Crimson Threads

Posted originally on the fanfiction.lol at https://fanfiction.lol/works/899.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Hetero (F/M)
Fandom:	Overwatch (Video Game)
Relationships:	Angela "Mercy" Ziegler & Genji Shimada, Angela "Mercy" Ziegler/Genji Shimada
Characters:	Angela "Mercy" Ziegler, Genji Shimada
Additional Tags:	Gency, Blackwatch, Pre-Downfall of Overwatch, Fluff, Wholesome Stalking, Protective Genji Shimada, Hurt/Comfort, Angst, One Shot, Training, Platonic, Determined Angela Ziegler, Blackwatch Genji, Blackwatch Mercy, Originally Posted Elsewhere | Cross-Posted, Cross-Posted on AO3
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-11-01 Words: 3,443 Chapters: 1/1

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by Saibogunotenshi

Summary

On a late evening, Doctor Ziegler finds herself secretly watching Genji train… Until he notices her presence.

Notes

Crossposting from Ao3!
You can find all of my works there under the same username ♡

See the end of the work for more notes

• ☽———✧˙°˙☆˙°˙✧———☾ •

The hour was late, and Gibraltar base had long since fallen quiet. Most agents were either asleep or away on missions of their own. Outside, ocean waves crashed roughly against the shore, the wind relentless as it howled around the base's structure.

But one light still burned. Doctor Angela Ziegler, call sign "Mercy," remained in her office, reviewing the data she had collected from the cyborg during their physical therapy session earlier that day. Genji had joined Blackwatch several months prior and had only recently begun training in earnest over the past few weeks.

Angela would catch him in the late hours of the night as she made her way back to her quarters. The sounds of hacking and slashing echoed through the nearby halls.

The first time she saw him train, Angela had been entranced by his movements. Lethal. Precise. The new body she had helped build clearly benefited him. More than once, she found herself lingering in secret, hidden behind the doorway, her form enveloped by the hallway's darkness as she watched from within.

He didn't know. In fact, he never did. Over the past few weeks, Angela had returned to that same spot more times than she cared to admit, each visit revealing noticeable improvements in his skill.

The lethal ninja rarely spoke during their physical therapy sessions. A hard look lingered in his red eyes, his brows knit tightly together. Genji almost always avoided her gaze. In truth, he did so with everyone at the base. The only reason he spoke to her at all was out of necessity. The doctor oversaw his rehabilitation, after all.

The cyborg wasn't fond of the doctor, or anyone else for that matter. But Angela knew. It wasn't hard to guess.

Overworked as she was, Angela had taken to observing him in secret, knowing he would never give her a straight answer when asked about his training sessions. He wasn't the easiest patient to deal with, but she refused to give up on him. Even if he didn't like her.

Doctor Ziegler rubbed at her tired eyes, the faint sting of strain lingering behind them as she took the final sip of her now-cold coffee. With a quiet exhale, she powered down her computer, the screen dimming to black. Her gaze drifted toward the clock on the wall.

1:06 AM.

A soft sigh escaped her, exhaustion settling deep within her. Gathering what little energy she had left, she pushed herself up from her chair and stepped out of her office, flicking off the lights behind her. She had only made it partway down the corridor toward her quarters when she slowed to a stop.

Genji.

Was he still awake? Maybe training? At this hour, it wouldn't be surprising. And if he was… she knew herself well enough to admit she wouldn't pass up the chance to observe him again.

Angela hesitated, then she turned on her heel. The route to the training grounds was long and dim before her. The echo of her heels carried through the empty halls, each step sounding louder than it should in the silence. Overhead lights flickered randomly, casting the corridor in uneven shadows. The base felt different at this hour. Hollow. Empty.

That was when she heard it. The familiar sounds in the distance. Even now, he was there. Training deep into the night.

As Angela approached the large doors, left slightly ajar, she slowed her steps. Carefully, she leaned just enough to peer inside, mindful not to draw attention.

His back faced her, muscles shifting beneath the plating as he struck the training dummy again and again. Each movement flowed seamlessly into the next, his blade cutting through the air with a sharp whistle. The speed was almost difficult to follow. Fluid, as if the sword were an extension of his body. Effortless. Flawless. Deadly. Precise.

Angela could almost see the beads of sweat forming along his left arm. The only limb that had survived his battle with Hanzo. His bicep flexed with each swing as he sliced through the dummy. Even from a distance, she could see it in his red eyes. Focus. Determination. As if every strike carried something deeper… Anger, frustration, driven into the dummy with relentless force.

She lingered behind the door, only half her face visible as she watched. Off to the side, a small pile of destroyed dummies lay scattered on the floor. Angela let out a quiet sigh. Genji had a habit of going too far when it came to training equipment, and Overwatch would not be pleased with replacing them. Again.

"How long do you plan on standing there?"

His voice cut through the silence like a lethal blade. Her blood went cold instantly, her heart hammering violently in her chest.

Panicked, she pulled back behind the door, eyes squeezed shut, as if hiding might somehow undo the moment, might make him lose interest.

His dark chuckle penetrated the stillness. She heard it clear as day. He almost sounded amused by the whole situation.

Angela didn't dare move. The silence stretched, until even the sounds from within the training room had stopped.

Slowly, cautiously, she leaned forward again, peering inside… Empty.

Drawn by confusion and instinct, she stepped in, one hand still curled around the edge of the door as her gaze swept the room.

“Took you long enough.”

The voice came from just beside her.

Angela jolted, a sharp breath catching in her throat as she turned. He stood near the doorframe, close. Far too close… arms crossed, red eyes locked onto hers with hard intensity.

She swallowed, forcing down the lump in her throat, and managed a small, strained smile.

“Apologies. I didn’t mean to disturb you.”

Genji said nothing at first. He simply watched her. The poor woman looked terrified just being in his presence, a small smirk forming behind his metal mask.

“You’ve been stalking me for the last several weeks, Doctor.” His voice remained cold, but there was something else beneath it. Curiosity. Interest.

Of course he knew. The doctor had never been particularly skilled at hiding her presence.

But what she didn’t realize was that he had been watching her too.

The cyborg occasionally found himself perched high atop the base, directly across from her office window. From there, he would watch her work with quiet intensity. She was often the only one still awake at such late hours, much like him, and something about that drew his attention. Whether it was her discipline or simply his lack of interest in anyone else, he couldn’t quite say.

He didn’t understand why he kept returning, only that it had become… habitual. Addictive, in its own way. There was something about the doctor that pulled him in. Was it her work ethic? The way she spoke to him during their sessions? Her kind blue eyes?

It was the only part of his day that made his heavy heart feel… calm. Satiated. More than once, the assassin caught himself watching her without realizing how long he had lingered, only to pull away abruptly and vanish into the night.

Angela, meanwhile, stood at a loss for words.

He had figured her out, he knew she was observing his training sessions. There was no use lying or trying to get out of it. Clearly, he was extremely perceptive when it came to his surroundings, and knew better than to play dumb.

“Sorry about that… I was merely observing your cybernetic improvements.” She said quietly.

Silence lingered for a moment before the cyborg relaxed. If only slightly.

“Hm. Well, if you wish to observe, then stay a while. Just don’t get in my way.” His voice was firm, leaving no room for argument.

In one swift motion, he unsheathed his sword, the blade flashing dangerously close to the doctor and startling her yet again. Without sparing her another glance, he turned and made his

way toward the simulation room.

The doctor had only seen him use the simulation a handful of times, but each instance had left a lasting impression. His skill was undeniable. Precise, controlled, almost effortless in its execution.

At the control panel, he keyed in his preferences without hesitation. Maximum difficulty. The doors slid open, and he stepped inside.

Angela moved toward the large viewing window as she positioned herself to watch. She waited, and the system powered on. The room dimmed until it was swallowed in darkness.

For a brief moment, there was nothing.

Then, his eyes. Two faint red points cutting through the dark room.

That's when the simulation began.

Human, faceless holograms appeared before him. Some wielded fire weapons, others held swords of their own. They closed in fast, but Genji immediately slipped into assassin mode. Each strike was precise, each movement deliberate. His blade cut through the holograms with ease, pixels scattering across the room. Bullets ricocheted off his sword, snapping back toward the enemy holograms. It was a display of lethal grace, almost mesmerizing to watch.

For a moment, he lost himself entirely in the simulation, nearly forgetting that he was being observed. Then he caught sight of her through the window. A flicker of amusement touched his lips. Somehow, seeing her there made him want to perform even better.

More holograms appeared, and his eyes darkened, a faintly sadistic smirk hidden behind the mask as he obliterated them with ruthless efficiency. Pixelated remnants littered the room until only one remained. With a final, precise swing, he cut its head clean off, sending a splash of pixels toward the window where Angela watched.

All she saw was a man, red eyes gleaming, blade pointed in her direction, before the simulation ended.

The lights returned. Genji sheathed his weapon and stepped out of the simulation room toward her, stoic and controlled once more.

"Well? Is that enough data for you and Blackwatch?" He folded his arms, eyes intense as they locked onto her blue ones.

Of course, the doctor was very impressed at witnessing up close his swordsmanship. It was clear his training back in Japan had paid off. Blackwatch had transformed him into a living weapon. It's what they wanted. But Angela…

"Very impressive as always, Genji. I certainly would not want to get on your bad side." She chuckled softly, hoping to ease the tension that always seemed to cling to them.

He scoffed. “You? On my bad side? You pose no threat to me, Doctor.” His voice was cold, mocking her.

Angela was used to this. He always spoke down to her, as if to mask any trace of genuine feeling. The assassin was measured, cold, and at times arrogantly confident during their sessions. She had noticed that he never allowed an ounce of vulnerability to slip through. In the past, she had tried to push him into heavier conversations, hoping he might open up so she could help him more effectively. But his walls remained strong, as solid as the armor that covered parts of him.

“Good. I don’t need you as my enemy.”

She knew what kind of game he was playing. He was trying to act tough, non-chalant, not wanting to show any interest in her whatsoever.

“Well, I’ll be turning in for the night.” She walked away slowly. “See you tomorrow at the usual time for our session. Have a goodnight.”

Something inside of him stirred. A flicker of disappointment.

“Wait.”

She paused, glancing back with a curious look.

“Do you know self-defense?”

She blinked, confused on what he was trying to say, or imply for that matter.

“Uh… well, I’m a combat medic. I know basic self-defense, sure. Why do you ask?” She asked curiously.

He closed the distance between them, coming a little closer than usual.

“How about we train a bit together, hm? Show me what you know.” His tone carried the faint edge of a challenge.

Angela didn’t like the way he said that. Did he have something else in mind? Why did he care about training with a combat medic?

A nervous laugh escaped her. “It’s late… and you won't find any benefit trying to train with someone like me.”

“Come on. Just for fun… I don’t bite.” His voice low, almost deadly.

The doctor bit her lower lip, weighing her options. She could back out, or she could see this as an opportunity. More than anything, she wanted Genji to trust her, to feel safe around her. To break down even a fraction of the walls he kept so meticulously. This… this could be her chance.

“Alright, but please go easy on me. It’s also rather late.”

His pupils narrowed slightly, a spark of intrigue, and something like excitement, lighting his gaze.

“No excuses Doctor. Now, show me your defensive stance.” He folded his arms as he waited patiently for her to demonstrate.

She paused for a moment, and mimicked holding her staff against her chest diagonally, her knees bent.

He chuckled, shaking his head at the sight.

“Without your staff. You *do* know self-defense without any weapons, right?” The cyborg was almost afraid to know the answer.

Angela didn’t respond immediately, but the guilt on her face spoke for her. She didn’t know how to defend herself unarmed, and that knowledge seemed to irritate him.

He pinched the bridge of his nose, letting out a soft sigh before stepping closer, standing beside her.

“As a medic, you need to be able to use all tools available to you. That includes your own two hands and legs.” He explained.

The doctor adjusted under his instruction, immediately noticing the chill of his cybernetic hand against her skin and the rough texture of the calloused fingers beneath. Personal space clearly wasn’t a concern for him.

He leaned over to adjust her posture, the metallic tang of his body mingling with a faint scent of deodorant. Then he stepped behind her briefly, ensuring her alignment, before returning to stand in front.

“Move your arm like this.” He demonstrated a precise strike with his hand, guiding her arm to mimic the block.

“Your arms and reflexes can save you from instant death.”

“Reflexes? Sorry to say that won’t help me in cases like this.” She chuckled nervously.

He sighed, a hint of irritation in his voice. “I may not always be there to protect you if we go on missions together, Doctor.”

His words caught her completely off guard. Did he… actually care? Angela froze for a moment, distracted, caught in the weight of his statement.

Suddenly, reality snapped back as he swung at her arm, using the same move he had shown her before. This time, she failed to block it.

“Focus. Move your arms like I taught you.” His tone was firm as he continued to test her with precise strikes.

Angela wasn’t fast enough. At first, she managed to block most of his attacks, but then he increased his speed, challenging her reflexes and strength.

She huffed and puffed, sweat forming on her forehead, until one strike landed squarely on her shoulder. She winced sharply, clutching it instinctively. Genji immediately stopped, eyes softening for the briefest moment. He said nothing, simply watched her closely.

This woman was more fragile than he had realized. His gaze flicked from his calloused fingers to the cold steel of his cybernetic hand, then back to her.

The guilt was heavy on him. His hands had only known violence, while hers healed many. It tore him to see her this way.

“I’m sorry, Doctor…” He closed the distance, his flesh hand massaging gently against her shoulder.

He avoided her gaze, red eyes hardening with a mix of guilt and frustration. Angry at himself for pushing her to train when she was clearly uncomfortable. Normally, he was practiced at hiding emotions, maintaining his cold, unreadable exterior.

But with her… it almost felt cruel. Doctor Ziegler was the only one who had ever tried to help him through this. The pain of adapting to a new body, the trauma of being defeated by his own brother, the endless pressure of living as both machine and man.

He had spent months watching her in secret. The dark circles under her eyes, the disheveled hair, the scattered, stained coffee cups that littered her office. Quiet moments that revealed her tireless dedication, her humanity.

Slowly, he withdrew his hand, yet still avoided her gaze.

“Are you hurt?” His voice was quiet, carrying a genuine concern that seemed almost foreign to him.

The doctor sensed his body language and saw the tension etched in his eyes. She pressed her hand gently to her shoulder, squeezing lightly. It didn’t hurt as much as she had feared.

“I’m alright. You just took me off guard. I did say I wasn’t that good.” She offered a soft laugh, trying to ease the tension.

But he didn’t laugh. He knew he had gone too far and realized his mistake. He had tried so hard to remain stoic, to impress her with his skill, and all it had done was cause her pain.

“No. It’s not your fault. I forced you to stay.”

The ninja allowed himself to meet her gaze. His eyes, hard at first, softened slowly. In her eyes, he saw purity. Kindness. And forgiveness… something he felt he didn’t deserve. This woman… simply by existing, calmed the chaos within him.

“Hey now, don’t give me that look. I’m okay, Genji. I promise.” Her voice was gentle, almost angelic.

“I don’t deserve such kindness from you, Doctor.” His words were firm. “I was built to kill. I was built to become the most dangerous living weapon on earth.” His fist clenched tightly.

For the first time, Angela saw vulnerability in him. His walls showed cracks, and she was not going to run away from this.

“That’s what Blackwatch wanted. I on the other hand… did not want this kind of life for you.”

His breath hitched. He remembered that conversation, how Angela had saved him months ago, offering him a second chance at life. She had wanted only this. A chance for him to live. But Blackwatch had seen only potential, and he had agreed to it as well. He had treated her horribly ever since being rescued. If anything, he owed her his life. All this time he had been angry at the wrong person, and he wanted to make it up to her.

“Once you’re well rested, I can train you properly in self-defense if you like.” His gaze was steady, intense as he met hers. “I won’t hurt you again, Doctor. And neither will anyone else.”

And he meant it. No lies or deceit was seen behind his eyes. In this very moment, he made a vow to himself. Genji suddenly felt an overwhelming urge to protect her from all the evils of the world. And if it came to it, he would die trying.

“Hmm… I would like that. Your help would be very much appreciated.” Her eyes gleamed with hope.

This was progress for the doctor. Some sort of unspoken understanding had happened between them that night, and she was determined not to let it fade.

“You should get some rest as well, Genji. Have a goodnight.” She smiled softly, turning to leave.

The assassin watched her walk away, until…

“Doctor.”

Angela paused at the exit, turning back toward him, waiting.

He remained silent for a long while. Across the room, they studied each other, the space between them heavy.

Finally, he spoke.

“…May I call you Angela?” His voice was low, almost hesitant.

Her heart softened at the request. His gaze was still sharp, but now carried a gentleness she had never seen before. Slowly, an appreciative smile spread across her face.

“Of course.”

She disappeared into the corridor, leaving him alone in the training grounds.

Genji stood in silence. His heart felt calmer than it had in months. In Japan, calling someone by their first name was reserved for those closest to you, or those you respected deeply. He recognized the honor in her granting it, and he would not take it lightly.

“Goodnight… Angela.” His words echoed softly through the empty room. Her name sounded safe on his lips. Everything felt… right.

The ninja remained in the training grounds for a few moments longer, letting the quiet settle around him. The room, once filled with tension, now felt still. Almost peaceful.

He let out a slow breath, the weight in his chest easing slightly. Her presence, even in absence, lingered like a warm light in the darkness. A promise was made. A promise to protect, to honor, and to never take her for granted.

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End Notes

Once Ao3 is back up, both copies should be identical :3 This is a slightly older version from my google docs, as I have made some small edits directly from Ao3.

Kudos/Comments are greatly appreciated (´ᵕ`)♡.°
Please be kind ♡

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!