

# INTERROGATION

---



A SHORT STORY

JAJA PERKINS

# COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2018 by Jaja Perkins. All rights reserved. This publication originated in the United States and is protected by Copyright. Permission should be obtained from the publisher prior to any prohibited reproduction, storage in a retrieval system, or transmission in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or likewise.



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jaja Perkins was born on September 18, 1999. The daughter of Kendia, Jaja has two siblings, Yohance and Omari. She attends Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida, and is majoring in Film and Television in the College of Communication and Design. She enjoys writing, Tumblr, and work, and is an accomplished NCAA women's volleyball player. Before attending Lynn University, she won back-to-back AAU Open National Championships, was named to the All-Tournament Team in 2014 playing for TBVA, and was named a 15-Open All American in 2015. In April of 2018, Jaja was awarded the grand prize for the Lynn University Library's Second Annual Creative Writing Contest for her short story, *Interrogation*.



---

# INTERROGATION

The room was quiet, almost unbearably so. It was set up like a dramatic version of King Arthur's Round Table. It had comfortable, red velvet seats arranged around a thick, mahogany table with hand-carved accents and feet. The room itself had decent lighting, however, for the sake of being mysterious, only one of the two overhead spotlights was centered on the table, specifically and on the interrogated's chair.

Hendrix stood in the back of the room, both per his superior's request and the Scribe Code. Marshal and Finn were each seated in the comfortable, red chairs when their target shuffled in. Hendrix took a long, deep breath as Mack shuffled through the door. Exhaustion emanated from her eyes. She was spent and broken, more so than Hendrix had ever seen her. Having lost one of her best friends a couple of weeks prior, she just lost her father with whom she had recently reconnected with— it was written all over her face, buried between the laugh lines and early-onset crow's feet.

"Please, have a seat, Mack." Finn pushed his glasses up his nose and gestured to the chair across from him and Marshal. He was noticeably tense, uncomfortable with the situation at hand, and did not like how Mack became entangled in this shit show of a case. She's been through enough already, and to be interrogated not even four hours later, Finn thought to himself. He would be surprised if she even bothered getting back to work after this.

"How are you holding up," Finn asked her with genuine and palpable concern.

Mack took her time to reply, moving slowly to the seat she was assigned. Hendrix scoped her up and down, analyzing every inch of her. She was more dressed-down than on an average day, wearing a pair of baggy sweatpants that, despite tying to her hips, still managed to slip below and reveal the black boxer briefs she was sporting underneath. The casual attire was punctuated with an old, thick, oversized hoodie that happened to once hang inside of Hendrix's wardrobe. She hadn't even bothered putting on shoes that morning, despite her room being just six floors above, and regardless of the Science Department's requirement that footwear must be worn at all times, particularly since they were always testing novel and highly-explosive concepts.

"I'm fine."

Her tone was flat and as unreadable as the expression on her face. Her hair had been a mess for weeks, but that day it was wet and neatly fixed into boxer braids. Hendrix swallowed a little louder than he meant to, and the slush of his spit slithering down his throat caught her attention. But the scribe was hidden completely in the blackness of the room, outside of the spotlight's illumination. Despite her inability to have seen him, she still saw him. Mack's sights were fixed where his eyes would be, and she allowed whatever she thought was in that corner to stare back at her, her violet hues pleading for a speedy trial, wanting nothing more than to be embraced in company and love, like that which she had just

lost. They screamed for a break, but the sadness within her eyes hinted that rest would only come with death.

“You loo—”

“Let’s cut the bullshit. Where is Cross?” Marshal cut off Finn curly, not moving his locked fingers from his face. Mack took her eyes off of the dark space occupied by Hendrix and looked back at the two men seated before her. The young woman shrugged shortly, jutting her bottom lip out a little to complete the ‘I don’t know’ look. Her expression was stoic and a little unnerving in the silence of the room. Despite her stare Marshal was unimpressed.

“Soldier! Tell us where your father is at once. That is an order.”

Another silence followed, but at the threat of enduring another incensed outburst, she answered, wanting to get the questioning over with as quickly as possible so that she could slink back into the ocean in which she felt she was drowning.

“I don’t know.” Mack breathed out, staying still in her seat and shifting her gaze to Finn, who once again pushed his glasses up his nose then cleared his voice.

“Mack, please don’t lie,” Finn begged weakly, the slow burning fire in her eyes intimidating him slightly. Mack shook her head and raised her fingers a little and shrugged once more.

“I’m not lying!” She was adamant. “I don’t know where he is,” she admitted. Mack had been there moments before her father was assassinated, but that was not something she was willing to share with them at that juncture. What she and her father, Cross, spoke about in that room on that day was theirs and theirs alone. No one was taking that away from her.

Marshal was growing markedly frustrated. He had been stonewalled. Cross was assassinated just hours before and while under their supervision. When his body was found by a guard, the guard ran off to tell someone and when he returned with more people, the body was had disappeared. The only reason they had made the assumption that he was dead was due to the amount of blood found in the room. Cross, nor anyone else, would be able to survive that that loss. When Marshal discovered that Mack was near the crime scene, he felt she must have been involved, and he would be damned if she continued to

stonewall him. Mack was going to tell them everything they needed to hear. Marshal refused to lose to the girl he always thought of as a naïve brat.

“Well, if you don’t know where he is, then tell us what you know. Be of use to us. Our time is very important,” Marshal grunted, demanding information from the young woman like he owned her.

Mack crossed her arms and narrowed her gaze. A small upturn in her lips did not tell much, but hinted that she had something up her sleeve.

“What do we get in return? A month’s paid vacation? A raise? I want to be a general, but I’ll earn that myself. What do we get out of it,” she asked again. Mack looked at both of them slyly, shifting her gaze back and forth and watching their reactions, mainly Marshal’s because she was able to read Finn like a book.

“Victory in the war is your return, my child. Don’t you see?” Marshal said in a decidedly patronizing manner, his fingers detangling only for his arms to cross over his chest as he sat back in his seat. Mack shook her head and shrugged, frowning her lips.

“I’ll tell you what I see. I see my friends dying. I see nothing but exhaustion from every exorcist I have come across. We’re tired, we’re understaffed, and if you want to win the war, you either have to treat us better or reach into your pockets and get us more exorcists. Buy out their souls before the Grandmaster does,” Mack stated matter-of-factly, attempting to turn the interrogation in her favor.

“Don’t play with us, sweetheart. You forget why you’re here. You get a three-day weekend, paid vacation for you and a friend. That’s all I’m allowing.”

“Then I don’t know anything.” Mack blinked with a straight face, looking back at Marshal before glancing over to Finn, who once again nudged his glasses up with his middle finger and swallowed hard. Marshal opened his mouth to speak, agitation clear in his eyes. He squeezed his fists so hard his knuckles inadvertently cracked.

“Listen here you bastard child—,” Marshal was on the verge of berating her, but Finn cut him off, the patient smile on her face prompting him to speak.

“Mack, my friend, you understand the serious consequences you face if you’re lying to us, yes? A case like this, you could be stripped of your uniform, you could face perjury

charges, possible imprisonment. I don't want to see you go down that road. In fact, many of us feel that way, especially if it's for—." He paused and looked down when he felt her eyes beginning to burn into his skin. The snap in Mack was almost as audible as her next words. Her smile dropped, her shoulders loosened, and her eyes dilated, but only Hendrix caught that part.

"Say it," She dared him in a deep tone, testing him as violet hues began flashing to the point that Hendrix, still uneasy in the room's shadows, had shifted when he noticed her patience officially expiring. "Go on, my friend. 'Especially if it's for?' Finish your sentence."

"A slimy, snake son of a bitch like Cross." Marshal finished Finn's sentence and redirected Mack's attention onto him. Mack found herself in a staring contest with one of the most powerful men in the Defiance. "He was a no-good, gambling alcoholic who fucked anything he could get close enough to touch. Don't think you're special just because you're the only kid to have claimed that you're his. I'm sure you have dozens of half-brothers, sisters, cousins. Finn, what are we even doing?" His agitation increased. "We're wasting our time. I'm convinced he never told her jack shit anyway."

Marshal made a move to get up. Though he never planned on it, he knew he had pissed her off and now was just waiting for a slip-up. But Mack stood before he could leave his seat. Her lip was twitching with disgust. She did a double-take, not because she was out of words, but because she was on the verge of tears.

"You think I don't know he's an asshole? I traveled with him for a year! I did all of his bidding and, yeah, he sucks, but he was also mine. I had something to call mine, goddamn it. I don't own get to call anything mine! He was my father, he was my dad. I loved him and he loved me, and no one—not even you, you smug sadistic cuck—can take that away from me. He was my dad. And it's a fucking load of crap that you drag me in here three hours after he's been killed to interrogate and devalue me while sully his name. One more thing: Cross was a sack of shit but he was the best general you had. No one was closer or more intertwined in the infiltration operation than he was. Nobody knew as much as he did, about everyone. He was a fuck, but he wasn't stupid."

She sniffled heavily, not giving them the satisfaction of seeing her cry, aside from few teardrops that fell onto the table as a result of her anger. Mack tucked a few strands of hair behind her ear and rubbed her nose.



“I’m done with this,” she scoffed with a shake of her head, pushing her chair in to give herself space and making her exit.

“Well, I’m not finished with you. Get back here,” Marshal barked as he stood up. Mack was already walking away, her face flush with frustration.

“Sit! Down!” Marshal’s command was ignored, and Mack slammed the door behind her. The young woman did not once turn around to look back.

Marshal whipped around to face Finn, who was attempting to conceal how proud he was of her without tipping off the inspector.

“Put everything on her. Mission after mission, send her to the middle of nowhere. That child does not get to act that way with her superiors. Bury her in work. That is her punishment. I want her gone in an hour,” Marshal hissed before departing, angrily, and yelling at anyone who got in his way.

Finn remained seated for a few minutes after Marshal left, taking his glasses off and rubbing the bridge of his nose. There was a long silence before he spoke again. This time, the ambiance of the room was much more tolerable, filled with a tired, pitiful silence that put everyone in the mood to sit down and recoup.

“Go see if she’s okay, Hendrix.” The young boy stiffened up a little, surprised at being addressed directly, usually remaining in the shadows for an indefinite period of time, scribing the scene for history as a mere onlooker.

“Just—just send me and Sparrow on the missions with her.” He cleared his throat, walking into the light and sitting where Mack had moments earlier. Hendrix was still able to smell the lingering scent of Mack’s argan oil shampoo.

“I can’t send you two on all of them. I need everyone spread out. There’s far too much going on for you three to be on missions as a group, especially since we know Mack is adept with handling things herself.”

Finn huffed, rubbing his face and closing his eyes to think for a moment. Hendrix shook his leg and quickly dragged his lip through his teeth before making an executive decision.

“Just me then.” He breathed, knowing he should not vacate Sparrow, his superior as his partner. But Mack needed someone right now. She needed him, and only him. And, if he played his cards right, then maybe she would tell him what Marshal does not know. Finn looked at Hendrix with a curious expression, wondering what the scribe’s motives were, but he figured that his intentions would change when he realized how she’s doing rather than what she’s storing when he gets her alone.

Finn nodded.

“Okay. I’ll have a mission for you two in 15 minutes. Pack warmly,” he warned before taking his exit. “Go, Hendrix. She needs someone right now.”

Hendrix nodded, and pulled a notebook out to scribble a few things down before forgetting the rest, then left for Mack’s room, hoping if anything to just be a shoulder on which to cry.

Hendrix stood in the back of the room, both per his superior’s request and the Scribe Code. Marshal and Finn were each seated in the comfortable, red chairs when their target shuffled in. Hendrix took a long, deep breath as Mack shuffled through the door. Exhaustion emanated from her eyes. She was spent and broken, more so than Hendrix had ever seen her. Having lost one of her best friends a couple of weeks prior, she just lost her father with whom she had recently reconnected with— it was written all over her face, buried between the laugh lines and early-onset crow’s feet.

“Please, have a seat, Mack.” Finn pushed his glasses up his nose and gestured to the chair across from him and Marshal. He was noticeably tense, uncomfortable with the situation at hand, and did not like how Mack became entangled in this shit show of a case. She’s been through enough already, and to be interrogated not even four hours later, Finn thought to himself. He would be surprised if she even bothered getting back to work after this.

“How are you holding up,” Finn asked her with genuine and palpable concern.

Mack took her time to reply, moving slowly to the seat she was assigned. Hendrix scoped her up and down, analyzing every inch of her. She was more dressed-down than on an average day, wearing a pair of baggy sweatpants that, despite tying to her hips, still managed to slip below and reveal the black boxer briefs she was sporting underneath. The

casual attire was punctuated with an old, thick, oversized hoodie that happened to once hang inside of Hendrix's wardrobe. She hadn't even bothered putting on shoes that morning, despite her room being just six floors above, and regardless of the Science Department's requirement that footwear must be worn at all times, particularly since they were always testing novel and highly-explosive concepts.

"I'm fine."

Her tone was flat and as unreadable as the expression on her face. Her hair had been a mess for weeks, but that day it was wet and neatly fixed into boxer braids. Hendrix swallowed a little louder than he meant to, and the slush of his spit slithering down his throat caught her attention. But the scribe was hidden completely in the blackness of the room, outside of the spotlight's illumination. Despite her inability to have seen him, she still saw him. Mack's sights were fixed where his eyes would be, and she allowed whatever she thought was in that corner to stare back at her, her violet hues pleading for a speedy trial, wanting nothing more than to be embraced in company and love, like that which she had just lost. They screamed for a break, but the sadness within her eyes hinted that rest would only come with death.

"You loo—"

"Let's cut the bullshit. Where is Cross?" Marshal cut off Finn curly, not moving his locked fingers from his face. Mack took her eyes off of the dark space occupied by Hendrix and looked back at the two men seated before her. The young woman shrugged shortly, jutting her bottom lip out a little to complete the 'I don't know' look. Her expression was stoic and a little unnerving in the silence of the room. Despite her stare Marshal was unimpressed.

"Soldier! Tell us where your father is at once. That is an order."

Another silence followed, but at the threat of enduring another incensed outburst, she answered, wanting to get the questioning over with as quickly as possible so that she could slink back into the ocean in which she felt she was drowning.

"I don't know." Mack breathed out, staying still in her seat and shifting her gaze to Finn, who once again pushed his glasses up his nose then cleared his voice.

“Mack, please don’t lie,” Finn begged weakly, the slow burning fire in her eyes intimidating him slightly. Mack shook her head and raised her fingers a little and shrugged once more.

“I’m not lying!” She was adamant. “I don’t know where he is,” she admitted. Mack had been there moments before her father was assassinated, but that was not something she was willing to share with them at that juncture. What she and her father, Cross, spoke about in that room on that day was theirs and theirs alone. No one was taking that away from her.

Marshal was growing markedly frustrated. He had been stonewalled. Cross was assassinated just hours before and while under their supervision. When his body was found by a guard, the guard ran off to tell someone and when he returned with more people, the body was had disappeared. The only reason they had made the assumption that he was dead was due to the amount of blood found in the room. Cross, nor anyone else, would be able to survive that that loss. When Marshal discovered that Mack was near the crime scene, he felt she must have been involved, and he would be damned if she continued to stonewall him. Mack was going to tell them everything they needed to hear. Marshal refused to lose to the girl he always thought of as a naïve brat.

“Well, if you don’t know where he is, then tell us what you know. Be of use to us. Our time is very important,” Marshal grunted, demanding information from the young woman like he owned her.

Mack crossed her arms and narrowed her gaze. A small upturn in her lips did not tell much, but hinted that she had something up her sleeve.

“What do we get in return? A month’s paid vacation? A raise? I want to be a general, but I’ll earn that myself. What do we get out of it,” she asked again. Mack looked at both of them slyly, shifting her gaze back and forth and watching their reactions, mainly Marshal’s because she was able to read Finn like a book.

“Victory in the war is your return, my child. Don’t you see?” Marshal said in a decidedly patronizing manner, his fingers detangling only for his arms to cross over his chest as he sat back in his seat. Mack shook her head and shrugged, frowning her lips.

“I’ll tell you what I see. I see my friends dying. I see nothing but exhaustion from every exorcist I have come across. We’re tired, we’re understaffed, and if you want to win the war, you either have to treat us better or reach into your pockets and get us more



exorcists. Buy out their souls before the Grandmaster does,” Mack stated matter-of-factly, attempting to turn the interrogation in her favor.

“Don’t play with us, sweetheart. You forget why you’re here. You get a three-day weekend, paid vacation for you and a friend. That’s all I’m allowing.”

“Then I don’t know anything.” Mack blinked with a straight face, looking back at Marshal before glancing over to Finn, who once again nudged his glasses up with his middle finger and swallowed hard. Marshal opened his mouth to speak, agitation clear in his eyes. He squeezed his fists so hard his knuckles inadvertently cracked.

“Listen here you bastard child—,” Marshal was on the verge of berating her, but Finn cut him off, the patient smile on her face prompting him to speak.

“Mack, my friend, you understand the serious consequences you face if you’re lying to us, yes? A case like this, you could be stripped of your uniform, you could face perjury charges, possible imprisonment. I don’t want to see you go down that road. In fact, many of us feel that way, especially if it’s for—.” He paused and looked down when he felt her eyes beginning to burn into his skin. The snap in Mack was almost as audible as her next words. Her smile dropped, her shoulders loosened, and her eyes dilated, but only Hendrix caught that part.

“Say it,” She dared him in a deep tone, testing him as violet hues began flashing to the point that Hendrix, still uneasy in the room’s shadows, had shifted when he noticed her patience officially expiring. “Go on, my friend. ‘Especially if it’s for?’ Finish your sentence.”

“A slimy, snake son of a bitch like Cross.” Marshal finished Finn’s sentence and redirected Mack’s attention onto him. Mack found herself in a staring contest with one of the most powerful men in the Defiance. “He was a no-good, gambling alcoholic who fucked anything he could get close enough to touch. Don’t think you’re special just because you’re the only kid to have claimed that you’re his. I’m sure you have dozens of half-brothers, sisters, cousins. Finn, what are we even doing?” His agitation increased. “We’re wasting our time. I’m convinced he never told her jack shit anyway.”

Marshal made a move to get up. Though he never planned on it, he knew he had pissed her off and now was just waiting for a slip-up. But Mack stood before he could leave his seat. Her lip was twitching with disgust. She did a double-take, not because she was out of words, but because she was on the verge of tears.

“You think I don’t know he’s an asshole? I traveled with him for a year! I did all of his bidding and, yeah, he sucks, but he was also mine. I had something to call mine, goddamn it. I don’t own get to call anything mine! He was my father, he was my dad. I loved him and he loved me, and no one—not even you, you smug sadistic cuck—can take that away from me. He was my dad. And it’s a fucking load of crap that you drag me in here three hours after he’s been killed to interrogate and devalue me while sully his name. One more thing: Cross was a sack of shit but he was the best general you had. No one was closer or more intertwined in the infiltration operation than he was. Nobody knew as much as he did, about everyone. He was a fuck, but he wasn’t stupid.”

She sniffled heavily, not giving them the satisfaction of seeing her cry, aside from few teardrops that fell onto the table as a result of her anger. Mack tucked a few strands of hair behind her ear and rubbed her nose.

“I’m done with this,” she scoffed with a shake of her head, pushing her chair in to give herself space and making her exit.

“Well, I’m not finished with you. Get back here,” Marshal barked as he stood up. Mack was already walking away, her face flush with frustration.

“Sit! Down!” Marshal’s command was ignored, and Mack slammed the door behind her. The young woman did not once turn around to look back.

Marshal whipped around to face Finn, who was attempting to conceal how proud he was of her without tipping off the inspector.

“Put everything on her. Mission after mission, send her to the middle of nowhere. That child does not get to act that way with her superiors. Bury her in work. That is her punishment. I want her gone in an hour,” Marshal hissed before departing, angrily, and yelling at anyone who got in his way.

Finn remained seated for a few minutes after Marshal left, taking his glasses off and rubbing the bridge of his nose. There was a long silence before he spoke again. This time, the ambiance of the room was much more tolerable, filled with a tired, pitiful silence that put everyone in the mood to sit down and recoup.

“Go see if she’s okay, Hendrix.” The young boy stiffened up a little, surprised at being addressed directly, usually remaining in the shadows for an indefinite period of time, scribing the scene for history as a mere onlooker.

“Just—just send me and Sparrow on the missions with her.” He cleared his throat, walking into the light and sitting where Mack had moments earlier. Hendrix was still able to smell the lingering scent of Mack’s argan oil shampoo.

“I can’t send you two on all of them. I need everyone spread out. There’s far too much going on for you three to be on missions as a group, especially since we know Mack is adept with handling things herself.”

Finn huffed, rubbing his face and closing his eyes to think for a moment. Hendrix shook his leg and quickly dragged his lip through his teeth before making an executive decision.

“Just me then.” He breathed, knowing he should not vacate Sparrow, his superior as his partner. But Mack needed someone right now. She needed him, and only him. And, if he played his cards right, then maybe she would tell him what Marshal does not know. Finn looked at Hendrix with a curious expression, wondering what the scribe’s motives were, but he figured that his intentions would change when he realized how she’s doing rather than what she’s storing when he gets her alone.

Finn nodded.

“Okay. I’ll have a mission for you two in 15 minutes. Pack warmly,” he warned before taking his exit. “Go, Hendrix. She needs someone right now.”

Hendrix nodded, and pulled a notebook out to scribble a few things down before forgetting the rest, then left for Mack’s room, hoping if anything to just be a shoulder on which to cry.

\*\*\*\*

---

# IMAGE CREDITS

Cover art: <https://pixabay.com/en/chair-interrogation-torment-2963765/>

Chapter art: <https://pixabay.com/en/man-woman-composing-dispute-2933991/>

Author bio: <https://www.facebook.com/Jaja.Perkins>