



**APEX**

4TH ANNIVERSARY  
FAN COLLABORATION

## FOREWORD

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This is the fourth anniversary of Apex and the third community collaboration we've put together. By now you'd think we would accurately be able to guess how much people love the Legends.

We were all wrong!

This is the biggest year yet! With cosplays, writing, 3D renders and 2D art, we've found even more family than ever.

We were thrilled to see people team up to create their pieces, after all one of the tenets of Apex is teamwork! Please take a spin through, read new little works of fiction, pore over lovingly rendered guns, find a new favorite cosplayer!

We love Apex and we love you!

**Caity, Mads, & Velocity**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>The Legends</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Ash</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Bangalore</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Bloodhound</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Catalyst</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Caustic</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>Crypto</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Fuse</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>Gibraltar</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>Horizon</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>Lifeline</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>Loba</b> .....	<b>45</b>
<b>Mad Maggie</b> .....	<b>49</b>
<b>Mirage</b> .....	<b>52</b>
<b>Octane</b> .....	<b>63</b>
<b>Rampart</b> .....	<b>74</b>
<b>Revenant</b> .....	<b>77</b>
<b>Rhapsody</b> .....	<b>82</b>
<b>Valkyrie</b> .....	<b>83</b>
<b>Vantage</b> .....	<b>86</b>
<b>Wattson</b> .....	<b>88</b>
<b>Wraith</b> .....	<b>97</b>

# JUST A LITTLE SOMETHING TO SAY

by **Desmond C. Feaithil**

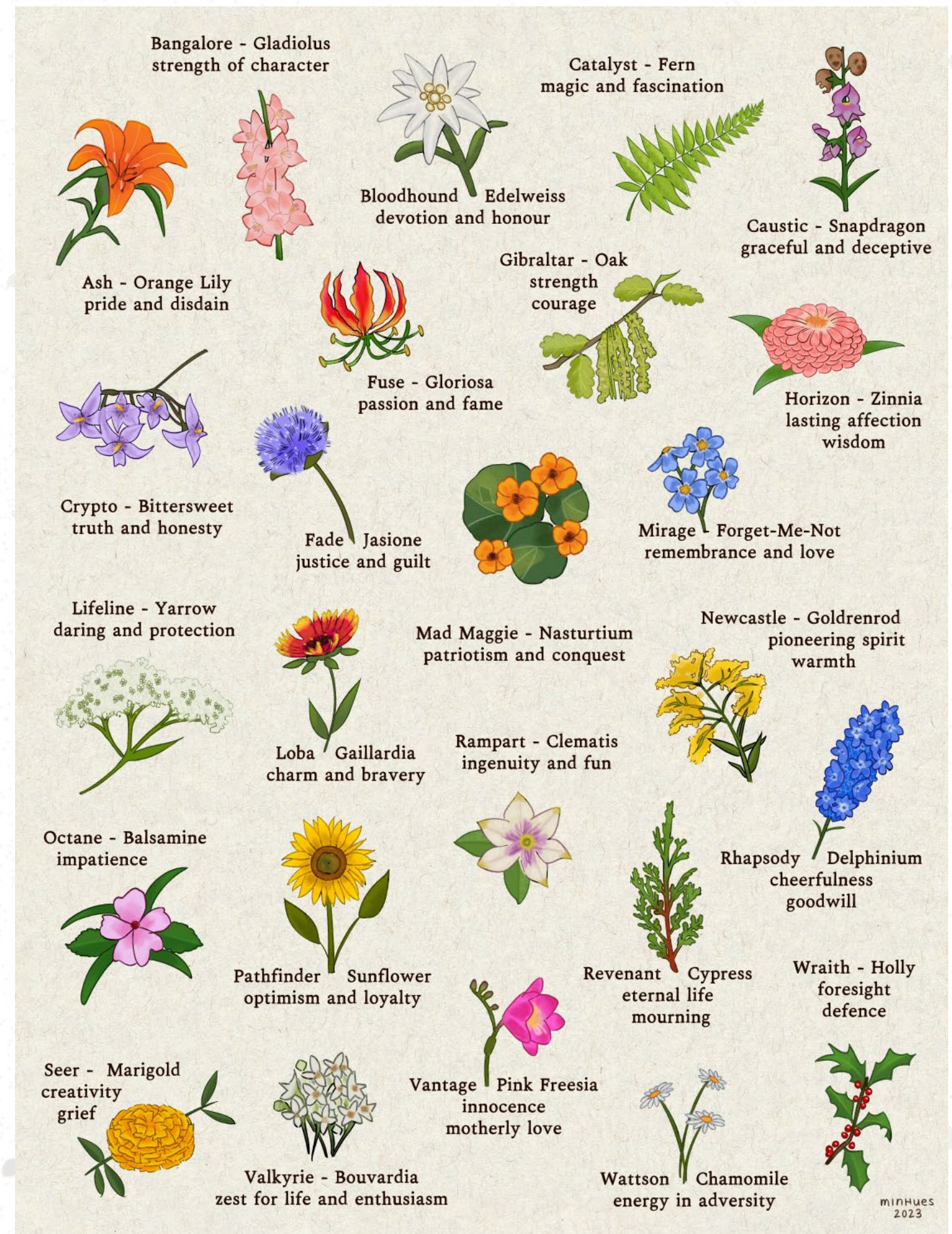
@NightWalker87 (Twitter), NightWalker87(Twitch)

Happy Birthday Apex Legends, to staff, cast and crew!  
You made it another year full around through and through.  
The vast community and dedicated fans will be on your side.  
Your game and detailed lore for such a genre turned the tide!

The multiplayer game's a battle royale unique for its in-depth flavour.  
I never expected to enjoy such a play-style with its complex colour.  
Who knew that I would be drawn in by such a roster of unique characters?  
They each have their story, their interesting origin, their broken feathers...

The universe that's being built for us is full of truly endless possibility!  
Keeping us on the edge of our seats with every new explained ability.  
Every season that's come to pass on regular cadenced rotation.  
The newest Legend introduced holds our dedicated captivation.

What will you give us next, to keep this interesting world growing?  
How far will the rabbit hole go in every tale that you'll be showing?  
Happy Birthday Apex Legends, this is an accomplishment to celebrate!  
The fans will be here, waiting, watching, for the next chapter you create.





6 Nurbzwax @Nurbzwax (Instagram, Twitter, Tiktok)



Novo @novo\_star (Twitter)



8 **Dara La Malice** @daralamalice (Ao3, Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter)



**Fransen\_** @fransen\_ (Instagram, Twitter) 9

## ANNIVERSARIES TO REMEMBER AND FORGET

by TheTruthHertz

An\_FNG (AO3) @TheTruthHertz\_ (Twitter)

The door burst open the instant Bangalore unlocked it, giving her no time to react to the hands and grinning faces that seized her by the arms and pulled her out of her apartment.

"Surprise!" Rampart threw her hands out wide as she danced in front of the soldier.

"The Hell?!" Bangalore struggled against the grip Gibraltar had on her, nearly escaping until he decided to scoop her up by her waist and throw her over his shoulder like a disgruntled sack of potatoes.

"C'mon now Sistah, relax! Don't want people getting the wrong idea here," came his merry chuckle.

Dark brown eyes scanned over the various "neighbors" of hers that they passed, all minding their own business. Even the clerk in the apartment complex's lobby didn't spare the trio a second glance.

"No one here would care if I got kidnapped. Besides, you two are easily recognizable," Bangalore grumbled as she rested her elbow on Gibraltar's back and propped her chin up with her hand.

"Awww don't be like that Anita, we just want to have a little fun today and didn't want ya avoidin' us."

"So you barge in and grab me instead? You're lucky I was ready for the day."

Rampart blew a raspberry and made a dismissive wave. "It's 10 am, we all know ya're up and at 'em by 6."

"Can you at least set me down?" Bangalore glared at the side of Gibraltar's head.

"Not yet!"

The lobby's automatic sliding doors pulled back, then closed behind the modder as the trio stepped out into a toasty Solace morning. Rampart rushed ahead and Bangalore heard the sound of a side door being pulled open. She glanced back in a panic and saw a blocky van sitting outfront with two wheels hopped up on the curb from what must have been a chaotic parking job.

"Wait, what are you two doing?!"

Bangalore attempted to scramble out of Gibraltar's grip and escape whatever plans they had for her, but he lumbered over to the van all the same and tossed her into it like she was a sand bag. Her back hit the cushioned seat at an awkward angle, temporarily knocking the wind out of her.

"Celebratin' ya anniversary!" Rampart grinned before slamming the door shut and locking it. "C'mon now Gibby! Tie her down if ya have to, I'll get ol' Bessie goin'!"

"Oh no you don't, Sistah. I'm driving this time."

Bangalore didn't notice Gibraltar catching Rampart up by the back of her shirt and gently pulling her away from the driver's door. Her mind was caught on what had been said previously. A quick glance at her phone confirmed that yes, today was that day.

"It'll take forever to get there, ya drive like a bloody grandma!" came Rampart's distant protests.

The van shook as both of Bangalore's friends hopped in. How many years had it been now? Seven? Eight? Had it really been that long since she won that game and signed her contract?

*"Bangalore has been named the latest Apex Legend, and while many are excited to have this brutal and strategic competitor join the ranks, most are up in arms. And for good reason. Sergeant First Class Anita Willaims, aka Bangalore, proudly served for the IMC. Many question the commissioner's and the Syndicate's decision to let such an individual have the title of Apex Legend."*

The echoes of Lisa Stone's voice and the "controversy" surrounding her earning her title were chased away by Rampart's yelling.

"Step on it granny! Ya burnin' daylight!"

"Not until everyone has their seatbelts on," Gibraltar calmly stated as he adjusted the rearview mirror and the driver's seat.

Rampart grumbled as she put hers on, Bangalore did the same, her mind bringing up another distant memory.

Her first actual anniversary as an Apex Legend turned out to be a dark day for her. Here she had hoped to have been celebrating it with her brother Jackson who she had found using the fame and money she acquired through the games. Instead she sat alone in her barely furnished apartment drinking by herself, staring at the only picture she had of the both of them. There wasn't much more to remember aside from her finishing one bottle after another.

An arm was thrown around her shoulder as Rampart attempted to pull her in for a noogie. Bangalore escaped the hold and gave her a friendly punch in the shoulder in return.

"Gotta be faster than that, P!"

"I wasn't really tryin', ya looked like ya were just spacin' out there."

Bangalore leaned back and put her arms behind her head, feigning nonchalance. "Forgot it was today that's all."

(cont...)



"That's exactly why we are here and why ya're goin' to have a blast today," Rampart said, her sentence punctuated with the blowing up and popping of her bubble gum.

Heat rushed to Bangalore's face. She folded her arms and looked away. "You didn't have to."

"We wanted to Sistah! I made a cake and everything!"

Gibraltar reached to the side and held up a cake covered in white frosting with the words "Happy Anniversary Bangalore!" on it. Framing the cursive frosting were several of her smoke canisters and air strike missiles made out of chocolate. The decorations were finished off with a red Apex logo at the bottom.

*Bangalore stared blankly at the woman standing outside of her door and the item she was holding up.*

*"You like red velvet, no? I remember you mentioning it during one of those nights we spent together."*

*The last thing she had ever expected was for Loba to show up like this after they had barely become friends. She looked over the number and words piped onto the cake.*

*"H-how did you know?"*

*"Beautiful, you should know by now I keep a record of all sorts of things. Now are you going to keep a lady waiting?" Loba said as she rested a hand on her hip and raised an eyebrow at Bangalore.*

Loba had been invited in of course and they shared a small yet memorable celebration. A couple of months later Bangalore had made sure to return the favor and celebrated Loba's first anniversary as an Apex Legend. The thief had been just as surprised and touched.

"She doesn't need no cake when she's got what's comin'!"

"I spent all morning on this!"

"I'll be more than happy to have some of the cake, G," Bangalore chuckled.

Gibraltar grinned at her through the rearview mirror.

As the noise of the city faded away and the van jostled about on an uneven road, Bangalore couldn't help but glance out the window to see where they were going. A bandana was instantly wrapped around her eyes.

"Ay ay, no peekin'!" Rampart scolded.

"Seriously, P?"

"As ever ya plonker."

Bangalore sat back and accepted her fate, a small smile forming on her lips.

The drive continued for another thirty, no forty?, minutes. By the time they slowed to a stop Bangalore was eager to get out and see what scheme her friends had come up with. Rampart guided her out, humming and skipping, with Gibraltar following behind. When the bandana was removed she found herself at the edge of a large crater

in the vast desert surrounding them. Down inside of the crater were a variety of targets, dummies, and more that had been set up. It was easy to recognize both Gibraltar's and Rampart's handiwork. Gibraltar tapped her shoulder and she turned to see Rampart going "ta-da!" to the array of guns and ammunition that had been stored in the back of the van. A light burning started to form the corner of her eyes and her chest felt warm.

"You guys didn't have to do all this," Bangalore got out, her throat caught with more emotion than she wanted.

"We wanted to, after all, we almost didn't get to celebrate it with you." Gibraltar's smile was warm and sincere, as was Rampart's.

"Who wants a lame party anyways, ya deserve somethin' way better!"

Compared to Bangalore's last anniversary that was spent sobbing over a false death certificate and her phone opened up to the one contact she wanted to reach out to but knew wouldn't answer, this one was already fifty times better.

Bangalore stepped forward and pulled them both in for a hug. "Thank you, this means more than you know."

They held her close for a moment.

"Yeah yeah, now let go of me before I change my mind on one last surprise for ya," Rampart shoved them both away.

An eyebrow was raised up.

Rampart pushed a crate of guns to the side and pulled out an even larger one with an oomph. With flourish the top was popped open and an all too familiar minigun was lifted out, harness and all.

"Now, understand she's my girl and if there's even one scratch on her I'll be toasin' ya buns hotter than the final ring," Rampart jabbed a threatening finger at her.

Bangalore grinned. She had always wanted to fully gear up with Sheila. "I'll take good care of her," Bangalore assured Rampart as she accepted the minigun.

"I know you will," Rampart sighed. Her eyes teared up as she took another glance at Sheila. "Don't you worry baby, ya in good hands and I'll be right up here the whole time."

Gibraltar and Bangalore shared a glance, doing their best to hold in their laughter while Rampart hugged Sheila. Rampart then stood tall and cleared her throat.

"What are ya bloody waitin' for?! Get down there and start tearin' up the place!"

Bangalore didn't need telling twice. After gearing up with as many guns and ammo as she could carry, she sprinted for the edge of the crater and slid down the side. As Sheila revved up in her arms Bangalore knew this would be an anniversary to remember.





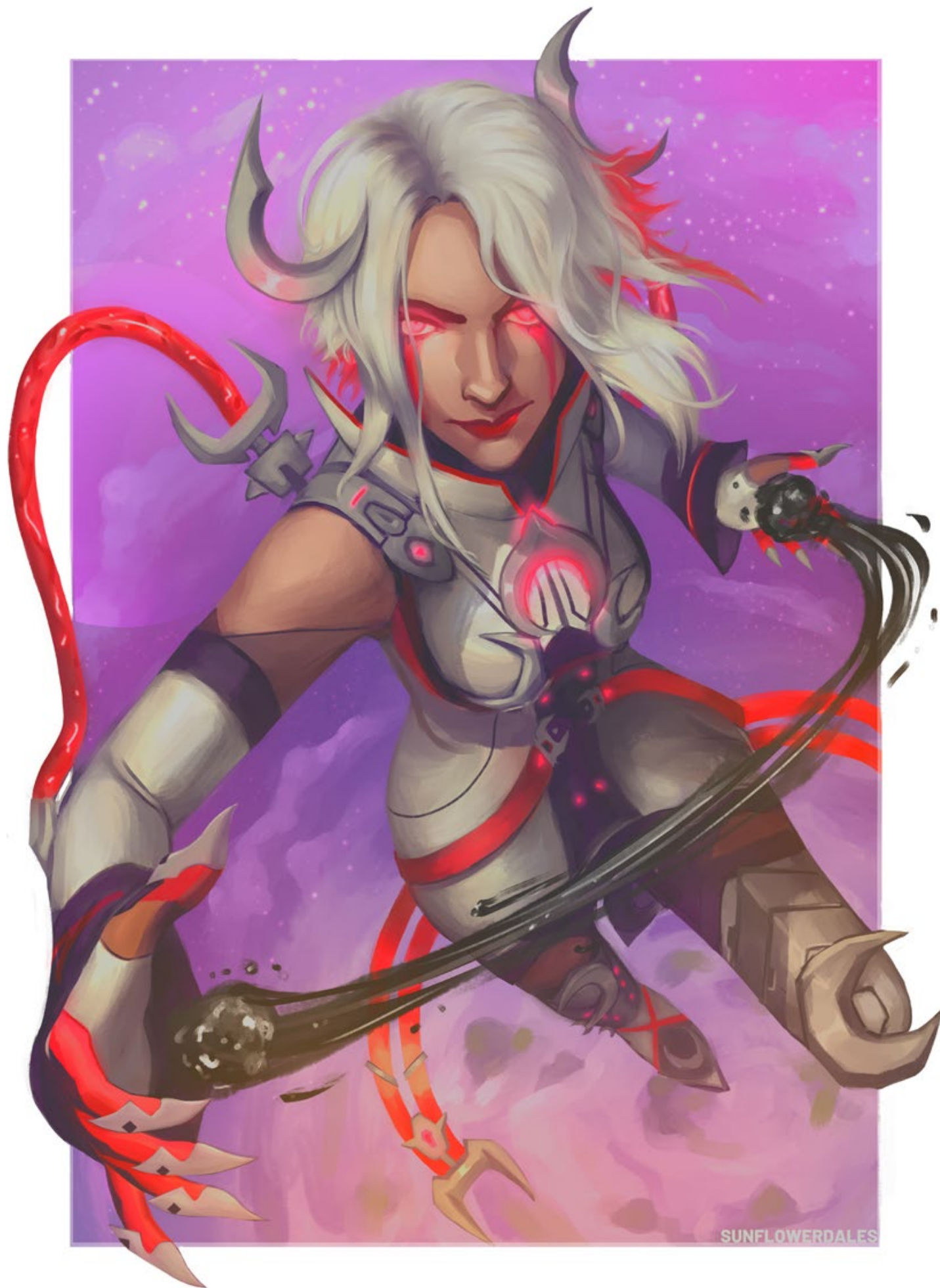
@pencil\_ace

Charlie Rodriguez @pencil\_ace (Instagram, Twitter)



SinBento





## FOUND FAMILY

by WickedLadyStyx, accompanying art by Yams  
@WickedLadyStyx (Twitter)

“You are the Apex Champions.”

The declaration of the announcer blared along with celebratory music. Tressa beamed, hearing shouts of praises roaring beyond the arena on Cleo from its residents celebrating another victory. While she hated the presence of the Games here, it felt good coming out on top. She was facing so many dangerous and seasoned contenders, so to win again so soon after joining filled her with pride. Of course, it helped having two of the most skilled Legends on her team.

“Well done, felagi fighter. We have claimed another victory in the name of the Allfather,” Bloodhound said, their voice filtering through the mask they wore.

Loba hummed in agreement, brushing off the dust and soot from their last battle. She then inspected her nails, huffing in annoyance before whipping out her fan to file whatever imperfection she discovered. “You did wonderful, beautiful. Your family must be so proud of you.”

The conjurer froze at the mention of her family, realizing she had not spared a thought their way since she moved to Cleo. It bothered her that the vision of her biological family came to mind, and not the family she made with her coven. It bothered her deeply. Tressa offered a weak smile, congratulating them before heading to the dropship nearby. The two Legends shared a look before joining their teammate on the ride back to Boreas.

Tressa left the shipyard quickly, opting not to attend the usual celebratory afterparty. She decided to return home, if it could be called that. Ever since the Games moved to Hope and took over the entire colony, everyone was forced to relocate back to Boreas. She missed her home so much.

The thought carried Tressa back to the shipyard, a single goal in mind: she wanted to

go home. It didn’t take much to convince an off-duty pilot to take her back to Cleo. A little bribery goes a long way. During the ride, Tressa conjured a hovering ball of ferrofluid and began to manipulate its form. She did it absently, musing over her earlier reaction to Loba’s comment about family.

Did she miss her biological family? It’s been so long...since before she transitioned and certified herself as the woman she’s always been. She abandoned any hope of reconciliation many years ago and has never spared a thought to them since. So why now?

Such thoughts continued after she got off of the ship, and began to traverse the empty expanse of her home. It was dark and quiet, the opposite of what she had known. Beyond the dome arching over Cleo, clusters of stars twinkled in the night sky.

Tressa’s legs guided her to the Promenade; a place once buzzing with life now abandoned. This place had been part of her daily routine. Walking down this strip signified the conclusion of a fruitful day of restoring the colony. At the end of it was her home. It was a place that once housed the warmth and love of her coven. Now it was merely a point of defense in the Games.

The thought made Tressa frown, and she traveled to the farthest building away from the Promenade. She zipped up to the platform, entering through the shattered doors. So many precious moments with her coven were spent here, moments when Margo was still alive. Moments when she had someone to lean on.

The elusive answer finally came to her and she let out a dry, bitter laugh. Exiting the building, she proceeded to seat herself on the roof as she did many times before. Silent tears fell as memories of her deceased friend filled her.

“Oh, beautiful, please don’t cry. You’ll ruin your makeup.”

(cont...)

Tressa jumped at the voice, eyes darting to the ground where Loba and Bloodhound stared up at her. Bloodhound's arms were folded over their chest, and they gave a cursory wave.

Tressa dabbed at the corners of her eyes, careful not to smudge her eyeliner. "Well, this is a surprise. Can I help you with something?"

"We are here for you, beautiful," Loba declared.

Bloodhound nodded. "We desire to offer support to our vinur."

The conjurer blinked in confusion. "I'm sorry?"

"We would like to keep you company, beautiful, if you will let us. May we come up?" the thief explained.

Tressa paused before nodding. When they arrived, she gave a dramatic sweep of her arm to the empty space beside her. Loba and Bloodhound took a seat on the roof with their fellow Legend.

"Did I say something wrong? You were upset when you left." Loba's voice was laced with concern, and the ferrofluid conjurer felt guilty.

"I..." Tressa considered how much she should divulge to her newfound friends. Compared to the other Legends, these two have been the most welcoming and understanding. They reminded her of her coven, and it was easy for her to relax around them. "...when you mentioned family, I thought of my biological family. It was...I guess you can say it was disconcerting."

Bloodhound hummed in understanding, their low voice filtering through their mask. "There are times when minningar come to us unexpectedly. You and I share more than kindred spirits, vinur minn. I, too, think of frændi and foreldrar minn. I...I miss them."

Loba reached over and grabbed her friend's hand, squeezing it reassuringly. "There isn't a day that goes by where I don't miss my papá e mamãe. Some days can be harder than others."

Tressa sighed. "No, I don't miss them—my biological family, that is. I just...I miss having a shoulder to lean on. When Margo died in that explosion, I just...I feel like I lost my mother, my rock. It's hard to be here, doing all of this to care for my coven, my home, and still feel...alone."

The other two Legends looked at each other, sharing a small nod. Bloodhound shifted into a lying position, placing their head on Loba's thigh and removing their respirator. The hunter closed their eyes, relaxing as they breathed in the night air.

The thief turned her head to Tressa and smiled, tapping the space beside her. "You don't have to be alone, beautiful. Family can be found anywhere, even here."

Hesitantly, the newer Legend shuffled over to Loba until they were hip to hip. Things felt awkward at first, but slowly she warmed up to the closeness of her friend. She leaned her head on Loba's shoulder, drawing a leg up out of habit. Loba proceeded to wrap a comforting arm around Tressa's shoulders. The three sat there in a peaceful silence, basking in the quiet of Cleo under the night sky.

A relieved sigh left the Borean's lips. She reveled in the warmth and camaraderie of her friends. No—family. It may have been a short time since she met them, but Tressa knew a bond like this was not common among friends. It was clear that they were her family, and that they had adopted her as their own.

The Apex Games was the very last place she expected to make friends. And to have found a family here? Maybe home is more than the earth beneath her feet.







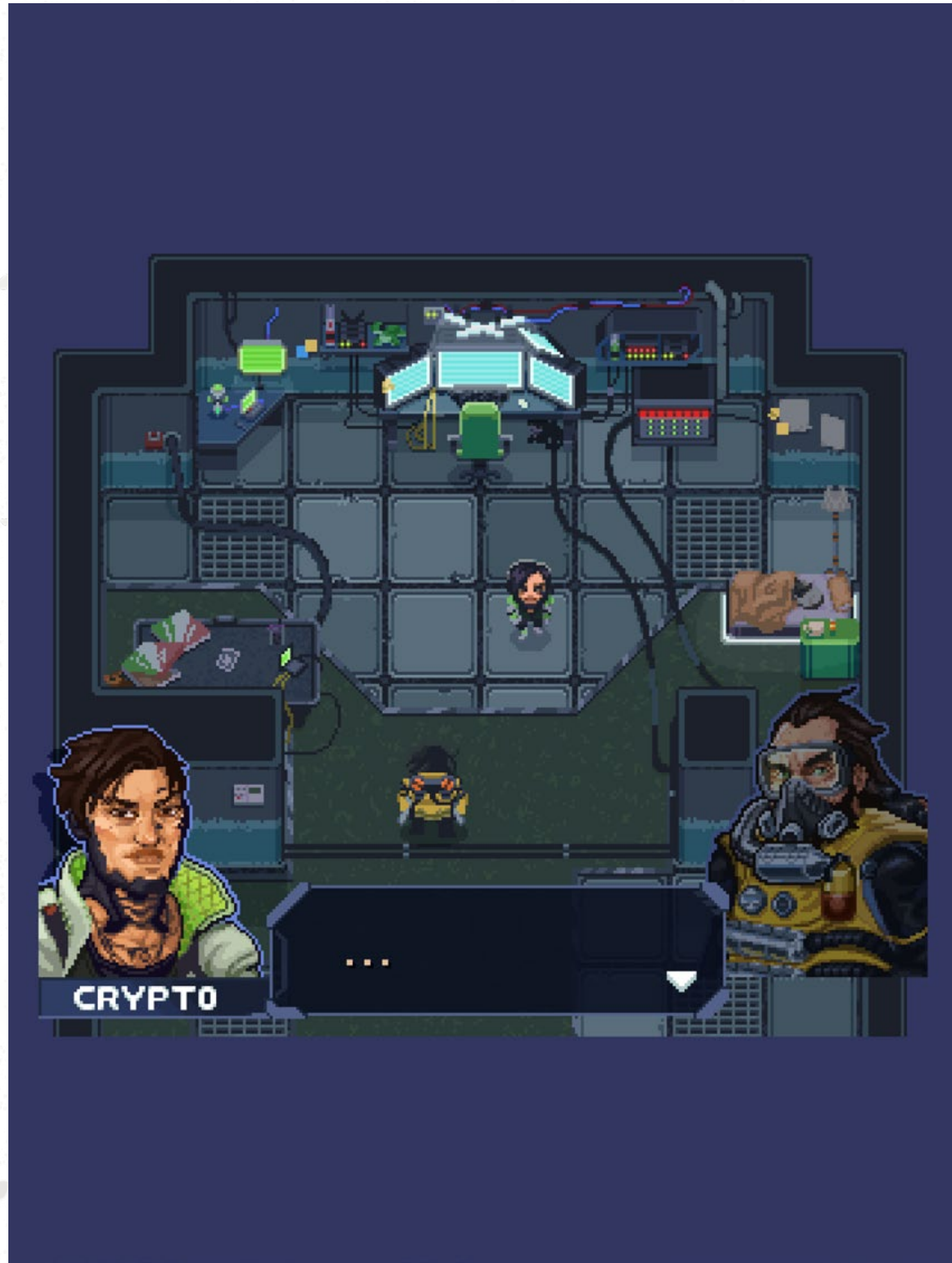
Yuugo47 @Eno\_e27 (Twitter)



Peanowot @sir\_nootsalot (Twitter) 23

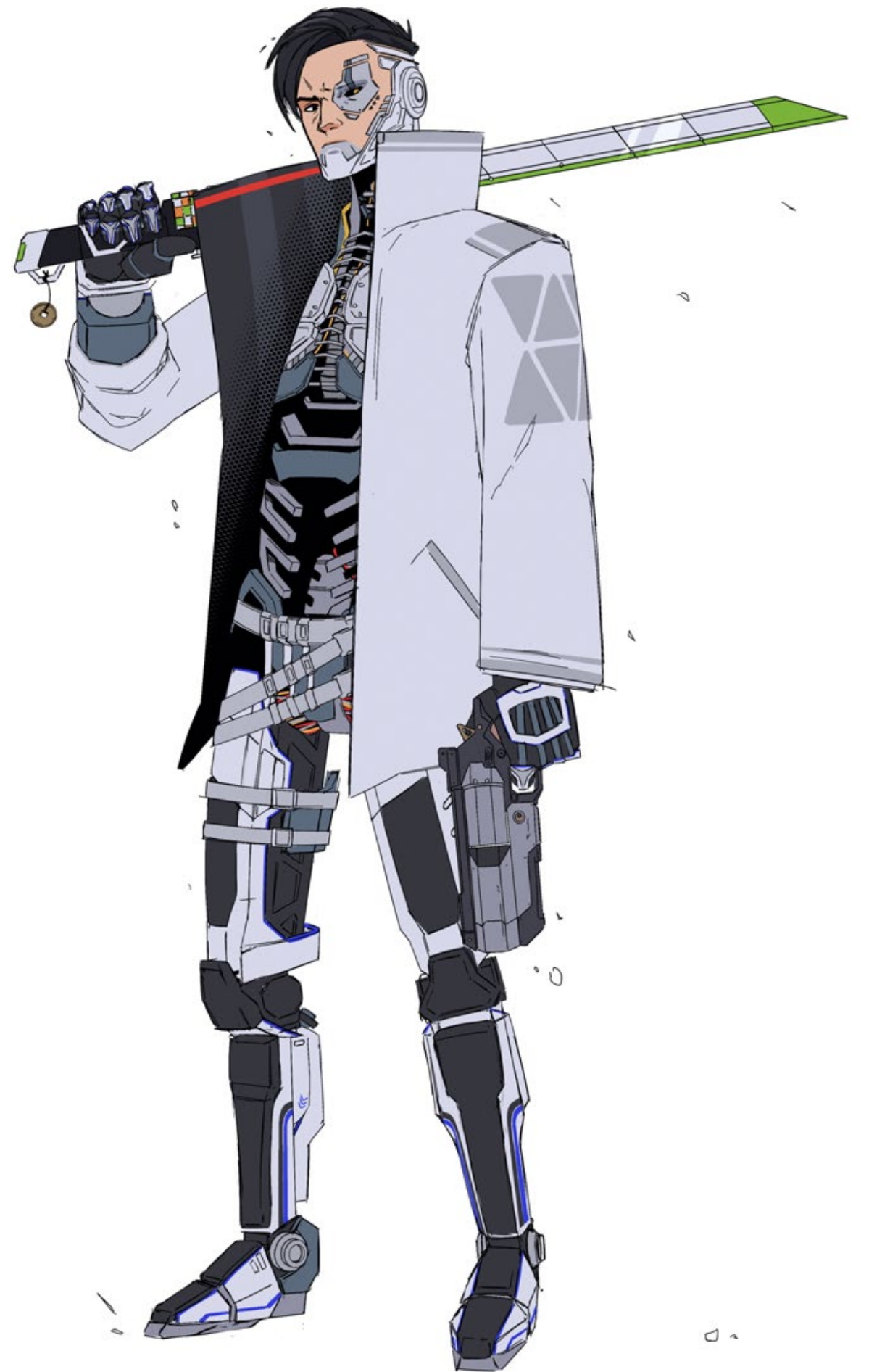


Jimmy Horner















## LOVE LETTER

By Mayuly, accompanying art by Loler

@memories\_about\_sunflowers (Instagram)

Fuse and Bloodhound met in a valley for their date. Bloodhound looked a little nervous, although the reason was unknown, they stuttered a little and trembled at times; Fuse notoriously confused asked “What’s the matter Houndy?”

To which they replied “No, nothing”.

Eventually, they found a place to rest and lie down. Bloodhound with a lurking shyness turned to their lover and handed him a letter that was undoubtedly a love one, Fuse surprised, decided to open it immediately.

“To my Walter, the beginning of our relationship was something... óvenjulegt. You were a very explosive character for my taste, always joking around. But even at that time, I saw a different spark in you, different from the others and from anyone I had met in those times. You reminded me, perhaps a little of the happiness I had lost.

Over time so many things happened, things that broke me and made me stronger inside; you were always there to give me your support and showed me that you are a faithful friend and hunting félagi. And I will always be grateful for that.

Over time I developed feelings that since Boone left I had never wanted to feel again. But I did, and it was with you. I was afraid, Walter, I was so scared of what I felt, of what was unfolding; this feeling was so foreign, it was comforting at times, but also fearful.

I was so scared that you would leave me if you found out, that you would look at me differently, that you wouldn’t call me “your mate” anymore. It was all-consuming for me so deeply. But in the end, you had the courage that I never had to face the situation and finally confess your feelings for me. Only the Gods know how

terrified I was at that moment, all the fear I had felt, that beast I couldn’t face was standing before me.

And you hugged me and told me that you would not leave my side, and at that moment I could really breathe again and just feel you with me.

Thank you, ástin mín.

PD: I made you a poem, don’t laugh.

Ode to my Walter  
You made me stay  
Instead of walking away  
With humor,  
Charisma,  
Personality,  
And all you got

I appreciate your hard work  
that makes me share my sál  
My world was falling apart  
And you were there all the time  
Your shoulder always it was there  
For me to gráta about

My Walter,  
My love,  
I hope that the Gods  
Lead our path,  
To a new landing  
We’ll be allt í lagi”

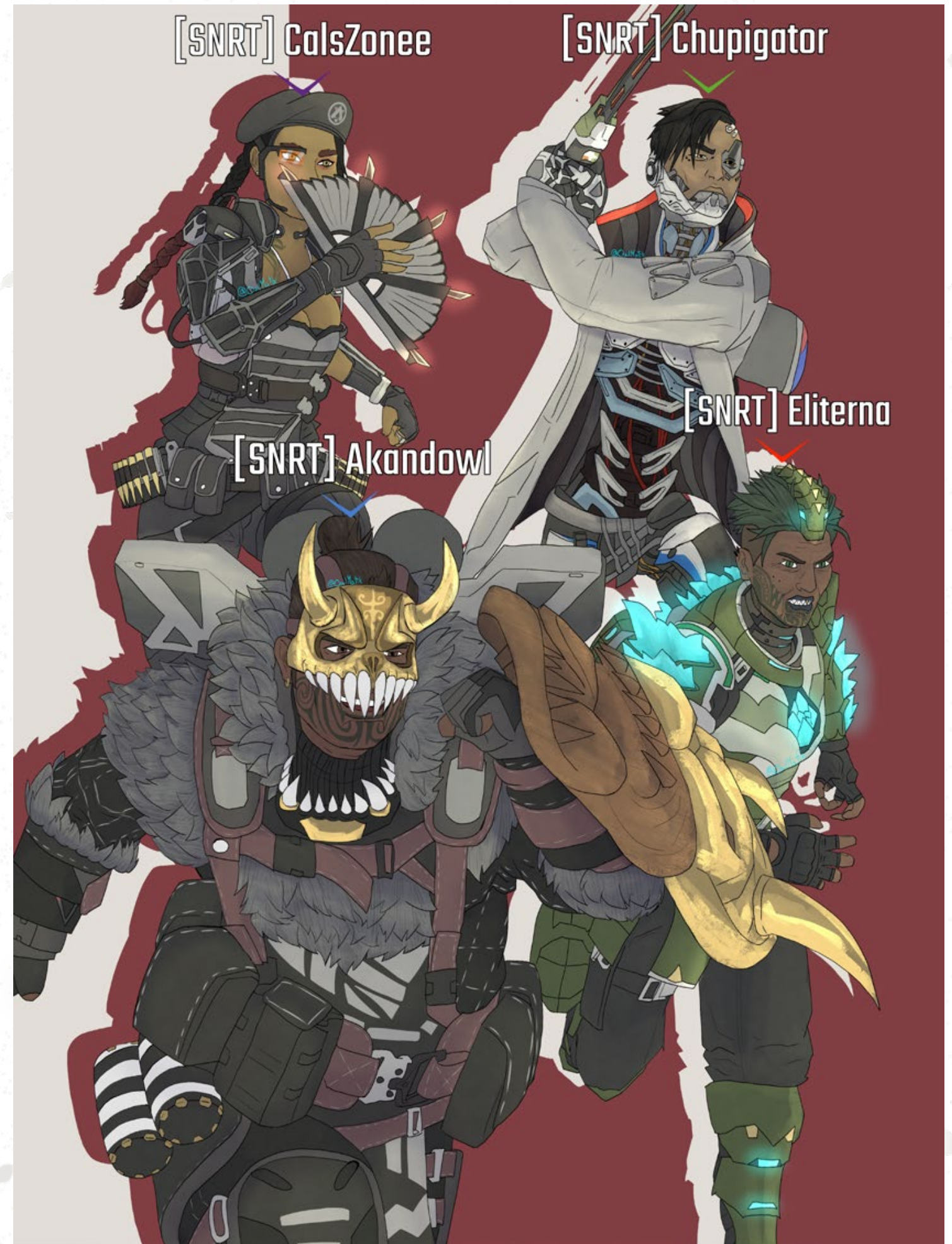
Fuse didn’t know what to say, he had never read anything like it. He felt butterflies fluttering inside him and could only look his beloved in their eyes without saying a single word.

Bloodhound on the other hand felt nervous “Why isn’t he saying anything?” They wondered; but resolutely blurted out a question “Did you like it?”

Fuse looked into their eyes as he approached “I loved it.... Thank you so much Houndy” and hugged them.



Wedswidden @wedswidden (Twitter)



OwlMatik @OwlMatik (Twitter) 37



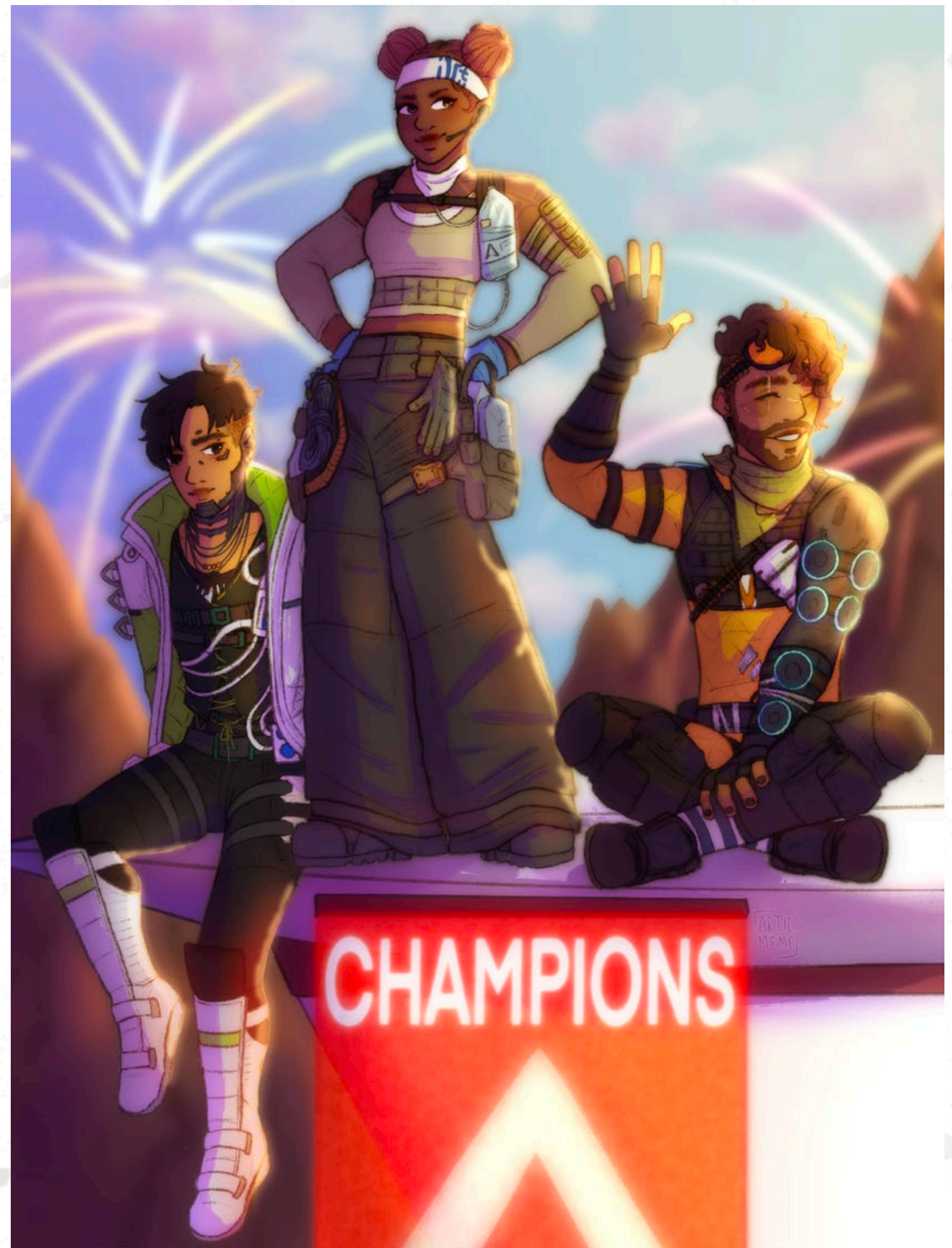
38 Ryven @ryvenarts (Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter)



Photography: @alasdairw

nat clayton @its\_natclayton (Twitter)

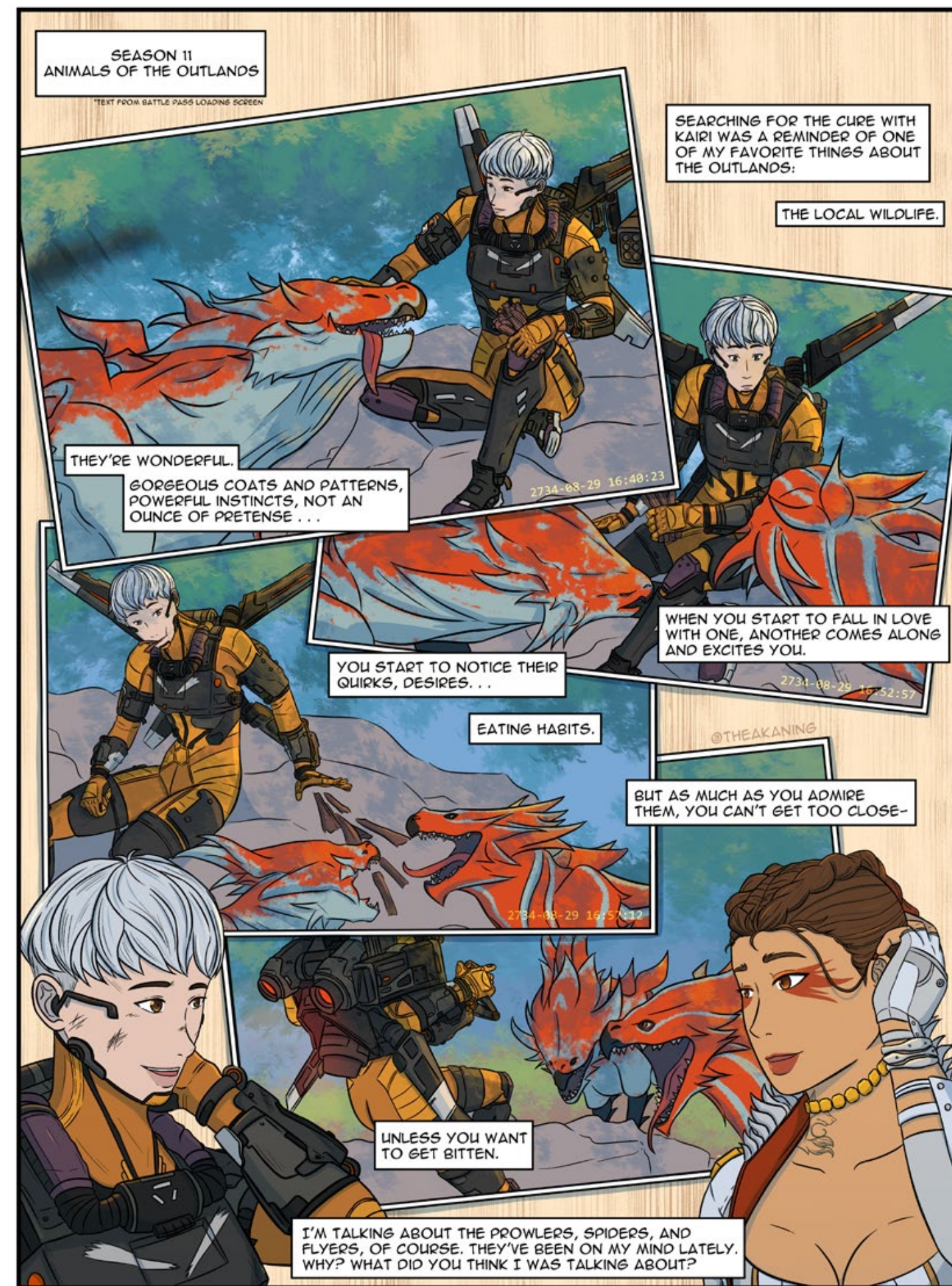
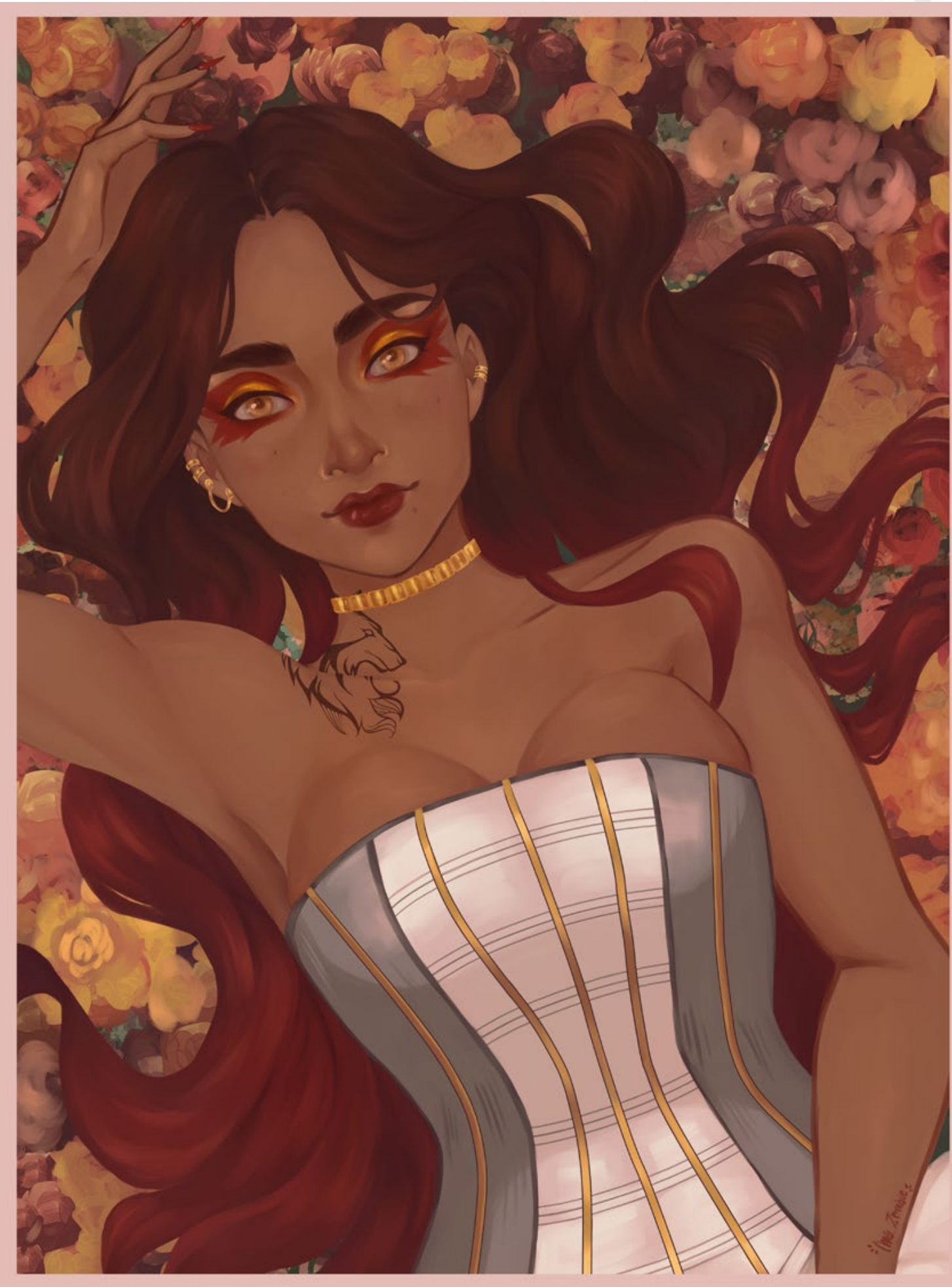






@TheOwlieFox on Twitter & Tumblr











RenascentFire @pigeon\_ker ArtHarmony 2023 @Ravin1003



52 **Ahmikii** @ahmikii (Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter)



**Clairepncart** @clairepncart (Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter) 53



## BEHIND THE CURTAIN

by Morghan, accompanying art by Emily

@Liein\_ (Twitter)

A nervous energy buzzed inside Elliott as he waited behind a curtain; just steps away from a stage in front of thousands of Apex fans- a stage that was also being broadcasted to thousands more at home. Nights like this were such a detour from the action he was used to.

This event tonight was more or less like any other sponsored event- this time celebrating another successful year of the Apex Games. It was routine: a glitzy photo op in front of the venue, men in suits ushering him and the rest of the Legends to a cozy greenroom, the screaming public kept at arm's length as they walked by- everyone excited for their favorite Legend to take the stage. Elliott had soaked in the thrilling elation on the way inside, holding the cheers and screams close in his rapidly beating heart. Sure, he's done events with a flashy speech plenty of times, but it never made him any less nervous about it. Crazy how he was more familiar with arsenal combat in the past years than public speaking.

Still, he loved speaking and he loved the public... way more than he could say for some of the other Legends here. (Renee and Anita's speeches combined were usually shorter than his morning toothbrush routine).

It was always nice to share a few words. Events like this somehow felt more intimate than the rushed after-match interviews; where a camera and mic were shoved in your face while the lingering white noise of gunfire was still actively ringing in your ear. Events like this were a chance to get close to everyone watching the matches- heck, sometimes Elliott was jealous that his fans had this to anticipate: Personal words from your favorite Legends, words for the fans, for the supporters, for- in Elliott's case, the ones that actually purchased his sold-out, limited-edition, signed "Mirage" posters and didn't resell them under the table...y'know- the true, true fans!

Tonight, Elliott pulled from the same well he used when he needed to fight in the Games: the desire to perform, to maneuver with pizzazz and make the viewers double-take and smile; an instinct deep within him. And just like in a match, he always made a point to remind himself just how many people were watching him- tonight was no different! From experience, he knew that you didn't have to be the best at words to do this- you just had to love using them.

-And tonight, through the nerves, Elliott wanted to use his words to thank every single fan for their support.

It was almost time for Elliott to take the stage and he patiently waited in the curtained wing, shifting his weight from foot to foot. He was suited in his best attire and every conditioned curl was perfectly misplaced- he knew regardless of what he said tonight, he at least was going to look amazing.

"So amazing," A decoy said. It had appeared behind him and was smoothing out some wrinkles on the back of Elliott's blazer. Elliott, of course, had dawned his iconic holotech discs over his suit, making sure the ensemble looked as stylish and coordinated as he could. His iconic tech was just something the audience expected on him at this point- and he couldn't say he blamed them! The decoy continued to straighten Elliott's blazer from behind and dusted it off a bit. "Really!" it said, smiling warmly, "This look is perfect- so glad we picked this and not that polkadot number."

Elliott blinked in confusion and then suddenly remembered the sparkly, polkadot suit he had modeled for his decoys at home. "Okay, yes." Elliott said, "but come on, that wasn't a bad look."

(cont...)

Instantly a second decoy appeared in front of him and began to straighten his tie. “A bad look?” it said and shook its head, “No no, it was great- just y’know, the wrong vibe for this crowd.” The decoy hummed proudly once Elliott’s tie was pristine and neatly nestled in the perfect place, “I mean, look at this...what look can’t we pull off?”

“Looking bad.” The first decoy answered and they high fived each other over Elliott’s shoulder.

Elliott rolled his eyes and gave a quiet laugh, “Okay, guys...guys, I’m on in like, five.”

In a flash of blue light, a third decoy appeared and reached out to adjust some of the curls framing Elliott’s face. The hologram thoughtfully rearranged Elliott’s hair and then tilted its head- gazing at Elliott like an artist appreciating his work. “Okaaay... and now we’re ready. Look, five minutes is practically eons!” The decoy reached out one last time to tuck a strand behind Elliott’s ear, “You’re gonna rock it, Boss- naturally. D’you know what you’re gonna say?”

Elliott’s heart skipped a beat at that question. He did this a lot and usually had something planned, some cue cards, a flashy practiced bit, but this time...“Yeah!...Uh y-yeah?” He cleared his throat, “For this one I’m, uh. I’m gonna...I’m just going from the ol’...heart.”

The three decoys smiled and chuckled at each other.

“Ooh ho, so the fans are getting raw, unedited Mirage? Fresh off the dome? Lucky Ducks.” One decoy said.

“Do you wanna practice?” another decoy leaned in and tilted its head.

Elliott looked to the stage entrance; the faint sound of Octavio plugging all his social media accounts meant he still had a little time to spare. “Guys... I got like...4 minutes?”

“So make it count!” the third decoy said and moved closer to massage away the stress building up in Elliott’s shoulders, “Here, from the heart, super quick- just pretend we’re your fans. What would you say?”

“Y-Yeah?” Elliott relaxed a bit into the soothing contact and cleared his throat again, “Yeah... Okay well, then I’d just say...thank you for sticking with me, through every season of this... crazy, shooty...Competition. Oh! And thank you for...for being excited! Because...when I’m contemping- contemplant- when I’m sitting there thinking and focusing on that dropship, getting ready to show up and show out- it’s your excitement that I bring out there with me. All of you! Yeah... because I really do like knowing you all have fun watching me compete- it makes me want to have fun out there too and... fight harder. You’re all like...my family! My... extended....really really large family whose names I cannot be expected to remember, but- the point is: I love you guys...I have the best fans and I really, really appreciate everyone out there rooting for me. It makes me proud to be a Legend! I wanna keep doing this for as long as I can and have you all keep cheering me on!”

The decoy in front of Elliott wiped a non-existent tear from the corner of its eye. “Okay what are you even worried about?! No notes!”

“I’m touched!” the decoy behind Elliott agreed, squeezing his shoulders excitedly.

“You’re gonna knock ‘em dead!” the last decoy echoed. “Like...right now! Yeah, they’re totally calling your name on stage right now.”

Panicked, Elliott’s feet froze up and his decoys began to encouragingly push him towards the stage, patting him on the shoulders and assuring him this was going to be a speech to remember.





## FOREVER FAMILY

by Kaini

@Benign\_Director (Twitter)

“Hey, Crypto?”

Mirage nudged the other Legend’s shoulder, no doubt knocking him off target considering he was currently peering through a sniper scope. There wasn’t much to see, though - the match had been pretty quiet after one initial skirmish, and Crypto was just scouting, his drone off flying in the distance.

He huffed in annoyance anyway, not even looking in Mirage’s direction.

“What is it, Witt.”

“I’ve been wondering... Why do you say things like... like what you said earlier?”

Crypto sighed, letting his tense posture loosen and his gun fall, giving up on the scouting since Mirage clearly wasn’t about to leave him alone.

“What did I say? I don’t even know what you’re talking about.” He hissed, with an annoyance that Mirage pointedly ignored.

“Like... ‘Watch your back, I won’t always be around’. That kind of thing.” Mirage shrugged. “It’s like... you’re not planning on stickin’ around.”

“I’m not.” Crypto huffed, and Mirage could admit his stomach fell, a little bit. “You know that. I told you: I’m here for one reason.”

He lowered his voice. “I have to find my sister. Once I do...”

“... You’re just gonna leave?”

“Ye.”

Mirage blinked. He figured... well, he knew that, he’d found out a while ago why Crypto was really in the games, but like...

“Just like that...? I mean, haven’t we like... had some good times? Don’t get me wrong, I hope you uh, find her -” He coughed. “But I was kinda hoping you’d stick around after. Y’know?”

“... No, I don’t know.” Crypto sighed, turning his attention back to his scope as he leveled his rifle. As if the conversation was over. But to Elliott, it wasn’t.

“I mean, think about it. I’ve met my closest friends through the games. People I consider family. And like, okay I know we, quote, kill each other, unquote, but...”

Crypto had abandoned his scope again, and was currently giving Mirage that signature look, like he was the dumbest man on the planet and he should probably stop talking, like, right that second.

He didn’t. “I’m just saying. You’re a part of that. So maybe you should stick around. And I’m not the only one that thinks so, either.”

A stray shot in the distance distracted both of them for a moment, Crypto quickly looking through his scope, but it was far off; they hadn’t been spotted. They had another second to talk before the ring closed, and Mirage wasn’t going to waste it.

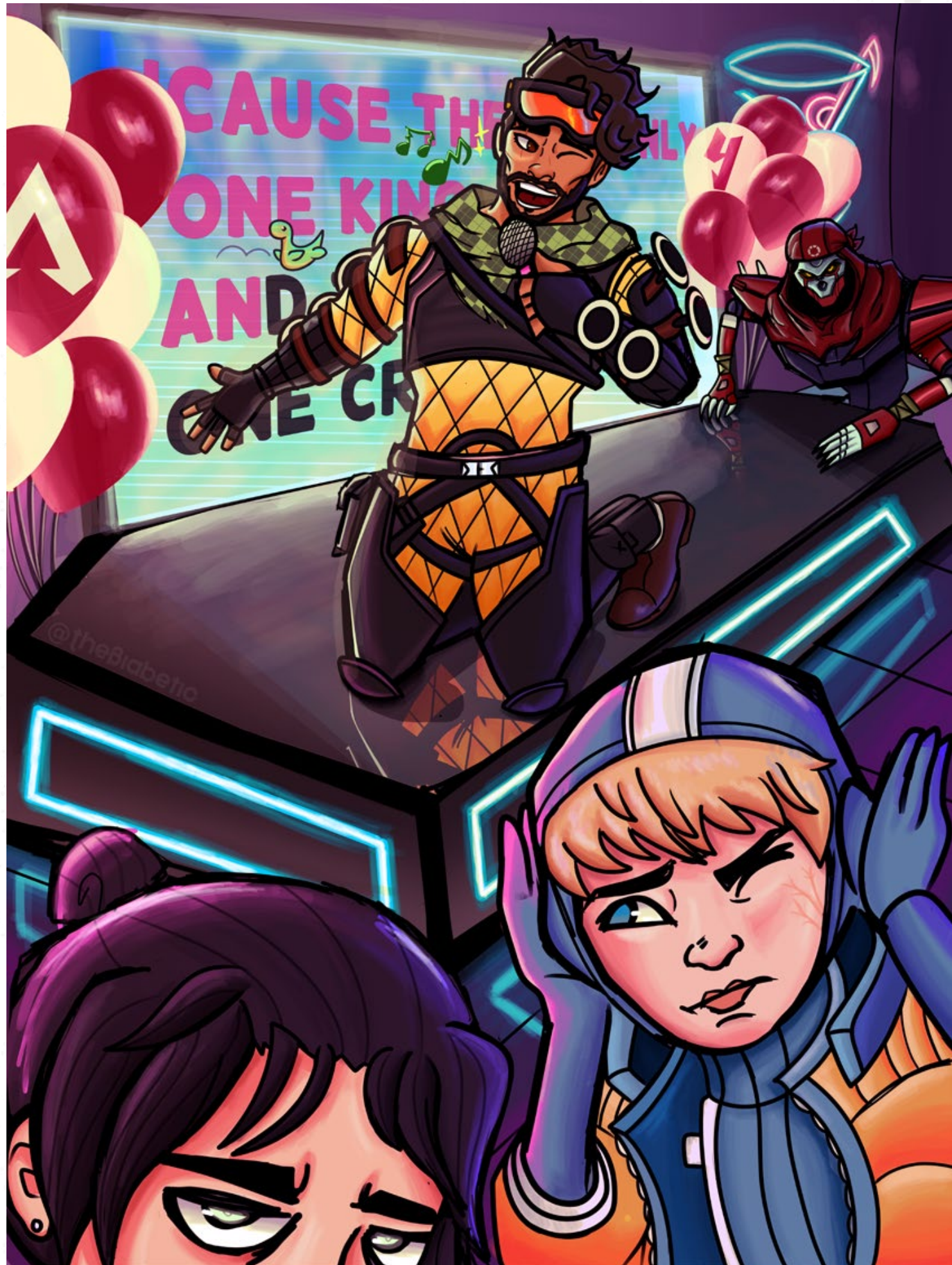
He put a hand on Crypto’s shoulder, giving it a squeeze through his thick jacket. “Think about it, okay? You’ve got family here, too.”

Crypto’s expression shifted at that, surprise flicking across his face before he schooled it again.

He shrugged Mirage’s hand off, but something in his posture changed, like... something Elliott had said had finally gotten through.

He really, truly did believe they were all family, aside from the... whole, bloodsport, thing. And he hoped Crypto could see that too.

“Alright, let’s win this.”



Helbawnd, Arvad X, Vad X @helbawnd (Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter)



62 **DerMopser** DerMopser (Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter)



Photography: Moments Revisited

**Cosmo Veinwires** @veinwires (Instagram) 63





## SUNSHINE AND A GOOD TIME

by Oliver

@oliver\_tavi (Twitter)

Warm sunlight was the first feeling that hit Crypto as he stepped out of the cool shade together with Obi at his side.

Lush fields of green dotted with flowers stretched across his view until his eyes came to a rest on the two men sitting a few meters away from them, underneath a decently sized parasol and on top of a soft looking, blue picnic blanket.

Crypto still couldn't believe that Elliott had found such a beautiful place on Solace, which was usually known for its dry deserts and sandy landscapes.

"Yo amigos!" Octavio called out to the duo as they slowly came closer until both Obi and Crypto were able to sit down. "You've finally made it!"

"My apologies. We were being held up by a lovely lady trying to talk us into a sponsorship deal," Obi explained calmly as he placed the small box of almost freshly baked cookies into the middle of the blanket, where other food and drinks had already found their place.

"I hate these corporate overlords," came Octavio's quick answer coupled with a groan. "They made the party yesterday so boring! Papá's dramatic speech also didn't help," he further complained while reaching out for a lunchbox, which contained bunny shaped sandwiches, courtesy of himself and Elliott.

The yearly anniversary celebration hosted by the Syndicate was indeed full of people, who didn't care a single bit for the Legends on a personal level and instead only paid attention to more profit, money and views.

"You're totally right, Tavi!" Elliott finally chimed in, a supportive smile on his lips and his eyes focused on Obi. "Though I thought the great Seer would enjoy showing off in front of a crowd. It's only your second anniversary after all."

Crypto had initially expected the same as the other Legend seemed even more extroverted than Elliott on such occasions, yet was proven to be wrong.

"I usually do," Obi replied. "But it does get tiring and I prefer us coming together, away from the spotlight and many cameras," he continued before pointing at the mixing set, which Elliott brought with him. "Care to prepare some drinks for us?"

While Elliott got to work right away, Octavio and Obi fell into light conversation, talking about the past year and teasing each other with how many times they had triumphed over the other inside the ring.

Crypto wasn't a man of many words, a fact that gladly made him listen to what his friends were saying and also keep an eye on Elliott, impressed by his fast drink mixing skills time and time again.

He still remembered the first time they held this private party and how Crypto reluctantly joined. How the center of attention had been the Paradise Lounge before Obi entered the Games and suggested the switch to an outdoor location.

"Here you go, Hyeon," Elliott's cheerful voice interrupted Crypto's daydreaming as he was also handed a non-alcoholic drink, since no one planned to get even slightly drunk. "I think that calls for a toast! Right guys?"

That question caught Octavio's attention almost immediately.

"Hells yeah!" he answered in an excited tone of voice and swallowed down the last bits of the cookie he had just started eating. "Me first, me first!"

(cont...)

Octavio's hand shot up- and forwards, right into the middle of the small circle they sat in and displayed the fancy glass taken from Elliott's bar perfectly.

"To more awesome and fun matches! And that I get to kick Obi's ass again!"

"To our friendship," Obi joined in and raised his own glass, throwing a quick side glance into Octavio's direction. "May it continue to blossom for years to come."

Crypto wished for the same because despite their often contrasting lifestyles and different times of joining the Games, they actually worked well as a team, in- and outside the ring.

"To celebrating yet another anniversary together," Elliott said with a big smile across his face. "You're the best group of friends I could ever ask for and I hope we can experience more cool stuff and hey, maybe we can return back to the bar for a year and-" he rambled on until realizing this very action and quietly apologizing, after which three pairs of eyes directed their attention towards Crypto.

"To us," he finished the toast in a simple way and clinked his glass against those of the others.

More food and drinks were shared between them and it was one of the rare times Crypto felt completely at ease.

He still had a long way to go to reach his goal and find his sister, even after all this time but with Elliott, Octavio and Obi at his side, it felt much easier to power through the dark and hopeless days and continue to fight.

And perhaps on one of these anniversaries he would finally reveal his real name.

A hand suddenly appeared in front of his face, belonging to Octavio, who was now waving it around wildly and made Crypto raise one eyebrow.

"We've talked about this, Hyeon," the other stated in an accusing tone, that was meant to be taken as playful. "No more being lost in your thoughts! It's time for your favourite part anyway!" Octavio went on and grabbed his backpack he had discarded to the side after his and Elliott's arrival.

"Not again," Crypto began saying but it was already too late as Octavio took out a familiar and dreaded portable music box.

"Oh cool!" Elliott chuckled and found a halfway stable place to put his glass down before slowly standing up while Octavio set up some energetic tunes.

"You're both ridiculous," Crypto muttered under his breath, though he couldn't stop the corners of his lips from turning upwards.

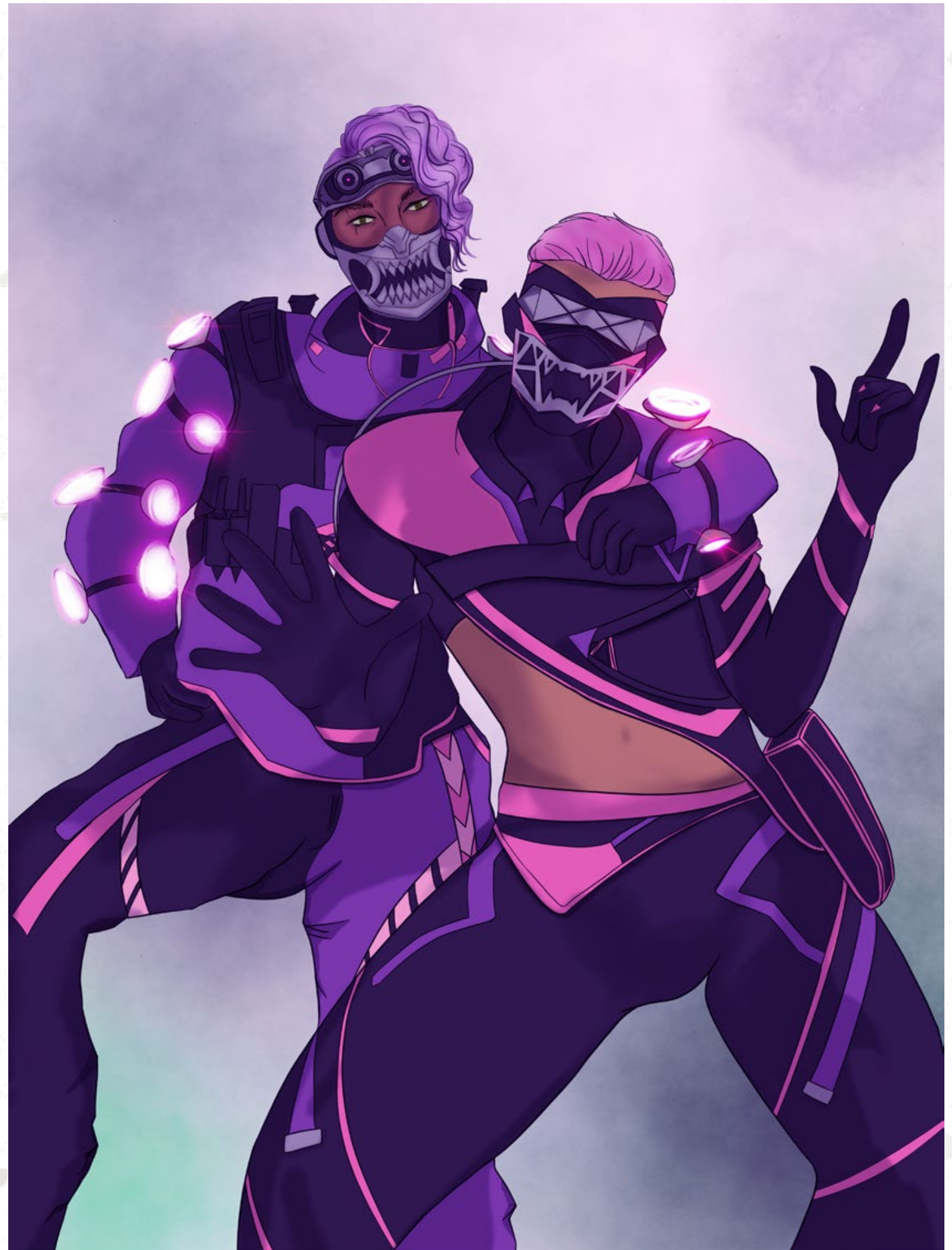
He accepted Obi's hand helping him up and awkwardly started dancing in one place, needing a bit of time to get truly comfortable doing this and tried to match the rhythm Octavio and Elliott were going at.

Crypto knew he would loosen up more sooner or later and share a dance with Obi, like in the previous year and that the rest of the day would be filled with even further good vibes.

He never ever wanted to miss out on any of these celebrations.

And he couldn't wait to spend a new and great year with his friends and experience anniversaries as a small group until the day they all retired.





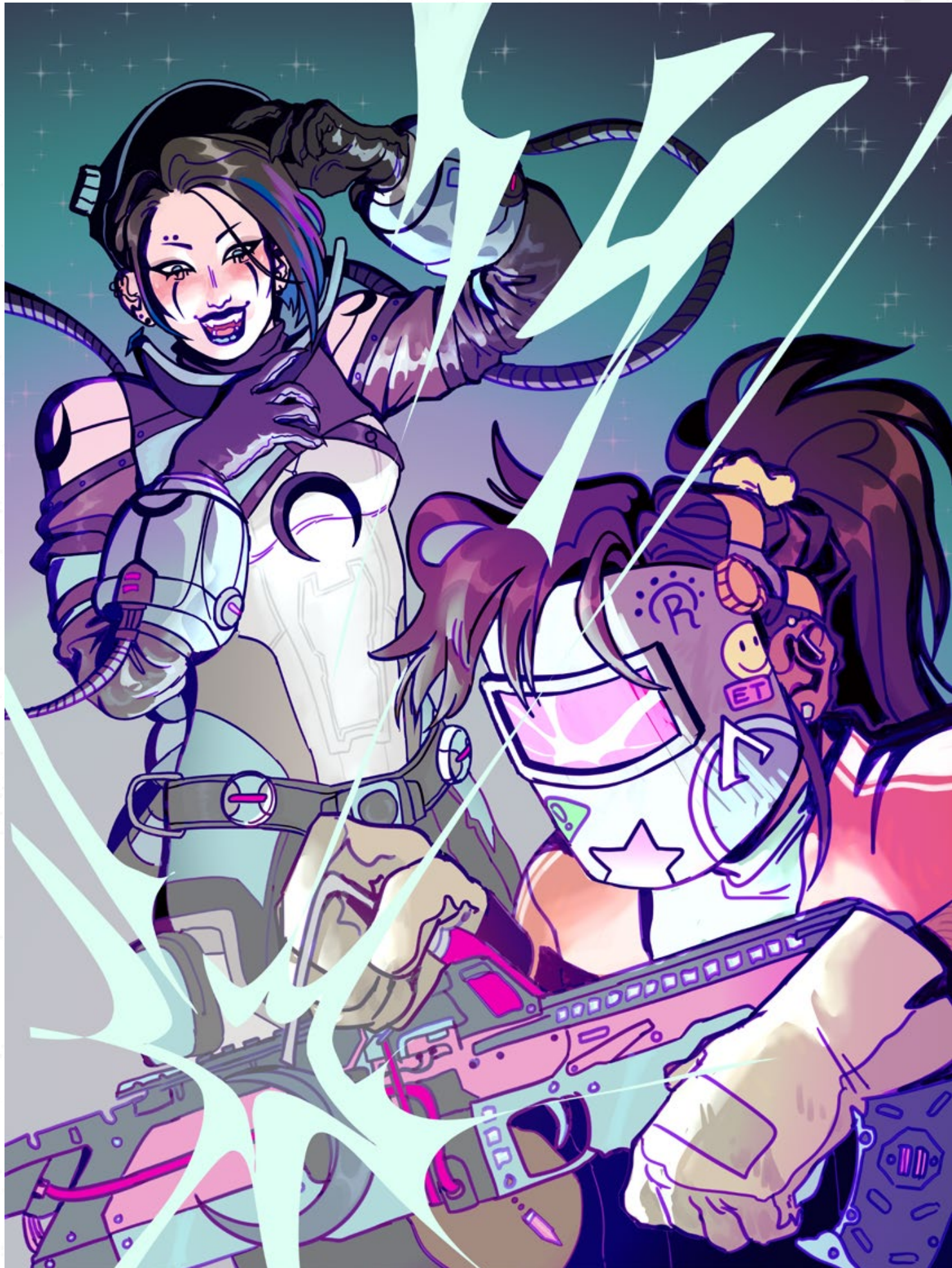


70 Ginger Goober, Ginger @GingerGoober (Instagram, Twitter)



Gubby @Gubby\_ (Twitter) 71







## SILENCE BOMBS

by Trickyni

Trickyni (Ao3)

“SHUT IT, SKINSUIT!”

The simulacrum’s synthesized voice croaked above a haze of bullets. Its left arm lurched forward, distorting with a series of soft metallic...

“Incoming, dodge right!”

In a flash, I obeyed. I took that single step to the right faster than I could blink.

...But I got it wrong. the voice didn’t mean “A single step”, but probably more of an all-out leap. The orb crashed into the floor at my feet, exploding into crackling orange light, blinding me momentarily. I reached into the void for a jump, but somehow... I couldn’t? I pushed against the fabric of reality with all my might, but it held firm.

My shields hit zero, and a bullet grazed my arm. Straining, I leapt behind a nearby fern planter, taking a moment to pull out a battery.

Something felt off.

Something felt wrong.

Something felt...

...right? Somehow, my mind felt clear. I took what might’ve been the lightest breath I’ve taken in years.

Silence. Even through the gunfire- Silence. A grenade exploded, and a charge rifle’s beam went off right above my head, and yet still!

Somehow, that simulacrum did the impossible. What I’ve needed years to learn to live with, he undid within a single moment.

I was so unfocused, so distracted by this newfound clarity, I didn’t notice the door to my side was breached. I was just sitting there, syringe still in my arm, guns aimed at my dumb, smiling face.

...Well, it’s not like I had any warning!

In the respawn room, I could see on Witt’s face he was annoyed with me. He certainly had a reason to, but something in my expression kept him from saying anything. I was probably staring into the air again. Natalie placed a gentle hand on my shoulder, and the first syllables of “are you okay?” died on her lips, her hand freezing with a slight shake.

It was the first time either of them saw me crying.

For as long as I remember myself, Literally for as far as my chronological memory goes back- I’ve

always been hearing the voices of the void. A soft murmur from the moment I wake up. A storm of shouts whenever anything of note happens. Even in my dreams, I could swear there was a layer of background noise. Always my own voice. Always, always talking.

I’ve spent years learning to tune them out. Learning to ignore the murmurs. Learning to shrug off the shouts. Filtering good advice from an endless stream. Having Natalie “the eye of the storm” Paquette in my life helped. Her relationship with “the noise” is just as complex as mine, and she’d always have something clever to say that would calm me down... But I’ve kept my worst away from her.

I looked back up to find about a dozen of Witt’s Decoys freaking the hell out. A few of them were juggling, another two were dancing tango, one of them was grilling some holographic pork-chops, and the rest were in various states of glitched.

It took me a long moment to notice, but Natalie threw herself on my shoulders, hugging me for dear life.

I breathed deep, watching the real Witt standing in the middle, scratching his head at a copy of himself that was fumbling with a deck of cards...

And I laughed. What started as a weak snort rolled into an all-out chortle. I just sat there, pressing my cheek into Natalie’s, feeling so awfully uncertain and yet so incredibly safe, laughing, and crying, and being a complete mess.

Natalie understood my half-formed explanation immediately. Witt took a moment longer to catch on, but he went very quiet once he did, shutting down his holo-projector at once and giving me one of his rare contemplative looks.

“His technology really is a mystery”, Natalie opened, deep in thought. “I’ve never seen anything like it...”

“G-gives me the creeps”, Witt chimed in, shuddering. “How can those silence bombs have such a wide... a wide... How do they work on so many different things at once?”

“Mirage is right, it truly is an anomaly!” Natalie confirmed.

“But if it quiets out your... other... yours, then we have to find out more!”

“Do you think I should ask him?”

(cont...)

“Ask that murder-bot to open up about his specs?” Witt made a theatrical shiver. “Why not ask him about his tragic backstory while you’re at it?”

I shrugged.

“I say you should do it”, Natalie swallowed hard before chirping. “What’s the worst he can do? Kill you?” She chuckled.

“He already did that today”, I said quickly, my disjointed thoughts already pulling together into the shape of a plan. Well, maybe not a plan, but an order of operations at the very least.

Witt looked at us both as though we were out of our minds.

“Go on Wraith”, Natalie gave my shoulder a rough pat. “You don’t have to go alone.”

Witt coughed loudly. “I’ll come too, o-of course! In case you need the decoy escape”

I groaned.

I was more thankful for them than I had the words for.

“Wouldn’t you love to know?” Revenant’s angle grinder-like voice cracked at me, as though slowly savoring every machine-borne imperfection in his own speech.

What was I expecting? How was I supposed to negotiate with an immortal murder machine? What words could I possibly say to convince an entity so far detached from his humanity to... potentially open up?

“I uh...”

Humanity. Humanity. Who the hell am I to talk about losing your humanity? I have seen through the void. I have walked through the void. I’m an interloper from beyond this reality, and I’ve witnessed the universe for the spec of dust that it is.

I still don’t know who I used to be, but the person I am now is certainly a far cry from “normalcy”.

I allowed my eyes to glow bright white, and leveled a stare into Revenant’s soulless approximation of the organs.

“I hear the voices of infinity. The murmurs of all of time converging right into this mortal skull. They yell. They scream. They give advice. They. Won’t. Shut. Up. And there’s nothing I can do to change that. Nothing anyone could ever do to change that. That’s what I thought, at least.”

I paused to take a breath, something he instinctively scoffed at.

“Your silence bombs make the voices stop. I need to know about them.” I laid my cards on the table. “I won’t insult you by making an appeal to humanity, but...”

I gave him one of the darkest smirks I ever allowed on my face.

“Help a fellow monster out?”

And today’s win had me in such a good mood. I’m not about to let a skinsuit knocking on my door ruin that. Wish I could just kill her right there.

“Help a fellow monster out?” HA. What a joke. Who does she think she is? Comparing herself to me? What a comedian. I ought to give her a quick death just for the boldness.

I can’t, for now, but I’ll take compensation in shattering her hopes. Can’t wait to see the look on her face when...

...A fellow monster...

I’m a monster. Of course I am! But when skinsuits use that term, it’s always an insult.

Strange.

She called herself a “monster” first.

“A fellow monster”

I groaned. Loudly. Theatrically. My annoyance compounded quicker than fractures on a skull pressed between my fingers.

I already killed her once today. She should consider herself lucky.

I groaned a second time.

“I don’t know.” I shrugged “Hammond filled me with whatever garbage they wanted and sent me on my way. They’ll all die screaming for that”.

That waste of space. That damn look in her eyes...

Those pale eyes have seen more death than I have.

“Thank you, Revenant.”

I scoffed.

She turned to walk away, but then turned around.

“Could you fill me in if you learn anything new? I have my own score to settle with Hammond robotics.”

I squinted.

“SHUT UP ALREADY”

The blowback from the silence bomb slammed her into the door, ripping it off its hinges and sending her flying out with it. As her little family skittered to her side, I couldn’t help but chuckle.

Monster or no monster, a skinbag is still a skinbag.







**mintcrows** @mintcrows (Tumblr, Twitter)



**Nighte** @NighteStudios (Tumblr, Twitter) & **Ren** @RenascentFire (Twitter)

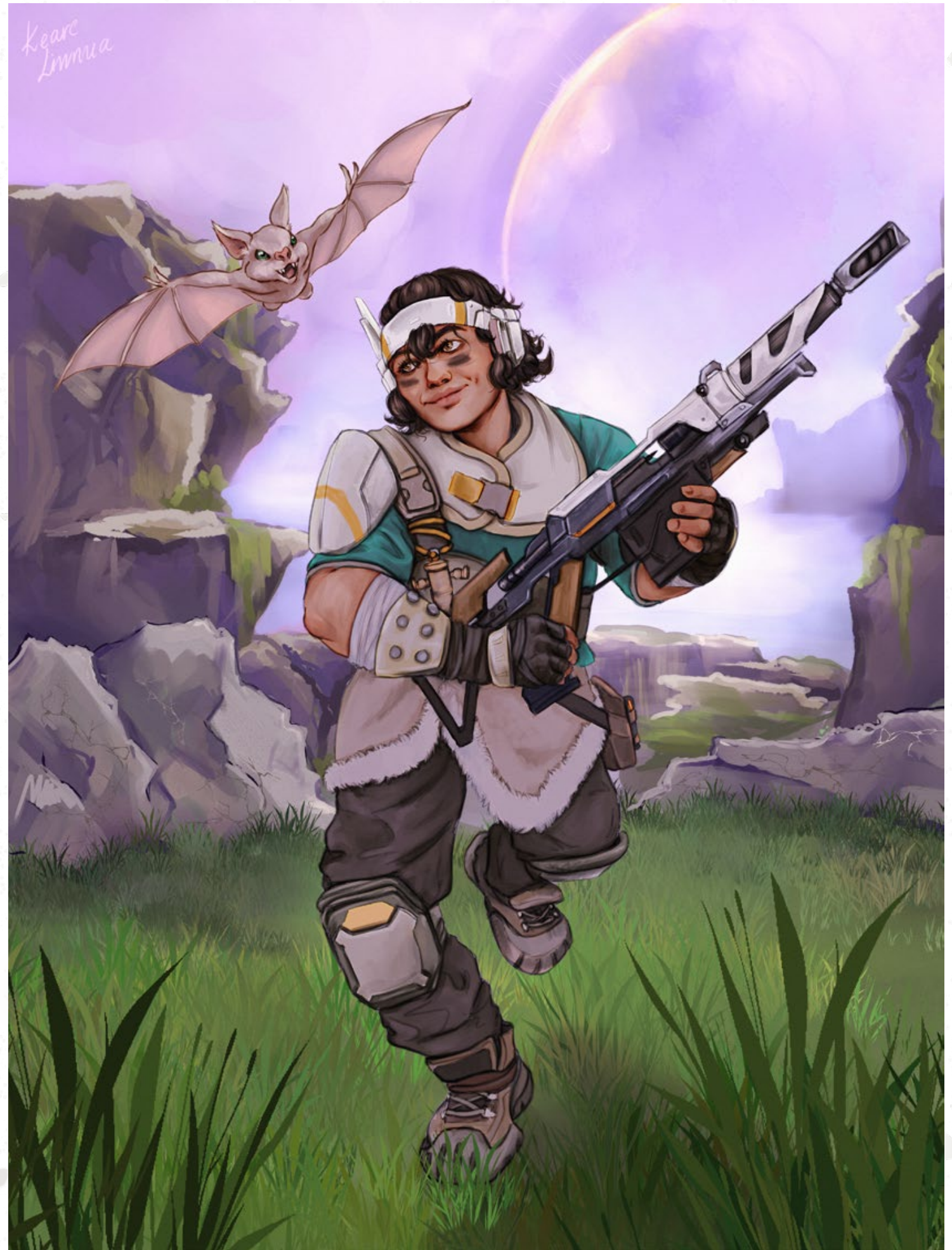


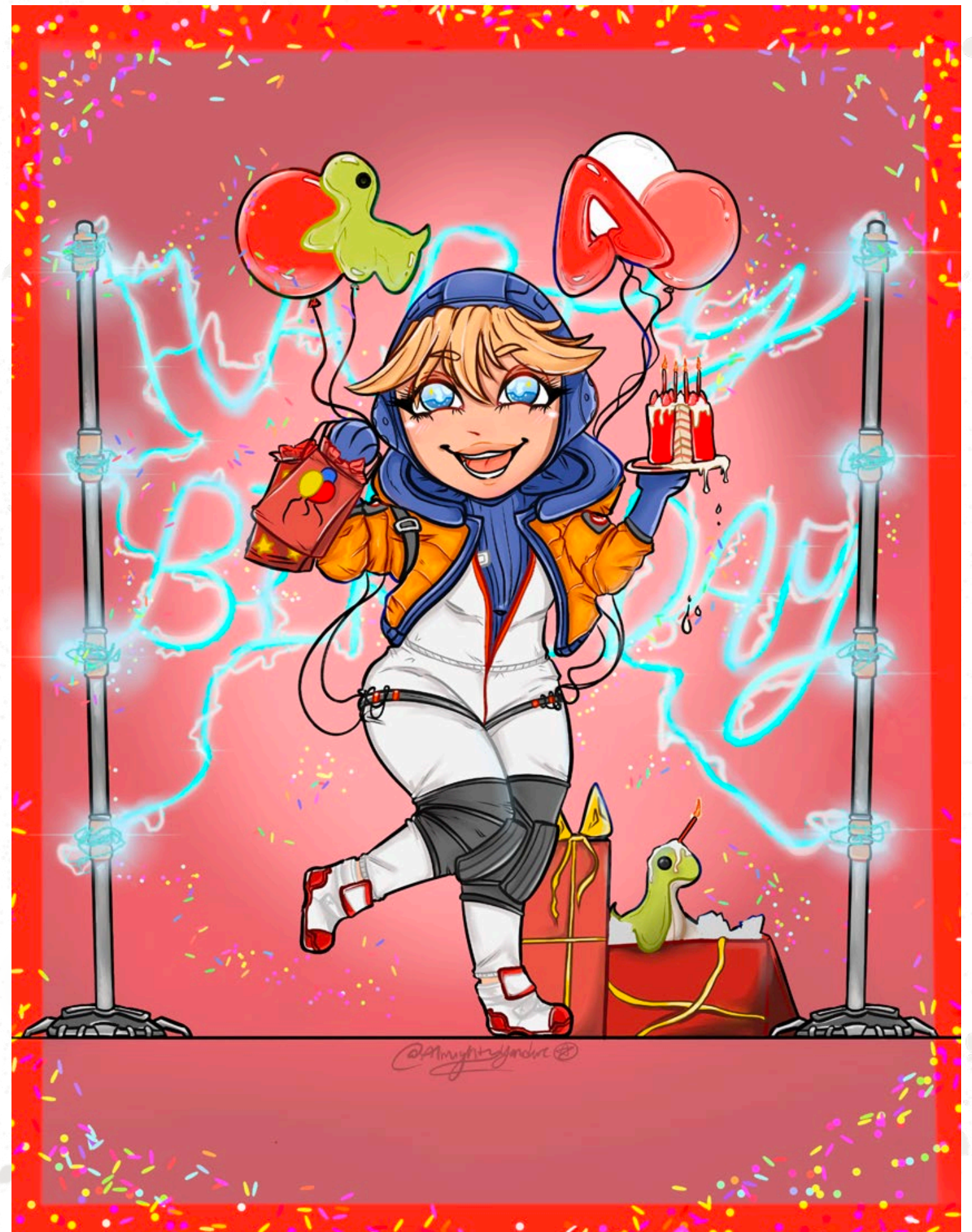
Pigeon\_Ker @pigeon\_ker (Ao3, Tumblr, Twitter)



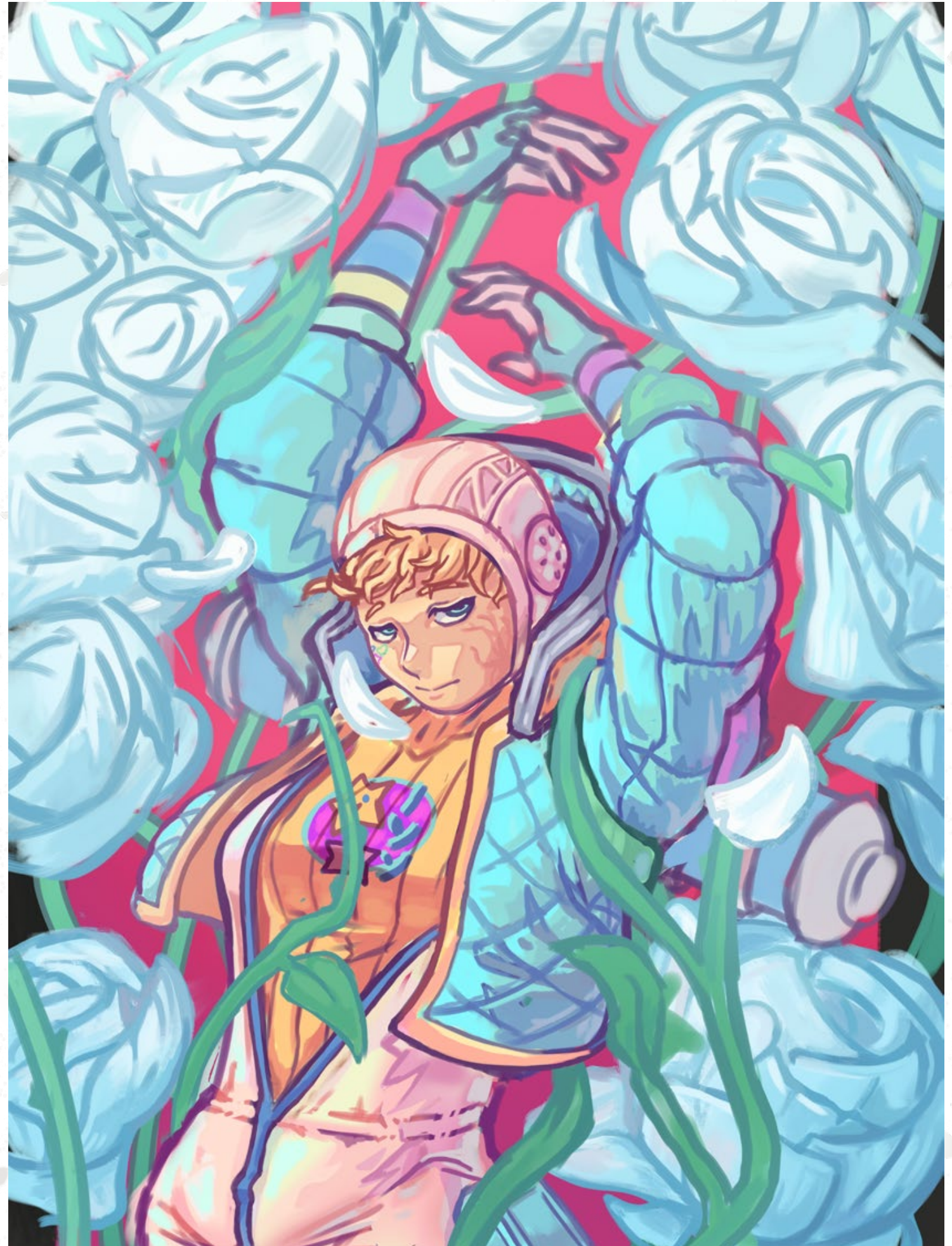


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It's morbin'  
time











## HOME IS WITH YOU

by Plope, accompanying art by OkieDokie7

@plope\_ (Twitter)

“Okay, okay, okay! Tavi, you next!”

The boisterous chatter and cheering only increased in volume as Octavio poured himself another shot of straight vodka. Gathered around the table with him was Kairi, Mako, Walter, Elliott, Ramya, and a very reluctant Bloodhound (who refused to participate in their drinking game).

On the far side of the room sat Loba and Anita, sharing a bottle of red wine and chatting on and on about who-knows-what. In the corner, Tressa and Mary had simply poured each other glasses of fruit juice and started looking at books about outer space together.

Everyone was having fun; there was plenty of alcohol from the fridge Renee helped Elliott stock up the previous day, a table covered in countless snacks to choose from, and colourful lights everywhere.

Bright, colourful lights.

And jarringly loud music.

Raised voices drowned by raucous laughter.

The air in the room was growing increasingly harder and harder to get a full breath of. The faint sound of ringing ears steadily increasing in volume. The room’s temperature being a little too warm and a little too cold at the same time.

Natalie whimpered as the group around the table erupted into uproarious cheering again, hugging her knees closer to her chest and adjusting her noise-cancelling headphones. She squinted against the lights, her headphones doing little to block out the headache-inducing yelling.

The bass from the music sent vibrations into the floor beneath her, shaking the walls and piercing right through the cushions covering her ears. Why they felt the need to keep the speaker’s volume so high was beyond her, but she was in no state to ask anyone about it.

Natalie’s eyes burned with the threat of tears, her vision growing distorted and watery. She squeezed her eyes tightly shut, digging her fingers into the soft fabric of her hoodie and rocking herself back and forth. The ringing in her ears grew more and more unbearable, a painful lump forming in her throat.

“Nat?” A soft voice broke through the overwhelming cacophony of cheering and deafening music.

The blonde peeked an eye open, gaze glistening with tears. Someone was shielding her from a large portion of the lights, kneeling on the floor in front of her. She couldn’t quite process the gesture in the moment, but she felt thankful nonetheless.

“Too much? We can go take a break outside,” Natalie quickly recognized the voice as Renee’s. Her only response was a nod, to which Renee quickly picked up on words not being an option of Natalie’s right now. She offered a hand, her grip careful as she helped the girl to her feet.

The conversation beyond that held no words, and had no need for them. Renee led Natalie to the glass door in the back of the apartment, slid it open, and stepped out onto the balcony with the blonde in tow. The door shut gently behind them.

(cont...)



Natalie took a deep breath and sighed, taking in as much fresh air as her lungs would allow. She leaned her elbows on the cool metal railing, a gentle breeze playing with her hair as her senses gradually calmed back down.

Renee opened her mouth to speak, but nothing came out. Natalie cast a glance in her direction, her gaze softening as she gave Renee a deeply thankful smile. The tension in the ravenette's shoulders dissipated a bit at the gesture.

Distant fireworks cut through the peaceful midnight air, lighting up the sky with bright vibrant colours and silly patterns. They were close enough to be seen, but far enough not to be too loud. The music was still very audible through the glass door, but definitely more muffled than before.

"Thank you, Renee," Natalie lowered her gaze to the view below the balcony, her voice barely a whisper as she spoke. She was chewing on her hoodie string, though Renee couldn't tell if it was fidgeting or self-consolation.

Nonetheless, Renee offered a warm smile to the woman beside her and leaned against the railing as well. "I honestly didn't think you would show up to something like this, you've always had an aversion to loud parties."

Natalie gave a breathy chuckle, shaking her head knowingly. "I thought the same about you, Renee. When was the last time you left your own apartment since our previous game?"

The question made Renee pause, a sheepish grin crossing her face as she quickly averted her gaze. "...Recently."

"Uh huh," The blonde giggled, giving Renee a playful shove before turning around to gaze at the fireworks. Together in comfortable silence, the two watched as sparks of colourful light crackled beautifully in the night sky.

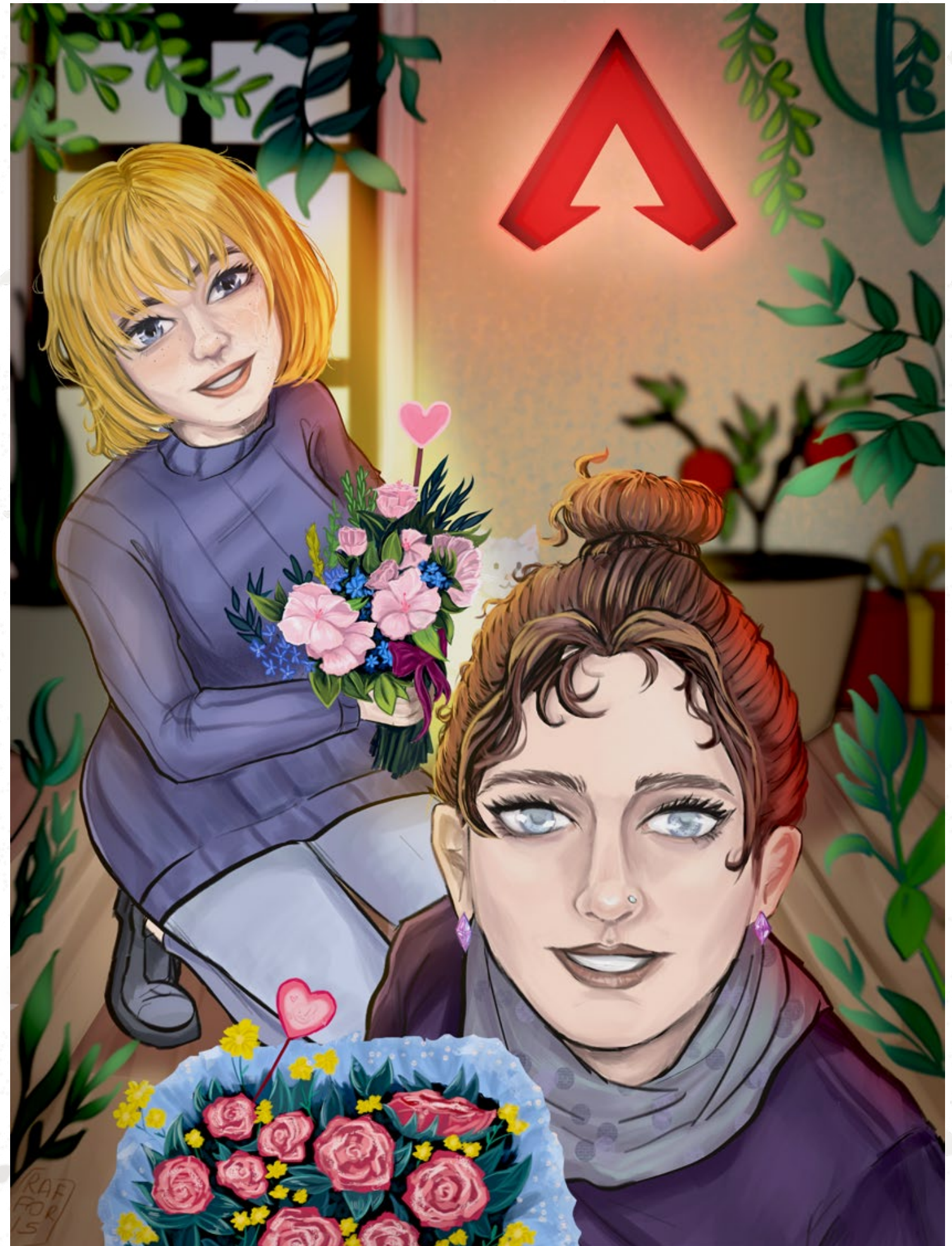
Natalie's hand found Renee's, and very tentatively, she took it in her own. They were both still for a second, but every drop of doubt in her body melted into relief as Renee gave her hand a gentle squeeze to acknowledge the gesture.

She sighed, unable to stop her lips from curling into a smile as she leaned her head on Renee's shoulder. In response, the older woman draped an arm over Natalie's shoulders and held her close.

Warmth spread throughout her body, her chest filled to the brim with nothing but love and happiness. Even so far away from her cottage, from her papa, from the canyon she grew up in, Natalie felt that same safety and contentment. She felt at home.

Because as long as she was with the woman she held so dear to her heart, anywhere felt like home.

And that, she wouldn't give up for the world.





THANK YOU

