

High Hawk Season

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High Hawk Season

by [2point5](#)

Summary

Cleo Mortus was a fairly well adjusted individual, despite what her psychiatrist said.

OR

A superhero au from the POV of a federal agent.

Notes

this one is dedicated to @sleepsaur and @gardenergulfie on tumblr

for more context, i'd recommend reading the other fic, but chronologically, this one comes first

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Cleo Mortus was a fairly well adjusted individual, despite what her psychiatrist said.

She was confident, and strong, and smart, and knew how to knit, all fantastic qualities.

However, according to her psychiatrist, she had anger management issues and untreated ADHD, and likely some form of OCD. According to her psychiatrist, she needed to attend twice weekly group therapy meetings, take her medication, and stop smoking. According to her psychiatrist, she

needed to take a week off of work and enjoy herself for a bit.

She didn't like her psychiatrist.

Besides, Cleo thought she was doing rather well, as she slammed her desk drawer shut and glared at the packed boxes in her cubicle.

"Agent Mortus-" Her boss started.

"Fuck off," She snarled. "I don't want to hear it."

"I told you, you're not being fired, just... transferred."

"Why?" She cried, spinning on him, fists clenching. "Why can't I keep working here?!"

"You know why," He tried to reason. "You broke a man's jaw."

"He catcalled me!"

"That's not the point, Cleo," He rubbed his forehead wearily. "You know that's not the point. You're an agent of GHASt, you have to uphold the law, you can't just-"

"Ugh," Cleo kicked the trash can beside her a little too hard and it went flying. Her boss stared at it ruefully. " *Transferring me*. Me! I'm your best agent, Craig-"

"You're also a loose wire," He sighed. "Please. Hermit City is nice. You can settle down, get a girlfriend and a nice apartment."

"I don't want a girlfriend and a nice apartment, I want to fucking stay here!"

His eyes met hers, hardening in annoyance. "Then quit."

The drive to Hermit City wasn't a long one, exactly, but it seemed to take a lifetime. The four and a half hours felt like it nearly stretched on to eternity, as Cleo gripped the steering wheel, grinding her teeth.

GHASt agents had a pretty simple job, all things considered. They worked with super heroes, investigating and finding cases. While the heroes fought, the agents thought. Cleo was more of a fighter than a thinker, but she didn't really want to be a hero. The amount of publicity seemed like a headache and a half, as her mom would say.

She used to want to be a teacher, she recalled with a wry grin. She used to want to teach kids. Now, she thinks that if she had to spend a whole day in one room, she'd kill someone.

The sun was dipping low as she approached the lights of the sky scrapers.

Hermit City was beautiful. It was one of those cities you see in postcards and t-shirts, the kind that everyone flocks to for fame.

It hardly ever works, obviously, because with a city of five million people who want to be a star, the only thing you get is light pollution.

Cleo had never liked the city.

Sure, it had heroes, and more work, but it stunk, and it was bright, and crowded.

But it was better than the alternatives.

She had an apartment already, Craig had arranged it ahead of time, as a sort of parting gift. It was on the sixth floor of a vile building with a crooked facade and moldy hallways. She got the key from the building manager who was smoking on the front steps, and made her way to her new life.

There were really only three rooms in the whole apartment. A crowded kitchenette, a tiny bedroom and a bathroom. There wasn't even a curtain on the tub.

Cleo groaned, tossing her bag on the bed. She'd have to unpack and move in later. For now, she had to call into her new workplace.

Her cellphone was almost dead, so she dug around in her bag for her charger, before giving up.

She'd just have to make this quick, then.

She punched in the phone number, moving to glare out the window at the brick wall across the alley. "Hello?"

"Hello," A calm, sweet voice sang out. "GHAST, Hermit City Headquarters. What can I do for you, love?"

"Ah," Cleo sighed, forcing a smile into her voice. "Yes, hello. I'm Agent Cleo Mortus, I'm transferring to your division tomorrow."

"Ah, right, from Tresville?"

"Yes," Cleo sunk onto her bed, ignoring the deafening creak that rose from the bedframe. "I just wanted to inquire if there was anything I needed to know before I started?"

"Ah, let me patch you through to Bryan," The voice said, cheerily. "He can walk you through the plans."

"Thank you-"

Cleo was cut off by soft music. She pulled the phone away from her ear to glare at it in annoyance. That bitch didn't say shit about putting her on hold.

The music stopped, and there was a pause, before another voice spoke up. "Uhm, Agent Mortus?"

"Yeah, is this Bryan?"

"Yes, I'm Bryan Statz, I'm going to be your technical support from here on out. Er, you had a question?"

"Yeah, what do I need to bring with me? And who will be on my team?"

"Ah, right," Bryan cleared his throat nervously. "Well, you probably won't need anything for your first day. As for your team... your record says you're not very good with working with people, so-

"That's bullshit, I'm great with other people," Cleo snapped. "Other people just have an issue working with me."

There was a pause, before Bryan continued. "So... You'll be working with just one partner. They're calling in a retired detective to give you the rundown and be your... mentor of sorts?"

"Bryan. Big B. Can I call you Big B? Big B. I don't fucking need a mentor. I've been working for GHAST for nearly a decade now-"

"Oh, I know, but-"

"-I don't need some old fart to follow me around and tell me how this shit works. I'm more than capable of handling myself," Cleo was a bit out of breath, but she was fired up now. "And if you think I can't, just because I'm disabled- or because I'm a woman! I want you to understand that you're-"

"Agent Mortus!"

Her jaw snapped shut. "What?!"

"One: you came from a much smaller subdivision. You don't understand how *Hermit City* works. Agent Hills will be in charge of that. Two: he's not old, he was retired early. He's probably only a decade older than you. Three," Big B sighed. "It's *not* because of your disability or gender. It's just policy."

Cleo frowned. "Fine. What's the guy's name?"

"Agent Joseph Hills."

"Fine. I'll see him tomorrow. Goodbye Statz."

"Goodbye Mortus."

She hung up the phone, staring at the cracked screen in annoyance.

She didn't need a babysitter. She was thirty three years old, she had been a federal agent for years, she was trained in hand to hand combat. Why the hell were they calling in some old retired fuck from Florida or wherever, just to tell her where the fucking bathrooms were?

She managed to dig out the charging cord from her backpack and plugged in her phone while she went down to unpack her cars.

It took nearly two hours to get everything to her room, and nearly an hour more to clear a path to the bed.

The mattress smelled like piss and mold, and every time she breathed it felt like the whole bed was going to collapse under her.

"This bites," She hissed. "Fucking hell."

The next morning started early. She couldn't find her work boots and had to settle for her tennis shoes, and she wasn't sure if she had to dress up or not, so she went with something semi formal, and hoped it'd be enough. She didn't have time for breakfast or a shower, and almost locked her phone, keys and wallet in her apartment.

A great start to a great day, she thought bitterly.

The Headquarters were in a large, pristine building with the familiar symbol of a teardrop emblazoned on the huge glass door. The lobby was cool, the floors newly waxed, the agents bustling around clothed in suits and badges.

She grimaced as she approached the desk. "Hello, er, I'm Agent Cleo Mortus? I'm transferring from

Tresville-

"Ah, Cleo," A voice from behind her drawled. "Delighted to see ya."

She spun, surprised, and nearly laughed out loud at the sight before her.

The man in front of her stood out even more than she did. His hair was shaggy, reaching his shoulders, the tips dyed an unsavory shade of washed out green, and his thick framed glasses were slipping down his nose. His wide grin was framed by a goatee that looked like it hadn't been trimmed in weeks. He wore an open blue and green Hawaiian shirt over a teal T-shirt that read 'Happy Days ARE Ahead!' and a pair of jorts. His bright yellow crocs matched the Lego Batman lanyard that held his ID around his neck.

With a wave of delight, she realized that he only came up to her collarbone.

"Joseph Hills?" She asked, crossing her arms over her chest in an attempt to make her shoulders and biceps look bigger. "Uh, I'm Cleo."

"I know who you are," He chuckled. "Call me Joe."

"It's... nice to meet you?"

"No it's not," He laughed, extending a pale hand. "Welcome to Hermit City."

"Right," She shook his hand. It was uncomfortably warm and a little damp. "So... they dragged you out of retirement for this?"

"Yeah," Joe shrugged. "I mean, Nashville ain't exactly paradise but it was nice to be home for a bit, y'know?"

"Uh huh," She nodded politely. "I'm sure."

He laughed, loudly, although she wasn't sure what was so funny. "Alright, then, Miss Mortus. I'll give you a tour if y'like."

The Headquarters were huge. The lobby itself was about the size of her whole house back home, and that was hardly the beginning. Joe led her down hallway after hallway, gesturing to meeting rooms and cubicles and offices and break rooms and stairs and elevators and-

"I'm not going to remember most of this," She warned him, as they walked past their fifth set of vending machines. "I probably won't remember any of this actually."

"Ah, well," He grinned. "That's what I'm here for."

He seemed to always be smiling or laughing or grinning, and even when he wasn't, he had a weird, open, cheerful expression on his face.

"So, Miss Mortus," He said, conversationally. "What's your power, if I may ask?"

"Animation," She shrugged. "I can bring things to 'life'. Like stuffed animals or mannequins."

"Interesting. Do they have to resemble living things?"

"Yeah, I'm not telekinetic. And I can't read minds either."

Joe chuckled at that. "I never would'a accused you of being able to."

"What's your power then, Sir Hills?" She asked, jokingly. She was weirdly comfortable, even as they wandered down yet another hallway in the heart of the massive building.

"Camouflage," He smiled, wiggling his fingers. "Watch this."

He abruptly stopped walking, standing with his back to the wall. He closed his eyes, visibly relaxing. Suddenly, his entire body turned bright green, and a moment later, he was gone.

"Oh shit," Cleo said, impressed. "That's good."

Joe flickered to the same green form, then he was back to normal, grinning excitedly up at her. "Y'think?"

"Yeah, that's some hero shit, right there."

His expression soured, just for a moment, but then he smiled again. "Ah, I'm not good at doin' it under pressure though."

"Oh," She nodded understandingly, suddenly uncomfortable. "Sorry."

"It's fine," He said, shoving his hands in his pockets and continuing along. "Anyways, I like workin' here more than I would like bein' a hero. Too much stress, too much expectation."

"Right," She nodded morosely. "Knowing me, I'd probably end up saying something fucked up and getting my ass handed to me on Twitter."

Joe laughed at that, shoving his glasses up on his nose.

The tour ended with him inviting her out for lunch, and they sat outside of a nice little cafe that had flowers in the window boxes.

Cleo was weirdly comfortable- more comfortable than she had been before, for sure, like she was home.

"So," She sipped her strawberry lemonsade, tilting her head at Joe, who had started pulling receipts out of his pocket and folding them into little shapes and animals while Cleo looked on in confused wonder. "You're a strange little man," She observed. "Aren't you?"

He just laughed, ripping up a straw wrapper and flicking it at her. She cried out- a little louder than intended- and flung her hands up.

"If I may ask, Miss Mortus," He said, popping a fry in his mouth. "Why exactly were you transferred here?"

She sighed. "I, uh... I broke a fellow agent's jaw."

"Did they deserve it?"

"He catcalled me."

Joe nodded. "Ah, that'll do it."

"My turn," Cleo said, swishing her lemonade around in her glass. "Big B said you were retired early. May I ask why?"

Joe grimaced a bit, the lighthearted grin fading from his face. "I, uh, had a bit of a breakdown,

started burning money- as in literally throwing dollar bills into a bonfire I'd started in the park. I'd worked at the agency for 15 years at that point, I guess they decided I deserved a break."

Cleo nodded. "Alright."

"I got another question," Joe said. "If you don't mind."

"Fire away, love," Cleo shrugged. "I'm an open book."

"What happened to your foot?"

"Was born without it," Cleo said, glancing down at her shoes. She'd thought her slacks were long enough to hide the prosthetic, but he must have picked up on it somehow. "Do I get another question, or...?"

"Yeah," Joe smiled at her, genuinely and honestly. "That'd be the fair thing, y'know?"

"Mhm," She rubbed her chin in thought. "What's your favorite color?"

He laughed at that, a genuine, full body laugh. She found herself laughing too, although she tried to muffle it as well as she could.

They fell into an easy rhythm. Every morning, Joe would meet her in the lobby, sometimes with a pastry or drink, sometimes just with a smile. They'd head down to the cubicle room, where they'd sit at their desks and do paper work. Sometimes they had a case, where they'd go out, look at the circumstances and settle on a hero team that could handle it. Sometimes, they would have nothing to do and would end up tossing paper airplanes at each other for a while.

Big B stopped by sometimes, to either chat with them or ask them questions about work. He wasn't nearly as obnoxious as Cleo had thought, and he brought them cookies sometimes, so she was willing to forgive and forget.

They were an odd group together.

Cleo had started wearing suits and sunglasses, in an attempt to look more intimidating, while Joe wore almost exclusively Hawaiian shirts and bright colored socks. Big B wore sweaters, hand knitted by his wife, and khaki slacks, like some sort of dweeb.

Sometimes, when Joe was out sick or was doing something else, Cleo would make Big B go on trips with her, or would take him out to lunch so she could bully him for his sweet tooth.

Sometimes, when Big B was out, Cleo would take it upon herself to install every virus and malware she could find on his computer, and Joe would spend an hour and a half trying to delete them.

Sometimes, when Cleo was out, Joe would fill her drawers with origami and pebbles, or write a haiku on a little post-it note to put on her desk and Big B would unplug every single electronic she had in her cubicle.

It was strange how fast all of her rage drained. She went from being bitter all the time to being weirdly content. She still hated her apartment. She still missed Tresville. She still occasionally felt the urge to break someone's jaw.

But she was content.

About six months after she transferred, her and Joe got the call. Someone's soul had been stolen. That was a weird occurrence, for sure, but it wasn't too concerning. There were quite a few ways to get someone's soul, and most of them were reversible.

All Joe and Cleo had to do was go down to the crime scene, look at the body, interview some witnesses, and decide which heroes to call. All pretty standard stuff.

The body didn't look right.

Most of the time, when someone's soul is 'stolen' it's more like it was trapped inside: locked down deep in their mind. Most of the time, that was easy to undo with some minor surgery and maybe some magic. But this? This was different. The victim's soul had literally been removed.

Cleo glanced at Joe apprehensively. His expression was unreadable, his eyes narrowed.

"...This is big." She said, unnecessarily. He had eyes, he knew this was unusual, but still, he nodded politely. "This is... we should get BTM to deal with this, someone big-"

"BTM is busy," Joe murmured. "We need someone else."

"Ah," Cleo hesitated, before pulling out her phone, opening the list of teams. "I mean... not many people are available... The Big Eye Crew, maybe?"

"Who?"

She shrugged, opening their file. "Uh... not much experience, but an okay track record."

"Alright," Joe sighed, running a hand through his hair. "Alright, the Big Eye Crew it is. I'll head back to the office, fill out the paperwork. You stay here, wait for them?"

Cleo nodded, glancing back at the body. "...God I hope this isn't a serial thing."

"Me too," He said. "For all of our sakes."

Hermit City was quiet, but not so quiet that Cleo heard the window above them shut. It was bright, but not bright enough for her to notice the figure scaling the brick wall of the building. It was safe, but not safe enough for the man to be running across the roofs to not be carrying a soul in his bag.

End Notes

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