



Tizzy would have liked to say that she could tell whenever Hank was down, even when others couldn't. She knew some couples like that. Couples that could tell whenever their partner was feeling a certain type of way even when they were acting completely normal. But the truth was that it was pretty obvious to just about anyone.

Nobody had really mentioned how the mission had turned out in front of Hank, except for his teammates and Kingsley who had tried to assure him that everything was fine. That he had done his best, and that nobody could have seen the attack coming. Even if they were just trying to make him feel better, Tizzy had been pretty sure it only made Hank feel worse.

At this point she wasn't sure if there was anything she could say to him to make him stop being so down on himself. The worst part about it was that, even in the workshop, he seemed so off. When he was rebuilding his chair he was just so lackluster about it. Usually whenever he was working on a project, any project, he was focused.

He loved building or repairing things. It was his passion. But that seemed to have fizzled out. And when she had offered to help him, he politely refused. Which was just... bad.

They worked on stuff together all the time, and Hank was always ecstatic about it. Even with simple little things like vehicle maintenance.

And even though he said and tried to act like he was fine, he was pretty terrible at it. “I wish you would talk to me about this...”

Hank looked up from his work desk, where he was adjusting one of the wheels on his new chair. “Huh? About what?” he asked.

Tizzy frowned. “You know what...”

Hank sighed. “Tizzy, I told you-”

“You’re a terrible liar. You know that, don’t you?” she asked. “You’ve been moping around for the last week. I know you still feel bad about the mission going south but... I don’t know how many times I can say it’s not your fault until it gets through to you.”

Hank hung his head. “Tizzy... it was my fault.”

She reached down and grabbed his face. “No, it wasn’t. Stop saying that. Missions go wrong sometimes. We can’t win every fight with the Young Blood. And it’s not like you were the only one there,” she said.

“But I was the one leading the mission. I was supposed to be prepared. I was-”

“You won’t listen to me. You won’t listen to Kingsley, or to your parents, or anyone else. I don’t know what I can say to you to get you out of this funk,” she said, shaking her head. She looked at Hank with an expression that made the boy’s heart sink. “I know you feel bad. I don’t want to *make* you feel better. But I... I don’t like you doing this to yourself.”

Hank reached up and ran a hand through his hair. “Tizzy I... look, I don’t know what to say. I don’t know what to do. I just...” He slumped forward and landed face first on the desk. “I don’t wanna feel this way. I wish I could just brush it off and get back to work, but I can’t.”

Kingsley had trusted him. His teammates had trusted him. And he had let them down.

He screwed up, and now it seemed like he was questioning every little thing he did. As both a leader, and as an inventor. He wasn’t even sure if he was putting this new chair

together correctly at this point. Every time he worked on anything, the image of Heath appearing with something bigger and badder and destroying it popped into his head.

“Maybe you should talk to Jocelyn?” Tizzy suggested.

“I don’t know...” He felt like Jocelyn would tell him that it wasn’t his fault or something like that. And he really just didn’t want to hear it again right now. “Maybe I just need to... to take a break or something.”

“From what?”

“Leading? Building? Maybe... just everything?”

At this point he was honestly reconsidering if he should have kept his position as a leading officer. There were probably other members in his Department that could have done a better job at it honestly.

Tizzy leaned down and grabbed his arm. “A little time to clear your head could be good. But... you do know you have to keep leading the department. I know it doesn’t seem like it, but we all kind of need you,” she said.

“I’m really not so sure about that. I think you guys would get along well enough on your own,” Hank said. Everyone was good at what they did. It wasn’t like they needed him looking over every little thing they worked on. And he picked up more stuff from them than they did him.

Tizzy clicked her tongue. “I don’t know if you noticed, but we all kind of hate each other,” she said bluntly. Some of them got along well enough, but honestly... most of them couldn’t stand being in the same room as one another for very long.

“That’s not true. I mean... you guys are... on alright terms.”

“If you leave they put Kaydence in charge I’m gonna fry that hussy,” Tizzy said, narrowing her eyes. She still didn’t like how showy she was, or how close she kept trying to get with Hank. Not that Hank would ever do anything, but she still didn’t like how clingy she was with him.

Hank chuckled nervously. He really wanted to think that she was joking, but... she probably wasn’t. “I’m gonna go grab us some lunch. But... thanks for talking to me Tizzy. I feel better talking to you,” he said.

The green skinned girl smiled and blushed slightly. "I'm glad." She gave him a kiss on the cheek, then got up and started making her way back to her work desk. They had started to eat lunch there together some time ago. It was some of the only private time they got together.

Hank rolled back, feeling a tinge of annoyance as he once again realized he was in a normal wheelchair again. He just wasn't used to not having his more advanced one. He made his way out of the workshop and to the cafeteria. Before he could get in line however, he spotted both Kingsley and Jack standing nearby.

He rolled back through the door, a nervous look on his face. He had honestly been trying to avoid Kingsley for a while now. It just felt... awkward.

He had practically begged Kingsley to still be allowed to lead the mission, and he'd ended up letting him down. And even if he didn't say it, he could tell that Kingsley must have had his doubts about his decision. And a few others probably.

Not that he could blame him. He'd totally let him down. So it was hard to just act like everything was normal. He slowly peeked around the corner. He couldn't tell what they were talking about. He knew it was paranoia talking right now, but he hoped it wasn't him. He took a deep breath and tried to work up the nerve to go in, but couldn't quite seem to.

Maybe he should have just waited until they left? But that might take too long. Tizzy was waiting for him. And was he just supposed to keep on avoiding Kingsley? That just wasn't feasible.

"Alright, I'll see you later."

Hank quickly backed up and away from the door as Kingsley made his way back. Luckily for the younger teen, the leader of the Vanguard didn't seem to notice him. "Right, catch you later kiddo," Jack said, waving as he watched his son leave. Hank let out a breath, feeling more than a little relief and being able to avoid the awkward encounter.

He waited for Jack to walk off so he could go inside the cafeteria, but to his surprise the man turned towards where he was hiding. "So kid, you wanna tell me why you're trying to ghost my kid?" he asked.

Hank flinched. "Wha... how did you notice me?"

“I saw you come in earlier, and then scoot the hell out when you saw me and Kingsley,” Jack said simply. “You look like you saw a freaking demon... well, maybe not a demon. Something scary as hell though. You get what I’m saying.” It was hard to think of demons as scary ever since he met that Vera girl.

Hank looked rather nervous. “Um... yeah, I get it. But I wasn’t trying to avoid him. I was just...”

“Trying to avoid him?” Jack asked, raising an eyebrow. “Look kid, I’ve pissed off my wife plenty of times before. So I know what it looks like when you’re trying to steer clear of somebody. So what’s the deal?”

Hank looked hesitant, which Jack noticed. He sighed before motioning back towards the cafeteria. “You came to grab something to eat right? C’mon. If you wanna talk about it then we can do it over lunch,” he said. It wasn’t like he had anything else to do. Or anywhere else to go. Prinny was pissed at him...

Hank thought for a moment. He knew he was supposed to be getting back to Tizzy with lunch, but... well, he wasn’t going to get many chances to have a one on one with Jack Spicer. “Is it okay if I text my girlfriend first to let her know. I don’t want her to think I’m ditching her,” Hank said.

“You’re a smart kid...”

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After Hank had texted Tizzy, he and Jack went to where he’d been talking with Kingsley earlier and started talking. Hank explained everything that had happened. The botched mission, his battle with Heath, all of it. Jack listened, humming and nodding every now and then. When he had finally finished, he set his drink down and leaned back in his chair.

“Yeah, sounds like you screwed up pretty bad kid.”

Hank blinked. “Okay, I’m not saying you’re wrong or anything. But I just don’t think I’m mentally in a place to be able to hear it so bluntly,” he said, looking rather down.

Jack shrugged his shoulders. "It is what it is kid. I mean, sugarcoating it isn't going to make you feel any better. I'm sure Kingsley and everyone else around here already did, and you still looked like someone kicked your puppy," he said. "So, what are you gonna do about it?"

Hank looked confused. "I mean... what can I do? Not like I can go back in time and try to get the metal back. Not that I'd be able to pull it off if I could," he said, shaking his head. Heath would just kick his butt again.

Jack looked down at him annoyed. "You're bringing me down with this whole pessimistic thing, kid. Aren't you an inventor?" he asked.

"I am. But-

"So invent something. Something to make up for losing the metal. Or to find a way to get it back," Jack said simply. "If you're gonna let one little set back knock you off your game then what the heck are you even here for?"

Hank frowned, now feeling a little irritated. "You're making it sound so easy. And it wasn't just one little setback. This was a huge mistake. It's not something I just can... bounce back from. I let Kingsley down. I let everyone else down. How is inventing something that someone else is just gonna smash apart going to make up for that?"

Jack leaned forward. "Okay see, that's a problem. You're worried your work suddenly isn't up to par now? Didn't Kingsley pick you as a lead officer because you're like some wiz kid inventor or something?" he asked.

Hank looked down. "Well he might have picked wrong. Everything I threw at Heath just got smashed apart. Like they were toys. I couldn't do anything to him," he said. "I thought my 2x4 stuff would work, but it was useless. My chair, my leg braces. Do you have any idea what it's like to see your best stuff just trashed?"

Kingsley narrowed his eyes. "Nope, no idea," he said, sarcasm dripping off the tongue. "All those years fighting and losing to the Xiaolin Dragon, I have never once seen my best work smashed into little metal bits. No clue what it feels like."

The boy looked pretty embarrassed. "Oh, right. Sorry."

"Kid, do you have any idea how many times I've screwed up in the course of my life? And I don't just mean as a villain. I mean as an inventor. Some of my best work has

gotten totally trashed, and some of it never even made it out of the lab. Malfunctions, explosions, downright freaking failures. You know how many times I gave up?”

“Never?” Hank guessed.

“A couple dozen times,” Kingsley said, waving his hand. “But eventually I would get over it, and then get back to work. And the next time I built something I would make sure it didn’t fail in the same way as last time. If you’re making a bunch of stuff and it’s not failing a couple times along the way, you’re not an inventor. You’re god.”

Hank thought for a moment. He guessed he did see his point. It wasn’t like all of the inventions just worked right off the bat. Even his chair had taken more than a few reworks and fine tuning before it was up to his standards. “But what if I can’t make something better?” he asked. “What if what I did was the best I can do?”

Kingsley rolled his eyes. “Kid, I’ve seen you build stuff out of trash.”

“Yes, trash. Wood, and garbage, and... other stuff. I’m not used to working with the same type of tech the others are. I’m not-”

“So get used to it,” Kingsley said, cutting him off. “I mean c’mon. Imagine the type of crazy batshit stuff you could come up with if you applied the same ingenuity for your 2x4 tech that you did with more upgraded stuff. You work with a team of geniuses. Ask them crap. Get advice. Soak it in.”

“I’m the leader though. Shouldn’t I be the one giving them help?” Hank asked. He was supposed to be the head of the Technology Department. Not that he thought he was doing a very good job of it right now.

“I’m not an expert on this whole superhero thing, but I’m guessing if you didn’t need help with anything you wouldn’t need a team to lead in the first place,” Kingsley countered. “I call up other guys all the time when I’m stuck on something. Hell, Kingsley said you built your first chair based on my heli-pack tech, right?”

“Well... yeah, but that was-”

“It was the same thing. There’s nothing wrong with taking stuff from things you see. I mean, so long as you don’t try to claim the shit as your own. If you can make it work in your own way, even better,” Jack said simply. “Some of the greatest inventions in history were made with other people’s works or concepts as the base or foundation.”

“You really think I could combine the methods with my 2x4 tech with everyone else’s stuff? That sounds kind of crazy,” Hank said. He supposed it could work in theory, but to actually pull it off?

Jack smirked. “I don’t think Kingsley would have recruited you if he didn’t think you could do it. He was pretty impressed by your stuff. And so was I,” he said. “And if you screw up along the way, learn from it. What’s that saying? Failure is the mother of success?”

Hank looked down in thought for a moment.

Failure is the mother of success.

He was pretty sure he’d heard that before. Maybe his dad has said it. He reached up and scratched his head. He honestly didn’t know if he could do this... but, giving it a shot was better than sitting around and feeling sorry for himself, right?

“Mr. Spicer, could you maybe help me with something?”

Jack raised an eyebrow. “If you’re hoping for me to help out with something I probably don’t have the time. I can send you some blueprints if you want but...”

“I mean I’d totally love that because I’m a fan of your work, but that’s not it. I just need your help with something quick. Should barely be over an hour.”

Kingsley looked down at his watch. “Well... I got about three until it’s safe to go home again, so sure,” he said.

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Tizzy slammed her wrench against the tire of the van, a satisfied smirk on her face when she saw it didn’t do a thing. She was sure this thing would hold up to a tough chase next time they ran into the Young Blood. Next she was going to work on the windshields. She planned on installing something to deal with any fogs or smoke screens.

After Hank had texted her and told her he was going to have a chat with Jack Spicer, she had decided to grab some lunch for herself and then get back to work. She liked eating lunch with her boyfriend of course, but she knew how big of a fan he was of Kingsley and his father.

A talk with the elder Spicer might have been just what he needed to get him out of his funk. Until then she would continue her own work, which consisted of making sure the next time they got into a chase with the Young Blood that they would run their sorry butts off the road.

It had been a while now however. She wondered if Hank had finished up yet? Maybe she should give him a call to check on him. She didn't want to seem like one of the needy girlfriends who always needed to know where he was though... wait, where was Kaydence right now?

She looked around and saw that the girl was nowhere to be seen in the workshop, and then narrowed her eyes. "That tramp..." she muttered. She was always trying to get close and suck up to Hank. She was probably in his office right now planning something.

She turned around to go find either her or Hank, whoever she came across first, but then bumped into someone and stumbled back.

A hand reached out and then caught her, and Tizzy looked up to see Hank. "Whoa, sorry about that. I didn't mean to sneak up on you," he said, an apologetic look on his face. He pulled her back upright. "Sorry for missing lunch. And being late. I was sort of working on something with Mr. Spicer."

The green skinned girl blinked for a moment, and then looked down. Hank was standing, wearing a pair of leg braces. "You built new braces?" she asked.

He nodded. "Yeah. Mr. Spicer helps me out with them. They were a quick job. I just needed something to use until I could make a real pair," he said.

Tizzy looked confused. "What about the chair?"

Hank hummed. "Yeah. I was thinking... that maybe I don't need another chair." Tizzy looked more than a little surprised, as did everyone else within earshot.

"What?" Tizzy asked. "You don't need another chair?"

He shook his head. "I had something else in mind."

Tizzy looked at him worriedly. "Hank... I just want to make sure. This isn't about what happened is it? Because if you're still upset about it, I get it. But just because your last one got broken doesn't mean you can't rebuild it." She didn't want his confidence getting rattled by this. Well, it was kind of already. But still...

Hank smiled at her. "Why rebuild it when I can make something even better?" he asked. "I talked to Mr. Spicer, and it got me thinking. I have this really cool idea. It's really complicated and it's gonna be hard to build, but I think I can do it. I really do. I'm gonna need your help though. And probably everyone else's."

Hank reached up and rubbed his chin. "I should probably call up someone who knows some more in depth stuff about nanotech too. Professor Load maybe?" he mumbled.

Tizzy stared at him, feeling a little confused, and then slowly relieved. She knew that look in his eyes. When he had some crazy idea or impossible project he wanted to tackle, he always got that look. Which meant at least for now he seemed to have forgotten about his bad mood.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa!" Seth sped over, making his way beside Hank. "So you're serious with this? No more chairs? You're up on your feet for good?"

Hank nodded. "Yep."

Seth smiled and then put an arm around his shoulder. "Well, I am one hundred percent down for helping you out with the new set of braces! Ask me for help anytime! I'm all in!"

"Glad to hear it," Hank said. "Gonna need a lot of help with this one. It's sort of crazy."

"Even more in!"

Benji clapped his hands. "And speaking of being in, did I hear you muttering something about going to someone on nanotechnology? When I am sitting. Right. Here," he said, holding his arms out.

Hank chuckled nervously. "Sorry. I wasn't sure if you'd be interested or not. But I'm willing to take all the help I can get there. I want to throw a lot of stuff at this. Nano tech, sonic energy... I need to grab some stuff from home."

He whistled, and suddenly a number of hamsters began scurrying from all corners of the room. Benji screamed and jumped up on the desk, while the others looked confused. "You're calling on the hamsters? How much stuff do you need?" Danille asked.

"A lot," Hank said, slamming his fist in his palm. "I don't want to tell you guys what I have in mind yet, but I promise you if I can pull it off it's gonna be amazing."

He was already starting to feel excited about it. He wasn't just going to walk from now on, he was going to soar.

"Oh, did I hear you're working on a new project?" Kaydance asked, making her way into the room. "Because you know your girl is totally down to-"

"Nobody asked you!" Tizzy snapped, angrily.

Kaydance held her arms up, while Benji smirked. The others just looked at the girl with not so surprised expressions. "Okay, geez. Just trying to help."

Hank reached out and grabbed Tizzy's hand. "Everybody can help out on it. Like I said, I'm probably going to need it," he said before giving Tizzy a kiss on the cheek. "Right now I need to go pick up stuff from home though. You want to come with me?"

Tizzy smiled and nodded, a blush on her face. "Sure."

"Awesome. We can grab something to eat on the way. I'm hungry."

"Oh, did you miss lunch?"

"Nope!"

"...okay then."

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Jack whistled as he made his way through the halls, heading towards Kingsley's office. He was going to check up on his son one last time before heading home and facing the wrath of his wife. As he walked, he saw something from the corner of his eye.

When he looked out the window, he saw Hank and Tizzy making their way from the base... being followed by an army of hamsters. "What the hell...?" That kid really was a weird little nut.

But he definitely had something.

Honestly he hadn't thought much of the kid when Kingsley first scouted him out. And even after he had started working with Vanguard he wasn't too sure. He was impressive, but he wasn't sure if he quite had the spark.

Now he was pretty certain he did though. Only a real inventor went through a slump like he did. And he felt like he sort of had to give him the kick in the ass he needed to get over it.

After they had talked he'd given him a few contacts of his that would probably be willing to give him some advice or help him out with his project. Jack was pretty curious if he could actually pull it off. It was possible, but it'd take a lot of fine tuning. The kid was ambitious if nothing else.

There was one thing that was still bugging him though...

"How did he even tame all those hamsters?"