“Comic, I think I’m trans!” Monarch blurted out to Comic’s back as he stood awkwardly in her room, to which the older woman seemed surprisingly nonplussed.

Instead, with some awkward shuffling – the chairs at the base they were operating out of for the foreseeable future in the Creole Republic were on par with, if not worse than, the ones found in a public school – Comic turned to face Monarch, with her head cocked to the side. In a surprisingly non-offensive tone and as motherly as Comic could muster – something she did well, despite her omnipresent scowl – she just asked, “What makes you think that, Monarch?”

That caught Monarch off-guard. He expected some resistance, but not like that. “Well, ah,” he stammered out, thinking for a second. “I… being a woman doesn’t feel *right*. Not for me, at least. Like, I don’t *feel* like a woman. If that makes any sense?”

Comic stared for a second back, her gaze narrowing as she looked Monarch once over. Then, with a curt nod, she simply replied, “That makes sense.”

Monarch blinked. “That makes sense?”

Comic shrugged, leaning back slightly in her chair. “I mean, it just kind of… does. I know that doesn’t really help, but it just sort of makes sense.” She looked Monarch up and down once more, and added, “So. I’m imagining you want help coming out to the others?”

“…yes please,” Monarch bashfully admitted, letting out a sigh. All things considered, this had gone a lot better than he had expected. “You’re… kind of the mom friend of the squad when Dip’s not around and so I just thought it would be best to go to you first and just –”

Comic interrupted Monarch with a rather loud snort before she started to laugh. “That’s enough, I get it. Do you want me to tell them all or –”

“No!” Monarch interjected, perhaps a bit too loudly. “I want to do it myself still, I just… needed someone smarter and older than me to ask first.”

Another snort came from Comic as she wore a weird cross between an amused look and, at the same time, there was an offended look on her face too. “Gods, kid, I’m not *that* old. Just because you’re our squad lead doesn’t mean you get to act like that.”

“Sorry!” Monarch’s reply was almost as instantaneous as the sharp redness storming across his face, which somehow… only made Comic laugh more.

“Relax, kid. That was a joke,” she explained as she stood up, stretching as she did so. The former major was, somehow, the tallest person on Hitman, a solid seven inches taller than Monarch and a good two inches ahead her closest competition, Diplomat. At 5’8’’, it was one of the rare times that Monarch felt truly short, and not just short in comparison to some people. “Let’s go find Kaiser, first. He’ll likely want to know so that he can relay that to medical – assuming that’s a path you want to go down. Likely wouldn’t hurt to talk to them, anyways.”

“Alright,” Monarch replied, standing to the side. “Lead the way?”

With a roll of her eyes, Comic just said, “Okay, squadron leader.”

Somehow, today ended up being even more tiring than the day they move into this base, but Monarch at least partially expected that. Still, the mental toll of it all was enough to make Monarch want to pass out at any moment as he lay nested up in his top bunk; there was something just keeping him up though. Kaiser had almost seemed excited when Monarch had came out to him, but that man’s mind operated on a different level from the rest of the mercenaries it felt. He did warn Monarch, however, that as they sorted out some of the medical things, Monarch might not be able to fly. Galaxy, similarly, had an enthused reaction, but Monarch had a bet that it was just because of a bet he had.

“Who’d he have had a bet with, though?” Monarch wondered aloud. Diplomat made the most sense, but there was still that thin veneer of uncertainty in Monarch’s mind. With a yawn, he settled to resolve it when he went and told the man himself –

With a crash, the door to Monarch’s dorm slammed open and in walked Prez wearing an extremely pissed off expression. With perhaps the loudest grown the shortest member of Hitman could make, she flopped down onto the lower bunk and held her head in her hands, and based off of how the groan became muffled, Monarch could only presume that his WSO-turned-dormmate was burying her head in her pillow.

Peaking his head over the edge of the bunkbed, Monarch couldn’t help but to ask, “Hey, uh, you good Prez?”

The girl groaned once more in reply.

“Do you want to talk about it?”

Another groan, but this time Prez rolled onto her back and made eye contract with Monarch. “There’s nothing to do on this contract, and I swear if Gunsel gets called out instead of us one more time, I’m going to go insane.”

“Ah…” Monarch replied, his voice trailing out as he thought up a response. “About that…”

“…Please tell me you didn’t find a way to get us grounded.”

“So…”

“Monarch I swear to god.”

“Well…”

“***Monarch.***”

“It’s for medical reasons!” Monarch blurted out as the first proper coherent thought came out of his mouth.

“…Medical reasons?”

With a deep breath in, Monarch explained, “Well, so, it boils down to the fact that… actually, do you mind if I come down there? This is kind of uncomfortable.”

Prez rolled her eyes. “Of course, Monarch, but you better keep talking.”

“Alright, so…” Monarch began as he shifted to climb down from the bunk, “I went to Kaiser today – er, well, I went to Comic first.”

“You went to *Comic* first?” Prez immediately questioned. “Should I be offended that you didn’t ask me?”

“I – No? Why would you be?” Monarch responded as he sat down on the floor besides Prez’s bunk and leaning against it.

“Given how much time we spend with you seemingly try to kill me with g-LOC and the hours of conversation we have, I was beginning to think I’d finally broken into that inner circle the three of you have,” Prez explained, and though the semi-joking nature of her original question, it was clear as day that there was a little bit of hurt layered into the girl’s voice.

“Oh. It’s not that I don’t trust you!” Monarch was quick to reassure, turning around to face Prez. “I trust you a lot – and I’m not just saying that because I have to regularly trust you with my life. I just… needed an older person’s opinion and advice.”

“And that’s on…?” Prez posed once more.

With a sigh, Monarch turned back around and flatly said, “That I think – no, that I am trans.”

“You are?” Prez immediately replied, earning an immediate groan back from Monarch.

“Yes.”

“Oh!” Prez replied, before falling silent. “I wasn’t trying to question you, I’m just…”

“Processing it?” Monarch offered.

“Yeah, you could say that,” Prez agreed. The quiet between the two returned for a few moments, before Prez added, “One of my siblings back home is, too.”

Now was Monarch’s own turn to be surprised. “Oh?”

“Yeah,” Prez softly mumbled.

“You don’t… really talk about your family too much, I just realized,” Monarch quietly added. “I know you write to them a lot, because, well, I’ve seen you writing, and I’ve heard rumors that you send them as much money as you can.”

“Yeah, I… do. I don’t talk about them much because, well, I don’t want to risk them getting hurt.”

“You know that –”

“Not from anyone in Sicario, Monarch. From anyone else who might be listening in whenever we’re on base or in the air.”

“Ah…” Monarch mumbled. “That… makes a lot of sense.”

“What about you, Monarch? You ever keep up with your family?” Prez asked, shifting to sit upright in her bed.

Monarch just shook his head. “They’ve been dead since… around the Oceania War, I think. That’s when I met Kaiser,” he explained.

“Ah, shit, I’m sorry Monarch,” Prez offered, but Monarch just shook his head once more.

“No, don’t be. They weren’t good parents, and… the thirteen years, at least, I’ve been without them have been better than the twelve or so I *was* with them.” As Monarch continued, his voice grew softer, and at the end of his explanation, a weak sigh left his lips. “I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t run away, anyways, and… so I wouldn’t be where I am now.”

“I getcha.”

Silence returned for a bit longer, the only bustle being the occasional aircraft outside. Then, Monarch muttered, “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you first.”

“Don’t worry about it, Monarch. I’m… glad that you trust me enough to tell me, really. Does this mean he/him pronouns from now on, then?”

“I’d… appreciate that.”

“It’s what I’m here for, that and saving our asses when you tune out the missile tone again,” Prez replied with a small laugh.

“That was one time!” Monarch replied with an indignant shout that almost immediately buried by Prez’s laughter growing louder, which rose a similar laugh in his chest.

“Yeah yeah, just admit you’d be dead without me and we’ll call it good,” Prez managed to squeak out between laughs.

“Only when you admit that you’d be broke without me,” Monarch chimed back between his own laughs. Once they died out, though, Monarch took in a deep breath and sighed as he stood up and made his way over to the ladder back up to his bunk. “Thank you for… understanding again, Prez. G’night.”

“Yeah, night Monarch – actually, would you come here for a second?” Prez asked.

With a raised eyebrow and a slightly cocked head, Monarch rounded the bed and looked down at Prez. “Yeah?” he asked as Prez shot forward and gave him a hug.

“Don’t think this is just for your sake,” she muttered softly. “I had a long day, and I needed this, and you looked like you did too.”

With a nervous chuckle, Monarch returned the hug. “A long day doing nothing in a coastal paradise?”

“The worst kind of long day.”

“Yeah yeah,” Monarch said as Prez slowly released him, shaking his head. With an extra sense of finality in his voice, he said once more, “G’night, Prez.”

“Night, Monarch,” Prez responded once more, but you could almost hear her rolling her eyes in the way she spoke.

As Monarch crawled back up into his bed, his mind was still racing, even if he was thankful for the fact that that was going to be one less person he was going to have to tell. He’d still have to tell Dip, and sort out medication – which meant that he’d likely have to talk to Sicario’s medic, who still unnerved him – as well as figure out clothes. With a smaller sigh, he rolled onto his side and stared out the window for just a bit, before he closed his eyes and finally let sleep take him.

“Ah, goddammit, I owe Galaxy fifty bucks now,” Diplomat mumbled as he leaned back in his desk chair, his head tilted over it to make eye contact with Monarch. Then, with a chuckle, he shook his head and smiled, leaning back forward as he shuffled his chair around. “Sorry, me and Galaxy had a bet about if you or your wizzo would come out as, well, somethin’ first.”

“You… bet on that?” Monarch asked, disbelief slipping incredulously into his voice.

With a laugh, Dip shook his head and added, “Hey, at least it’s better than the bet Kaiser took – er, I likely shouldn’t tell you about that one though.” Even as Monarch’s look turned into a glare at his wingman, Dip just smiled a little bit more nervously and shrugged.

Sighing, Monarch flatly said, “I likely don’t want to know what it was anyways, do I?”

“Most likely not. All that aside, however, it really is wonderful to hear that, Monarch. That you’ve found a label and an identity that you’re comfortable with. Did Comic give you any trouble?” There was a certain light in Diplomat’s eyes as the nervousness in his smile faded, turning the look onto his face into one that read equal parts protective and equal parts proud.

“Nah, she was really supportive. I’m surprised she didn’t already tell you, though, you two seem to spend as much time together as me and Prez do, and we were forced to share a bunk,” Monarch replied with a snort.

“Ugh, not you too,” Dip groaned, rolling his eyes. “Why does everyone seem to think that we’ve got something? There’s nothing going on between us!”

“I never said there was,” Monarch pointed out slyly, “I just said that you spend a lot of time together.”

Dip groaned again. “Don’t you have other things to be doin’?”

“…We’ve literally had nothing to do this entire contract so far, what makes you think that’s suddenly changed? What am I supposed to do, right reports about missions we haven’t flown? Stare over Prez’s shoulder as she does maintenance?” Monarch pointed out, complaining the whole way through.

“How about just enjoy yourself, Monarch?” Blinking at Monarch for a second, Diplomat paused. “Er, wait. Is Monarch still fine for your tac name?”

Monarch simply shrugged. “I don’t see why it *wouldn’t* be. Besides, it’s not exactly gendered or anything, even if you guys were trying to compare me to the ‘lords of the butterfly kingdom’ or whatever.”

“So, we’re letting you proclaim yourself king then, eh? Fine by me,” Dip said with a laugh. “Now, really. Get out of here, I’ve got work to do, because *some* of us haven’t been training our entire lives.”

“Yeah yeah,” Monarch said with a roll of his eyes. “See you later, Dip.” Walking out of the room, he lingered in the hall as he shut the door behind him, and then let out a heavy sigh. That was the first thing he’d done since getting ready for the day, and now he’d have to go face not just Sicario’s medic, but their logistics officer too. The doctor only unnerved him – the logistics officer, on the other hand, she scared Monarch.

“No rest for the wicked,” Monarch weakly muttered, nervously laughing. And then he set off, but there was an idea buzzing in the back of his head.

“I’m telling you, Prez, I think Comic and Dip are seeing each other,” Monarch mumbled through a mouth of popcorn.

“And I’m telling you that you’re just saying that because this week’s movie’s a dumb, sappy romcom, and it’s making you emotional,” Prez snarkily replied, “now stop hogging the popcorn!”

Without complaint, Monarch gave up the popcorn, but shot back, “You were the one that chose this movie!”

“Because you wanted to put on that dumb Albian movie that Galaxy’s always referencing with Kaiser, nerd,” Prez retorted, only earning back a groan from Monarch. With the exception of the sappy romance on screen, things were silent for a few moments before Prez suddenly went, “Oh holy shit I think I see what you’re getting at.”

“They’re totally up to something!” Monarch agreed.

“I don’t think they’re a ‘thing’, though,” Prez murmured, her brow furling. “Like, they don’t seem like the kind to not be more obvious about it.”

“I don’t think they’d go around wearing a ‘we’re dating’ sign either, though.”

“But they’re not the kind to *not* talk about things, either,” Prez continued to mumble. “…Hey Monarch, we should play matchmaker for them.”

“Oh, look at who’s being *sappy* now, miss ‘my pilot’s being emotional’,” Monarch teased, rolling his eyes. “That sounds like a sure-fire way to get Comic to frag us. Or at least to threaten to.”

“Nah, Dip would hold her back, wouldn’t he?”

“He was *really* indignant when I pointed out how much time the two of them spend together earlier,” Monarch explained.

A soft ‘huh’ left Prez’s mouth as she pondered that tidbit of information. “So he’s in denial about his feelings.”

“Maybe?”

“Then we *definitely* got to at least try. C’mon, Monarch, it’ll be fun!”

“You *really* want to do this, don’t you. Alright, fine, but we’re watching my movie next week,” Monarch conceded.

“Deal!” Prez enthusiastically exclaimed, only just remembering to set the popcorn down so that it wouldn’t spill everywhere as she brought Monarch into a tight hug. After a second, it seemed she realized what she was doing and quickly let Monarch go, clearing her throat.

“Yeah, yeah, don’t speak of this, I won’t. Now can we just make fun of this movie?” Monarch snarked, laughing.