Genji staying over practically every night, they figured they might as well make things official.

“…You have to have more than that,” said Mercy, putting her hands on her hips.

“I… lived with monks and was raised by ninjas,” said Genji with a shrug as he adjusted the duffel on his shoulder. There was a single box in his arms with some of his things as well. A handful of the things in the box were just things he had picked up since answering the recall and coming to the Watchpoint. There were some wooden frames of his disassembled sword stand sticking out of the box, but not much else.

“I mean, I knew you were always a bit of a minimalist, but…” Mercy trailed off.

“You’re minimalist too,” said Genji.

“I… I decorate! I have my relief tchotchkes!” said Mercy.

“I love that you travel and save lives all over the world and people pour their heart outs to you and give you heartfelt gifts for your relief work and you just call them ‘Relief Tchotchkes.’” He craned his neck to look into her office, “Most of them are in one place though, anyway.”

“…I just… this is going to sound weird and obsessive, but if we’re both living here, I…. I want this place to feel… lived-in, you know?”

“Your office is definitely lived in,” said Genji, smugly.

“Har-har,” said Mercy, rolling her eyes.

“We could do the college dorm thing—hang up christmas lights, get some tacky movie posters…” Genji walked past her with a smile in his voice, “You like ‘They Came From Beyond the Moon,’ right?”

Mercy huffed and snickered. “…Pictures,” she said after a few beats.

“Mm?” said Genji.

“We should put up pictures—like, in frames.”

“Like an old couple?” said Genji.

“Athena can make some high-quality prints—we have pictures of ourselves, right?”

Genji paused and put his box down on the table. “Do we?” he tilted his head.

—

“Agents—It’s been a while since you’ve made your way back to my primary terminal,” said Athena.

“Well you are everywhere, technically,” said Mercy.

“I do like having you take the time to come here, though,” said Athena.
“We like the big screen,” said Genji.

Athena giggled. “What can I help you with?”

“This is going to sound odd but, do you have pictures of us?” asked Mercy.

“Many Overwatch agents dump their photos into my data stores when they run out of storage on their own comms but won’t delete them. I can run a cursory facial scan?” Athena suggested.

“That would be wonderful, Athena, thank you,” said Mercy.

“Scanning,” said Athena, the screen blipped for a few seconds, “Excluding official and bodycam footage, I have 249 image results for Agents Shimada and Ziegler. I can filter it by photos containing both of you where you are among the center subjects?”

“That works.”

“Right. I have 45 photos from the ‘general’ folder of other agents, and 11 photos from a file recently dumped by Agent McCree titled, ‘Watchpoint Cryptids.’”

“…‘Watchpoint Cryptids?’” repeated Mercy.

“I believe it’s a joke on how difficult it is to get a photo of either of you,” said Athena.

“Well.. scroll through what we have?” said Genji.

“Understood,” said Athena.

There were very few photos from Genji’s Blackwatch days—both for the obvious reason that Genji was in Blackwatch, and the fact that back then Genji didn’t like having his photo taken. Mercy looked frazzled and overworked in nearly every photo of the old days. There was the old lineup of Winston passing the physical for active agent duty with Tracer cheering next to him, but both Mercy and Genji were practically on opposite ends of the photo there. From there photos of both of them seemed to be taken more frequently, no doubt thanks to being put on a strike team with Tracer, who tended to take a lot of photos to deal with gaps in her memory from Chronal disassociation.

There were a handful of group photos. There was a photo of the first time their strike team was all suited up—Genji seemed more confident in this photo than almost all the other previous photos combined with his new prosthetics. They agreed to frame that one. There was one photo of Mercy and Genji sleeping on each other’s shoulders on the orca with Tracer in the foreground holding a marker. Then there was a blurry bluish selfie of Tracer, still holding the marker, with Genji chasing her in the background with a crudely drawn mustache on his faceplate and Mercy chasing after him. There was a photo of Winston and Tracer victoriously holding up empanadas after the Havana mission (it would have been a nice photo to frame if it hadn’t caught Mercy mid-chew.) Then there was another selfie—apparently taken by Genji given the angle of his arm, taken within Mercy’s lab. Mercy had dark circles under her eyes and was dramatically posing at a petri dish.

“…I don’t remember that one,” said Mercy.

“You don’t remember that one? You were half-crazed from caffeine overdose and what must have been 30 hours without sleep. You had just cracked a new compound that would reduce the number of individual nanobots in the biotic tether without sacrificing healing output and you had me take this photo for posterity.”
“You remember that?” said Mercy.

“You passed out two minutes after this was taken,” said Genji, “I had to carry you back to your on-site apartment.”

Mercy reddened a little. “Oh…” she said quietly, “Sorry about that.”

“I didn’t mind. You’re carrying the team half the time, someone ought to return the favor now and again.”

Mercy smiled, then looked up at Athena’s screen. They scrolled through a few more—Reinhardt grinning with his arms wrapped around them both, easily dwarfing them.

“I like this one,” said Mercy, “I could see it framed.”

“I think he cracked a rib of mine when we took that,” said Genji.


“What was the first one we ever took together?” said Mercy, scrolling back through the archives.

“This one’s from you, Agent Ziegler,” said Athena bringing up a photo of Mercy looking sweaty and frazzled in a sweatsuit with Genji’s arm strung over her shoulders. Genji had his very first prosthetics, rudimentary leg blades and a somewhat omnic-looking prosthetic arm. Genji’s face was covered by a surgical mask and several bandages. Both were giving a thumb’s up. It was clearly a clumsy selfie being taken by Mercy.

“…Your physical therapy,” said Mercy.

“I can’t believe I didn’t make you delete that,” said Genji.

“It was your first steps since the—since we met,” said Mercy.

“I was on so many painkillers…” muttered Genji.

“Oh you can tell,” said Mercy. She looked at Genji and smiled.

“What?” said Genji.

Mercy nodded her head at the photo on the screen.

“That one?” said Genji.

“It’s our first photo together!” said Mercy.

“I look like a disaster,” said Genji.

“We both look like disasters!” said Mercy and then she said, with deep ache in her voice, “It’s our first photo together!”

“Greas y topknot and sweats’ is a very different disaster from ‘freshly tenderized pork loin wrapped in metal and bandages.’”

“Genji…” Mercy squeezed his arm slightly.

“…we’ll make one print, but that doesn’t mean we’re framing it,” said Genji, folding his arms. He
gave a glance to Athena, “What about something more recent?” asked Genji.

“This one was… three months ago. In Nepal,” said Athena, bringing up a photo of Genji with Mercy next to him, Zenyatta on the other side, and several Shambali monks behind them. Genji’s mask was off and his scars were crinkling with his smile.

“Oh that one’s much nicer,” said Mercy, “We can frame that one.”

“It will be nice to have a piece of Nepal in our home,” said Genji with a slight smirk in his voice.

“Our home,” Mercy repeated the words and looked at him. She couldn’t really place last time she called a place ‘home’ let alone said the word ‘our’ in front of it.

“And this one,” said Athena, bringing up a photo of just Mercy and Genji, also a selfie, being taken in front of one of many of Nepal’s mountainous vistas.

“That one’s beautiful…” said Mercy.

“That one’s my comm lockscreen,” said Genji.

Mercy snorted. “So we’re framing that one,” she said with a smile.

“I can live with framing that one,” said Genji. He started counting on his fingers, “So there’s the group photo with our strike team, the photo with Reinhardt, the physical therapy photo—which, we are not putting that one up in the living room—and the two pictures in Nepal. I’d say that’s plenty!”

“That’s only five,” said Mercy, folding her arms.

“Well… we’re going to take a lot more, and so many of these are just work-related. We should take pictures of us on dates, on vacations, pictures at parties, holidays, wedding photos—”

“Wedding photos?!” Mercy sputtered.

 “…hypothetical wedding photos,” said Genji.

“You’re just moving in and now you’re talking about wedding photos,” said Mercy with a smirk.

“Hypothetical wedding photos,” Genji said a bit more insistently, “What if we get married and I say, ‘Oh Angela, I want to put this picture of us at our wedding up, but then where will we put this photo of our Strike team eating empanadas?’”

Mercy snickered. “You’re thinking very far ahead.”

“I’m a ninja. We pride ourselves on being prepared,” said Genji.

Mercy just smiled and looked back at the screen. “I suppose home is a thing you build, then—we shouldn’t just push everything out there all at once…”

“Well, yes,” agreed Genji, “At the same time, looking at these photos… you’ve been home for me for a long time, Angela.”

Mercy blushed and tucked her hair back. “You’re home for me too,” she said quietly. There was a beat and then she elbowed him. “We are not putting the empanada picture up.”

“No we are not,” said Genji with a chuckle in his voice.
It was strange, seeing Genji in civilian clothes. He didn’t bother wearing shoes, of course, but everything else kept throwing her off. She was used to the sight of the green glow of his heat sinks, or the neural indicators glowing in his torso and back. He was wearing a dark blue zip-up hoodie with the hood up. It was a bit baggy on him since it was borrowed from McCree as were the awkwardly fitting jeans, and the black shirt he was wearing was a bit tight and short on him because it was borrowed from Lúcio. His visor was reflecting a bit against the glass of the open ocean tank. Mercy leaned her head on his shoulder as an enormous sunfish swam by.

“You sure know how to kill two hours,” said Mercy, smiling as she watched the fish, “I can’t remember the last time I’ve been to a place like this.”

“To be honest, I wanted to come here because I have never been to one, myself,” said Genji, as Mercy hooked her arm in his.

Mercy glanced over at him. “Really?”

Genji shrugged, “My parents did not tolerate many distractions.”

“I think my parents took me to one when I was very young but…” Mercy trailed off, “Well…I never really bothered taking myself to one when I was older.”

“Do you miss them?” said Genji.

“Hmm?”

“Your parents.”

“Some days more than others,” said Mercy, turning and walking him over to the jellyfish tanks. She paused for a while, watching the amber sea nettles drift in the tank. “I’m not sure if it’s appropriate to return the question,” she said after a short silence.

Genji half scoffed and half-chuckled. “I suppose that’s fair,” he said with a shrug, “I have some good memories of my mother but… Well… training for the family business started young.” Genji watched a bit of anchovy caught in the tendrils of the sea nettle. “Very young…” he said quietly. He felt Mercy’s arm squeeze his. “You always worry so much,” he said, a slight chuckle in his voice.

“That’s my job,” said Mercy, a smile tugging at the corner of her mouth. Her smile faded. “So… I take it Hanzo still hasn’t responded?”

“It has been months,” said Genji. He scoffed a little. “Don’t act like you aren’t relieved.” She could hear the smile in his voice but she still glanced off.

“I want to believe in redemption as much as you do,” she said, “But you know my concerns are not unfounded.”

“You’re afraid of him undoing all your hard work,” said Genji.

“Don’t joke about that, please,” said Mercy. Genji sighed and continued watching the fish.

“He is my family,” said Genji, “And he would not reject his role in the Shimada Clan as lightly as I
“I know,” said Mercy, leaning her head on his shoulder, “It’s just… “ she sighed, “I feel silly for saying this, but you and Overwatch were the closest thing I had to a family in years.”

“And I left you,” the words fell out of Genji hollowly.

“And Ana left me. And Jesse left me. And the Zurich headquarters blew up and I thought Jack was dead, but no, he just also left me. And I tried to save Gabe and I just—I just—” She felt Genji’s hand touching the side of her face and she broke her eyes away from the tank to look up at him. he pressed his forehead against hers and she closed her eyes. “I’m sorry,” she said. She hugged him and pressed her face into his shoulder, “I shouldn’t be talking about this.”

“It’s all right,” said Genji.

Finally she pulled back a bit and exhaled. “I know he’s your family just—” she pursed her lips, “Just please be safe.”

“You know me,” said Genji.

Mercy’s brow furrowed, “That’s what worries me,” she said flatly.

Genji chuckled, “Fair,” he said.

Mercy smiled, then leaned forward and kissed him on his face plate. His visor brightened. “Come on,” she said, “Let’s get to the kelp forest before feeding time.” She moved to walk while holding on his arm but was stopped by him standing in place.

“Angela,” he said. She looked over her shoulder at him. He pulled his hood back and then clicked at the catch at the back of his helmet, then pulled off the face plate with a click and a hiss of steam. Mercy’s eyes widened. “I—I uh…” Genji stuffed the faceplate in his pocket, rubbed at the scars on his face then cleared his throat, “You do not have to—” he gestured at his face. Mercy smiled and cupped her hands to the sides of his face. She kissed him, and there were a few moments where he was just sort of standing there, knowing this was what he wanted but not really sure what to do with it. Then he seemed to remember, wrapped his arms around her, and pulled her in close.
Genji came home to a steamed up kitchen and a mushroomy lemony scent hanging in the air. The rice cooker was probably an accomplice, but the main culprit was Mercy frowning over the stove.

“Oh!” she glanced up from the beige ragout in the pot, “It’s almost done,” she said, picking up a small shaker of paprika, next to the stove, frowning, then setting it down again.

“Smells new,” said Genji, stepping up behind her and clicking off his mask.

“It’s old, actually,” said Mercy, looking back at the pot, “Or… an attempt at the old, at least. My mother called it Zürcher Nicht Wirklich.”

Genji furrowed his brow slightly as he leaned over her shoulder and looked into the saucepan “Not… Really… Zürich.ian?” he clumsily translated.

“You’re getting better,” Mercy smiled, “It’s a variant on Zürcher Geschnetzeltes. Well… my mother’s variant. She couldn’t stand using veal, but the the kidneys were still important to her.”

“Kidneys?” Genji repeated.

“They’re good for you,” Mercy said with a smirk.

“Well if you need my help I’m at your disposal,” he said, kissing her on the cheek.

“I already said it’s almost done,” she said, smiling, “And you already cook so often, I have to return the favor sometimes.” she tasted the thick sauce and frowned, “I can’t quite get it to taste like hers though… maybe it needs more black pepper? I feel like maybe I should use more lemon zest but it’s so easy to use too much and—ugh,” she tasted it and frowned, “All the recipes online call for fresh parsley but she used dried—I suppose it was easier… here,” she forked a bit of meat and held it up to Genji, who took the fork and ate the bit of meat.

“It’s good!” he said, his eyes brightening.

“…you sound surprised,” said Mercy wryly.

“I’m entitled to some skepticism when kidney is involved,” said Genji, smirking.

Mercy sighed, “Well, I suppose that’s as close as I can get it without overcooking it…” she said, pushing her hair back and turning off the burner.

“It’s perfect,” said Genji.

“It’s not quite how my mother made it,” said Mercy, spooning out brown rice in two bowls for them and then spooning the Not-Really-Zürcher-Geschnetzeltes over it, “But I suppose it was all so long ago there’s no way for me to be sure about it.”

“It’s homey,” said Genji, taking another bite of it as they headed out to the living room with their bowls and turned on the holoscreen, “Would I sound like too much of a spoiled rich asshole if I said it tasted peasant-y?”

“I–you know the original recipe called for veal and white wine, right?” said Mercy.

“So a little bit of a rich asshole,” said Genji.
“Little bit,” said Mercy, grinning.

“It’s good though,” said Genji, as Mercy put on their usual period drama. that they only paid about 75% attention to between cuddling, Genji sleeping, and Mercy scrolling through her tablet.

“You have any old family recipes you’d like to try?” said Mercy with a smile as the opening title theme rolled.

“Shimada castle had a cooking staff,” said Genji with a shrug, “Not as sentimental as I would have liked. I could call up some old friends from the Shambali for their recipes though. Zenyatta’s probably due for a cooking day at the Watchpoint mess hall eventually too…”

“It’s been a while since we’ve been to the mess hall,” said Mercy with a slight snicker.

“Oh no, what a tragedy,” said Genji with absolutely no hint of remorse as he cuddled up closer to her and took another bite of her cooking.

“I cooked something,” said Mercy, a bit smugly.

Genji just snickered and kissed her on the temple.
They were both tired. Genji had been off-watchpoint on several missions that had taken days at a time, only to return to the watchpoint to find Mercy pulling all-nighters at the lab. He couldn’t blame her, exactly—and what could he ask her to do? Put her lab work on hold so she could coddle him? With Talon breathing down their necks? That was one of the hard parts about loving someone so devoted to their work, someone who insisted on shouldering so much of the team. He was used to distance with her, more used to than he liked to be, but on the third night he found himself alone in their apartment, he decided enough was enough.

Usually Genji treasured their late-night talks in the lab, but tonight the lights overhead were cold, sterile, flickering and annoying.

“…still working on the Reaper samples?” he leaned his head into the lab.

“Nanites, and yes. Sorry I couldn’t make it to dinner,” Mercy was frowning through her microscope,

“It’s okay,” said Genji, leaning on the wall of the lab.

A few beats of silence passed between them.

“So,” said Genji, “How goes progress?”

“It’s difficult to say,” said Mercy, still looking through the microscope, “From what I can tell, without biotics or a stable host body, or, cloud, the nanites quickly destabilize. They affect human cells like a retrovirus, essentially rewriting it to be able to switch between an organic and a nanite state, so the question is, how can I force nanites back to an organic state?”

“They would… probably need to be a part of their host body to do that?” Genji suggested.

“Maybe I could replicate the neurological signal,” Mercy muttered, more to herself than to Genji, “But presumably neurological cells are converted to nanites as well… ugh!” she pulled up from her microscope and rubbed her eyes, “The nanites can’t seem to infect themselves cross-species, I can’t make rat nanite cells from scratch, and even if I could make a nanite-infected rat, I still don’t have any idea what compounds were used in the SEP program and—and—!” she grunted in frustration, “I’m going in circles.”

Maybe it was the jet-lag from the last Orca trip, but the words fell out of Genji, “If you’re going nowhere, you don’t have to keep going, Angela.”

Mercy looked up at him. “I’m sorry?”

“I know nanites as a technology is a big threat, but it’s one only wielded by Talon. If we just… focus on taking out Talon, then we take out nanites along with it,” he shrugged, “Seems fairly straightforward.”

“…you’re saying don’t bother figuring out what went wrong with Reaper, and just kill him,” Mercy said flatly.

“Well… he tried to kill us,” said Genji.

“I can’t believe you,” Mercy brought her eyes up from the microscope, “I can’t believe you—!”
“I’m only saying it’s okay to back down from—”

“This is my technology, Genji! I have a responsibility to it! I’m the only one who can figure out a cure for him!”

“You said this wasn’t about curing him! You said this was about stopping his condition before Talon could replicate it!” Genji paused, “I mean, and considering they have Moira, it’s not unlikely they haven’t already replicated it.”

Mercy visibly bristled at the mention of Moira and Genji realized what he was saying wasn’t alleviating her annoyance in the slightest.

“I do have to do this, Genji,” said Mercy, pacing around the lab counter.

“You’re burning the candle at both ends, it’s already impacting your infirmary work here on the watchpoint, if it starts impacting your performance on missions—”

“What are you talking about?!”

“You missed two appointments with our fellow agents because you were busy with that… stuff—”

“These nanite samples are time-sensitive! God forbid one of the junkers is stuck with the sniffles for another day though!”

“…Angela, you’re obsessed,” Genji said flatly.

“Obsessed!?” fury deepened her voice.

“You would never put something like this over a patient! I know you still feel guilty about what happened at Zurich—”

“Stop–stop–don’t–don’t pull that Shambali nonsense—”

“Nonsense!?”

She huffed. “You know what I mean—”

“Oh so because I’m able to grow past my problems in a way you can’t control, then it’s nonsense!”

“NONSENSE IS YOU PSYCHOANALYZING ME ON SOMETHING YOU HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA ABOUT BECAUSE YOU WEREN’T THERE!” Mercy shouted and then immediately caught herself. She shut her eyes and furrowed her brow, taking a few breaths to try and collect herself. “Genji–Just… let me do my work.”

“I’m worried about you, Ange—”

“Please.”

Genji took a deep breath. “I’ll be back at the apartment.”

Mercy didn’t come back to their apartment that night. She swore to herself she would just take a quick power nap on the couch in the break area near the lab, and ended up passing out. She slept until a shaft of sunlight fell on her through one of the windows, then grunted in her sleep and turned away from it, only to have a warm liquid splash on her side, sending her awake.
“Hey!” Mercy looked at the tea stain on her lab coat.

“Good morning.” Ana stood over her.

Mercy rubbed at her eyes and sat up, “Unless it’s an emergency, Lúcio is fully capable of looking after the infir—”

“This isn’t about the infirmary,” said Ana.

Mercy’s brow furrowed and she pulled herself up further, no longer splayed across the couch and allowing Ana to take a seat next to her. Ana sipped at her tea.

“Here’s the thing,” said Ana, “The insulation between your lab and Athena’s main monitor room is very thin. And Jack and I tend to burn the midnight oil just as much as you.”

“Ach du scheisse—” Mercy pressed her hand against her forehead, “You didn’t—”

“Jack passed out. I heard the whole thing,”

“Well it wasn’t any of your business—”

“Overwatch consumed one of the greatest loves of my life, Angela. It consumed both of Jack’s,” said Ana, “I think we all learned too late that half the fight is making sure the team is all on the same side.”

Mercy made a face.

“It seems obvious, but it isn’t. Not as much as you’d think. We’re all here because we want to stop Talon, but some of us have different ideas as to what stopping Talon looks like. Some of us get frustrated with the methods of the organization as a whole. I don’t think I’ve properly expressed to you that that’s why Jack and I value you as a part of this team now more than ever.”

“Because I hated the militarism of the previous Overwatch?” said Mercy.

“And you were well within your rights to. But now,” Ana clasped her hand around her teacup, “I… I don’t believe that, as an organization, we’ve ever been as single-minded as we are now.”

“…and this has, what exactly, to do with my fight with Genji?” said Mercy.

“What you and Genji have was forged in Overwatch’s fight. It’s not like the relationships Jack and I struggled to keep alive through the Crisis. It’s not part of a world we struggled to keep alive even though we knew our circumstances would leave it forever changed. It’s yours. And I can’t, in good conscience, let you make my mistakes.”

“Your mistakes…?”

“Pushing people away when you’re at your most scared,” said Ana, “Fearing the loss of the things you love so much that you sacrifice that love.”

Mercy snorted. “I’m not scared—”

“Work can be one of the few places we feel control. More than our relationships—”

“More than a watchpoint full of idiots constantly hurting themselves…” Mercy said quietly, but then she huffed, “More psychoanalysis—”
“Angela you should know by now this whole organization is a mess of traumas and neuroses,” said Ana flatly, “Fighting Talon is important—taking back your creations that talon has corrupted is important… but so is the life you’re fighting for.”

Mercy bit the inside of her lip. “I really bit his head off, didn’t I?” she muttered.

“Well to be fair, it wasn’t very thoughtful of him to just shrug off weeks of work for you like that and reduce our fight with Talon to something that simple, but yes. You bit his head off,” said Ana, “But Angela–this is the most important question: do you still see a life with him beyond this fight?”

“The… fight we just had…?” Mercy’s brow crinkled.

“The fight with Talon,” said Ana.

Mercy tucked her hair back. “Sometimes it’s so hard to imagine that this fight could someday end…” she said quietly, “But… when I come home to him… I know there’s no one else I’d rather see.”

Ana gave her a comforting pat on the shoulder. “Take a nap and a shower,” she said, “Then extend the olive branch.”

“You threw tea on me,” said Mercy.

“A necessary sacrifice of a perfectly good cup of darjeeling to get your head out of your ass,” said Ana.

Mercy smiled weakly.

—-

Genji was meditating in his usual spot overlooking the sea cliffs when his visor brightened with alertness. He looked over his shoulder to see Angela standing a few feet behind him.

“Are my footsteps that loud?” Mercy asked quietly.

“No I just… I’ve… gotten good at telling when it’s you,” said Genji, turning back around to look at the horizon.

“Can I…?” Mercy started.

Genji glanced over his shoulder at her again, then scooted over to let her sit down next to him. She took her seat and another few beats of silence passed between them. Not tense, like the last time, but tired.

“I’m sorry,” she said quietly, “I’m sorry for yelling at you and calling what the Shambali did nonsense. I don’t think it’s nonsense. I was just…angry.”

“I was treating you like a child,” said Genji and Mercy perked up.

“I was acting childish,” Mercy returned.

“No, I mean—well, yes, but… I was dealing with you the way Zenyatta deals with me, and I’m not your teacher. I’m your partner. And trying to take back your work from Talon, trying to undo what Talon did with it… that’s not an obsession, and… you put in so much work, it was callous of me to just say you should walk away from it,” he pressed his fingers to the catches of his helmet and took off his faceplate, showing his scarred face, “So I’m sorry too.”
“I was definitely more of the asshole though,” said Mercy.

“It’s not a competition Angela,” said Genji with a slight smirk.

“Do you think I’m controlling?” asked Mercy.

Genji blinked.

“You just… that part about the Shambali being something I didn’t control…” Mercy trailed off, “If you need more space–”

“I wanted you to quit poring over those nanites because I missed you,” said Genji smiling a little, “Well, that and the infirmary and the lack of sleep… But… I don’t think you’re controlling. I think… the way we’re living now, it’s very easy to feel like things are beyond our control, so we take what we can get. In your case you dive into work and in my case I withdrew from the situation and ended up coming off as… a condescending jerk who treats you like you’re unstable.”

“I was on hour 33 without sleep. I don’t think you could call that stable,” said Mercy with a smirk. His smile faded, “I am still worried about you though.”

“Mm,” Mercy nodded, “I’m… I’m glad you are. I mean, I’m not glad you’re worried, but I’m glad I have you in my life to care about me like this. I was thinking… I’d put the nanite samples on ice for a while.”

“Would that work?” Genji tilted his head.

“Well, if Mei could survive, presumably we could find a way keep those cells stable. I just have to be willing to ask for help,” said Mercy, “If I’m getting nowhere pouring all this hours into obsessing over them, I probably need to step back.”

“You don’t have to do that for my sake–” Genji started.

“I’m doing it for our sakes,” said Mercy, “It wouldn’t be that long, anyway. Enough to get back on top with infirmary work and…” she glanced over at him, “Get back in touch with what I’m fighting for.”

“And sleep,” said Genji, “Please.” he pressed his hands together in front of himself, “I’m begging you. Please sleep.”

Mercy snorted. “Fine, and sleep.”

Genji smiled and let his hands relax into his lap again.

“Genji?” Mercy spoke up again.

“Mm?”

“Do you see us having a life beyond this fight?”

“…the fight we just had?”

“No, the big fight. The Overwatch fight.”

“Remember that time we were at that gala, and we pretended we were married and I gave us three kids and a dog?” Genji arched an eyebrow.
Mercy snorted. “You were serious about that?”

“Well, not *that* serious but I did like the idea of it. Just… us having that little life together. Or maybe I just like the idea of making the Shimada clan roll in their graves by being a ninja-turned-househusband.”

Mercy grinned.

“But… to answer your question, yes,” said Genji, “A life with you is one of the things I’m fighting for. I mean, yes, of course there’s ‘Talon is evil and must be stopped’ but also I love you. And you want to see a kinder, more peaceful world. I want to see that world with you.” He reached over and took her hand.

Mercy’s eyes were wet and shining again. She blinked a few times and rubbed at them. “I love you too,” she said, smiling, “So we’re… all right?”

“We’re all right,” said Genji, “But, if you ever need to talk more about it…”

Mercy smiled. He gave her hand a squeeze and she leaned her head on his shoulder.

“So we should probably call Mei to get some cryo storage for those…” Genji glanced down to see Mercy had closed her eyes and her breathing had slowed. He smiled a little. A short little nap probably wouldn’t hurt.
It was three in the morning when the chainlink fence surrounding the watchpoint rattled softly. It was quiet enough so as to be attributed to the wind, not the black clad figure that had vaulted over the fence and landed soundlessly on the ground. The figure rose up to a low position and surveyed his environment. He had a rough idea of the layout of the Watchpoint—in being a mothballed UN facility, satellite imaging of the place was fairly accessible to the public, but not a lot to give him a good idea of the scale of its security. From what information he had gleaned from various crime rings, he knew that the current splinter group calling itself ‘Overwatch’ had some Omnis in its ranks—a heavily modified OR-15 and a decrepit Bastion unit—those wouldn’t need to sleep and they would likely be serving as Watchpoint security, but any other information he could try to gain seemed ridiculous or impossible. He had been observing the Watchpoint for several days, and had been able to estimate the largest gaps in perimeter security—enough to bypass the Bastion and OR-15’s rounds, of that he was sure. He couldn’t trust what information he had gained about the Watchpoint’s residents, so the second he had gone over that fence, he had to be ready for anything.

He slipped into the shadows of a large hangar before scrambling up its side and slipping through an open window in it. From what he had seen of the Watchpoint’s satellite imaging, it would be faster than circumventing the building. He landed soundlessly once more on the cement floor and looked around the cavernous hangar, lit up in the dim orange of hazard lights. He drew himself up a little taller as he walked through the hangar, frowning. All things considered, for the Watchpoint being overseen by, what he assumed were a crew of murderous squatting war criminals, they seemed to keep the facility in remarkable condition. He had only passed below an upper floor walkway when suddenly a searing burning sensation hit him in the shoulder and a loud “FFFFZZZZHHHHHHH” sound broke the silence of the hangar. He moved to leap back but found that the same searing burning pain seemed to latch onto him like a tether. His eyes fell on the source of the tether-like laser beam, a rather unassuming looking little sphere for something that was causing him so much pain. Grunting, he seized his bow off of his other shoulder, nocked an arrow, drew and fired it. The turret didn’t break but rather burst and disappeared, leaving no broken pieces behind it.

“Hm,” the figure quietly ran up the wall and grabbed his arrow where it was embedded before continuing on his way through the hangar—slower this time, keeping an eye out for more of the odd little sphere turrets.

——

Satya’s prosthetic buzzed on their nightstand.

“Satya… arm,” muttered Pharah, not opening her eyes.

“Mm,” Satya’s face was buried in the point where Pharah’s neck joined her shoulder. Satya’s prosthetic buzzed again and Satya muffled her own groan into Pharah’s baggy shirt before breaking away from Pharah and picking sleep from the corner of her eyes and looking over at the prosthetic buzzing on the nightstand. She pushed off of Pharah and got to a slightly upright sitting position in bed and awkwardly reached over and grabbed her prosthetic arm off of the nightstand, she gave a slight start as the nerves connected at her shoulders as she clicked the prosthetic on, then sleepily wriggled and gestured with her prosthetic fingers to make sure it had come on properly, before opening her palm flat and seeing it project a slightly reddish light.

“…it doesn’t say anything,” mumbled Satya.
“Headpiece,” murmured Pharah, half-muffled into a pillow.

Satya yawned and nodded before grabbing her headpiece off of the nightstand as well. Her blue visor flickered into existence in front of her eyes and as she squinted at the bright blue she read the notification from her prosthetic.

“Just a turret destroyed…” she said, her eyes closing and her head slowly nodding down again before she suddenly jerked into alertness, “Turret destroyed!” she blurted out.

“Whuzzabout the turts?” said Pharah, pushing up slightly from her pillow and rolling over onto her back, but Satya was already hitting a button on her headpiece.

“Winston–? Wins–” Satya started but sighed, “Athena, wake Winston. I do not have time for this,” she said, touching the panel on her headpiece again, “Orisa–? Are you there?”

“Agent Vaswani? From what data I have obtained on your circadian rhythms, it is inadvisable to be awake at this hour.”

“Orisa–Can you investigate the…” Satya brought up a projection of the destroyed turret’s location on her prosthetic, “…the Watchpoint’s Southern Sector Hangar? A turret’s been destroyed.”

“That does not compute,” Orisa said, clearly a bit frustrated that something may have slipped past her defenses, “I will investigate.”

“I’ll be sending backup your way as well,” said Satya, rising out of bed. She glanced over at Pharah, “Who’s in the southern Sector of the watchpoint?”

“Jesse’s still in the hangar dorms, I think?” said Pharah, sitting up in bed and scratching the back of her head, “You think it’s bad?”

“If it is, Orisa should be more than well equipped to deal with it, but caution doesn’t hurt,” said Satya, pulling a robe on over her satin pajamas.

—

McCree’s comm buzzed and he choked on his own spit mid-snore and grunted, his hand blindly flailing out grabbing at the comm on the footlocker next to his bed.

“Whozit?” he said, pressing the comm to his cheek, only to have the comm buzz against his face again then he grunted and actually opened the call, “G’mornin’?”

“McCree, we need you backing up Orisa in the hangar,” Symmetra’s voice sounded over the Comm, “You’re the closest to where we first picked up the breach. Sending the coordinates to your comm.”

“Mm-hmm,” said McCree, pretty much rolling out of bed, “Jus’.. jus’ gonna… get some pants on…”

—

Orisa pushed open the door to the hangar. “Hello?” she said, trotting inward. The intruder watched, hidden in the shadows of the upper walkway as the large omnic paced across the cement floor and around the various shipping containers. “Hello?” Orisa lifted up a massive shipping container with one arm and then gingerly set it down again.
Just a machine, thought the intruder, nocking an arrow.

“If there are any authorized personnel in the area, I would ask that you make your presence known,” said Orisa, “Continued concealment and evasion will force me to register you as hostile.”

Orisa heard the creak of a bowstring and her head swiveled in the intruder’s direction, her eyes going red to register a low-light environment. The intruder was armed with a bow, pointing an arrow at her.

“Please lower your weapon,” said Orisa.

“Where is he?” said the figure.

“You are unauthorized on this Watchpoint, please lower your weapon,” Orisa stated.

The figure fired an arrow and Orisa quickly put down a barrier. The arrow embedded itself in the wall of blue light, Orisa noted from its position that it would have whizzed past her shoulder.

“A warning shot?” said Orisa.

“Where is Genji Shimada?” said the figure, nocking another arrow.

“I am not at liberty to state the locations of—” Another arrow embedded itself in the barrier and Orisa’s optical receptors narrowed.

“I am not here to negotiate with a glorified security drone,” said the intruder.

“Ah, understood. You are being non-compliant,” said Orisa, “Engaging countermeasures.”

“Counter–?” the intruder started, but Orisa fired off a graviton charge several feet below the walkway. He suddenly found himself yanked off of his feet and tumbling off of the walkway towards a bright green light. In the midst of his fall, a blue energy suddenly spiraled around his arm and he rapid-fired off several arrows without drawing a single one from his quiver.

“What–?” Orisa started as the bright blue arrows embedded themselves in her barrier before the last one shattered the barrier. The figure landed with a grunt on the cement floor, the graviton charge the only reason why his fall didn’t break any bones.

“Stop–!” Orisa started and fired off another graviton charge, but the intruder lunged right and fired off one last arrow. “Defense Mode Acti–” it struck her in the side, “AAAHHH!” She shrieked as her eyes flickered red and yellow and green wildly before she collapsed where she stood.

The intruder took a moment to catch his breath. Now that that business was over with, he could find Genji—

“What in the goddamn–?”

The intruder heard the click of a revolver and turned on his heel to see another man in a grubby tank-top, well-worn hat, and sloppily belted jeans. McCree frowned as he looked over the intruder, dressed all in black, with some light armor, a bow and quiver, and a tight hood and mask that covered his face from just below his eyes.

“Ninjas. Of course it’s gotta be ninjas,” McCree muttered, itching his temple, “Risa, you got his ba–?” McCree caught himself, “Orisa?” he called again. The intruder looked over his shoulder at the collapsed modified OR-15 unit.
“…You named it?” said the intruder.

“You hurt her?” said McCree closing the distance between them to look past the ninja to see Orisa’s collapsed form. Her optic receptors were dark. McCree’s stomach dropped. “Shit–” he leveled his gun at the intruder. Instinctively the intruder nocked and drew his bow at McCree in turn.

“…kinda stupid, ain’t it? Bringing a bow to a gunfight?” said McCree.

“You’d be surprised,” said the intruder, keeping the bow drawn.

“Don’t know who you are, but I don’t take kindly to folk who hurt my friends,” said McCree.

“I did not ‘harm’ your security drone,” said the intruder, “My sonic arrow is equipped to overwhelm electrical systems should it come in contact with them. A few hours and it should reboot just fine.”

McCree’s brow furrowed. “She’s not,” he clicked the hammer back on his peacemaker, “An ‘it.’”

“I don’t care,” said the intruder, “Tell me where Genji Shimada is and neither you nor any more of your compatriots will be harmed.”

“You ain’t in a bargaining position,” said McCree.

“I beg to differ,” said the intruder.

“Lower your weapon,” said McCree

“You first,” said the intruder.

“Tried bein’ reasonable,” muttered McCree under his breath before he fired. The intruder loosed his arrow.

Both shots grazed each other in mid-air, the bullet sparking along the steel shaft of the arrow. The bullet blasted through the arc of the bow and the intruder found his ears ringing as it whizzed past the side of his head and the bowstring snapped and lashed across his cheek. The arrow knocked McCree’s gun from his hand and McCree winced hard, looking at the gash that now traveled down from the gap of his thumb to midway down his forearm. There was a beat as both tried to simultaneously understand what had happened, and decide their next move.

“Goddamn…” McCree was gripping his bleeding hand with his prosthetic one when he glanced at his peacemaker on the ground. The intruder, still holding the broken bottom two-thirds of his bow, followed McCree’s line of sight. In a split second the intruder knew trying to run now would likely end with a bullet in the spine or worse. He acted. McCree’s prosthetic hand flung out for the peacemaker on the ground only for McCree to find himself knocked hard from the side by a flying kick from the intruder. The intruder himself scrambled for the gun only for McCree to tackle and elbow-drop him with his prosthetic arm. The intruder’s breath was knocked out of him and he felt a rib crack as he was slammed against the cement floor of the hangar. McCree was reaching for the Peacemaker again, using his weight to keep the intruder down. One of the intruder’s arms was pinned beneath him. In desperation the intruder whipped his head back and knocked McCree hard on the jaw, before flailing out with the broken bow and knocking the gun away from both of them. He’d have the advantage in hand to hand combat, he was pretty sure. McCree recoiled back from the pain in his jaw and the intruder managed to struggle onto his back to try and get a punch in on McCree, when McCree’s hands flailed out, catching the intruder’s wrist with his organic hand while his prosthetic fingers gripped the tight cloth of the intruder’s mask, and tore it off.
There was a beat.

Both of their eyes were wide at the intruder’s face now revealed. The hangar was dark, but McCree could make out prominent cheekbones, an artfully arching nose, a carefully trimmed beard, and familiarly thick eyebrows. And then there were the eyes—sharp, furious, somehow both so tired and so restless. Beautiful.

And then he punched McCree hard across the face.

The world slowed as McCree reeled back from the blow, his mind half a blur and half racing.

*That face… Looks almost like… Genji,* he realized, *He wanted to find Genji. He’s…*

The face clicked into place in his memories as McCree stumbled up to his feet—the rescue mission all those years ago—a person of interest. Genji’s Would-be murderer. He couldn’t let him get to Genji. McCree rubbed his jaw

“You must be Hanzo,” he mumbled, moving his jaw a bit to make sure it wasn’t broken by the blow.

The intruder visibly tensed, then appeared to compose himself with a breath.

“If you know who I am, you know you’re out of your depth,” he said, assuming a ready fighting position.

McCree put up his fists. “Dunno about depth, but I know you’re an asshole. And I know you ain’t getting to Genji.”

Hanzo gritted his teeth and huffed, then launched himself at McCree.

—-

A hand gently touched Mercy’s shoulder as she was slumped over her desk.

“Mm? Genji,” she sat up slightly, rubbing her eyes, “What time is it?”

“Time for you to get some sleep,” said Genji, “You *did* say you were coming to bed.”

“I was, just…” Mercy yawned, “Just….had some colleague’s lab reports to leaf through… and I was… resting my eyes…” she glanced at the clock on her tablet and blinked. “Oh dear—” she said, getting up.

Genji chuckled and kissed her on the cheek as she got up from her seat. “Don’t worry, the world’s not going to come crashing down just because Angela Ziegler got some proper rest,” he said, tucking her hair back as they walked from her office into the bedroom. She all but flopped onto the bed and cocooned herself in their sheets and Genji himself stretched a little as he rounded the bed to the other side, pulled back the sheets and..

His comm buzzed.

“Nnh…” Mercy stirred a little.

“I’ll take it, don’t worry,” he said, bending and kissing her on the temple, “Just sleep.”

“Come back snn…” Mercy apparently meant to say ‘Come back soon’ but was pretty much out before she finished her sentence. He walked out of the room and answered his comm.
“Shimada,” he said, rubbing his eyes.

“This is an automated message from Athena’s security network. Agent Orisa has been incapacitated and Agent McCree is not reporting in from investigating the southern hangar.”

“Kuso…” Genji rubbed his forehead, “Athena, can you override McCree’s comm? Get me an audio feed? I should know what I’m dealing with before I rush in if it’s given McCree and Orisa this much trouble.”

“Attempting Overrides…” said Athena. There was a brief pleasant chiming music, and then Genji had to hold his comm away from his ear.

“GODDAMN NINJA PIECE OF SHIT—GOT SOME NERVE COMIN’ ONTO MY WATCHPOINT, HURTING MY FRIENDS—GET YOUR ASS BACK HERE! OOF! GAH! GODDAMN MOTHERFU–”

Genji clicked the comm off. “Southern hangar then,” he said, grabbing his swords off of their stand.

—

“This is ridiculous,” muttered Satya,

“Satya, I can handle this,” said Pharah, pushing her hair back.

“We both got the automated call from Athena,” said Satya, “And I want to see whoever has the nerve to destroy one of my turrets.”

“Habibi!” a call came out from across the Tarmac and Ana in a thick fluffy bathrobe rushed over with Reinhardt wearing a grubby sweatsuit and his lion buckler close behind her. Ana put a hand on Pharah’s shoulder, “Are you all right?”

“We’re just answering Athena’s call, same as you,” said Pharah.

“Have you seen Reaper?” said Jack, running up alongside the rest of the group, also in pajamas, but also wearing his visor and carrying his rifle.

“We don’t know that it’s Reaper,” said Ana, as the five of them closed in on the hangar.

“Who else could it be?” said Jack as they opened the hangar door to see McCree and Hanzo beating the everloving shit out of each other.

“…Oh,” said Jack.

“‘Bout—Oof!” McCree got socked in the stomach, “Goddamn time y’all got here!” Hanzo stopped and looked over his shoulder at the mass of pajama-clad-but-still-armed-Overwatch members and froze and McCree quickly broke away from him. Reinhardt brought up his shield, Ana and Jack raised their rifles. Pharah brought up her sidearm and Satya tossed out several turrets to maintain a perimeter before bringing up her own photon projector. Pharah gave a glance to Jack. “I’ll take point,” she said, stepping forward past Rein’s shield, her sidearm leveled at Hanzo.

“Jesse—” she called, “Are you all right?”

McCree spat out some blood. “Relatively,” he said, rubbing at a black eye.

“Who are you?” said Pharah, narrowing her eyes at the intruder, “Why are you here? Did Talon
send you?”

“That is none of your—”

“It is very much our concern,” said Pharah, furrowing her brow as she continued moving forward, “Did you come alo—” Instinctively Pharah’s eyes flicked left and right with the question as she continued moving forward, but rather than possible backup for the intruder, her eyes fell on Orisa’s collapsed form, previously obscured by some of the hangar’s shipping containers. “Oh no —” she hurried over to Orisa’s side. Hanzo knew he couldn’t take advantage of her distraction with three other guns pointed at him.

“What did you do?!” said Pharah, touching at Orisa’s faceplate.

“Oh for–What is wrong with you people?! It’s just a security drone!” snapped Hanzo.

An icy silence settled over the entire group, and within a few seconds, Hanzo realized that he had just managed to make everyone in that hangar hate him with only five words.

“Orisa,” Pharah stated calmly, “Is a part of the team.”

“A part of the family,” Ana added.

“Not like you would know much about family, would you Hanzo?” said McCree, who had now walked over and picked his peacemaker up from where Hanzo had knocked it away.

“Hanzo?” said Jack, “Hanzo Shimada?”

“He’s been below the radar for years…” muttered Ana.

“Said he was lookin’ for Genji,” said McCree, furrowing his brow.

“Wait!” Genji burst in through the door and sprinted in front of Reinhardt’s shield, “Wait! It’s okay!”

“Genji, it’s not safe—” McCree started.

“Brother,” said Genji, coming to a stop in front of Hanzo, “What are you doing here?”

“You told me it was time to pick a side, so I came to see the side you picked,” his glare panned across all the Overwatch members aiming their weapons at him, “The side of fools seems fitting for you.”

“You broke onto the Watchpoint! The hell were we supposed to do? Just let you waltz in and kill Genji?!?” shouted McCree.

“I did not come to kill Genji!” snapped Hanzo.

“Sure, because those are friendly arrows on your back,” said McCree.

“Jesse,” Genji put a hand up and McCree lowered his gun, but continued glaring at Hanzo. “I can handle this,” said Genji. He turned to Hanzo. “Are you all right?”

“Despite the best efforts of your oafish cowboy,” muttered Hanzo, examining his own bruised and bloody knuckles.

“Oafish–!?” McCree stepped forward but Genji put a hand up again and he just seethed and stood
his ground.

“Hanzo,” Genji spoke calmly, “I am glad you are here. And I understand you wanting to come here on your own terms, however, my teammates acted in accordance to what they knew of the situation. We do not need to escalate the situation any further.”

Hanzo’s eyes narrowed. “And what would you have me do? Trust the people that are currently pointing guns at me?”

“I trust these people,” said Genji, “I’m asking you to give them reason to trust you.”

Hanzo’s eyes narrowed. “And how am I supposed to be sure you haven’t been… conditioned by these people? That you aren’t their loyal dog?”

Genji sighed wearily. “Hanzo, if you came here to learn of my situation with Overwatch, I would ask that you actually open your mind to that learning.”

Hanzo frowned and gave a cold sidelong glance to Pharah and the others, still standing with their weapons at the ready. But then he glanced back to Genji. The reason he came. The only family he had left. Hanzo’s brow went from furrowed to crinkled.

“Please,” Genji said, very softly.

Hanzo’s lips parted, Genji’s stance slipped from guarded to open. He was his brother. He had come here for a reason.

“Hmph,” McCree spat, “I wouldn’t bother with him, Genji.”

Hanzo’s eyes widened and the coldness swept back over his face swiftly and easily.

Oh no, thought Genji. “Jess—” Genji started.

“How dare you,” said Hanzo, turning on his heel to face McCree, “You have no ideahow much grief or how much pain I have gone through for what I have done. I know your kind. All you have ever been in your life is a thug, serving the word of whomever’s most convenient to you. You haven’t the faintest idea what it means to—”

There was a high pitched ‘Thwiff’ sound and Hanzo suddenly flinched and gave a glance down at just below his collarbone, where a little dart was embedded. He turned his sights back at the group of five people hiding behind the old man’s shield, where a little old lady was holding some kind of pistol-like gun.

“Captain!” Genji blurted out.

“Ana…” Reinhardt said in shock.

“Whuh…” Hanzo gave another bewildered glance down at the dart embedded in his chest before dropping to the floor unconscious.

“It is three in the morning,” Ana said flatly, holstering her sleep dart gun, “He was an intruder on the watchpoint. He was subdued. We’ll question him and figure out what to do with him when we’re actually equipped to do so.”

“But… what will he…?” Genji looked at Hanzo.

“He hurt Orisa, Genji,” said Pharah.
“And he made a point of sneaking past the Watchpoint’s other defenses,” added Satya.

“I know he’s your brother, but we can’t be sure of his motives,” said Pharah.

“There’s a containment cell near the Watchpoint’s central hub,” said Jack, “It’s got a bed. Rein, you and me can get him there. Jesse, you get yourself cleaned up and…” Jack gave a glance over to Orisa’s collapsed form, “She’s too big to move for now. We’ll get Brigitte to take a look at her in the morning.”

“Regroup at 0800,” said Ana.

Reinhardt nodded, brought his shield down, then easily slung Hanzo over his shoulder and walked off with Jack.

“Well that was… certainly something,” said Pharah, holstering her sidearm.

“And I thought your family was dramatic,” said Satya, setting up a new turret in place where Hanzo had destroyed the other one.

Pharah snorted as Satya hooked her arm in hers and they walked off together.

Genji gave a glance over at McCree, who was sorely circling his wrist.

“I… I am sorry for all this,” said Genji.

“Don’t feel like you gotta do the ‘Brother’s keeper’ thing with all the shit he’s done,” said McCree.

“But he is still my brother,” said Genji.

“Well Genji,” McCree looked up from his wrist to Genji, “Your brother’s a dick.”
Hanzo: Not A Job Interview

It was the first dreamless sleep Hanzo had had in a while. He usually dreamt of rasping breath and a bloodstained tatami, of a puddle of his own vomit and his shaking hands on the cement floor of a parking structure, of thin cool fingers cupping the side of his face and tucking his hair back and soft words telling him he had done well, that he was so brave. He was used to snapping awake too, his own paranoia from years on the run forcing him to full consciousness but here he woke up groggy, on a cheap thin spring mattress, cold and a bit sore, but no more than he was used to waking up back on the run.

“’Mornin’,” a gravelly voice spoke.

Hanzo sat up and rubbed his eyes. He found he was in a bare room with a gray haired man in a blue and white jacket, seated in a metal folding chair and sipping a mug of coffee a few feet from his cot. Hanzo’s hand instinctively padded the mattress next to him to grab a bow that was not there.

“You want breakfast?” the gray-haired man asked.

Hanzo’s stomach lurched at the thought of food and he shook his head.

“Yeah some people get nauseous recovering from Ana’s sleep darts,” said the gray haired man, “A couple hours and you should be fine.”

“I take it I’m a prisoner?” said Hanzo, not making eye contact.

“Well that’s what I’m here to figure out. What you are, is a man who broke onto the watchpoint and assaulted two of our agents. But you’re also the brother of another one of our agents… who… you also nearly killed a little over a decade ago. I’m gonna level with you, it doesn’t look good.”

“Hm,” Hanzo glanced down.

“However, that same brother is vouching very hard on your behalf, and it doesn’t feel right to just ignore him, so here we are,” the man itched at one of the two diagonal scars running down his face.

“Where is Genji?” said Hanzo.

“He’s close, but he’s also… emotionally compromised on this case. We need to establish whether or not you’re a threat before we can let you see him.”

Hanzo was sullen, but somewhere in the fog of memories of his fury and the pounding headache from the cowboy’s fists, he remembered Genji’s words from the night before. I trust these people, I’m asking you to give them a reason to trust you. Hanzo noted the angle of the scar, and the man’s hairline. “You… you were among the group that came to back up the cowboy last night,” said Hanzo.

“Got some sharp eyes on you, huh?” the man sipped his coffee, “Name’s Jack Morrison.”

“Mm,” Hanzo gave a slight nod of acknowledgement. There was a beat of silence.

“…that usually gets a bigger reaction out of people,” said Jack.

“Should I know who you are?” said Hanzo.

“Ah,” Hanzo said, raising his eyebrows slightly, “The one with the statue.”

“Always hated that statue,” muttered Jack.

“Admittedly, I never gave much mind to the original Overwatch—only gleaned as much from their propaganda as was necessary to me. It was my understanding that their collapse into disgrace was inevitable.”

“Inevitable?” Jack repeated.

“There are no heroes, Jack Morrison, there is only what people need to see in other people.”

“What do you think Genji needs to see in you?” said Jack.

Hanzo opened his mouth to retort but paused, and then glanced off with a “Hmph.”

“Well… I think the real question is, why are you here?” said Jack.

“Why are you here?” said Hanzo, arching an eyebrow, “There is… a lot to walk through.”

“We got time,” said Jack.

Hanzo examined his own bruised knuckles. “It’s been over ten years since I killed Genji… or at least thought I did. I tried to take up the role of Clan Head. For a few months I was very competent but I could feel…” he exhaled, “I could feel myself rotting from the inside out. I could feel myself stamping out my own thoughts, my own feelings bit by bit. I was destroying myself to survive my choice. The paradox of it all consumed me with pain and confusion—I had destroyed my family to protect my family. In this haze of grief, I knew I was little more than a figurehead to the clan. If the council was in control anyway… what was the point of staying?”

“…He’s full of shit,” muttered McCree as he and Genji watched the conversation play out through one of Athena’s monitors.

Genji elbowed him.

“Watch it—still sore…” said McCree, rubbing his arm.

“Shh,” Ana gave them both a stern look and both were quiet.

“So you left,” said Jack, “Dropped below the radar.”

“They sent assassins after me…” said Hanzo, rubbing at the side of his head, “None of them were
good enough. My pride in my training and everything I had learned from my clan would not permit me to simply submit to their blades. The Shimada clan had trained me to be better than anything they could throw at me, after all. In a way… I rationalized it as, if they could send an assassin that could best me, then the Clan’s future and its place in the world was earned.”

“…and then Overwatch collapsed it,” said Jack.

“Crushed the council and the main operations, certainly,” said Hanzo, “What remains of the Shimada clan has been absorbed into other crime families at this point. They still have the resources to maintain Shimada castle and send the odd assassin after me every so often, so I’ll give them points for tenacity.”

“You keep tabs on criminal organizations?” said Jack.

“Only to the extent that they might affect me. My informants are not of the Shimada clan,” said Hanzo.

“You have a spy network,” said Jack.

“I have a collection of loose associations garnered by killing the right people at the right time,” said Hanzo.

“Any of your informants know you were coming to the Watchpoint?”

“They were in service to me, I do not owe them any information about my whereabouts.”

Jack sipped his coffee, not breaking eye contact with Hanzo. “What do you know about Talon?” he asked as he brought his mug down from his lips.

“Talon attempted to recruit my father, Sojiro. He refused. When I left the clan they attempted to recruit me. I refused. The assassin known as ‘The Widow’ made contact with me a few years after the clan collapsed, promising to restore it with me at the head. I refused again. Akande Ogundimu contacted me a few years later when he broke free from prison. Apparently a space had just opened on their council. I refused again.”

—

“Can we agree that the fact that Talon really wanted this guy on their team is a big red flag?” said McCree, looking at Ana and Genji.

“But he refused,” said Genji.

“You don’t get Talon’s attention without doing some shady stuff.”

“Talon likely was serious about restoring the Shimada clan, but probably as a factor they could control,” said Ana, “They could do so more easily with its heir.”

“‘Killing the right people at the right time…’ Genji you can’t be serious about this—”

“You of all people should believe in the desire for redemption, McCree,” said Genji.

“If he has informants in the criminal underworld, that could be very useful to us,” said Ana.

“Aw come on, Cap, this guy’s—”

“We have to consider all the factors of his being here,” said Ana.
“And what if he didn’t refuse Talon?” said McCree, “What if he’s here because he didn’t refuse Talon?”

“He wouldn’t accept Talon,” said Genji.

“You don’t know that–”

“I know my brother,” said Genji.

—

“Why didn’t you join them?” said Jack.

“Would you prefer if I did?” said Hanzo.

Jack maintained an expectant silence.

Hanzo sighed. “The things they offered me felt like steps backward,” he said, “And I knew I was worth more to them than anything they were offering me.”

“Not because of the whole… ‘Evil international terrorist organization’ thing,” said Jack.

“Considering my own life in the Shimada clan, it did not seem like my place to judge,” said Hanzo.

Jack shrugged, finished his coffee, and set his mug aside. “So how long ago was this last contact?”

“Shortly before Mondatta’s assassination,” said Hanzo, “Around that time was the anniversary of Genji’s… not-death. So I went to honor him as I did every year.”

“Breaking into Shimada castle,” said Jack.

“It was my home,” said Hanzo, “Genji confronted me… I thought he was just another one of the clan’s assassins at first but then…” Hanzo was silent for a few moments, “Do you understand what it’s like?” he said, “Thinking someone that close to you… someone whose blood is on your hands… thinking they’re dead for years… only to find out…”

“…It wasn’t years for me, but yeah,” said Jack, “It’s… a lot to deal with,” he leaned back in his seat, “Still a lot to deal with.”

Hanzo huffed a little.

“So you refused again,” said Jack.

“Well the offer wasn’t clear…He told me to pick a side, it wasn’t until later that I found out a recall for Overwatch had gone out. That was my only lead as to his whereabouts.”

—

Both Ana and McCree looked at Genji.

“To be honest a lot was going on that night,” said Genji, “And I knew there was no way he would come with me… not that night. Not as he was.”

“But he’s here now,” said Ana, looking back at the screen.
“So you’re here for Genji,” said Jack.

“As my numerous demands to speak with Genji have indicated, yes,” said Hanzo, at this point frustrated that he would have to explain so much of himself to establish something he had been speaking of since the beginning. Jack continued sitting in his seat, perfectly calm. Hanzo composed himself in a breath. “It… has been months since that night,” he said, looking down, “In the time after that encounter, I tried to convince myself that he was a fool. That he was not the brother I knew. That seeking him out was folly. The more I tried to convince myself of this, the more aware I became of my own lack of direction.”

“You’re here because there’s nowhere else to go,” said Jack.

“I’m here because Genji is all that I have left,” said Hanzo, “If he was lucky enough to survive me, I won’t see him die in service to the people who turned him into… turned him into…” Hanzo trailed off and rubbed his forehead. “It’s strange…” he said quietly, “Genji accepts himself as he is so much more easily than I can accept him.”

“Well… if it’s any comfort it took him a while,” said Jack.

“He accepts himself far more easily than I accept myself as well,” said Hanzo.

“I mean…” Jack folded his arms, trying to keep from fidgeting due to the fact that he wasn’t really sure how how to respond to that, “Again… took him a while to…” he caught himself and cleared his throat, “Okay, so… You came here to speak with Genji. We can give you some time with Genji —what are your plans from there? I’m not sure if we can let you… continue being a wandering assassin with a criminal spy network.”

Hanzo’s brow furrowed slightly. “I’m afraid my skill set isn’t… really adapted for anything else.”

“Look, I’ll talk this over with Winston, Genji, and Ana, in the meantime, we’ll send you to the infirmary to make sure you’re all right after that scuffle. Sound good to you?”

“…Passable,” said Hanzo.

“Good talk,” said Jack, getting up from his seat and taking his mug, “We’ll be in touch. In the meantime, enjoy a few hours without assassins on your ass.”

“Hm,” Hanzo leaned against the wall and watched as Jack exited the room.

—

“So what’s the verdict?” said Ana as Jack walked into the room.

“We can’t just send him wandering again,” said Genji.

“I’m sure Interpol’d be more than willing to—” McCree started.

“No,” said Genji.

“Okay, let’s everyone calm down,” said Jack.

“…you want that spy network,” said Ana, flatly.

“It would be the closest thing we have to a Blackwatch intelligence network. Make logistics a lot
“easier,” said Jack, “But ultimately the decision is going to be up to Winston.”

“We can’t seriously trust this guy to stay here,” said McCree.

“Well, there would be a probationary period, obviously,” said Jack, “Hanzo’s presence on the Watchpoint would have to be overseen by one of our agents to make sure he’s compliant and trustworthy.”

“Someone to bust his ass if he gets out of line? I like that,” said McCree.

“I could—” Genji started.

“Genji, we trust you, but you’re too personally involved,” said Ana.

“It needs to be someone without a close attachment to Hanzo,” said Jack.

“Someone the whole Watchpoint trusts,” said McCree.

“But someone willing to understand that this sort of thing is a delicate situation and a process,” said Ana.

“But who ain’t soft on him,” said McCree.

“Which is why I’m submitting to Winston that Jesse be Hanzo’s probationary agent for as long as he’s on the Watchpoint,” said Jack.

“Yeah because—” McCree started and caught himself, “Beg pardon, what?”
The biotic field chimed around Hanzo as a bright light shined in one of his eyes, then the other.

“Well, no concussion,” said Mercy, clicking the light off and pulling herself up to her full height, “Hand seems to be all right as well. Aside from the cracked rib, you should be fine.”

Hanzo’s eyes trailed around the infirmary as the doctor busied herself with her tablet, taking down notes. There were three beds, separated by curtains, and an examination table, and an office branching off in another room. The door to the office was only halfway open, but Hanzo noticed something on her desk. A mason jar of… feathers?

“You’re dismissed, Mr. Shimada,” said Mercy and Hanzo broke his sight away from the desk.

“Doctor Ziegler,” said Hanzo, pushing himself off of the examination table, “If you have the time —”

“I don’t,” said Mercy, flatly.

“It was about Genji,” said Hanzo.

Mercy brought her eyes up from her tablet, kept a steady, cool look at him, and said, “I’m not at liberty to discuss Genji’s medical records. You came to this watchpoint to speak with him, didn’t you?”

Hanzo glanced off. “Genji… wants me to forgive myself. I don’t believe I can do that unless I know the full extent of what my actions wrought.”

“If you knew the full extent of those consequences, you’d never forgive yourself,” the words fell out of her and her eyes widened and she looked off, “I…” she started, “That wasn’t…”

“…you were with the old Overwatch,” Hanzo said quietly, “You…must have seen him after—”

“Can you leave?” said Mercy, her voice taut, “I’ve told you, you don’t have a concussion, and I’m not at liberty to discuss Genji’s records. I’m–I’m very busy so I will say again that you are dismissed.”

“I… understand. I apologize for taking up more of your time,” said Hanzo, stepping out of the infirmary out into the hall where McCree was leaning against a wall, frowning.

“Well?” said McCree.

“Despite your best efforts I am in good health,” said Hanzo, frowning.

“I’m all right too despite your best efforts, thanks for asking,” said McCree, pushing off the wall and pocketing his hands.

“I… don’t suppose you talked to the Strike Commander about…”

“I did,” said McCree, “Sorry, but until this Watchpoint can trust you, I’m gonna be on you like ugly on an ape—No offense to Winston of course.”

“Hmph,” Hanzo glanced off at they continued walking down the hall.
“Look, I don’t like it any more than you do,” said McCree, taking his hat off and running his fingers through his hair, “So the sooner you have your… big transformation and turn yourself in to interpol and work out some kind of deal where you’re an informant on house arrest for the rest of your life, the better.”

“Is that seriously how you see this ending?”

“You don’t exactly strike me as a team player,” said McCree, putting his hat back on.

Hanzo frowned and looked off. They continued walking down the hall in a tense silence.

“Doctor Ziegler treated Genji after my attack, didn’t she?” said Hanzo, after a long while.

“What tipped you off about that?” said McCree.

“She hates me,” Hanzo said flatly.

McCree snorted, “Hell yeah she does,” he said with a slight laugh in his voice before catching himself. Hanzo didn’t seem bothered by the schadenfreude at all. McCree cleared his throat, “Well… she was the one who saved him that night, actually. I was there too.”

“Which explains your attitude toward me as well,” said Hanzo.

“Well that and punching me in the face didn’t exactly help,” said McCree, “Look, Doc feels… strongly about Genji. So do I. The three of us go way back like that.”

“I see,” said Hanzo, “That’s a relief.”

“It’s a relief this Watchpoint hates your guts?” said McCree.

“It’s a relief that Genji found people who care about him that deeply,” said Hanzo, “In spite of Overwatch’s… numerous failings.”

“You got a black belt in backhanded compliments, don’t ya?” said McCree. Hanzo gave him a steady look. McCree threw his hands up, “But that’s fair. Truth be told, I jumped ship before all hell broke loose between Morrison and Reyes. Second I smelled trouble, just ‘fffft,’” McCree made a blowing sound through his teeth and a pinching motion with his hand, “Just… gone… Landed a bounty on my head, but truth be told I think I would have died in the crossfire if I’d have stayed.”

“And Genji…?”

“Left before me. Wasn’t easy on the Doc,” said McCree, “But I’m here now. And so is he. We’re all here because we want to make things right. And hell, the people’ll probably never trust Overwatch again but… that doesn’t matter. What matters is stopping Talon.”

“The perception of your honor doesn’t matter in the face of your duty,” said Hanzo, “More noble than most wanted criminals i’ve met.”

“Yeah I mean the whole world can think we’re assholes, but that doesn’t change the fact that we’re…” McCree caught himself and looked at Hanzo,”…that we’re trying to do the right thing,” McCree cleared his throat. “Look, I’ll give you a tour of the watchpoint, you probably already saw plenty sneaking in here, but we can’t let you start using the ‘I got lost’ excuse for being in places you’ve got no business bein’ in.”

“Yes, that would help,” said Hanzo.
“How did it go?” Genji was standing in the doorway as Mercy was rifling through papers in her desk.

“I don’t like this,” said Mercy, not even looking up as she straightened a pile of papers against the top of her desk.

“I know,” said Genji.

“I know you made the offer to him months ago but I never thought he’d actually…” Mercy shook her head before looking up at Genji, “Well… I suppose he’s here now, so it can’t exactly be helped.”

“He’s… all right, right?” said Genji.

“Physically? He’s about as healthy as anyone could be after spending a decade on the run,” said Mercy, pushing her hair back, “Is he all right with me? No–No–he—I had to send him out of the room before I bit his head off.”

“Angela,” Genji walked across the office over to her and put a hand on her shoulder. She put her hand over his, leaning against her desk.

“Every time I looked at him I’d just—I’d see you on that night, in a puddle of your own blood. I’d see you struggling to walk in your new prosthetics. I’d see you so angry, in so much pain. And I—

“ She gave Genji’s hand a slight squeeze, before her eyes flicked to his, “Sometimes when you forgive someone, you can just forgive them for your sake. It doesn’t mean you have to invite them back into your life.”

“Neither of us could get out of the shadow of the Shimada clan when we were children,” said Genji, pushing his visor up and clicking off his faceplate, “It perpetuated itself, the clan elders made certain that we knew we were born to continue its empire… its violence—Hanzo even more than me, ” he brought his hand up and gently brushed his fingers against the side of Mercy’s face, “But now he’s come to us. I need to give him this chance. To make a new life free of their influence. I can’t be sure we’re ending the cycle of our clan unless we’re doing it together.”

“If he hurts you again—” Mercy started.

“I’ve got a whole watchpoint on my side,” said Genji, smiling a bit, “And the world’s greatest doctor,” he played with her hair a little bit.

“That’s subjective,” said Mercy, huffing before looking up into his eyes, “It’s going to take a lot more than some missions with Overwatch and a few heart-to-heart sessions with Zenyatta to make him part of the team.”

“It took a lot more than that for me as well,” said Genji, kissing her on the forehead.
It was 2230 hours, and the Watchpoint was in the midst of shutting down for the night. The mess hall was cleaned up and locked up. The training grounds were dead silent. Bastion and Orisa were running their evening patrols, ever the vanguards with Omnis not needing sleep. Mercy was still hard at work in her lab, of course, with Genji hanging around and helping drain her coffee to make sure she made it to bed at a semi-human hour as he was wont to do. Sleep, however, was a precious resource on the watchpoint, and one the agents of the reformed Overwatch had to take advantage of when they had the chance, and they were more than happy to with the previous night’s interruption.

After a lengthy tour of the Watchpoint, Hanzo was relieved to see his sleeping arrangements weren’t in a cell like the night before, however his new arrangements he also found questionable. Hanzo folded his arms, staring at the bed. “Is this really necessary?” he said, looking up from the bed.

“Somethin’ wrong with it?” said McCree, leaning against the wall next to the stairwell, “I mean you could ask Genji and the doc if you could crash on their couch–I’d love to see the Doc’s reaction to that.”

Hanzo remembered the coldness in Mercy’s eyes and the tautness of her voice from earlier that day and suppressed a shudder. “No, no I am willing to sleep down here.” He gave a skeptical glance to another bed in the opposite corner of the Watchpoint dormitories, the walls surrounding it plastered with newspaper clippings and a tattered ‘Six Gun Killer’ poster.

“’Fraid that bit’s non-negotiable,” said McCree, walking over to his own bed, “Me being your probationary agent all. Plus I’ve already been sleeping down here.”

“Is there a reason for that?”

“Watchpoint apartments didn’t feel right. Felt like I’d just trash the place on my own, to be honest,” said McCree with a shrug.

“Also minimalist. Easy to leave if you have to,” said Hanzo, glancing over at the few possessions McCree kept near the bed.

“Well y’know, if the Watchpoint itself ever gets compromised..” said McCree.

“You also positioned it so that you have a clear vision of the exits,” said Hanzo.

“Well that’s just common sense,” said McCree.

“…You’ve been on the run as well,” said Hanzo, looking over at McCree.

“I did mention the bounty on my head earlier, didn’t I?” said McCree.

Hanzo blinked. “To be honest, I had forgotten. I was just… noticing the signs,” said Hanzo.

“There go the backhanded compliments again,” said McCree folding his arm.

“You picked a dormitory where you were able to act the quickest when there was an infiltrator,” said Hanzo.
“Well you were the infiltrator,” muttered McCree.

“First to defend it, but easiest to leave it,” Hanzo said a bit mindlessly.

“Did I ask you for a psychoanalysis based on my sleeping situation?” said McCree, folding his arms.

“Should we not get to know each other if you’re going to be my ‘probationary agent?’” Hanzo arched an eyebrow.

“Well you could ask, like a normal person. Not play Sherlock Ass-Holmes.” McCree muttered under his breath before walking over to his own bed and taking off his hat and serape.

“You’re going to sleep already?” said Hanzo.

“Well as you recall, last night someone got everyone on the watchpoint up at three in the goddamn morning so he could attack two of our agents and yell at the rest of us like a nutjob. Orisa’s fine, by the way, thanks for asking.”

“The security drone?” said Hanzo.

“Her name—Ugh,” McCree rubbed his forehead. “We’re all just background noise to you, ain’t we? You’re just here so you can stop kicking your own ass over Genji, and then you’re going to dip, and us, the people who care about Genji, the people Genji cares about, mean jack shit—That’s the deal, ain’t it?”

“I don’t know,” Hanzo’s voice was low.

“Well, figure it out before you hurt him again,” said McCree, taking off his shirt.

“I will try,” said Hanzo. McCree’s back was to him as he undid his belt, set the belt aside, and unceremoniously shuffled out of his pants. Hanzo noted the point on his arm where the metal of the prosthetic ended and the remains of his organic arm began. An image flashed in his mind of the bloody stump of Genji’s arm, the red stain eking across the tatami, the sound of Genji struggling to breathe echoed in his ears. Panic clawed at the interior of Hanzo’s chest. He shouldn’t be here. He shouldn’t be here. Run. He had to run.

“Why don’t you take a picture? It’ll last longer,” said McCree. Hanzo was suddenly thrust back to reality, his breath catching in his throat. McCree was standing in front of him in just a tank top and a pair of briefs and Hanzo immediately cast his eyes downward from the sheer whiplash of his mental image and the physical one before him.

“Sorry, I was just… thinking,” said Hanzo. He gestured at McCree’s arm. “How did that happen?”

McCree looked at his own prosthetic arm.

“It was during the disbandment,” he said with a shrug, “Pretty shortly after I ditched… I guess maybe a part of me was still assuming I’d have a team at my back when… I didn’t,” he brought his arm down, “But that was on me.”

“I’m sorry,” said Hanzo.

“Eh. I’m pretty used to it at this point,” said McCree.

McCree didn’t seem to want to go further into details than that, so Hanzo let the subject drop.
“Welp, better settle in for the night. I guess Winston and Jack’ll have a better idea for what you can do here tomorrow.” McCree slouched down onto his own bed and picked up a pair of reading glasses and a well-worn paperback, lighting a small lamp clipped to the headboard of his own bed and reading. Hanzo wasn’t sure if he was making a big show of reading out of politeness to give him some space to disrobe for bed, or if this was just part of his own nightly rituals, then again, Hanzo was becoming increasingly aware of how much of a disruption his own presence was. Hanzo had folded his own clothes and set them on the footlocker at the foot of his own bed when he glanced over to see McCree still reading.

_Probationary agent, Hanzo realized, He can’t let himself fall asleep before me._

McCree’s eyes flicked up from the page of his book at Hanzo, made eye contact, then calmly flicked down again. A still-spiteful part of Hanzo considered staying up as late as he possibly could, wearing the cowboy out physically and mentally. In retribution for the beatings sustained from the night before, but as Hanzo sat down on the mattress and felt it sink slightly with his weight, that desperate survivalist part of him said, _They won’t kill you. Not yet. Sleep while you can in case they change their minds later._ He also knew sleep would put more distance between him and the residual nausea from being sleep-darted the night before. Hanzo’s eyes warily flicked back at McCree again.

McCree licked a finger and turned a page and Hanzo laid down and pulled the sheets over himself. As soon as he was laying down, an exhaustion washed over him, his body leaping at the opportunity to make up for years and years of nights awake to the gray hours of dawn, kept going only by adrenaline, spite, and a desire for redemption. That same spite and stubbornness though, kept his eyes fixed on the cowboy, still reading his stupid little book, looking far older than he actually was with those reading glasses. He could stay up later than the cowboy. He knew he could. He could definitely, absolutely–

McCree glanced up from his book to see Hanzo had fallen asleep. McCree closed his book, took off his glasses, set both on the footlocker and turned off the lamp.

Maybe it was a blessing that the night terrors only really kicked in at 5 AM.

McCree woke up to muttering in Japanese, the sound of Hanzo talking jerked him awake, and it took a few seconds for the haze of sleepiness to lift slightly for McCree to realize Hanzo was still in bed. McCree slid out of bed, his bare feet padding across the cold concrete floor of the watchpoint dormitories over to where Hanzo slept. McCree took a knee next to Hanzo’s bed as Hanzo continued muttering and thrashing in his sleep. That grayish-blue dawn light was lighting up the stairwell, and in its dimness McCree could make out beads of sweat glistening on Hanzo’s forehead, shoulder, and at the dip of his collarbone. Hanzo was on the edge of hyperventilating, his eyes squeezed shut, his knuckles white with his sheets in a death grip. He muttered something in Japanese again and his breath suddenly quickened and he flinched and tossed and turned.

McCree took a deep breath.

“Han–” he started and Hanzo suddenly flinched awake hard and moved to strike him on pure reflex. McCree managed to catch his wrist in his prosthetic and there was a half-beat where Hanzo was moving to counter, still on reflex, when McCree spoke and Hanzo barely managed to stop himself, “Easy!” he held Hanzo’s wrist, “Easy…”

Hanzo was still breathing rapidly, his eyes flicked around the dormitory, and then flicked to McCree, and then flicked to his wrist caught in McCree’s hand.

“Are you gonna hit me if I let go?” said McCree.
“No–” Hanzo seemed to be getting his breath under control, “No–I–I’m sorry.”

McCree released his wrist. “Look, wherever the hell you were, you’re not there anymore,” he said, “You’re here now, you hear me? You’re here.”

Hanzo rolled his wrist, before looking back up at McCree.

“Do you need to talk about it?” asked McCree.

“I… not now,” said Hanzo.

“All right,” said McCree, getting up to his feet.

A long pause passed between them.

“Nothing to say?” said Hanzo.

“What can I say? I’ve been through that shit and it sucks. Genji went through that shit and it sucks. It’s hard to see anyone go through that shit. No matter how much of an asshole they are.”

“It’s a torment well-deserved,” said Hanzo, wiping some of the sweat off of his forehead with a frown.

“Oh for fuck’s–There’s no ‘deserve’ about this shit, Hanzo. Genji wants the two of you to try and put what’s left of your family back together, try and heal from all that Yakuza shit. If you’re just gonna lie down and take the shit your brain hands you, how’s that going to help anyone?”

Hanzo was quiet.

McCree huffed. “Look, we don’t need to go opening up cans of worms right away at…” he glanced over his shoulder at the clock, “…5 in the morning…” he sighed, “But my point is I don’t think you’re here so you can keep doing the… up-your-ass stoic thing you’ve been doing to stay alive the past…”

“Decade,” said Hanzo.

“Decade,” McCree repeated incredulously. He sighed and rubbed the back of his neck. “Well, half the watchpoint’s going to be up in an hour anyway, you want to sleep in more, or should I pick the lock on the mess hall and fix us some eggs?”

Hanzo’s stomach growled. Admittedly the aftereffects of the sleep dart had killed his appetite for most of the previous day, but the prospect of actual food was welcome at this time. And it might provide a bit of mental distance from the nightmares.

“I can fix my own breakfast,” said Hanzo, grabbing his folded clothes off of his footlocker.

“Yeah, but I fix the best breakfast,” said McCree.

“Is that a challenge?” said Hanzo, pulling his pants on.

“Genji did say you were competitive…” said McCree with a wry smirk, “It’s me being nice, asshole.”

“Yes, I could tell by the ‘asshole.’” said Hanzo.

“Come on,” McCree pulled on his own pants and shirt. “Let’s get some food. Winning omelette
“I hope you enjoy doing dishes, cowboy,” said Hanzo, ascending the stairs after him.
“So?” Genji was sitting across from Hanzo in the watchpoint mess hall as Hanzo poked at his orange vinaigrette-glazed greens with indifference, “Day four… how are we doing?”

Even though biotics had all but made them disappear, Hanzo’s bruises from his bout with the cowboy still ached. He wasn’t willing to show it, though. “It is not a ‘we’ if we are not experiencing the same thing,” said Hanzo, his eyes flicking up from beneath furrowed brows.

Genji rested his chin in his hand, his plated jawline clinking softly against his prosthetic.

“They will come around,” Genji said, as reassuringly as he could, “Overwatch is… it’s messy. Like our family was—”

Hanzo gave Genji a weary look.

Genji rubbed at the back of his neck, “Well.. ‘messy’ isn’t the right word—Complicated. Overwatch is complicated.”

“As one would expect from a splinter of a disgraced UN peacekeeping organization…” said Hanzo, uncorking the jug at his side and pulling out a small sakazuki from the interior of his obi and filling it with sake, “Why rejoin it?” said Hanzo, handing the saucer over to Genji.

“Closure, I suppose,” said Genji with a slight shrug, pressing at the catches of his faceplate and clicking off the plate covering his nose, mouth, and cybernetic jaw as he did so. Hanzo’s stomach twisted and his appetite all but dropped off at the sight of the scars on Genji’s face and the knowledge that he was the one who inflicted them. Still, Hanzo forced himself to look at Genji in his eyes. He knew he would only make it harder for himself if he didn’t.

“You had more or less dismantled the Shimada clan, how much closure did you need?” asked Hanzo.

“One of my last, most vivid memories of Overwatch is Doomfist devastating my team,” said Genji, as Hanzo pulled a second sakazuki from the interior of his obi and filled it for himself, “Talon operates on a level no one else is ready for… if I’m being honest, I don’t think Overwatch is ready for it either…. but we stand a better chance of withstanding it than anyone else.” Genji smiled a little his mouth tugging at his scars and shifting them slightly, “I think you improve our chances as well.”

Hanzo just glanced off.

“You have to admit it’s better than going from place to place because assassins will zero in on you if you stay anywhere too long,” muttered Genji.

“It is better…” Hanzo said, looking out over Gibraltar’s seas, “A very tactical choice—small area of control, being the Rock of Gibraltar, excellent vantage points, and the mediterranean climate lending fewer environmental hindrances than many seaside bases…”

“So you’re staying?” said Genji.

“You told me I had to forgive myself,” Hanzo said staring into his sake, “It is not that easy. I am still finding my path, but I know you are the only true family I have left, and I can’t lose you again—even if it means throwing in my lot with the rest of these fools.”
Genji smiled again and held his sakazuki out to Hanzo. Hanzo glanced from his own cup to Genji’s and hesitantly clinked his cup against Genji’s.

“I don’t think Talon is your sole source of closure on this, however,” said Hanzo before bringing his cup to his lips.

Sake caught in Genji’s throat and he coughed. “Excuse me?”

Hanzo huffed and rolled his eyes, “The doctor,” he said flatly.

“Ange—Doctor Ziegler?” Genji tilted his head.

Hanzo rolled his eyes. “You do realize I’m your brother, don’t you?” he said, tucking his hair back.

Genji huffed and itched underneath his headband. “All right then… fine. Angela and I are together. I’ve been living with her for a while now. We’ve known each other for over a decade and we care about each other deeply. If you want to dismiss her as another one of my ‘escapes’ you are welcome to do so, brother, but please do so knowing that you’re wrong; that I’m no longer the person you once knew me as, and that she is far better than what you expect of most of humanity.”

“You love her,” said Hanzo, his eyebrows raising slightly.

“Yes,” Genji answered without missing a beat.

“She doesn’t like me…” muttered Hanzo.

“She… has concerns,” said Genji, hesitantly, “She was the one who saved my life, all those years ago. So she saw the worst of it…”

Hanzo rolled his knuckles in his lap, his jaw tightening. Genji noticed Hanzo’s unease and tried to push the conversation more towards Angela.

“In a way, she’s here because she seeks closure as well,” Genji added quickly, looking down at his own food and pushing it around his plate, “She told me that she can’t let everything Overwatch touches become a weapon, and now with Talon utilizing Moira’s talents… Angela wants to stop her work from being weaponized. She’s a brilliant medic—Overwatch and I would be dead countless times over since the recall and well before that if not for her.”

“So she saved your life and you fell in love with her because of that,” said Hanzo, flatly.

Genji shook his head. “It wasn’t that simple. I was… very angry back then. Consumed with destroying the Shimada clan. With destroying you. She was butting heads with Jack over corruption in the organization and misuse of her biotic technology. We grew close because we spent a lot of time together, and… there were some feelings, but back then neither of us were really…” Genji trailed off, “I was only able to act on my feelings because Zenyatta helped me find peace with myself. Angela and I exchanged letters during the disbandment, but we’ve only gotten together in the past few months since the Recall. he smiled, “Ten years after we met… Better late then never, I suppose.” Genji blinked and looked up from his plate, “Have you…?”

“Have I what?” said Hanzo.

“Well… you’ve been traveling the world for a decade… has there… been anyone?”

“What do you mean ‘Been anyone?’”
“Anyone special to you,” said Genji, “Anyone you loved.”

Hanzo scoffed, “I was a brother-slaying criminal on the run from my own family’s assassins. Do you think there would be anyone?”

“Well you’re…” Genji gestured at Hanzo.

“What?”

“Handsome?” Genji shrugged, “I don’t feel like there would be no one in all that time…”

“There were… dalliances—distractions,” Hanzo said, now focusing on trying to get his appetite back because if he was eating he wouldn’t have to talk as much, “Very brief and far apart. Nothing in the same volume you had back before…” Hanzo managed to make his own stomach tie in a knot again and he shook his head, “This discussion is pointless,” he said, folding his arms, “Why would you even bring up something like that?”

“Well… you brought up Angela…” Genji said hesitantly.

“Hmph,” Hanzo forced himself to take a bite of his salad.

A long pause passed between them.

“For what it’s worth, I’m glad you’re here,” said Genji.

“I’m here for now,” said Hanzo, still a bit sore about the line of questions. There was another tense silence and Hanzo sighed before refilling both their sakazuki.

“You’ll find your path, brother, I’m sure of it,” said Genji, holding up his sakazuki.

“Let’s hope so,” said Hanzo, clinking his saucer against Genji’s.
If Hanzo had to name the worst thing about being on the run—well, there were a lot of ‘worst’ things about being on the run. The guilt was bad. Devouring, rotting guilt that clawed itself even into his moments of peace like veins of mold in cheese. There were the assassins, and there was the exhaustion of his own vigilance against his family’s assassins that made every day without an immediate threat on his life feel like a lie. But up in the top three was probably not knowing when he would get his next shower. He did have resources—safehouses and the like, which he had gotten from assassin and mercenary work, but those were few and far between. He had gotten a lot better than he would like to admit at quick, desperate wash-ups in public bathroom sinks, and he could count on both hands the time he had risked pursuit by the authorities or the Shimada clan just to get a few minutes in the shower at the home of someone he had just killed. Being able to bathe on his own terms for the first time in too long was probably the most luxurious thing he had experienced since he first came to the Watchpoint.

Steam flooded the showers of the watchpoint dormitory. Hanzo’s fingers were well past pruning but he set his hands against the tiles of the wall and let the water pound his shoulders. He tried to let the sound of water drown out his thoughts, but still they bled into his consciousness.

What am I doing here? he thought, Genji is doing far better without me than he ever did with me. Why invite me? Spite? his stomach turned, Pity?

“You know you’ve been in here nearly 30 minutes, right?” McCree’s voice cut through the steam and bounced off the walls and Hanzo’s head jerked up.

“I—I…” to be honest Hanzo had completely lost track of the time. Not like him. Sloppy.

“Not to put a damper on your beauty routine but Jack did say we gotta convene with him at 0930 to establish your intended role with us. You being Mr. ‘Spy Network’ and all.”

Right, thought Hanzo, That. Might as well just toss any resources I have into this circus too. Forget about any contingency plans for when this whole organization goes down in flames. Again.

“It’s hardly a spy network,” said Hanzo, turning off the water and sticking his hand out of the plastic of the shower curtain, padding around for his hanging towel, “Merely a collection of contacts. I cannot exactly send them out to gather intel. We all have to watch our own backs.”

“Been there,” said McCree as Hanzo finally found the towel and pulled it into his shower stall.

“‘Been there,’” Hanzo repeated, toweling himself off before wrapping the towel around his waist. “You know,” said Hanzo, pushing the shower curtain aside, “You are just as secretive, if not more so, about your dealings before you joined this splinter cell than I am.”

“I was on the run. Not a lot of glamorous stories there,” said McCree, “One of the highlights was stopping a robbery at a ramen restaurant… and the train thing, I guess…”

“Train thing?” said Hanzo.

“Talon strike team,” said McCree, flicking up the brim of his hat and smiling at him, the smile faded though, “They were after this glowy purple box thing. Looking back, I wonder if I made things worse, giving it to them…”

“You gave it to them?” said Hanzo.
“I kicked it off the train rather than let them kill the whole train trying to get it!” said McCree.

“It could have been a weapon that could kill far more people than just one train,” said Hanzo.

“I think about that too but… truth is I didn’t know. Thankfully, I still don’t know what the hell that thing was. Maybe it just speeds up Talon’s wifi or somethin’…”

Hanzo snorted.

“I hope it just speeds up their wifi…” said McCree, taking off his hat and itching at his hair. He shook his head. “Anyway. Meeting with Jack,” he moved to turn around and walk out of the showers, “0930 Hou–Fu–”

McCree slipped hard. His prosthetic arm flailed to try and grab for the doorway and miss in his descent.

“McCree–!” Hanzo stepped forward too, grabbed his arm, felt the prosthetic grip his forearm and yank him down too in McCree’s fall.

The stream of panicked thoughts constricted around Hanzo’s mind as they both fell. *If he cracks his skull open I’m finished. There’s no way to prove it wasn’t an attack. Only a few days in to coming back into Genji’s life and I’m already destroying the things he holds dear again. They’ll kill me. Make me leave the watchpoint. I don’t know which is worse.*

Both grunted as they hit the tiles of the shower floor.

“Are you all right?” Hanzo said in an instant.

McCree’s eyes were squeezed shut in pain until they flicked open and he gritted his teeth, “This is why we don’t take no gotdamn thirty minute showers!” McCree snapped at him. He realized his nose was inches from Hanzo’s and instinctively his eyes flicked down to see that, though Hanzo’s towel had come loose at the hip, perhaps by the grace of god it still served as a buffer between him and McCree’s jeans. Hanzo’s own heart was pounding at his throat and ears. Aside from a few embraces from Genji, this had been the most physical contact he had had with another body in a painfully long time. He caught himself and cleared his throat.

“I’ll um–just…” he kept one hand braced against the tile floor as he grabbed at the loose edges of the towel at his side

“Yeah–just–uh…” McCree was looking off, apparently pretending that the nearby shower drain was some kind of avant-garde artwork that he was struggling to understand as Hanzo fumbled between him, the floor, and his own towel.

Hanzo finally managed to roll off of McCree into a kneeling position to re-secure his towel as McCree grabbed his hat off the floor and shook droplets of water off of it.

“Thanks for the uh… attempted save,” said McCree, not making eye contact, still swatting water off of his hat.

‘Yes, well… I hope future attempts are… more successful,” said Hanzo, “Not that I… hope there is ever a need for future attempts again.”

“I getcha,” said McCree.

“Mm,” Hanzo grunted.
“…Can we agree to…”

“Never talk about this again?” said Hanzo.

“Yeah,” said McCree.

“Yes,” said Hanzo.

“Good,” said McCree.

“Good,” agreed Hanzo.

A long pause passed between them. Hanzo half-forced a rueful chuckle.

“What?” said McCree.

“I think this is the longest we’ve gone without you calling me ‘Asshole,’” said Hanzo.

“Look at that,” said McCree, pushing his hair back, “Makin’ progress.”

—-

“Is there a reason why you two moved your seats 10 feet further away from each other than usual for this meeting?” said Jack.

McCree and Hanzo exchanged glances.

“I don’t understand the question,” said Hanzo.

“Yeah, we always sit like this,” said McCree.

Jack took a deep inhale, knew full well that was bullshit, and decided not to press the issue further.
Tracer threw a punch and Genji blocked it.

“Still–” Tracer threw another punch and Genji blocked it, “–don’t see the point of all this.”

“What if your enemy knocks your pulse pistols out of your hand and kicks them across the floor?” said Genji, blocking a kick from her.

“Then I’ll just blink over to them!” said Tracer, demonstratively blinking behind Genji and moving to kick, “You just want a training session where I’m not kicking your arse!” Genji easily caught her foot and she recalled out of his grip. Genji’s eyes flicked at the flash of blue that trailed behind her in recall and managed to get a kick in right as she flashed back into existence which sent her tumbling back.

“My going easy on you is not you ‘kicking my arse,’” said Genji.

“Oh going easy on me? Is that what you call it?” She quickly sprang back to her feet and blinked right back at him and began throwing multiple punches.

“It’s important to know how to fight in different scenarios,” said Genji, dipping out of the way and blocking her strikes, “You haven’t blocked once. That’s concerning.”

“Ugh, you sound like Morrison sometimes,” said Tracer.

They exchanged several strikes, neither one landing a full hit with Genji either blocking or evading Tracer’s strikes, and Tracer alternately blinking and recalling out of the way of Genji’s strikes. Noting Genji’s words, Tracer attempted a block. Genji’s fist met the block and he looked impressed for all of .2 seconds before quickly countering the block and nearly getting Tracer into a hold before she recalled out of his hold once again.

“And what if they throw your guns off the side of a building? Or a cliff?” said Genji, ducking out of the way and blocking each of Tracer’s strikes.

“There’s a cliff in this scenario now?” said Tracer, ducking beneath a strike from Genji.

“Suppose you cannot get to your guns!” said Genji, finally knocking Tracer’s legs out from underneath her with a swipe of his own legs, sending her sprawling on the floor. Tracer recalled back to her feet.

“Look, this is a situation where,” Tracer punched and Genji blocked it, “Hypothetically,” Tracer threw a punch and Genji dipped out of the way, “Someone is able to actually get a hold on me enough to get my guns away from me,” Genji threw a punch and Tracer blinked out of range of it, “And y’know, if the super-duper-cyber-ninja has trouble doing that, I’m not too scared of these Talon goons doing it.”

“I am not having trouble,” said Genji.

Tracer snorted, “Sure love, just keep telling yourself that,” she said, blinking around him. Genji was ready, however, and darted forward and managed to catch her in the shoulder with a hard kick which once again sent her tumbling back. “That,” said Genji, walking over, “Is why you must learn to block.”
“Oof…” Tracer rubbed her shoulder, “All right, point made,” she paused, and looked past Genji’s shoulder, “Oh but what will our dear Doctor Ziegler think of you picking on me?”

“Angela?” Genji looked over his shoulder at the training floor’s observation room, but saw no figures in the window, he heard the warping sound of the chronal accelerator and quickly turned back to where Tracer was, only to find she had disappeared. He heard the warping sound again and suddenly Tracer slammed hard into his side with a blink-accelerated kick, knocking him down. He grunted and gripped his side on the ground.

“Boom! Pow! Down for the count!” said Tracer, pumping a fist into the air, as Genji swore and moved to get to his feet.

“That was a dirty trick,” muttered Genji, getting to his feet.

“What’s that? Can’t hear you! Crowd’s going wild!” said Tracer, who then cupped her hands over her mouth and imitated cheering noises.

“I said it was a dirty trick,” said Genji, folding his arms. Tracer could hear the smile in his voice even beneath his mask.

“The art of deception,” Tracer imitated Hanzo’s voice and Genji snorted. “So,” Tracer circled her arm in its socket, “You up for round 2? Or have you learned your lesson?”

“I’m supposed to be teaching you, said Genji, “And I would be teaching you, if you didn’t insist on continuing to use time travel to sidestep learning actual hand-to-hand combat,” he took a position across from her on the floor.

“You ninjas are all about using the abilities at your disposal, aren’t you?” said Tracer, putting her hands on her hips, “Why shouldn’t I use mine?”

“You do use yours and you use them very well. It’s just best to be prepared for a situation in which you can’t use them—say if your Chronal accelerator gets damaged.”

“Ugh, how much time have you been spending with Morrison?” said Tracer, folding her arms.

Genji just chuckled and assumed a fighting position. “Just try and block a bit more this time,” he said, when suddenly he lowered his fists and craned his neck a bit to look behind Tracer to see Mercy and someone else walking through the door to the training room.

“Who is that?” he said.

Tracer scoffed, “Not going to work, Genji,” she said, raising her fists and smirking.

“I’m serious,” said Genji.

“Sure you are,” said Tracer, “And I’m about to give you a serious beat dow—”

“Lena?”

Tracer immediately turned on her heel to see a familiar red-headed figure.

“Em?” said Tracer.

Emily waved a little.

“Em!” Tracer bound and blinked across the training room floor and whipped her arms around
Emily and covered her face with a dozen pecking kisses as Emily laughed. “You weren’t supposed to get here for another day!”

“Caught an early flight,” said Emily, grinning.

“How is the training going?” said Mercy, stepping past Tracer.

“Oh it would be going wonderfully if Tracer actually remembered the point of it,” said Genji, folding his arms.

“You’re just sore because I got the best of you,” said Tracer, her arms still wrapped around Emily.

“It’s not about getting the best of me, it’s about learning to fight when your usual weapons or abilities are unavailable to you!” said Genji, exasperated.

“Sounds like someone’s a sore loser,” said Tracer, smirking.

“I am not a sore loser,” said Genji.

“He’s a sore loser,” Tracer whispered under her breath to Emily. Emily giggled.

“You only won through deception,” said Genji.

“Which you should have won through, since you’re an actual ninja,” said Tracer, raising an eyebrow.

“Yes, I should have won, but I went easy on you,” said Genji.

“Oh come off it, you fell for that fair and square!” said Tracer.

“All right, settle down, both of you,” said Mercy, stepping between them, “I’m sure Emily has a great many things she’d rather do than hang out in a training room getting suffocated by both of your egos.”

“Egos?” Genji repeated.

“Actually…” Emily said slowly and tucked her hair back, “I’ve never actually seen Lena in action. If they want to have a rematch, it might be interesting to watch.”

Mercy blinked a few times, “Are you sure?” she said, raising an eyebrow.

“Sure,” said Emily, shrugging, “You get to see Genji spar all the time.”

Mercy reddened, “Well–yes, but my observation is–” she cleared her throat, “It’s an important part of—It’s important.”

Genji snickered, “Yes, there is no other reason,” he said, wrapping one arm around her waist.

“I swear she’s rubbing off on you,” muttered Mercy, rolling her eyes.

“Well today’s your lucky day, Em! I think I need to teach Genji here another lesson!” said Tracer.

“If you wish for a rematch I would be happy to grant one,” said Genji.

“No holdbacks,” said Tracer, putting her hands on her hips, “You use everything you can use, and so will I!”
“Agreed,” said Genji.

Mercy hooked her arm in Emily’s and began walking, “Well I suppose this is happening,” she said. She paused next to Genji, then leaned forward and kissed him on his faceplate. “Good luck,” she said to Genji, smiling. The heat sinks in Genji’s shoulders clicked out and steamed.

“Yes—Thank you,” he said, looking after her as she walked away with Emily.

Mercy walked Emily over to an elevator that would lead up to the observation room, “They’re going to need some space,” she said, hitting a button on the panel of the elevator.

—

“This brings me back,” said Mercy, folding her arms and watching as Genji and Tracer leapt and darted over and past each other, Genji dazzling with cybernetically enhanced acrobatics and Tracer combining her own speed and agility with her time-bending chronal accelerator.

“It brings you back?” said Emily.

“To Zurich,” said Mercy, smiling, she glanced back at Genji, “Before the fall.”

“Were you together back then?” said Emily.

“Oh—no, it was a very different time,” said Mercy, “It was... very difficult for him. He’s in a much better place now.”

“What was Lena like back then?” said Emily.

“Oh just as optimistic and plucky,” said Mercy, smiling, she paused, “A bit less cocky though. She was still getting used to us back then, and still adjusting to the chronal disassociation,” she turned her attention back to Genji and Tracer sparring, “She’s always had such a good heart,” said Mercy.

They watched the fight continue for several minutes with neither Genji nor Tracer getting the upper hand. For the first five minutes, it was thrilling to watch. Genji would give a glance and small salute to Mercy as he landed from a backflip, and Tracer would randomly shout out “Em! Watch this!” For the next 8 minutes, Emily and Mercy pulled up chairs and sat down. The fight continued unchanged for another five minutes. Emily checked her phone and scrolled through her messages for another minute and glanced up to see the fight was still going on, still with neither actually getting enough of a hit in to make a difference. Both Genji and Tracer were leaping and darting around each other, moving to strike but narrowly evading each other’s attacks.

“Who usually wins?” said Emily.

“It switches off pretty consistently, actually,” said Mercy.

“So... how long do these sparring matches usually last?” said Emily.

“Well our shortest one was 5 minutes,” said Mercy

“...and your longest one?”


Emily raised her eyebrows and looked back at Genji and Tracer, “Don’t they get tired?”

“The cybernetics allow Genji much more stamina than most humans,” said Mercy, “And Tracer’s
chronal disassociation has demonstrated similar effects in regards to her energy levels and metabolism, though we still haven’t been able to fully quantify said effects.”

“Ah,” Emily glanced back at Tracer and Genji, continuing to fight. Another few minutes of fighting passed and Emily glanced at her watch.

“…Do you want to get coffee?” Mercy said at last.

“Have any tea?” said Emily.

“Yes,” said Mercy, “It’s in the rec room though. If you want to stay and watch–”

“Let’s go to the rec room,” said Emily.

Mercy snickered. “Very well,” she said, turning around.

They left the observation room. At this point both Tracer and Genji were so wrapped up in the fight that neither noticed they left.
The car was parked at the front of the Numbani museum. McCree leaned back in his seat, eating out of a takeout box.

“McCree,” replied Hanzo.

“I would be better positioned on a roof,” said Hanzo.

“Ana’s got the rooftops covered,” said McCree.

“I don’t know why they keep pairing me off with you,” muttered Hanzo.

“I’m vetted,” said McCree, with a shrug.

“You have a bounty on your head,” said Hanzo, with a furrowed brow.

“Says something about how much they trust you then, huh?” said McCree with a smirk. Hanzo scowled and McCree held something wrapped in a banana leaf out to Hanzo. “C’mon, don’t be like that. Want some moin moin?”

“What?” said Hanzo.

“It’s like a bean…pudding?” said McCree, squinting at the moin moin before taking another bite, “’s good.”

“Why are you always eating on missions?” muttered Hanzo.

“Hey, if you have an opportunity to get food you wouldn’t usually be able to get most other places, why wouldn’t you get it?”

“Because you’re on a mission,” said Hanzo.

“A stakeout,” said McCree, taking another bite, “We’re probably going to be here a while. Might as well get comfortable.”

Hanzo folded his arms, then his expression softened and he leaned back in his seat. “Do you trust me?” he said, after a long while.

McCree choked a little bit and swallowed hard. “What now?”

“You said, or you implied at least, they keep pairing me off with you because they don’t trust me. Do you trust me?” said Hanzo.

“You really know how to take it from 0 to 90, huh?” said McCree, rubbing the back of his neck.

“Answer the question,” said Hanzo.

“Yeah I trust you,” said McCree with a shrug. Hanzo didn’t look quite happy with this answer. “What? Do you not want me to trust you?” said McCree.

“No, it is only—” Hanzo looked thoughtful, “Our first introduction was… difficult.”

“That’s one way to put it,” said McCree, taking another bite of moin moin.

“I am sorry for striking you,” said Hanzo, “But I suppose that further illustrates my confusion at
“Well…” McCree shrugged, “I wouldn’t call it trust in the traditional ‘camaraderie and loyalty’ sense. It’s more in a… ‘I’ve been there’ sense.”

“You have ‘been there?’” Hanzo repeated, then scoffed, “Forgive me, but I highly doubt that.”

“Well–okay, I’ve never… magically dragon-blasted my brother at point-blank range and left him for dead,” said McCree, scratching the side of his head. Hanzo visibly bristled, “But I’ve done more than my fair share of things I ain’t proud of,” said McCree.

“I have read your dossier. You were little more than a child when Deadlock took you in,” said Hanzo.

“And you were born into the gotdamn Shimada clan,” said McCree, “Look, I know one of them’s a helluva lot fancier than the other, but the principle’s the same. It twists you up when you grow up with people like that. Screws you up somethin’ real bad. You can’t really say you didn’t know any better, but at the same time you never knew much else.” McCree sighed, “And then–then when you finally leave it turns your whole damn world upside-down. And then you see the person you used to be and it’s…” McCree took his hat off and ran his hand through his hair, “And it’s not pretty.” McCree glanced down and realized he had been holding an empty banana leaf for a while now, then put the banana leaf into his takeout box, and tossed the box into the backseat. He put his hat back on and then fumbled through his pockets before finally pulling out a small leather pouch. “Mind if I smoke?” said McCree, taking out rolling papers from the pouch and tucking tobacco into them.

“No,” said Hanzo, “Are you all right?”

McCree shrugged, then stuck his hand-rolled cigarette in his lips and lit it. He took a long inhale, then cracked the window as he breathed out a cloud of smoke. “Anyway,” he said, tapping some ash off the tip of his cigarette, “Redemption’s a bitch.”

“Excuse me?” said Hanzo.

“It’s a bitch, pardon my French,” said McCree, “You start out thinking it’s something that you’re working toward, something shining in the distance and one day you’re going to reach it–but it’s not like that and never was. It’s something you’re wrestling with every day and it’s going to kick your ass every day for years and all you can do to just… keep doing your best even though you barely know what you’re doing to begin with. You never get to rest.”

Something like a smile tugged at the corner of Hanzo’s mouth. “In a strange way, that is somehow comforting,” said Hanzo.

“That’s me,” said McCree with a wave of his hand and a puff on his cigarette, “Jesse McCree: The comforter.”

Hanzo scoffed and chuckled a little then was quiet for a long while. “Do you think..” he said slowly, “Do you think they will ever trust me as much as they trust you?”

“I dunno,” said McCree, “Maybe if you’re lucky, they’ll stick you with a new recruit they trust even less than you.”

Hanzo smirked, then was quiet again. “For what it’s worth, I am glad to be here,” he said.

“Thought you wanted to be on a roof?” said McCree, grinning and taking another puff of his
“A roof would be optimal,” said Hanzo, folding his arms, “But I suppose being here is sufficient.” He settled back in his seat a bit. They kept watching the museum front for a while longer in a contented silence during which McCree put out his cigarette in the car’s ashtray and then stretched and yawned.

“That bean stuff’s hitting me hard. Mind if I rest my eyes a couple minutes?”

“This is why we don’t eat on missions,” said Hanzo, furrowing his brow.

“Aw come on, I thought we bonded,” said McCree.

“How is calling redemption a ‘bitch’ bonding?” said Hanzo,

“I felt like we were bonding,” said McCree.

Hanzo scoffed and was quiet for a bit before finally conceding. “Oh very well. But in 20 minutes you keep watch and I’ll rest.”

“Sounds like a plan,” said McCree, grinning, then pulling the brim of his hat down over his eyes and leaning back in his seat. It only took two or three minutes for his breathing to go slow and rhythmic, but then about five minutes later he slumped over and was leaning on Hanzo’s shoulder, snoring softly.

“I didn’t say you could—” Hanzo started, but then he stopped. McCree mumbled something incoherent in his sleep and Hanzo sighed and settled back in his seat, allowing McCree to sleep on his shoulder. He’d wake him up later when it was time.
McCree’s eyes opened to the sound of rain on the windshield. He realized he was leaning his head on Hanzo’s shoulder and abruptly sat up in his seat, clearing his throat. “Sorry,” he said, straightening his hat.

Hanzo shrugged. “It’s fine.”

“I miss anything?” said McCree, squinting out the window at the lights of Numbani, now blurred by the rain.

“Still no movement,” said Hanzo.

“Mm…” McCree leaned back in his seat a bit and kept watching the city. Numbani was lit up in green and orange and blue and gold at night, with the skyrail trolleys drifting through it like fat shining silver scarab beetles, catching the lights of the buildings as they wove between them. “Sure is pretty,” said McCree.

“I suppose,” said Hanzo.

“Oh—that’s right, you don’t like this place,” said McCree.

“What?” said Hanzo.

McCree furrowed his brow. “My wanderings brought me to this place,” he spoke dramatically, “It was not to my liking.”

“Very funny,” said Hanzo, folding his arms.

“Any reason why it wasn’t?” said McCree, “To your liking, I mean?”

Hanzo huffed. “You seem fond of it. I don’t see why you would want me to go into what I don’t like about it.”

“Stakeout,” said McCree, gesturing outside again, “Gotta pass the time with something. Even if it’s you taking a shit on a city that’s doing pretty well for itself all things considered.”

Hanzo huffed. “It calls itself the City of Harmony,” he said, “And it flourishes while the rest of the world struggles to pick up the pieces of itself after the Omnic Crisis and the fall of Overwatch. One needs only look at King’s Row, or Russia, or Korea to know the wounds still run deep, or are even still being inflicted. Numbani and the Shambali can claim peacefulness and harmony all they like, but the simple fact is nothing heals that quickly.”

“I get ya,” said McCree, leaning back in his seat. He itched under his hat, “Y’know, I didn’t think anyone could not project their brother issues onto a whole city but—”
“You’re a cowboy, not a psychoanalyst,” Hanzo bristled.

“All right, all right, I get it. I touched a nerve, I’m backing off,” said McCree. Both were quiet for a long while, with the rain pattering on the windshield being the only noise that filled the car. McCree rolled down the window to let some fresh air in, but found that the rain along with the heat of Numbani only brought mugginess into the car. He sighed and rolled the window up again.

“…You are right though,” Hanzo said after that long pause.

“Called it,” said McCree with some slight smugness. Hanzo’s brow furrowed and McCree rubbed the back of his neck.

“Sorry…” said McCree.

“It’s fine,” Hanzo said with a slight shake of his head.

“I hear you though, it’s a bit clean-cut for my tastes, too,” said McCree, “Not usually one for cities, myself. If I’m in one too long they can start to feel…” McCree made a ‘closing-in’ motion with his hands and Hanzo nodded in understanding, “I guess I prefer them if they feel a little more… ‘dirty’ isn’t the right word. ‘Lived-in’ I guess,” McCree went on, “But then, I s’pose Omnic public utilities don’t exactly need sleep like humans so…” he trailed off, “Still pretty though.”

“That’s not the only reason you like it,” said Hanzo.

“Hm?” McCree glanced over at him.

“You aren’t the kind who likes things simply for appearances. You like them for what they represent,” said Hanzo.

“Now who’s playing psychoanalyst?” said McCree.

“Hanzo grinned and continued, “But that’s not what we’re talking about. So tell me—what do you like about it?”

McCree huffed a little. “All right well… You say nothing heals that quickly, I say you’re right, nothing does heal that quickly, but… you still gotta take those steps forward, and yeah, this place took some… pretty big steps, all things considered, and it’s probably not all as nice as it looks on the surface. Nothing ever is… still… for me, the whole ‘harmony’ thing wasn’t just them running away or denying everything that happened in the Crisis, it was… It was a whole damn city deciding it doesn’t have to be like that. It didn’t have to be defined by all this god-awful shit that happened, that it could move forward. A whole damn city.”

“And you wish you could do the same?” said Hanzo.

“Trying my best to do the same,” said McCree with a shrug, “As stated before: Redemption’s a bitch.”

Hanzo half-scoffed half-chuckled.

“Oh–and the coffee,” said McCree.

“What?” said Hanzo.

“That’s the other reason I like this city. I’d put it at about half-redemption and hope, half-coffee.”
“The coffee,” Hanzo repeated flatly.

“Have you *had* the coffee here yet?” said McCree.

Hanzo frowned, then sighed and shook his head. “Unlike you, I don’t spend missions eating.”

“Beg your gotdamn pardon but coffee just so happens to be vital to mission success, thank you very much,” said McCree.

Hanzo chuckled.

“So I guess we’re hitting up Aromo at daybreak,” said McCree, folding his arms.

“Aromo?” said Hanzo.

“Coffee shop. Trust me, you’re gonna want it after a stakeout,” said McCree.

Hanzo opened his mouth to question or debate further, seemed to think on it, then closed it and leaned back in his seat with a slight huff of amusement. “Very well,” he said.
The staff collided with the wooden sword with a satisfying *tok* sound. Mercy swept back as Genji moved to counter her attack, dipping and blocking, before moving to strike her side with the sword. She blocked it, pivoted her footing and shifted the staff, nearly managing to butt him in stomach with the end of it before he blocked it.

“Good!” he said as she shifted her staff in response to that block to aim for the head. He blocked that too, “Good! More aggression!”

“I won’t get better if you keep going easy on me like this,” said Mercy as the staff and sword met in a flurry of blocks and parries.

“I’m not going easy on you,” said Genji, moving to swipe her legs out from under her.

“Please, I’ve seen your training sessions. You’re going maybe a fourth of the speed you go with Tracer,” said Mercy, leaping up to avoid his swipe and swinging down with the staff.

“Because Tracer is *Tracer*!” said Genji, blocking her blow.

Mercy arched an eyebrow before parrying her staff across the wooden blade of the sword and managing to strike him in the side. Both stumbled back from each other and Mercy stamped the butt of her staff on the ground and put a hand on her hip, looking at him expectantly.

“I mean… yes, I’m going slow, but that’s because you want to worry about making the right moves before you worry about speed,” said Genji.

“Genji, I’ve been using a staff for well over a decade. You know my muscle memory is sound,” said Mercy. She smirked a little. “You aren’t going soft on me just because we’re–”

Steam suddenly puffed out of the heat vents on Genji’s shoulders, “I–No! I mean, obviously I care about you very much, but I can stay focused!”

“Then think fast,” said Mercy, leaping forward. Genji sidestepped out of the way and moved to counter her, but she pivoted, blocked his blade, and moved to kick. He caught her foot but stumbled slightly. Before their spar had been more of a dance, but Mercy wanted to challenge herself, not just go through the motions.

“More aggression is good, right?” she said with a smile as he shoved her foot away and she pushed off her back leg. Her plan was working though–she was forcing Genji to move faster if he didn’t want to be constantly on the defensive. Still she had pretty strong reach with her staff compared to his sword, she was driving him back.

“You want aggression?” said Genji as she backed him toward a wall. He turned on his heel and blocked a strike from her staff behind him before running up the wall and springing off of it in a graceful backflip. Mercy pivoted to meet him but he already sprang forward, their positions now reversed. Mercy brought up her staff to block the strike from the wooden sword but in stepping backward, she found her back against the wall. “Aggressive enough?” said Genji.

“Almost,” said Mercy, shoving forward with her staff. Genji hadn’t expected her to throw her entire weight into pushing off the wall, and in blocking her staff with his sword, he suddenly found himself on his back with her straddling him, bearing down her staff against his sword. “Better,” said Mercy.
It went against literally everything Genji was trained for, but some part of him would have liked to stay down there forever. Still, the competitive part of him couldn’t very well have her smirking like that, so he shoved up with only one side of his sword, forcing her staff to slide down its length as he pushed upward and managed to get Mercy off-balance long enough for him to turn his weight over on her. His prosthetics were light enough for him to be thrown off surprisingly easy, however, they were strong, and he managed to pin her hands above her head. “I agree,” he said, “Better.”

Her brow furrowed but that smirk on her face remained. “Best 2 out of 3?” she said.

“There seems to be no way around it,” Genji said with an insufferably smug sigh as he kept her arms pinned, “You definitely need more practice. This is a very compromising position, Doctor Zieg–”

The door to the training area opened and McCree and Hanzo walked in. “I’m serious, those heavies must have been– Oh, Hey Genji,” McCree seemed to be coming right out of another conversation-slash-debate, “Settle something for us. Hanzo won’t believe me about that time Blackwatch–” McCree cut himself off and stood there for a beat. Genji glanced down at Mercy, still pinned underneath him, Mercy’s eyes were wide. Genji’s shoulder vents puffed out steam at the worst possible time. Hanzo seemed to be desperately avoiding eye-contact with everyone in the room.

“Uh…we’re.. interrupting something, huh?” said McCree.

“S-sparring,” was all Genji managed to say.

“Sparring!” Mercy blurted out underneath him.

“Understood. I’ll just…” McCree made finger guns at them, “Leave you two to it, then!” he grabbed Hanzo by the shoulder and practically yanked him out of the room.

Mercy and Genji stared at the closed door behind them. A long pause passed between them.

“Um, Genji,” said Mercy, giving a glance up to her wrists.

“Oh–!” Genji released Mercy’s arms, “Sorry.”

Mercy just made finger guns at him and both burst out laughing.
“Sorry it’s taking so long…Angela’s better at this than me,” said Genji, having to raise his voice slightly over the buzz of the razor.

Hanzo’s neck hurt a little from tilting his head for so long. “Because letting Angela go at my head with a razor is a wonderful idea.”

“It is, because she’s a surgeon, and she touches up my hair all the time,” said Genji, there was a smile in his voice, “You’re not… afraid of her, are you?”

“Afraid–” Hanzo huffed, “I’m just able to pick up that she’s clearly uncomfortable around me and protective of you,” his voice dropped slightly, “And you can hardly blame her for that.”

“The worst she would do is shave a dick into the side of your head,” said Genji, pushing hair off of the back of Hanzo’s neck. Hanzo shot him a glare from the corner of his eye that he could manage to see Genji in. “Which… Genji added, “Obviously, she wouldn’t do.”

“You would do that,” muttered Hanzo.

“Which is why I’m amazed you asked me to help out with this,” said Genji, that smile still in his voice as he continued to shave the back of Hanzo’s head.

“How is this so easy for you?” the words fell out of Hanzo and Genji paused, the tickle of the razor and the sound of its buzz against Hanzo’s scalp ceasing.

“What do you mean?” asked Genji.

“You can just say, ‘Let’s go to the beach!’ as if we don’t have decades of trauma and centuries of our family’s crimes to deal with,” said Hanzo.

“You’re finally off probation,” said Genji, “I thought you’d want to celebrate.”

“Yes, let’s celebrate your friends no longer pointing their weapons in my direction if I so much as sneeze suspiciously,” muttered Hanzo.

“Talon did ask you to join them 3 times–and you did have that whole thing with-”

“Baptiste defected,” Hanzo cut him off, “And I don’t know how many more times I have to tell you that was years ago.”

“You know it isn’t personal on their end,” said Genji.

“Except for the part where they all mostly know me as the man who nearly killed you,” said Hanzo.

“It’s gotten better,” Genji set the razor aside and put his prosthetic hand on Hanzo’s shoulder in a comforting gesture, but the reminder that that arm was prosthetic just made Hanzo’s guts tie up in knots more, “And it’s going to keep getting better. You know what I think?”

Hanzo’s shoulder’s slumped and he rolled his eyes, “What do you think, Genji?”

“I think you’re just getting anxious because this is a chance to see my teammates when they’re not on duty. This is a chance to let people get to know you outside of your skills on a mission–and
you should have a life outside of missions—outside of…” Genji gestured between them, “Outside of trying to rebuild our family. When was the last time you were able to just… be with people? In a group?”

A long silence passed and Hanzo furrowed his brow.

“You know you left the entire right side of my head unshaved,” was all Hanzo responded with.

Genji just shrugged and turned the razor back on.

——

The Rock of Gibraltar loomed over the beach. McCree never really thought of their watchpoint as ‘looming,’ but looking at it now, he could definitely understood why locals kept their distance from it. You couldn’t even see the Watchpoint from their angle, but the knowledge of who was living up there, what kind of trouble they could bring to civilians in the area, was enough to make McCree’s stomach tense up slightly as he looked around the beach. Still, it felt freeing to feel the water rush up around his ankles with each wave. Overwatch duties could wait for now. Everyone needed a break eventually, even rogue vigilante peacekeeping organizations, he supposed.

It was a hot, crowded day, and a handful of Overwatch members were taking advantage of the crowds at the beach to slip in and try and snag a few hours of relaxation for themselves. A good amount of them were either off-watchpoint on missions (Like Pharah and Zenyatta) or looking after their own careers (like Lúcio and D.Va). And of course Jack was probably obsessing over Reaper’s next step, as usual. McCree itched for a cigar, or even a cigarette, but he was at least not enough of an asshole to subject crowds like this to secondhand. If he was, Mercy would probably knock it right out of his mouth anyways.

“Ahh,” Mercy stretched her arms high above her head, her seersucker swimsuit cover-up ruffling in the ocean breeze, “I can’t remember the last time I was able to get out like this!”

McCree shuffled behind her, sand finding its way between foot and flip-flop, tilting the brim of his hat back with his thumb. “It’s good to see you gettin’ some sun, Doc,” he said, looking out at the water.

“I could say the same for you,” said Mercy, “Finally off those ‘probationary agent’ duties. I still think it wasn’t fair of Jack to saddle you with all that—”

“They weren’t all bad,” said McCree with a shrug, “He’s—” McCree nearly said, ‘He’s not all bad’ but caught himself. Mercy was still probably the toughest nut to crack with regards to Hanzo’s presence on the Watchpoint.

“Finally settling in,” Mercy said crisply, “He’s finally settling in.”

One corner of McCree’s mouth tugged up in a smirk.

“I know he grew on you,” said Mercy, adjusting the brim of her own wide hat, “You don’t need to act like he didn’t for my sake.”

“He didn’t—I mean, I just figured it was too much energy to keep being as pissed with him as I was —”

“Jesse,” Mercy’s shoulder’s slumped in that almost motherly conciliatory way of hers.

“He’s really…” McCree started and then itched at the brim of his hat, not really sure how to finish
that sentence. He shook his head, deciding to take the focus of the conversation off of himself.
“You think he’ll ever grow on you?” McCree tilted his head and Mercy followed McCree’s gaze out over the sparkling waters.
“I don’t know,” Mercy admitted, “A part of me wants to trust him, for Genji’s sake, but so much of me just… can’t.”
“For Genji’s sake,” said McCree.
“Yes,” Mercy tucked a bit of hair back from her face.
“Heeeeyyy!” a familiar voice yelled across the beach and both Mercy and McCree glanced over in the direction of its source to Brigitte and Torbjörn a couple dozen yards away, sitting on a few beach towels with an umbrella and cooler nearby. Torbjörn was busying himself with rubbing on another layer of sunscreen, but Brigitte was waving her arms above her head, signaling them to come over. Mercy and McCree exchanged glances, then picked up their pace to close the distance between them.
“Angela!” Brigitte’s voice was bright, “You’re out of the lab!”
“I should probably be concerned with how surprised people act when that happens, shouldn’t I?” said Mercy, smiling a little.
“Probably,” said Brigitte, opening the cooler and handing them each a packet, “Here. Take these quick. We miscalculated on the cooler’s insulation so they’re melting.”
“I didn’t miscalculate anything!” Torbjörn blustered, still rubbing sunscreen on himself, “These are clearly inferior and cheap popsicles!”
Brigitte rolled her eyes, “Just take them,” she said, as McCree and Mercy opened their popsicles. McCree’s was strawberry, Mercy’s was orange cream.
“I see you two actually came all set up,” said McCree, licking at the bottom of his popsicle before red could drip onto his knuckles.
“But of course!” said Torbjörn, “We Lindholms work hard and play hard!”
“Don’t believe him,” said Brigitte, “He’s got a nannycam on the watchpoint anti-aircraft turrets. He’s been checking his tablet every 5 minutes.”
“Stop calling it a nannycam!” said Torbjörn.
“Stop calling the turrets ‘babies,’” said Brigitte with a smirk.
“Why of all the–” Torbjörn huffed and seized another popsicle out of the cooler, muttering as he unwrapped it and bit off a chunk of it.
“Where’s Genji?” asked Brigitte, craning her neck to look around, “He didn’t come here with you?”
“He’s coming, he just had some things to wrap up at the Watchpoint first,” said Mercy.
“Guess he’s gotta babysit his brother now that Jack let me off the hook,” said McCree with a shrug, sliding the last bits of popsicle off its stick with his teeth.
“Don’t tell me the probation’s over already?” said Torbjörn.
“Congrats on the new team member?” McCree shrugged.

“So he’s actually staying?” said Brigitte. “But he’s so… ‘Hmph!’” she passed her hand in front of her face and her expression theatrically shifted to a furrowed brow and deep frown. Mercy snickered.

“Well, the only sniper we’ve got is Ana, and she’s focused on medic stuff half the time,” said McCree, “I mean, I don’t think it would hurt.”

“Huh! I guess you would know,” Brigitte shrugged, “I mean, you spent more time with him than anyone here.”

“Well, yeah—that was my job,” said McCree, a bit more harshly than he meant to say.

Brigitte blinked, “Sorry, did I come off as rude with that last comment?”

“What?” said McCree, “No.”

“It’s just you seem a little agitated—”

“I—” McCree huffed and cut himself off, “I’m fine. It’s fine. You got anything to drink in that cooler?”

“Thought you’d never ask!” said Torbjörn.

—I

“I can’t do this,” said Hanzo, as they walked across the beach. Hanzo’s stomach was still twisting at the sight of the scars that scored Genji’s arms and face. Genji’s prosthetic legs were on full display with his ridiculously short workout shorts. The way Genji talked about the shame he felt about his own body in years past, it was a bit of a relief to see Genji walking around dressed like he did back in their youth, but it also faced Hanzo with his own mistakes. But what could he do? Ask Genji to don a full wetsuit for his own comfort? When every scar on display was Hanzo’s own doing? Hanzo tried to focus on scanning the crowd for potential threats rather than look directly at Genji.

“It’s really not that bad—” said Genji.

“Why am I doing this? Why are you wearing that?!?” said Hanzo, gesturing at Genji’s open-sided tank top.

Genji glanced down at the words ‘BAE WATCH’ splayed across his chest in large block letters. “Because it’s fun?” he suddenly perked up, “Oh! There’s Angela.”

Hanzo followed Genji’s line of sight to a small gathering at a beach umbrella. McCree and Mercy were facing away from them, blocking out whoever was under the umbrella. McCree was still wearing a cowboy hat with his swim trunks. Of course he was. They all seemed to be having a pleasant time talking, and Genji started walking towards them when Hanzo suddenly stuck a hand out in front of Genji’s chest.

“What?” said Genji.

“Hold this,” Hanzo handed Genji his vest.

“Sure—” Genji started but Hanzo split off from him and started wading into the water, “Wait—but
the others are–!” Genji cut himself off as Hanzo submerged his head. Genji’s shoulders slumped a little, still holding Hanzo’s vest, “It’s fine!” he called out to the water, “I’ll just tell them you’re swimming!”

—

“…but you guys are still sharing the dormitories?” said Brigitte, slipping a cozy on her beer can.

“We aren’t sharing the dormitories—they’re dormitories—there’s like 12 beds down there, not exactly sharing,” said McCree.

“I’d say it’s sharing if there’s no walls,” said Torbjörn.

“It’s not sharing,” said McCree flatly.

“There is still that last admin apartment,” said Mercy, “You could take that.”

“God, no, I’m not pulling that ‘odd couple’ shit,” said McCree.

“…I mean just you. You singular. You would take the apartment and Hanzo would stay in the dormitories,” said Mercy.

“…Oh,” said McCree. He took a long gulp from his own beer then.

“I mean if you wanted to take the apartment with him, I wouldn’t stop you—” Mercy started but McCree sputtered and coughed.

“You okay?” said Brigitte as McCree coughed for an awkwardly long time.

“Fine—” McCree coughed, “Just—fine—” he coughed some more.

“Yo!” Genji’s voice rang out from behind him and McCree swiveled on his heel.

“Gen—” he coughed, “–ji! You made it!”

“Of course I’m here,” said Genji, tossing a white vest over his shoulder and swinging an arm around Mercy’s waist, “I heard a certain doctor would be in a swimsuit and I came running.”

Mercy snorted and rolled her eyes before leaning into his embrace and kissing him on the cheek. “I can’t believe you’re wearing the tank top,” she said, grinning.

“You love this tank top,” said Genji, returning the kiss.

An “Aw!” fell out of Brigitte while Torbjörn just rolled his eyes and grumbled.

“Guess Hanzo chickened out, then?” said McCree.

“Oh no, he’s still here,” said Genji, “Just decided to cool off. He really is looking forward to spending time with all of you!”

No one really had the heart to tell Genji when it was painfully obvious that Hanzo had said no such thing.

“Well,” Brigitte offered helpfully, digging through the cooler and tossing Genji a popsicle, “When he gets here, there’s popsicles and beers and sodas with his name on them!”
Hanzo’s eyes were squeezed shut beneath the water, he could feel the salt clawing at the line of his lips and the creases of his eyelids.

*You can’t stay down here forever,* he told himself, *Literally. You have to breathe.*

He permitted his head to break the surface only slightly, letting his nose rise above the water to breathe, and blinked a few times to get the sting of salt away. On the beach, Genji was eagerly chatting with his arm around Mercy’s shoulders, McCree was looking on, and the Lindholms were sitting on beach towels beneath an umbrella. Genji said something Hanzo couldn’t hear from that distance and all five of them laughed. What? What was so funny? Were they talking about him? No, don’t be an idiot—they all had lives well before he came to that watchpoint, it was ridiculous to assume he’d be at the center of all them just by being there. None of them even looked over in his direction.

*When was the last time you were able to just… be with people? In a group?* Genji’s voice echoed in Hanzo’s mind and no small amount of resentment came over him.

There’s always a bit of bitterness when one is an older sibling and one watches something come more naturally to their younger sibling. Genji was always the more personable between the two of them—Hanzo could hold council with the elders of the clan, but Genji could actually *talk* to people and not come off as stiff and unnatural. Hanzo couldn’t stand how naturally it came to Genji, and for Hanzo it just became a vicious cycle of throwing himself into his training and clan traditions and then wondering why people only seemed more and more distant to him. Brigitte said something this time and McCree cracked up, the lines of his stomach and ribs tensing with his laugh. Genji glanced over his shoulder towards the water.

*Don’t look at me don’t look at me don’t look at me*— the words ran as a prayer in Hanzo’s mind.

They made eye contact.

*Shit,* thought Hanzo, *Don’t wave to me. Don’t point me out. Don’t—*

Genji waved to him and then glanced back at the others, pointing out Hanzo in the water, saying something inaudible from where Hanzo was.

“Shit,” Hanzo said the word with his mouth still below the water and it broke the water’s surface as a silent bubble. Well if he stayed out here any longer it would just get more and more awkward unless he made a big show of doing a backstroke or something—but no, he was in the water and he was staring so he *had* to come out now. Hanzo brought his head up out of the water and took a deep breath. “Very well, Genji,” he muttered under his breath, wading towards the shore.

—

“See?” said Genji putting his hands on his hips, “I told you he’d be happy to join us.”

“So you really had to drag him out here, huh?” McCree smirked, mindlessly chewing on his popsicle stick.

“I didn’t have to drag him—he actually does like the beach. He was always better at fishing than me,” said Genji.

“Sure. Ten bucks says he’s going to fake being caught up in a riptide before he…” McCree trailed off as Hanzo got out of the water, “comes…” Water was dripping down the dip of Hanzo’s
collarbone and glistening over the curve of his pecs, “Over.” The last word fell out of McCree as a murmur, an afterthought as Hanzo brushed water from his brow and swept his hair up off the back of his neck, revealing a freshly-shaved undercut. The sun glared off the water’s surface almost blindingly behind him, leaving the silhouette of his body outlined in blazing gold and greenish-blue. Hanzo’s eyes were downcast—apparently he was attempting to look as casual as possible in coming out of the water, but the result was an inadvertent visual homage to every 80’s movie slow-motion coming-out-of-a-pool scene. With his hair swept up, Hanzo wrung his hair out, sending more water dripping down onto his shoulder muscles and running shining down the lines of his torso, dancing along his ribs and obliques. The popsicle stick fell out of McCree’s mouth and landed in the sand. Mercy gave a glance down to the popsicle stick then up at McCree, still staring, utterly transfixed. The dragons tattooed on Hanzo’s arm shifted with the muscles of his arm as he tied his hair back in a not-quite bun and he circled his arm in its socket as he closed the distance between himself and the group, his eyes now focusing on them. Genji said something that sounded like ‘How’s the water’ and Hanzo responded with what McCree assumed was ‘Good’ or some equivalent, but if McCree was being honest, whatever they were saying was blurred out of his conscious mind by the extremely distracting visuals of droplets of water running down the contours of Hanzo’s chest and abs. Hanzo dug through one of the pockets of his Hokusai wave-printed swim trunks and took out a strip of white cloth, twisting it and tying it into a headband to keep a stray bang of hair from his face before he made eye contact with McCree and said something.

“What?” said McCree.

“I said ‘Do you have a towel?’” said Hanzo.

“Yeah,” said McCree, still staring.

A long pause passed between them.

“…may I have a towel?” Hanzo asked after some time.

“Oh!” McCree snapped out of his haze, “oh–yeah just–” he looked around, and saw Torbjörn holding up a spare towel. Hanzo reached out for the towel but McCree grabbed it first and then caught himself at how awkward that just was, “Sorry-just–” he stuck the towel out to Hanzo and Hanzo hesitantly took it. Hanzo ran the towel over himself briskly, pressing his face into it and getting under his arms. McCree didn’t really realize he was staring again until he felt Brigitte’s eyes on him and he snapped out of the stupor. Brigitte snorted and McCree made sharp eye contact with her, but she just sipped her beer to suppress a laugh and glanced off before digging through the cooler.

“I…” Hanzo cleared his throat, “To be honest, in spite of how aware I was of the proximity of the sea, it did not occur to me that the Watchpoint would be so close to a beach.”

“We forget about it all the time, ourselves. Overwatch is busy like that. Popsicle?” Brigitte offered.

Hanzo warily took the popsicle and unwrapped it. “Thank you,” he said, blue raspberry already dripping onto his fingers.

“Speaking of the Watchpoint, we were just discussing sleeping arrangements now that you’re on the team,” said Mercy.

Hanzo broke off the end of his popsicle in his mouth. “They’re subject to change?” he tilted his
“Well the thing is, is that both you and McCree are in the dormitories, which while, yes, they do have all the amenities, are dormitories, and there’s one administrative apartment left.”

“We don’t need to talk about this now—” McCree cut in.

“You could take the apartment,” said Genji, looking at Hanzo, “We could be neighbors!”

“That’s hardly fair to those who have been living here for some time,” said Hanzo, “McCree should take it,” Hanzo gave a glance back to McCree, “I know you were concerned you would just ‘trash the place,’ but your teammates obviously value you, so you shouldn’t downplay your—”

“We’ll play it by ear,” McCree blurted out.

Mercy knew she could push for an actual resolution on the matter, but noting McCree’s face she decided not to.

“You said I was on the team,” said Hanzo, looking at Mercy.

“Well your probation is over,” said Torbjörn.

“But we don’t have to worry about missions right now,” said Brigitte, tossing Hanzo a beer can, “Right now, it’s about relaxing, and taking a breath.”

“Hm,” Hanzo gave a nod. “I…” he started and then cut himself off.

“Yes?” said Mercy.

“I know… my coming here has disrupted a lot of things, but… it… it does mean a lot to me to get to know all of you.” Hanzo awkwardly bit off more of his popsicle then.

“Han—” Genji started but McCree cut him off.

“It means a lot to have you here, Hanzo,” said McCree.

Everyone’s head swiveled towards McCree.

“Because… you’re… Genji’s family,” McCree tacked on awkwardly, “It’s good to have family here. You two know all about family, right?” said McCree gesturing at the Lindholms.

Brigitte and Torbjörn just stared at him and nodded awkwardly.

“Don’t worry about disrupting things,” said Mercy, swooping in to McCree’s rescue in the awkward silence.

Hanzo perked up and looked at her with some surprise.

“We’re vigilantes,” said Mercy, “Disruption is a natural state for us. You should just focus on settling in.”

She felt Genji’s eyes on her and she glanced back at him and gave him a little smile. Genji squeezed around her waist a little in response.

“Thank you,” said Hanzo.
There was a brief lull in the conversation and Hanzo’s eyes trailed across the beach. He glanced past several people playing volleyball and his eyes widened.

“What?” said Genji, following his line of sight.

“Fishing pole rentals,” said Hanzo, a bit mindlessly.

“We should get one!” said Genji.

“I’m terribly out of practice—” Hanzo started but Genji broke away from Mercy and grabbed his arm.

“Come on!” he said, leading him off, “You could catch a mejina! Like the old days!”

“We’re in Gibraltar–The fish aren’t the same here–” Hanzo was protesting but let Genji drag him off.

McCree watched as they two brothers went off, the muscles in Hanzo’s back, sparkling with salt and shifting as he tried to keep up.

“You’re staring again,” said Mercy, as soon as the Shimada brothers were out of earshot.

“What?” said McCree, snapping his eyes away from Hanzo. “Who’s staring? I wasn’t– Look, I was his probationary officer. It was my job. It’s all force of habit.”

“Wow,” said Brigitte.

“What?!” said McCree.

“Wow,” Brigitte said again.

Mercy and Torbjörn just cracked open new cans of beer.
His armor was stripped off, he was clad in only Overwatch’s orange and gray training jumpsuit. He was trying to get used to the sight of his organic arm more, scars and all. Honestly it didn’t seem fair just smashing through the poor training bots at this point, but everyone else seemed too busy to spar and he had to stay ready for the next mission. Athena sounded a buzzer and Genji looked around at the bot parts strewn about the training area.

“How was that?” he asked, lifting his head up slightly.

“Training Series 4, Session 23: Marked time 5 minutes, 18 seconds. 2189 units of pulsefire deflected. 17 Training bots incapacitated. Time on the defense point: .0043 seconds,” Athena’s voice chimed over the speakers.

“.0043 seconds?” Genji gave a glance to the section of the training area marked off by orange tape, “Oh…” he rubbed the back of his neck.

“You should probably work on staying on the objective, Agent Shimada.”

“17 training bots incapacitated though!” said Genji, rolling the shoulder of his organic arm.

“There are only so many I can put out at a time, Agent Shimada,” said Athena.

“Right, right,” Genji ran a hand through his dark hair.

He flinched at the sound of a door sliding open. Granted, while he was trying to get used to the sight of his own scars, he wasn’t entirely comfortable with parading them around in front of the rest of the Watchpoint yet, but he relaxed at the sight of Mercy.

“Angela,” he said, stepping over some strewn bot parts, “Come for some more staff traini–?” he cut himself off at the sight of her face, “Hey,” he closed the distance between them, “Everything all right?”

“I–I need to sit down. Could you hold me?” she looked up at him.

“I–” Genji’s eyes flicked down at himself, “I’m a bit sweaty–”

“I don’t care,” said Mercy, taking his hand and leading him over to a wall. They slumped down it together, Mercy slingling his arm over her shoulders as they did so, before settling on the ground.

“What happened? I thought you were just working in your lab,” Genji gave her arm a comforting rub.

Her lips were pursed, “It’s fine,” she said, taking his hand, “I’m fine, it’s just…” she huffed, “My last nanite culture finally destabilized. I can’t research it anymore.”

“Your… what culture?”

“You know how I’ve been asking to see your sword after every run-in with Reaper?”

“Yes…?”

“Well, you’re not the only one–Jack’s gloves, Reinhardt’s hammer, Junkrat’s traps—Any mission where we had a run-in with Reaper, I’ve been trying to collect samples of…well, him.”
“You did mention you were still trying to cure him,” said Genji, still skeptical of the whole endeavor.

“Well it’s not just curing him, Genji, it’s trying to undo the anomalies in his cells before Talon can create more of him,” said Mercy, “I figure with Moira on their side, they’re probably at it already but… he’s in so much pain—”

“And he’s tried to kill us,” Genji’s arm tensed around her slightly, ‘Numerous times.’

“I know but—” Mercy looked up at him, “I… I want to believe I can make this right. That I can make things right without fighting.”

Genji gave a wary glance to the broken bits of training bots he had left strewn about the floor.

“Angela…” he started softly.

“I know,” she muttered, “I know it’s stupid—”

“It’s not stupid,” Genji leaned his head on hers a bit, “I think it’s one of the most admirable things about you—your first instinct being to heal rather than fight.”

“And Talon is far more complicated than Reaper, I know,” Mercy pressed her forehead against the point where his neck and shoulder met, “I just… The things Moira did with my biotic research… she always claimed she was bringing it to its natural conclusion—but… but she’s not its natural conclusion—I am. I have to see it through. I have to.”

“It’s like Jack,” said Genji.

“Ugh, don’t compare me to that gun-toting, over-militant—”

“He believes Reaper is his mess. He wants to clean it up. Your biotics are tangled up in all this, of course you want to make things right, too,” Genji pressed a bit more of his weight up against the wall, “Maybe if I was a more just person, I’d see things the same way. I’d see things the way Jesse sees them—”

“Gabriel was Jesse’s mentor, it’s more personal for him,” said Mercy, glancing down.

“The most personal stake I have in this isn’t in Talon though—It isn’t even in Blackwatch,” Genji brought a hand under Mercy’s chin, tilting her face up to look at him, “It’s in you. It’s in protecting my friends and the people I love.”

Mercy brought her hand up and pressed Genji’s hand against her cheek. In that moment, Genji was deeply grateful he had chosen to train with his organic arm exposed.

“Thank you Genji,” she said quietly, “I—I know I shouldn’t be moping over some lost lab samples…”

“Well, he’s still out there, if I manage to get more of that black stuff on Ryū Ichimonji, I’ll be sure to get it back to you,” said Genji.

Mercy huffed a little, “Don’t kill him,” she said, pulling his arm around her a little tighter.

“(I can’t promise that, Angela. I have to think about what’s going to keep the team alive, first,” said Genji, “Like you.”

“I know…” Mercy pressed more of herself against him.
Genji looked out at the sparking bits of training bots strewn about the floor, “One day this will all be over,” he said quietly, “We won’t be stuck in this fight, and you’ll be able to research the medical advancements you want to, so you can help everyone, like you always talk about.”

“And you?” Mercy smiled at him.

“I’ll be standing right beside you,” said Genji, “Right where I want to be.”

Mercy smiled and Genji pulled her in closer against him.
“Took me years to figure out that little mark right there was Horizon,” said Tracer, pointing at the moon. Emily leaned her head on Tracer’s shoulder. “I was nearly an astronaut, you know.”

A smile tugged at Emily’s mouth. “Liar,” she said.

“Uh, hello, test pilot,” said Tracer, grinning and gesturing at herself, “It would have been after the slipstream,” she said, looking up at the stars, “There were talks of ‘exo-atmosphere’ models, ones that could handle repeated atmospheric exit and re-entry in short periods of time for satellite and orbital station maintenance and whatnot—but…accidentally sending the young, daring, irresistibly attractive ace pilot hurtling through time was…well… a PR disaster and put a major damper on our experimental flight budget.”

Emily snorted, “Irresistibly attractive?” she said, giggling.

“Every story needs a good-looking hero,” said Tracer, smoothing her hair back a bit. Emily broke into a fit of giggles.

“You’re ridicu—Come here, hero,” Emily grabbed at the straps of Tracer’s chronal accelerator and pulled her in close, kissing her. The first kiss somewhat missed, but not really, and got Tracer on the side of the chin, this was due largely to the fact that they were in the dark and were now both falling backwards onto the maintenance platform of Watchpoint: Gibraltar’s launch tower. They quickly corrected themselves and there were many kisses broken by giggling until Emily paused for a breath and set herself down Tracer’s arm around her and her head on Tracer’s shoulder and her red hair spilled across Tracer’s chest. Tracer was mindlessly spiraling a lock of Emily’s hair around her finger. Both were silent for a while, staring up at the stars.

“What are you thinking about?” said Emily.

“Is it terrible of me to not want you to leave tomorrow?” said Tracer, watching the sky.

Emily huffed a little and kissed Tracer on the cheek. “Someone’s gotta keep King’s Row from setting itself on fire,” said Emily, smiling ruefully, “And…there’s the candlelight vigil for Mondatta coming up.”

“It’s been nearly a year already?” said Tracer, glancing down at Emily. Tracer gave a glance to her chronal accelerator, “I should get Winston to take a look at this. There’s no way it’s been that long.”

“Y’know if um… If you could get Zenyatta to maybe come… say a few words…” said Emily, tucking her hair back, “I know you said he wasn’t into the big speeches to the big crowds and stuff. But it would mean a lot to people if someone who really knew Mondatta spoke.”

“I think he’d come for you,” said Tracer, smiling at Emily, “I don’t know about saying anything to a big crowd though… I’ll talk to him,” Tracer’s brow furrowed a bit, “Plus, we’d have to be sure to get him a much better security detail.”

Emily smiled and leaned her head against Tracer’s shoulder again. She reached over and took Tracer’s hand that had been playing with her hair. “That wasn’t your fault, you know,” Emily said softly.

Tracer shrugged. “It’s fine,” she said.
Emily sighed. “You should come too,” she said, “Get some closure.”

“I’ll have closure when Talon’s finally gone,” said Tracer, her brow furrowing. “I owe him that much.”

Emily was quiet, then leaned in and kissed Tracer’s neck. Tracer softened and curled up against Emily. “Well…I suppose every story needs a good-looking hero,” said Emily. She forced a smile but it faded. She touched the side of Tracer’s face. “Please promise me you’ll stay safe.”

“‘Safe’ isn’t exactly part of the job description, love,” said Tracer. Emily exhaled and pressed her forehead into Tracer’s shoulder, “But I promise you I’ll make it back to you,” said Tracer, stroking the back of Emily’s head. She looked up at the moon again. “Promise,” she said.
“…you have too much hair is the problem,” said Sombra, holding Widowmaker’s hair back as she threw up into the toilet.

“Do you–” Widowmaker gagged, “Have to make everything into a joke?”

The muscles in Widowmaker’s arms were twitching and her hands were shaking as she gripped the sides of the bowl. The scent of sweat and sick hung on her, clung clammy to her skin. Finally spitting one last wad of bile and phlegm into the bowl, she pushed herself up to her knees, then swayed. Sombra caught Widowmaker’s shoulders before she could collapse on the bathroom tiles.

“You look a lot better,” Sombra lied, “Let’s get you back to bed, eh, Araña?”

Almost all of Widowmaker’s weight was slumped on Sombra as Sombra lead her back to the bedroom. Widowmaker all but collapsed onto the bed, the mattress creaking beneath her as she hauled her legs up onto the bed and pulled the comforter around herself. ‘I don’t even feel the cold,’ Sombra remembered Widowmaker’s whisper. Widowmaker felt the cold now—it was a balmy 74 degree evening and Sombra’s stomach tightened with anxiety as she watched Widowmaker ball up, shivering, tightening the comforter around herself and struggling to build up body heat. Sombra bent over and brushed a strand of Widowmaker’s hair back from her face. “Just… get some rest,” she said, “I’ll find someone who can help us, promise.”

“Mm…” Widowmaker closed her eyes as Sombra set a water bottle next to the bed. She wasn’t sure if Widowmaker could even keep water down, but she might as well have the option.

Sombra sat down at her numerous monitors and brought her hands up, looking quickly through years of Talon medical and labtech files and cross referencing them with cutting edge medical technicians around the world. Anything could be hacked. And anyone. It would be a simple matter, find a doctor making medical advancements on par with or ahead of Talon’s own work, find his weakness, and boom, Widowmaker would have her doctor. Hours passed, Sombra’s eyes and wrists and shoulders ached, and the whirlwind of articles and emails and medical research papers and private correspondences all maddeningly cycled back to the same name.

“Well as Doctor Ziegler stated in ‘Ethical Applications of Medical Nanotech’—”

“Doctor Ziegler’s thesis on biotic tissue regeneration tells us that—”

“You should see Doctor Ziegler’s notes on—”

Sombra frowned. She didn’t want to bring Overwatch into this. This was enough of a mess on its own. She glanced over her shoulder to see the shape of Widowmaker still shivering violently beneath the sheets. For a moment, mindlessly, her hand went up to the comm in her ear. She could call in that favor. Sure it would be a big mess, it would probably be a disaster—Overwatch would probably just hand them off to the authorities and Talon assassins within their prison would take care of them from there. She had to think. There had to be another way. There had to–

Sombra’s train of thought was interrupted by sleepy French muttering coming from behind her. She looked over her shoulder to see Widowmaker tossing and turning and talking in her sleep. Sombra got up from her seat and walked over, rotating her shoulders in their sockets. Widowmaker’s breath was growing more rapid and shallow with panic. Her fingers clawed into the sheets as she muttered and shivered.
“Éloigne-toi de moi—laisse moi partir—Non—Gérard—Aidez moi, Gérard—non…Gérard—”

“Araña—” Sombra started and Widowmaker gasped hard, her eyes snapped open with a gasp and flicked around the room.

“You’re still here, Araña,” said Sombra, “You’re still with me.”

Widowmaker just shuddered again and buried her face into her pillow.

“Hey,” Sombra got up onto the bed, “Hey it’s okay….” she wriggled under the sheets and brought her arms around Widowmaker, “Just hold onto me. My neural implants make me run a little warm. I’ll be your heating pad,” said Sombra. Widowmaker wrapped her arms around Sombra’s waist and pressed the side of face between Sombra’s collarbone and breast, pressing herself against Sombra and wrapping her legs around her. Sombra ran her fingernails through Widowmaker’s hair.

“What’re you thinking about, Araña?” said Sombra, looking down at Widowmaker.

“Araña?” said Widowmaker, “You know Amélie. You know everything there is to know about Amélie. And all I know is Sombra.”

“Nothing I can’t handle,” said Sombra, a wry smile tugging at the corner of her mouth. A long pause passed between them. “I remember reading poems in school when I was younger,” Sombra said, her thumb making a circle on Widowmaker’s bare shoulder mindlessly, “I remember… some things,” she closed her eyes and her brow furrowed, “I wish… I could say they had to rewrite me. That they had to unmake me to make me what I am. But I know that’s not true. A lot of Amélie was… still here when I told them I would kill Gérard. I would have done anything to make them stop. It didn’t work, though. They pushed me down into a dark place…”

Sombra’s voice was muffled into Widowmaker’s shirt, “And… the widow reached down, wrapped her arms around me, and promised she would keep me safe… now I’m riding in a car… And there is another me in the driver’s seat. She has no fear, no grief. She is perfect… and empty. The more I accept her, the more I see my own hands on the steering wheel.”

Sombra didn’t know what to say to that, so she just kept stroking Widowmaker’s hair. Sombra felt Widowmaker smile slightly.

“‘I’m nobody, who are you? Are you nobody too? How boring to be somebody!’ Or something like that. I was… well, losing my parents in the crisis… I became so used to being nobody. When you’re a crisis orphan you’re nothing but a file in the system. You’re a hungry mouth to feed and nothing else. Reading that was the first time the idea of being nobody felt like something… good. Powerful. Unseen and unstoppable. It would be a couple years before I became Sombra, but…” Sombra trailed off, “Olivia,” she said at last.

“Olivia Itzel Colomar,” said Sombra with a smile.

Widowmaker stared at her for a moment. “It’s beautiful,” she said.
“Thanks,” said Sombra. There was a beat. “Don’t breathe it to another living soul.”

“Wouldn’t dream of it,” said Widowmaker, squeezing Sombra tighter.
Sombra had expected Los Muertos to rat out her and Widowmaker at some point. She had expected to be able to leave Dorado before Los Muertos could do it but with Widowmaker’s current complications, they were forced to stay longer. Sombra glanced over at Widowmaker as they sprinted down the streets of Dorado, the concrete shining in the rain. She was shivering. She wasn’t supposed to shiver. Her hair was sticking to her face in dark strands. Sombra glanced over her shoulder to look at her again, and she wasn’t sure exactly who she was looking at. The Widowmaker had no fear. This woman did.

“Hey—” Sombra reached back with one hand and grabbed her by the wrist, “I said I’d get us out of here, right?” They were heading to a tunnel. Out of the rain the cloaking would work better—nothing to give away their outlines, but it also meant one long stretch, easy to get cornered. Sombra ran to a control panel, hacked the magnetic lock and shut the lights off in the tunnel. A shot flew overhead. “Come on,” said Sombra, pulling her into the tunnel. Sombra dug one of the cloaking projectors out of a frayed corner of her coat and quickly stuck it on Widowmaker’s shoulder, then activated it. Expanded to more than one body, Sombra’s cloaking was much weaker. Sombra knew that the more the field of invisibility was expanded, the less it was technically ‘invisible’ and more simply ‘distorted.’ That was fine. Talon operatives had infrared anyway. The distortion was just important to making sure they couldn’t get a clear enough shot.

As they raced down the tunnel, Sombra glanced over her shoulder to see the infrared goggles of Talon operatives glowing in the dark like they were nocturnal animals. There were three options for why Gabe wasn’t involved: The first was that in the end she and Widowmaker were really nothing to him. That he wouldn’t see to their elimination personally because in the end he expected this of both of them and didn’t care. The second, and Sombra thought this was a far less likely option, was that he couldn’t bring himself to do it. The third (and equally as unlikely) option was that he expected them to survive this—that he knew he wouldn’t have an excuse if he went after them personally and they escaped alive. If Sombra was with the Widowmaker, they could have easily dispatched every one of these jokers, but Sombra wasn’t with the Widowmaker, not quite.

Sombra yanked her into a door that opened up into maintenance hallways for maintaining the tunnel’s turbine fans just as the cloaking shut off. Sombra moved to lead her up some stairs but Widowmaker grunted, gripping her chest, and buckled over.

“Shhh!” said Sombra and they both shrank into the shadows, watching as the contingent of Talon guards continued moving down the tunnel. They waited a few seconds longer and then Widowmaker’s hand went to her chest again as she leaned against a wall and then slid down to the floor.

“Hey—what’s wrong?” said Sombra dropping to one knee in front of her.

“Something’s—nh—something is wrong with me,” said Widowmaker, continuing to grip her chest. Sombra gently moved her hands aside and put an ear against Widowmaker’s chest.
“You’re fresh,” Widowmaker said flatly.

“Ssh,” Sombra said again, listening. She heard a beat, and then another only a few seconds later, then another pause of a few seconds, then another beat. Sombra’s eyes widened as she pulled back.

“What’s wr—” Widowmaker said and she winced and gripped her chest again, “Merde.”

“Your heartbeat is picking up,” said Sombra.

“That should not be possible,” said Widowmaker.

“We’ve been away from Talon for over a week. Without their medics keeping you, well, you…” Sombra trailed off.

“My body is destroying itself by attempting to go back to normal,” said Widowmaker.

“We don’t know that for sure—” said Sombra.

“That’s what it feels like,” said Widowmaker, “The pain. The nightmares. They make sense now.” She pursed her lips, “If Amélie is going to live, we can’t let her return kill us—me?” Widowmaker pressed a hand against her forehead and sighed.

“…This was a bad idea,” said Sombra.

“No,” said Widowmaker, shaking her head, “I could not spend another second there. She–We were—I could feel myself fading. Getting further and further every time they…” she trailed off and ran her hand through her hair, “This was the only choice.”

Sombra huffed a little bitterly. “Well…” she said, leaning against the wall next to Widowmaker, “Wish I could have had more of a head’s up…” she said.

Widowmaker smirked, “And here I thought you were prepared for everything.”

“Hey I had plans!” said Sombra, throwing her hands up, a slight smile tugging at her mouth, “But I had a timeframe,” she said with a grin.

“Oh all your beautiful planning gone to waste,” said Widowmaker with a roll of her eyes, “How inconvenient of me to start dying.”

Sombra snickered and elbowed her, “Hey. I promised you I’d figure something out,” she said, glancing back at her cloaking device. “Come on,” she said, standing up, “Let’s get moving.”

They were able to get out of the tunnel and back into the rain, only to find Talon operatives in the streets. Sombra wrapped an arm around Widowmaker’s waist and laid down suppressing fire as Widowmaker shot a grapple to the roof of a nearby building to get them out of range.

“I need you to hold the position and buy me some time. You can still shoot, right?” said Sombra as Widowmaker brought down her recon visor.

“‘Can I still shoot?’” Widowmaker rolled her eyes, “A qui parlez-tu?”

“Look it’s nothing personal. You’ve been a little,” Sombra made a hand-waving motion next to her head, “all week.”

Widowmaker walked over to the edge of the building and dropped down with her rifle out over the edge. Sombra opened up several violet screens and started hacking.
Widowmaker peered through the scope on her rifle and squeezed the trigger. One Talon agent was
downed. She adjusted her scope. Downed another. She slipped away from the edge. Rain meant
low visibility, but that wouldn’t do much against infrared goggles. Still she fired.

Sombra’s skull icon suddenly lit up one of her screens and she grinned. She put a finger to her ear.

“Hola, Sparrow?” she said and she glanced over her shoulder at Widowmaker, “Remember when I
said I’d call you in for a favor one day?” Sombra paused, listening to her earpiece. “Since when
have I given you reason not to trust me?” she said, then immediately added, “Don’t answer that.
Look—I need a transport. I need a safehouse. I need a doctor. And I need them now.” she paused
again, “Because I have a lot of data collected over the years that can make things very very hard for
you if they were ever to see the light of day. If anything happens to me, or my friend, this data gets
released.” She paused and listened again, and then laughed, “Aw, pobrecito. It’s so cute how you
think you’re the only one this can hurt. Look, I’ll send you just one little snippet of the things I’ve
collected and see what you think then,” with that Sombra tapped on the screen, sent a single file,
and waited. There was a long pause and she put a finger to her earpiece again and smirked. “See?”
she said, “Was that so hard?–oh-yes–coordinates are right here. See you soon.” With that Sombra
closed the screens and turned around to face Widowmaker, “I got us a—”

There was the sound of a gunshot and Widowmaker was thrown back, one side of her recon visor
shattered. Sombra’s breath caught in her throat. She ducked down to avoid another gunshot and
scrambled over to Widowmaker and pulled her into her lap. The side of her head was
bleeding. “Shit–no–Okay,” Sombra felt at the wound on the side of widowmaker’s head and then
pressed her hand on her forehead, smearing Widowmaker’s blood on herself as she sighed in
relief. “Just a graze. You’ve been grazed before. You’ll be fine.” She threw a translocator over onto
another roof and held onto Widowmaker as both of them disappeared and reappeared on the other
roof. She picked it up and threw it again.Translocated again. She had to get more distance between
them and Talon. When the gunshots seemed far enough away she glanced back down at
Widowmaker who coughed and blearily opened her eyes, then narrowed her eyes at her and
smirked weakly, “You’re fresh,” she said flatly.

Sombra realized she was still holding her in her lap. Sombra rolled her eyes. “Now you get a sense
of humor,” she said.

“I want to puke,” muttered Widowmaker, her hand going to her head and coming away bloody.

“Translocating does that just—stay awake. Can you do that? Stay awake,” said Sombra. There was
suddenly a whirring noise and a bright white and blue teleporter opened up right next to her.
Sombra hoisted Widowmaker’s arm over her shoulder, “Just stay awake,” said Sombra, rising to
her feet and walking Widowmaker into the teleporter.
It was 4 AM when Genji’s comm rang.

“Antworte nicht darauf,” murmured Mercy, more than half asleep with her arms and legs tangled around him. He had half a mind to listen to her but he glanced over at his comm on the bed stand and noticed a regrettably violet light emanating from it and sighed. He gently pulled himself out of her arms, got out of bed, picked up the comm and held it to his ear.

“Hola, Sparrow,” Sombra’s voice came over the comm.

Genji rubbed his forehead and walked out of the bedroom, giving one glance over his shoulder at Mercy pulling all the sheets tight around herself before stepping out the door. “It’s 4 in the morning,” he muttered.

“Remember when I said I would call you in for a favor one day?” said Sombra.

“I feel as though I am about to regret answering this call,” said Genji, with a yawn.

“Since when have I ever given you reason not to trust me?” said Sombra, and then she quickly added, “Don’t answer that. Look—I need a transport. I need a safehouse. And I need a doctor.”

“And why would I give you any of those things?” said Genji.

“Because I have a lot of data collected over the years that can make things very very hard for you if they were ever to see the light of day. If anything happens to me, or my friend, this data gets released.”

Genji scoffed. “Whatever you have on me, I don’t care,” he said, “I can face my past.”

“Aw, pobrecito. It’s so cute how you think you’re the only one this can hurt. Look, I’ll send you just one little snippet of the things I’ve collected and see what you think then.” Genji’s comm made a blipping noise and Genji brought it away from his ear to find a hologram projection of a stylized purple skull floating above it. The skull suddenly shifted into a small screen featuring several video clips of Jack Morrison, unmasked, alive. Jack Morrison and Ana Amari and Winston, at Watchpoint Gibraltar, in clear violation of the Petras act.

Genji exhaled. “I will see what I can do,” he said. “Tell me your coordinates.”

“See? Was that so hard? Oh–yes, coordinates are right here. See you soon.”

With that, the call ended, and Genji was left with numerical coordinates on the screen of his comm. He walked over to a panel in the wall, placed his palm over it, and the wall opened up to reveal his armor charging in a cooled chamber.
“What did she want?” he heard Mercy speak behind him and he glanced over his shoulder at her. She was sitting up in bed, hugging her knees slightly.

“It was Sombra, wasn’t it?” said Mercy as he started putting on his armor.

“I think she’s in trouble,” said Genji.

“What if it’s a trap?” said Mercy as Genji put his helmet on.

“If she had the resources to try and trap us, she would probably come up with something better than ‘I need your help,’” said Genji.

“I’m coming with you,” said Mercy, getting out of bed. Genji simply stepped over to her and kissed her on the forehead.

“Just get your lab prepped,” he said, putting his face plate on, “I’ll welcome our guests.”

–

“The things I do to get you people to trust me,” muttered Symmetra, frowning over Winston’s satellite control panel.

“It’s possible though?” said Genji.

“Well,” Symmetra stood up straight, then yawned, “This technology is primeval compared to Vishkar’s resources, but on a fundamental level, yes, it should be possible.” She clicked her tongue and hit at a few buttons on Athena’s keyboard, “Vishkar’s satellites have easily allowed for teleporters at distances significantly farther than your given coordinates and sustained them for much longer, but Winston’s satellite should suffice,” she hit a few keys, “Barely.” She stood up and turned toward Genji, “I have a feeling we won’t be asking Winston for permission?”

“There’s no time,” said Genji.

“And he might say no,” said Symmetra.

“We’re not in a position for much debate on the matter,” said Genji.

Symmetra’s brow furrowed but she sighed and bent over the keyboard again. “Very well then,” she said, typing several things in before materializing a wire of hard light from the palm of her hand and plugging it into Athena’s port, then materializing a teleporter pad in the center of the floor and plugging the chord into it.

“Interfacing with satellite,” said Athena, “Please enter coordinates.”

Genji allowed for Athena to scan the series of violet numbers on his comm.

“Coordinates entered. Please enter access code to—” Sombra’s skull icon briefly flashed on Athena’s screen and Athena’s voice distorted briefly before returning to normal. “Access granted. Accessing satellite.”

Genji glanced over at Symmetra, who had not bothered to get into any gear and was still wearing her pajamas, which consisted of geometric printed silk shorts and a Helix Security shirt that was a bit too big on her. “They are dangerous,” said Genji, “Are you sure you won’t need—” Symmetra raised an eyebrow at him then swiped her prosthetic arm in front of herself, briefly surrounding herself in blue lights which quickly faded from the spectrum of human vision. Her shielding...
“Right,” said Genji.

“Dispatching beta pad,” said Symmetra, typing some commands into Athena. A blue light started emanating from the teleporter pad. “Teleporter online. I have opened the pa—”

Both Sombra and Widowmaker burst through the teleporter, which immediately collapsed behind them. Genji held his sword at the ready and Symmetra raised her photon projector at Sombra and Widowmaker. Athena started beeping an alarm.

“Satellite overloaded. Backup generators failing. Orbit deteriorating,” said Athena. Symmetra hit a button to turn the alarm off without taking her eyes or her photon projector off of Sombra and Widowmaker, but she lowered it as soon as she adjusted to the sight of them and realized Widowmaker was slumped against Sombra with one side of her head bleeding.

“I said we needed a doctor!” Sombra said.

“Drop your weapons!” said Genji. Sombra dropped her gun without hesitation and shoved Widowmaker’s rifle off of her shoulder.

“Fine,” said Sombra, “No weapons. Now we can—”

“Oi!”

Genji, Sombra, and Symmetra all looked up to see Tracer in the doorway pointing both her guns at them with Winston standing behind her.

“I received an alert that one of my satellites had been severely damaged but…oh my,” Winston adjusted his glasses behind her.

“Someone here had better have a good explanation for all this!” said Tracer.

Sombra glanced down at Widowmaker, then up at Tracer, then to Genji, who even with the faceplate seemed to give her a look as if to say, “I’m not talking you out of this.”

Sombra cleared her throat and stood up straight, hauling Widowmaker up with her. “So…good news!” She said, “We’re defecting!”

Pulsefire whipped through Sombra’s hair, barely missing her head.

“You expect me to believe that?” said Tracer.

Widowmaker groaned a little and put her hand over her chest.

“We don’t have a lot of time,” said Sombra, “Talon wants us dead. There’s nowhere else for us to go. We know enough about Talon to be more use to you alive.”

Tracer’s brow remained furrowed.

“They’re outnumbered here,” said Winston behind her.

“And unarmed,” said Genji, kicking their weapons over to Tracer.

“And injured!” said Sombra, gesturing at Widowmaker’s head.
Tracer was silent for several agonizingly long seconds before she took a deep breath and lowered her guns. “Get to the infirmary,” she said, frowning, “And don’t think this is over.”

Genji moved along with Sombra and Widowmaker, but Tracer caught his arm as he moved past her, “And don’t think we don’t have a lot to talk about,” she said, before releasing Genji’s arm. They left Symmetra and Winston to fuss over the status of the satellite as they moved toward the infirmary.

—

Mercy barely had the infirmary set up when Genji and Sombra rushed in with Widowmaker barely conscious between them and Tracer following quickly behind. They set Widowmaker down on an infirmary bed and Mercy looked at Genji questioningly and he was about to speak to her when Tracer grabbed him by the arm.

“Talon wants them dead, apparently. Do what you gotta do to keep her from dying, Doc,” said Tracer as she dragged Genji off.

Widowmaker fell unconscious as soon as she was set down on the bed. Mercy quickly grabbed her caduceus staff and began releasing a biotic stream at Widowmaker to stabilize her, then sat down and cleaned the wound in her head and started stitching it up. Sombra paced around behind Mercy as she worked.

“She’s in shock,” said Mercy, hooking a saline IV into Widowmaker’s arm then resuming the biotic stream, “The biotics should keep her body from damaging itself further.”

“What about her heart?” said Sombra. Mercy looked at her questioningly. “She’s been away from Talon for a while,” said Sombra, “They haven’t been able to… do whatever it is they’d do to her to keep her Widowmaker.”

“Her body’s returning to normal?” said Mercy. She glanced back at Widowmaker. “We could implement a regimen of incrementally decreasing beta-blockers, allow her heart to slowly return to a relatively normal rate.”

“Well then do it!” said Sombra.

“Calm down,” said Mercy, “We don’t know exactly what Talon did to her to slow her heart and lower her body temperature. If we immediately start injecting her with different medications, there could be adverse reac—”

“Here,” said Sombra bringing up several dozen violet screens with a wave of her hands, “All of Talon’s experimental and medical files on Amelie LaCroix. Chronologically ordered with complete annotations. Use them. Please,” she shoved the screens toward Mercy, “Please help her.”

Mercy blinked and looked at the screens, then stopped the stream of biotics and brought her staff up. “The biotics should stabilize her for now,” she said, looking at different screens, “But… I will need these to design a long-term treatment for her… condition. Thank you.”

Sombra brought the screens down and paced across the floor. “Are you all right?” said Mercy.

“I’m fine,” said Sombra.

“When was the last time you slept or ate?” said Mercy.

“She doesn’t need sleep or food like most people,” said Sombra, glancing at Widowmaker.
“But you do,” said Mercy. She could hear Tracer yelling at Genji in the floor above the infirmary.

“No offense, but I don’t exactly feel safe here yet,” said Sombra, folding her arms, “And I’m not leaving her alone with you. I know your handiwork.”

Mercy’s brow furrowed.

“…Sorry…” said Sombra, taking a seat, “I read your notes on the whole thing. I know you didn’t mean for Gabe to end up like that.”

Mercy blinked several times and raised her eyebrows.

“What?” said Sombra.

“Nothing just… you never struck me as the apologizing type,” she paused, “The genuinely apologizing type,” she added.

“Huh. Guess 32 hours without sleep is getting to me,” said Sombra. She plopped down into the chair next to the infirmary bed.

“So Talon wants you dead,” said Mercy.

“Talon wants me dead,” said Sombra.

“And her?” Mercy nodded toward Widowmaker.

“They don’t want her as dead,” said Sombra, “But… I’m pretty sure they were starting to look for a replacement.”

“And I’m guessing the only reason Genji helped you get here was because of blackmail,” said Mercy, folding her arms.

Sombra didn’t glance up from Widowmaker but pointed a finger gun at Mercy in confirmation.

“Talon wants you dead because of her,” said Mercy.

“Yeah, stealing one of their best assassins doesn’t make them very happy,” said Sombra.

“To spite them or for her sake?” said Mercy.

Sombra glanced away from Widowmaker to look at her, but then just turned her attention back to Widowmaker.

“This isn’t something simple, you must understand,” said Mercy, “Trying to recover from what Talon did to her will take weeks, months…”

“I’m patient,” said Sombra, she looked at Mercy, “And you need me. If we’re going to stop Talon, you’re going to need me.”

“You really do care about her don’t you?” said Mercy, a smile tugging at the corner of her mouth.

Sombra scoffed, then took Widowmaker’s hand in hers and kissed her knuckles. “Nah, I’m just spiteful,” Sombra said with a grin.
“Aramis was the first to descend from the carriage; he held the door open for the young man. He saw him place his foot on the mossy ground with a trembling of the whole body, and walk round the carriage with an unsteady and almost tottering step. It seemed as if the poor prisoner was unaccustomed to walk on God’s earth. It was the 15th of August, about eleven o’clock at night; thick clouds, portending a tempest, overspread the heavens—” Amélie cut herself off and glanced up from her book to see Sombra pacing back and forth again, “I can stop if you like,” she said, glancing back down at the book.

“I’m sick of this stupid ‘Vetting process,’” muttered Sombra.

“You try and bypass it with hacking and they’ll know,” said Amélie, glancing down at her book, “This is to be expected. It is likely they’l never trust us—”

“We can crush Talon faster if they did,” said Sombra, parting the slats in the venetian blinds with her fingers and frowning.

“They know just how much damage we can do from within,” said Amélie, “They already have a very good idea of how much damage I can do from within. We wait.”

Sombra bit the inside of her lip and folded her arms, then glanced back at the IVs leading into Amélie’s arm. “How are you doing?” she said.

“You’ve asked me that every ten minutes,” said Amélie, glancing back down at her book.

“Well—what are you feeling?” said Sombra.

“Annoyed,” said Amélie, frowning at her book. She glanced back up at Sombra and then scoffed a little. “Fear and pining is not a good look on you, mon cœur.”

Sombra’s mouth tightened and she glanced off. She sighed and plopped down in the seat next to Amélie’s hospital bed and brought up a handful of videos and photos with a wave of her fingers. “I’ve been doing some research into Amélie LaCroix,” she said, leafing through several photos. “I keep wondering who you’re going to turn into when you wake up all the way.”

“Wake up all the way?” repeated Amélie, “Like—Like I’m simply going to—” she made a popping sound with her lips, “Be—be who I was before—like the Widowmaker is just going to…disappear?” Sombra reached forward and clasped one of Amélie’s hands in both her own. Amelie placed her free hand over Sombra’s.

“It’s not going to be like that, is it?” said Sombra.

“The omnic, Zenyatta. He said that… they’re like muscles that have atrophied,” said Amélie, touching her fingertips to her temple, “It will take a long time. And I will not be the same.” Amélie looked at the photos and videos of herself. “We must stop Talon,” she said.

“For what they did to you?” said Sombra.

Widowmaker shook her head. “So they don’t create another of me.”

They were both quiet but the silence was dulled by the partially muted audio of one of the videos Sombra had brought up. It was just a photo of a younger Amelie in a swimsuit and oversized
sunglasses, scoffing and covering her face.

“Gérard, arrête l'appareil.”

“Ma femme est trop belle. Cela doit être documenté.”

“Imbécile.”

Sombra huffed a little. “Guess you aren’t that different,” she said, glancing back at Amélie. She immediately noted Amélie’s face and shut the video off. “Sorry,” said Sombra.

Amélie shook her head. “C’est rien,” she said, then tapped the side of her head, “Remember?”

Sombra’s brow crinkled and Amélie rolled her eyes. “So serious now,” she said, looking at Sombra and clicking her tongue, “I almost miss when you were a cocky little nuisance.”

“What can I say? Your own team sending assassins after you changes your priorities,” said Sombra, forcing a smile and shrugging.

“Ugh,” said Amélie, “You forcing a smile is even worse than fear and pining.” She tucked some loose hair away from Sombra’s face, then brushed her fingers across Sombra’s now slightly shaggy undercut. “It is not good for you to be cooped up in here.”

“Well the weather’s shit out there so…” Sombra shrugged again, then paused. Her eyes flicked to Amélie’s hand brushing against the side of her head, then she grabbed Amélie’s wrist and held it against her face.

“What are you doing now?” said Amélie.

“You’re warm,” said Sombra.

Amélie raised an eyebrow. “Warm?”

Sombra snickered a little. “I’ve never felt you be warm before. Mierda–I’ve been missing so much.”

“You’re ridiculous sometimes, you know that?” said Amélie. She broke her wrist from Sombra’s grip and gave her an affectionate tap on the tip of her nose, “Boop.”

Sombra scoffed and smiled, then leaned forward and kissed Amélie on the forehead.”Not too bad being cooped up if it’s with you, I guess,” she said, grinning.
The door slid open and closed again. Widowmaker didn’t glance up from her book.

“I was wondering when it would be your shift,” said Widowmaker, adjusting herself slightly against the pillows of the infirmary bed.

There was no response. Widowmaker glanced up from the book. Sure enough there was Tracer, leaning against the wall next to the door, frowning, arms folded, with pulse pistols on her hips. Tracer made eye contact with her only briefly before glancing off. Aware of her movements within the infirmary bed, but not watching, not quite. Widowmaker glanced back down at her book. A long silence passed, Widowmaker tried to read but just found herself

“Quiet,” Widowmaker said, staring at the page, “That’s not like you.” Instinctively Widowmaker’s eyes flicked to Tracer, though her own face remained bowed toward the book, expecting a retort. Some response. Any response.

But again, Tracer said nothing. Widowmaker’s lips thinned and she turned her attention back to her book. If the silent treatment was the worst the annoyance could hurl at her, it would be a welcome reprieve. Another few minutes passed in silence. Widowmaker found herself re-reading the last four lines of a paragraph before her eyes would flick back to Tracer, still silent, still frowning, before going back to the page and re-reading in an attempt to find her place.

“Is Sombra…?” Widowmaker started.

“She’s fine. Pharah’s keeping an eye on her,” Tracer didn’t even make eye contact with Widowmaker as she said this.

“Ah,” Widowmaker turned her attention back to her book. Another fifteen minutes of dead silence passed. Finally Widowmaker drew a long breath. “You know, after everything, I’m having a very hard time believing you have nothing to say to me.”

Tracer looked over at her, her expression surprisingly unreadable, before she huffed out a breath. “To be honest, I don’t know how much speaking to you is worth it,” said Tracer.

“Try me,” said Widowmaker.

Tracer pushed off of the wall and started walking around a bit, apparently trying to gather her thoughts. “I know who you are--Well, who you used to be,” said Tracer, “I don’t know how much of that person is still in there, but I know the person I’m looking at right now, the person sitting in this bed in front of me is a remorseless killer. You killed Mondatta. You killed an advocate of peace, one of my own personal heroes, the brother of one of my teammates—and then you laughed.”

Widowmaker said nothing at this.

Tracer took her goggles off and looked at them, “But…look–here’s the thing about chronal disassociation: turns out the human brain isn’t exactly equipped to handle disconnection from our own time.”

“Is that just something they told you to make you feel better?” said Widowmaker with a slight smirk.
Tracer ignored the barb and continued, “What I mean is that… it scrambles both your memories and your perception of time. These days it’s not as bad as when I was coming out of the chronal disassociation, but it still happens. I get memories of things that never happened. I feel phantom pains on wounds that I literally erased from my own timestream, I lose time, all sorts of things,” she put a finger to her temple, “Just to be here mentally, I need anchors. Focuses. I need things to mentally tether myself to this continuity and who I am in it. The big ones are easy—Em, the team, Winston…And then there’s me. There’s what I believe.”

“And what do you believe?” said Widowmaker, “All those slogans on the posters Overwatch put you on? ‘The world could always use more heroes?’ The only reason you are the way you are was because of Overwatch’s mistake. You’re a mistake of Overwatch even more than I am.”

“I knew the risks when I got into the Slipstream,” said Tracer.

Widowmaker gave her a skeptical look.

“Well… okay not the specific risks. I knew that there were risks,” said Tracer, “Experimental flight program, after all,” Tracer shrugged, “But you asked what I believe, and I believe in good.”

“Tch,” Widowmaker looked around for any kind of dial that might up her painkiller dosage.

“What I mean is,” said Tracer, “Is that I believe that deep down, everyone’s got the capacity for good. Talon completely rewired you, yet here you are. And sure, maybe you’re only here because otherwise your body would have eventually given out under Talon’s treatments, and this was your only choice to survive. Sombra, she… to be honest I don’t trust the thief but she saw something in you that she decided was worth all the risks of defecting for. I don’t know if I’ll ever see it myself. I don’t know if I can ever see past what you’ve done, but what matters is that at one point you realized you couldn’t let what Talon did to you be done to anyone else. So you’ve got a tether. Somewhere in all that evil Talon pumped into you, Amélie’s got an anchor, and she knows the right thing to do.”

“An anchor…” Widowmaker repeated the word, “Like yours.”

“Overwatch mistakes with scrambled brains,” said Tracer, a not-quite smile tugging at the corner of her mouth, “Looks like we have that much in common.”

Widowmaker was quiet for a while. “You’ve thought about this a lot, haven’t you?” she said, “What you would say to me if we had the chance…”

“I’ve been thinking about what I would say to you ever since the night you killed Mondatta. Most of them were really cool things for right before I stick a pulse bomb onto your face or when the interpol van doors are closing on you, I never thought I’d be talking to you…” she gestured at Widowmaker in the infirmary bed, “Like this,” she chuckled a little, “I’m a bloody time traveler and there’s no way I could have ever seen this coming.”

“Sombra has a habit of making the unexpected happen,” said Widowmaker, “Tiens, tiens. It looks like we will be working together.”

“Don’t think I’m happy about that,” said Tracer, there was a wryness in her voice, more warmth than in the rest of the conversation, but still holding Widowmaker at a distance. Tracer’s comm buzzed at her side. She pulled it out of her jacket and looked at the screen. “Looks like my shift’s ending early,” she said, pocketing it again. She hit the panel next to the door. “McCree will be looking after you for the next while.”
“Pity. And we were having so much fun,” said Widowmaker, as Tracer hit the panel next to the door.

The door slid open and Tracer was about to walk through it but paused. “Just so we’re clear,” Tracer said, not even turning to face her, “If you hurt any of my team—any one of them—you’ll pay. And don’t think your being here even begins to make up for what you did to Mondatta.”

“Very well,” said Widowmaker.

Tracer walked through the door and Widowmaker sank against her pillows with an exhausted sigh.
Prompt: Emily Meets Spiderbyte

“So the situation is… complicated,” said Tracer, holding Emily’s hands in hers as the elevator descended, “And… we promised each other full disclosure.”

“The UN’s finally taking you all in?” Emily’s face paled.

Tracer shook her head, “No. They can’t sign off on us, but at this point we’re doing more against Talon than anything they can organize, so it’s mostly just… decrying us while not actually doing anything to stop us. But… well… while we’re on the subject of Talon–”

The elevator dinged and opened to the watchpoint rec room, where Widowmaker was casually reading on the couch with Sombra splayed across her lap, lazily tapping at one of her screens.

“Oh sh–” Tracer started.

Emily’s face went from white to red. “You–!” she half lunged forward but Tracer quickly blinked around her and was holding her back with her hands on Emily’s shoulders.

“Em–Em, look at me, look at–” Tracer was trying to calm Emily down.

“You murderer! You monster!” Emily apparently had no qualms with lunging at one of the world’s greatest assassins, so great was her fury. Widowmaker looked up from her book and watched calmly as Tracer struggled to hold her furious redhead girlfriend back.

“Em!” Tracer cupped her hands to Emily’s face and Emily was forced to look at Tracer in the eyes, “Breathe–Breathe, Em.”

“She murdered Mondatta! She hurt you!” Emily’s voice was cracking with rage and heartbreak.

“I know, I know, I said it’s complicated,” said Tracer.

“Complicated!?” Emily repeated, “What exactly is complicated about-about housing a murderer like this!?”

Sombra sighed and sat up from Widowmaker’s lap, smoothing her hair a bit. “So, do we have to go into the whole tragic backstory thing or…?”

“Who is this?” said Emily, looking from Sombra to Tracer.

“That… is Sombra,” said Tracer rubbing the back of her neck, “…also ex-Talon.”

“What?!” said Emily.

“Ex-Talon! Ex!” said Tracer, “They defected—I meant to actually tell you and then have you meet them after I’d broken the news to you but… I expected them to be at the infirmary.”

“Jack did say we were allowed to freely move around certain areas of the Watchpoint,” said Widowmaker, glancing back to her book.

Tracer huffed. “And that’s worked out great,” she muttered.

“You defected,” Emily pressed her fingertips to her forehead, looking at Sombra and Widowmaker, then looking at Tracer, “And how do you know they’re actually against Talon? Just… taking them
at their word?"

“If it makes it any more believable we’re mostly doing it to save our own skin,” said Sombra.

“Sombra apparently established some line of communication with Genji back during the incident at Volskaya,” said Tracer.

“We’re friends,” said Sombra.

“You EMP’d him, then threatened to give his brother’s whereabouts to assassins,” said Tracer flatly, “Not to mention what was going on with Doctor Ziegler at the time.”

“Good friends,” said Sombra.

Emily was rubbing her temples. “Wait—wait—go back, they’re here to save their own skin?”

“My body was finally deteriorating from all of Talon’s treatments,” Widowmaker said simply, “The simplest course of action for Talon would be to keep working me until I fell apart altogether while finding and conditioning a… replacement.”

“Wait—treatments? Conditioning—?” said Emily.

“She’s brainwashed,” said Tracer, “Or… was brainwashed,” she glanced over her shoulder at Widowmaker, “It’s kind of hard to tell at this point. But the point is, she never joined Talon willingly, they kidnapped her and then…” Tracer did a waving motion next to her head, “I just—I don’t like it. I hate it every bit as much as you do, believe me,” she tucked a stray bit of hair back from Emily’s face, “But… We need to give her a chance or…”

“Don’t try and feed me a ‘We’re just as bad as Talon’ line, you know you’re not,” said Emily.

“No, not just as bad as Talon, but not any better than the old Overwatch,” said Tracer.

“I am not here simply to save myself,” said Widowmaker, “I’m here to make sure what has been done to me never happens to someone else.”

Emily’s brow remained furrowed. “And you,” she looked at Sombra.

“I felt unappreciated with Talon and I’m here out of spite,” said Sombra with a smirk.

“Sombra was the first one who decided somewhere in Widowmaker was someone worth saving,” said Tracer, “She’s a nasty little liar. And blackmailer. And thief. But she never really believed in Talon’s ideals, not really. They were just a means to an end for her, until she decided she didn’t like the means.”

“You don’t see me calling you out,” muttered Sombra with an eye roll.

Emily’s lips thinned, and she took a deep breath, “Okay…” she said, furrowing her brows, “I mean… not okay, far from okay—I’m going to need a lot more time to process—” she gestured up and down at Widowmaker and Sombra, “…everything about this, but…” she looked at Tracer, “I trust you. I trust you, not them.”

“Fair,” said Sombra with a shrug.

Emily shot Sombra a glare and then looked back at Tracer. “I hope you know what you’re doing,” she said quietly.
“Aw come on, when do I not know what I’m doing?” said Tracer, forcing a grin.

“You don’t want me to answer that,” said Emily, managing a smile as well.

“Hmph. I like you,” said Widowmaker with a slight smile.

Emily couldn’t suppress a shudder at that.
“Are you sure about this?” said Mercy as Ana entered in several access codes to Athena.

“I’m sure,” said Widowmaker, leaning back in her seat, “I would have returned to my old home in Paris for Gérard’s own files on it if I were not sure Talon was watching it.”

“What you’re describing is, technically, exposure therapy,” said Mercy, folding her arms, “Well, sort of. Your case is… very unique.”

“I need to see them,” said Widowmaker, “I need to see them as they were. I need to see me as I was. What Talon didn’t destroy it twisted and now—” One of her hands clenched into a fist in her lap. Sombra dropped to her knees next to her and put a hand over Widowmaker’s fist, “And now…” Widowmaker trailed off.

“You don’t have to do this,” said Sombra, giving her hand a small squeeze.

Widowmaker looked her dead in the eyes. “Yes, I do,” said Widowmaker, giving her a tap on the nose, “You’re supposed to be the cavalier one, mon coeur.”

Sombra’s lips thinned then she stood up and kissed Amélie on the temple. Amélie smiled a little and then turned back to Ana. “Are they ready?” she said.

“This is everything I was able to access from Gérard’s file with my override codes,” said Ana, bringing up several image folders on Athena’s screen, “They’re ready when you are.”

“Start with the oldest ones,” said Widowmaker.

Ana nodded and opened the first file. It was a landscape with a line of poplar trees and no figures in it.

“Do you recognize—?” Mercy started.

Widowmaker shook her head. “Gérard took many photos. A hobby of his. One of the reasons why he was excellent in reconnaissance.” Amélie pursed her lips, wondering whether or not she was remembering that or if she was extrapolating from Talon and Overwatch dossiers. She remembered cameras in their apartment, old ones and new ones. She glanced at Ana. “Show me the next one.”

The next few photos were of the same landscape from several different angles, until there was another landscape, one she recognized this time. Paris.

“That looks like—” Sombra started.

“The view from our apartment,” said Widowmaker, She seemed to catch herself. “Go back to the trees,” she said.

Ana raised an eyebrow then scrolled back to the poplar trees.

“This one wasn’t digital,” said Amelie, standing up, “He had a darkroom. We–we had a darkroom. Can you go forward?” She suddenly pressed her fingertips to her temple as a high pitched noise filled her ears.

“Araña?” Sombra leaned close. Amelie remembered six cameras, three film, three digital on a shelf with a record player and a stack of vinyls. He was so old fashioned. So terribly old fashioned.
She had never been to the place with the poplar trees, but she remembered the photo of them suspended on a chord in a red-tinged darkroom.

“Amélie?” Sombra was close enough for Amélie to feel her breath but the sound of Sombra’s voice itself seemed to be getting further and further away. Amélie pressed her palms to her forehead.

“May I take your photo?” Hearing Gérard’s voice in her mind made her heart beat hard in her throat and ears.

“Excuse me?”

“I mean no disrespect. Usually I work with landscapes. However I saw you and…well… I thought ‘This must be documented.’”

“Amélie!” Sombra’s voice cut in riding another high-pitched sound in Widowmaker’s ear. Widowmaker’s eyes opened and she felt the back of her neck clammy with sweat. Both Mercy and Sombra were close by.

“Do you need to stop?” said Mercy.

“The next one,” said Widowmaker, looking at Ana, “Show me the next one.” Ana shot a questioning glance over at Mercy, but Widowmaker said, “Please.”

The next one was of Amélie, several years younger, in a dusty rose sundress. She knew the sundress. She knew when the photo had been taken. Amélie’s hand went over her mouth. “Cela doit être documenté,” she said under her breath.

“What?” said Mercy.

“Gérard,” said Sombra as Widowmaker gripped her wrist, and buckled over in her seat.

“‘This must be documented,’” said Amélie looking up at last at the photo of herself, “It’s what he would always say when he was taking my picture. ‘You are beautiful in this light. This must be documented.’ ‘My love, that dress! This must be documented.’ ‘Hold that smile. This must be documented.’”

Sombra scoffed and chuckled a little, “So—he just took pictures when he had a camera on hand and thought you looked good? He must have been taking a lot, then.”

“Oh he did,” said Widowmaker with a roll of her eyes. Then Ana began moving through the photos and Widowmaker’s point was proved within seconds. There was Amélie in a coffee shop. Amélie waking up in the morning with her hair tangled, a sweaty Amélie in her dance studio tying her hair up in a messy bun while wearing a leotard, baggy cropped crew neck and leg-warmers. There were clumsy selfies of both Amélie and Gérard, There were several of Gérard as well, and one of Amélie holding one of Gérard’s cameras over her eye. Widowmaker snickered and then broke into a laugh. Sombra blinked a few times, “Araña?”

“No—I just—remembered—” Amélie snickered again, “I took one of his cameras so I could just be like, ‘See how you like it!’ and he just said, ‘You make a lovely photographer. This must be documented’ and he took that one with his phone. He was ridiculous.”

“I can second that,” said Ana as she scrolled through several more photos with Amélie. “He adored you. Kept a photo of you in the pocket over his heart. Jack and Gabe always joked that it was excessive, even for a frenchman,” Ana huffed a little, “I would always tell them to leave the fool alone.”
Ana scrolled through the photos and there were several pictures of Amélie during a visit to the watchpoint, including a photo of her and Gérard tangled up asleep on a watchpoint couch. Then there was a photo Gérard had taken of his own hand holding a ring in a small box, and then several photos of Gérard and Amélie that appeared to be taken within several seconds of each other. Gérard on one knee in front of Amélie, then one of Amélie covering her face with her hands, then one of Gérard sweeping her off her feet in a kiss. Amélie gave a glance over at Sombra, who was fidgeting a bit with her hair as they scrolled through the next few photos.

“Are you all right?” said Amélie.

“I’m the one who’s supposed to be asking you that,” said Sombra.

Amélie’s expression softened. “Mon coeur,” she said softly.

Sombra scoffed and chuckled again, “I just keep on thinking ‘Lucky guy’ and then I have to catch myself,” said Sombra. Finally they reached the wedding photos. At this point though, they didn’t seem to affect Widowmaker as strongly as the photos earlier had. Something like a smile tugged at the corner of her mouth. “There’s always that cliche about weddings being ‘the happiest day of your life,’” said Widowmaker, leaning back in her seat, “Really they’re exhausting, and I’m used to being a performer,” her smile faded, “Gérard had just gotten that promotion to Anti-Talon Task Force head. He was going to be a hero. We were going to get a new place…room for children…” she trailed off, then closed her eyes and put a hand to her forehead.

“Amélie?” Mercy looked over. The ringing was returning to Amélie’s ears. Ana seemed to pick up on this immediately and her hand went over her sleep dart. Sombra stayed close.

“I’m ready to stop,” said Amélie and Ana immediately clicked out from the photo display.

“Are you—?” Mercy started but the ringing disappeared from Amélie’s ears and she shook her head.

“I’m fine,” said Widowmaker. She looked at Mercy, “Would… it be possible to continue this another time?”

“We can find another way…” Mercy said, but Widowmaker shook her head again.

“No…this…” Amélie ran a hand through her hair, “It helps. I—” She glanced down at her hands, “Things are feeling less far away. I feel… I feel more real. I want to do this again. I need to do this again.”

“If—If it helps,” said Mercy.

Amélie nodded, then stood up, “I need some fresh air,” she said, walking out of the room.

“Of cour—” Mercy started but the door clicked close behind Widowmaker before she could finish. —

Sombra gave her about an hour to decompress before finding her on the roof of the Watchpoint.

“So…” said Sombra, plopping down into a seat next to her, “Want to talk about it?”

“Not particularly,” said Widowmaker, “Do you?”

“Hey, Araña, this is about you. This is your…de-widowfication?”
“That is not a word,” said Amélie with a smirk.

“Whatever,” said Sombra with a shrug, “My point is, it doesn’t really matter what I feel. Whatever gets you to being the person you want to be, you know? I’m fine with it.”

“What you feel matters to me,” said Widowmaker.

Sombra elbowed her, “I knew you loved me,” she said, forcing a grin.

“Sombra,” said Widowmaker flatly and furrowing her brow slightly.

Sombra flopped back so that she was laying down, staring up at the sky.

“I just…I kept feeling like I was looking at a life you should have had,” said Sombra, staring up at the sky, “You were happy. Don’t pull that icy Widowmaker shit, you were happy and we both know it.”

Widowmaker smirked a little, “I won’t deny it, I was happy.”

“The best version of your life is the one without me,” said Sombra, “Then Talon had to ruin everything,” Sombra’s brow furrowed, “I’ve worked with messed-up people before, and you know, for the first few months I knew you, you were just this oddity that was just…. there….while I was using Talon for my own ends. Everything fell off to the side while I was focused on this…” she brought up a screen featuring the stylized eye icon that had haunted her for most of her life, “This… thing,” Sombra sighed and closed the screen, “And the worst part is, it still keeps me up at night. It still just… consumes me. I never had much—And then I had you. But you had everything taken from you—and now you don’t have much—you just have me…and I guess…” she gestured vaguely back at the watchpoint, “Them, to some extent. Sort of. I don’t know,” Sombra closed her eyes, “I love you, you know that, right?”

“I became somewhat aware of it when you pretty much sabotaged your own great hacking quest and put yourself on Talon’s hit-list to rescue me,” said Amélie.

Sombra sighed again. “I wish I could give you the life you should have had,” she said, “Even if I can’t be in it.”

“There is no life I ‘should’ have had. There’s only the life I have,” said Amélie, “What Talon did to me is no fault of yours. Maybe I could have been as happy with Gérard as the photos suggest, maybe not. I don’t look at them because that’s the life I want. I look at them because this is the life I want.”

“This?” Sombra repeated, gesturing around at the watchpoint.

“Free from Talon. In control of my own mind. With someone I love,” said Amélie.

Sombra blinked a few times and her eyes widened. “Oh—I mean—Okay—Uh…” she cleared her throat, “I—Thanks.”

“You’re making a very cute face right now, mon coeur,” said Amélie with a grin. She made a frame shape with thumbs and forefingers and looked at Sombra’s face through it, “Cela doit être documenté.”

Sombra snickered a little and covered her face.
Sombra stirred only slightly when Widowmaker got out of bed. It had been a while since the nights of withdrawal fever sweats and vomiting would interrupt their previous nights. Sombra had seen her through the worst of it so diligently. Widowmaker A soft gasp escaped Widowmaker as her bare foot touched the ice-cold floor of the watchpoint dormitory. Widowmaker blinked a few times and then touched her fingertips to that same floor. Cold. She felt the cold.

“Mmh…You okay?” Sombra muttered sleepily but Widowmaker just calmly bent and kissed her on the temple.

“I’m fine, mon coeur. Just sleep,” Widowmaker smiled, smoothing some of Sombra’s hair.

“Mm…” Sombra pulled the sheets up closer to her chin and Widowmaker chuckled, but then got a sinking feeling in her stomach. She trusts me too much, she thought, Gérard would do the same. She shouldn’t—No. Widowmaker shook her head. All the books and the treatments had told her to catch and stop herself from falling into that train of thought. The strings between her and Talon had been cut, the way to make sure they remained so was to actually let herself be a person beyond those strings. She pushed off of the bed and walked over to the bathroom of the Watchpoint dormitory.

Widowmaker turned the light on in the bathroom and flinched hard at the white figure before her, before her eyes adjusted and she realized it was just her own reflection in the mirror. She blinked and stepped forward, putting a hand on the bathroom counter. She was still deathly pale but when was the last time she had been this close to a human skin tone? The eye color hadn’t changed, still yellow, but now she actually felt like she was looking at herself now. Blue veins laced her temples, wrists, the back of her hands, and the top of her breasts. Blue still tinged her toes and nail beds, but her overall complexion had shifted, dramatically, from the image she had held of herself in her mind. It had been a gradual thing, she had seen the lavender ebbing away from her skin as Ziegler’s treatments continued and her heart started moving back to a normal human rate, but this was the first time she had been confronted with the image of herself all at once and been made aware of just how much she had changed since defecting from Talon. She looked at her still-bluish fingertips, and then back at her full reflection in the mirror, trying to make this image of herself last—the muted orchid-finally-edging-towards-pink of her lips, her hair hanging down past her hips, how tired she looked, and yet so alive. Actually alive.

Until she remembered exactly what had woken her up in the first place and had to break away from the mirror to go about her business and relieve herself. She regained eye contact with herself on returning to the mirror to wash her hands and get an unceremonious drink of water. She could keep water down—she remembered there was a time during the worst of her withdrawals that she couldn’t even do that. She glanced back at Sombra’s silhouette in bed in the mirror’s reflection before turning the bathroom light off. She padded over, feeling the cold of the floor beneath her feet, and feeling a small victory in that, before climbing back into bed next to Sombra, who gave a small “hm,” as she felt Widow’s weight press into the mattress behind her.

Widowmaker pulled the sheets up around herself as well, and looked down with a slight smile at the brightening and dimming glow of Sombra’s neural implants as she slept. That purple glow highlighted her features and hid them away again in rhythm with Sombra’s breathing, and with every breath Widowmaker couldn’t help but be awed by Sombra’s place in her life. Her Sombra. Her Shadow. Her rescuer. The woman no force in the world could tear from her, and god help the poor souls who tried. After what seemed like a stare that could last forever, Widowmaker finally
settled down next to her and wrapped an arm around her waist. Almost on instinct Sombra pressed backwards, conforming her body’s to Widow’s as Widow held her. Widowmaker smiled and then touched her feet to Sombra’s. Sombra flinched in her sleep.

“Arañaaa…” Sombra whined, still half-asleep, “Your feet are freezing.”

“I know,” Widowmaker kissed the back of Sombra’s neck, “I can feel it.”
“So these are…?” Hanzo picked up one of the fried balls covered in powdered sugar. “Deep fried oreos,” said McCree, digging a plastic fork into a larger fried object on the paper plate and dipping it into a little cup of strawberry sauce.

“And you’re eating…?” Hanzo’s brow crinkled.

“Deep fried twinkie,” said McCree with his mouth full.

Hanzo’s mouth dropped open, “…American food never ceases to amaze and horrify me.”

“Aw, come on, you’ve probably eaten fair food at least once!”

Hanzo shrugged. “Sweets on occasion, yes, but never to such an…” he watched as McCree dipped a deep-fried oreo in strawberry sauce and ate it, “…extent.”

“Fortune favors the bold, my friend,” said McCree, popping another deep fried oreo into his mouth.

Hanzo folded his arms, “This is a waste of time. The target we were assigned to for protection is not even here. We should inform the park staff and return to the Orca.”

McCree snorted, “See, only you would turn down a free day at a theme park.”

Hanzo looked around, “I will admit I do not fully understand the appeal.”

“Well we haven’t even gone on the rides yet!” said McCree.

“We have already taken full advantage of their swindling games,” said Hanzo, gesturing to the enormous stuffed Pachimari plush that was nearly half his size sitting on the bench next to him.

“Hey, I won that for you. You’re welcome, by the way,” said McCree.

“Charming,” Hanzo muttered with a furrowed brow, looking at the plush, “However, Overwatch will not be pleased knowing we spent the whole day here on an aborted mission.”

“Fair enough,” said McCree, pulling out a map of the park and handing it over to Hanzo, “You pick a ride. One ride, and then we hit the orca.”

“Me?” said Hanzo. He furrowed his brow at the map, and then glanced sidelong at McCree, “You should know I have almost no point of reference for this.”

“Guess that’s what makes it fun,” said McCree, taking another bite of deep fried twinkie. He handed a deep fried oreo to Hanzo, who begrudgingly ate it, displayed some pleasant surprise, then swallowed and continued frowning at the map. Finally he pointed to a large blue icon on the park map.

“This one,” he said, holding the map over to McCree to see.

“‘The Dragon?’” McCree tilted his hat back with his thumb as he looked at the map, “Looks like you’re going from 0 to 90 there, partner.”

“211 Kilometers an hour, actually,” said Hanzo, looking at the brochure.
McCree whistled. “That’s uh… that’s pretty fast.”

“You said you rode atop a hypertrain once. This should be nothing,” said Hanzo, standing up and picking up his oversized Pachimari plush.

“Yeah,” McCree rubbed the back of his neck as Hanzo walked off, looking at the map, he followed after Hanzo, “Yeah sure. It’ll be nothing.”

—

“Guard this with your life,” said Hanzo, handing the oversized Pachimari plush over to some park staff as they were getting strapped in to the roller coaster. McCree tried to keep his hands from shaking as his eyes flicked between the brochure and the roller coaster ahead. “Four loop-de-loops, three corkscrews, and the fifth biggest and third-steepest drop in the world. You uh… sure know how to pick ‘em.”

“And we have the first row!” said Hanzo, as one of the park employees brought a large plastic restraint over his chest and shoulders.

“Sir–we’re going to need to take your hat,” one of the park staff came up to McCree, “We can keep it with the plush…”

“Yeah,” McCree said, taking his hat off and handing it to the park staff, who placed it on top of the Pachimari plush before securing McCree into the coaster, “yeah sure–makes sense.”

“Are you all right?” said Hanzo.


“Have a fun ride! Good luck slaying the Dragon!” the park staffer holding their Pachimari plush shouted after them as the roller coaster suddenly jerked to life and started cranking them up a nearly vertical arch.

“Why ‘Slaying the dragon?’” muttered Hanzo, “It should be ‘riding the dragon.’”

“Hoo boy,” McCree said, breathing out. The clackclackclackclackclackclack of the upward movement of the coaster first seemed to match his heartbeat, then his own heartbeat easily outpaced it. He heard a large clang.

“What was that?!” said McCree, struggling to look over his shoulder at the tracks or whatever was securing their train into place.

“I’m sure it was nothing,” said Hanzo easily, seeming quite relaxed as they continued moving upward.

“No I heard a clang,” said McCree looking around, “They should have someone come out and look at the track or something or—”

Hanzo chuckled a little, “They would have stopped the ride by now if something were wrong.”

“Well yeah but what if they don’t know?” said McCree, still struggling to look around.

“They probably know. I was under the impression that Jesse McCree did not fear death,” said Hanzo.

“Jesse McCree does not fear death. Jesse McCree fears going out like a punk,” said McCree, still
craning his neck to look around.

“Calm down,” said Hanzo “We will be fine.”

“Sure-” said McCree, “Sure you keep telling yourself that when this thing flies of the rails at 211 kilometers an hour or–” Hanzo reached over and took McCree’s hand. “…What are you doing?” said McCree.

“You are very nervous,” said Hanzo, still looking forward as coaster continued cranking upward.

“You’re holding my hand,” said McCree, looking down at Hanzo’s hand wrapped around his.

“I am aware,” said Hanzo, “Do you want me to let go?”

“I–” McCree started but then the cranking of the coaster suddenly stopped and the only sound seemed to be the wind and nervous giggles from coaster riders behind them. They were at the apex of the roller coaster’s first arch, and the earth seemed so very far below them. “…Don’t let go,” said McCree.

“Hm,” Hanzo nodded and then the roller coaster fell, straight down, and McCree screamed, and did not stop screaming for the entirety of the roller coaster ride. There weren’t just four loop-de-loops. There was a zero-gravity dive, an inclined dive loop, a cobra loop, a sidewinder, too many camelbacks to count, a pretzel loop, a horseshoe roll, and there was screaming. There was so much screaming.

McCree was shaking by the time the roller coaster finally came to a stop, and his legs were practically jelly getting out of it. Hanzo actually had to pry his fingers off, his hand had practically gone numb from McCree gripping it so hard. “Ha!” Hanzo sprang out of the roller coaster and rolled his shoulders, “Perhaps we can go again?” He looked over at McCree, who had managed to stumble over to the Pachimari plush and half collapse against it and put his hat back on. “Or…we could see what other rides there are,” said Hanzo.

“Thought you–” McCree stumbled to his feet and Hanzo put a hand on his shoulder to stabilize him, “Thought you wanted to get back to the Orca.”

“I think I understand the appeal of this place now,” said Hanzo, looking around, “It would be a shame to leave now. We must see what other rides there are,” He hoisted up the oversized pachimari plush, “Though we should be quick. Winston or Jack could be checking in soon.”

“R-right behind ya, darlin’, ” said McCree, as Hanzo went off, map in hand. McCree slumped onto a bench, head spinning, “Right behind ya.”
The Orca was largely quiet save for McCree’s plucking. Traveling between timezones did that to people.

“So…” McCree said, looking up from the guitar, “Any requests?"

Lúcio laughed a little, “Come on, man, everyone knows the only stuff you know is *ancient.*”

“I prefer the term ‘classic,’” said McCree.

“What was that one you’d always play back on Gibraltar?” said Tracer.

“What, this one?” said McCree, strumming mainly on the bass strings the opening chords to Wildwood Flower, “They call this the Carter scratch,” he said, letting a banjo-like twang ring out beneath his plucking.

“No, the other one,” said Tracer, “The one where you would—” she mimicked smacking the guitar with the tips of her fingers, “And it wasn’t as twangy? It was more like,” she gestured with her hands, trying to remember the beats, “Dun-dun-da-dun-da-dun-da-dun-da—” she suddenly stopped when she realized McCree’s plucking had gone quiet. She looked up at McCree’s face. “Oh—you all right, love?”

“Yeah no I just…” McCree rubbed the back of his neck, “Never could get those chords right since…” He trailed off and Tracer remembered. Gabe had taught Jesse virtually everything he knew about playing the guitar. Since Zurich Jesse had been able to develop his own style, but that chord progression must have been one of the first Gabe had really taught him.

“It’s all right,” said Tracer, leaning forward “I understand.” Tracer looked up, “I think he’d be really proud of you, you know, if he saw you today.”

“He’s not Gabe anymore,” McCree said flatly. Tracer's lips thinned and she looked off. McCree took a sip of his drink and then cleared his throat, “Anyway–as I was saying–requests?” He glanced over at Hanzo, sitting in the corner, reading something on his tablet with a furrowed brow. McCree’s eyes lingered on the way the pale bluish light highlighted Hanzo’s profile. Tracer followed McCree’s line of sight to Hanzo, then looked back at McCree, then looked back at Hanzo, then back at McCree, and then she grinned.

“I think,” Tracer said, “You should play a love song.” Lúcio snickered.

“Aw come on, you don’t want to hear that,” said McCree.

“Oh but we do,” said Tracer, swinging an arm around Lúcio, “Wouldn’t we like to hear a love song?”

“Oh we would *love* to hear a love song,” said Lúcio and Tracer gestured at Lucio with a ‘See?’ expression on her face.

“Everyone’s all tired, missing home,” Tracer started nodding her head in the direction of Hanzo, “A love song would be great.”

McCree frowned and leaned forward, “Don’t think I don’t know what you’re doing,” he said.
“You’re saying you don’t know any love songs?” said Lúcio.

“Shame,” said Tracer, shaking her head, “Such a shame.”

“I know love songs!” McCree said a bit louder than he’d liked then dropped his voice, “I sort of know love songs,” he muttered, shrugging.

“Closest thing to a love song you’ve got,” said Lúcio and Tracer nodded next to him.

McCree scoffed, “Okay, but I’ll need some help,” he brought his hands down and drummed them on the table in a ‘freight-train’ rhythm. “Can you give me a beat like that?” he said, looking up at Lúcio.

“Sure,” said Lúcio, easily copying the beat with his own hands on the table and sustaining it. Lúcio made eye contact with McCree and he grinned and McCree’s brow furrowed, then McCree glanced warily over to Hanzo and started strumming.

“I keep a close watch on this heart of mine,” McCree felt his voice going flat. It was never flat. How could he be screwing it up this early out of the gate? He cleared his throat and started again.

“I keep a close watch on this heart of mine,
I keep my eyes wide open all the time,
I keep my ends out for the tie that binds,
Because you’re mine…I walk the line…”

McCree felt eyes on him and looked up to see Hanzo had set his tablet down and was now watching and looking thoughtful. McCree hit a sour note and then gave a panicked glance over to Tracer and Lúcio. Tracer gave him that stupid grin of hers and two thumbs up while Lúcio, who had actually picked up on the sour note gave him an encouraging smile and continued his drumming on the table. Sure, McCree, ask the professional international music superstar to drum on the table while you make a goddamn fool of yourself, he thought bitterly, still strumming, and then realized how long he had been keeping the guitar bridge going before jumping on the next chord.

“I find it very, very easy to be true,” he sang,
I find myself alone when each day’s through,
Yes I’ll admit that I’m a fool for you,” McCree glanced up and found himself making eye contact with Hanzo, and an even bigger rush of panic gripped him,

“But because you’re mine,” he managed, now very self-conscious of all the possible sharps and flats he could hit, “I walk the line.”

“Arriving at Lijiang Tower,” Athena’s voice suddenly sounded over the speakers of the Orca and McCree stopped playing and exhaled hard.

“Aww, already?” said Tracer, springing to her feet. She glanced back at McCree, “Well— you did good! We should do this again sometime!” She nimbly vaulted over the table to run to her locker to get set up. Lúcio gave McCree a grin and a small salute before doing the same.

McCree sighed as the Orca doors opened and both Lúcio and Tracer ran out. He was still putting
the guitar back in his case when he heard a voice behind him.

“A shame you couldn’t finish the song,” said Hanzo, and McCree flinched hard and turned on his heel.
“What? Oh–Oh that? psh,” McCree gave a dismissive wave, “That was—”

“It was good,” said Hanzo, “I should like to hear the whole thing sometime.”

“Yeah, sorry to subject you to that whole–wait, what?” said McCree.

“I said I should like to hear the whole thing sometime,” said Hanzo, “That is, unless you are uncomfortable with—”

“No–No I’d love to—” McCree cleared his throat, “Anytime.”

“Probably best if we do it when we are not on a mission, however,” said Hanzo, walking past him to the doors of the Orca.

“Yes that is–good idea–yes—not on a mission,” McCree was falling over his words, struggling to get his guitar case closed. Hanzo chuckled a bit and adjusted the strap on his quiver before heading out of the Orca. McCree finally got his guitar case shut and tilted his hat back slightly with his thumb and exhaled in a whistle. “I really gotta practice more,” he muttered, before adjusting his belt and following Hanzo out of the Orca.
Efi was perched on Orisa’s shoulders as D.Va and Lúcio gave the grand tour of the Watchpoint. “So this is the launch tower,” said Lúcio, gesturing upward, “We don’t use it all that often, but there’s a really great view from the maintenance platforms.”

“I still can’t believe Winston won’t let me launch my MEKA into the stratosphere,” said D.Va, putting her hands on her hips. She turned on her heel to face Orisa and Efi, “Welp! That’s about it for the tour! As you can see the Watchpoint’s totally safe!”

Efi smiled, “See Orisa? Totally safe!” but Orisa’s photoreceptors narrowed skeptically.

“My neural mapping indicates that there is a section of the watchpoint that has not been covered in this tour,” she said, folding her arms.

D.Va and Lúcio exchanged glances, “Well… we just gave you the tour we got when we first got here,” said Lúcio, “It should have covered everything.”

“Not everything,” said Orisa, turning around and walking off with Efi protesting atop her shoulders.

“Orisa, you can’t just walk away, that’s rude!” Efi folded her arms and pouted.

“Your safety is my primary concern,” said Orisa, “We must investigate this area to be sure that this Watchpoint is indeed safe.”

Lúcio and D.Va quickly followed after Orisa and Efi as they headed off around the main hangar of the watchpoint to a fenced-off area. One area of the fence however, was flattened.

“Huh,” said D.Va as Orisa walked over the flattened point in the fence. She stepped over the flattened chain-link as well and took a few steps into a heavily grassy and overgrown sunlit area that received a nice breeze off the sea despite being further inland than most of the watchpoint. There was a small fence lining what must have been a garden at some point, with rusted and oxidized solar panels and a dilapidated greenhouse. Lining the area were several overgrown citrus trees, their branches groaning with fruit.

Lúcio whistled behind D.Va. “Man, Winston’s been holding out on us.”

“I don’t know if he even bothered looking into–” D.Va started then stepped in something that squirted, “Ew!” she said, glancing down and lifting her foot to see a half-eaten orange. “What the–?”

Something chittered at her ankle and D.Va leapt nearly a foot in the air and stumbled several feet back to see a Barbary macaque snatch the orange she had just stepped on and run off into the grass. “Stupid Gibraltar…” muttered D.Va.

“Must have wandered in from the nature reserve,” said Lúcio walking up behind her. He grabbed an orange off of one of the trees and tossed it up and down in his hand, “Can’t really blame ‘em.”

Both D.Va and Lucio perked up at the sound of Efi shouting “Orisa, wait!” and Orisa’s fusion driver powering up.
“Identify yourself!” Orisa announced loudly as both Lúcio and D.Va raced over and quickly turned a corner around the greenhouse to find Orisa pointing her fusion driver at Bastion with several macaques scattering away from them. By the looks of bastion’s tread-prints in the ground, it had apparently been there for hours, allowing the macaques to sun themselves and groom each other on it as Ganymede flitted around the overgrown garden for food.

“Orisa!” Lúcio quickly dipped between the two omnics, forcing Orisa to lift up her fusion driver away from Bastion, “It’s fine! Bastion’s with us!”

Bastion booped and gave a friendly wave behind Lúcio. Efi gasped and she quickly scrambled down from Orisa’s shoulders to the ground and shoved past Lucio and stopped in front of Bastion. She waved her arms. Bastion made a questioning beeping sound and waved its arms in turn. Ganymede swept over and alighted on Bastion’s head, and both chirped in greeting to each other.

“Amazing,” said Efi, “The Omnium never bothered with a personality matrix for the siege automatons! Who customized it?”

“No one,” said Lúcio, shrugging, “Bastion was just sort of… Bastion when we found it.”

Efi laughed and rolled her eyes, “Good one, Lúcio.” She walked around Bastion, giving him the occasional knock with her knuckles and poking at his joints with a furrowed brow. Orisa looked equally skeptical and leaned close to Bastion, prompting Bastion to whistle and chirp with some self-consciousness.

“It’s amazing it’s still functioning,” said Efi, putting her ear against Bastion’s side and giving it another knock with her knuckles, causing it to boop confusedly. Ganymede gave Orisa a quick peck, causing her to flinch back a bit, photoreceptors widening.

“Torbjorn gives it a tune-up every now and then,” said D.Va. She pointed a scolding finger at Bastion, “So this is where you’ve been wandering off to all this time! He gets all worried and grumpy when he doesn’t know where you are, you know!”

“Not a bad place to wander off to, though,” said Lucio, opening up the door to the greenhouse.

“And Winston said we’re not supposed to feed the macaques!” D.Va went on, kicking aside another half-eaten orange, which was quickly snatched up by another macaque, “This facility’s a launch site! It’s not safe for—” She glanced over her shoulder at Lúcio, who had stepped within the doorway of the greenhouse.

“Yes, tell me you’re not thinking what I think you are,” said D.Va, folding her arms and walking up next to Lúcio.

“Hmm?” Lúcio glanced away from the greenhouse at her.

“We don’t get a lot of time between missions as is,” said D.Va.

“It wouldn’t be too hard to clear out the weeds,” said Lúcio, looking around the greenhouse, “I mean it wouldn’t be too big of a garden, just some basil, tomatoes, cilantro….”

“Please tell me you’re not serious,” said D.Va.

Lúcio snapped his fingers, “Strawberries. Strawberries would do great here.”

“You are serious,” said D.Va.
“Oh come on, half the food on the watchpoint is canned!” said Lúcio, “I used to work on community garden projects in Rio all the time! This is nothing!” As soon as he said that, a panel fell out of the ceiling of the greenhouse and landed, shattering on the floor, behind Lúcio. “…We can fix that,” he said, glancing over her shoulder.

D.Va rolled her eyes, “You want to fix this place up, be my guest,” she said, throwing her hands up, “Not really my thing.”

“Suit yourself,” said Lúcio.

—

About a day later D.Va was playing on her handheld in the empty dining hall when Zenyatta floated past her carrying a large bag and wearing a large straw hat that she was pretty sure belonged to Mercy.

“You too?” said D.Va, glancing up from her game.

“It is good to surround yourself with growing things,” said Zenyatta, briefly stopping, “You are welcome to join me, Miss Song.”

D.Va glanced at her game, then back to Zenyatta, then clipped her handheld shut and got up from the table.

—

The garden was bustling when they reached it. Winston was setting up new solar panels while Torbjörn was trying to get the sprinkler system working again. Apparently word had spread and the prospect of fresh produce on the Watchpoint was hard to turn down. Bastion was assisting Symmetra with repairs to the greenhouse and Efi was helping Lúcio pick oranges and lemons while Orisa would prune the trees back after they were done picking from each one. Zenyatta easily floated past D.Va with his large bag and focused on areas already cleared of weeds to plant new seeds. Winston’s presence alone seemed to be enough to keep the macaques from coming back.

“Hey!” Lúcio glanced up from one of the trees over to her, “Glad you could make it!”

“Okay don’t look so smug,” said D.Va, tying her hair back, “What do you need me to do?”


D.Va folded her arms and Lúcio snickered and clapped her on the shoulder, “Kidding. Here, you can help me with the trees,” he said, grabbing another orange and tossing it to her.

“Maybe I could get up on your shoulders so we could actually reach them,” said D.Va, tossing the orange between her hands.

“Ha-ha,” Lúcio said flatly hoisting up the basket as D.Va picked some fruit.

—

Work got done far more quickly than D.Va anticipated. Orisa could easily till up the ground in minutes and while Bastion seemed to feel bad about picking weeds, he was eager to help when it came to hanging up birdfeeders or repairing the greenhouse. Zenyatta would make trips to the dining hall to make sure everyone stayed hydrated, and by the time the sun was going down D.Va
found herself with her knees covered in dirt planting strawberries alongside Zenyatta. She wiped some sweat off her forehead.

“Okay hand me the next one,” she said, rolling her shoulders.

“That was the last one, Miss Song,” said Zenyatta.

“Huh?” D.Va sat up and glanced down the row to see a long line of strawberry plants, “Oh…” she said. Zenyatta floated up from the soil and went over to Bastion, who was clunking away from the greenhouse.

“Hey–You ready to hit the dining hall?” said Lúcio.

“Let me guess, dinner is orange chicken with orange glazed carrots and orange juice?” said D.Va.

“Nah, same MRE stuff from what I heard,” said Lúcio folding his arms, “Though rumor has it they may have whipped up some orange sorbet for dessert.”

D.Va snorted and stood up, dusting her knees off. “Oh–you got some—” Lucio reached forward and tucked a loose strand of her hair back, then wiped off some dirt that was on her cheek and temple with his thumb. “There you go.”

D.Va just smiled and plucked a leaf out of his hair. “So do you,” she said. She glanced over her shoulder at Efi and Orisa who were both softly chatting over some small potted seedlings.

“You go save me a spot at the dining commons,” she said, elbowing Lúcio, “I’ll walk them back.”

Lúcio smiled and headed off and Hana let her hair down out of its messy bun. “Hey kiddo,” she called over her shoulder. Both Efi and Orisa looked up, “Ready to go?” Efi sprang to her feet and Orisa lumbered after her.

“You’re so lucky you get to date Lúcio,” said Efi as they walked through the watchpoint toward the dining commons.

D.Va snorted. “What–Oh, no we’re not dating.”

“But you’re always together in the magazines and holovids,” said Efi.

“Well yeah but they always like to push that stuff,” said D.Va shrugging. Efi’s brow furrowed thoughtfully. “So… how long have you known him?”

“I first met him when we were working on Hero of My Storm,” said D.Va, “He wrote a couple songs for that movie—the one for the club scene, that scientist montage, climax, and the end credits.”

“I love the scientist montage song,” Efi said, her eyes sparkling, “I played it on repeat when I was working on Orisa!”

“It’s catchy, right?” said D.Va, grinning, “Well anyway, I actually met him because he needed to record me yelling for the climax song.”

Efi gasped, “For that part where it goes ‘Ah-ah-ah-ah’ and then it’s all BOOM!” She gave a hop to emphasize the beat dropping.

“Boom!” Orisa repeated behind her.
“Yeah!” said D.Va, “I was in his sound studio for an hour trying to yell at the right pitch for him. He was…” she snickered, “Really patient and encouraging. And then we started hanging out ever since. He’d be a really good guest on my streams and stuff, and with him I wouldn’t have to worry about getting a date for fancy events and we can coordinate looks together easily, and really he’s just a good person to hang around with and make out with when you’re bored.” D.Va caught herself and slowly glanced over at Efi, who was grinning ear to ear. “…you didn’t hear that last part,” said D.Va.

“You like him,” said Efi in a sing-songy voice, grinning.

D.Va snorted. “He’s Lúcio. Who doesn’t?”

“Yeah but you kiss him,” said Efi, maintaining the sing-songy voice.

“Yeah not gonna lie, that part’s pretty sweet,” said D.Va, grinning.
Vishkar buildings never really looked like they belonged. Too clean, too bright. Like something well-meaning-but-totalitarian aliens dropped out of the sky that could vaporize you if you misstepped within its borders. The Burgas Vishkar development was no different—a near-crystalline looking spire hugging some old docks, clashing against what bits of the city managed to survive the crisis.

A handful of rooftops away from Vishkar’s spire, Sombra breathed in the salty night air as she opened up a purple screen with a wave of her fingers. “Ah…. just like old times, eh Araña? Just you, and me, and a geriatric war criminal pumped full of government steroids.”

Widowmaker huffed and Jack made a scoffing grunt.

“We don’t need a chaperone, you know,” said Widowmaker, glancing sidelong at Jack.

“As much as I would like to not have to spend a night listening to Sombra talk—” Jack started.

“Hey!”

“You’re still being vetted. So you’re both being kept far away from the front lines, and no, you don’t get your guns.”

“What?!” Sombra and Widowmaker said at the same time.

“What is even the point of my being here if I can’t even—” Widowmaker started.

“You’re making us be lookouts,” said Sombra, furrowing her brow.

“Believe me, if I could have your first mission be a dry run, I would. Hell, you two were be lucky to be on the Orca considering Amélie’s state—”

Widowmaker’s eyes narrowed and Jack caught himself.

“But you’re on a real mission. You’re just hanging back for now. We play it slow and we play it safe,” said Jack, before looking at Widowmaker, “I know you want them to pay for what they did to you, I get it. I know you’re both good at what you do because you were both that big of a pain in my ass when you were on Talon’s side. But you also know your standing with this team is tenuous at best. So you need to play nice. Sombra–you’re eyes on the interior. Widow, exterior. We’ll be checking in over comms throughout the mission. Symmetra and Zenyatta are on the orca if you need backup, but you should be far enough from the action for it not to be a necessity.”

One of Symmetra’s teleporter pads opened up next to Jack.

“We’ll be counting on you,” said Jack.

Sombra gave a sarcastic salute before Jack disappeared into the blue light of the teleporter.

“‘Not listen to Sombra talk’ ‘Play nice’—” Sombra mimicked Jack, “Ass. I’m charming.”

“I know,” said Widowmaker.

“I am a delight,” Sombra insisted.
“I know, *mon coeur,*” said Widowmaker, smiling a little. She sighed and brought her visor down as Sombra brought up several screens of the building’s exterior and interior security feeds. It was a pretty run-of-the-mill infiltration and extraction mission—just snagging some Utopaean building schematics from one of Vishkar’s shell companies. Sombra had told Jack several times that she could slip in and out very easily with her thermoptic cloaking, but that brought up the counter-argument that the team couldn’t keep track of her if she did that, so here she was, pouting and thumbing through screens.

“I feel like an idiot,” muttered Widowmaker, tilting her head and looking at the various perspectives her tactical visor gave her, “No gun…”

“…Do you want a gun?” Sombra tilted her head.

“What sort of question is that?” Widowmaker’s visor clicked up off of her eyes.

“Well I mean…” Sombra gestured, “You’re away from Talon. You don’t… y’know, have to be what Talon made you.”

Widowmaker’s yellow eyes were fixed on her. Sombra had to break her own eyes downward.

“I mean… you’ll always be my Araña no matter what, but you get to figure out who you want to be now,” she said, scratching at her neural implants.

“I don’t have time to learn to be anything else,” muttered Widowmaker, “Talon made a weapon—the best we can do is turn it against them.”

“But what about after?” Sombra brought her eyes up to meet hers again.

“You think there’s an ‘after’ for us?” Widowmaker arched an eyebrow.

“You know me,” said Sombra, enlarging one of her security feeds at the sight of movement in it, “Planning for everything.”

“I wouldn’t think a conspiracy theorist would be such an optimist,” said Widowmaker with a slight smile.

Sombra snorted. “I’m a survivor. I don’t intend on changing that anytime soon. And you can bet whatever I survive, I’m dragging you along with me,” Sombra smiled and dragged one of her windows to the side, apparently rearranging them for easier viewing, but also a bit demonstratively, “From fallout shelter to fallout shelter if I have to.”

Widowmaker smiled at this and brought her visor back down.

“Check in 1, how’s everyone looking?” Jack’s voice sounded over the comms.

Sombra brought up an audio feed screen to keep track of who was talking.

“Orca backup, standing by,” Symmetra’s voice sounded over the comm line.

“Northern infiltration, now making my way through the third floor,” Genji’s voice chimed in.

“South infiltrators confirming rendezvous in 90 seconds,” said Jack, “Surveillance team, how are we looking?”

There was half a beat before Sombra realized Jack was talking to them and clicked into the comm channel.
“Still…. surveilling?” said Sombra.

“How are we looking?” said Jack.

Sombra’s eyes flicked to the screens and Widowmaker tilted her head slightly, both eying the interior and exteriors of the building. Thankfully, being only a shell company of Vishkar, this particular spire wasn’t as heavily guarded as the others. Sombra knew she didn’t have to scramble the guard’s GPS coordinates to further keep them away from the team, but tonight she decided she was nice like that.

“Still clear,” said Sombra, her eyes

“Good,” said Jack, “Update us if that changes.”

Sombra paused, “I could go in and knock out all of their-”

“We know. Stand by and surveil,” said Jack.

Sombra scoffed.

“Understood,” said Widowmaker as several audio feeds clicked out of the comm channel.

“Look at us,” said Sombra, “Surveillance team.” Sombra frowned and looked at the Vishkar spire. “I know all of Sanjay’s little toys backwards and forwards. I could make this mission much shorter if they just….” she trailed off and huffed.

“I’d feel safer with my rifle, but none of them would. I’ll choose to be flattered in that regard,” said Widowmaker with some resignation.

“We could mess them up,” Sombra said, giving a glance to Widowmaker.

“Mm,” Widowmaker conceded.

“Surveillance team. Lead them in circles and stuff…” Sombra trailed off, feeling the enthusiasm fading out of her voice.

“Except you don’t actually want to do that,” said Widowmaker.

Sombra pursed her lips and crinkled her brow thoughtfully, “I’m used to wanting to do it,” she said, turning her attention back to her screens, “You and Gabe and Akande and Moira… it was fun to run circles around you guys.”

“Gabriel knew,” said Widowmaker.

“Gabe knew,” said Sombra.

“You don’t want to run circles around Overwatch?”

“Never stopped,” said Sombra, before looking back at her screens, “But things are different now.”

“Different how?”

“Still a bigger picture, and, yes, being in Overwatch means we don’t have nearly as many resources as we did with Talon–and of course, we know Overwatch isn’t willing to do what Talon’s willing to do, and we know Talon is very willing to kill us and Overwatch’s sense of protection towards us is dubious at best–wow, I’m depressing myself–”
“Sombra,” Sombra felt a cool hand on her shoulder. Widowmaker’s visor was still down. Sombra wasn’t sure why she kept assuming Widowmaker couldn’t see when it was down when the truth was she was seeing far more with it. Maybe it was the fact that her eyes were covered. But then the visor clicked back off her eyes. Yellow. Unnatural. There were times when Sombra could almost swear she could see tapetum lucidum in Amélie’s eyes like some kind of nocturnal animal. But there was a warmth there. A wary, quiet warmth that always seemed to clear Sombra’s head of all the hundreds of little voices of countless streams of information.

“I…” Sombra huffed, “My point is–maybe it was working with rich assholes like Vialli and Max but… if I’m going to take down a a messed up secret hierarchy, I should probably be… not in the ‘have a lot of money that we got by exploiting people and also we’re gunning down random civilians’ team.”

“And you threw away everything you had built up with Talon just to save me,” said Widowmaker, “Perhaps you are more like the so-called ‘heroes’ than you think.”

Sombra made a gagging sound “Don’t joke about that stuff,” she said with a snicker.

“You tell me I can’t joke all the time,” said Widowmaker with a smirk. Her smirk shrank a little and she tilted her head. “Hey,” she said quietly, and she brought up her hand. Her thumb only barely grazed against Sombra’s jawline when Sombra leaned in and went on her tiptoes. The screens that framed Sombra phased through her, only light after all. Some text on the screens stretched over Widowmaker’s torso, distorted by the contours of her ribs and waist as Sombra wrapped her arms around her. It was a long, tentative kiss, steadying, and thankfully distracting from the tedium of being lookouts. So naturally it was interrupted.

“Check 2 to Orca and surveillance teams,” Jack’s voice crackled over the comm channels, “Status?”

“Just like old times?” Widowmaker said quietly, her words breaking the kiss apart.

“Same shit, different geriatric war criminal pumped full of government steroids,” said Sombra with a grin.
It was Winston’s operation—he had called it ‘Operation Clear Skies’ but McCree had called it the “Drone Rodeo” and somehow that was the name that stuck. Talon spy drones had been flying over London, exactly what they were searching for, no one was sure, but it was agreed that it certainly wasn’t safe to let them continue their ominous flights. Ana could take down a few, and Jack and McCree had managed to take out a few low flyers from a rooftop, but Pharah was doing most of the heavy lifting. Pharah would ground them, either by landing on them and ripping out the propulsion systems, temporarily disabling navigation, or with a well-fired rocket, then using the Raptora armor to safely bring them down to the ground or to nearby roofs where they wouldn’t damage civilian properties. Symmetra was assisting Winston with the ground work, retrieving the drones via teleporter and bringing them back to their temporary base of operations in the cathedral where Winston was dismantling them and attempting to reverse-engineer their navigation and GPS functions to find out where they were being controlled from.

“How many more?” said Symmetra, walking through the teleporter with the wreckage of a drone suspended on a hovering platform of hard light.

“Well, I want to say this is the last one,” said Winston, narrowing his eyes at the blinking beacon on his monitor.

“But…?” Symmetra hovered the platform over one of Winston’s empty worktables and dematerialized it.

“Well, the most likely option is that, no matter what the model is, this drone should be the last one, my instruments aren’t picking up any more unusual flight patterns in the area.”

“You have a concern though,” said Symmetra.

“First and foremost I’m a scientist, but I’d be lying if I said animal instinct didn’t run pretty strong with me,” said Winston, taking off his glasses and polishing them, “These drones have gone down easily—”

“Not that easily,” said Symmetra.

“Easily enough to raise concerns,” said Winston, putting his glasses back on, “I expected some kind of malware—the drones as a honeypot if you will—but there’s been none. Well…none Athena and I couldn’t handle.” Winston sighed, “I feel like there should be more. More of…”

“More drones?”

“More of a fight,” said Winston.

“Target five located,” Pharah spoke over the comms, “In pursuit.”

“You’re headed to her location anyways, can you humor me and set up a couple sentry turrets just in case?”

“Of course,” said Symmetra.

Winston leaned back in his seat, “You’re not worried about her?”

Symmetra shrugged, “I have full faith in her abilities.”
“Well yeah but I thought you two…”

“Yes,” Symmetra’s voice was clipped and professional, but Winston glanced over his shoulder to see her smiling slightly. Winston contacted Pharah over the comms.

“How’s it looking, Pharah?”

“I was able to damage it’s left wing. I’m sending you coordinates for its projected landing spot.

“Better get going,” Winston said to Symmetra. Symmetra nodded, entered the coordinates on her prosthetic, and opened up a teleporter.

She stepped into the teleporter and onto a rooftop. She found that the overcast clouds overhead that had given Ana and Jack and Jesse so much trouble in taking down the drones had finally managed to begin drizzling down, causing Symmetra’s own shielding to be slightly visible as a faint aura of blue. “I’m at the coordinates,” she said, looking around.

“You might wanna keep your head down,” McCree spoke from behind her.

Symmetra’s eyes narrowed, then she became aware of an odd sound on the wind, then found herself ducking down as a drone flew overhead with Pharah in hot pursuit. Symmetra stared after her, eyes wide. McCree chuckled a bit behind her and Symmetra quickly caught herself and stood up straight, tucking her hair back.

“You two have been on missions together before, haven’t you?” said McCree.

“Well…” Symmetra cleared her throat, “Yes but…”

“You don’t get to see her in the open air like this that often?” said McCree.

Symmetra watched as Pharah landed on the back of the drone, which shot into the clouds and disappeared. Symmetra squinted into the gray and white sky, searching for her. The was the distant boom of an explosion, and a section of the clouds flashed yellow and Symmetra’s breath caught in her throat. She looked over her shoulder at McCree, who was also watching the clouds, perfectly calm, then turned her attention back to the clouds. Then finally a shape broke through. It was Pharah, gripping the remains of the drone, slowly descending. Symmetra’s hand went over her chest and she breathed a sigh of relief.

“She’s fine,” McCree said, grinning, “Don’t you worry. She’s handled way worse than this.”

“Something’s just come up on my instruments—” Winston’s voice came over the comm.

“Amari!” Jack barked over the comm, “On your fi—”

It happened faster than Symmetra could process. There was the scream of a missile through the air, and then a collision with Pharah and the drone.

“Fareeha!” Ana’s screech over the comm was nearly earsplitting.

McCree grabbed Symmetra by the arm and forced her to duck down as the wreckage of the drone tumbled down around them in flames, but Symmetra immediately broke away from him and deployed a photon barrier and only had to search the skies briefly for Pharah, who was spiraling down diagonally with a stream of smoke behind her. Pharah crashed into the into the side of an under-construction building. Symmetra desperately brought up the coordinates that automatically locked on to Pharah’s raptora armor on her prosthetic.
“Symm–” McCree started but Symmetra was already opening another teleporter and leaping in. McCree moved to jump in after her but suddenly another large hunk of the burning drone Pharah had been carrying crashed down onto the teleporter before he could do so and forced it to dematerialize.

Symmetra didn’t even look over her shoulder at the teleporter disappearing behind her as she rushed to the crumpled figure in half-blackened blue armor on the floor. Jack was yelling over the comms. Gunshots could be heard as McCree and Jack were both attempting to take that last drone down. Symmetra was tuning them out, dropping to her knees next to Pharah and turning her over. Pharah’s eyes were closed and there was a large gash across the side of her forehead, streaming blood over one eye, and blood out of one corner of her mouth.

“Pharah–Fareeha can you hear me–can you—?”

Symmetra saw her own hand shaking as it reached out towards Pharah’s neck to test for a pulse. Pharah suddenly coughed and Symmetra flinched back. Pharah opened one eye at her. “Satya…?”

“Stay awake,” said Symmetra, wiping blood out of Pharah’s eye.

“I’m repositioning,” Ana spoke over the comms, “I’ll have you in my sights in a few moments–Fareeha–please say something—”

“There was another…” Pharah managed and then winced.

“Fareeha? Symmetra, her comm is offline. Do you have a visual?”

“I have a visual,” said Symmetra, taking Pharah’s hand in hers, “Stay awake,” she said to Pharah. Pharah’s breath was ragged.

“Satya–” Pharah said again, “I should have…”

“You’re all right,” Symmetra said, trying just as hard to convince herself of this.

“Oh…” a pained exhale that was almost a chuckle escaped Pharah, “I was… pretty worried there…”

“Just—stay breathing and stay awake,” said Symmetra, tucking away some hair that was sticking itself to Pharah’s face with her own blood, “Ana will be here soon. As soon as we get you stabilized I’ll teleport us back to—”

“I love you,” said Pharah.

Symmetra’s mouth hung open, dumbly all thoughts and words dying in her throat.

Pharah read the shock on Symmetra’s face and chuckled a bit before wincing. “Just… thought you should kn–”

“No,” said Symmetra. The word came out of her in that clipped aristocratic tone of hers, but it was shaking, somehow threatening to collapse itself under its own weight.


“No,” said Symmetra, now with a clear shudder in her voice and tears brimming in her eyes, “You are not saying that. You’re going to say that at a nice restaurant. Or after a play. Or sitting on-on–” Symmetra’s voice was breaking, “on that hideous couch back at the watchpoint. Or waking up in
the morning. Or any other time when you’re not dying because I will not permit this to be the first time you said that, and certainly not the last.”


“You—” Symmetra’s mouth drew to a thin line. She knew how to keep sobs in the back of her throat, yet still they choked her words, “You can’t— I will not allow—I’m—I…”

“This must look pretty bad, huh?” said Pharah, staring up at the ceiling, “Not like you to lose comp—” she winced again, “composure…”

Something dripped off of Symmetra’s chin and plopped onto Pharah’s face, diluting the stain of blood on her forehead. Symmetra’s hand went to one of her own cheeks and she found it soaked with tears. Symmetra squeezed her hand and held Pharah’s armored knuckles to her own lips as she tried to choke down the sobs that threatened to boil over. “Just stay wake,” she said, holding Pharah’s hand, “Just stay breathing. Stay bre—"

There was another high pitched sound and suddenly Pharah convulsed, inhaling sharply, as she was hit with a biotic cartridge.

“…Ana?” Symmetra spoke over the comms.

“Move to your right, dear,” said Ana over the comms. Symmetra did so and another biotic cartridge hit Pharah, “We’re moving on your location.”

“The drone…?” Pharah said softly.

“Taken care of,” said Ana. Another biotic cartridge hit Pharah and Pharah once again flinched hard and coughed. “Let’s get both of you back to the watchpoint.”

“Understood,” said Symmetra, clasping Pharah’s hands in hers. A long silence passed.

“Satya?” Pharah’s voice was still weak.

“Yes?” Symmetra’s eyes were wide, still shining with tears.

“…I think she meant you need to open up a teleporter,” said Pharah, smiling.

Symmetra laughed a little and the motion sent tears running down her face. “Of course,” she said, somewhere between a laugh and a sob, her hands still shaking as she drew a projection of a teleporter out of her prosthetic, “Of course.”
Prompt: McHanzo and Gency, Cherry Blossoms

The Shimada family plot had a decent view of the city, and even of Shimada castle, where the trees in the courtyard were in full bloom. The Shimada plot itself was shaded by an ume tree whose own petals littered the ground and still drifted down on Hanzo’s shoulders even as he and Genji weeded around the gravesite, sponged dirt and moss off the gravestone, then ladled water over the grave. It was Genji who set the flowers out, tweaking the bouquets slightly so that the flowers weren’t crushing each other and stood out prettily in their vase. Hanzo lit incense and both paid their respects, first Hanzo, then Genji. Once Genji rose to his feet they stood in silence for a long time, and Hanzo found himself frequently glancing over at his brother. He didn’t know exactly what he was looking for every time he glanced over. Genji had drawn his visor up and removed his faceplate, yet somehow his face was just as expressionless as if he had left both on.

“Are you ready to rejoin the others?” Hanzo said, glancing over.

“You can go on ahead,” said Genji. Hanzo tilted his head slightly in some confusion. Genji gave a soft huff and itched at one of his scars. “I have… uh… I just need to talk to them.”

Hanzo’s brow furrowed slightly. “Talk to them?”

“The first time I visited here with my Master, it helped greatly,” said Genji.

“Do you want me to leave?” said Hanzo.

“I do not mind your presence,” he said, “You can speak to them too, if you wish.”

Hanzo folded his arms. “Just… do as you see fit. Proceed as if I am not here.”

Something almost like a smile tugged at Genji’s scars and he faced the grave. “Did you hear that, Father? Hanzo’s finally given me his blessing to do something.”

Hanzo scoffed.

“He’s in Overwatch as well now,” said Genji, “We’re both…” he paused, “We’re almost getting along.”

“Almost,” said Hanzo, with a slight smile and a nod.

“He met someone, too,” said Genji, putting his hands on his hips.

“Are you just going to tell them about me?” said Hanzo.

“You said proceed as if you are not here,” said Genji, glancing over at Hanzo, before turning back to the grave, “He doesn’t want me to tell you this because he is convinced that anything that makes him remotely happy would make you spin in your grave.”

“I am not,” said Hanzo, furrowing his brow.

“He is much happier than before though,” said Genji, “Jesse is a good man. You would like him.”

Hanzo half-scoffed, half-chuckled, “No they wouldn’t,” said Hanzo.

Genji paused, “No… they probably wouldn’t,” Genji conceded.
“Aren’t you going to tell them about Angela?” said Hanzo.

“They already know about Angela. I told them about her last year,” said Genji. He turned back to the grave, “She’s doing well, by the way.”

Hanzo smirked but Genji continued. “I realize… we have not ended up doing what you planned. We have not even ended up being who you wanted,” a bitter chuckle escaped Genji and he glanced down, “When I did finally become the person you wanted, I did so against you. I became the weapon the Shimada clan wanted… against the Shimada clan.” Genji paused, “Or perhaps you never wanted any of that for me. It was always hard to tell.” He straightened up, “Still… This family is a part of me, and, it has been difficult, but I’ve made peace with that. I don’t know how you would feel if you saw me today,” Genji looked down at the faceplate he was holding in his hand, “I doubt you would even recognize your Sparrow.” Genji exhaled, “But… I know who I am now. And I am a part of something I believe in now. And…. Hanzo is too.” Genji looked over at Hanzo. “Right?”

“Right,” said Hanzo.

“Anyway,” Genji looked back to the grave and turned his faceplate over in his hands, “I hope wherever you are, you can understand that, and if you don’t… well… I accept that,” he bowed to the grave, “Until next time,” he said, sliding a feather out from the sheath of his wakizashi and placing it among the flowers.

Genji put his faceplate on and turned to walk away from the grave, then paused and glanced over his shoulder at Hanzo, “Are you coming, brother?”

“I need some more time. I’ll be right behind you,” said Hanzo. Genji nodded and headed down the hill. Hanzo sighed and took a seat underneath the ume tree, next to the grave.

“I could never figure out why you doted on him so,” he said, watching Genji make his way through the cemetery, “I did everything you told me. I did everything right. I was everything you wanted me to be,” he glanced at the tattoo running down his arm, “Still, your eyes never filled with the same light looking at me as they did with him. It’s only been recently that I’ve started to see it. Your ‘Sparrow,’” he huffed slightly, “You looked at him and you saw someone who didn’t have to grow up to be… you.”

He looked out over the city, then down onto Shimada castle. “It’s still hard to look at it like this,” said Hanzo, “It’s hard to think about everything I walked away from. Genji hardly wanted any part in it but… it was all I was for most of my life.” Hanzo glanced over at the grave. “I still hear the voices of the clan elders in my head. I keep having to remind myself that I don’t live in their world anymore,” he looked back at the city and closed his eyes, “You didn’t always do what they said either. I wonder, sometimes, if that is why you’re here and not with us. I wonder if we would still be in that castle if you were still with us,” Hanzo was quiet for a long time before standing up, “I suppose it doesn’t matter now,” he said, “You told me once that everything the Shimada clan does is for our family. Genji is all the family I have now.” He chuckled bitterly, “I suppose, in a way I’m still doing what I was doing when you were around: Looking after your favorite,” he smirked, “Perhaps I still am what you made me,” he looked back at the grave and noticed the incense had all but burnt out, “They are waiting for me,” he said quietly, standing up, “I will take back my birthright, someday,” he said glancing back at the castle, “I promise you that. But I will do so on my terms.” He bowed to the grave, “In the meantime there is much other work to be done. Until I see you again, Father.”
McCree leaned against the car with folded arms, rolling his fingers on his arm a bit nervously. He glanced over at Mercy and Zenyatta, Zenyatta meditating peacefully and Mercy calmly looking through her schedule for appointments she would have when they returned to the Watchpoint. McCree paced around the car again and itched at the back of his head.

“They’ve been awhile,” he said, leaning against the car.

“This is the first time they’ve been able to do this together,” said Mercy, “Give them some time.”

“I know, I know…” said McCree, sighing, “Just—We shouldn’t be in Hanamura any longer than we have to.”

“This is their home,” said Zenyatta.

“And it’s full of people who want them dead,” said McCree.

“Genji’s done this several times before and he’s been fine every time,” said Mercy.

“Look, all due respect, Doc, but the Shimada clan still thinks your beau’s dead,” said McCree, “You haven’t had a goddamn assasin break into your room in the middle of the night and—” McCree stopped himself and took a calming breath. Mercy realized that McCree had picked up Hanzo’s mannerisms when he did this now. Rather than just huffing and sighing where he stood, he had somehow gotten into the habit of straightening his posture and tilting his head back slightly, inhaling through his nose and exhaling through his mouth. “Sorry—Sorry,” he said, rubbing the back of his neck. Zenyatta patted McCree’s shoulder.

They sat in silence for a while longer until Mercy noticed glinting metal among the tombstones. She shaded her eyes in the sunlight then walked away from the car to the cemetery gate where she was met by Genji. McCree couldn’t quite hear the words they exchanged but Zenyatta made his way over as well and the three of them seemed to be talking quite pleasantly. He looked behind Genji for Hanzo but saw no sign of him.

“We should probably get going,” Hanzo spoke from behind him and McCree flinched hard and took a step, turning on his heel to see Hanzo.


“Ninja,” said Hanzo, folding his arms.

McCree scoffed. “You get a kick out of spookin’ me?”

“I’d be lying if I said I didn’t,” said Hanzo.

“Hmph,” McCree gave a glance over his shoulder back at the cemetery, “Your old man doing all right?”

“He has a nice view,” said Hanzo.

“How hard do you think he’s spinnin’ in there?” said McCree.

Hanzo glanced over at Genji speaking with Mercy and Zenyatta. He chuckled a little. “Hopefully not too hard,” he said.
McCree rolled a cigarette as they stood in line. “A terminal you can’t hack. Never thought I’d see the day,” he said, smirking.

“There’s a difference between ‘I can’t hack it’ and ‘I can’t hack it remotely,’” said Sombra, folding her arms, “Pretty sure it’s at least some of the same quarantine tech they’re using on the God AI’s,” she muttered, furrowing her brow, “But I can hack it.” she put her hands on her hips, “I just need to find it.”

“Mm,” McCree gave a nod and then glanced up at the neon sign of the club, “Mictlan, huh? Bit on the nose, ain’t it? Might as well just put up a big ol’ sign that says ‘Los Muertos Aqui!’” The line moved forward and McCree found both he and Sombra were now standing in front of a large graffiti tag of Los Muertos. “Huh…” said McCree. Mictlan was a club, operating out of an abandoned Lumérico power plant on the outskirts of town. Still, the place seemed pretty popular. McCree exhaled smoke and readjusted the waistband of his pants again.

“Do you have to keep doing that?” said Sombra, rolling her eyes.

“These damn things keep riding up and shimmying down and creasing in places you don’t wanna know,” said McCree, shaking out one of his legs.

Sombra just scoffed and smirked. “I think you pull off skinnies really well.”

“Feel like a damn fool. Next time, I pick the disguises,” muttered McCree.

“Riiight and let you wear that stupid belt?” said Sombra.

“It’s lucky,” said McCree.

“Was the hat lucky too?” said Sombra.

“As a matter of fact, yes,” said McCree.

Sombra snickered. “Who wears a cowboy hat to a club?” She caught herself. “You,” she said, with a sigh, “You wear a cowboy hat to a club.”

“Well so long as we’re ragging on each other’s tastes, I will say it’s nice to see you in an actual pair of shoes rather than those neon…whatever the hell those things are.”

Sombra glanced down at her heels. “I thought they were a little tacky,” she said.

“Nah they’re… I dunno, strappy–they look fine,” said McCree, puffing out some smoke.

“Well they’re pinching my toes so I’m switching back to the neon whatever-the-hell-they-are as soon as this mission’s over,” she said, tossing a translocator into some nearby bushes.

“Fair enough. And you can bet I’ll be getting that belt back. Hat, too,” said McCree. He readjusted the waistband of his pants again, “And into a pair of pants that ain’t crushing my tender vittles.”

Sombra snorted as McCree took one last drag of his cigarette and stamped it out under his heel as they made their way to the front of the line. The bouncer glanced down at a list, then back up at McCree and Sombra and frowned.
“And you are?”

“Maria Escaton,” said Sombra, tossing her hair over her shoulders. She hooked her arm in McCree’s. “And this is Joel.”

McCree half-flinched and half-bristled at the name but quickly caught himself. “We’re on the list,” he said, moving to pocket his hands but finding it too difficult to do smoothly in the skinny jeans so just resting it on his hip.

The bouncer glanced down at the list, then up at them, then grunted and stood off to the side.

“Much obliged,” said McCree, walking past with Sombra. As soon as they were out of earshot of the bouncer McCree gave a glare to Sombra. “Joel? Seriously?”

A smile just tugged at the corner of Sombra’s mouth. “I thought Blackwatch was supposed to be good with cover identities,” she said.

McCree scoffed. “Let’s just get this over with,” he muttered.

“We move too fast and Los Muertos will know something’s up,” said Sombra, taking McCree by the arm, “Dance with me.”

McCree complied and both were on the dance floor. Sombra languidly put her arms about his shoulders and he kept his hands on her hips. Both were looking over the other’s shoulders, scanning for security and exits, turning as needed.

Sombra pressed herself close to McCree as a Los Muertos member brushed past them “How you holding up, Joel?”

“I’m holding up just fine, Pumpkin,” said McCree.

“Pumpkin?” Sombra repeated.

“That’s Joel’s nickname for Maria,” said McCree, smirking.

“Joel needs to pick a better one,” said Sombra.

“Sweetheart.”

“No.”

“Sugar-pie.”

“No.”

“Baby cakes.”

“No.”

“Honey bee.”

“No! Are you even trying?”

“What does ‘trying’ look like?” said McCree.

“Just call me ‘Darlin’,” said Sombra, furrowing her brow.
“You picked out ‘Joel.’ You don’t get ‘Darlin’ privileges,” said McCree.

“What—do I need to punch you in the face and have D-cups like your boyfriend?” said Sombra.

“He’s not my—” McCree started then cut himself off, “I dunno, would you be nicer to me if I had your girlfriend’s ass?”

Sombra shrugged, “Maybe,” she said. Both snickered. Sombra glanced over McCree’s shoulder and her brow furrowed. “Northwest corner,” she said, turning McCree so that he could see what she was seeing without turning his head. There was a dark stairway off in the northwest corner of the club with a single Los Muertos member standing watch next to it.

“Sure your little doohickey will work with two people?” said McCree.

“I’m sure,” said Sombra. They moved across the dancefloor, easily cloaking their movements as dancing and navigating the flow of the crowd. “We’ll have six seconds,” said Sombra.

“Gotcha,” said McCree. They danced in place, each using the turns in the dance to keep an eye on the stairwell and its guard at all times until a group of people moved in front of them, obscuring them from view, and Sombra activated her thermoptic camouflage. As it had been with Widowmaker, spreading out the camouflage ended up distorting it, but between the darkness and pulsing music and flashing lights of the club, they might as well have been completely invisible. They quickly moved past the guard and rushed down the stairs, finding themselves in a dark hallway. They moved down it as far as they could until the cloaking wore off, then Sombra quickly hacked the security cameras so that they would only show a loop of the past five minutes to whoever was watching them. Sombra brought up a screen projecting a floor plan of Mictlan back when it had been a power plant. “This way,” she said, navigating the dark hallways with McCree following close behind. They stopped dead in their tracks when they reached a door guarded by two members of Los Muertos.

“Hey—Party’s upstairs, you two shouldn’t be down here,” said one of the guards.

“Well shoot, Sugarbum, looks like we took a wrong turn lookin’ for that bathroom!”

Sombra gave McCree an icy sidelong glance when one of the guards squinted at her, “Wait—Sofía?”

Sombra’s reaction was instant. She punched him in the face, sent him reeling back, his compatriot opened his mouth to shout for backup but McCree clocked him across the face, knocking him out instantly before he could do so. Sombra threw her weight against the first guard and elbowed him hard in the solarplexus before finally knocking him out with an uppercut. Both caught their breath as the guards slumped to the floor.

“So…” McCree looked over at Sombra, “Who’s Sofía?”

“Go lock these guys in a closet, Joel,” said Sombra, hacking the locking panel next to the doorway. McCree shrugged and started dragging the unconscious guards over to a closet. When he finished unceremoniously shoving them in there, he closed the door then elbowed off the door handle with his prosthetic. He made his way back to a now opened door and walked into a dark server room where Sombra was busily hacking her way through the server.

“I knew it,” she muttered, “Same Quarantine tech. This could take awhile.”

McCree kept a lookout at the door as she worked.
“It’s not my real name,” said Sombra after a short while.

“What?” said McCree.

“Sofía. I just used that name because even when I was a kid I wasn’t dumb enough to use my real name with these guys.”

“Fair enough,” said McCree.

A silence passed between them filled only with the quiet chimes and blips of Sombra’s screens. “You’re not going to ask me about the real name?” said Sombra.

“‘Sombra’ always seemed real enough to me,” said McCree with a shrug.

Sombra brought up a screen featuring a feed from the security cameras she hacked then turned her attention back to the terminal. McCree continued keeping watch, but after several minutes he glanced over his shoulder, “Not rushin’ ya but… I don’t think you’ve ever taken this long,” he said, glancing over at the screens she had projected around the terminal, then he blinked. Sombra had about 8 more screens projected than usual, and was working furiously, her mouth drawn to a thin line, her brow furrowed.

“Sombra?” he spoke and she seemed to snap out of it briefly, then tossed him an info-drive.

“Here. The intel that Jack wanted,” she said, quickly returning to her work.

“Well we should get back to the rendezvous point then,” said McCree. Sombra didn’t seem to be listening, only glancing feverishly between different screens, moving them around, trying to sort through data. McCree cleared his throat. “I said, ‘I think we should get to the rendezvous point.’”

“Just give me a few more minu—ah!” All of the screens around her suddenly flashed red and featured the stylized image of an eye before disappearing altogether as sparks suddenly flew out of the neural implants on the side of Sombra’s head.

“Jeez!” said McCree, jumping back from the sight of the sparks. Sombra was shaking, her breath shuddering. “You okay?” said McCree.

Sombra was still shaking, gripping herself.

“What was that?” said McCree. Sombra shook her head.

“Nothing,” she said, “It was nothing. Warning shot, maybe…”

“What are you talking about?” said McCree.

“We should get back to Ja–” Sombra started then both fell silent at the sound of footsteps coming down the hall outside. Sombra started desperately searching through her bra for her translocator beacon.

“Shit,” said McCree, but Sombra suddenly seized him by the front of his shirt and yanked him close and kissed him. It took him about three seconds to register what she was doing before he leaned in and reciprocated, just in time for the guard to reach the door.

“Hey lovebirds,” the guard said, folding his arms and McCree broke away and glared over at him.

“Is it so much to ask for just a little privacy?” said McCree as Sombra hastily started searching through her bra for her translocator beacon again.
“You two shouldn’t be down here,” said the guard, “Where are the other guards?”

“Sounds like you’ve got security issues,” said Sombra, wrapping her arms around McCree’s neck.

The guard scoffed and then pulled out a comm. “Valdez,” he spoke into the comm, “I’ve got two intruders in the server room—Valdez?” He scoffed and set his comm to a different channel, “Oi–Martín. We need security down in—”

Sombra and McCree translocated.

They reappeared in a flash of violet in a patch of bushes outside Mictlan and quickly and quietly exited the scene and headed toward the rendezvous point, the ruins of an old church that had been shelled out during the omnic crisis.

“So… you all right?” said McCree.

“I’ll be fine,” said Sombra.

“I take it you’re not going to tell me about the mysterious and spooky eye symbol that scared the shit out of you and made your head all sparky,” said McCree.

“Nope,” said Sombra.

McCree frowned, then took out his pouch of tobacco and started rolling a cigarette as they walked. “You in trouble?” he said, as he stuck the hand-rolled cigarette between his lips and lit it.

“When are we *not* in trouble?” said Sombra, smirking.

“Fair point,” said McCree. They were both silent for a while before McCree spoke again. “You know, I figured this went without saying, but Overwatch ain’t Talon. We take care of our own. If you need help, we can help you.”

Sombra scoffed. “Yeah I’d rather not the whole of Overwatch get involved with this,” she said, folding her arms.

“Gotta,” said McCree, he exhaled smoke, “Just so you know, I can keep a secret,” said McCree, “If you think you’re in over your head, feel free to bring me into the loop and I’ll see what I can do.” He paused, “I suppose the ability to secrets doesn’t matter much to someone who can hack her way to them whether I like it or not but—the offer’s there.”

Sombra chuckled, “I’ll keep that in mind, cowboy,” she said as the Orca appeared in the distance.
“Just– be sure to call it in if your chest starts hurting,” Sombra spoke over the comm.

“I know,” said Amélie, walking across the rooftop.

“Flashbacks too. And tunnel vision,” said Sombra, “Any disorientation–”

“You’re acting like I’ve never sat on a roof and aimed a gun before,” said Widowmaker, a bit irritated.

“Technically this is your first mission without Talon pulling your strings,” said Sombra, “Plus, last time we were in Dorado…”

“I know,” said Amélie, her voice a bit softer now, “Don’t worry about me, mon coeur, just focus on getting that intel with the cowboy.”

“Got it,” said Sombra, “You take care.”

“You too,” said Amélie, ending the call.

Widowmaker brought the scope of the rifle up and looked through it. It was a simple two-pronged mission: Harass, distract, and disrupt Los Muertos supply lines throughout the town, drawing their numbers out from Mictlan, allowing Sombra and McCree to grab the intel Sombra insisted was hidden in a terminal in there. Simple enough. She brought down her recon visor, expecting to have the whole thing thrown off whack from Winston’s pitiful attempts at repairs to it, but it worked just as well as it did with Talon.

“This is Lúcio with Bastion,” Lúcio spoke over the comm channel, “First point secured.”

Widowmaker pulled her comm away from her ear for Bastion’s beeping agreement, which always screeched with a bit of feedback over the comm before putting it back in her ear.

“Excellent work, Dos Santos. Hold position,” Jack spoke over the comm. “Oxton, flank Point B from the southwest.”

“Got it, chief!”

“Widowmaker, do you have visual contact?”

Widowmaker first turned her scope on a blue flash zipping through the streets. She scanned across the windows then fired off her grapple to a nearby water tower and perched on it for a different vantage point. “Southwestern sector is secure,” she said.

“Can I get a second confirmation on that?” Tracer spoke over the comm.

“It looks like you’re just going to have to trust me, cherie,” said Widowmaker, looking through the scope at Tracer.

“You’re here and not in a cell, I’d say that’s more than enough trust,” said Tracer.

“Dial it back, Oxton,” said Jack as Widowmaker turned her scope on Lúcio and Bastion.

“Dos Santos and the Siege unit are confirmed secure,” said Widowmaker.
“All right. Moving out,” said Jack.

The next several minutes passed with little disruption. It was odd, being on a mission where there wasn’t exactly anyone she had to kill. She found herself continually looking through her own scope at her teammates. She knew not to pull the trigger, but it was sort of force of habit from the vague memories she had of Talon listing targets in her head. She turned her scope onto Jack and let the crosshairs trail up to his head.

“Bang,” she said softly.

Jack suddenly dropped to the ground.

Amélie lowered her gun in horror. Had she done that? had she killed him? No there had been no blood. “Morrison?” she quickly rang him up on the comm.

Jack grunted. “I’m fine.”

“What happened?” said Amélie.

“Nothing! I’m fine! Maintain your vantage point!” said Jack.

“Should I get Lúcio?” said Amélie.

“I said maintain the vantage point!” said Jack. Widowmaker narrowed her eyes and brought down her recon visor to see Jack’s collapsed figure behind a car.

“You are not strike commander,” said Amélie, firing a grappling hook over in Jack’s direction, “And Winston said to use our own discretion.” She leapt off the roof and retracted the grapple until she reached the opposite building, then rappelled down the side of it easily. Jack was gripping his ankle on the ground with a biotic field glowing around him. He glanced up at her.

“Get back in position,” he said.

“I will,” she said, hauling his arm over her shoulder and firing her grapple back onto the roof.

“You sure that thing can support two—” Jack started but Widowmaker retracted the grapple and both shot up onto the roof. “Watch the leg–watch–” Jack grunted as Widowmaker let go of him and he fell onto the roof, his hand went to his ankle again. Widowmaker swatted his hand away.

“Straighten your leg out,” said Widowmaker.

“What, you’re a medic now?” said Jack, sitting up.

“Dancer,” said Widowmaker.

“What?” said Jack.

“Does this hurt?” said Widowmaker, moving his foot slightly.

Jack grunted in pain. “Yep–Yeah that hurts.”

“Lateral sprain,” said Widowmaker, “The girls in my studio would get it all the time.”

“Look, I just need another biotic field and—”

“The way you’re using biotics will just make your leg lock up more,” said Amélie, elevating his
ankle, “Try and relax.”

Jack scoffed. “You do this sort of thing often?”

“Dancer,” Widowmaker said again. Jack gave her a steady look which prompted her to explain further. “The thing about being a ballerina is,” she said, grabbing a biotic field distributor off of Jack’s belt, “You hurt your feet and legs. A lot. I was lucky enough to be married to a man who could give me access to a steady supply of biotics for myself and other injured dancers in my studio to keep us all on our feet,” she smirked, “Gave us a bit of a competitive edge over other dance companies. Relax your leg.”

“Gérard snuck you biotics?” said Jack.

“I said relax your leg, and yes,” said Amélie “Can’t always call a physical therapist when a show is in 3 hours.” She glanced up at Jack and rolled her eyes, “Oh don’t give me that look. They were his unused own standard issue biotics from missions. They would have gotten thrown out anyway.”

Jack was quiet as Widowmaker carefully pried off his boot. He grunted a bit as she felt around his ankle, then watched as she worked and got the biotic field generator to disperse a more concentrated stream at his ankle.

“How much do you remember?” he asked.

Widowmaker glanced up, then looked down, “A lot of what Talon did to me either I blocked out myself or is so…” she gestured vaguely at her head, “…affected that I really can’t trust the memory,” she looked out over the city, “But I find I’ve been… remembering more of Gérard… of the time before they made me…” she itched a bit underneath her recon visor, “There hasn’t been a huge rush yet… mostly broken pieces. But there’s more and more of them every day that I can put together.” She was quiet for a while, “I know you don’t trust me,” she said at last.

“Well if you give everyone some time to—”

“It would be stupid to trust me completely. Never trust me completely. I don’t trust me completely,” said Widowmaker, “I know what I can do. Is your comm off?”

“Yeah,” said Jack, “Didn’t want to subject people to an old man complaining about his bum ankle.”

Widowmaker smirked a little before turning her attention back to his ankle. Her smile faded. “If Talon finds some way to activate me again, you need to stop me.”

“I will,” said Jack.

“By any means necessary,” said Widowmaker.

“It’s not going to come to—” Jack started.

“Any means, Jack,” said Widowmaker, looking at him with a furrowed brow, “Take off the visor. Look me in the eye.”

Jack complied and clicked the visor off.

“Give me your word that you won’t let what happened with Gérard happen again,” said Amélie.

“I don’t know if I can—”
“I can’t do it again, Jack,” said Amélie, “I won’t do it again, and if I do it again, then the thing that is doing it again is not me and it needs to be killed. Give me your word that if it comes to that, you’ll stop me. I know Sombra won’t do it so it has to be you.”

Jack sighed. “I won’t let what happened with Gérard happen again,” he said.

“Good,” said Widowmaker. She glanced down at Jack’s ankle. “Try moving it now.”

Jack rotated his ankle a bit and nodded before pulling his boot back on. “I should… be getting back to Oxton,” said Jack. He cleared his throat. “Thanks.” Amélie nodded and used her grapple to get him back down to street level and gave him cover fire as he ran to the rendezvous point to Tracer. She used her scope to make sure he was running all right, when he suddenly turned, and for a moment it felt as if he was giving her eye contact through the scope. He gave her a small salute and she pulled away from the scope and scoffed. “Pfft. Americans,” she muttered.
“For your own safety, I recommend moving behind my barrier,” said Orisa, waving civilians through. The reaction to the heavily modified OR-15 unit was somewhat mixed, as was to be expected for the occasional ruckus Orisa would cause in Numbani. Still, in the face of a Talon attack, her presence was more welcomed than not, especially when it came with a protective barrier. She glanced over her shoulder to see Zenyatta, overseeing the actual exit of the civilians while sending some kind of orb hovering over the more injured ones to stabilize them until they could get to safety. She turned her attention back to keeping watch for Talon agents as the last few civilians exited. She heard a soft chiming sound and looked up to see the same orb shining over her. She poked at it, then pointed at it and looked over her shoulder at Zenyatta.

“Query—” she started.

“It is an orb of harmony,” said Zenyatta, already knowing her question, “It should restore your armor after that debris fell on you.”

“Understood,” said Orisa, glancing back at the orb, “Is my performance satisfactory?”

“You are doing very well,” said Zenyatta, patting her on the shoulder.

“Master,” Genji’s voice came over the comm channel, “If the remaining civilians have been evacuated, we can regroup near Aetria.”

“Acknowledged,” said Zenyatta. He glanced back to Orisa, “We must make our way to our friends,” he said, moving forward. Orisa followed after him.

“Our friends?” Orisa repeated.

“Yes,” Zenyatta answered easily, “They are your friends as well.”

“Oh,” Orisa went quiet and seemed to be processing.

“Have I said something that confused you?” said Zenyatta.

“No,” said Orisa, “Current outlook is… optimal.”

“Excell–” Zenyatta started but then there was a shout from the balcony above them and grenade landed between them. “Oh,” said Zenyatta.

The grenade detonated. Orisa instinctively fortified. Zenyatta was sent flying by the blast. When the dust cleared Orisa looked up to see two talon agents up on one of Numbani’s walkways. Her photoreceptors narrowed and they aimed their guns at her. She brought up her fusion driver and they quickly turned tail. No, she wouldn’t have that. She fired a graviton charge and they were thrown into each other. She then moved to shoot, but then found her fusion driver was in cooldown mode, so she did the next most logical thing: she picked up a nearby (heavily damaged by the blast) moped with one arm, said “No parking,” and threw it at them. It hit hard. When the Talon agents seemed to be downed, she quickly looked around.

“Zenyatta?” she called. No answer. “Zenyatta?” she brought him up on the comm channel.

“Did something happen?” Genji spoke over the comm but Orisa was focused on finding Zenyatta.
“Zenyatta?” she called again but suddenly stepped on something that gave a metallic screech across the pavement when moved. She looked down. It was an omnic leg. “Oh no…” said Orisa.

“Oh no?” Genji spoke over the comm, “What do you mean ‘Oh no?’”

“Processing,” Orisa said, continue to look around. There had to be other pieces of him. Where were the other pieces?

“Orisa, what do you mean ‘Oh no?’” Genji spoke over the comm, “Why isn’t Zenyatta reporting in? Master? Master, are you there?”

There was a halting sound of vocoder feedback and Orisa turned her head over to one of the acacia trees that lined Numbani’s streets. She picked up the leg she hurried over to look up and see a mangled Zenyatta suspended by his own sparking wires in the branches. “Zenyatta located,” Orisa spoke over the comm.

“Is he alright?!” Genji was distraught on the comm channel, “Master, can you speak?”

A distorted sound escaped Zenyatta as he weakly raised a hand. “He is still functioning,” said Orisa, “…sort of.”

Zenyatta then dug his fingers into his own neck. Distorted sounds continued to escape him as he tweaked with some wires and his voice came out first far too deep, “My pupil—” he started with a voice that would have blown out a subwoofer, then tweaked another wire in his neck and his voice went autotune high, “My pupil—” he tweaked it once more and his voice returned to a normal pitch with some crackling and distortion, “I am-am h-h-he—” his head jerked around and sparks flew out of his shoulder briefly and his voice distorted again, “I am here,” he managed at last.

“What happened?!” Genji demanded over the comm.

“A t-tem- A temporar-rar-ary–A temporary setback,” said Zenyatta as Orisa looked worriedly between all the wires suspending him in the branches of the tree.

“I will get you out of there,” said Orisa determinedly.

“Please be care—care—” Zenyatta’s voice started playing over itself again when Orisa snapped a tree branch and Zenyatta immediately fell out of the tree in a heap on the grass, “Careful,” Zenyatta managed while facedown on the grass with one leg missing.

“Sorry,” said Orisa.

“Destiny ha-has brought-brought me here,” said Zenyatta, still facedown in the grass.

“I brought you your leg,” said Orisa, holding up the leg. Zenyatta managed to look up.

“Th-Thank you,” said Zenyatta before he glanced over and pointed. Orisa looked in the direction he was pointing to see one of his orbs, half-blackened by the blast, rolling down the street. She hurried over and picked it up and brought it to him. As soon as he took it in his hand it was set alight with a glowing yellow field of biotic energy, which Zenyatta allowed to hover over himself as he made a relieved sound.

“Master?” Genji spoke over the comms again.

“I will be fine, my pupil,” said Zenyatta, managing to roll himself over onto his back in the grass, “However, mobility has been greatly hindered by damages to my system, so there will be a
delay in our rendezvou–oh,” Zenyatta was suddenly scooped up by Orisa, who was still holding his leg as well.

“Rendezvous will proceed as planned,” said Orisa, moving forward while carrying Zenyatta.

“Keep him safe,” Genji spoke over the comms.

“Affirmative,” said Orisa, switching off the comm channel.

She glanced down at Zenyatta, then glanced off.

“I am sorry,” she said.

“That grenade was not your fault,” said Zenyatta.

“Your safety is my primary objective,” said Orisa firmly, “I have failed.”

“You have not failed,” said Zenyatta.

Orisa gestured at him with his own leg.

“…ah,” said Zenyatta, “Well… Life has ways of surprising us,” he said, looking at the orb of harmony hovering over him, “It cannot always be avoided.” He looked to her, “But you are still learning. You must not let yourself be discouraged.”

“I will ask Efi to reattach your leg,” said Orisa, “Then perhaps she can give you a barrier like mine. Or a fusion driver.”

Zenyatta chuckled, “I am happy with myself and my current abilities,” he said, “I believe you can handle barriers and fusion drivers far better than I ever could.”

“But what if I fail you again?” said Orisa.

“You are not failing, you are learning,” said Zenyatta, “Be patient with yourself. I believe you are already doing very well.”

“Oh really?” said Orisa.

Zenyatta managed to nod. Orisa glanced away from him and continued walking.

“I am still learning,” she said to herself.
The Oladeles’ townhouse was a charming place, slightly disheveled, but bright and homey with large windows and fresh flowers in vases and little drones zipping about, keeping the place tidy, if not a bit hurried. Zenyatta and Orisa enjoyed coffee with Efi’s parents as Efi herself and Torbjörn worked down in their garage with Winston present via video chat.

“Hmmmm…” Efi frowned at the omnic leg on the worktable in front of her, “Reattachment should be no problem,” she said with a serious nod, putting her hands on her hips. “But…” She then brought down one of the magnifying lenses on the worktable.

“Are there further issues?” said Winston from a laptop screen as Efi hauled up the leg to check its underside.

“Easy!” Torbjörn had mostly stayed out of her way for the most part but took a few steps forward to help Efi with lifting up the leg, “That thing’s nearly as big as you!”

“It’s taller than you,” said Winston as Torbjörn helped her turn the leg over.

“Hmph,” Torbjörn folded his arms, then pulled a pair of eyeglasses out of his pocket and squinted through them at the underside of Zenyatta’s leg, “Ahhh I see what you’re talking about.”

“The repulsors,” said Efi, pointing to several blackened plates on the underside of Zenyatta’s leg, “They’re heavily damaged and non-standard. They’ll need to be replaced. We probably have the parts to make a new ones here in Numbani, but judging by the size and intricacy of these ones…” Efi trailed off.

“We can handle it,” said Torbjörn.

Efi’s eyes brightened, “You think so?”

“Pah!” Torbjörn thumped his chest, “Don’t underestimate an engineer!”

“Yes sir!” said Efi, saluting before looking back down at Zenyatta’s leg. “He was made in an omnium, right?” she asked, “Human-made mag-repulsors are never this… pretty.”

“Honestly, I’m not sure,” said Winston.

“I’ve asked him that a few times as well,” said Torbjörn, “Always answers with that ‘Iris’ nonsense,” Torbjörn frowned, “All I can figure from his capabilities is that he’s based off of an old medical omnidroid frame from before the crisis, but the Omnium largely discontinued their production when the crisis broke out. The repair omnics they put out for their own forces during the crisis weren’t nearly as humanoid…” he took the leg from Efi, “He got their repulsor tech though…an odd choice. Not like the Omnium. There’s also the possibility that he cannibalized—”

Torbjörn stopped himself and cleared his throat, “I mean… lots of parts lying around and all that,” he said, “They always were… efficient.”

Efi stopped looking over the leg and glanced over at him, looking slightly worried.

“Don’t you concern yourself with me,” said Torbjörn, patting her on the shoulder, “I can fix it. Won’t be as pretty as the omnium repulsors. But they’ll get the job done. Can you do me a favor and pass me the CO2 La–”
“Sunkanmi–Laser,” said Efi and a drone hovered over with a small CO2 laser in its robotic arm.

“You name every little bot in this house?” said Torbjörn as another drone zipped past his feet.

“Of course,” said Efi, “Don’t you name yours?”

“Haven’t made a bot in many a year, and never bothered with personality matrixes or AI when I did,” said Torbjörn, working on detaching the repulsors, “Turrets and armor don’t need names, and they get the job done just fine.”

Efi gave a glance over to Winston, who cleared his throat. “So…what are their names?”

Efi smiled brightly, and then she started pointing them out, “Sunkanmi,” she pointed to the drone that had just brought over the laser, “Bolanle,” she pointed to the drone busying itself on the floor, “Mayowa’s helping Mum and Dad in the kitchen, and Ugoulo takes care of the garden on the roof.”

“Do they all have personality matrixes?” said Winston, trying to watch Sunkanmi through the laptop screen.

“I never installed them, but I like to think they do!” said Efi. Winston’s face softened a bit at this, and Torbjörn caught sight of it, but said nothing.

Several sparks flew from Zenyatta’s leg as Torbjorn worked. “Better get that welding helmet of yours,” said Torbjorn, bringing his own welding helmet down. Efi whistled and Sunkanmi came over with her welding helmet and she pulled it on and watched as Torbjörn worked.

“Efi, you have some mag-field generators on hand, right?” said Winston, tapping a few things into his computer.

“Yeah! They’re for Orisa’s fortification field,” said Efi, whistling and motioning to Bolanle this time. The drone seemed to perk up and hurry over to a crate, which it wiggled itself underneath and carried over. Efi rifled through the crate and handed Torbjorn several mag-field generators.

“I’ll need a soldering iron,” said Torbjörn and a drone was instantly at his side with the soldering iron at hand. He cleared his throat, “Well…thanks,” he said, setting to work.

“Efi!” Efi’s mother called from the kitchen, “Mayowa’s being…um…helpful! Again!”

“Good helpful or bad helpful?” Efi shouted back.

“Bad helpful!” shouted Efi’s mother.

“Uh oh,” said Efi, “I’ll be right back!” she rushed off and yelling in Yoruba could be heard from the Oladele kitchen.

“I saw that,” said Torbjörn, continuing to work on the leg.

“Saw what?” said Winston, furrowing his brow.

“That look a few moments ago. You only get that look when you’re talking about your father. Or thinking about him. Or when you see his picture.”

“Doctor Winston was not my father,” said Winston with a dismissive chuckle.

“Ehhhh…” Torbjörn gestured with his hand a bit and Winston huffed.
“Do you still think about it?” said Torbjörn, continuing to work on the leg.

“Are we really talking about this now?” said Winston, folding his arms.

“You’re the one who refers to our merry little band as family, you think you’d accept people having concern for you,” said Torbjörn.

Winston sighed. “Well… I mean the moon is right there. It’s… hard not to think about it sometimes.”

“What happened to Doctor Winston is not going to happen to her,” said Torbjörn with dead certainty.

“I know that,” said Winston with a roll of his eyes.

“But you’re still worried,” said Torbjörn.

“We’re living in a dangerous world,” said Winston, “Good people, bright people who want to make a change, who can make a change… It’s even more dangerous for them. And we’ve made it more dangerous for her and her family just by having her and Orisa associate with us.” He huffed a little, “And scientists are brave, by nature, so my concerns are not unfounded.”

“Brave,” said Torbjörn, “But not stupid. Wouldn’t be a scientist otherwise.”

Winston chuckled, “I suppose that’s true.”

“We’ll watch her back,” said Torbjorn, connecting Zenyatta’s leg to an electrical current to test the mag-repulsors. The leg floated about a foot off the table, held in place by the wire, “We look after our own,” he said, disconnecting the current and catching the leg, “Better go reattach this thing,” he said.

“I’ll see you back at the watchpoint,” said Winston. Torbjörn gave him a nod as Winston clicked out of the channel.
“I don’t understand how you can fight in the cold wearing so little,” said Mei as the team was heading back to the Orca.

“Hm, I’ll tell you my secret if you give me your coat,” said Zarya, grinning.

Mei giggled. “So you are cold!”

Junkrat, seeing Mei in apparent good spirits, attempted to join in. “I get cold just lookin’ at ya!” he said, sauntering up alongside her.

“Then you should look somewhere else,” said Mei.

Junkrat was sort of left standing there with his mouth hanging open slightly, “Well—what I mean is—”

“Or put on a shirt!” said Mei, “Don’t complain about the cold if you’re not even wearing a shirt!”

“I’m not complaining about the cold—that was— Well you know, I was just being—I was trying to—”

Height-wise he towered over her, but there was something both terribly intimidating and incredibly disarming when she pushed her glasses up her nose, and glared up at him with her eyebrows furrowed.

“Y’know, I was just…” Junkrat trailed off and looked over at Zarya to back him up but she simply smirked and shrugged. “Anyway—” Junkrat cleared his throat, “I think I hear Roadie calling…”

“I didn’t call you,” said Roadhog, from several feet away.

“Coming, Roadie!” said Junkrat, hurrying over. Junkrat matched Roadhog’s more slow-going gait to allow Zarya and Mei to slip out of earshot.

“I don’t know what I’m doing wrong,” muttered Junkrat. He turned to Roadhog, “I mean…I’m…attractive, right?”

Roadhog gave Junkrat a long and steady look. “Are you really asking me that?”

“Come on, Roadie,” said Junkrat.

Roadhog sighed. “You’re all right,” he said, scratching at his armpit.

“So what am I doing wrong?” said Junkrat.

“I’m not getting into this with you,” grumbled Roadhog.

“Well fine! Not like I’d get any good advice from you anyway!” snapped Junkrat.

—

Back on the Watchpoint, Lúcio and Genji were relaxing on the couch, with Lúcio quietly listening to his own work-in-progress music and trying to map out the beats on a notebook page to figure out where to tweak it, while Genji was reading through some mission briefings on recent Talon
encounters.

“Oi. Jumpy guy,” Junkrat called, “Got a question for ya.”

Lúcio and Genji both glanced up. Junkrat pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed. “y’know what. Fine. I’ll ask both of ya.”

Lúcio and Genji both exchanged glances.

Junkrat took a deep breath. “’sabout… Women–or I guess–relationships–flirting–what have you.”

“Mei,” both spoke at the same time.

“Wh– Seriously?” said Junkrat.

“I talk to McCree,” said Genji.

“And I’m not an idiot,” said Lúcio.

Junkrat frowned. “Look, he said, vaulting over the couch with his prosthetic arm and plopping between Genji and Lúcio, “You both got someone, right?”

“Yes,” Genji and Lúcio both said hesitantly.

“Well how’d you make that happen?” said Junkrat.

“I dunno,” Lúcio shrugged, “D and I always just hung out together and then eventually we just decided we could hang out, like, together.”

“You’re telling me you did absolutely nothing and you just got together?” said Junkrat.

“Well, we had some close calls on missions,” Lúcio rubbed the back of his neck, “Kind of makes you realize some stuff. I guess that sped stuff along. But mostly it was just because she’s like… my buddy, you know?”

“Right–Okay yeah you’re not a good example,” said Junkrat.

“I’m not a good example?” said Lúcio.

“Look, no offense, but you’re a fabulously charismatic international music star freedom fighter and philanthropist with perfect skin and a smile that could bring a puppy back to life. Of course it’s easy for you,” said Junkrat, folding his arms.

“Thank… you?” said Lúcio.

“Yeah so you’re no help at all,” said Junkrat. Lúcio frowned and Junkrat turned over to Genji, “What about you, Tin-Arse?”

“What about me?” said Genji, flatly.

“Well… you’re all sorts of fucked-up under that shiny helmet, yeah? How’d you and the Doc get together?”

Genji sighed, “If you must know, I first met Doctor Ziegler shortly after my brother left me on the brink of death. The first time I saw her I—”
“Gonna need the abridged version, mate,” said Junkrat.

Genji paused. “Very well. I would say I first started recognizing my feelings for Angela during a mission to the southwest when—”

“Can you abridge the abridged version?” said Junkrat.

Genji made a half-scoff half snarling sound beneath his faceplate and then spoke very flatly. “I nearly died. She saved me. I was full of rage and vengeance and spent several years taking down my family’s crime empire. She was kind to me. I developed feelings for her, and—”

“You hooked up?” said Junkrat.

“No,” said Genji, clearly getting a bit frustrated now, “I finished taking down my family’s crime empire but was not sated because I had never confronted my brother, and was slowly realizing my hatred towards myself. I left Overwatch and set out searching for my brother who did this to me. I… did not even say good bye to her.”

“This is terrible advice,” said Junkrat.

“You did not ask for advice! You asked how Angela and I got together!” snapped Genji. He huffed. “I can stop if you wish.”

“No–actually she’d probably hate you for that, so I think I can work with this,” said Junkrat, “Keep going.”

“I—” Genji pressed a hand over his visor, exasperated, “Overwatch fell and I was terribly worried about Doctor Ziegler and I realized I still had strong feelings for her.”

“So you went back to her and you hooked up,” said Junkrat.

Genji folded his arms. “No, I found my Master. I started writing to Doctor Ziegler. I spent 5 years traveling the world and coming to peace with myself in Nepal—it was long and difficult but it was during this time that I finally found harmony between—”

“I said the abridged version, mate,” said Junkrat.

Genji sighed. “Winston issued the recall. I returned to Gibraltar with my master. I reunited with Doctor Ziegler. We flirted, but little more than that. Then she nearly died and she’d say I saved her but really without Miss Zaryanova—”

“Skip to the end,” said Junkrat.

Genji paused. “Well… I don’t know where to go from there. We got together shortly after the incident with Reaper in Volskaya.”

Junkrat’s brow furrowed. “Well that’s all very exciting and morbid but I think I’d like to do this without either of us nearly dying and probably without the 8 years of me being up my own arse.”

Genji glanced off with a “Hmph.” A snicker escaped Lúcio. Junkrat pushed himself up off of the couch. “Well you’ve both been a real big help.”

“Really?” said Lúcio.

“No,” said Junkrat, “But that’s okay! I can figure this out! I don’t need anyone’s advice!”
“Oi. Death-From-Above. I need your advice,” said Junkrat, walking into the Watchpoint gym.

Pharah looked up from the weight she was doing curl-ups with, “What?”

“I’ll spot you,” said Junkrat, motioning over at a barbell and a bench.

Pharah shrugged and let Junkrat spot her while she did bench presses.

“So… you and Symmetra, huh?”

“Yes,” Pharah said, grunting slightly as she lifted the weight.

“Real smart lady, that Symmetra,” said Junkrat.

“Mm-hmm,” said Pharah, doing another rep.

“How’d you get her to like you?” the question came out of Junkrat more whining and desperate than he had anticipated and a half-breathless laugh escaped Pharah as she did another rep.

“Honestly?” said Pharah, “I was an idiot for three months and then something clicked somehow.”

“Well I’ve been an idiot for six months and it’s doing jack shit!” said Junkrat.

Pharah smirked and did another rep. “You can’t force things,” she said, a slight grunt at the end of her sentence, “You make your moves when you see an opening, but you don’t force the openings, do you understand? And if she’s not interested, then she’s not interested.”

“Gotcha…” said Junkrat.

“Did you ask Satya how we got together?” asked Pharah, doing one last rep.

“Well…I did, but she just made this face,” Junkrat pursed his lips and arched his eyebrow in aristocratic displeasure.

“Sounds like my Satya,” said Pharah and Junkrat helped her set the bar back onto the rack.

—

“We agreed no one is going after anyone’s bounties,” said McCree, as he fired at target drones on the practice range.

“Got it, mate, just had a question for ya,” said Junkrat.

“Is it about Mei again?” said McCree, shooting down another drone.

“No no, nope, not about Mei. I’m just really curious about you and the archer,” said Junkrat.

“Why do I feel like this is somehow about Mei?” said McCree.

“It’s not about–Alright it is indirectly about Mei. But I’m serious about you and your cosplay buddy.”

“We’re not in cos–” McCree started, then stopped himself, “Okay. I’ll bite. What do you want to know about me and Hanzo?”
“Well… When you first met, he punched you in the face,” said Junkrat.

“After I tackled him, yeah,” said McCree, “I mean he was breaking onto the Watchpoint. But that was pretty much water under the bridge once Genji cleared stuff up with him.”

“Well yeah, but still you’re.. y’know really different from each other. I mean, there’s no way you two would be together without all this Overwatch business.”

“Eh. Wouldn’t say we’re that different,” said McCree, reloading his peacemaker, “I mean, both pretty much raised by criminal organizations, I had a bounty on my head, he had assassins on his ass…”

“Both avid cosplayers….” said Junkrat. McCree just scoffed.

“I guess what I’m saying is, it’s easy to think you’re at odds with someone just because you’re so different, but… sometimes different things can mess people up in the same ways. You gotta keep an eye out for that stuff,” McCree paused, “Y’know, I don’t think I ever asked you–Why her?”

“Why–Have you seen her, mate?”

“Well, yeah she’s cute but–”

“Cute?! I believe you’re mispronouncing ‘most beautiful woman on the Watchpoint.’ Objective fact,” said Junkrat.

McCree snorted, “So it’s all looks?”

“Well, no, just–” Junkrat rubbed the back of his head, “She gives a shit about the world.”

McCree raised an eyebrow. “Most people give a shit about the world.”

“Well yeah but—Not the way she does,” Junkrat leaned against a wall behind McCree, “Most people give a shit about the world because there’s something that’s important to them in it. Friends, family, you know. It’s their stuff. People care about the world because that’s where all their stuff is. She’s got her friends, but well–Everyone just let her be a popsicle for years down on that Ecopoint, so I dunno how much that’s worth to her. I dunno. Omnium explosions change you. I spent years of my life pretty sure that this world was a sphere of burning garbage that I would happily just ride into the sun and grab all the loot I can while doing so. But for her…” Junkrat shrugged, “This world can take everything from her—hell it practically has already—but she’s still working harder than anyone to make sure this shitty planet has a future and this world isn’t going to give her anything back for it and she doesn’t care. She’s a bit crazy in that regard.” Junkrat smirked, “A real good kind of crazy,” Junkrat paused and then finally glanced back at McCree, who was standing there, staring at him, “Why’ve you stopped shooting?”

“Why the hell don’t you say something like that to her?!” said McCree, “You’ve been throwing ice puns at her this whole time when you’ve got all that goin’ on under the hood!?”

“I dunno,” said Junkrat, shrugging, “Bit hard to put something like that into post mission banter. Can’t exactly throw myself out there.”


“Gotcha. One nice thing,” said Junkrat.
By the time Junkrat managed to get the nerve up to speak to her again, were heading back to the Orca after a relatively uneventful mission in Oasis.

“Oi, Mei!” Junkrat called.

Mei glanced up from walking and tweaking at her Cryo-gun’s settings. “What,” she said flatly.

Junkrat felt himself break a sweat. He awkwardly made finger guns at her and said, “…Ice job back there.”

“Ugh,” Mei continued walking.
Prompt: Spiderbyte, R76, "Don't Leave Me"

Maybe I was never meant for normal sleep, thought Sombra when one of the neural implants scoring her undercut lit up red, prompting her eyes to flick open. Amélie’s face was buried in her pillow, her hair splashed out across the bed in all directions like a spider’s limbs. Sombra rose from bed and brought up a screen, small, red, not too bright so it wouldn’t disturb Amélie, and read the message. She pulled on her clothes and was fastening her jacket shut when Amélie spoke behind her.

“Going somewhere, mon coeur?”

Sombra glanced over at Amélie, sitting up in bed. Sombra’s hand instinctively went up to activate her thermoptic cloaking.

“Turn on your cloaking or translocator and you’re sleeping on the couch for a week,” said Widowmaker, furrowing her brow. Sombra’s hand dropped.

“Go back to sleep, I’ll be back before sunrise,” said Sombra.

“Not happening,” said Widowmaker simply, getting out of bed.

“Araña, please—” Sombra started, but Widowmaker was already pulling on pants.

“I don’t know where you’re going, but knowing you, I doubt it’s somewhere I should let you go alone.”

Sombra pressed her fingers to her brow. “I’m supposed to go alone—otherwise I won’t be safe.”

“That sounds like a threat. All the more reason I’m coming,” said Widowmaker,

Sombra half-sighed half-groaned. “Fine. But keep your distance.”

“I’m most effective at a distance,” said Widowmaker, pulling a crate out from under their bed, opening it, and fitting her recon visor onto her head.

They didn’t travel far from the Watchpoint. Widowmaker kept to the rooftops of Gibraltar’s dense little city while Sombra used her cloaking to pass under streetlights only to disappear back into the shadows. Sombra flinched and took a few steps back at the sound of rustling and clanging from an alley, then turned on her heel and watched a macaque scramble out of a trash can then swore under her breath.

“Not like you to be nervous, mon coeur,” said Widowmaker over their private comm channel, “Care to tell me what this is about?”

“You’re not going to like it,” said Sombra, tossing a translocator up onto a roof.

“I’m not going to like what?”

“Get out of sight,” said Sombra, “Now.”

Widowmaker complied, dimming the red lights of her recon visor, and dipping into the shadows on the roof. Widowmaker held her rifle close. She didn’t like this. Sombra was secretive, of
course, she was Sombra, but something felt off. Things felt less in Sombra’s control than usual, then again, Sombra had been a lot more desperate for a while now since their defection from Talon. Widowmaker stayed hidden, but then she heard a rasping voice on Sombra’s end of their private comm channel.

“You were told to come alone.”

Widowmaker’s eyes widened and she slunk to the side of the roof and looked through the scope of her rifle. Sombra was standing at the base of an Omnic crisis memorial. Reaper was with her.

“Yeah. Like I would come alone for a meeting with the Reaper,” said Sombra, putting her hands on her hips. Reaper looked straight into Widowmaker’s scope. He gave a slight wave and Widowmaker broke her eye away from the scope, her breath catching in her throat.

“Say the word and I have a clear shot,” said Widowmaker. Sombra clicked her comm off.

“Merde,” muttered Widowmaker.

—

“She seems well,” said Reaper, glancing away from the rooftop.

“She’s doing a lot better,” said Sombra, folding her arms, “What, you were worried about her?”

Reaper folded his arms and Sombra’s lips thinned. He wasn’t going to say it, but Sombra wondered if deep down he was glad to see someone escape the hell of a technologically induced living death.

“What was it you wanted, Gabe?” said Sombra, “Or did you just miss us?”

“I’ll make this brief: The only reason you left Talon and lived was because I permitted it. So you owe me.”

“Awww,” Sombra’s hand went over her heart, “You do care.”

“I’m not done,” said Reaper, black smoke rising off of him, “I permitted it because Overwatch—or at least the newest cluster of idiots to call themselves Overwatch— may have resources Talon doesn’t, and there would be times when Talon needs access to those resources.”

“Is that what you tell Talon? We’re your little double agents?” said Sombra, grinning.

“This is one of of those times,” said Reaper, “Talon needs Dr. Ziegler’s lumbar nanite stabilizer.”

Sombra’s face dropped. “What?” a slight chuckle escaped her, “You’re—you’re joking, right?”

Reaper continued standing with his arms folded.

“Right. You’re Reaper,” Sombra said with an exaggerated hand wave. “Okay well… yeah that’s not happening.”

“Talon needs—” Reaper started.

“I need Doctor Ziegler alive to keep treating Amélie and I’m pretty sure her little ninja boy toy will slice me in half if I try ripping out her spine.”

“The prototype,” said Reaper, exasperated, “She’ll have a prototype somewhere in her lab. Or better yet, a backup model.”

Sombra frowned and brought up several violet screens. “So Talon’s developing systems similar to
Ziegler’s spinal biotic distributors, huh?” she said. She looked at Reaper. “Quid Pro Quo. I get you that prototype, you give me information. Why does Talon want this?” she paused and her eyes widened, “Widowmaker,” she said softly, “They’re making another Widowmaker. A sturdier model. A spinal distributor means she can stay out in the field longer and—”

“I’m not giving you anything until I get that stabilizer,” said Reaper.

Sombra frowned and opened up several screens containing her notes on watchpoint security systems, “Give me a couple days to find it without detection and we’ll establish a drop-point so—”

“They need it tonight,” said Reaper.

Sombra raised an eyebrow and closed her screens, “Excuse me?”

“Tonight.”

Sombra scoffed and chuckled, “Look, these people aren’t idiots,” she said, putting her hands on her hips, “I can’t just—”

“I don’t want excuses. You got out here, didn’t you?” said Reaper.

—

With Sombra’s comm off, Widowmaker couldn’t be sure what she and Reaper were talking about. She didn’t like this.

“Sombra can really lock down a comm channel like no other, huh?” she heard a gruff voice behind her and quickly turned around, her rifle locking into automatic mode. Jack Morrison put his hands up and Widowmaker lowered her rifle.

“You followed us?” said Widowmaker.

“Do you really think we’re dumb enough to let you two wander off somewhere alone?” said Jack.

Widowmaker shrugged. “Fair enough,” she said, “Stay low and keep that visor dimmed.” she said. Jack nodded and looked over her shoulder. He saw Reaper and instantly he moved to raise his pulse rifle. “And don’t be a fool,” said Widowmaker.

“I take it this isn’t as simple as you and Sombra selling us all out to Talon,” said Jack.

“I meant what I said back in Dorado,” said Widowmaker, “I would die before I let Talon put one hand on me again, and I know Sombra would do the same.”

“You trust her that much, huh?” said Jack.

“You find that unbelievable?” said Widowmaker.

“I find it a relief, really, for your sake,” said Jack with a shrug. He looked back at Sombra and Reaper, “But be careful. I had someone I trusted that much too. Didn’t end so well.” Jack paused. “You’ll take him out if he tries anything?”

“What do you think I’ve been doing?” said Widowmaker with a roll of her eyes.

“Right—sorry,” said Jack.

“Hmph,” Widowmaker looked back through her scope. They both watched, both doing their best to
hide their impatience and the dread that crept up from the pit of their stomachs. “Did you love him?” said Widowmaker at last.

“Are you really asking that right now?”

“Gérard said you loved him,” said Widowmaker, “Said you had no right calling him a lovesick fool the way you carried on.”

“I—” Jack’s words caught in his throat, but he just sharply exhaled before composing himself, “It’s hardly relevant at this point, isn’t it?”

Widowmaker gave a shrug. Jack’s rolled his grip on his pulse rifle as they waited and watched.

—

“Why tonight?” said Sombra.

“I told you. You’re not getting anything until I get that stabilizer,” said Reaper.

Sombra was quiet for a while. “I don’t like this,” she said, frowning.

“I don’t care how you—ngh—feel about this,” said Reaper, suddenly visibly wincing. His shoulders caved inward suddenly and his hand clawed at his stomach.

“Gabe?” Sombra’s eyes widened and she took a step forward, “Are you—?”

“I’m fine, don’t touch me,” said Reaper, pointing a clawed hand at her to keep her back, “If we’re going to keep Talon from killing all of us, you’re going to—”

Reaper’s arm fell off.

“Ay mierda!” Sombra took several steps back from the limb in shock, “Gabe—what’s—?”

“Get me that damned stabilizer!” Reaper’s voice came out in a rasp at her as he dropped down to one knee next to his arm, which seemed to be decomposing into smoke. “Shit—” he muttered, “Shit—come on—” Reaper’s fallen-off arm turned completely to smoke and then reformed itself against his body. He seemed to catch his breath as he curled his reformed fingers into a fist.

“The stabilizer isn’t for Talon…” said Sombra, “It’s for you.”

“Obviously,” said Reaper.

“Gabe this is bad,” said Sombra.

“I’m aware,” said Reaper.

“Talon can’t help you?” said Sombra, “Gabe, I don’t know if I can get that thing to you fast enou —”

“Stop talking and get it!” Reaper snapped.

“Okay just—calm down,” said Sombra, “Keep it together.” Reaper shot a glare at her and Sombra coughed. “Okay, poor choice of words,” she said. Reaper suddenly let out a cry and buckled over, then dropped to his knee as one of his legs crumbled away into smoke underneath him.

—
Widowmaker made a repulsed noise as she watched Reaper’s arm fall off through the scope of her rifle.

“Something’s wrong,” said Widowmaker.

“What do you mean something’s—?” Jack started but Widowmaker fired off a grapple and shot off of the roof, leaving Jack alone. “Dammit–” muttered Jack, vaulting over the side of the building and scrambling down the fire escape.

—

Sombra was about to run off back toward the watchpoint when Widowmaker landed lightly in front of her.

“You are unharmed?” said Widowmaker, touching the side of Sombra’s face.

“I’m not the one to be worried about,” said Sombra, glancing over her shoulder at Reaper. Widowmaker shouldered her rifle and stepped over to Reaper, who was furiously attempting to get his leg to be solid again.

“Mon dieu,” said Widowmaker.

“I told you to go,” said Reaper.

“We’ll go, we’ll go,” said Sombra, backing up and wrapping an arm around Widowmaker’s waist.

“Should we leave him?” said Widowmaker.

“You should get me the damned stabilizer,” said Reaper.

“We will! Just—” Sombra gestured a bit helplessly, “Sit tight?”

“Sure,” said Reaper, “I’ll just be here,” he itched under his mask, “Falling apart in a nanite-induced living hell.” He watched as Widowmaker and Sombra shot off again.

—

As Sombra and Widowmaker shot through the air on Widowmaker’s grapple, Widowmaker put a finger to her ear.

“Jack,” she spoke, “I realize this looks bad—”

“Yeah it looks pretty bad,” said Jack, over the comms.

“But Reaper is dying. I know he’s your enemy—our enemy, but he’s in agony. There’s something that might help him, but we’ll need you to keep an eye on him while we’re getting it.”

“You two realize you’re both going right back on probation—if not being sent directly to the authorities—once we get back to the Watchpoint, right?” said Jack over the comms.

“Turn us in and I’ll bring Overwatch down with me,” said Sombra over the comm.

“Mon coeur, please,” said Widowmaker.

“What? I will,” said Sombra, “He’s falling apart, Jack. We can’t just let that happen. Keep an eye on him. Shoot him if he tries anything.”
“I don’t believe this…” Jack muttered before his comm clicked out.

The fingers fell off of the hand Reaper was gripping his leg with and he swore. It wasn’t the first time he thought he would die alone. He had been in better places to die alone in, but he had also been in worse.

Reaper wasn’t sure if they would make it back in time. He wasn’t sure if he wanted them to. The fingers fell off of the hand he was gripping his leg with and he swore. It wasn’t the first time he thought he would die alone. He had been in better places to die alone, but he had also been in worse. There was a certain level of acceptance at the core of his being that had been there for years. This level of acceptance had remained virtually unchanged until Reaper’s realization that the last thing he wanted to see before his death was not, in fact, Jack Morrison rushing at him with a pulse rifle in hand. At the same time, however, Reaper knew this wasn’t quite death. Not yet. The nanites in his system that kept him in a constant state of decay and repair granted him a certain level of consciousness when most humans’ brains would shut down from the strain. His hand went to one of the shotguns ever at his side, but decomposed into smoke, crumbling like ash before he could grip it fully.

Jack Morrison stopped while still several feet away. “Gabe,” the name fell out of him and he wasn’t sure how he felt about it. What he was speaking to wasn’t Gabe. It hadn’t been Gabe for years.

“You don’t want to see this, old man,” came Reaper’s rasping reply, his hand still dumbly destroying itself as it attempted to clasp around his gun.

The reports said Reaper was in a constant state of decay, a fact Jack had more or less taken for granted. Without this state there would be no way that the Reaper could do the things that he could do. Jack Morrison realized at this point that Reaper’s effectiveness as a mercenary and assassin, further bolstered by these abilities which gave way to the horror stories cropping up across different war zones, was still fueled by something that was constantly creating and destroying him. “Even now you still want me dead?” said Jack, lowering his pulse rifle.

“Yes,” Reaper replied flatly.

Jack sighed and shouldered his rifle. “Don’t you get tired?”

“Always,” said Reaper, “But I don’t sleep anymore.”

Jack sighed and clicked off his tactical visor. “We’re getting too old for this,” he muttered.

“You’re getting too old for this,” Reaper rasped.

“I’m serious,” said Jack, “We can’t keep doing this.”

“Speak for yourself,” said Reaper. “People still want my work. There will always be a buyer for it. No one asked for Jack Morrison to keep running around playing soldier.”

“No, I suppose not,” said Jack, stepping over to Reaper and setting down a biotic field, “ Doesn’t mean I wasn’t still needed though.”

“You realize as soon as I can get my hand to work, I’m shooting that ugly mug right off your shoulders, right?” said Reaper.
“I’m aware,” said Jack.

Reaper glanced at the biotic canister. “I used to get you,” he said, “I’m trying to figure out when that stopped.”

“I think it was roughly around the time the statue went up,” said Jack, rubbing at his receding hairline.

“So what is this?” said Reaper, gesturing at the biotic canister with his head, pretty much unable to move his arm for fear of it falling off again. “Guilt trip? Olive branch?”

Jack shrugged. “We’re going to kill each other eventually. Is it bad that I don’t want it to happen like this?”

“I don’t know,” said Reaper, “You do remember all the times I’ve tried to kill you and your people, right? Giza? Numbani? Gibraltar? Volskaya? Utopaea?”

“Yeah,” said Jack. He chuckled a little. “I don’t know how you can stand being with Talon if it means failing over and over.”

A snarling noise escaped Reaper. “You’re going to regret saying that as soon as I have that stabilizer.”

“Probably,” said Jack. They were both silent again for a while.

“You could end it,” said Reaper, “You know that’s the best decision. You know that’s what would keep everyone safe.”

“It hurts that much, huh?” said Jack.

“Not as much as your moralizing,” said Reaper.

Jack scoffed a bit. “You know, I wouldn’t have to ‘play boy scout’ if you didn’t insist on being a massive ass.”

Reaper was quiet for a while. “How do you see this ending?” he said at last.

Jack shrugged. “Not well,” he glanced back up at the omnic memorial they were standing at the foot of. “But I’d like to spare you some irony.”

Reaper made a noise that was half-cough half-snarl.

“What about you?” said Jack.

“What?” said Reaper.

“How do you see this ending?” said Jack.

“I don’t expect you to understand Talon’s vision,” said Reaper.

“I mean for you. Not Talon. What does five years from now look like for you? You on a big pile of everyone’s bodies?”

“Ideally, yes,” said Reaper.

“Seriously?” said Jack.
“I don’t see myself in this,” said Reaper, “I just see everyone who did this to me dead. When I—” his leg decomposed into shadow again and he swore.

“Just--take it easy. They’ll be back soon,” said Jack.

“Are you seriously trying to comfort me?”

“You know I did care about you at one point. A lot,” said Jack.

“Yes, but I destroyed everything else you cared about,” said Reaper, “And I promise you I’ll do it again.”

“Don’t give yourself too much credit,” said Jack, “We had plenty of other messes that had nothing to do with you.”

“Ever the appeaser, huh, Jack?” said Reaper. “What are you going to do when i get that stabilizer?”

“Well you said you were going to kill me so I’m probably going to avoid that,” said Jack, “And… you know I’ll have to take you in.”

“You can try,” said Reaper. He paused. “Sombra and Widowmaker—”

“They’ll be fine,” said Jack, “Well… they’ll have a shit-ton of explaining to do, but they helped us catch you so—”

“You didn’t catch me,” said Reaper.

“Big words for an angry puddle of nanites,” said Jack.

Reaper just snarled again then they were both quiet for a while longer as he attempted to get both his legs back to a stable, solid state. “You said ‘Gabe,’” he said, mostly trying to distract himself from the pain.

“Hm?” said Jack.

“Gabe. When you saw me you called me Gabe.”

“Well maybe I have a hard time taking either of us seriously when I call you ‘Reaper,’” said Jack.

“Hmph,” said Reaper, “Do you miss when I was Gabe?”

“There was a lot less outright trying to kill me, so yes,” said Jack.

Reaper was quiet for a while before saying, “Some of the other stuff was good too.”

“Yeah it wasn’t all bad,” said Jack.

“Just so we’re clear, I am going to kill you when I get that stabilizer,” said Reaper.

“I’ll be ready,” said Jack. He squinted into the distance and saw the purple flash of Sombra’s translocator. The morning light was creeping in, pink and blue and gray and Sombra was racing toward them with something gripped in her hand.

“Damn well better be,” muttered Reaper,
“Hm,” Junkrat looked at counting down numbers on the detonator, “Well this is a pickle.”

“Can you disarm it?” said Mei.

“Oh of course, snow plum, who do you think you’re talking to?” said Junkrat, thumping his chest, “I am the IUD expert after all!”

“IED,” said Roadhog.

“Pardon?” said Junkrat.

“It’s IED, not IUD,” said Roadhog, he glanced around at the bricks of C4 lining the large room and down the hall, “Not improvised either.”

“Well explosives expert,” said Junkrat, turning his attention back to the detonator, “Hm,” he leaned close to it again, “Hm. Hm. Hm.” He furrowed his brow as the detonator continued beeping and counting down.

“You don’t know what you’re doing,” said Roadhog.

“I know very well what I’m doing!” said Junkrat, glancing away from the detonator, “I’d welcome you to try but we both know you’d blow us all to kingdom come! So let the expert,” Junkrat made a flourish ing motion at himself, “Handle this.” Junkrat bent over the detonator once more. His brow furrowed. “Gotta give whoever did this credit though. This, this is art.” He glanced up at both Mei and Roadhog, “All right—I can take it from here. No reason for you two to be here. Roadie, please see Miss Zhou makes it safely back to the Orca. I’ll meet up with you as soon as I get this done.”

Mei’s brow furrowed a bit, “Are you scared you won’t be able to disarm it?”

“Yeesh! What is with you two!? All ‘You don’t know what you’re doing,’ and ‘What if you can’t disarm it?’ A vote of bloody confidence would be nice!”

“Just disarm it,” said Roadhog.

Junkrat made a frustrated grunting noise and pulled out a pair of pliers from his pocket, “Almost seems a shame,” he said to himself, “Must’ve worked real hard on this, our artist,” a chuckle escaped him, “Unfortunately they didn’t account for my genius and the fact that I have been easily able to deduce that our disarming wire is this naughty little fella right here!”

He clipped a yellow wire and the countdown on the detonator dropped to 30 seconds.

“Ah,” Junkrat said, raising his eyebrows at the new countdown, “Welp. No time to get out of blast range. Guess this is it. Roadie?”

Roadhog glanced up.

“I’ve always loved you, mate,” said Junkrat.

“Don’t make this weird,” said Roadhog.

“Mei?” Junkrat turned to Mei, who was feverishly dialing something into Snowball and
desperately unscrewing the cartridge from her cryo-gun, “Snow blossom, Frostee Freeze, Light of my life, I think you should know that I—”

Mei threw a cryo-cartridge against the ground and all three of them were encased in a massive block of ice as the explosives detonated. It was a terrifying several seconds as Mei watched through a sheet of ice, the smoke and rubble pouring down on them. Large fissures ran through the ice in the heat of the explosion and the downpour of rubble, but suspended in the ice, they remained unharmed. Of course, since it wasn’t Mei’s usual cryo-freeze it ended up lasting much longer than usual and Mei ended up having to rely on the compromised integrity of the ice from the explosion to wiggle and finally burst herself out of it. Roadhog easily burst himself out as well and gave her a thumbs up, then both looked back at Junkrat, still encased in ice.

“Oh dear…” Mei said, walking around the frozen Junkrat, “If he’s lost consciousness in there, we’ll have to proceed very delicatel–” Mei was cut off by Roadhog slamming a fist into the ice, successfully cracking it. The ice crumbled around Junkrat and Junkrat fell to the ground, gripping himself and shivering violently. “N-n-nice m-m-move S-snow p-p-p pea,” said Junkrat, his teeth chattering. His eyes widened in horror. “I c-c-can’t feel m-my arm and leg,” he said, “Izzit f-f- frostbite?! Do–” He glanced at his prosthetic arm, then down at his peg leg, “Oh…r-right,” he said, continuing to shiver.

“I think you have hypothermia,” said Mei.

“Why d-d-doesn’t he have hypothermia?” said Junkrat, pointing at Roadhog, then desperately breathing on his knuckles, then putting his hands in his armpits for warmth only to flinch from the shock of the cold of his own prosthetic.

Roadhog just patted his stomach, “Insulated,” he said simply. He looked around, “We should get out of here,” he said, hauling Junkrat to his feet.

“Right,” said Junkrat, continuing to shiver hard.

“Ugh,” Mei undid her belt and pack and pulled off her coat and held it out to him. Junkrat looked at the coat confusedly.

“What’s this?”

“Take it so you can try and regain some body heat,” said Mei.

“Your coat?” said Junkrat, incredulously.

“Just be sure to clean it when you’re done,” said Mei with a furrowed brow.

“Gotcha,” said Junkrat, taking the coat and pulling it on. Of course, since Junkrat was much taller and thinner than her, it fit him a bit ridiculously, only going down about as far as his stomach, with the sleeves only going just a little ways past his elbows. He pressed the coat against himself “Ooh– That is soft—that is–it’s like a hug–thank you, Snowflake!”

“Don’t mention it,” said Mei.

“You’re a real lifesaver, you know tha–”

“I said don’t mention it,” said Mei, “Ever.”
The song prompting this fic was "Montage" from "Swiss Army Man."

The name of the town was Opalburn, though ‘town’ seemed generous. ‘Settlement’ more like. It didn’t have half the fortifications of Junkertown, and seemed to serve mostly as a waypoint and pit stop for Junkers crossing the wasteland on various scavenging and courier missions. Mei’s own mission was re-establishing Eco-watch weather stations that had gone into disrepair following Overwatch’s shutdown. Junkrat had proven invaluable in navigating the Wasteland and communicating with the locals… in his own special way.

Apparently they had good timing in their mission, considering they were dropping in on Opalburn during a major celebration. Strings of light were hung between the stacked trailers and portables and ramshackle shacks and at the very center of town a wild bonfire burned. Though she herself was glad to be dressed for Australia’s hot weather, Mei wondered how the people here could stand jumping around a fire on such a warm evening. Thrusting itself up from the center of the bonfire was a blackened scrap metal structure of… a man? An omnic? It was hard to tell. It had a smiling face carved into the top and its two arms were reaching skyward. The air was thick with the smells of smoke and diesel and sweat and alcohol. A horrifically out-of-tune guitar and didgeridoo could be heard. Junkers were clapping, shouting, cheering, banging on corrugated tin panels and empty metal trash bins, and dancing around the bonfire sculpture/effigy. A chorus was singing, voices falling over each other but managing to hit just the right beats to maintain a melody. Mei felt a bit more like an anthropologist than a climatologist in that moment. Not quite a part of this world, but a someone who had the rare privilege of observing it.

“Didn’t I tell you Junkers can throw a party?” a voice spoke up next to her and she gave a light start where she sat. Normally she could hear the clunking and creak of Junkrat’s spring-loaded peg leg from a long ways away, but the festivities must have drowned the sound out. He towered over her usually, but it was even worse when he was standing and she was sitting. He was holding two mason jars and stuck one mason jar out to her. “Here ya go,” he said, smiling, “Happy V.O. Day.”

“V.O. Day?” said Mei, taking the mason jar from him and looking at the citrine-colored liquid in it.

“Victory-Over-The-Omnics Day. It’s Australia’s own version of the Festival De La Luz—well Junker Aussies, anyway. Sidney won’t call it that because it’s, quote, ‘Insensitive to omnics,’” he said, making finger quotes with his now free prosthetic hand.

“Is insensitive to Omnics,” said Mei, flatly.

“Way I see it, they can slap all the nice names on it they want, but we all know what we’re celebratin’,” said Junkrat with a shrug as he plopped down next to her.

Mei huffed and moved to sip at her drink but Junkrat stayed her wrist.

“Oh—Hold on—Forgot somethin’,” he rifled through the pouch at his hip and pulled out a small pink cocktail umbrella, unfurled it and put it against the rim of Mei’s mason jar, “There. Now it’s
classy.”

“What is it exactly?” said Mei, holding her mason jar up so she could see the liquid in the light of the fire, she gave a suspicious sniff and flinched back hard, “Paint thinner?”

“What? No! It’s Junker hooch,” said Junkrat, “It’s mostly like….” he held his own glass up and squinted at it, “Rum, maybe? Whiskey? Rumskey?”

“Moonshine,” said Mei.

“Yeah! Cheers!” said Junkrat, clinking his mason jar against hers before knocking some back, flinching, shuddering, breathing out hard, and thumping his chest, “AH! Wakes you up like a punch in the face, that!”

Mei gave a worried glance to her own mason jar.

“No pressure, Snow Pea,” said Junkrat with a shrug.

“Thanks,” said Mei, setting her mason jar down next to her.

They watched the bodies leap and thrash around the fire as the improvised drums continued to beat, half a line dance and half a mosh pit.

“Why Snow Pea?” said Mei.

“Well…” Junkrat looked down into his own drink, “I mean it’s obvious, right? You’ve got the… freezy gun, and stuff.”


“Consistent nicknames are overrated,” said Junkrat with a shrug.

“I’m asking why you don’t just call me ‘Mei,’” said Mei, flatly.

“Ah… well…” Junkrat rubbed the back of his neck, “S’pose it felt a bit… assuming?”

“Since when has Jamison Fawkes ever cared about coming off as ‘assuming?’” said Mei.

“Since Mei-Ling Zhou called him a bully,” said Junkrat simply.

“Oh…” Mei looked off.

“Look–Don’t worry about it. I know you don’t like me—” Junkrat went on.

“I don’t don’t like you,” said Mei, “…I never thought you cared what I thought about you that much…”

“‘Course I care what you think. You’re whip smart and the only one on the team crazier than me,” said Junkrat.

“…You think I’m crazier than you,” said Mei flatly.

“Only thing crazier than wanting to ride this burning trash heap of a world into the sun is thinking it can be saved,” said Junkrat, smiling a little, “Can’t help but admire that.”

“Oh…” Mei adjusted her glasses slightly and glanced off.
There was a brief awkward lull in the conversation but Junkrat suddenly caught himself. “I mean—Let’s uhh—I didn’t really explain the name thing. Calling you ‘Mei’ felt a bit assuming, and you’ve got all your freezy whatnot so it’s… whozzat Morrison calls ‘em… not nicknames…” he snapped his finger, “Callsigns! All callsigns.”

Mei snickered a little. “So you’re saying… you’re calling me all that stuff because you’re shy.”

“Wh—I—Jamison Fawkes does not know the meaning of the word ‘shy,’ Snowpuff,” said Junkrat, “I just said they’re callsigns! I’m a professional Overwatcher now, after all. And I ain’t calling you ‘Miss Zhou’ because that makes me feel like a goddamn suit.”

Mei snickered. “Trust me Jamison, I don’t think you’ll ever be a ‘suit.’”

“I think that’s the nicest thing you’ve ever said to me,” said Junkrat. He took another sip of his hooch and shuddered hard, “Hoo!” he inhaled sharply, “No chaser,” he said, his voice hoarse, “We die like men.”

Mei snorted, “Hey—here,” she took his drink and pulled her cryo-gun from its holster at her side. She gave quickest flick of the trigger and frost feathered up all along the sides of the mason jar, then she handed it back to him. He sipped it. “Bloody hell that’s smooth… You’re real clutch, you know that, Frostee Freeze?”

“Mei,” said Mei.

“Mei,” Junkrat repeated. She liked the way he said it. She picked up her own drink and iced it down as well before holstering her cryo-gun. She clinked her mason jar against Junkrat’s and sipped it, then shuddered hard at the taste.

“Yeaaah, it’s an acquired taste…” said Junkrat.

“Hwah!” Mei exhaled hard and adjusted her glasses, her head already buzzing. She looked back at the dancers leaping around the bonfire. “Hey—” she said, looking back at Junkrat, “We should join them.”

“What?” said Junkrat.

“I spent nine years on ice! I can’t be standing off to the side like this!” said Mei before knocking back a bit of her drink again.

Junkrat grinned, “Well if you insist, Snow Plu—”

“Mei,” said Mei.

“Mei,” said Junkrat.

They hooked their arms together and headed toward the bonfire to join the mass of dancing bodies.

“Hey Jamison,” said Mei.

“Yeah?” said Junkrat.

“If you think I’m crazier than you, do you think I’m crazier than Roadhog, too?” asked Mei.

“Wh—Roadhog’s the picture of mental health! What are you talking about?” said Junkrat.

Mei just snickered and pulled his precariously tall frame into a dance.
Tracer wanted to have the ceremony in Ilios, but with Talon activity in the area, the easiest and safest option was Gibraltar. Emily said she didn’t really care where the ceremony was, and didn’t really want a big fuss, but Tracer wouldn’t have it. Everything had to be perfect. Symmetra helped a lot in that regard, transforming the industrial interiors of Watchpoint Gibraltar with Hard Light to create a gleaming white reception venue accented by several ice sculptures courtesy of Mei. Pharah usually insisted on only using the Raptora armor for missions, but she supposed someone had to hang up the strings of orange, yellow, and blue paper lanterns from Gibraltar’s hangar ceilings and it was faster and safer than a ladder.

Zenyatta conducted the ceremony. Winston was best man. Cindi, one of the Omnics from Emily’s work, was Maid of Honor, and the rest of the honor attendants were a handful of Overwatch members (McCree, Pharah, Lucio, and Mercy,) and several of Emily’s friends and cousins. Tracer looked quite dashing in her suit, with a light blue waistcoat and orange and yellow striped bowtie, and Emily was stunningly beautiful in her white dress with its blue sash, carrying a bouquet of orange and yellow ranunculæ and forget-me-nots. The ceremony was held on Gibraltar’s cliffs at sunset. Of course both Tracer and Winston were blubbering messes throughout the whole ceremony and Emily and Zenyatta were exceedingly patient.

“Such a cheery girl,” said Ana, leaning her head on Reinhardt’s arm as Tracer stumbled through her vows, “It’s a bit funny seeing her like this.” She glanced over at those in the rows of seats facing the ceremony and it occurred to her how small the wedding party itself was. Reinhardt glanced down at her and followed her line of sight, scanning the small crowd. Seemingly small parties, tables with empty seats, they weren’t strangers to these sights after the Omnic crisis. The rest of the world had seemed to bounce back, with gleaming advanced metropolises like Numbani, Oasis, and Utopaea rising out of the ashes, but not Overwatch.

This was the first wedding most of them had been to in years, Ana realized. Mei had been in cryostasis, McCree had been on the run, herself and Jack in hiding. The only children at the wedding were all Torbjörn’s. Ana glanced over at them to watch Torbjörn’s wife adjusting one of her daughter’s braids, and then she looked back at Pharah, standing next to Tracer on the cliffs. The honor attendants had a choice of either an orange and yellow ombre dress, or a suit with a light blue tie and vest. Pharah had opted for the suit and looked wonderful. Ana wondered if she would live long enough to see Pharah settle down with someone.

“Are you all right?” Reinhardt spoke softly as Ana’s gaze lingered on her daughter.

“Mm?” Ana broke her sight away and gave an affectionate pat to Reinhardt’s chest, “I’m fine.”

It was a relatively short ceremony. Neither of the brides had parents to give long tearful anecdotes on how proud they were. Tracer said she would have liked Jack to say a few words, but Jack decided it was probably safer for everyone if he was just an old man in the wedding party. A revelation of Jack Morrison could make the wedding even more of a target than it already was. Most were politely paying attention, but Ana noticed Symmetra giving frequent glances to a small hard light display projection she would bring out of her prosthetic, displaying the status of the countless sentry turrets she had placed around the Watchpoint for just this occasion. Ana squinted at the display. None activated, none destroyed. No intruders in the Watchpoint. Reinhardt brought an arm around Ana, finally making her break her sight away from the audience and simply enjoy the ceremony.

Hanzo huffed as Genji struggled to see over Reinhardt’s shoulder. “You do not have to sit next to
me, you know,” he said.

“Family sits together,” said Genji, craning his neck to see.

“You should not have waited for me,” muttered Hanzo. He watched as Genji got up to a low standing position, just high enough so he could see over Reinhardt’s shoulder. He could make out Angela from the other bridesmaids easily. Her dress matched the sunset. Mercy caught a glimpse of Genji’s head-plate gleaming in the sunset and gave a small wave. Genji gave a small wave back and Hanzo scoffed a bit.

“You’re making a fool of yourself,” said Hanzo, prompting Genji to sit back down.

Genji was sullen, but then said, “You know–I don’t think I’ve ever seen McCree with his hat off. Or his hair styled like that. Or shaved. He looks good.”

“What?” Hanzo impulsively got up to the same crouched standing position to look over Reinhardt’s shoulder, only to see McCree was, in fact, still wearing the hat and was scruffy as ever. Hanzo frowned and sat down and Genji snickered and elbowed him.

“You’re making a fool of yourself,” Genji imitated Hanzo’s voice and Hanzo just huffed.

“.may now kiss the br–Oh,” said Zenyatta as Emily practically tackled Tracer in a kiss, causing Tracer to stagger back before regaining her footing to twirl Emily a bit in the kiss. The wedding party clapped, McCree whistled.

The reception was held in Gibraltar’s hangar. Lucio offered his services as MC and DJ, Winston cried through his best man speech, McCree gave a speech as well (which was disastrous but endearing), Pharah gave an excellent toast to more than make up for it. Mercy sniffled a little through her toast but was able to catch herself. And Tracer and Emily had their first dance.

“You’ve been very quiet,” said Reinhardt as Ana ate her food.

“Quiet?” said Ana.

“It is strange,” said Reinhardt, “I do not believe I’ve been to a wedding since my Crusader days.” He chuckled a little, “It’s funny—I was at both Jack’s and your funeral, and now I get to go to a wedding with you.”

Ana’s eyes widened and she glanced downward, “I know–I know we don’t talk about that much. I’m so sorry for what I put you thr–”

“Ana–it is fine,” Reinhardt placed a hand on her shoulder, “I’m happy you’re here now.”

“All right everyone it’s time for the bouquet and garter toss!” shouted Lúcio, “We’re not doing the gender thing–anyone who’s not married, come to the dance floor!”

Reinhardt stood up and held a hand out to her. Ana chuckled a little, “Are you serious?”

“Why should the kids have all the fun?” said Reinhardt and Ana scoffed and took his hand and walked out to the dance floor.

“What is the point of this again?” said Genji as he awkwardly shuffled in with the rest of the crowd.

“Oh–you know, it’s a luck thing,” said McCree.
“A luck…thing?”

“Yeah, you know, like… good luck until the next wedding,” said McCree.

“I see,” said Genji.

McCree wolf-whistled as Tracer got down on one knee to get Emily’s garter off, prompting a “Sod off!” from Tracer and a laugh from the reception. Tracer and Emily stood with their backs to the crowd, then tossed the bouquet and garter over their heads.

“I don’t see how it’s even a contest with your heigh–” Ana was saying to Reinhardt when Genji leapt up in front of him and caught the garter. While Ana was distracted by this, something hit her in the chest and she fumbled to see some flowers and instinctively grabbed them, finding herself awkwardly clasping the bouquet.

“We have our lucky couple!” announced Lúcio and Ana and Genji looked at each other. Reinhardt laughed hard.

“What?” said Genji. He looked at McCree, “Couple?”

“You guys get the first dance after the brides!” said Lúcio.

“What?” Genji said again.

“Here,” said Ana, taking the garter from genji and fitting it around his upper arm, then hooking her arm in his, “You’d better know how to dance,” she said, leading Genji out to the dance floor.

“I know how to dance,” said Genji, rubbing the back of his neck before assuming position as the music started.

“Doing all right, Genji?” said Ana, as they danced.

“Yes,” said Genji, “I believe I was not fully informed on the implications of the bouquet and garter toss.”

“McCree messed with you,” said Ana.

“McCree messed with me,” Genji agreed, and twirled Ana as more people made their way out to the dance floor.

“Well I’m afraid you’re in over your head, Genji,” said Ana, “According to tradition we need to get married now.”

“What?” said Genji and Ana laughed.

“Loosen up, it’s a wedding. That’s an order from Captain Amari,” said Ana.

“Yes, Captain,” said Genji.

Ana nodded her head over at Hanzo and McCree laughing while hanging around the open bar. “If your brother is more relaxed than you, that’s a problem,” she said, grinning.

Genji huffed a little, but somehow Ana could tell he was smiling underneath the faceplate.

“Mind if I cut in?” said Reinhardt, stepping up to the two of them.
“About time you did!” said Ana, breaking away from Genji and taking Reinhardt’s hand. Genji watched as they danced away and chuckled a little. He felt a finger tap on his shoulder and turned to see Mercy standing behind him.

“She left you for another,” said Mercy, looking after Reinhardt and Ana, “How scandalous.”

“Somehow I am not too upset,” said Genji, taking a grinning Mercy by the hand and pulling her close.

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