

A heart and steel

Piltover, the beating heart of the continent of Valoran and known also for many other names. To its inhabitants and those with interests on it, it was also known as “The City of Progress”. A vital cog in the commercial web and a hub where the brightest minds could meet in safety to bring a bright future. A shining example of mingling of cultures and exchange of ideas; a golden chance to which artists and artisans, inventors and engineers, flocked to.

However, the brighter the light, the longer the shadow it casts. And the monumental architecture of the city casted an immense shadow over the valley below. It was known by just as many names and nicknames, but it stood as a complete opposite to their upper neighbour. To them it was just “Uppercity”, or “Topside”. The ugly side to the march of progress that nonetheless managed to prosper.

A symbiotic relationship, where those skilled or quick-witted enough could thrive, where the sharp and the strong could make their lives carry on. And also bountiful grounds for aversion and prejudice, for anger and discontent.

The skyline of the undercity, if it could be called that, glowed like a jungle of colourful but unnatural light. A corona of shades that tried to light the cold below, contrasting with rusting metal and rugged stone. “An inverted mirror from the above” thought a figure overlooking the scenery from a balcony.

A nobody, like so many around. But there was much being so unremarkable offered, a chance to pass by unnoticed by most, a chance to disappear instantly among the parts that none wanted to acknowledge. And that could be the greatest asset, if used with caution and measure.

Knock! Knock! Knock-Knock!

The figure turned around, as a man entered the room. There was nothing remarkable about him. Fair skinned with a bald head, his eyes a dull colour. His clothes were as common as they got too, a plain beige shirt and streaked overalls blending perfectly with the mundane.

“I... I saw her.” He panted, trying to catch his breath. “The description matches.”

The figure remained silent, meditating for a moment. The target was hard to track, appearing and vanishing anywhere with the same ease. But besides that, the main attraction was not who she was, but what she could do. And if the rumours were true she could be a unique opportunity.

“Good. We’ll make sure her stay is extended this time.”

“I’ll make sure everything is ready.”

“Discreetly.”

“Discreetly.” The new arrival repeated, walking out the same door he came.

Alone again, he sat down on an old and weary chair. A piece of wooden furniture that lacked any of the lavish luxury from the Top and the... uniqueness of the Under, but that remained steady despite the age. A trend that carried on across the hideout and the members of the group. Plain to some, lame to others, mundane all around. But that lack of flashy personality could allow them to mutate and change, like a blank page waiting to be used, and their target would be perfect for that.

“The chance to become anyone... Much easier than dealing with hostages. Or maybe just a cleaner way of it.”

The words floated in the air, out of the window and into the hustle and cacophony of the outside. However, they were not lost, as a shadow left the vicinity in complete silence, leaving only a brief and faint sound of wires.

The first time, it had been a shock. The second time it had been surreal. Now it was something that she did, although it remained incredible and a testament to the abilities of her friends and co-workers. That Galex was able to have her travel between worlds was quite the idea to wrap her mind around.

“And then I decided to engage in tourism with it...”

Looking out the window, at the skyline of chimneys and towers, at the airships that came and went in the distance, she was unable to decide whether to shake her head in disbelief or to snicker at the thought. She had done plenty of things, but this... That she had not only done it twice but more times after that first experience said a lot about her.

“Whether it’s good or bad... that’s another thing entirely.”

Still, once they had managed to work out details and iron out rough spots, she didn’t doubt her capabilities. Reckless? Absolutely, but she would be lying if she said the idea didn’t tempt her. And here she was, sitting on a soft couch, in a lavishly decorated room lit by massive windows.

Clear skies and a sunny evening set a lovely tone, well advanced by now. All accompanied by a gentle breeze that swayed the curtains in an almost playful way and allowed the noise from outside to come in. And on her hands, there was the tea she was about to enjoy, something that had quite the renown around these parts. And it had earned it, as a single sip sent a wave of fresh delight down her throat. Maya closed her eyes, setting the cup of tea in her hands down, sighing contently.

“Well, I can’t say that Piltover isn’t home to some wonderful tea...”

The aftertaste was just as enjoyable, as a mix of fresh flavours lingered on her mouth and tongue. As great as she had imagined, and it had lived up to expectations. Opening her eyes she looked down at the light brown liquid, perfectly still like a mirror to look on. So much so that two orbs of teal looked at her, features of a face appearing on it.

“Hm? MRPH!”

A hand quickly covered her mouth, immediately causing her to stand up while turning around and trying to break free from the sudden grasp. Someone pulled her back, feeling someone press against her, although that would not stop her from trying to break free.

“I’d advise you not to resist.”

She would have loved to fully ignore that command, to break free and face her sudden attacker, but something in her gut told her otherwise. Still, she struggled, the arms remained steady and unwavering in that unbreakable hold, but allowed her to turn around and look. She was not what was expected, as the woman looked at her like a predator toying with her prey. She was free to struggle and attempt to break the hold, it would be for naught.

Her lips curled in a smug smirk “You already lost your chance of escape...”

Maya felt her merging flare again. She controlled it at will, but accidents could happen... more so when taken by surprise. Pressed against the woman’s bust, their different outfits started to shift and turn, sneaking around them as they brought them closer and closer. Each new turn the cloth made around their limbs, each part of their bodies it enveloped, it pushed one into the other.

The chokehold turned into something else, almost like a pose between two dancers. Maya could feel the woman’s fingers locking with her own as she held her hand, as well as the dark cloth of her outfit slowly engulfed her. There was little of her, as her silver showgirl outfit was drowned in the unrelenting barrage. As the two of them merged, she stared at the woman defiantly, only to be answered by that smirk.

Their busts became one, the woman assimilating her without hesitation as their torsos merged. She was nothing like Ireliia, as she felt... different, very different. It wasn’t just flesh and bone, not the cloth, but steel and metal that merged with her. Her legs and plump rear were added to that of the woman, hips now holding wires and the legs now long and sleek metal limbs that lacked feet and ended in sharp edges.

Her head sunk between the woman's breast, giving her one final glare and remembering her face. She was... alluring. She looked older than first imagined, her platinum hair carefully combed and tied in a bun behind her head. Her fair skin was smooth... almost unnaturally so, and the two lines that spread from her eyes told Maya that was not skin care most likely. And her eyes, two dots of teal that glowed with light, which she made sure to glare as she was fully integrated into her.

Still, she heard the woman gasp lightly, as her presence was made evident in the faintest of ways. Although somewhat mature, the woman held a beauty of her own, enhanced by the machine part of her. But Maya's curves made her that more attractive, as rear and bust inflated into round and smooth orbs. The outfit quickly shifted to accommodate the inflating breasts, taking the chance to resemble the tiniest bit of Maya's silver showgirl outfit as small strands of cloth appeared on the chest. And the same happened on the arms, the gloves that reached almost all the way up to the shoulders quickly forming those same strands, letting them dangle freely.

A dash of brunette appeared on the woman's hair, forming a lock that carefully slipped into her face, partially covering her right eye. But beside that, there was nothing else that could suggest there had been two women standing there moments ago. To a complete stranger, she would look natural. Well, as natural as mechanical legs looked, at least.

A hand made her way towards her face as the fused woman looked down at her chest in approval, another gingerly touching her belly and moving a bit down. She smiled a blend of satisfaction and smugness. "Well~ we've certainly fused exceptionally well~"

Looking up from the glowing crystal on her new and fuller chest. There was a mirror nearby, a full-body mirror, perfect to fully inspect her new appearance. But before she was able to take a single step, she felt a tightness on her chest.

"Like hell I'm done!"

"O-oh?" The feeling spread everywhere through her body, making the woman blush and get a hold of herself. She cursed quietly, as Maya revolted openly against her. "Still resisting, are you?"

The sound of ripping cloth was her answer, as well as Maya's growling voice. Part of the brunette showgirl separated from her, the woman surprised at her will and impetus. And Maya took the chance to push forward. The cloth struggled to hold her inside, as her head and bare bust now tried to break free from her captor, the two torsos sharing a set of legs.

"I ain't your damn puppet!"

The showgirl rolled with her chances, trying to separate before the woman regained her footing and the shock wore off. However, it was for nothing, as the silver haired lady composed herself, putting a hair around Maya's waist and another around her bust. The cloth also swarmed around her, the brunette dancer vanishing for the second time just as fast. And this time, she felt the woman's will take over for good. A firm and unbreakable grip holding her.

"Actually, you are..."

The woman's voice oozed smugness, as she looked over her shoulder to see cloth and metal ripple on her back. A visage formed, lacking definition but bearing a distinct haircut, as Maya tried to call for any help she could find.

"Mmprrrh!"

The clothes fluttered, almost like angry limbs, but the woman simply ignored it and walked up to the mirror, her steps quiet and barely clinking as she felt Maya's face vanish. She smiled in satisfaction, cocking her hips while she rested an arm on them and the other carefully touched the gem on her chest. She had fused wonderfully, a curvy and alluring beauty that mostly took after her, but that some dashes here and there revealed Maya's presence. Just the right amount.

"...and I'm pulling the strings."

"Wait... wait, you're the grey lady." Maya's voice said in her mind. *"Why come after me? I'm not a criminal."*

“Obviously.” She answered like a patient mother as she picked up the teacup that had fallen on the carpet. “But your ability is one that such mongrels are happy to claw for.”

“So you just decided to claim me for yourself?”

“Only to see if such rumours speak the truth.” She smirked. “After all, only a fool would try stealing from the Steel Shadow...”

There was a moment of silence, as Maya thought about what she had been told. Maybe acting as a world-crossing tourist had more drawbacks than first thought...

“That... is a fair point.” She begrudgingly admitted. *“You’re not letting me go, are you?”*

“I will, once news of our meeting has spread. But until then...” The merged woman strutted towards the open window and stood on the stone handrail. “...you'll have to make do as my passenger.”

“So much for enjoying my tea...”

“My dear, there is always time for more tea...”

The merged woman jumped, falling through the air with practised and experienced ease. Still, Maya couldn't help but have conflicting emotions. On one hand it felt amazing, the air, the movement and rhythm of the servos and the wires. On the other, she couldn't help but feel intimidated at how they moved, and maybe a tiny hint of vertigo.

The opulent architecture of Piltover was still towered and dominated the skyline, but as the figure moved swiftly and lightly, a complete difference from seeing it from a balcony or a street. She had felt small before, the massive stone colossi looking down at the streets below, but seeing the city from a completely new perspective, realising how massive the scale and scope were now that the Steel Shadow swung next to them.

The stone was smooth and beautifully cut and carved, not a single piece out of place and carefully maintained. All sorts of metal filigranes, be it bronze or brass, glittered and shone in the afternoon light, each an elaborated piece of unique forgery. Chimneys spat small trails of smoke, rising gently skyward before vanishing. For Camille, it was everyday; for Maya, it was novel and awe-inspiring enough to cast part of her fears and trepidation aside.

Walls and chimneys also offered plenty of hook points, all sorts of feelings running through her. The wind on Camille's face as the Steel Shadow sped through the air, the awe of seeing the scale of the buildings... and above them all, the feeling of the wires that allowed the woman to move. She was part machine now technically, something new she had not tried before, and it was... interesting. Despite the coldness, it followed a rhythm. A clink, hunting they had hooked somewhere, followed by a tug with the sound of metal wires retracting. Rinse and repeat..

She imagined the image of the bombshell speeding through the air, barely managing to stifle a giggle. Dignified, yes, but quite the spectacle to behold. She was a passenger now, so she focused on that. The feelings of the wires inside the thighs, the sensation of metal limbs, the ease with which she moved through the air. She relaxed a bit, trying to simply enjoy the ride, but some words lingered in the back of her mind.

"Your ability is one that such mongrels are happy to claw for."

Sometimes night and day blended into one, lacking a clear event horizon that would separate them. Not that it mattered though, as that twilight only contributed to the anonymity, and they would make their move very soon. Leaving the room behind, the rest of the group waited in the hall below. Five of them, men and women who looked as ordinary as they came, lit by the glow of a lamp above. No flashy appearance nor weapons, perfect to blend in with the crowd.

"Why this uneasiness then?"

The shadows and the dark worked as friendly cover, but now they felt menacing and hostile. As if something waited in them to pounce. The steps were quiet and soft, making the way

towards them and only being noticed when barely being two or three steps away. The chatter immediately ceased, the group waiting for direction.

“All set?” A woman asked.

“Yes. The Otherworlder will make things much easier if we succeed.”

“That woman won’t be around forever.” Said another man “We should get goin-”

Words were cut short, as a figure took down the man. A single strike from above, with a resounding clank made him lose consciousness and fall like a sack of potatoes. Surprised and alerted, the rest drew all sorts of weapons. Pocket knives, bars of metal and even a handgun. A single shot rang out, echoing in the otherwise empty building as they sprung into action.

The projectile missed, the figure sliding and making an ample arch with the leg. A swipe that took down the gunman and two more, the second shot rocketing upwards and shattering the lamp. The hall was shrouded in darkness, as the two downed criminals stumbled to their feet and the rest tried to assume a defensive formation. A simple circle, but it would have to do.

The shadows and the dark, previously their cover, now hid any and all from them, their eyes not used to it now that the lamp’s glow had been snuffed out. A renewed attack came, as the figure struck another one with a powerful kick, the woman grunting and trying to defend herself. The rest swarmed to help her, but a vertical kick took her out of the fight, as her jaw let out a cracking sound.

Said kick was followed by another wide swipe, but the figure was unable to follow it up, having to step backwards and dodge a swing. Taking the initiative, the group moved forward, trying to land a hit on her. But in the dark, she made for a difficult target, and the swooshing of the movements constantly gave away their position. And the clinking of the steps only made the heart of the leader sunk.

Numbers would have to do, as they tried to locate her with those noises. The clanking of metal on the floor, as well as the glow that was now visible gave away her position. Panting in anger and anxiety, the group lunged forward, only for the Shadow to dodge easily, in an

almost mocking way. Something that only provoked the group further, as they tried to land a hit in the glowing lights of the woman.

With practised ease, she fired her anchors at the wall, clinging to it as she avoided more attacks with blunt objects, only to jump forward and land two hits in their respective heads. More cracking sounds, probably their noses, as they fell limp to the floor. Two remained, but it was already over. The leader tried to get the hold of the gun, only to receive a kick on the side of the head that immediately did away with the consciousness, stumbling to the ground.

The last one standing was a bald man in plain beige clothes and striped overalls, shaking on his boots as he decided it was better to make a run for it. Before he could take a single step though, the Steel Shadow was over him.

“The Otherworlder is under *my* watch. Make it known.”

A kick on his chest took the air and strength off him, and a second ascending kick on his chin had him join the rest of the group. Not after flying off his feet and making a turn in the air, having him land on his chest.

With a smile of satisfaction, the Grey Lady surveyed the Hall. Six fools, and a clear message to be spread. Sparing no further thoughts or glances, she took off into the night.

Night had fallen already when Camille landed on the balcony of her home. The sound of voices and music came from within. A celebration or gala, most likely. She sighed, taking a moment to stand before the lit fireplace and making sure not to step on the furs that covered the floor. A moment of respite and quiet, interrupted by the sound of ripping cloth and some pressure on her chest.

First time she had been surprised, now that she saw a feminine and delicate hand appear on her chest, flailing wildly as it tried to reach for anything, she was mostly amused. With a smirk, she focused on her chest, an image that lacked such... oddities, and the dark cloth quickly covered the nascent limb, merging it with her body again.

“Ah, ah, ah. It is very improper to irritate elders.”

“So is forcing me to fuse with you.”

“You say that, yet I don’t recall hearing you complain after seeing me hold to my word.”

Maya recalled what she had seen a short time ago, the fight very fresh in her memory. It could hardly be called a fight, since Camille had been toying with that group. She had taken them down without effort, and probably shattered their morale in the process. As well as some bones...

Still during the way back she had been thinking about it. During the brief exchange they had before the Steel Shadow moped the floor with them they had been talking about her. The words her... protector had spoken before were true.

The Gray Lady made her way into another room, her steps light and clinking. It was a secluded bedroom, much more intimate and reserved. The wooden furniture lacked much of the ostentatious nature of Piltover, and opening a window, the woman leaned against the handrail of a small balcony. Not quite a terrace, but enough to fit a couple of chairs and a tea table.

The skyline of the city glowed with lights, while the sky was dotted here and there with blinking light signals of airships. It was just as imposing as during the day, but now the silhouettes of the colossal towers let the streets have the spotlight. And it was down below where the attention went, to those streams of light, people coming and going either for fun or on their way home.

“I can see why you work so hard to keep people safe, this place is beautiful.”

“Quite true.” Camille sighed “A shame very few appreciate the efforts others make to preserve such peace.”

“I’m... a big believer of consent.” Maya said. *“If my disapproval of you making me tag along didn’t hint.”*

“It has been noticed.” Chuckled the woman. “Slightly.”

Looking through her eyes, Maya imagined her form. Or rather, their merged form. A lone woman leaning on a balcony, somewhat lonely and tired. Maybe she had a bad day for any onlooker, but those that knew, knew the lengths she was willing to go to keep those she cared for safe. Something that probably came with the vigilantism, but still, she couldn’t help but feel a bit sorry for her.

Their merged form stared into the void, seemingly lost in thought for a moment, as Maya looked face to face at Camille in their mind. She was an imposing image, a blend of human and machine, with an air of cold ruthlessness and a gaze that constantly judged everything in search of possible threats. She reached for her hand, taking it with warm care.

“You may be ruthless, blunt, and lacking a heart. But I can feel that there is still compassion and good in you.”

There was no reaction from Camille, her face an expressionless mask. But still, her free right hand did reach for her bust, clenching the hextech crystal in her chest. A testament to who and to what she was... if one ignored the legs.

“You said it yourself, you did this to make sure no one else could harm me.” Maya said warmly. “Does that not say enough to the person you really are?”

Camille took Maya’s other hand, trying to match the care and warmth while she reflected on those words. Memories she always carried with her, and the driving force behind the path she had chosen. A lost lover, whose love was the only time that her still human heart had been split in two.

“The things I have sacrificed for my family, my home are... very personal.” Camille finally said. “And while I have no regret for my choices, your words do bring some.. comfort.”

Maya leaned forward, throwing her arms around her and resting her head against Camille's chest. A move that actually caught the Steel Shadow with her guard down, remaining immobile for a moment. A gesture of warmth and affection, of gratitude without ulterior motives or second reasons. She made sure her face was out of the showgirl's vision, allowing her lips to curl into a small smile as she returned the hug. A heart of hextech, but a heart nonetheless.

"Then let me bring something more..."

The fusion between Maya and Camille gasped, as changes overtook her body. It rustled and fluttered, as if it had come to life or was swayed by a breeze. The dark cloth enveloping the skin started to shrink, to retreat, as soft and supple flesh was revealed. A fair and rosy skin, looking much warmer than the usual dark palette of the Steel Shadow.

It encroached around the neck, forming a necklace that took the hextech crystal on the bust as limit. It wouldn't back off any further in that front, but it was enough. The fair skin drove back the cloth across the bust, leaving the shoulders bare but letting it form long and elegant gloves, covering the better part of the arms.

The dress also shifted, becoming much more compact. It centred around the trunk and bust, taking a much more similar look to a corset. A single piece of greyish blue, while some golden metallic filigranes encroached around the thighs for contrast. And it tightened, fully hugging the curves of the woman, perking up her generous bust. As the frock-coat like ends of the outfit parted to reveal her bubbly rear, the new outfit only made it appear even more rounder.

And right on top of her butt, the outfit started to expand. It started as barely a tug, but one that remained there, only becoming more and more noticeable as it grew in size to become a fluffy tail that adhered to said ends. A dark azure frame for her fair butt cheeks.

The cloth of the corset crawled up, moving over her back like snakes that eventually made contact with her necklace. And the moment it did, the same azure fluff sprouted over her shoulders, a similar frame to the window the dress had on her back. A perfect match to the one below, and that showcased the showgirl part of the fusion just as much as the strands that

grew a bit longer. They were around her bust, around her thighs and crotch, and hanging from the gloves in her arms.

But her attention was not there, but rather on her legs. The metal receded, all the way down to the knees, while a fair and rosy tone took over. However, the teal lights of the sides remained, as well as the mechanical feeling and the wired inside. Neither fully flesh nor machine, but a compromise between the two. The blades on the legs remained intact though, a fancy blend of high-heel and lethality.

Taking some steps, the merged woman looked herself in a mirror that the wardrobe held on one of its doors. The brunette hair, merely testimonial before, had expanded. It now claimed almost the entirety of the front, from covering the right eye to a single lock on the left of the face. The bun behind the head remained untouched, though, blending two in one. The woman smiled at the reflection, looking aside and playfully touching the fluff on her shoulders.

“My, my, you were holding all this back?”

“You dominated this body the most before, because I didn’t trust you enough to open all of me to you. But now I do.”

“And here I thought you were a stubborn showgirl.”

“Says the tea addict.”

“This coming from the one who is fond of Piltover’s delicacy?” Lectured Camille.

There was a moment of silence, as Maya huffed, but she capitulated immediately.
“Touche...”

“Now then, how about we indulge in such riches?” Said the merged woman, as she closed the wardrobe and walked towards the door, hips and butt swaying alluringly. “The night is still young~”