

OVERWATCH 2

HEROES ASCENDANT  
A FRIENDLY  
RIVALRY



*A SHORT STORY BY JUSTIN GROOT, GAVIN JURGENS-FYHRIE, AND MIRANDA MOYER*

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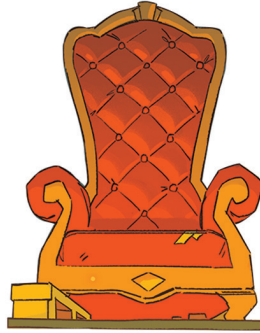
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“So, I know this looks bad,” Junkrat said, struggling against the chains to scratch his nose.

Mako Rutledge, aka Roadhog, his much larger, much more heavily shackled partner, said nothing. Through a high, barred window in the wall, there was a metallic *crunch* and a scream as someone in the arena lost an important bit.

Junkrat wasn’t listening. He had a strong suspicion his best mate was nervous. “Relax!” he said. “I’ll do *all* the talking. And if things get too heated, I can always tell Queenie where the secret treasure is.”<sup>1</sup>

Roadhog said nothing.

“Come on,” Junkrat said. “You know me and the Queen! We’re tight as marbles! Not like you and me,” he added hastily. “But like . . .”

He prodded the chipped floor tiles with a dirty toe.

“A friendly rivalry!” he said. “Sometimes not *that* friendly, but there’s respect there, right? *Mutual* respect.”

Roadhog grumbled. Junkrat took this as a positive sign.

“So yeah, maybe we’ll get a stern talking-to.” Junkrat shrugged. “Then, we offer a statement of sincerest regrets, some shovel time at the Sludge Pit, and then? Back to the bar for some boba and cricket crisps!”

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1. Junkrat’s knowledge of a secret treasure hidden below Junkertown was the worst-kept secret on the Australian continent. Even if you traveled a hundred miles into the irradiated Outback, the hermit you found out there would say, “Junkrat? I’ve heard of him. Got a secret treasure, doesn’t he? Never shuts up about it.”

***HIGH ABOVE, ON A VANTAGE JUTTING OVER THE RING, STOOD THE JUNKER QUEEN, NEARLY SEVEN FEET OF ARMOR, SCARS, MUSCLE, AND ONE VERY LARGE KNIFE. HER AXE, CARNAGE, LOOMED OVER HER SHOULDER LIKE THE PROMISE OF PAINFUL DEATH.***

Roadhog did not look relieved. He looked, Junkrat judged, a trifle *more* worried.

"All right," Junkrat admitted. "Maybe we'll spend a few days in the clink. Week at the most. Is that what you're worried about?"

Silence.

Junkrat snapped his fingers. "You think we should escape now! You're right. Waiting around for our sentence? That's not worthy of master criminals like Junkrat and Roadhog! We should already be down the sewer and halfway up the trench! *Let's do this thing!*"

Roadhog did not leap to his feet and rip the chains from the wall. Junkrat was losing patience with him.

"What is it, then? What are you waiting for?"

The door to their cell slammed open.

"All right, gents!" said the guard. "It's time to get executed!"

For the first time in a long while, Junkrat was speechless.

Roadhog sighed.

"Finally."

---

The Scrapyard was a huge ring of rusted steel, its floor a sandy landscape of stains and debris. At its center was a metal spire, hung with robot parts and other bits.

Above the walls were the seats, packed to bursting with people Junkrat had known his entire life. Touched, he gave them a cheery wave, and someone threw an egg at him.

"I saw that, Scumbo Wigley!" Junkrat shouted. "You should be ashamed! Here in Junkertown, our wise and compassionate Queen demands we treat prisoners with *respect*."

Roadhog tapped him on the shoulder.

High above, on a vantage jutting over the ring, stood the Junker Queen, nearly seven feet of

armor, scars, muscle, and one very large knife. Her axe, Carnage, loomed over her shoulder like the promise of painful death.

She was smiling. It wasn't a friendly smile.

"You two don't get respect," she said. "You've barely got my attention. I'm just here for the execution."

"This is outrageous!" gasped Junkrat. "Roadhog and I are loyal subjects. If there are allegations against us, we demand to hear them!"

The Junker Queen gave him a *look*.

"Fine," she said, holding up a finger. "Attempted demolition of Junkertown's main gate."

"We were testing your defenses!" Junkrat protested.

"Blasting Outback Bill's Premium Sausage Stand to chunks." A handful of charges now. "Along with a few of his favorite customers."

"We—" Junkrat paused and glanced at Roadhog, who nodded. "Right, we did that one. Sorry, mate!"

Outback Bill sagged in his seat, looking more hurt than angry.

"And worst of all," the Junker Queen said, leaning into the silence, closing her fist, "the Biscuit Incident."

Angry muttering rose like a tide, and Junkrat whirled on them.

"You look me in the eyes and tell me you wouldn't have done the same!"

"The sentence," the Junker Queen said from high above, "is death at the hands of my champion."

"Afraid to challenge us yourself?" Junkrat shouted.

"Nah. Giving you a chance because the biscuit thing was pretty funny. Catch." She kicked a crate over the edge. It shattered on the ground.

"Unbelievable," Junkrat muttered, going through the wreckage. He grabbed the six grenades on a rather fetching bandolier, while Roadhog wound his chain hook around his meaty forearm.

The huge iron door at the far end of the arena rose. Behind it, a mouth of darkness.

"Isn't this wonderful?" Junkrat breathed. "Dying at the hands of the champ! What an honor!"

"You die," Roadhog said. "I'm living."

"Tinkers and Wreckers, Demolitionists and Scavengers. . ."<sup>2</sup> The Junker Queen hefted her axe. "Your champion and mine: Wrecking Ball!"

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2. The Queen ran Junkertown, but the factions made the city work, more or less. Scavengers found parts for the Demolitionists and Tinkers to build delightful contraptions with. Wreckers, on the whole, wrecked things, but in a generally helpful fashion.

A grapple claw crunched into the top of the doorframe, and a huge ball-shaped mech swung into the air. Roadhog grabbed Junkrat by the bandolier and hurled him out of the way.

Above, two quad cannons unfolded from the ball and opened fire, shredding the sand where Junkrat had been. The crowd bellowed and whistled. Junkrat, who had landed on his head, wasn't as happy about the turn of events.

"Hasn't lost a single match and never leaves the mech!" said a voice in the crowd nearby. "No one's ever seen their face!"

"What you reckon? Too ugly?" another spectator said.

"Could be. But think about it: In this heat? *Never* leaves the mech?"

"Gotta smell fierce in there. Like a sewer made of cheese," Junkrat shouted, excited to join in.

"Keep moving, idiot," Roadhog said. Neither saw the mech bounce, rebound off the wall, and rocket at them like a murderous comet.

Junkrat raised a finger to retort, but Roadhog was already hurtling toward the far wall at unconscionable speed, wrapped around the bulk of the champ.

Stone crunched. The crowd groaned. The Queen bellowed laughter from her high throne.

Junkrat yanked a grenade from his bandolier, pulled the pin because he worked better under pressure, and looked up.

Wrecking Ball's grapple was coming right at his head. Junkrat jerked out of the way, then grabbed the line as it retracted, whipping and hissing. The momentum pulled him off his feet and into the air, like a dust-colored bird. On his way over the mech, he dropped the grenade.

"Roadhog!" he shrieked as he shot toward the ground. "Catch me!"

Roadhog did not catch him. Roadhog lay at the far end of the arena, unmoving.

As Junkrat bounced along the ground, the grenade exploded. Checking his mouth for loose teeth, Junkrat staggered up, peering into the smoking crater where Wrecking Ball had been.

Where Wrecking Ball still *was*. The mech's armor was singed at best, and a little hatch at the top looked loose. But that was it.

"Wicker basket!" Junkrat swore, with feeling.

With a deep-bellied wheeze, a very much not-dead Roadhog surged forward, whirled his chain hook, and threw. The hook bit deep into the hatch. Muscle rippling beneath the meat, Roadhog pulled and—

An entire panel of the mech's armor tore away.

There, at the mech's controls, blinking in the brutal light, was a hamster. He was a smidge larger than the average, non-mech-piloting hamster. He had a mohawk.

The crowd went silent. Then, finally, someone spoke.

"That's the champion?" asked Outback Bill.

The hamster shook his fist and chittered angrily. Lights flashed on the front of the mech.

"He says, 'You'll suffer for that,'" the mech translated.

Leaping to their feet, the crowd *roared* in approval.

The hamster dropped into the mech's guts, and the quad cannons sprang out. Junkrat and Roadhog dove apart as bullets screamed past.

"It's all right, Roadhog!" Junkrat panted, ripping another grenade off his bandolier. "All we've gotta do . . . keep our distance . . ."

But the crowd was chanting.

*"Spin to win! Spin to win!"*

The mech ground to a halt on the sand. The hamster surfaced and nodded once. A grapple shot out from the mech and latched on to the spire at the center of the ring.

Slowly at first, then with greater and greater speed, the mech whirled around the center, letting out slack little by little. It was a blur of metal, an ever-widening circle of death.

Junkrat and Roadhog backed away.

"You're gonna be sorry!" Junkrat shouted up to the Queen.

She leaned over her balcony. "You're gonna be *paste*."

Junkrat bit the pin out of his grenade thoughtfully and eyeballed the hamster, whirling around the spire . . .

He threw the grenade.

The explosion hit its mark. Unmoored, Wrecking Ball hurtled in a straight line through the wall of the arena, and by the sound of it, the next three streets.

The crowd held their breath as the Junker Queen peered out over her city.

"He's fine," she said. "Looks like Bill's new shack broke his fall."

The entire crowd, Bill included, cheered as the Queen leapt down from her balcony.

"That's all right. Kind of wanted to kill you both myself anyway."

"B-but you don't have to," Junkrat said, his lip quivering. "And consider this: if I die here, you'll never know the location of my secret treasure!"

The Queen and the crowd groaned as one.

"No one cares about your treasure," the Junker Queen said, making her way toward him.

"That's right, my infamous secret treasure!" Junkrat said, bearing the scorn with the injured dignity of a true hero. "For I alone know how to get through the *Final Door*!"

Silence, in which was heard the distant crunching of a giant round metal mech rolling furiously over sand in the direction of the arena.

***“YOU WANT THROUGH THE FINAL DOOR,  
YOU’RE GONNA NEED MY EYE.”***

***THE CROWD CONSIDERED THIS.***

***“KILL HIM AND TAKE HIS EYE!”***

“What’s the Final Door?” someone asked.

“The last unopened door of the omnium,<sup>3</sup> nitwit.”

“Oh, *that* door.”

“The Final Door’s impenetrable. We’ve hit it. Bombed it. Nothing made a scratch.” The Queen scowled at Junkrat. “*You* never got in.”

“Not only in, but *out!*” said Junkrat. The crunching of sand was getting louder.

“Yeah?” said the Queen. “And you did that how?”

“I fell through a series of increasingly minuscule holes in the roof! Found a control room and hooked it up to me own special key!” Junkrat gave the Queen a saucy wink. “You want through the Final Door, you’re gonna need my eye.”

The crowd considered this.

“Kill him and take his eye!”

Wrecking Ball popped back through the hole in the wall just as a wave of Junkertown muscle poured over the railings. The mech tumbled with them, like a cork in a storm. From the other side of the arena, blast-scorched Demolitionists lit fuses, while Tinkers hefted massive machines.

Down in the arena, Roadhog looked from one advancing army to the other and sighed.

“Junkrat,” he said.

“Junkrat, you’re a genius?” Junkrat said hopefully.

“Knife,” Roadhog said.

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3. Junkertown was built within the ruins of an omnium, a pre-Crisis factory that produced robotic servants for humans and mechanical soldiers for the rogue god program Anubis. Junkers, appropriately, had blown theirs up ages ago and used it for scrap.



"Oh, what a relief. I thought you were gonna say idiot."

"Knife," Roadhog said, because one of the Wreckers had thrown one.

The Junker Queen drew her axe and swatted the flying knife out of the air.

"Mako," she said, "is he lying?"

"Don't know," Roadhog said.

"Figures." She turned to the advancing army of Wreckers. "What makes you lot think you can claim treasure in *my* city?" Before anyone could answer, a hundred Demolitionist bombs went off at once. A cloud of dust descended, leaving Junkrat standing in the Junker Queen's growing shadow. All around them, the Wreckers fought a life-and-death battle against themselves to get to him.

"I was really looking forward to watching you die," she said.

"Me too," Roadhog said. The Junker Queen patted him on the shoulder sympathetically, then turned as Wrecking Ball, at last, rolled up.

"Where've you been?" she said.

The hamster clawed his way out of the cockpit and snarled something.

"The mammal says he fell into a sewer," the mech translated.

"And that's why you stink, yeah?" the Junker Queen said, snorting. "Not because you never take a bath."

Junkrat clawed at the air, trying to understand.

"You knew?!"

She turned, and the smile dropped from her face like a guillotine.

"I don't remember saying you could speak, ratbag."

"*He's a wombat in a robot suit!*" said Junkrat.

The Junker Queen tilted her head. "And you're a rat, and your mate's got a pig face," she said. "I'm bored talking about this. You owe me treasure."

She slapped Wrecking Ball's plating and pointed through the crowd of Wreckers.

"Champ! Lay out the red carpet!"

Firing a grapple through the crowd, Wrecking Ball surged forward. Roadhog charged after, laying about with his hook to keep the path clear. Junkrat followed . . . with the Queen's knife at his back.

The four sprinted, staggered, and rolled down a crooked alley. On neighboring streets, gangs of hunting Wreckers called to one another like drunken wolves.

Without a pause in the pace, the rolling ball sprouted four legs, skittering ahead of the group as a Wrecker burst out of a side alley and pointed a rifle at them. The mech bounded into the air, spun, and came down on the Wrecker with a *crunch*.

Junkrat winced. When he saw the state of the Wrecker, he winced again and surged forward to Roadhog, jogging at the front of the pack.

"Roadhog," he whispered.

"No," Roadhog said.

"What do you mean, *no*?"

"No more plans."

Junkrat *almost* exploded. But he decided, rather cunningly he thought, to save his temper for later.

"Once Queenie gets the treasure, we're expendable. Right?"

Roadhog said nothing.

"So, once we get through the door, wait for my signal. All right?"

"What are you two whispering about up there?" the Junker Queen demanded.

"The treasure," Junkrat said, sticking to the truth.

"*My* treasure," the Junker Queen corrected. "And what is it, anyway?"

"A surprise," Junkrat said. "But I'll tell you one thing. You'll never see it coming!"

He cackled a little while the rest of the group trekked on, picking off Junkers as they went. Together, they exploded into a courtyard at the top of a hill. At the very bottom, set in the rock foundation of a leaning building, was a polished steel door untouched by rust or time.

The Final Door.

Unfortunately, a crowd of Wreckers stood in front of it, waiting for them. Their leader was at the head of the group, with a fresh bandage and a large homemade cannon dangling from duct-taped handles. It was not clear what the cannon fired, or even if it *would* fire, but he looked awful pleased with himself, nonetheless.

The Junker Queen eyed them sourly, then slapped Junkrat upside the head.

"You never had much respect for my rules," she said. "But now I have you watching my back in this scrap. Do you know why I rule Junkertown? Why people follow me?"

Rubbing his cheek, Junkrat opened his mouth to respond.

"Don't interrupt," the Junker Queen said. "It's not because everyone's loyal to me, obviously. Take a look."

Junkrat *was* looking. The Wreckers had the cannon aimed now.

"It's not because I'm better than any of you," the Junker Queen continued, "though I *am*."

*Vwoop*. The cannon unleashed a white-hot beam of energy. A large section of the building above the Junker Queen's head evaporated.

"Pay attention," she said, while glowing embers fell around her like stars.

***“PEOPLE FOLLOW ME BECAUSE WHEN STUFF GOES WRONG, WHEN THE MOB IS AT THE DOOR AND EVERYTHING YOU’VE BUILT IS IN FLAMES, YOU NEED SOMEONE WHO’LL DO THIS.”***

Junkrat’s eyes instead went to the leader of the Wreckers, at the bottom of the hill. He was cursing and adjusting the angle of his cannon.

“I said *pay attention*,” growled the Queen, grabbing Junkrat by the throat. “People follow me because when stuff goes wrong, when the mob is at the door and everything you’ve built is in flames, you need someone who’ll do *this*.”

She dropped Junkrat and drew her axe and knife.

“Who wants an axe in the face?” she roared.

Then she charged down the hill at the Wrecker mob. Alone.

*Vwoop*, went the cannon, but the Junker Queen was airborne, laughing, and the beam wasn’t even close. Her axe carved an arc through the smoke and ash, and the cannon exploded. The Wrecker leader shrieked. As the rest of the Wreckers surged toward him, Junkrat considered his options. He counted the grenades on his bandolier (four), then looked at the crowd of Wreckers (more than four). Giggling, he pocketed a grenade, then sprinted down the hill into the melee.

Wrecking Ball swung through the crowd at full speed on his right, knocking great sweeping handfuls of Wreckers into the air. On his left, someone was making the funny bubbling sound people made when Roadhog got angry in their vicinity.

Junkrat broke into the center of the melee and saw the Junker Queen.

She stood with her back to the Final Door. Ten Wreckers with knives, clubs, hooks, and guns surrounded her. Another four lay in the mud at her feet, not looking at all well. Both her weapons were missing, and still no one dared get close.

“Took you long enough,” she said. “Come here.”

“Anything for the Junker Queen!” said Junkrat, aglow with sincerity.

The Junker Queen nodded and laid a hand on his scrawny chest. “Loyalty’s a bastard. I avoid it, myself.”

She lifted her hand, wearing the three pins from his remaining grenades like rings.

“Try not to blow up your eye, hey? Need it for the door and all.”

Junkrat's heart filled with admiration as he and his now explosive bandolier hurtled into the crowd. It was a shame he had to betray her at the end of all this.

He scanned the battle for options and saw one swinging toward him. He leapt aboard Wrecking Ball and clung to the grapple line as the ground curved away. At the peak of the swing, he soared away from the ball and began hurling grenades at clusters of Wreckers.

*Boom.* He closed his eyes, smiling. Life was good.

*Boom.* Wreckers screamed. Junkrat stretched his arms out like a bird, feeling the heat of the explosions on his back.

*Boom.* Gravity was making several demands upon his attention. *Oh.*

Junkrat opened his eyes. The ground was approaching fast.

"Roadhog! Catch m—"

"Get him up," said the Queen.

Roadhog lifted Junkrat into the air and dangled him there. Junkrat's feet eventually found the ground and held it in place.

"Did we win?" he said blearily.

"You tell me, genius," said the Junker Queen, leaning against the wall beside the Final Door's optical scanner. All around her lay Wreckers in various states of unhealth. The champion had left his ball and was examining pieces of the Wreckers' cannon, chittering derisively to himself.

"We won!" Junkrat decided.

"That's right," she said patiently. "Now it's time for your bit."

"Of course, my queen!" he said, rubbing his hands together craftily. "Roadhog! Now!"

Roadhog stared at him blankly.

"I'm giving the signal!" Junkrat added desperately.

Roadhog scratched his elbow.

A proprietary hand, scarred and strong, closed around the back of Junkrat's neck.

"Forgot to tell him the plan, didya?" said the Junker Queen, almost kindly. The hamster, now back in his mech, shook his little head in disgust. Junkrat thought about it.

"I suppose I did," he said sadly.

"Ah, well," she said. "There's always next time."

Then she lifted him by the neck and slammed his face against the optical scanner.

"ACCESS GRANTED," said the door.

"Hnghtbthh," said Junkrat.

The Final Door slid open with a warm hum, revealing rich, cool darkness. The Junker Queen stepped through, squinting as her eyes adjusted. Then she looked up. And farther up.

"Detecting astonishment," Wrecking Ball's mech said, breaking the silence.

Roadhog peered around them, his mask failing to hide his awe. Their collective wonder filled Junkrat with pride, though it was short-lived.

"You two," the Junker Queen said, gesturing to Junkrat and Roadhog, "have thirty seconds to get out of my sight. Just consider yourselves lucky I'm letting you live after the stunt you pulled."

Before Junkrat could protest, she turned back to the room, clapping Wrecking Ball's mech. "Reckon you can get it flying?"

*THE WORLD NEEDS MORE HEROES . . . ARE YOU WITH US?*



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