**Operant Conditioning**

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**Operant Conditioning**

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**Summary**

It may not have started out under the best of circumstances, but Clint and Phil's newfound dynamic has led them to mutual confessions of love and lust. Three months separate them and their agreed-upon collaring date - that's plenty of time to um... get to know one another better right? There may be a few bumps and bruises along the way, but hey, they're both quick learners. They can figure this out.
Operant Conditioning: A type of learning in which behavior is controlled by consequences.
Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

So, Clint's decided he loves bondage.

If you'd asked him about it before, even up through his and Phil's negotiations, he would've hesitated, would've been unsure of his answer. At best his feelings about it were meh, at worst they triggered all kinds of messed up shit, invoked feelings of being trapped and memories of torture sessions – both personal and professional.

Now though...

Hoo boy, now.

They'd come at it slow, of course. After that first scene together Phil has been extra careful, not hesitant or uncertain but attentive, considerate. They negotiate scenes beforehand and he's meticulous with his words, constantly showering Clint with praise. They tell each other they love each other constantly, like they've built up a surplus of the phrase after holding it in so long, and in general just bask in each other's presence. Phil takes him on dinner dates and they sleep together just the two of them, no power exchange in sight, and on other nights Phil puts him halfway down and razzes him playfully while pairing the teasing words with hugs and pets and kisses.

They get better, and they start to trust each other even more, and they both relax a little as the newness wears off. Clint had been worried that once the shininess started to dull things might fall apart a little, but really they only got better. They were learning more about each other, becoming accustomed to each other's kinks, their likes and dislikes, and all in all it's just more and more fantastic. He's not so tense anymore, doesn't worry so much about performing, and by the time the first month has gone by of their contracting period, Clint's happier than he'd ever thought he could be.

So it's nice for Clint to find that his kinks line up with Phil's better than he'd originally thought. That first time, that first scene with the cuffs had been a revelation – Phil was a clever bastard when he wanted to be and the choice of bondage tape was a perfect one. Clint was familiar with the stuff already because it was actually used quite often in medical; the soft, stretchy tape was perfect for keeping bandages in place. It only stuck to itself, not his skin, it breathed and flexed and didn't crush the tendons in his wrists. It was gentle pressure, being held instead of locked down, and the fact that Phil had picked the color with him in mind, always kissed his wrists and ankles before wrapping the tape tenderly around him was probably the best part.

From there they moved on to more intense ties. Phil hadn't lied when he said he preferred Shibari to traditional American bondage, focusing on patterns and elaborate designs instead of on restriction of movement and anchor points. He'd given Clint a well-loved paperback, pages dog-eared and spine cracked and soft that he carried around for several days, reading covertly on mission until he had to stuff it in the pocket of his cargoes and take out a Bolivian drug lord at five hundred yards with a single shot. Later he gave him links to a few websites, and not-so-subtly left out a few old-fashioned photos of male and female subs wrapped in beautiful ropes, their faces artfully removed from the pictures.

Clint's breath had caught in his throat and he'd been intrigued enough to run his fingertips over the glossy images with reverence. Leave it to Coulson to notice, and to plan the perfect scene to induct
him into the art of sensual bondage, to entice him into wanting more.

He comes out with two bundles of rope, one black and another dark, jewel purple, matching satin ribbon. Standing Clint at the end of the chaise lounge, completely naked while he himself is wearing those god-damned jeans of his again, he runs his hands all over his body, down his arms and his belly and his thighs. He slides the ribbons through his fingers in a way that makes Clint instantly hard, wraps them around his muscles and ties neat, efficient bows. The loops curl around the bulge of his biceps, the swell of his calves and thighs, the long tails of ribbon trailing down to tickle at him when they move as Phil circles round him like a predator and they're beautiful.

The whole time he keeps a steady murmur of appreciation, muttering in explicit detail – almost to himself – about how much he loves each part of Clint's body, kissing muscle groups as he goes. It sends Clint to a nice, floaty place, so he's calm and breathing deeply when Phil switches to the ropes, choosing the black and starting his tie just below Clint's heavy pectoral muscles. The tails cross over his spine, run up and over his shoulders, and the way Phil sinks into it, the way he moves slowly and methodically and entirely sure of himself plays to Clint's competence kink harder than anything has so far.

It's beautiful to watch, the way his Dom falls into the process, becomes consumed by it as he builds a neat pentagram over Clint's chest. The harness is snug, thick and sturdy between his shoulder blades like an army pack, a familiar weight. His arms are free and he still has nearly his full range of movement, but the way Phil looks at him when he's done puts any sort of logistical thought out of Clint's mind. Tucking his fingers beneath the bottom strap, his Dom jerks roughly and Clint's dick jumps, and then he's pulling him around to look in the mirror and Clint is stunned by what he sees. The ribbons gleam in the glow of the lamplight, the ropes are dark against his skin, every strap of muscle highlighted, and there's a hunger on Phil's face that Clint has never seen before. The man's pupils are blown, huge and dark and intense, and he's staring at Clint like he's the last drink of water in the desert. Clint actually kind of gets it – he looks fucking hot like this and the chest harness actually feels hella-good, like the straps and reinforcements of his tac vest – but this is very obviously Phil's thing. The process of creating the patterns, the meticulous detail involved in the knotwork, the touching and the tracing line work; he's turned Clint into art and the man himself is a damned Van Gogh.

He's enjoying the view himself when Phil suddenly strips out of his jeans, his erection springing free to slap against his belly before he pounces.

He hauls Clint back to the chaise by the harness, tight but not painful, his weight all evenly distributed, and the sheer mastery of the ropework making arousal coil hot and tight in the pit of his stomach. Phil thumbs his nipples between the ropes, bites at his lower lip and swallows his whine before sitting back against the Lounger with his legs spread wide, feet flat on the floor on either side. Dragging Clint down to straddle his hips, he gives them both a few rough strokes together, the calluses on his fingers and the heel of his palm catching on sensitive skin just so, and Clint can't do anything but whimper and tumble into the sensation.

He ends up riding Phil's dick for what feels like an eternity, until Phil commands him to put his hands behind his head and shoves him backward, until Clint has no hope of keeping his own balance and has to lean all his weight into the harness. Phil holds him up by the clean, straight lines of the pentagram, his own biceps bulging under the strain and sweat glistening at the hollow of his throat as he fucks up into Clint's body, hitting the happy place inside him with every stroke, the angle absolutely perfect and he feels like he's coming apart, like the ribbons and ropes are the only thing keeping the pieces together.
The sensations build until they're nearly unbearable and Clint's babbling incoherently, begging for permission to let go. Tears are streaming down his cheeks and precum streaming down his cock by the time Phil snarls his assent, panting with the effort of supporting Clint's weight and the driving pace of his own hips. He manages it without a touch and his Dom follows right after, the both of them shaking apart like they've shattered, and it takes nearly fifteen minutes for them to catch their breath. Clint flops forward onto Phil's chest and kisses every bit of the man that he can reach, and won't let him take the ropes and ribbons off until he fully recovers some two hours later.

Yeah, he pretty much loves this stuff.

Chapter End Notes

Inspired by the Star Harness demonstrated by Watts the Safeword - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0r6bHFG6qQ
Chapter 2

It really is the best of things – being on his knees. It's one of Clint's absolute favorite acts of submission, settling down at a Dom's feet and letting himself breathe for a few minutes. It's an enormous weight off his shoulders, permission to drop his guard, to dial back on his senses, the hyper-awareness that life and SHIELD demand of him.

He hasn't had that in a long time – even when he'd knelt for the professionals it hadn't been like this, like it is now. Hadn't been submission freely given. He'd... he'd been commanded to it, forced down for the pleasure of men who hadn't earned it from him, and he hadn't gotten any of the relief he'd craved from the gesture. Instead he'd been filled with anger, with bitterness and with the intense, bone-deep sorrow of thinking he'd never find someone who'd understand him.

Add to that the fact that he was painfully, irrevocably in love with his untouchable, incredible handler and well, it kinda took all the fun out of it all.

Only, turns out, not so untouchable.

Not so... not so impossible.

Because now all of a sudden he has Phil, really has him, and the man tells him he loves him every day. They're still Barton and Coulson, still a badass handler/asset team, but now they're Clint and Phil too. They text each other and they talk and Clint hangs out in his office more than he ever did before and it's perfect. They go on a date or two; mostly lunches snagged here and there when they can – they are still active SHIELD agents after all – and slowly they become a different kind of partners, like, actual boyfriends.

Clint's never had that before either.

It's perfect, it's wonderful, but it's not the best thing.

Cause... cause they're Phil and his boy now too, and that, that is the best thing.

Half the time he doesn't even have to ask, he can just... kneel. Just sink right down and fall.

It's awesome.

Like the time he comes over to Phil's apartment on a regular old Wednesday night. He isn't sure why Agent Coulson – infamous for pulling all-nighters and looking fresh as a daisy the next morning – is home early, doesn't really care. No, instead he just rushes through his after-action report, cuts his rangetime in half, and hightails it across the city. He makes the door at the same time Phil's delivery guy does, and he catches him before he can knock, hands him a couple of twenties and sends him away again.

He's not embarrassed to admit that he takes a minute before he knocks himself. Waits for his heart to stop hammering and his grin to dull just a little bit so he doesn't look like he's raging on molly when Phil opens the door. He straightens his jacket, runs his fingers through his hair, but screw it, he wants to look nice. His Dom always looks nice, well put-together... Clint's hot, but he wants to try a little bit too.

He must do a good job of it because Phil visibly brightens when he opens the door and finds him standing there.
"Moonlighting with Lucky Dragon now?" he asks with a little half-smile, leaning against the jam and looking him up and down.

Clint laughs, ducks his head and rubs the back of his neck, suddenly blushing and bashful. He loves that about Phil, loves that he feels safe enough with him to be vulnerable, to be honest.

"Was hoping you wouldn't mind some company," he shrugs.

Phil's grin widens into a full-blown smile and he reaches through the door with both hands, grabs the sack of Chinese with one and a fistfull of Clint's t-shirt with the other, dragging him across the threshold and into the apartment. He's kissing him before he even gets the door closed, strong and firm but chaste and sweet, rounded off with three quick pecks that have Clint laughing into his mouth.

"Hi," Phil murmurs, walking them backward into the living room, their fingers tangled together.

"Hey Boss."

It's halfway between Phil and Sir, halfway between up and down, and that's another thing that Clint never thought he would have. Now that he's with Phil it feels like two parts of himself have come together, that he's no longer two halves of a person; the badass, smart-mouthed agent and the submissive. He can be both, can be all of himself, and Phil's so damn good at reading him he doesn't even have to think about it.

This is Clint's opening shot, alerting Phil to the state of his head, and now all he has to do is relax and let Phil respond.

"You're off early," Phil hums, tugging him down onto the couch beside him and leaning forward to set the food out on the table. "Playing hooky?"

"Shouldn't I be asking you that Sir?"

Phil shoots him a look, a fond, exasperated warning before he jerks his chin at the stack of reports on the end table beside him.

"Working from home tonight," he replies, pulling out waxy paper cartons and a little bag of chopsticks and sauce packets; orange and soy and hot mustard. He hadn't known Clint was coming but when Phil ordered Chinese he ordered enough for two days' worth of leftovers, so there was plenty to go around. He puts crispy duck and chow mein in front of him, takes sweet and sour pork for himself. "But I needed a break – you make for a welcome distraction."

Clint feels his cheeks heat, doesn't respond. Normally he would flirt, bat his eyelashes, but he's in a strange, quiet place in his head today and he's not sure how far he wants to take all this, not sure where he wants it to go. Phil doesn't push though, doesn't turn it to an easy sexual tease, but he doesn't back off either, doesn't apologize or shy away. Instead he turns on an episode of Dog Cops and sits back on the couch, close enough that his thigh presses down the length of Clint's, and he settles too, eases back and munches his noodles, watches Sergeant Whiskers solve a catnapping against his better judgment.

Half the episode passes in companionable silence and Clint drifts, hazy and lazy. Phil reaches over to steal a few of his potstickers before putting his chopsticks away, wiping his hands on a napkin and pulling his paperwork back into his lap. The noise from the television doesn't seem to be bothering him, nor does Clint's presence at his side, so he sits quietly and wallows in the closeness.

For a while it's good, great even, but he starts to feel strangely restless somehow, almost like he's
resentful of the attention his Sir is lavishing on the paperwork in his lap. Weird, since Clint really isn't the whiny sort, and he knows that isn't exactly right, but it takes him a while to puzzle it out.

He just... he wants something in the middle.

It makes sense – that's where his head is at after all, somewhere in the middle. Not quite up, not quite down. He doesn't want to play exactly, doesn't want a scene, but he doesn't want to be ignored either, doesn't want to be treated as Phil's colleague or Phil's asset.

He wants to be Phil's boy.

He's not sure he can explain that though, so he doesn't try.

Instead he goes to the corner where Phil's reading chair sits, a monstrous, cushy, leather-covered thing that's as comfortable as it looks, and plucks his purple kneeling pillow from behind it. Phil must be tracking him surreptitiously because he can feel the Dom's eyes on him, must be paying attention because his feet are spread wide enough for Clint to deposit the pillow between them when he comes back to the couch. He doesn't speak, doesn't ask, so Clint doesn't either, just goes to his knees, finds a comfortable position, and sighs. Phil tucks his knees in a little closer, so that his shins are pressed down Clint's sides and leaves him there, leaves him there to kneel and just breathe.
Another time it's different.

Clint and Phil have both come off a mission, and it wasn't bad but it wasn't good either. Frustrating, longer than it should have been, more involved. Just... tiring, the kind of tiring with no payout where he's left with all kinds of frenetic energy zinging across his nerves, buzzing in his hands and his feet, and his knee goes a mile a minute on the flight back to base where he's strapped to the bench of the quinjet.

Phil notices, of course he notices.

That just might be the man's superpower.

Noticing, and not being noticed.

Certainly no one notices the way his hand curls around Clint's knee and squeezes, too intimate for work, for the cramped, claustrophobic belly of the plane. He presses him down, holds him still until some of the crackling adrenaline burns itself out, banks down to coals before he lets go. It's good, he needs it, but very very suddenly it's not enough and he wants more.

But he doesn't ask.

He's irritable, grumpy, and he doesn't want to give that attitude to Phil – not as his handler or his friend or his Dom.

So he goes to the range.

He always goes to the range when he comes off a mission like this, when he doesn't get to take the shot and feels all that energy tighten up inside him, feels like he is the bow, all that coiled tension and power and forward motion held back, held back, held back and never fired, just released back to base so slowly and quietly it hurts.

It's a physical ache in him that not even the other snipers can quite understand, and there's no cure for it but to shoot until his arms shake.

Phil pages him to his office before it gets that far.

And that...

That kinda pisses him off.

He knows he hasn't done anything wrong, knows he hadn't fucked up enough for a reprimand, so there's no reason the man's pulled him off range time. He knows Clint's habits, knows his patterns, so he knows why he's down there shooting, why he needs it. It's only been an hour since debrief – that's not even half of Clint's normal come-down time.

So he's annoyed, irritable, huffy when he steps into Phil's office and the man doesn't even look up at him. He's seated at his desk, his head bent over his paperwork, no doubt going over the after-action reports submitted by their team just an hour ago. Typically Clint would fall into easy parade-rest;
today he stands behind the guest chair hip-shot, with his arms crossed over his chest and a scowl on his face.

"Come here."

Clint blinks, stunned, because that's not Phil's handler voice, that's his Dom voice, and he hasn't used it here at work before, hasn't commanded him.

It sends a shiver down his spine and a spark of anger skittering through his belly.

But that's stupid though, doesn't make sense.

Doesn't mean he's not still reluctant, doesn't mean he comes eagerly.

No, he shuffles, hesitates, drags his feet, pouts as he crosses the floor and rounds the desk, only to stop dead in his tracks.

There's another kneeling pillow at Phil's side.

It's blue this time, disguised as a throw pillow that matches the hideously comfortable couch against the wall, but fuck it's a kneeling pillow and it's one he's never seen before, which means it's for him...

Clint lets out a sound like a whine that he hadn't known was stuck inside him, but then Phil's fingers are curling around the nape of his neck and gripping him tight, scruffing him like a kitten and pressing him down hard. It's sharp and grounding in a good way, doesn't hurt but acknowledges and allows Clint's fight, the minor resistance he throws up in spite of himself. He growls and pushes back into the hold but lets it guide him, shudders in Phil's grasp.

"Down."

The command is dark, Phil's voice deep and gravelly, and it's like a rubber band being snipped – all the anger and irritation and tension going slack, all the fight and fury bleeding out of him. Clint's knees hit the pillow and it's like salvation, like instant pain-relief. His shoulders round and slump, his head falls forward, and Phil's grip on his neck loosens, lets him go. He shifts a tiny bit, settles his weight evenly and breathes, and the greatest sense of peace he's ever felt on base sweeps through him.

A moment later Phil's fingers creep into his hair, pet him soothingly until he slumps to the side, his face pressed against Phil's knee and the crisp wool of his slacks.

"Good boy."

And oh, there it is.

There's that sweet spot, that good place where everything's alright. He doesn't worry about the fact that he's on his knees at headquarters, that anyone could walk in on them like this at any moment. He doesn't worry about the op, that hadn't gone wrong but hadn't gone right, had been like one massive cockblock leaving him with a raging case of sniper's blueballs. This, this right here is good, is perfect, and damn Phil for knowing it but Clint isn't worried about the man rubbing it in his face either.

He's never been one to say 'I told you so.'

Besides, it's not like he doesn't have a stake in this too.
He ends up humming The Civil Wars all afternoon, one hand in Clint's hair until his paperwork is finished.

Chapter End Notes

**The Civil Wars** - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibENEQXnP_E
They still have things they're working on, the both of them. It's hard to leave behind so many years of uncertainty and heartache so completely. Phil had been right when he'd said they both needed some reassurances, that they both needed to see and hear and experience the other enjoying the relationship. It's a bit silly, letting what's normal or popular or common among other Doms and subs to affect their relationship, and they do their best not to let it happen, but sometimes it still creeps in on them.

Two months in Clint's on an op with Sitwell that goes wrong hard and goes wrong fast. They lose three agents, Jasper lands himself a concussion, and Clint gets nabbed, drugged, and buried alive when the building blows. They dig him out but he's practically fucking frantic by the time daylight starts shining through the bricks hemming him in. The drugs have adrenaline rushing through his system and his brain reacts to the pounding of his heart and the spike of energy the same way it does to any fight-or-flight response – tells him to grab his shit and get out – but he can't, and it builds and builds and builds inside of him until he screams.

In the end he's so hoarse he can't speak to guide Jasper's excavation efforts, has to take a pipe to the walls of his little concrete grave to make some noise. He manages to get half a handle on his shit in front of his remaining team members, but he's hurt and he's shaken even worse than that. His entire body aches, badly bruised and covered in little cuts and scrapes, and all he wants, all he needs in the damn world is to see his Dom.

He's been a hell of a lot closer to dying than this, but in the moment it certainly doesn't feel like it.

He's so caught up in his head that he doesn't realize they're taking him to medical until he's there. Nurses come at him from every side, shine penlights in his eyes and prod for broken bones, ask all the questions he knows how to fake the answers to. One of them, a sub named Javier that Clint's always liked, looks at him with a frown and puts his hand on Clint's wrist, and he knows what the man is thinking – *sub in distress*.

It's right then and there that Clint snaps his mouth shut and refuses to open it again.

Jasper is in the bed next to him having his concussion graded and his forehead stitched, but he's eyeing Clint like he knows exactly what's going on, and the moment the nurses finish trickling out to amend their files or report to their physicians his cell phone is in his hand, magicked back from wherever he'd managed to hide it on their arrival. That's all it takes for Clint to unhook himself, to slither out of the hospital sheets and the IV's and hoist himself up into the vents, Jasper cursing his name after him.

Phil's got one foot out the door when Clint drops into his office from above. Hand on the knob, he actually jumps a little when Clint's boots hit the floor, startles as he turns back to him, and really that tells Clint more than his words do.

"You're supposed to be in medical," he says, sounding stupidly surprised. "Jasper just texted me that you were..."

The next thing Clint knows, before he can even open his mouth to reply, he's lunged forward and wrapped his arms around the man in a hug, warm and comforting and horribly, horribly painful against all his bumps and bruises. Clint hisses, trembles, and Phil immediately pulls back from him, tugs out of his embrace and holds him at arms' length which seems to hurt just as much.
"Oh baby," Phil whispers, sounding strangled and choked as one hand comes up to cup Clint's cheek carefully. "What happened to you?"

And well that's all it takes.

The floodgates open and tears start streaming down his face, sobs jarring ribs that are very likely cracked but that he hadn't stuck around to have X-rayed. He grabs at Phil's sides, at the lapels of his suit jacket, suddenly desperate for contact and he can't tell which one of them is shaking but he needs this, needs Phil, needs to be touched and he can't...

Phil curses under his breath and then he's pulling Clint toward the couch, sitting down and guiding Clint to his knees between his feet. He's hiccupping and sobbing, his fingers clutching at Phil's shins, but his Dom somehow knows exactly what to do. Taking Clint's head between his hands, he drags him forward and brackets him in with his thighs, pressed his legs tight against Clint's ears. It muffles all the sounds around him, closes off his lines of sight, and suddenly the only thing left is Phil, is being at his feet, surrounded by him. He's back and he's home and he's safe, and if Phil Coulson has anything to say about it everything is going to be ok.

It's not that easy of course.

His body is still freaking out and his thoughts are racing too fast to even be recognizable, so instead of fighting it he just lets himself feel, lets himself cry until he can't anymore, until his voice is completely gone and he's sagging against his Dom, letting Phil take all of his weight. Phil keeps up the pets that they both love so much and never talk about, just stroking his fingers through the hair on the back of Clint's head and keeping him hemmed in, murmuring quiet nonsense the whole time.

He's stopped crying and started a hard, full-body tremble by the time the door to Phil's office clicks, the harsh light of the hallway spilling in.

"Oh thank god," Jasper huffs quietly, and Clint's shoulders sag just a little bit more. "I'm so sorry Phil; I was caught in medical and they took my phone..."

"It's all right Jasper," Phil murmurs, his fingers curling around the nape of Clint's neck. "It wasn't your fault."

Clint makes a choked squeaking sound, because Phil's right, about more than just this.

None of it was Jasper's fault; not the op going south, not his getting blown up in that bunker, not his sudden panicked drop or his escaping medical.

He doesn't want him thinking that it is.

"As long as he's ok."

"He will be," Phil replies, and it sounds like a promise. "Go home Jazz. You've obviously got a concussion; put in for two days stand-down... that's what we'll be doing."

"Don't worry about me Phil, I'm fine. Take care of your boy. Be well Clint."

And then he's gone.

"Can you stand love?" Phil hums, stroking the top of Clint's head. "I want to take you home now."

Home.
Yeah.

Yeah, that...

That sounds good.

"Sir please," he chokes, throat raw and voice a sand-scraped whisper. "I need..."

"I know sweet boy," Phil murmurs, tucking his fingers under Clint's chin and tipping his face up to press a chaste kiss to his forehead. "I know what you need. I'm going to take such good care of you."

And Clint's heart kind of breaks.

Tears roll silently down his cheeks the whole way back to Phil's apartment, the junior agent driving them home carefully minding her own business, and his Dom's arm around his shoulders keeping him tucked in close against his side. It's everything that he'd dreamed of as a teenager, just coming into his orientation, already hurt and praying for someone, anyone to care. Phil ushers him into the apartment and sits him down on a kitchen chair, crouches to remove his combat boots, and kisses him on the way back up.

"Come on," he says quietly, pulling Clint to his feet again. "You need a bath."

Clint flinches, ducks his head as shame sweeps through him. Of course he does, he should've... he's filthy. Covered in dust and dirt, rubble in his hair, reeking like ash and sweat and cordite, skin streaked with blood and grime...

He's a mess and he's come to his Dom like this, like...

" 'M sorry," he whimpers, his throat aching, barely able to form the words. "Shouldn't have..."

"Don't even think about it," Phil warns, catching Clint's wrist as he tries to stumble backwards. "Come here."

The next thing he knows Phil has wrapped him up in the hug he'd tried for the first time, holding him as gently as possible and cradling him against his own body. Clint gasps, sucks in a strangled sob and tries to fight, because Phil is still in one of his nice, pressed suits and...

"Don't fight me baby."

Clint freezes, stunned by Phil's broken whisper, the sheer pleading in his voice.

"Please," he murmurs, and this time it's definitely the both of them trembling against each other, like they could shake apart. "Clint please. Jasper pinged me when you hit medical, and he told me what happened, and then you... you're dropping baby, and you're hurt. I know you're not helpless, I know you don't need it, but baby please, just... could you let me take care of you tonight? Just this one time, could you let me let me..."

Oh.

Oh...

Jesus, forget a broken heart, Clint thinks his whole damn world just shattered.

No one's ever...

"Please," he whispers brokenly, tears still hot in his eyes. "Sir please. I want... I didn't think you'd..."
"Oh Clint," Phil says sadly, turning his head to press a lingering kiss to Clint's jaw, to murmur in his ear. "Sounds like we both missed something."

"'M sor..."

"No, don't apologize sweet boy. Neither of us were sure, both of us held something back. There's no fault here. But... just so we're clear here Clint... It would be a privilege to be permitted to care for you tonight. May I do that for you sweet boy?"

It's the formality of it that seals the deal for Clint. Even if it hadn't been something he wanted with his whole heart, wanted desperately, the quiet, formal pleading in his Dom's voice is enough to break him. He can't understand how Phil wants to do this for him, how he could possibly want to lavish all this attention on a sub who's done nothing to earn the pleasure. He's not even sure what Phil has in mind, but the thought of being bathed, or fed, or just held and gentled down from that fearful adrenaline edge is very nearly more than he can bear. It's everything he's ever wanted, everything he'd been sure he'd never receive, and yet here is this man before him – this perfect, badass, competent man – who loves and cares enough to give it to him.

"Yes please Sir," he chokes, and he can hear the desperation, the begging in his own voice over the hoarse rasp of his ruined throat.

"Good boy."

Phil takes him by the hand and leads him into the master bath like a lost child, which seems appropriate because that's very, very close to how Clint feels. Sitting him down on the counter, he kisses his forehead before reaching into the top of the linen cabinet and bringing down a wicker basket filled with bottles and little plastic tubs. Clint doesn't have the energy to be curious, just watches silently as Phil starts the water running in the jacuzzi tub, turns on the jets. He perks up a bit when the man takes something purple the size and shape of a softball from the basket, unwraps the crinkly cellophane and drops it into the tub.

"The only good kind of bomb," he explains as Clint watches the thing explode when it hits the water, hissing and fizzing merrily and turning the bubbling water pale violet and filling the damp air with the scent of lemon and verbena.

"Fatbomb," he mumbles, staring mesmerized as the bath bomb dissolves and beside him his Dom chuckles.

"Touche. Be a good boy for me and I'll make you some tomorrow."

"Really?"

Phil smiles at him softly, strokes his cheek.

"Really really. Come on sweetheart, let's get you cleaned up."

Phil hands him carefully into the bath, supporting him until he's safely seated leaning against the reclining back of the tub. He makes sure there's a towel folded behind Clint's neck and that the jets are all positioned to do their best work on his muscles before taking a seat on the side of the jacuzzi and picking up a soft terry-cloth face towel.

"Close your eyes sweet boy," he murmurs, pouring gel from another bottle onto the cloth. "I've got you."

And Clint does, exhausted and strangely heartsore, and so terribly, terribly aware of how lucky he is
that it hurts. His entire body aches but not nearly as much as his psyche, the jets rumbling along bruised muscles and the hot water stinging scrapes and cuts, his mind trembling from having been lost and buried alive, so far away from his Dom that he thought he'd never...

This will pass – he knows that. Somewhere in the back of his mind he's prepared for this kind of situation, has stood and faced death alone countless times and walked away with a smug fucking smirk on his face. This is the first time with Phil though, the first time since Phil, and he's never been so in touch, so in tune with his submissive side before that he's come tumbling down like this.

But Phil's here, Phil's got him, and he's safe.

His Dom never once takes his hands off of him completely. He's gentle as he washes the filth and grime from Clint's body, careful and attentive. He starts with his fingers and actually does each one, the spaces in between and the center of his palm before moving on to his wrist, then his elbow. The cloth moves up and over his shoulders, across his throat and behind his ears, and Phil cradles his jaw in his hands to carefully scrub his face.

It's strangely new and scary to close his eyes for Phil like this, even though they've talked about it, even though they've done a little bit of verbal blindfolding before. There'd still been light in his little stone tomb so he's not panicking, not having flashbacks or freaking out, but it's super intense and the physical sensation of Phil's touch seems ratcheted up by a hundred. It's soothing and unnerving at the same time, right up until Phil starts murmuring to him and he stops fighting the inevitable drop.

"I told you I liked body worship," he murmurs, his hands working down Clint's chest. "I'm an atypical Dom Clint – I like taking care of my sub. I like bathing them, feeding them, touching them. Giving them all the things they want. I like spoiling them. I've wanted to do this for you for a long time."

Sliding his hand down Clint's leg, he gently lifts his knee to get at his thigh, his shin, careful but clinical, not sexual at all. He's surprised by how much he appreciates that. He's just so damned tired – hell if Phil weren't here he'd probably slip and drown in this stupid, perfect tub, the water hot and silky and soothing against his aches.

"I'd give you the moon on a chain Clint," Phil says quietly, finishing up his feet. "Whether you asked for it or not."

Clint feels Phil draw nearer, his eyes squeezed tight shut, then feels the man cradle his chin in his hand, press his cheek to Clint's.

"It makes me happy to take care of you," he murmurs in Clint's ear. "It feels good knowing that I can. Seeing it with my own eyes, feeling it with my own hands. I love you Clint."

He opens his eyes – he couldn't keep them closed if he wanted to this time. He needs to see, needs to see the honesty on Phil's face, the truth in his eyes and he's not disappointed. His hands come up to clutch at Phil's wrists, his chest hitching as he starts to pant, to sob silently, but Phil's cupping his face between his hands and peppering him with kisses and he's ok, he knows he's ok.

"I love you," he whispers, his lips forming the words even though no sound makes it past his swollen throat, but Phil's mouth is on his and his eyes are shining and he knows.

**AVAVA**

Phil ends up stripping down to his boxers and sitting on the edge of the tub, his legs dangling into the water on either side of Clint's ribs. He washes his hair and rinses it carefully, then lets him soak in the
hot water and rumbling jets for a good half hour without a word passed between them. He takes a tub of something from the little wicker bath basket that smells incredible and dollops it into his wet hair, and spends the entire time finger-combing it through his locks, massaging his scalp and humming quietly under his breath and it's perfect.

Clint's loose and loopy by the time his Dom drains the tub, helps him to his feet and gently towels him dry. He sits him back up on the sink again and carefully spreads antibiotic ointment over each of his cuts and scrapes, taping up the worst of them. Then Clint gets swaddled into socks and sweats and the Rangers hoodie he's totally commandeered, and put on his kneeling pillow at Phil's feet beside the stove.

Perfect.

He doesn't have to ask, doesn't have to speak, which is good because it feels like he's swallowed glass. He's given up, given in, given *everything* to his Dom and completely turned himself over, and it's a warm, safe, easy place he's floating in as Phil putters around the kitchen above him. He crouches down and wraps Clint's hands around a hot ceramic mug, presses a fleeting kiss to his lips and tells him to sip slow, and the tea doctored with lemon and honey soothes the very last of the pain he's in and warms him from the inside out.

He doesn't know why he'd kept this so quiet, this aching want in him for aftercare. In the back of his head he does – he'd thought he hadn't deserved it, hadn't earned it, thought for sure that there was no possible way Phil could want this too – but now it's so very easy to see how wrong he'd been. His Dom is looks looser and calmer himself, more content than Clint's ever really seen him. He's very obviously enjoying himself just like he said, has slipped into a nice, quiet place of his own. Clint wouldn't have thought it possible but he seems even more confident now, moves and acts and speaks with even more surety, a low thrum of Dominance in his tone that puts a shiver down Clint's spine.

He floats.

Phil continues his humming, like he doesn't realize that he's doing it, chopping and whipping and sizzling and stirring, his fingers constantly creeping into Clint's hair to pet him, until Clint's flagging, leaning full-body limp against Phil's lower leg as he finishes off whatever it is he's cooking. It seems like far more effort than it's worth to stand and walk to the dining table when Phil moves his pillow over there so he crawls, slips across the floor on his hands and knees to settle back in at his Dom's feet. He can hear the man's sharp intake of breath but doesn't feel humiliated, doesn't feel objectified here in this place. He feels... *shiny*, proud, like he's done something to please his Dom and that's just the best thing there is.

Then Phil's sitting down sideways at the table with Clint between his feet and it just gets better.

He's made a soft, custardy french toast with real vanilla bean, caramelized bananas and a sticky maple-peanut-butter sauce, and Clint actually blinks, surprised when Phil offers him a bite from his fingers, no fork between them.

His Dom just smiles softly.

"Hungry sweet boy?"

And well, what can he do but whimper and lick his lips, take the morsels delicately from Phil's hand. It's lightly sweet and not too heavy, and he spends longer than he probably ought sucking the sticky traces of each bite from his Dom's fingers, shivering when Phil traces the rough pad of his thumb across his mouth. He feeds him tenderly until he's full and then takes him to the couch, puts Clint's head in his lap and turns on more MonsterQuest.
He lets Clint hold on to him, lets him grip at his wrist and his knee so tight there will be bruises the next day and doesn't say a word, just gives and lets him take. He falls asleep like that, only to be shuffled sleepily to the bed in the middle of the night and spooned until he drifts off again.

The next day Phil lets him kneel at his feet while he makes him chocolate fatbombs as promised, then lays him out spread-eagle on the bed in his purple bondage cuffs and feeds him from his lips and his fingers. If he then also spends the next hour licking smudges of fudgey cocoa from Clint's skin until he's a writhing, gasping mess, well that's just his Dom's prerogative.

He's never loved anyone so much it hurts before, and he's never felt so loved in return.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

*I've got something for you.*

Clint bites his lip, chokes back a whimper because shit, he's on the range, and Lewis is in the lane right next to him putting together a Cheytac M300, definitely close enough to hear him. Not fair, not fair for his Dom to play dirty like that when he knows Clint's still at work, helping Hutch the Weapons Master design a new long distance obstacle course.

He knows what he does to Clint by now.

Making his excuses, he checks the sniper rifle he'd been using back into the weapons' cage and high-tails it down to his bunk, intent on grabbing a pair of sweats and some sneakers. His clothes have been slowly migrating over to Phil's apartment but he hasn't moved in, and every night he spends there he hopes Phil will ask, but it hasn't happened yet. It will, he believes that, and in the back of his mind he knows that Phil is probably the better judge of when the time is right, but he's excited for that day to come.

He's maybe kind of hoping the thing Phil has for him is a key.

"Do I get three guesses?" he purrs by way of greeting as soon as the call connects, phone held between his ear and his shoulder. He's delighted by Phil's dry huff on the other end – he loves making his Dom laugh. He can hear background noise behind him, women chattering gaily, the tell tale *cha-ching* of a cash register and he wants a hint. "Where are you?"

"Joanne Fabrics," Phil replies calmly, and heh, ok, not what he was expecting. "Would you like to play with me tonight sweet boy?"

Oh.

*Oh.*

*That* kind of something...

"Yes please Sir," he answers immediately, his voice instinctively going soft and submissive.

He's not disappointed – far from it. He's greedy now, excited, curious. He loves his scenes with Phil, every one of them more than the last. Turns out his Dom is a man of *many* hidden talents, and Clint has been enjoying the fruits of all of them.

"So eager," Phil chuckles quietly, warmly, and it makes Clint go soft and gooey on the inside, no longer bothered by the man's gentle teasing like he was that first time. Something to be said for the balance of punishment and reward – Phil's fond, playful words always come with good things attached; hugs and strokes and kisses. "You'll beat me back."

"Probably," Clint admits, slinging his bag over his shoulder and pulling the door of his barracks shut behind him. "Subway only takes twenty minutes."

Phil hums and Clint's feet slow, waiting for the go-ahead, waiting for his directive.
"You'll have five minutes on me then," he says finally, and Clint can practically see him shrugging the sleeve of his suit jacket up to check his watch. "I have another stop to make. Well, that's fine, head that way and I'll meet you at the apartment. I left you something."

And that's it.

He ends the phone call without further instruction, without a goodbye, and Clint gets the sudden impression that his Dom is a little bit nervous, which, instead of making him wary, makes him all the more excited.

They're going to have fun tonight.

It's excitement and anticipation that carry him all the way to Phil's apartment, his bag held carefully in front of his hips just in case. He takes the stairs up to Phil's second-level apartment three at a time and isn't surprised when there's no envelope taped to the door because it's Phil Coulson, but he's Hawkeye. He spies the dark-colored envelope tucked deep inside Jim's branches – the potted ficus Phil keeps next to the door.

When he fishes it out and tears the top open a small silver key and a note fall out, and his heart stops in his chest.

For you Clint. You have my full consent to use this key at any time you choose, and while the choice is entirely yours I hope you'll consider making a permanent move of it. Let yourself in sweet boy, and make yourself at home. I'll be here soon.
- Phil

Home.

Phil's said it before, but Clint had always just thought it was a figure of speech, home meaning his home like he'd called it a hundred times before. Now it feels like he's calling it their home and how...

Jesus, how he'd known that this was exactly what Clint needed he'd would never understand.

The guy's just kind of perfect like that.

Still, his hands shake as he inserts the key in the lock, hears the tell-tale click of the inner security mechanisms releasing when his fingerprint is accepted by the ID pad discreetly tucked beneath the doorknob. He's walked into Phil's apartment dozens of times by now, but it feels entirely new and different this time, and yet entirely the same. The sense of settling, of belonging, of acceptance and relief and that warm, safe feeling deep inside his chest is the same as it always is, and Clint, who has never really had a true home, wonders if that is exactly what the word means.

Phil finds him standing in the middle of dining room, where he can see nearly the entirety of the apartment three minutes later, unable to move or speak or even really breath.

"Clint?"

The next thing he knows he's got his arms around his partner and is holding him as tight as he can, his forehead resting on his shoulder and his body pressed as close as he can get. Phil grunts at the force of their collision, the way Clint's arms have banded around his ribs, but he wraps him up right back, strokes his hand down the length of Clint's spine.

"I love you so much," he chokes, and he can feel Phil's surprise, his relief in the way the tension melts from his body.
"I'll take that as a yes then?" he says hesitantly, and it makes sense now, the reason he'd left the key in the envelope instead of handing it to him.

Clint yelps a half-hysterical little laugh because how could he have possibly thought that Clint might turn him down?

"Thought you'd never ask," he teases, because Phil's said that to him and they're both still working on asking for what they want. It's getting easier, oh is it getting easier to share the deepest, tenderest, most vulnerable parts of himself, especially after the incredible scene they'd had when Phil had taken care of him after that horrible op, but his Dom has been less forthcoming with his own fantasies, preferring to coax them out of Clint instead.

But maybe it's this, maybe it's having Clint as his partner and as his sub, having him here, at home.

And he thinks maybe he's hit on it with that, because when he pulls back Phil cups his face in his hands, wipes away tears with his thumbs that Clint hadn't known he'd shed, and his own eyes are dark and shiny and his face is so open, so unguardedly happy that it makes Clint shiver.

"Oh. You were..."

"Just hoping," Clint murmurs, pecking a kiss to his lips. "Now come on, what'dja bring me? Cause no offense Boss, but I'm not sure you can top this."

For a minute Phil just stares at the key in Clint's hand, still looking a little bit stunned, then he grins, bright and wicked and curls his fingers around it.

"We'll have to see about that."

AVAVA

Turns out what Phil's brought him is a blindfold.

They've talked about this, about what Clint's hated about them before, about how he feels when he thinks about wearing one. They've played around with verbal blindfolding, with Phil telling him to keep his eyes closed and that's been good. He's even led Clint through a fantasy when he was safe in his bunk, alone and locked in and in familiar, comfortable surroundings with Phil's voice weaving a scene in his ear.

This though, this is a step further, and it puts a spark of fearful anticipation in the pit of his belly.

"Only if you're ready," Phil murmurs as Clint holds the length of fabric between his hands, stroking his own down Clint's arms shoulder to wrist. "Only if you'd like."

"Yeah," he breathes, swallowing when his mouth goes dry harshly and abruptly, his heart thumping in his throat. "Yeah, I... with you. Yes, please Sir, I'd like that very much."

"Alright then."

He takes it slow. Clint, he... he appreciates that. There's a strange electricity thrumming beneath his skin, a little bit of anxiety and a lot more anticipation, but Phil's always been good at settling him, gentling him. He keeps his hands on Clint's body, even when he takes him to the bedroom and commands him to strip, forcing him to work around lingering strokes and fleeting touches. He presses up and leans in to each one, sighing when he's finally done and falls into an easy parade rest, his head ducked, and somehow through all of it he's still surprised to look down and find that he's hard.
"Love the way you slip for me," Phil murmurs, circling Clint slowly as he strips out of his suit jacket, frees his tie from his collar and rolls up his sleeves. "Love that I can see it, the way your shoulders drop."

His chin still dropped against his chest, Clint breathes deep, shivers when Phil drags his fingertips lightly down his spine.

"Would you like some cuffs tonight sweet boy?" his Dom asks, stepping back around in front of him. "I won't tie you down, but you... you seem to like being held."

"Do like it," Clint hums, already slipping just like Phil's observed. "Love that you put them on me..."

"Something a little stronger than the tape then I think."

Clint shudders, licks his lips.

"Yes please."

"Then kneel."

Clint kneels with all the smoothness and grace he has, instinctively making the gesture as pretty as possible for his Dom. He doesn't wait for the command to offer up his wrists – that too is instinctive and natural and everything he wants to do – palms up, giving everything he has. He can hear his Dom's appreciation in the way the man heaves a breath, always shocked, always stunned by this. It makes him feel warm and proud and tingly inside, and when Phil bends to put his lips to Clint's wrists, so kiss and nibble and suck a mark just like he always does everything feels right.

The rope is another custom-blend, the same dark, jewel purple Phil seems to favor on him, soft like silk, and it's snug when Phil begins his tie low on Clint's wrist beneath the base of his thumb. Tight, the way he's found he likes it, but it doesn't pinch or bite into his skin, and he knows his Dom knows his knots. In a way he almost regrets the slight drop he's taken, the little bit of haziness he's already floating on because watching Phil double the rope, wrap it around his wrist and then pull the tails through, watching him fall into it the way he always does when they play with Shibari – it's a beautiful thing. His breathing slows and deepens, the tension leaves his body, and his nimble fingers move across the ropes calmly and surely.

It's gorgeous to watch, and Clint can't help but mumble his appreciation as Phil builds a sturdy gauntlet up his forearm.

"Pretty."

"It is, isn't it?"

"No. I mean, yeah, but... you," he clarifies, leaning to the side to rest his face against Phil's knee. "Love it when you get like this, love watching you."

Phil blinks, seems surprised, but then simply shrugs and strokes Clint's cheek before tying off the finishing knot, the length of rope estimated so perfectly that there's no tails left at the end to snip with the safety scissors he always keeps close at hand.

"I enjoy this," he murmurs, almost like he's admitting some kind of horrible secret as he begins the second gauntlet on Clint's other wrist. "I like wrapping you up in my ropes, in my knots. It's... soothing for me; the patterns, the repetition, the logic of the ties..."

"Ropes have rules," Clint mumbles, eyes watching fervently as Phil works his way up Clint's arm,
and his Dom chuckles.

"Something like that," he says quietly, finishing off the last loops. Taking Clint's hands in his own, he squeezes his fingers, presses down on his nails to check his circulation. "How does that feel sweet boy?"

"Good. Perfect. Thank you Sir."

"Good. You'll tell me if anything starts to tingle or pinch, or if you get numb."

"Yes Sir."

"Alright then. Up on the bed now, on you back. Spread out for me."

Clint goes immediately, flops out spread-eagle on the sheets, humming happily. These new cuffs, the ropes wrapping his forearms so similar to his arm guards are wonderful and snug, placed there so carefully and lovingly by his Dom that he suspects he's going to have some... issues going forward whenever he steps onto the range or heads up to a nest.

Small price to pay.

Then Phil is sitting on his chest in nothing but a pair of boxers and all thoughts of the future go out the window.

"I'd like you to wear a cock ring for me tonight," he purrs in Clint's ear, nibbling the side of his neck. "Want to make this last. What's your color Clint?"

"Green Sir," he gasps as Phil's teeth scrape across the tendons in his throat, his cock giving a decidedly interested jerk. "'M green, 'm green."

"Good boy."

Phil's hands slide up his arms, mapping the bulge and swell of muscle, his fingertips dancing over the ropes that run from just below his elbow to his wrists. Clint watches his eyes, watches his gaze lock on the ropes, fascinated, and again feels that flush of pride that sweeps through him. Arching his back, he stretches himself out beneath his Dom, shows off his chest and tips his head back to lengthen his throat. Phil chuckles, brings his eyes down to meet his and smiles.

"Very pretty," he murmurs, leaning down to press a long, lingering kiss to his lips, and then he's stretching Clint's arms up and over his head, leaning his weight against the gauntlets so he can briefly feel each loop of the rope pressed into his skin, and he shivers knowing that there might be thick, red lines being made beneath them.

"Don't move," Phil purrs darkly, and oh yeah, he's green, he is so green. "You can grab the headboard if you need to, but your arms stay above your head, understand?"

"Yes Sir."

"Good boy."

Phil climbs off of him after that and Clint misses his weight, but he's back a moment later sitting near his shoulder, the length of fabric in his hands. He lifts an eyebrow, a silent question, but Clint only offers him a smile, one that feels small and young and a little nervous, but happy enough. This is a test, a task to prove to himself how much he truly does trust his Dom, his partner, and when Phil slips the fabric over his eyes and ties it in a loose knot behind his head, he realizes he's exactly right
The blindfold he's chosen is a length of black lace, delicate and sheer. Because the fabric's not solid Clint can actually see through the cut, not well, but enough that the panic he'd feared would come with the dark never does. Instead the world is a blur, his Dom's face hovering above him like dreams of smoke, and Clint feels all the breath leave his body in a great, cleansing sigh, his body melting against the bed with a shiver.

"Oh," Phil breathes, sounding stunned and delightfully terrified, his fingers light on Clint's chest. "Look at you."

Clint just shifts, tests this new thing, this reduction of his greatest, most-relied upon sense. The sheets are rougher against his skin, the bed firmer beneath him, the ropes around his wrists more defined and the warmth of his Dom's skin burning hotter. It's... it's incredible, and scary, and so much more than he expected, and he kind of gets why Phil sounds so breathless 'cause he can feel it humming along his nerves, the reality of how big this thing is that he's done.

"So beautiful."

"Thank you Sir."

What follows is a long session of tantric massage, something Clint's only ever read about being performed by subs for their Doms. Phil dribbles warm, silky oil across his skin that takes on the heat of his body, spends hours working it into his muscles. He starts with long sweeps of his hands, up Clint's thighs and across his chest, over his shoulders and up toward his wrists. His touch is light, skimming sensation against the surface of Clint's skin instead of the deep, heavy pushes against the line of his muscle, so different from the previous massages he's given him. This isn't about injury or tension, this is sheer sex, brushes of Phil's bare skin against his own that make Clint's breath catch in his throat.

By the time Phil climbs back onto his body Clint's rock hard and panting, and he's more than grateful for the band of leather his Dom snaps around his balls, every touch intensified by the fact that he can't see what's coming next.

He cries out at the first touch of Phil's mouth against his body, high on his ribs, the most fleeting brush of lips and tongue. His chest hair is crisp and rough against Clint's inner thighs and he arches into the sensation, throwing his head back and gasping, so, so careful to keep his hands where his Dom has put them. In the moment it's the hardest thing he's ever had to do, to stop himself from touching, from giving the same pleasure he's being given, and before he can break the rules he fists his hands around the bars of the headboard, holds on tight.

"Good boy."

His Dom says it like a sigh, like this is the best he's ever had, just to see Clint laid out before him, still and silent and unseeing beneath his hands and it helps, helps him to not coming bucking right off the bed when Phil's mouth descends on his cock and swallows him down in one smooth, hot glide. It doesn't last – no touch does – everything there and gone again, never in the same place twice in a row, and oh god, he wants to come so badly but he can't, not yet. Phil's tongue circles the head of his cock, his thumbs massaging the skin beneath his balls and Clint whimpers, teeth clamping down on his lower lip as he tries to keep his hips still.

More oil is poured over him in a warm, slick stream and then Phil is straddling his hips, his hands splayed out flat on Clint's chest as he glides his ass across Clint's cock. It's a smooth slide, his balls bumping against the head of Clint's cock and he starts to pant, to whine and squirm and very, very
suddenly it's all too much, too big and too bright and too strong and he chokes out one of his safewords before he even knows he's going to.

"Sir I can't... please, I... yellow!"

Phil's hips slow but he doesn't leave, doesn't jump away which Clint had instantly feared as soon as the color had left his mouth. Instead his hands glide up his chest, nice and easy to cup his face and he leans down to press a kiss to each of Clint's eyelids beneath the lace.

"Tell me what you need sweetheart."

"I can't... it's too much, I... I need..."

"Give me your hands Clint."

And oh, yes, that.

That's what he needed; a calm, confident command, to be able to touch, to feel like he's doing something instead of just lying here taking.

Phil knows this of course, must read it on his face or in his head or in his history and knows exactly what to do – takes Clint's hands and curls them into loose fists, stacks them and wraps them up in his own fingers and starts fucking into them, pausing a moment later to add more slick and remove the restrictive band of leather from the base of his cock. A moment later Clint's practically screaming out his orgasm and Phil's following right after, spilling hot over his hands before collapsing, falling forward onto his chest.

They pant and shiver their way through the aftershocks and Phil's peppering Clint's face with kisses, all across the blindfold that's a little damp with tears but which neither of them mentions. Clint's hands start to move between them of their own accord, desperately rubbing stripes of cum into his own skin, spreading it across his chest and his belly until Phil grabs his wrists, grips the rope gauntlets tight and tugs them up. Clint gasps when he sucks one of his fingers into his mouth, swirls his tongue across the sensitive skin between them, and if he didn't feel absolutely one hundred percent done he thinks he might be hard all over again.

Apparently cum play is one of his kinks.

"I love you so much," Phil whispers, turning his cheek into Clint's newly-cleaned palm and pressing a kiss to the base of his thumb. "You did so well for me Clint. I'm so proud of you."

"Thank you Sir," he sobs, the emotion far too much and welling up hot and shiny in his chest, tears rolling freely now. As much as he feels like he needs a good hard cry he's already slipping into that deep, warm, contented place he goes to after a scene, where everything is good and nothing hurts.

"Do you need me to take the blindfold off now Clint?" Phil asks, and he chokes another sob because no, no, he doesn't want that yet.

"Cuddle me first?" he begs, and above him Phil chuckles before he rolls to the side and pulls Clint into his arms.

"Always."

They'll talk about this after. About the blindfold and the tears and the safeword, and about every little part of it, but Clint doesn't mind. He's pushed himself tonight, his Dom has pushed him, and everything's worked out, everything's gone ok. They'll talk about it, and they'll plan, and maybe one
weekend they'll do this all again. Maybe a weekend before that Phil will help Clint box up his barracks, and he'll move in for real, with a shiny new key in his pocket and a whole new part of his life to start.

Now though, for now he curls up against his Dom's chest, his partner's chest - the man who loves him and who's taken care of him and given him every dream and fantasy he could ask for, the man he loves.

Clint's last thought before he drifts off into sleep is that he should probably get Stevens some sort of going away present when he moves.
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Short and fluffy interlude.

Clint moves in the next day. He's a little more eager than he's willing to admit but Phil doesn't seem to mind, actually does take the day off to play hookey and help Clint box up his bunk in the SHIELD barracks. It's not as hard as he expects it to be – course, he's never had much by way of possessions. Still, he thought it might be... a little emotional leaving the first safe place he'd ever had, the first place that was his and his alone. And maybe it is, a little, because he does stop in the doorway and look back over his shoulder at the emptied room – the scar on the wall from his knife-tossing practice, the ceiling tiles all askew – but there's a smile on his face when he silently says goodbye and Phil's standing in the hallway with a duffle over his shoulder and a plastic crate in his hands.

He's here, helping, ignoring the confused looks he's being cast by the other agents coming and going from the hallway like he doesn't care if they know that he's in a relationship with the walking disaster that is Clint Barton, that he's taking him into his home and making him a part of his life and...

And maybe it's still a little incredible to Clint, a little amazing.

Even if he does know that he's better, that he's not nearly the mess he used to be.

Phil has a big part in that.

Not just that he's Clint's Dom now, not just because he's finally going down on the regular and actually submitting one hundred percent for once in his life, but because Clint's finally told the truth, finally given up all his secrets, and gotten nothing but love and acceptance back in return.

Crazy how much good that can do for a guy.

Phil's commandeered one of SHIELD's fleet of SUV's to take them home – fuck, yeah, home - folded the seats down and shoved all of Clint's junk into the back that hadn't already found it's way to the apartment. They drive in silence and make exactly three trips each up the stairs, piling stuff in the doorway until they've got it all in from the car, and then they sprawl on the floor side-by-side, feet kicked out in front of them, somehow already exhausted.

"How is that even a thing?" Clint pants, and Phil chuckles, bumps his shoulder before scrubbing his hand through Clint's hair fondly, using him as a handhold to push to his feet.

"Never moved before have you?" he says fondly, hauling Clint up after him and pecking a kiss to his lips. "That's how it works. Now we'll open all the boxes, spread your stuff out in a pile, put maybe half of it away before we give up."

"Give up?"

"Yup. Give up, order pizza and drink beer in front of the TV, cramped up on the couch between piles of crap. Tell ourselves we'll finish it before bed and then fall asleep in front of Dog Cops instead."
"That's how it works?"

"Yeah," Phil hums happily, pulling him into his arms in a classic waltz pose. "That's how it works."

Before Clint knows it he's twirling him around the kitchen amongst the boxes like they aren't even there, sweeping him along to music only he can hear. It's a little sappy, a little dorky, but beautiful and sweet and heartbreakingly tender, a moment's glimpse into the heart of a man who's normally so private, so buttoned-down that he kind of wants to cry.

He doesn't though, of course he doesn't.

Why ruin a perfect moment, right?

Phil finishes off their dance by handing Clint into a pirouette, then pulling him in for a deep, impressive dip, cuddling him close when he stands him back up and Clint cuddles right back, happy enough to be held and kissed and snuggled even like this, even when he's up and on even footing with Phil, when he's Clint the SHIELD Agent but still kind of Clint the sub, just... in the background. He's always been a snuggly bastard, touch-starved as hell from a horrible childhood, and he already knows this place to be a safe one to ask for what he wants.

Yeah, this is gonna be good.

The rest of the afternoon goes exactly as Phil predicted – they get most of the boxes open and spread out, a few books shelved and Clint's treasured longbow hung on the wall above the couch before they call it quits, dropping down onto the furniture in a pile of sweaty, weary limbs and laughter. For two SHIELD agents, two grown men in damn good shape, it's strange to be so tired from so little work, but Clint suspects there's maybe more to it than just the physical exertion, so he doesn't let himself puzzle over it.

They order two huge meat-lovers pizza and trot down to the corner store to grab a six-pack of craft beer and spend the evening lazing around on the couch until Clint crawls into Phil's lap and starts a make-out session of pretty epic proportions. It doesn't go much further than some pretty heavy petting, but it doesn't have to and that's ok. They head to bed together giggling and sneaking touches like teenagers, and Phil smacks him playfully on the ass as they head down the hall with a pop that's louder than the sting. It's the first time he's risked a shot at any kind of impact play and while Clint appreciates the care he's taken it's good to see him reach out that way. He makes sure to show his appreciation for the gesture by planting a voracious kiss on his partner before heading off to the bathroom to brush, all teeth and tongue and bite.

"We should try that some time," he murmurs in Phil's ear when he crawls back into bed, spooning up behind him and licking his ear. "Know how much you love my ass."

"It's a great ass," Phil answers, and it sounds like he's grinning. "Is that something you'd actually enjoy?"

"What, getting your hands all over it? Could be fun."

Phil hums happily, snuggles further into Clint's arms, unperturbed by the fact that typically one would expect their positions to be reversed.

"We'll talk about it," he promises, and Clint drifts off to the happy memory of the best promises fulfilled.
They miss their collaring date.

Well not *date* – they hadn't picked an actual day or anything – but Clint's maybe kinda counting down the three month trial period in the back of his head. Kinda hopes Phil is too. They haven't planned anything, haven't even really talked about it to be honest, but there's obvious anticipation on both sides.

So when Phil gets called out on a mission that goes bad, that runs three weeks longer than the original three projected, Clint's surprised that he's actually pretty calm about the whole thing. He'd have thought he'd panic, have a mini melt-down, but in his heart he knows that this isn't by Phil's design, isn't him getting ditched or left behind or having his heart broken. He knows it's not fate either, not the world telling him that this just isn't gonna work. This is just life, just normal, just two SHIELD agents trying to make it work like anyone else between jobs and missions and everything else.

After everything they've been through in the last three months, he absolutely believes that he *will* be collared by his Dom, just as soon as he gets back and they get a minute to breathe.

Except, as it turns out, he's not the only one who maybe has some insecurities.

Before Phil goes dark he's all apologies, sounding small and hurt and regretful on the phone and unreassured by Clint's many, many loving texts back. Then the op goes black and it's Fury he has to hear it from when they finally start on their way back to HQ, mission successful. The report he's given says Phil's headed for medical, bruised up and druggy from a round of torture, one shoulder relocated on the medichopper on the return flight. Phil doesn't contact him, doesn't alert him to the fact that he's home – and that more than anything clues Clint in to his partner's state of mind.

Nervous, unsure, maybe even afraid that everything's gone wrong and he's about to lose it all...

And well Clint can't have that can he?

They haven't really talked about the whole domestic service thing. He knows Coulson likes it, marked it pretty high on his kink list, but Clint had been pretty adamant when he'd said no in the beginning. He was still wary of being humiliated, even though he knew Phil would never do it intentionally, was horrified by the thought of a french maid's outfit. Sometimes though, when he had cleared the table after dinner or put away the DVD's scattered around the entertainment center Phil would look at him with a little more heat than was warranted, would thank him and kiss him and call him *sweet boy,* and Clint wonders if maybe that isn't it.

He's always brought Coulson coffee. Always made sure he has a little something to eat when he works over that hasn't come from the vending machines. It's always been accepted with halting, grudging good graces but now, when Clint slips into his office and carefully places a mug at his elbow with a quiet *sir,* 'it's always a tiny flash of surprise on his face, quickly replaced by fondness and poorly hidden hunger. It puts a flood of heat through Clint's belly, and he thinks if that's it, if it's just... taking care of his Dom, then it's definitely something he can do.

If Phil just wants someone to take care of him every once in a while because he's earned it, because
He deserves it, well, that Clint is one hundred percent A-ok with.

He thinks he might even like it a little.

Like, love it more than anything kind of like.

Being able to take care of Phil the way Phil's taken care of him sounds... really, really nice.

He's been gone six weeks on a mission gone wrong – not as bad as Croatia or even that time in Washington – but bad enough. Even minor torture sucks, and he'll be cranky and grumpily that he can't file his paperwork without his bum shoulder bothering him for several days. He'll be drawn, exhausted, and quietly homesick, probably expecting his apartment to be messy and stale and empty. It's the first time he's gone on mission without Clint since he moved in, the first time he'll be coming back, and Clint knows for a fact that the man hadn't thought to schedule SHIELD cleaning services before he was called away.

For his part Clint hasn't spent much time there – it's still weird to be in the apartment without Phil, and he's missed him, so he's spent most of his time on the range and keeping busy. There will be dirty sheets and piled up dishes and dust, and Phil apparently isn't going to bother calling ahead. Clint knows him by now, knows he won't be in any state to deal. No, he'll just trundle on him, collapse into fitful sleep fully dressed and hungry instead of braving the state of his fridge or trying to run the washing.

But... maybe Clint could help?

Admittedly he's not great at that stuff, but he could try?

He has time so he hauls ass home. Phil's going to be in medical for at least an hour while they get his shoulder scanned and his blood analyzed and the drugs flushed from his system, so he starts by opening up the apartment windows and getting the air moving. He changes the sheets and the pillowcases, tosses the dirty laundry into the washer and runs a rag over the bookshelves and the counters. He's not as fastidious as his Dom but he's not a pig either, so there's not actually that much to do, but he still takes the time to straighten things up. Then it's cooking and where Phil is the god of all things breakfast Clint is actually a damn good cook in his own right.

It's weird in a way. He's never really liked chores or housework before. This though, this feels entirely different, mostly in a good way. He thinks about Phil the whole time, thinks about why he's doing the tasks he's doing, and it sends him to a calm, steady place he feels like he needs to be. Something has the hair standing up on the back of his neck, warns him that he'll have to be the rock tonight, and he doesn't know how he knows or how he's handling it so well but he is.

It's easy and it's natural and he is.

Doesn't mean he can't have a little fun though right?

Cause he remembers that little unspoken fantasy, that little hitch in his Dom's breathing over the crackly phone line when he suggests something pretty to wear.

And maybe Clint's been a little bit of a bad boy, maybe he's done a little shopping and been holding out...

He's got just enough time to change and go skidding to his knees in the entryway before the door opens and then there's his Dom, one arm in a sling looking exhausted and miserable and stunned to see him there at all and Clint smiles.
"Welcome home Sir."

"Jesus."

He says it like a prayer, breathes it like a benediction, and Clint flushes with pride and happiness so sweet he can hardly stand it.

"Look at you."

Oh yeah, bullseye.

He picked out the underwear himself in a boy-short cut, form-fitting boxers made of black lace. Yes, they match his blindfold and yes, that was a conscious choice on his part, but more than that they look hella good on him. They cling to everything and leave nothing to the imagination, do incredible things for his ass and somehow manage to stay masculine, which is the only reason he managed to get through check-out without blushing himself to death.

The way Phil is staring at him makes it all worth it.

He's never seen the always-cool Agent Coulson look so openly dumbstruck.

"So beautiful."

"Thank you Sir," Clint hums, turning his face into Phil's palm when he reaches out to stroke his cheek. "May this boy help you with your shoes Sir?"

It's his opening gambit, first shot fired, and he's setting the tone for both of them, getting himself into the deeply submissive headspace he wants to float in and hoping that he can take his Dom down with him. He can hear the man's breath hitch, that gorgeous tell of his, and only just sees his pupils darken from down on his knees, sees him lick his lips and swallow hard before acknowledging him with the barest dip of his chin.

Breathing a sigh of relief he leans forward, unties Phil's neat leather oxfords and slips them off his feet one by one. He rolls down his socks too, sweeps his thumb over the sensitive arch of his foot, the point of his ankle and revels in the shuddery gasp that sounds above him. Setting the shoes aside in the rack, he rolls smoothly to his feet, very nearly crawls up Phil's body with barely an inch to breathe between them before pecking a kiss to his Dom's lips.

"May this boy take your jacket Sir?" he purrs, and Phil, who seems to have utterly lost his tongue, nods silently.

Circling around behind him, Clint slides his palms up Phil's strong back to his broad, muscular shoulders, so well hidden by his perfectly-tailored suits that he's often mistaken for less of a soldier than he is. He delights in the firm, warm flesh beneath his hands but is careful of Phil's recently relocated shoulder, slipping his jacket down his arms with incredible care. His right arm is in a sling, strapped tightly against his chest, but it's more of a precaution than anything – medical takes a preventative approach to Phil the same way they do with Clint. It'll be safe enough to remove it to get him comfortable for sleep, and anything else Clint can talk him into.

Circling back, Clint stops in front of him and slides his hands up Phil's front, from his belt to his chest, pleased to feel his heart thumping, his breath coming just a little fast beneath his palms.

"May this boy take your tie Sir?"

"He may."
Clint blinks, his gaze snapping up to meet his Dom's, surprised and delighted by the indirect tense the man has used. Phil had yet to jump on board with the whole third person thing though he'd accepted Clint's need to use it and the reason behind it. This is his first attempt and it sounds a little uncertain, like he's uncertain of himself and his Dominance in the power dynamic for the first time. It makes sense – Clint's still got that little tingle going on that says maybe Phil is feeling a little off-balance – so he's not terribly shocked, but it makes him that much more determined to get his Dom to that nice, floaty place where everything's good. It's not the same place Clint goes to, but he knows Phil gets there, sees it on his face when he's weaving ropes around Clint's body.

This time the kiss he initiates is long and lingering, and he lets himself lead it as Phil melts against him, his body wavering until he's pressed all along Clint's front, letting him take half his weight as his good hand comes around to grip him by the ass. Clint smiles, flexes in Phil's grasp before pecking him on the lips, slowly slips his tie from his collar and opens his top three buttons, dips his fingers inside to run them through the man's thick, curly chest hair.

"This boy has made you dinner Sir," he murmurs. "May he serve you?"

"Please."

Clint grins, moves to step away and lead his Dom to the dining table but he's caught by the wrist, held back. How he manages it with only one arm Clint will never know, but before he realizes what the man's doing he's got his tie looped around Clint's neck and knotted into a semi-acceptable four-in-hand. He leaves it hanging loose, the long, silk tails tickling Clint's belly and now it's his turn to have his breath stutter, his heart thump heavily in his chest.

"So pretty," Phil murmurs distantly, his fingertips ghosting down over Clint's pectorals and abdominals, tracing down his tie and along the waistband of the lace boy-shorts, and it sounds almost like he's surprised, like he's seeing Clint for the first time.

"Thank you Sir," he replies, catching Phil's hand and bringing it to his mouth to kiss his wrist. "Let's get you something hot to eat huh?"

"Already got something."

He mumbles the joke almost petulantly, like a child who's being ushered off to bed before they're ready and Clint chuckles, can't stop himself from stealing another kiss. It's cute but it shows just how out of it Phil is, so he's careful to be gentle yet firm as he pushes him into the kitchen, his hands on Phil's hips as he guides him down into a chair. He's made honey-garlic salmon and wild rice, filling but not too heavy, and he serves Phil from the left like he'd been taught for one of his undercover ops, filling his water glass before sinking slowly to his knees.

"You're not hungry?"

"This boy has eaten already Sir. He wishes only to serve his Dom tonight, if he may."

Phil breathes out a shaky sigh and then his hand is in Clint's hair, hesitant at first before stroking gently over the top of his head. He allows himself to lean just a bit to the side, to press his body lightly against Phil's hip and settle, listening to the quiet scrape of cutlery and murmured sounds of enjoyment his Dom makes above him. It's good to be here, on his knees for his Dom, caring for him, pleasing him, and he can very nearly feel the man trembling with... with something.

Exhaustion, pleasure, disbelief – it doesn't really matter.

Either way, any way, it's good.
"Has Sir had enough?" he hears himself murmur some time later, lulled by this easy exchange, kneeling for his Dom, feeding him, needing only to be close.

"Yes sweet boy," Phil replies, as quietly and tiredly as Clint has. "It was wonderful – thank you."

"Sir is very welcome. This boy is pleased he enjoyed it."

Rising to his feet, Clint takes a minute to stretch the kinks out of his knees before clearing away the empty plate sitting before his Dom. By the time he returns from the kitchen the man is almost asleep in his chair, but Clint slips behind him and wraps his arms around Phil's shoulders, presses his face to the top of his head.

"Would Sir like a shower?" he asks, already knowing the answer.

Phil huffs and grumbles under his breath, confirming his suspicions, but drags himself to his feet anyways. If Clint weren't here he would likely just fall into the bed fully clothed, but in his presence he'll feel some strange social obligation to scrub down more so than the need to cleanse himself of the mission and weeks away from home. Clint leads him to the bathroom and gets the water running, nice and hot just the way his Dom likes it, turns to help him undress.

He's thought about this. Thought about tucking Phil into the jacuzzi tub like he'd done before for him. He thinks it's probably different though, that he won't quite enjoy it the way Clint had. It's something about the control, he thinks, and about taking things for himself. It would be more Phil taking a moment out of his own, to soak in the hot water, more than it would be Clint giving him something, and when he follows his Dom into the double-wide shower stall it's clear that he made the right decision, because Phil actually looks surprised when Clint climbs in after him.

He'd taken the tie off of course. Wouldn't want to get water stains on the silk. The underwear have stayed and they immediately soak through, but it's not like they left much to the imagination to begin with. Phil takes a minute to stare, to look at him and to trace his fingertips along the scalloped edges of the lace that cling to Clint's thighs. It's a tender look of regret he wears when he pecks a kiss to Clint's lips, and then he's grabbing the loofa and the shower gel and lathering up.

He does the major scrubbing himself, but Clint doesn't let that stop him from participating. He gets his hands good and soapy and keeps them on Phil's skin, working around his economical movements – ever the Ranger – to run them over the man's chest and shoulders. It's slick and slippery and wonderful and he makes sure to do Phil's back and two sexy handfuls of his ass before he slides slowly to his knees and drags his hands down the man's legs. Phil huffs a breath, leans back against the shower wall but his eyes are caught on Clint, he can feel them, and who can blame him for what he does next?

Phil whines, fucking *whines* when Clint takes him into his mouth, his hips hitching forward even though his cock stays limp and soft on Clint's tongue. He suckles gently for a few minutes, the shower spray hot on the back of his shoulders and misting across his face, and above him his Dom's pants, hands flat against the tile behind him.

"Don't think I could get it up with a crane tonight sweet boy," he mutters, his head tipped back and his eyes closed. "But _fuck_ you feel so good."

Sliding off his cock Clint presses a kiss to his thigh before climbing carefully to his feet, pressing another one to Phil's wet shoulder.

"That's all this boy wants Sir," he murmurs, before reaching over to shut the water off. "Let's get you to bed huh? Work out those knots."
Phil follows him docilely, watches with big, vulnerable eyes as Clint dries him off meticulously, going to his knees again to do his legs and feet before giving himself a quick pat-down. Nice thing about lace is it doesn't really hold water, so he doesn't drip everywhere when he tugs Phil into the bedroom and lays him out on his stomach on the bed. He fusses, gets him turned just a bit on his side and gets his bum shoulder propped up on a pillow before turning down the lights and fetching the massage oil, and then it's a long, slow eternity of his hands on Phil's body, gentle kneading away the knots and the tension and the pain along with them.

He makes some sounds of discomfort at first. Whimpers. He's bruising up pretty spectacularly and Clint's as gentle as possible, but it's clear he was pretty battered during his time with the bad guys. It's not that though, not that has him making small, choked sounds and trembling beneath Clint's hands. Phil's just as much of a badass as he is, knows how to take pain. No, this is more, something else, and Clint doesn't know how to fix it except be here, be good, keep his hands on his Dom and make him feel good.

By the time he's worked down Phil's back and then up again from his toes, by the time he gets to the ass that's pretty spectacular in its own right, the noises he's making have changed a little. Phil's got one leg hitched up and out, still mostly on his belly, and he's still soft but he's rocking gently against the sheets, his breath coming a little shorter and a little faster than normal, and when Clint finally grabs on, gets two more firm handfuls and squeezes Phil keens like he's been shot.

"Ohhhhh, fuck," he moans quietly, a shiver rippling down his spine and the steely muscles of his ass flexing in Clint's hands.

He gives another experimental push and pull, still keeping up the pretense of a massage, and is rewarded with more pleading sounds for his efforts. Leaning down he presses a kiss to the base of Phil's spine, to the dimples at the small of his back and is overwhelmed with the sudden urge to bite, to taste, and the way Phil's pushing up into his grip suggests he might not be all that opposed to the suggestion. Slowly, carefully, Clint dips his thumb down the cleft of his ass, presses against the tight furl of muscle hidden there and his Dom whines.

"Holy hell," Clint breathes, pulling the globes of his ass apart and feeling him shudder.

They haven't done this. Haven't talked about it. He's never known a Dom who bottoms and Phil's never mentioned ass-play, and for half a second Clint wracks his brain trying to remember what was on the man's kink list before he realizes he could just ask. Leaning down again he flicks his tongue innocently over the outside of the man's cheek, scrapes his teeth lightly against his skin before resting his forehead against the small of Phil's back and savoring the gasp he's elicited.

"Please," he murmurs, breath puffing against Phil's skin. "Please Sir may this boy pleasure you?"

For the longest moment Phil doesn't answer, his muscles locked tight beneath his hands, then he sighs and sags against the sheets with a full-body tremble like all his strings have been cut.

"Just... go slow," he whispers, and it's choked and a little bit fearful, and Clint feels something tighten in his chest, that his Dom needs this so much, that he feels like he has to cling so tightly to the sheets that his knuckles have gone white.

"Yes Sir," he promises quietly, crawling up the bed to nuzzle Phil's temple, kiss the corner of his mouth and cuddle him as best he can. "Anything you want. Love you so much Phil, just... just tell me. Wanna make you feel so good."

"Get the lube."
It's strange, doing this in the absence of the sharp, hot spike of lust he'd expect to feel. He's attracted to Phil, of course he is, always has been, and he maybe returns the fascination with his partner's ass that he has for Clint's, but here like this it's not about how he feels or what he wants. He's pretty sure he's been hard since his slipped into the lace boyshorts he's still wearing but he hasn't spared a thought for his own dick. And really it's not even about Phil's, which is still soft against his thigh where he's got his knee bent and only showing the smallest twitches of interest. It's not about fucking, or getting him to orgasm, or anything except making him feel good, and he's going to do that if it kills him.

There are an embarrassing number of bottles rattling around Phil's beside drawer, though to be fair the man is always prepared. There's the Gun Oil which is very nearly empty, another that's water-based and safe for toys, a third one with some pretty intense warming properties that drives Clint crazy, but it's the one at the back he goes for this time, never opened and never used. The bottle's clear with a purple cap, branded *Wet, Flavored,* and *Kosher* – which he guesses is nice, but...

*Flavored* lube... there's gotta be a reason Phil has this right?

He realizes he's staring at the bottle when Phil shifts minutely on the bed, tips his face down to look at him over his shoulder. He huffs a silent laugh, smiles softly and puts the bottle down by Phil's hip. Silly to be thinking about it so hard – he knows what he's doing now and he doesn't need the lube to get started. Keeping hard eye contact with his Dom, he leans down, pulls his cheeks apart, and licks a long, slow stripe from the tip of his cock to his tailbone.

Phil's hips jump off the bed and he chokes out a startled gasp, like he hadn't been expecting that, hadn't expected it to happen or to feel as good as it did. For Clint's part he'd enjoyed it immensely – getting that kind of response from him – and he sets about working for another one.

He's never really enjoyed rimming before, but like many things it's different with Phil. It's not about humiliation with him, never with him – instead it's about service, about providing something to his Dom, making him feel good, and it's submissive pride and eagerness and love welling up big and bright and warm in his chest so wonderful it's suffocating. He dives in eagerly but does as he's told, takes it slow and savors every sound he manages to pull out of his buttoned-down Dominant, uses lips and teeth and tongue to tease and taste while his hands continue to knead and massage Phil's ass until he's a whining, quivering mess.

"One Sir?" he asks, unscrewing the cap of the lube and pouring it onto his fingers.

"One," Phil gasps, his face pressed into the pillow and his hips still hitching against the sheets.

He moans long and deep when Clint slips his first finger inside, a slow stretch that's barely a stretch at all after all the attention Clint's given him with his tongue. He dribbles a little more lube across his knuckles and gets his mouth back on him, the taste of cherries sweet and strong but not sickly artificial. Phil is panting, rocking back on his finger and his tongue so he offers him a few smooth, shallow thrusts, listens to him whimper.

"Two, gimme... two Clint, one more," he cries quietly, attempting to stifle all his beautiful sounds in the pillowcase and failing spectacularly.

Clint grins, nips at his buttcheek and pulls out, crosses his first two fingers and slides back in slow, feeling the stretch this time as Phil's ass clamps down.

"Nice and slow Sir," he murmurs quietly, kissing Phil's tailbone as he squirms. "Any way you want."
He stays still until his Dom stops wriggling, until his feet stop pushing against the mattress behind him and he relaxes. He's still making happy little grunts and whines, his hips still rolling even though his cock is still soft between his legs, and Clint is gentle as he starts to scissor his fingers gently, his tongue pressing in against his knuckles. Finding the smooth little bump inside that he's been avoiding so far, he gives it a nice, soft rub and watches Phil choke on a cry.

"Oh fuck Clint, so good, baby please..."

"Anything," Clint murmurs, circling his fingertips slowly, and now that he's found the good spot he hones in on it like a target, finds a firm, easy rhythm that has Phil breaking down within minutes, thigh muscles flexing hard as his hips roll.

"Please," he sobs, like he can't get the words out or the oxygen in, desperate and broken. "Clint please, I can't, I'm gonna..."

His body locks like he's been hit with five hundred volts, snapping stiff and hard as every muscle tenses and he cries out, then trembles and goes slack against the bed, Clint's fingers slipping out of his body. There's a wet spot spreading across the sheets and Clint just stares, stunned.

"Sir did you..."

"Yeah," Phil pants, pushing himself up onto his elbows and letting his head hang as he shivers. "Yeah, I... Clint."

"I'm right here Phil," he replies immediately, breaking the third person and quickly wiping off his fingers. Crawling up the bed, he lays himself out against Phil's back and takes his questing hand in his own. His Dom suddenly sounds anxious, almost frightened, and the way he clutches at Clint's arm says he needs to be held, and Clint is more than happy to oblige. "I've got you."

"I love you so much," Phil sobs, snuggle back into his arms and getting as close as he can. "'M so sorry Clint, I..."

"Aw baby, no," Clint murmurs, hooking his chin over Phil's shoulder and nuzzling his jaw, kissing the spot behind his ear. "It wasn't your fault. I'm not mad, I promise. Love you Phil, love you so much right back."

"You're too good for me," Phil hiccoughs, and Clint can't stop the chuckle that bubbles out of him. "You're too..."

"Really not," he argues, pressing another long, lingering kiss to his partner's cheek. "You're perfect for me, everything I want. We'll talk about it ok, as long as you want, and I'll even be good for you and not bitch, but not tonight alright Sir? Tonight this boy just wants to hold his Sir and cuddle him until he falls asleep."

Cuddled up all along his front, Phil hesitates, licks his lips, then nods and snuggles closer.

"Kay."

Chapter End Notes

*Clint's Undies, soooo.... NSFW* - https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/564x/f1/79/97/f179973e0d83038353078cb5587f023c.jpg
Phil wakes up the next morning with a pair of huge arms banded tight around him and his lover's breath stirring the fine hair on the nape of his neck. Logically he knows he's warm and loose and safe but the Top Drop is clinging to him like a lingering cold and it makes him shiver. Behind him Clint makes a snuffling sound and pulls him even closer against his broad, bare chest, tightens his hold and that... that's good.

He's got his sub, and his sub's got him, and Clint's still here, still his, even after all this time, even after...

"'S too early," Clint mumbles, his lips moving against Phil's shoulder. "No thinking 'fore coffee."

Phil opens his mouth, not sure what he's about to say but then shuts it again, turns instead and curls up against his partner's chest. He lets out a shaky breath when Clint hums and cuddles him closer, presses his face into the curve of Phil's throat and nibbles at his neck, sucks gently. He's warm, he's always so warm, and it soothes the tremble in him, the need to shiver against the fragile state of his psyche.

He's never felt like this, never dropped so far.

He doesn't understand it and it scares him.

"Got you," Clint mumbles, lips still pressed against his skin. "Go back to sleep."

He doesn't but it hardly matters. He gets an extra hour, hour and a half maybe cuddled against his lover's body, wrapped in his embrace and held close. It's a good place to be, to breathe quietly and just feel, and though he's fairly certain that Clint doesn't sleep either they both seem to enjoy the quiet. It can't last forever though, and eventually calls of nature and daily routine drag them both out of the cocoon of covers they've built and out into the late morning sun.

"Mmm," Clint hums, smiling dopily and rubbing his face against Phil's cheek like a cat, his eyes closed. "You're stubbly."

Phil frowns, lifts his hand to rub at his prickly jaw and hisses when the movement strains his shoulder.

"Come on," Clint says with a yawn, stretching his arms above his head and twisting from side-to-side to pop the discs in his spine. "Breakfast with a side of pain pills, and then an easy day. We're getting old, you and me, you know that?"

Phil finds that he can't respond, his mouth gone dry, because Clint has stood up out of the bed and taken a few steps to cross the room, bare-ass naked but for a slip of black lace and despite his complaint he's one long line of tanned, shifting muscle, beautiful in his bold simplicity.

He catches him looking, flicks a smirk at him over his shoulder before bending at the waist to step into a pair of sweats, shimmying them up over his hips and hiding the lace away like a gorgeous, dirty little secret.

Fantasies come to life...

Clint's hands are on his body as he stands, slipping over his skin like a tease, not like the careful support he knows it to be. It means something that he's trying to preserve Phil's dignity by being so
casual and cavalier, but he needs the contact right now more than he needs to save face, so he takes a step forward and tucks himself in against the man's front like a cat, unashamed or at least unheeding of his own state of undress.

He thinks he lost that battle last night anyway, when Clint had wrung a sobbing, quivering orgasm from his battered, exhausted body with lips and fingers and tongue and beautiful, quiet pleas.

"Thank you."

"For what baby?" Clint murmurs, bussing Phil's temple with his jaw, and Phil has to think, because his brain is slow and syrupy and he's not quite sure, doesn't know just how to express it.

"For last night," he settles, knowing that later, when he's more himself, he'll be better at this, will do better.

"Did it help?"

That one though, that one is easy.

"Yes."

"Then I'm glad," Clint hums, rubbing Phil's spine. "If you want... I'd still like take care of you today. The way you did for me. You... you seem like maybe you need it?"

He says it slowly, hesitantly, and that doesn't seem quite right and he's still feeling off, not quite himself so of course he puts up a stupid, token protest.

"You don't have to..."

"Phil," Clint says, and that's good, makes him a little more certain of where they stand. Clint takes a step back and cups Phil's face in his hands, brushes his thumbs back and forth along his jaw before leaning in to press a light little peck to his lips. "I want to," he murmurs insistently, holding his gaze. "I know that you like this, the domestic service thing, and yeah I was playing to it, but I enjoyed myself the whole time. I... I liked it. Loved it... taking care of you. I love giving you something, love serving you as my Dom. Never had that before Phil, but you're my boyfriend too – or... partner, whatever you want to call it – and... I wanna make sure you're ok."

"Don't deserve you," Phil mumbles, and Clint snorts, scoffs before tugging him in for a hug.

"Bullshit," he huffs. "If anyone deserves the world it's you. Besides, it only seems fair. But you and me, would could stand here arguing this all day huh?"

"We're a hot mess," he agrees, and this time Clint laughs.

"Think that's my line," he chuckles, pushing gently at Phil's good shoulder and his opposite hip, turning him toward the dresser. "But I make it look good, right?"

"You always look good."

"Yeah yeah, like you don't know exactly how hot you are in those five-figure suits you swan around in."

"I don't..."

"Don't feel like that you?" Clint murmurs softly, suddenly quiet and serious. "I know. Trust me Phil, I get it. But it's not too tough a fix ok? You'll be you again, I promise, and I won't leave until you
are."

It's a shivery, shaky sigh that he breathes then, terribly reassured, and he can hardly do anything but stand there as Clint helps him into his own sweats, gently guides his bad arm into a zip-up hoodie, dark purple and a little too big. Once he's got it zipped halfway up his chest he gets him back into the damned sling he hates so much, straps his elbow to his chest to stabilize his shoulder.

He walks him into the kitchen, sits him down at the counter and fixes coffee, makes softboiled eggs on toast with avocado and red pepper flake – hangover food – and Phil goes through all the motions as if in a little bit of a fog. It's strange, experiencing the drop this way – it's nothing like he's ever gone through before. But then, he's always dropped alone, dropped because he hadn't had a sub to take care of or to coddle, dropped after something had gone wrong.

Everything was different this time, and it was all because of Clint.

"You're thinking again," he accuses softly, taking Phil's mug from his hand where it's been stuck halfway to his mouth. "Come on. I have an idea."

He leads Phil into the master bath and Phil flashes back to the night before, the way Clint had touched him in the shower, so reverent and careful, the way he had obviously been trying so hard. He remembers that horrible op, so many weeks away, feeling their three month deadline approach one day at a time like a drumbeat against the inside of his skull, squeezing his chest tighter and tighter until it came and went, how it felt like the world had ended. He'd been so scared of coming home, had felt so guilty – for more than one reason – and then to step in the door and find Clint waiting for him, on his knees and offering him everything...

It had felt like heartbreak, like shattering to pieces, and no matter what Clint said he still isn't sure he deserves all this, all that he's been given.

"Come on, up."

His turn to be sat up on the counter apparently.

The next thing he knows Clint is running the hot water in the sink and wrapping a damp towel around the lower half of his face, pulling Phil's battered leather shaving kit towards him from the corner of the vanity.

"Trust me?" he asks softly, his eyes glinting and a smirk playing around his mouth as he takes out the soap and the soft bristle-brush, starts to work up a lather in the little stone bowl he'd picked up on some long-ago mission.

"You know I do," he murmurs, but his eyes still move to the bone-handled straight razor that had been a gift from his father. He loves the ritual of using it, the clean, smooth finish it gives him, and hates the sticky, scented gels and creams that come in aerosol cans today, and he absolutely does trust Clint but he's never seen the archer use anything but an electric razor on his own face.

"Know what I'm doing, promise," he murmurs, opening the razor and stropping it expertly, causing Phil to widen his eyes in surprise. "All kinds of hidden talents, me."

Removing the towel from his face, Clint wipes the spare drips from his neck and swirls the brush around in the soap, starts applying it smooth sweeps across his jaw.

"Used to do this for the Bearded Lady, back at Carson's," he says quietly as he works, one of his rare revelations about his time in the circus. "In her tent before the show. She used to say there was an art to this that had been lost, like you didn't get with safety razors. And she liked the finish better."
"You loved her."

"Yeah," he replies softly, and he says it with a smile that puts truth to the sentiment. "I did. Closest thing I had to a mom, you know? She looked out for me, and I tried to look out for her."

He doesn't know what else to say to that so he doesn't say anything, just moves his lips and his jaw as Clint commands, enjoying the sensation of the man standing between his thighs, the razor moving over his skin against the grain of his beard, cleaning it away. It's hypnotic, settling, and by the time Clint wipes the last of the soap away and claps some aftershave onto his cheeks he's feeling much more like himself than he thought he would. Clint grins at him like he knows, then takes his tie from the edge of the sink, the same tie he'd put around Clint's neck last night, and loops it over his head, tightens it just a fraction.

"There you are," he smiles as Phil's shoulders straighten just a bit, as a little of the fog clears. "Better?"

"Better."

"Good."

Planting a kiss on his cheek, his silk-smooth cheek, he helps him down off the sink, quickly cleans and dries the razor and puts the kit away.

"Come on," he beckons, his hands warm on the small of Phil's back through the hoodie, "Let's go have that talk huh?"

"Never thought you'd be the one to say that," he says, and Clint chuckles. "Yeah, but I think you need it and I promised."

It's not so bad. He is feeling better, more like himself, and Clint is here, with him. He's got Phil all wrapped up in his clothes, the scent of him, and he tucks him into the corner of the couch where his arm can be supported by a pillow, the pain pills finally kicking in and taking the edge off the deep, throbbing ache. He can't seem to let go of the man at all, constantly touching and stroking and reaching out, clinging, until finally Clint can't seem to find a way to help him any more than to fall at his feet, cuddle up as close as he can get and curl against Phil's shin, snuggling against the cotton of his sweats and resting his face against Phil's knee.

His hand goes to his hair, of course it does. He loves petting Clint's hair, loves the way it feels between his fingers and the sheer relief he feels, having wanted to do it for so long before they got together. Clint clearly loves it too, both as Clint his sub and as Clint his lover, which makes Phil feel warm and shiny inside and he needs that right now.

"Were you scared to come home?"

He says it quietly, but Phil can see the tension in Clint's bare shoulders, hear the thread of it in his voice even though he mumbles, his face buried against Phil's thigh. It's a hard question, a harder answer, one he doesn't want to give because it makes guilt bubble up hot and vile in the pit of his belly, but honesty was a rule he had set and it's only fair that he follow it as well.

"Yes," he murmurs, hot with shame. "I was."

"Did I..."

"No Clint," he insists, because he knew this was coming, because he knew he would have to answer
to this. "It was nothing you did, nothing you... I wouldn't have blamed you."

It's not what he means to say and it hurts, brings all the insecurities and fears and pain back, because that had been the worst part of it all, worse than knowing he had disappointed his sub, that he had let down his lover. The prospect of Clint breaking it off, of coming back and finding him packed and gone had been the looming, irrational horror that had snuck into the back of his mind and haunted him all through the mission, growing bigger and darker and far more teeth as the days ticked by.

"I thought... I wouldn't have blamed you."

He whispers it this time, cracked and broken, and he feels Clint's hands come up and grab at his shin, clutch fistfuls of his sweats tight.

"I promised you three months, I signed... and then the days went by and it got closer and closer and the whole time I felt like I couldn't breathe because I had to focus on the mission and I couldn't even call you to tell you I was sorry and... and then it was two weeks later, like it didn't even matter, like you didn't matter and that wasn't... that wasn't true Clint, I swear, it wasn't true."

He's crying now, tears running down his face, and he feels a little old and a little maudlin and a little foolish because here Clint is, his wonderful, beautiful sub, still on his knees at Phil's feet, letting him blurt out all his sins in a rush.

"And I thought... I thought I'd come home, and you'd be gone, and I would have lost you and it would have been my fault..."

He chokes on the words, and the next thing he knows Clint is scrambling up off the floor, climbing into his lap and jostling him but still oh-so-careful of his shoulder, until he's straddling Phil's lap and gripping the sides of his hoodie and burying his face in Phil's neck, holding on tight.

"It wasn't your fault," he whispers against Phil's throat, his voice hoarse and raw. "We're SHIELD agents Phil. This is gonna be a part of our life, forever probably. I'd never hold that against you and I know... I know you believe that, when you're you."

"I do, I do believe that. I... this is forever for me Clint, and I... I think it is for you."

"It is forever for me, you dick."

"I know," he murmurs, and he even manages a little bit of a laugh, wrapping his arm low around Clint's waist and ducking his head to press kisses to Clint's neck.

"So it was the collaring date thing? That made you drop?"

"Yeah. Stupid, we..."

"Not stupid," Clint interrupts, sitting back so he can catch Phil's gaze. "Come on, not stupid. We decided on three months because that was what was going to work for us. Because we are different, because we have known each other for years. We chose three months because three months fit. We still fit Phil."

"Yeah," he murmurs, his eyes dropping to the hollow of Clint's throat. "Still fit."

"So we do what fits for us. Do you... Sir? Do you need to collar me?"

Phil blinks, surprised by the sudden change in tone, the sudden honorific.
"I..."

"Phil," Clint says, insistent and serious. "Is that something you need?"

"Not because of this," he answers suddenly, before he even knows he's going to, certainty flooding through him strong and clean and clear, for the first time since all of this started. "I want to, but... not because of this. That... that's not us either."

"Nah," Clint smiles, lifting his hand and cupping Phil's jaw, smudging away a tear with his thumb. "Not us. Wanna just take it as it comes then? Think maybe we both might do better if we don't put a time limit on this, don't put... rules on it. Does that make sense?"

"Very good sense," he says with a sigh, leaning forward to kiss this man, this man he loves so much. "Clever boy."

"Hah. Sometimes," Clint laughs. "Besides, the way things go, I figure the universe is gonna give us a sign when the timing's right."

"Probably. You don't... you don't mind?"

"Don't expect you to ditch me or dump me Phil," Clint scolds gently, snuggling closer and laying his head on Phil's chest, seemingly listening to his heartbeat. "You're here, you're mine. If you do ever get tired of me I know you're the kind of guy that'll tell me to my face. But I think you're right. I think this is forever, for both of us. I fucking love you – it's you I want. The collar's just cake."

"Well Jesus, when you put it like that..."

"Let it go," he advises, kissing a bit of Phil's chest where it peeks out above the zipper of his jacket. "You dropped – that's not your fault. We fixed it, figured it all out... and hey, last night wasn't that bad was it?"

"Bad," Phil snorts, his heart leaping into his throat again, and he pulls Clint impossibly closer, holds him tight. "Don't think I've ever wanted anything as much as I wanted what you gave me last night. Wanted it with you. You're fucking perfect and I love you so much..."

"Love you back," Clint murmurs. Then he smirks, slides his hand up Phil's chest and gives him a slinky little roll of his hips. "Last night was fun – we should do it again sometime."

Phil just drops his head to Clint's shoulder and groans.
Chapter 9

Phil thinks Clint deserves a reward for how well he'd taken care of his Dom through his drop.

Clint doesn't.

It's oddly hard to reconcile; he'd done so well, been so good, given Phil so much of what he wanted, of _himself_, that it's hard for him not to reciprocate, not to reward that.

Clint insists that Phil isn't the only one who'd enjoyed it.

He also insists that doing something that he _wants_ to do, something that he also feels, in a way, that he _ought_ to do, doesn't merit a reward. That what he'd done for Phil had been comfortable and natural and easy, wasn't something that he'd had to _try for_.

It had just been nice, and was something he would be more than happy to do again. Was something that Phil himself had already done for Clint – he helpfully points out – but Phil still feels an undeniable need to do something, to balance the scales.

So they compromise.

Phil's been away for a while, obviously, and they're already reconnecting, helped largely in part by the clear, clean-cut sense Clint had whipped out on him during their little conversation. They spend a few nights lazing about in bed together, just relearning each other's bodies, spend a few days with Clint on his knees and Phil touching, touching, touching him as much as he wants. It all seems to be going fine, everything getting back to normal, but like Clint had said, it's _their normal_. There's still SHIELD, still missions, still paperwork, so as nice as it would be it's not like they're on vacation.

A vacation is something Phil's been contemplating more and more, but he can't quite swing it so he goes with something else instead.

By the time he _does_ get everything set up he's out of that accursed sling and his shoulder is healed through. Clint's been angling for attention for a while, bouncing around, getting underfoot like a hyperactive puppy – not that he minds. Makes for a good set-up, gives him the opportunity to give his boy – shit, his _boyfriend_ – exactly what he wants.

That's one of the rules.

One of the... _stipulations_ Clint had made, when they'd decided on a compromise.

If Phil wanted to give him something it had to be as Clint and Phil, not sub and Dom, and he'd managed another shy and blushing demand as well.

He'd prefer an _experience_ to a gift.

That's what he'd said, an _experience_.

That word, the way he'd said it had put a shiver down Phil's spine.

So here he is, on a bright and sunny Saturday in late July, summer in full-flush, walking hand in hand with his partner down to Coney Island's beach and boardwalk.

"No way!" Clint exclaims, his face lighting up like a child's, like Phil's never seen it. "Really?"
"Really really," he grins. "Come on. Let's have some fun."

And they do.

They spend the heat of the afternoon on the beach, walking barefoot in the sand, splashing through the surf. It's all tanned skin and the salt spray of the ocean, laughing and people-watching and bumping shoulders. They grab hotdogs from one cart, Italian ice and french fries from another, catch a bit of music from a little indie band set up on one of the stages as the day starts slipping into evening and the heat begins to lift just a little.

As the teenagers and families with young children start to filter out they head up onto the boardwalk, walk through the little flea market shops buying nickel candy and glowsticks, hemp-and-seashell bracelets. They ride the carousel and the roller coaster and Phil blows fifteen bucks winning Clint a purple stuffed teddy bear at the bottle toss. He protests loudly, decrying the tricks of the carnie trade the entire time, but he smiles so Happily and hugs the thing under his arm so tight it's worth it.

It's pizza next, and a walk down to the end for milkshakes, hot, fresh-fried doughnuts and kissing the sugar off the corner of Clint's mouth. Laughing, touching, holding hands, back across the boardwalk. He bribes the guy running the ferris wheel with a twenty to stop them at the top, and they get a solid five minutes of making out under the stars as the midnight sky turns a deep, velvet blue.

The ride down is slow and sweet, the music softer than it was before as they head back toward the parking garage. Muffled. Safe. Clint ropes him into a series of selfies under the Coney Island sign, the lights spots of color in the background before they go, wrapping his arm around Phil's shoulders and pressing a face-smooshing kiss to his cheek.

Later he'll steal it from his phone, print it off and put it in a frame in the living room. He'll set it as his wallpaper too, locked down tight where only he can access it. For now he takes Clint home, tumbles him into bed where they collapse together, sunburned and exhausted and happy, and kiss until they fall asleep.

The next day Clint will tell him that it was the perfect first-date he'd always imagined as a teenager back in the circus, kiss him on the cheek before waltzing away with a dreamy smile on his lips. It's wonderful and perfect and sets Phil to thinking about all kinds of other dates, all kinds of other experiences he might be able to share with this man, that he loves so deeply and wholly, all parts of him. If some of those experiences lean toward black ties and churches, well, for now that's between him and his gods.
Coney Island was awesome.

Clint loves getting a day off with his partner, loves going out on a date just him and Phil.

But...

He's kinda dying for a good scene.

It's been a while. Not for sex, they've done that plenty since the passing of their originally agreed upon collaring date, their little come-to-jesus, and it's been good, great even. He's knelt a few times, done a little bit of submitting, but it hasn't gone much past a hesitantly received blowjob.

Phil's being careful, and Clint appreciates that, he does, but he's always been a greedy brat and he wants more.

He starts to dream about rough sex. About being tied spread-eagle to the bedposts. About teasing his Dom until he gets taken over his knee for a playful spanking, about being edged until he sobs, and he can only hold out against such vivid images for so long. The morning he wakes up humping Phil's hip and whimpering 'Sir' and 'please' over and over and over again he realizes he can't go on the way he has been.

He's gotten more than a little taste now; it's become a need, practically an addiction, and he wants.

So he does what Phil taught him to do, what Phil wants him to do.

He asks.

"Mmm, you've been awfully good lately," Phil hums as Clint slides his hands over his shoulders and down his chest, bent over the back of Phil's armchair where he can nuzzle at his temple. "What did you do?"

Clint chuckles, moves around to the front of the chair and crouches down swiftly, so that he can slink his way back up beneath the paper Phil is reading, one long brush of his near-naked body against his Dom's.

"Nothin'," he pouts, crawling slowly into the man's lap, an aggressive, seductive move that puts his knees in the chair on either side of Phil's hips, just enough room to hold himself up in a kneel that keeps them mere inches apart.

His hands are on the back of the chair framing Phil's head and it gives him a little thrill to be hovering over him, to be staring down at him. Phil's eyes are already going dark, and he licks his lips, swallows, a glaring tell in a secret agent usually so blank-faced and calm. Clint leans down as if to kiss him, pleased when Phil tips up his face to receive, but he stops short, teases, lets himself ease in just close enough to feel the puff of Phil's breath against his lips, the barest brush of skin.

"My Dom says I'm always good," he mumbles, mouth catching against Phil's and he feels more than sees the grin spread across the man's face.

"This is being good?" he asks, one hand sliding up Clint's bare chest from waistband to collar bone, but his eyes are gleaming and hungry, pupils blown.
Clint grins, grabs him by the back of the neck, and dives in.

The kiss is hard, aggressive. He plunders Phil's mouth, takes, all teeth and tongue and gasping for breath and he puts everything he's got into it, tries to make it the best kiss he's ever laid on anyone in his life. In the back of his mind he recognizes the fluttering of Phil's newspaper as it gets tossed to the floor and then there are two big, warm hands on his waist gripping him tight, his Dom's fingers biting into his sides and his hips rolling as he tries to arch up and get as much contact as he can. Clint's got his own fingers fisted in the collar of Phil's shirt, trying to pull him up, up, up, deeper into his mouth and by the time they break apart, panting for air, Phil's got Clint's teeth marks in his lower lip, looks unstrung and completely debauched.

"That what definitely good," Phil huffs, and Clint smiles, leans back in for a shorter, more playful smooch.

"Good enough for a treat?" he asks slyly, and Phil's eyes narrow, darken impossibly as they skim over his body; the hollow of his throat, the sheen of sweat on his chest, the way the muscles in his stomach flex and contract, all leading down to the massive erection tenting his briefs.

"Oh, is that what you're after?" he purrs, and his fingers stroke once along the length of his dick, warm through the cotton.

Clint whimpers, bites his lips and nods.

"And does my good boy know what kind of treat he wants?"

Clint gasps, nods again.

He does, he really, really does but it's suddenly very hard to think with Phil's fingers stroking idly over his hard-on, like he doesn't even realize he's doing it.

"Been dreaming about you," he whines, his fingers flexing around Phil's shoulders as he tries to keep his hips still, and the man chuckles quietly because of course he knows that already. "About what you... about what you could do to me."

Phil's body tightens up beneath him, his hands open and close against Clint's ribs, and his voice is a low rumble when he speaks.

"What could I do to you Clint?"

"Anything," he mumbles, a tremor running down his spine. "Anything but I want..."

Phil growls deep in his chest, runs his hands up Clint's chest to pinch his nipples and bury his face in the curve of Clint's neck. His tongue sweeps over the hollow of Clint's throat, his teeth scrape lightly over his skin, and then he's sucking gently, not quite enough to bruise.

"I want you to tie me down," he whispers, and Phil's mouth tightens on his shoulder, his hands slipping around to the small of his back to jerk him closer. He yips but it only seems to spur the man on – he's working a real hickey into Clint's neck now and his hand dives into his briefs, wraps around his cock in one smooth stroke.

"Fuck!" he chokes, his head falling back, and Phil snarls against his skin.

"Keep going," he hisses, his hips rocking up against Clint's ass as his hand takes up a rough but steady rhythm. "Tell me."
"Want you to tie me to your bed Sir," Clint whines, unable to stop himself from thrusting up into Phil's tight, dry grip. "I want... I want you to blindfold me."

Phil's hand stutters but he doesn't stop, and it's quickly winding Clint higher, a sharp heat building low in his belly as all those dreams flash behind his closed eyelids, that incredibly sense of floating, of falling when Phil had wrapped the lace around his eyes.

"I want you to touch me," he pants as his breath comes faster and harder now, clutching at Phil's shoulders as the man lifts his hand to his own mouth, licking his palm sloppy before picking the pace back up. "Want you to make me feel, want you to make me wait. I... I want all those things you said you like, I... I want you to make me..."

"Make you what Clint!" Phil snarls, his hand twisting wickedly around the head of Clint's cock, making his balls hitch up high and tight.

"Want you to make me wait!" he wails, "Oh fuck, please Sir, please, please, please make me come!"

"Then come!"

And well...

He never thought he'd be the kind of guy who could come on command, but something about Phil just... brings it out of him.

He's giggling, which is stupid, but he's loose and sweaty and warm and plastered against Phil's chest which is a great place to be, and he just... he feels nice.

"Well," he hums, snuggling against Phil's shoulder and running his fingers through the mess on his stomach, lifting them to his mouth to lick them clean again, "That escalated quickly."

"That wasn't your plan?" Phil chuckles, stroking his flank and rubbing his cheek against Clint's hair.

"Not exactly," he admits. "You know me, I'm more of an improviser."

"Mmm. I like your improvisations. At least in the bedroom."

"Haven't made it that far yet," Clint laughs, and Phil smiles against his temple, presses a kiss to his forehead.

A moment of silence falls, the two of them breathing quietly together. Phil's hard-on is still pressing insistently against his inner thigh where he's sprawled across the man's lap but he doesn't seem to be too interested in doing anything about it, so Clint lets himself lounge in the moment, at least until Phil murmurs against his ear.

"You've missed this haven't you?" he asks quietly, his thumb brushing back and forth across Clint's hip.

"Yeah," he admits, a little sadly, a little shyly, and god he hopes the next words out of his partner's mouth aren't an apology.

"I have too."

Another moment of quiet, and then Phil is pulling back so he can look Clint in the eye, press a long, soft, lingering kiss to his lips.

"Give me till the end of the week," he says, "And I'll give my good boy everything he's asked for."
They practice of course.
They always practice.

Phil's tied him up in a fair bit of Shibari thus far, every once in a while tying him to himself, but he's never gone so far as to anchor him to anything, and as the week passes it's obvious that that's the bit his Dom is worried about. He starts him out slow, tying his wrists together in his lap at dinner that night and feeding him from his own plate, but it escalates from there, and what surprises Clint the most is that it happens at work.

In the beginning Clint had said absolutely no submission at work.

Later he'd shyly admitted that he'd often wished for a Dom he could go to within SHIELD when he needed handling, and Phil had teased him after finally discovering the source of the two words' interchangeability – Dom and handler.

As their relationship has progressed they've constantly communicated, talked and questioned and updated their kink lists and their limits, and it's the most comprehensive, responsible relationship Clint's ever been in.

By now he has a much better understanding of himself and his desires, his fears.

It's not the public submission that he hates, just like it's not really the pain.

It's the humiliation.

It's the loss of respect, the way that people look at him with disgust and the way shame bubbles up in the pit of his belly.

It's not like that with Phil.

He feels... proud to have earned his place at Phil's feet, and trusts the man never to put him into a situation where he'll be looked down upon.

Still, it's incredible to see the legendary Agent Phillip J Coulson start to unbend for him, Clint Barton.

The first time it's nothing, just Phil putting him on his knees beside his desk and tying Clint's wrist to the leg of his chair. He wriggles a bit for a while, testing the bonds, not really trying to get away but exploring the feeling of being stuck to something. Phil mostly ignores him, going about his paperwork, at least until Clint settles and then his hand lands in his hair and doesn't leave it until an hour's passed and it's time to go home. The next time is more intense – Clint has sacked out on Phil's couch, one leg thrown over the back of the sofa, arms thrown over his head when Phil sits down by his hip and kisses him hard, starts trailing silk ropes over his skin. He asks, of course he always asks, and Clint actually surprises himself how quickly and eagerly he agrees. Loops go around his wrists and ankles, long leashes that tie him tight in the position he's flopped out in but that go loose and flexible if he moves just right. He does the same as he did before – fights it just to test his limits, his own reactions to it – until he collapses back against the cushions, his chest heaving and his cock rock hard in his tactical pants.
That surprises them both.

In general it's the added naughtiness of being on SHIELD time that makes Clint's blood zing in his veins when they fool around in the office. Phil coaxes the same responses out of him just by kissing him in HQ, has him up and ready to go just by touching him on the hip or the shoulder or the small of his back. He doesn't particularly think it's the ropes that elicit his reactions, and it seems like Phil may suspect the same because when they're shipped out with two other agents on an overnight milk-run, he and Coulson wind up in the same hotel room for the night, alone after their short debrief concludes and Hanson and O'Rourke head for their room across the hall. Clint's blood is still thundering from the op, from a chase across the courtyard and a last-minute shot well made, and he's keyed up and bouncy, pacing at the foot of one of the double beds.

"I want to tie you down."

Clint freezes so hard and fast he stumbles, has to catch himself.

"What?"

Phil – and it is Phil now, his partner and his lover and his Dom, not Coulson his handler – looks a bit shamefaced, a bit surprised by his own outburst, like he hadn't meant to say it, but the man has never backed down from a damn thing in his life.

Taking a slow, blatant step forward, he reaches out and places his palm flat against Clint's chest, hot through the thin cotton of his t-shirt.

"Your heart's racing," he murmurs, eyes on Clint's pulse fluttering at the hollow of his throat, his heartbeat pounding beneath his fingers. "You're still high on the adrenaline, haven't even started to come down yet. This, now, it..."

"It's a better test."

"We don't have to," Phil says immediately, his thumb sweeping over Clint's left pectoral and he has to smile, a surge of sweet fondness rushing through him for this man that he loves so much, who is so careful and caring with him. "We never have to. Or we can do something else, or we can..."

"I love you, so fucking much."

Phil blinks, surprised by Clint's sudden declaration, even more by the way Clint leans in and kisses him long and slow and soft.

"Tie me down," he murmurs in Phil's ear, his arms sliding around his lover's waist. "Tie me to your bed and make love to me. Keep me there and love me, and just... just keep me."

"Always."

There's not a trace of Agent Coulson or Agent Barton between them that night. Phil wraps his silk tie around Clint's wrist, a navy with silver pinstriping, and lays him out flat on his back before tying them securely to the headboard. It's all whispers in the dark trying to stay quiet, lingering brushes of skin on skin, and Clint pulling, pulling, pulling at his bindings feeling like he's about to fly apart.

Later, when they're lying together panting and sated, Clint's hands still laced above his head and Phil cuddled atop his chest like a cat, he can't keep a smug little smirk off his face.

"Mission successful boss?" he asks quietly, and Phil huffs, pinches him playfully on the hip.
"Feel like I should be asking you that," he replies when they've finished snickering and squirming. His hand comes up and he traces the edge of the fabric twisted around Clint's wrists, threads their fingers together. "How was it?"

Clint hums, tugs at his restraints, considers.

"Good," he answers after a moment. "Not my favorite thing ever, not something I'd go for every time. Like the other better, the Shibari. Like the way you like it better. But it's not bad. Nothing like it's ever been."

"I'm glad," Phil murmurs. "And I'm proud you tried Clint. I don't want you to... lose something you might enjoy because of a bad experience. Does that make sense."

"Makes sense on you."

"You still want to try?"

"Yes please. Do you?"

"Mmm. I've wanted to do a sensation play scene for a while. I think this would be a good opportunity to indulge. Blindfold will keep you guessing, ties will keep you from coming completely off the bed."

"And my Dom will keep me from coming until he says so."

Growling, Phil gives him a sharp, playful nip and tugs him free.

Chapter End Notes

I am *so* looking forward to giving you guys the next chapter omg...
Clint's nervous as he heads home. It's sharp and hot in the pit of his belly, beneath his skin, but it's the good kind of nervous and he knows the difference. He's never gone into a full bondage scene excited, eager, anything but terrified, and even though his heart is pounding in his chest his feet are carrying him toward his Dom instead of away.

All those other times, all those other people – if he'd had the chance to run he would have.

Now he doesn't even consider it.

Phil opens the door in those damn jeans and that soft black t-shirt, his feet bare, and Clint pretty much goes hard right there in the hallway. As much as it's a terrible kind of cliché it looks really good on him, and Clint's come to associate the clothes with all kinds of wicked and naughty things. It seems to give Phil a bit of confidence too – he's always smoother, steadier, more... sure of himself when they're together like this, and Clint doesn't even know how that's possible because it's Phil Coulson.

It doesn't really matter. It works out really, really well for him and he certainly isn't going to complain.

"Hello sweet boy," Phil purrs, and there's something so warm and affectionate in his tone that Clint just melts as his Dom slides his arms around his waist and pulls him across the threshold into the apartment. "Have you done as I asked you tonight?"

Clint hums as Phil tucks his face into the curve of his neck, his lips roving over the skin just beneath the edge of his collar.

"Yes Sir," he answers, his hands curling around his Dom's hips.

He had too, followed Phil's orders to the letter. As much as he'd wanted to stalk his Dom down to the parking garage as he left HQ, chase him back to their apartment, he'd stayed after; eaten a good meal, completed a light workout, and showered carefully. He's not a hundred percent sure what he's in for tonight – Phil's asked him to trust him with a bit of improvisation and of course he said yes – but he wants to be ready for anything.

"Such a good boy," Phil praises against his throat, and Clint whimpers, skin prickling as Phil's fingers slip beneath the edge of his shirt to tease the small of his back. "You're tense."

For a second the world stops, his heart squeezing in his chest, then Clint barks a laugh and feels nearly all that tension drain away.

"'M nervous," he admits, and Phil pulls back sharply to look him in the eye but doesn't get far, given Clint's grip on his hips. "'S good, 's good nervous. I like it."
Phil doesn't reply, doesn't seem to feel the need to. Instead he just looks, stares, admiring not searching as his hand comes up to grip Clint's chin, to rub his thumb over Clint's lower lip.

"So pretty," he murmurs. "Come on, couch."

Clint lets himself be tugged, toeing out of his boots as Phil pulls him from the entryway. He's a bit surprised at the direction this has taken, had expected things to get hot and heavy straight off the bat what with the way he'd been feeling on the way over, and he thinks it must show on his face because Phil is smirking at him.

"What?" he asks innocently, flopping down onto the couch and letting his legs fall apart, slouched low and splayed wide. Lifting his arms, he laces his fingers behind his head, eyes sparkling. "I wanna neck. You complaining?"

Clint's breath catches in his throat as he shakes his head hard – Phil looks young and unbearably smug like this, confident and cock-sure, and Clint just wants to drop to his knees and lick him.

"Better not be," his Dom rumbles, low and rough, though the corner of his mouth ticks up as he fights a grin. "Now. Be a good boy and kiss me."

He maybe spaces out a little after that. Who can blame him, with all the blood in his body rushing south so fast he goes dizzy and breathless with it? Sinking down into his Dom's lap he ranges over him, hands curled around his shoulders, and does his best to kiss him just as breathless. Phil is oddly passive beneath him; keeps his hands behind his head and lets Clint run the show, and there's something incredibly hot about it that has Clint diving in twice as hard, twice as deep. It's lips and teeth and tongue, a long, slow make-out session that sees him coaxing his Dom toward something else, something bigger, and he easily loses track of time, of his nerves.

Which... thinking about it, was probably Phil's plan all along.

"Think you're so smart," Clint mutters against his ear, nipping lightly at the tendon in his neck. He doesn't see it but he can practically feel Phil smirking at him, decides to try wiping the smug off his face by sucking on his tongue. "Fuck you're so hot like this, cocky son of a...

He cuts himself off with a gasp as Phil grabs on to his hair, tugs his head back to bear his neck.

"Careful sweetheart," he purrs, liquid and dark like molasses, sweetness laced with bitter warning. "I already have plans to keep you at my mercy for as long as you can take tonight. It's not the time to test my patience."

Clint whimpers, nods his head as best he can with Phil gripping his hair, but then the man's hand gentles, drags him down so his Dom can suck his earlobe into his mouth as his free arm wraps around Clint's waist and hauls him impossibly closer.

"But if you want to play at topping me another time, you know all you have to do is ask."

And Clint... well.

Clint just kinda... loses the thread for a minute.

That... that's not something he thought happened. Not something he thought Doms did. In fact he's pretty sure it's a hard core no-no; he may not have gotten the fancy sex-ed orientation courses in high school like most people did but he's known enough Dominants in his day to know that the thought of submitting, even a little, even in play is the epitome of ridiculous suggestions. It makes sense though, of course it makes sense that Phil would be different, so completely comfortable with himself and his
orientation, especially now that he's got Clint, who fits so well against his 'atypical' style.

"Thought that would distract you," Phil chuckles as he waltzes Clint up the hall into their bedroom.

Clint blinks, looks around the softly lit space looking for clues but doesn't spy any. The bed has been stripped down to nothing but Phil's soft, grey sheets and a single pillow placed neatly in the middle, the tableside lamps casting everything in a warm glow, and there's a soft jazz record playing faintly from the turntable in the corner. Other than that there's nothing, no clue to what he's about to be in for, and that tingle of excitement comes rushing back up his spine, making him shiver.

"Give me a color sweetheart."

"Green," he answers immediately, already breathless and ready to beg for a good, hard stroke. "So green Sir."

"Good boy."

Phil gives him a kiss on the cheek and it's so chaste and sweet that Clint blushes, ducks his head shyly as his cheeks go warm and tingly. Phil is smiling at him but steps back out of reach, settles down on the chaise lounge in the corner, his knees once again falling open, and given how hard he is beneath his fly, Clint understands. He licks his lips, whines, but as he moves to take a step forward, to go to his knees at his Dom's feet, the elegant wave of a wrist stills him.

Phil's eyes are dark and hungry as they fucking prowl over his body, and he feels his Dom's gaze like a physical touch that fires sparks beneath his skin.

"Take you clothes off," he commands quietly, and oh yeah, that's the stuff right there.

Clint shudders, breathes out heavily, and if it weren't for the quiet, the soft light of the room he would have stripped off quickly and efficiently, shucked his clothes as sharply as he did at work with no purpose but getting naked. Like this though, with Phil's eyes feasting on him, with the soft, gentle music playing against his skin he strips slowly, sensually out of his clothes. He folds each item as he slowly bares his own skin to his Dom's gaze, thinks the man will appreciate the care and the time, and if the way he shifts in his seat, his fingers kneading his own thighs is any indication he does.

"Never get tired of looking at you," he murmurs when Clint's standing there completely bared at last, his hands tucked away at the small of his back in a loose parade rest. Rolling smoothly to his feet, he stalks toward him, circles him like a predator, so close but refusing to touch. "Don't know how I didn't get caught at it before, with your eyes."

"Was too busy trying not to get caught myself Sir," Clint murmurs.

Phil's fingertips dance down his spine, the lightest touch, and he sighs as he relaxes into the sensation, the safety of his Dom at his back.

"I'm glad that's behind us."

"Me too."

Circling around to stand in front of him, Phil cups his face and kisses him, long and slow, and Clint manages not to push into it, not to press forward and rub against him, not to demand. Instead he takes what he's given, lets himself be kissed, and then Phil's fingers are sliding down his arms to his wrists and bringing them forward, rubbing his cheek against each one like a cat before pulling a pair of leather cuffs from his back pocket.
They've talked about this part. About what kind of bondage that Clint and Phil both want, what kind he'll be comfortable with. He'd wanted something stronger than the tape, and Phil had wanted something more comfortable than the ropes, something that he could wear for hours, tug and writhe against without bruising or breaking the skin. He'd been careful bringing out the leather, making sure Clint knew that he didn't have to use them if he didn't like the way they felt or made him feel, but they're smooth and supple, soft and well-shined, and lined with a padded quilting that's gentle on his skin. They're Phil's, belong to Phil, and he puts them on Clint's wrists the same way he's always done, with a kiss and a careful touch, a possessive look that never fails to make his insides squirm happily.

"Come here."

Walking Clint to the end of the bed, Phil slips in behind him and wraps his fingers around the footboard, his hands shoulder-width apart. Stroking his way back up Clint's arms, over his shoulders and down his back, he grabs him suddenly and firmly by the hips and pulls him back sharply, so that he's half bent over and leaning forward, his ass snug against Phil's dick. Clint whines, high-pitched and long, because this, oh, this. A bolt of heat strikes him low in the pit of his belly because this is the perfect position to get some of his Dom's dick in him, and if he wasn't hard to the point of aching he'd probably be laughing at himself for that thought.

As it is he shakes his ass as best he can, rolls his hips against the stiff, denim-clad cock behind him and feels himself pink when Phil chuckles, his hands relaxing against his hips.

"Such an eager boy," Phil murmurs in his ear, leaning forward so that he's pressed along Clint's back. His hands slide up Clint's chest, tweak his nipples before wrapping around his ribcage and holding him close, a dirty, dirty hug. "I'm going to put the blindfold on now alright?"

"Yes," Clint gasps, his eyes already fluttering shut. "Yes please Sir..."

But the soft fabric is already being wrapped around his head, thicker and softer than the lace from before, solid and dark all the way through. Black takes his vision and his feels his breathing quicken immediately, an instinctive, visceral reaction, but Phil's already made quick work of the knot and his hands are back on Clint's skin – long, sweeping strokes that gentle him back from the edge.

"There you go," he hums, lips on Clint's neck as he leans heavily against him, hands sliding down his taut belly, over his flanks. "You can't know how this feels Clint, to see you trusting me with this."

He thinks he can. Sort of, anyway. He knows how it feels from this side at least – to really let go with someone he cares so much about, someone he believes in.

"Love you so much," he hears himself sigh, and Phil's arms tighten around him as he buries his face between Clint's shoulder blades.

"Love you back," he mumbles, and then he's placing a kiss on the nape of Clint's neck, slapping him playfully on the ass, and dropping to his knees.
Dear god, what have I done? I don't think this counts as anything but straight porn with a side of feels.

God, he's wanted to do this for ages. When he thinks about what he likes, what he's wanted to do to a sub, what he fantasizes about doing with Clint, this is what he thinks about. A long, involved scene, giving him as much as he can take, and that Clint had actually expressed a desire to explore anchored bondage with him of his own volition, that he'd been excited about the bare bones of the scene Phil had outlined... well.

It's everything.

He had been nervous when he'd shown up on their doorstep that afternoon, an hour and a half after Phil had left him at HQ, but he'd said it was a good nervous and Phil had believed him. He needed to believe him, not just for Clint's sake but for his own. This kind of thing, this kind of scene, Phil needs to have his own calm confidence about him so that he can inspire the same in his sub, so that he can lead them through an experience they'll both enjoy.

And he'd enjoyed kissing on the couch, oh, had he enjoyed it.

Clint's a damn good kisser, and it had been the first time that Phil had ever really just sat back and enjoyed his skill. He could feel the younger man getting frustrated for all of a second when he'd failed to respond the way he usually did, with eager teeth and tongue, but it had vanished in an instant when his clever mind had caught on to the trick of it. They'd stayed there for fifteen, twenty minutes just making out, and it had taken all he had to keep his hands behind his head, to keep teasing Clint, forcing him to fight for a reaction.

It was wonderful.

Eventually though, eventually the tension had melted away, the nerves had faded, and Clint had gone warm and pliant in his lap, kissing him deep and smooth like the best scotch. He feels like he's been drinking; he's loose and warm and relaxed himself, and he says what he says and he means it, doesn't regret it. It serves its purpose anyway; gets Clint distracted enough that Phil dances him all the way into the bedroom before he decides to check back in and join the party. He gives Phil one hell of a show stripping off, slow and sweet, folding his things as he goes and it's that silly little extra touch that makes Phil's heart go all melty.

By the time he gets the submissive cuffed and blindfolded and bent over against the foot of the bed, his stupid heart is ready to burst it's so full-up with feelings.

"So beautiful," he murmurs, more to himself than to Clint as he sweeps his palms up the man's flanks, from ankle to hip and back down again. "Love looking at you."

"I do have a pretty spectacular ass," Clint hums, but he sounds breathless and needy already so Phil forgives the comment.
Mostly.

Lifting a hand, he gives said ass a backward slap, not enough to sting but enough to set it bouncing. Damn that's nice. He does it again, smacks the other side this time, pleased when Clint whines and squirms above him, shifting his weight.

"You really do," he acknowledges, because really, it can't not be said at this point. "A solid ten for bounce and biteability."

"How would you... ohhh fuck."

Phil is careful with his teeth as he tests his theory, bites down hard enough to bruise but not break right on the meaty part of Clint's right cheek. The submissive moans, the steely muscles of his thighs flexing beneath Phil's hands as he fights to keep himself still. He holds the bite, teeth sunk in deep, thoughts of marking flashing through his mind and thudding in his chest before he lets go. Clint whines as he worries a bit at the flesh before running his tongue soothingly over the skin, rubs his cheek against the bite mark, feeling incredibly tactile himself.

A good time for it really, he muses, since he's got such a wonderful toy in front of him to play with.

Cupping Clint's ass in his hands, he gives it a good squeeze, pets at the backs of his thighs and presses kisses to the creases of his knees. They wobble but keep him upright, a bit ticklish apparently, so Phil steers clear in a bid to keep his lover standing. He has no interest in getting mule-kicked tonight. Besides, there's plenty more fun to be had, as evidenced by the way Clint continues to shift and whine the more Phil touches him. A couple of light slaps, some jiggling, a nice firm knead – yes, he's enjoying himself immensely.

"Good?" he mumbles, nibbling at the curve of Clint's ass where it meets his thigh, his fingers sliding around the man's hips to stroke at his inner thighs.

"Good, 's so good, thank you Sir."

"Mmm, good boy."

Reaching beneath the edge of the bed between Clint's feet, Phil pulls out the towel he'd stashed there earlier, the items he'd laid out on it. Popping the cap of the cherry-flavored lube he'd purchased so long ago, he squeezes a dot out onto the pad of his thumb and slips his hand between Clint's legs, bracing the man's left knee with his free hand. Good thing he does too, what with the way he yelps, jumps in surprise.

Phil chuckles, rubs his thumb over the tight ring of muscle, circling lightly to make his submissive whimper. Clint pushes back but he keeps him upright, doesn't let him take more than he's ready to give just yet, still enjoying his play too much. Above him Clint grumbles, shifts his hips before settling down again, though Phil can see his fingers flexing around the footboard where he'd placed them. Withdrawing his hand, he adds a little more lube, warms it between his fingers before diving back in, and this time he gives him what he wants; the slow, teasing push of a single finger.

Clint gasps, whines, rocks back against it but Phil makes him take it slow, pulling back and pushing in again one small nudge at a time. He's panting hard by the time he's taken the whole thing, though it's certainly no stretch for him, and Phil can't help but grin against the back of his thigh, pleased by the thin sheen of sweat that's broken out over his skin.

"Good?" he asks again, and God he sounds like a love-struck dope but he can't care.

Clint's shivering, flexing around his finger and Phil can see him nodding furiously, his teeth no doubt
sunk into his lower lip.

"Good, good, 's... more please Sir."

"Since you asked."

He gives it to him too, more. Gives him a second finger, gives him his lips and his tongue, touches and teases and tastes and he's wanted to do this since the beginning, since he bought that stupid bottle of fruity-flavored slick. He likes doing this, as backward as that is for a Dom, had never expected Clint to do it for him the way he had. He knows face-sitting is a pretty popular kink, or forced sexual servitude, but he couldn't have even imagined asking Clint to do that, let alone commanded it. He'd been startled, stunned when the archer had nearly begged to be allowed, as if it were a privilege to be awarded, and he thinks they were both shocked by the outcome.

Hell, Phil hadn't even known he was capable of orgasming without an erection, had been worked up to it by Clint's gentle massage of his prostate and the slick, delicate tease of his tongue.

He doesn't bring Clint nearly that close.

"May I have another please Sir, can I... can I have more?"

"No."

Clint whines deep in the back of his throat as Phil pulls back, and he can't stop himself from laughing, from dropping a kiss to the curve of his ass.

"I'll make you a deal though," he says conversationally as he wipes his fingers off on the towel and picks up the toy that he's laid out. "If you can make the guess, then I'll give you more."

"Deal," Clint whimpers, his body rocking minutely as he pants, his toes curling in the carpet. "Deal, yes, please Sir."

"Good boy," Phil hums. Picking up the lube, he coats the toy in his hand and plants another quick kiss on Clint's thigh. "Love it when you play with me. Now, guess?"

Clint moans when Phil presses the toy between his cheeks, teases at his opening. His body tightens as he fights to keep himself still, from rocking back against it, and Phil rewards him by pushing in just a tiny bit, spreading him open.

"P... plug?" he pants, and Phil grins, immensely happy with the note of hope in his voice, happier still with the disappointed little wail he gets when he pulls back.

"Nope. Guess again sweetheart."

"I... Sir please..."

"Need a hint?"

"Yes, please I, ohhhh..."

Clint moans long and low as Phil gently pushes the prostate massager into his body, rocks it back and forth. He's used this one himself before – he knows what it does, rolling slowly over the soft, sensitive place inside and rubbing against the smooth expanse of your perineum. Clint whimpers and whines as Phil nudges at the handle, tugs on it gently, until he's sweating and shaking and thrusting his hips back as best he can bent over the way he is.
Leaving the toy in place Phil rises to his feet, stifles a groan as his knees creak and pop.

He'd been down there longer than he'd planned.

Sliding his hands down Clint's arms, he relishes the shiver that ripples down the man's spine before he wraps his fingers around the sub's, uncurls them from the footboard and coaxes him upright. "Come on sweetheart, come here," he murmurs, petting Clint's chest and tugging him forward.

Clint's face is tight beneath the blindfold, his mouth open as he pants, but Phil recognizes sex-face when he sees it and decides to check in after he gets Clint settled. It takes a minute – the archer moves cautiously without his sight despite Phil's guiding hands – but eventually Phil gets him up onto the bed and laid down on his back in the middle, head on the pillow, hands above his head. He's whimpering, hips hitching restlessly as he sucks in his breath between gritted teeth. His cock is rock hard between his legs and Phil is distantly, vaguely surprised by the way he hadn't even thought about it until now, hadn't even noticed the massive hard-on Clint was sporting when faced with his ass instead.

He immediately wants to touch, but the way Clint's jaw tics tells him he wouldn't be able to handle it just yet, so instead he splays his palm across the man's chest so he can feel his heart pound.

"Too much?" he murmurs, and Clint shakes his head frantically, licks his lips. "No, 's good, 's good," he slurs, rolling his hips, the head of his cock dragging against his belly and leaving a sticky smear of precum behind. "I'm green, I'm green Sir, just..."

Phil knows what he wants, and maybe Clint hadn't guessed right the first time but he's never been able to keep a kiss from Clint. Still, he needs to do a quick brush of his teeth first, so instead of the kiss he'd like to give him, he gives him a tender peck on the cheek. Stroking his ribs soothingly, Phil sits back but keeps a hand on Clint's side while he speaks.

"I'm going to step into the bathroom for a minute," he says gently, "Grab a few things. I'll be right back and then we'll start, all right?"

"Start," Clint chokes, a half-hysterical little laugh. "Jesus Sir, I... I don't know what you think all that was. If you haven't even started, I... I don't think 'm gonna last."

"Yes you will," Phil says quietly, confidently, with a smile and a well of warm fondness. "You will because I tell you to, because you want me to make you wait. Don't you sweet boy?"

"Yes, yes Sir, I'll be good, I'll..."

"I know you will."

Sliding his hand down Clint's belly, he presses gently against his lower abdomen, makes him feel the toy still resting inside him.

"Stay here," he says over Clint's long, low moan, his thumb brushing against the edge of his bellybutton and conveniently (or inconveniently, depending on who you asked) avoiding his cock. "No touching. I'll be right back."

"Yes Sir."

Phil allows himself one look over his shoulder at the submissive spread out in his bed on his way to the bathroom. Any more than that and he'd probably get stuck there, staring. Clint's always gorgeous,
no matter where he is or what he's doing, all muscle and economic movement, efficient and deadly power, but here, like this, with his hands firmly above his head and thick, black fabric wrapped around his eyes he's something else entirely.

Truly submitting, giving up all of himself, a hooded hawk...

Phil knows how lucky he is.

Starting the hot water, Phil scrubs his hands twice before brushing his teeth and swishing some Listerine until the artificial cherry taste is gone from his mouth. He and Clint had both been tested at the start of their relationship and only rarely used condoms anymore, but there was no reason to get sloppy or careless. Once he's gotten himself cleaned up he gives himself a squeeze through his jeans, the first of any attention he's given his own erection. He doesn't really have any plans for sex or for getting himself off, so it might be the only attention he pays it tonight, but the thought doesn't dampen his excitement.

Grabbing the wheeled table tray that he'd hidden behind the bathroom door, he pushes it toward the bed, watching as Clint tilts his head and tracks the sound across the room. Pulling it up next to the headboard, he leans down to open the hidden mini fridge and takes out one last item, along with a bottle of water. Sitting down beside his submissive's hip, he cracks off the plastic top and slips his hand behind Clint's head, lifting it from the pillow.

"Nice slow sip sweetheart," he instructs, holding the bottle to Clint's lips. He gulps thirstily instead, and Phil grins fondly, stroking a hand through his sweaty hair, careful not to dislodge the blindfold. "Greedy boy. There, that's enough now."

Clint sighs as Phil uses his grip to his advantage, pulling him up into a long, much more thorough kiss before he sets the bottle aside and turns, getting comfortable on the edge of the bed at Clint's side. He sits cross-legged, surveys the array of tools and toys he's collected, and very, very suddenly doesn't know where to start.

Huffing lightly at himself, he runs his hand idly down Clint's side, just to enjoy the feeling of taut, tanned skin beneath his fingertips, muscles and scars and coarse hair. Clint drags in a deep breath through his nose but lets it out again slowly, settling back onto the mattress.

It's a murmur, a sigh, and he supposes it's a good enough place to start.

First things first though.

"I'm going to cuff your wrists to the headboard," he says quietly, taking Clint's hand in his own and lifting it to press a kiss to his knuckles. "I'm using quick-release carabiners, so if you want your hands back just tell me."

"Yes Sir."

"Good boy."

Tugging Clint's hands over his head, Phil caresses his wrists, squeezes his fingers before clipping the cuffs to the rings he'd attached to the headboard earlier that evening. Once they're fixed, approximately shoulder-width apart, Clint's elbows just bent, Phil runs a finger beneath each of the cuffs, checks their tightness and the way they sit on his sub's wrists.

Clint must sense him let go, sit back, because he tugs at the bonds and flexes his arms, biceps bulging as he tests the hold, his range of motion. It's a familiar sight after all the practicing they've done and it settles something inside him, knowing that the younger man is so practical about this. When they'd
started with anchored bondage he'd expected a bit of panic to come through, an immediate gut reaction, but it's more Agent Barton in these moments than Clint the sub, or even Clint Barton the man. It's a careful, strategic exploration of his situation, of what he's left with, and when he's satisfied with his conclusions he sinks back down on the bed with a quiet hum and a happy little smile on his face.

"Green Sir," he purrs, and Phil feels a wire of tension uncoil from his shoulders, is careful to keep his relief from his voice.

"Thank you baby," he praises, cupping Clint's jaw and pressing another kiss to his lips.

He doesn't think he'll ever get tired of that.

Using just the tips of his fingers he begins stroking over Clint's skin, tracing marks, following the dips and valleys of his muscle. There's so much of him, all so bare, so warm, he could do this for hours and not get bored, not run out of things to marvel over.

Yeah, he's a total goner.

For a while Clint just lies there, a dopey smile on his face, head lolling back and forth on the pillow as Phil continues his exploration of the man's body, seemingly in no hurry for anything more. It's nice, in its own way, but not exactly the reaction he's looking for, so he decides to up the ante and drops his hand to Clint's ankle. Sliding his fingers up the length of his leg, he continues along his inner thigh, firm enough not to tickle. Clint hums happily, makes to stretch and point his toes, only to gasp and buck his hips when his body tightens around the toy still inside of him. He moans, sinks his teeth into his lower lip, and Phil grins, massages the inside of his thigh firmly.

"How does it feel?" he wonders aloud, and Clint whines, rolls his hips slowly.

"'S weird," he pants, his fingers closing into fists, corded forearms flexing. "Feels full but... not. Heavy. Feels like too much, like I'm right there but it's still... 's too far, 'm not even close."

"Mm, how terrible for you," Phil muses, still petting Clint's thigh.

"Bully," he accuses, sticking his tongue out at the ceiling. "You're me... ahhhhhhhh."

Phil grins, tugs on the handle of the toy a second time, rolling it against the smooth skin behind Clint's balls and rocking it against his prostate. The man's thighs clench, huge, steely muscles locking up as presses his feet to the bed, lifts his hips inches off the mattress, and he lets him move, lets him ride the toy for several minutes before he lets go.

"Mean," Clint pants with finality, his chest heaving as his legs cave out from under him and he flops back onto the bed, whimpering when it jars the toy inside him.

Phil chuckles, rolls up onto his knees so he can put an arm on the other side of Clint's body, prop himself over him and lean down for another one of those addictive, nibbling kisses.

"Not me," he denies, nosing his way down Clint's jaw, nipping his earlobe.

Sitting back again, he drops his hand into the bowl of ice cubes he'd taken from the mini fridge, already starting to melt around the edges. He gives them a stir, watches Clint pick up his ears at the clacking sound, pulls out a cube and sucks it into his mouth to make sure all the dry corners are gone off of it. He doesn't want it sticking to Clint's skin.

"Guess?" he asks, taking the cube from his mouth, and he grins when Clint licks his lips, frowns.
"I don't..." he mumbles, but Phil's made up his mind to just jump right into this, and slides the melting ice cube from the hollow of Clint's throat all the way down to his bellybutton. He sucks in a wobbly gasp, pulls at his bindings as if to drag himself out from beneath the cold, but there's a wide grin spreading across his face and Phil knows, if he could see his eyes, they would be sparkling.

"Ice," his yelps, a laugh hiding at the back of his throat. "Ice, it's ice!" He barely gets the last bit out before he's giggling, squirming as Phil circles his belly button, slipping the last of the melting cube into it and chasing it back out again with his tongue. "Oh god, that feels good."

Phil smiles, sits up and reaches for another.

"Good," he declares, "And you guessed right, so you get some more."

This time he holds the ice cube tight in his fingers over Clint's chest, letting it melt so that the drips of cold water fell onto his nipples. This earns him a gasp and a whine, a hearty squirm when he drops it to Clint's pec, circles the tight little nub of flesh until it's stiff and pebbled. Leaning down, he sucks it into his mouth, flicking it with his tongue while giving its twin the same little tease with the ice cube. Clint arches his chest off the bed, jerks his arms hard enough to rattle the clips keeping him attached to the headboard, and Phil hums around the nipple in his mouth, knows he wants to grab him by the back of the neck and pull him closer.

He reacts beautifully to the cold. Phil traces cubes along the ridges of his abdominals and behind his ears, runs them up the insides of his thighs and across his underarms, then lets drips fall onto his balls. Clint hisses and wriggles, his body flushed, heat coming off him like a furnace as his muscles tighten and relax over and over again, and by the time Phil runs the last melty, dripping cube up the length of his cock, stopping just short of the head, he's practically begging for more.

"Feels so good Sir, please, Phil, please..."

Phil just hums, dries his hands and sets the damp, empty bowl on the floor. Picking out his next trick, a silky, fat-headed make-up brush, he wraps his hand around Clint's hard-on and gives him a few rough strokes, listens to him groan while at the same time he begins to flick the brush along Clint's torso, working down his ribs from top to bottom.

"Mmmm, feather," Clint guesses, sounding terribly cocky and confident for a man who's blindfolded and tied to Phil's bed.

"Guess again," he suggests, moving the brush to flick over the inside of Clint's thigh, starting near the back of his knee, this time tickling with purpose.

"Ahhh, no, no!" Clint yelps, giggling and squirming, planting his feet and pushing himself up the bed. "Phil!"

Chuckling himself, Phil grips his knee, leans forward and kisses the laughter from his submissive's mouth. Clint just grins, bites at his lips, flops down again and moans as he rolls his hips. Because he's human, because he can't resist, he gives the handle of the prostate massager a tug, drizzles on a little more lube and takes the brush to Clint's balls. This has the delightful result of making the man beside him whimper and spread his legs, the vein running up the underside of his cock throbbing. He wants to run his tongue over it but it seems a little soon, so he uses the brush instead, dusts lightly up the long, thick length of Clint's erection.

The man makes a choking sound, his chest jerking like he can't get enough air, and oh yes, Phil likes that. He brushes around the head of Clint's cock until it's leaking, until his arms and legs tremble hard enough to shake the bed. He moves upward then, to his nipples and the hollow of his throat, the
sensitive undersides of his biceps, until Clint is panting and pleading for a break.

"Yellow, yellow," he gasps, his head rocking back and forth on the pillow. "Don't... don't make me cum, not yet."

"Not yet," Phil agrees, putting the brush down and carefully removing the prostate massager from Clint's body, relishing the moan he gets in response. "You've been so good for me baby. Would you like a treat?"

"This... this isn't all a treat?" Clint pants. "You're going to spoil me Sir."

"What makes you think this is all for you?"

Clint's manic grin softens into something fonder, more heartfelt as Phil takes a jar from the table, unwraps the towel he'd rolled around it. It's still warm to the touch and when he opens it the sweet aroma of chocolate assaults his senses. It's not strong enough for Clint to catch just yet, so he still has the element of surprise on his side. Picking up the little wooden ice cream spoon he'd nicked from the cafeteria, he gives the fudge sauce a stir and props his elbow on his knee, testing its temperature on the inside of his wrist.

He'd considered a low-melt wax for this, but suspected the heat would be too much for Clint, slightly more pain than pleasure, and anyway, isn't this more fun?

Holding the spoon over Clint's chest, he watches the chocolate drip down onto his skin, three neat drops on his left pectoral muscle, just over his heart. Clint gasps, tenses, his face going tight as though he expects it to sting, but then he sighs and melts back against the sheets.

"Wax? he guesses, his eyebrows making an appearance above the edge of his blindfold. "Is it purple Sir?"

"No on both counts," Phil replies, drizzling a line of chocolate over the edge of Clint's ribs so that it starts to run down his side. They've played a version of this particular game before, when he'd made Clint chocolate fatbombs at the archer's request and eaten them from his body, but this is something different, something so much more sensual as the liquid chocolate runs down the curve of his torso toward the bed. "Do you need another hint?"

Sweeping his thumb over Clint's side, he catches the line of chocolate sauce as it makes its way toward the sheets, drawing it back up his body and smearing the warmth across his skin. Dipping into the jar for a bit more, he holds it out toward Clint's face, waits until the moment the submissive catches the scent of cocoa before rubbing his thumb across the man's lower lip. The sub isn't the only one that moans as he sucks the digit into his mouth; he rolls his tongue over the pad of Phil's thumb so filthily that he very nearly comes in his jeans.

Phil sucks in a harsh breath between his teeth, drops his free hand to his fly as Clint fellates his thumb, dick aching beneath the denim.

"Mmm, 's chocolate," Clint hums after giving Phil's thumb one final nip. "Is it good Sir?"

Phil cuffs Clint lightly, ruffles his hair - the cheeky brat.

"Very good," he acknowledges, stirring the chocolate and dribbling it across Clint's chest because he obviously means more than just the sweet treat. "Always good."

In a split decision, Phil pulls off his t-shirt and tosses it to the floor, crawls between Clint's legs and gets himself laid down so that his weight is centered on his elbows just over Clint's hips. It's the
perfect position for him to lick the chocolate off the man's torso, off his nipples and his belly, the perfect position for Clint to rut against his chest. Every once in a while he shares a smudge of chocolate and gets his fingers licked and nibbled and sucked for his troubles, Clint practically fucking them with his lips and his tongue. By the time Phil slinks lower, the fudge sauce set aside in favor of his submissive's gorgeous dick, the man is muttering nonstop under his breath.

"Not fair," he hisses as Phil runs his tongue over the head of his cock. "'S not fair Sir. You don't know... awwwww, you don't know..."

"Don't know what?" he murmurs, pulling off just long enough to peer over Clint's hip and reach the last three things off the table, place them on the bed at Clint's side, just within reach.

"Don't know how bad I've wanted to lick chocolate off your dick," the archer sighs. "Don't know how long I've wanted to just... eat you. 'S so nice..."

He's mumbling now, just starting to lose the thread, and Phil smiles against his thigh, a surge of Dominant pride welling up in his chest. He's done this to Clint, brought his sub to this wonderful, happy place where things are soft and warm and fuzzy around the edges. It makes him rumble deep in the back of his throat, urges him to keep going until the man is a puddle of incoherence and pleasure in the middle of their bed so he does just that, swallows him down.

This next thing, this is a gamble. As Phil bobs his head over Clint's cock he fingers the thin strip of coarse-grain sandpaper, runs it over the back of his hand. It doesn't hurt, oddly enough – you'd think it would – and there's a reason he'd thought of it at all. Curious, the head of Clint's cock still in his mouth, he runs the paper lightly over the inside of Clint's thigh, careful not to press down too hard.

"Oh god," Clint groans, thrusting up into Phil's mouth. "What is... is that sandpaper?"

"Mmm, very good," Phil hums, pulling off of Clint's dick and watching it slap against his belly, still thick and flush after all this time.

He has to be close.

"That should not feel so good," he huffs as Phil drags the paper gently over his other thigh. "Why would you even..."

"You liked my stubble," Phil mumbles, and it comes out softer and more apologetic than he'd meant it too.

Clint lifts his head, cocks it even though he can't see, and his hand moves as if to touch Phil's face but he's brought up short by the cuff around his wrist.

"But you don't," he says fondly, and hell it's just such a damn sweet moment that Phil has to hide his face against Clint's belly, his cheeks burning. He gets back to things while he's down there, nuzzling at Clint's balls which are starting to hitch, his hips rolling just a bit, jerking when Phil touches his legs and his abdomen with the sandpaper, soothing the scuffed skin with his tongue.

He doesn't want this to end. Everything is so soft, so quiet, music playing gently in the background, lamplight turning Clint's skin gold. He's found a good position tucked between his thighs, is strangely content and comfortable cuddled up between his legs, and something in him thinks that he could curl up and fall asleep right here, warm and safe and happy.

He isn't so sure Clint would appreciate that though.

"You ready to come now sweetheart?" he murmurs, and above him Clint nods his head slowly.
He's stuck in it now, floating, and it seems like a good enough time as any to push him over that final edge. Picking up the Hitachi wand that's been charging in his closet all day, he tucks the head of the vibrator up beneath Clint's balls and flicks it on to the lowest setting. He gets a low, weak wail for his trouble and Clint's hands fist as he starts to rock against the air, searching for friction as the vibrations shiver up through his body.

"Please," he whimpers, "Please Sir, pleasepleaseplease..."

"I've got you baby," Phil consoles.

Stroking his palm down Clint's leg, he crawls over him, lying down at his side so they're pressed together chest to knee. He's got a fleshlight in his hand and lubes it quickly, gets comfortable with his cheek on Clint's shoulder so that he can look down the length of his body and watch. Teasing the dark head of his cock with the lip of the opening, he's pleased that Clint still has the will to thrust his hips, to chase the sensation because very, very suddenly the only thing he wants to do is rest, to lie side-by-side with his submissive and watch him take his pleasure.

"I've got you," he shushes again, pushing the fleshlight slowly down the length of Clint's cock before pulling back again, giving him a few strokes with the toy and feeling the tingles in the palm of his hand as the vibrator does its work. "Come on Clint, fuck that pretty pink pussy for me and come."

And well, apparently Clint likes dirty talk a little more than he'd known, because that sets him right off and he fucks the fleshlight with abandon until he lets out a tready little cry and goes shock-still on the bed, jerking his way through an orgasm that lasts longer than Phil's ever seen. As Clint slumps back against the bed, boneless and breathless, Phil is quick to take away the toys, to turn off the vibrator and gentle him down with long, sweeping strokes of his palms against Clint's skin. There are tears rolling down his cheeks from beneath the blindfold and he rubs them away with his thumbs, cupping Clint's face between his hands and pressing little kisses to the corners of his mouth.

He's tugging fitfully at his cuffs, almost like he doesn't realize he's doing it, so Phil quickly releases them and brings Clint's hands up to his mouth, kisses each palm before pressing them to his own cheeks, nuzzling into them and practically purring. Clint seems to recognize something in him, seems to feel it, because he starts strokes at Phil like he can't touch enough of him, petting down his throat and over his chest, down his belly. Wrapping one arm around Phil's neck he pulls him in close, a cramped sort of half-hug, burying his face in Phil's neck and fumbling awkwardly at the button of his jeans with his free hand.

"C'mon, c'mon," he mutters, his words slurring, "I can't see it but I wanna feel it, please Sir, please. Gave me so much, I know, I know, but 'm bad, I want more..."

"Not bad," Phil argues, pressing insistent, hungry kisses to Clint's neck and throat, tearing his fly open and pulling out his cock, feeling the deep, painful ache of waiting too long for the first time since this started. "Never bad. You're my good boy Clint, so perfect, took everything I had to give you; let me pet you, let me play with you, let me push you..."

He's panting now, jerking his cock hard and fast until he's shaking, and then he's gritting his teeth and growling against Clint's throat, cumming in long streaks across his chest. Collapsing against his side, he wraps his arm around Clint's waist and rubs the evidence of his orgasm into the sub's skin. Clint is humming and smiling smugly, completely blissed out, and snuggles into Phil's side as he finishes up, tugging him close and pressing a kiss to the underside of his jaw.

"Mmm, love you Phil," he mumbles, already drifting off despite the fact that the blindfold is still wrapped around his eyes.
Phil sniffs, eyes stinging, snuggles closer and hides a smile of his own against Clint's side.

"Love you back."
Chapter 14

It can't last, of course it can't last.

Everything's been so wonderful, so perfect.

There have been a few bumps in the road here and there, but that's all they had been; just bumps, minor nothings they worked through and moved past...

They're due for something worse.

Phil has always been painfully cognizant of his winning streaks. It serves him well given the job he performs, that sixth sense that warns him when he's due for a little bad luck, a loss. It gives him time to brace himself, to prepare to deal with the fallout, and it's been no different with Clint.

It's not like he expects Clint to misbehave. As a submissive the archer craves praise, wants to be good for his Dom. He doesn't brat, not in the typical sense, doesn't intentionally try Phil's patience or press his buttons in an effort to earn a punishment. All in all he's a great fit for Phil's own dynamic – he has no desire to train a sub into certain behaviors or constantly dole out a punishment, but the fact that neither enjoys physical pain, giving or receiving, makes the entire concept a bit of a minefield to navigate.

Knowing that one day it will undoubtedly become an issue gives Phil plenty of time to puzzle over it, and when it finally, finally happens, he's ready.

It starts out inconspicuously enough – you'd never guess it was the day things would go wrong. They're on a mission; Phil as handler, Clint as specialist up in his nest, three more Level Fours on the ground. It's nothing too complicated, nothing too intense, and everything's trotting along just fine. Clint's chattering over the comms, flirting with Phil and joking with Agent Marks, with whom he's good friends back at base, and they're all waiting patiently for their targets to slip into place. Phil gives the go and all agents move in, until Clint mutters a curse and leaps from his hidden position on the roof, smashes through a closed window into the building.

"Get back to your fucking position Barton!" Agent Cody snarls, his breathing heavy as he's forced to jump from the shadows and engage his target hand-to-hand to cover Clint's sudden appearance.

Phil immediately goes on high alert, tapping at the screens in front of him to get a better view of the area.

"Barton, sitrepl" he barks, just as he gets eyes on the room where Cody is tangling with a security guard twice his size and Clint is bolting across the floor.

"Izzardi's on the move boss," he pants.

Phil blinks, double checks the screens that his techs are bringing up at lightning speed, covering both the inside and the outside of the bank vault they've had staked out for the last thirty-seven hours.

"Barton he's right in front of me, he's getting into the car. You're going to miss your..."

"It's not him Coulson!" Clint snarls, banging out the back door and leaving Cody alone. "I never miss."

He doesn't, shit, he doesn't miss.
"Get me a close up of that car," Phil demands, even as Cody chew Clint out over the comms. "Fuck!"

Sure enough, it's not Izzardi being escorted into the car by his armed henchman – from the point of view of the cameras across the street there's a distinct curve to the man's jaw and a thin scar on his chin that doesn't match the most recent images they have.

It's a body-double.

"I want surveillance of all the back halls in and out of that bank," he barks. "Hawkeye, get topside."

"He's not going topside!" Clint growls, and Phil catches sight of him taking a hard left into a stairwell, leaping down them six and eight at a time.

"Barton..."

"There's a car between eighth and main Coulson," he pants. "He was waiting for us."

"Agent Coulson."

Phil blinks, turns to the screen the techie gestures toward, and yup, there it is, a nondescript Cadillac parked next to the dumpsters and already idling.

"Marks, get to the street," he commands, "Barton, two more flights down and take the door on your left."

Clint doesn't respond, just bangs through the emergency exit and bounces it off Izzardi's skull just as he's slinking down the alley toward the car. It wraps up quick from there – Clint's got him cuffed and on the ground before Marks even arrives, Cody and Llorentes have the rest of the guards rounded up, and the car with the body-double has trundled off down the street entirely unawares. Phil sends in the cleanup crew who collect the bad guys and rattle off SHIELD's version of their Miranda rights, and he directs the rest of his agents to meet him back at HQ.

As often happens when a mission ends in a burst of chaos and adrenaline, the comms are left on. Unfortunate really – all SHEILD agents have their way of dealing with it, and most tend toward cracks that are a little too morbid or a little too sexual in nature for the squeamish or faint of heart. As an Army Ranger and a Level Six Agent, Phil is neither, though he knows a little more about many of his Agents personal lives than he'd care to. Clint's climbed into the SUV transport alongside the others, Llorentes behind the wheel, and they're all bickering and panting and sweating it off as they follow Phil's communications van back to the safehouse when it all goes to shit.

"Fuck you Barton!" Cody snarls, apropos of nothing.

Phil blinks, turns up the volume on his comm, confused by the outburst. Cody had suffered some bruised ribs and a small cut above his eye in his scuffle with the security guard but it was nothing serious, nothing he shouldn't have anticipated and been prepared for as a field agent.

"The fuck kind of sub are you anyway?" he snaps.

And that, well, that sends ice flashing through his veins, his hands fistig around the edges of his tablet. His driver glances in his direction but isn't wearing a comm, has no idea what's just been said, so when Phil shakes his head he simply shrugs and turns back to the road.

"What did you just say to me?" Clint sneers, and shit, he knows that tone, this is not...
"I said, what the fuck kind of sub are you? Everybody knows you don't follow orders from your handlers – can't follow one from your Dom either?"

"Shut up Cody," Marks says calmly, "It's none of your business."

"Piss off Tanya," Cody hisses. "He breaks orders, blows my cover, argues with his Dom in the middle of a live op – he doesn't fucking deserve him."

What.

The Everloving Fuck.

Jesus, he'd thought he only had to worry about other Doms giving Clint shit, now he has to worry about subs too? He doesn't for a minute think that Cody's actually interested in him – he'd never shown any interest before. No, this is professional jealousy, him wanting what Clint has because Clint was promoted over him, given the better missions because he's Phil's Specialist.

Christ, now he's going to have to...

"Fuck you Cody," Clint snarls. "I had information you didn't and I made the right call – if it wasn't for me that op would have been a total bust."

"What the hell does he even see in you?" the other man snarls back. "Constantly arguing, running your mouth. Never follow orders, never shut up, christ, I thought Coulson was supposed to be smarter than that! What the fuck is wrong with him that he picked..."

Phil is about to open his mouth and put a stop to all this when he hears the familiar sounds of a fist hitting flesh, of a scuffle, of a skull thudding against glass, and in the side mirror he sees the SUV behind them jerk to a dead stop as Llorentes slams on the brakes.

"Shut your fucking mouth Cody," Cint growls, his voice flat and cold and deadly calm. "You think I don't know what a shit sub I am? Think I don't know that Phil fucking Coulson deserves better than me? I know exactly what I am and I don't give a good god damn if you sing it out for the fucking world to hear, but you'll keep your fucking mouth shut about Coulson, do you understand me?"

Cody makes no reply but for a gurgling choke, and now is probably the time to step in.

"That's quite enough agents," Phil says in his most unimpressed deadpan, and he hears Llorentes suck back a snort as they all realize that he's still on the comms. "You'll report to conference room J12 immediately for debrief. I expect you there within the next twenty minutes."

He signs off after that. He's disturbed, not only by Cody's reactions but by Clint's. They've come a long way together, the two of them, but he knows that the archer still occasionally struggles with his dynamics and his kinks, his self-confidence. Phil can't blame him – those scars go deep and he still has his own struggles sometimes. No, what worries him was the way it had all come flooding out of his sub, the way Cody's barbs had cause them to burst from flicker to full-flame. He'd made no effort to defend himself, only to defend Phil, even though they were two sides of the same coin, mirror reflections of each other, worried only for the way others saw his Dom, not the way they saw him.

It wounds him and infuriates him in equal turns, and he knows this is something they'll have to have a long, stern talk about once again.

But first how to deal with Cody?

The man wants his attention, that much as clear, though whether as a Dom or as his superior he isn't
sure. Both, perhaps, if he thinks Clint is sleeping his way to the top.

Reacting then, whether with reprimand or praise, will be giving him exactly what he wants.

Well.

That's remedied easily enough.

Phil contacts Sitwell as the communication van drops him off in front of HQ and meets him in front of his office. He reads him in on the way to the conference room and sees Jasper's eyes darken at the things Cody had said – he and Clint are still close and Phil knows that archer still sometimes goes to him to talk, more comfortable with the neutral than with other subs or Doms. He reassures the man that he'll be taking Clint home immediately to discuss the comments if he can handle the debrief, specifically because he doesn't want to provide Cody with the feedback he's looking for, and Sitwell assures him that he's more than happy to help.

They're waiting when the agents come shuffling in; Cody's cheekbone already bruising, his throat red, Marks and Barton glaring daggers at him, Llorentes wisely keeping her distance from all three. Phil suppresses a sigh and the urge to pinch the bridge of his nose – he has no doubt that Clint's hands had temporarily been around the other man's throat, but given that the op had been over with and given that subs did occasionally scrap over Doms, it's not something that will earn either of them an official reprimand, not like with Tandy.

Besides, from the looks on their faces, not a one of them is going to lodge a complaint.

Cody is glaring at Clint and refusing to even glance in Phil's direction, and he thinks that the his having overheard the whole thing is more than enough punishment for all of them.

"Mission complete agents," he says plainly and flatly, with no emotional inflection whatever. "Barton, well done in spotting the body-double; we'll have surveillance in place immediately. As for the rest of you, mission successful, though I suggest in future you be certain your comms are off before engaging in private discussions. I'd hate to send you all back to Situational Awareness 101."

Llorentes looks properly chastised, Marks looks horrified, Cody looks sullen and Clint looks...

He can't tell, and that scares him.

"Agent Sitwell will be conducting your debriefs," Phil says, handing off his tablet and the agents' stack of After-Actions to the neutral. "Agent Barton, with me."

Clint doesn't so much as blink when he's called out, just gets to his feet and kicks his chair into place at the table, marches past him and shoulders roughly through the door. That's not good, suggests that things are worse than Phil had thought, and he studiously avoids Jasper's eye as he follows. Clint is already stalking up the hallway with murder on his face, passing agents leaping out of his path, and Phil feels his shoulders slump as he follows after.

Clint is standing at parade rest in the middle of the rug staring dead ahead, and by the time Phil has locked the door and turned around again he's got his pants down around his knees and is leaning forward with his hands flat on the surface of his desk. Phil's heart jumps into his throat with a hard pang and it hurts, hurts like he's never felt before. He wants to pull Clint into his arms and hold him close, not only for the submissive's sake, but before he can even move Clint's snarling at him between clenched teeth.

"I'd appreciate it if we got this over with Sir," he grinds out, and Phil genuinely cannot tell which Sir he's addressing – his handler or his Dom.
"I'd appreciate it if you refrained from removing your clothes in my office, Agent," he replies, calmly but firmly.

"I don't need a fucking lecture," the archer snaps, his shoulders high and tight. "How about you just beat my ass like you're supposed to and we can both move on?"

So that's how it was going to be.

He's not surprised really, disappointed sure, but not surprised.

Lashing out at Phil is the easiest way for Clint to displace blame, which Cody had planted in his brain during his little rant on the way back to HQ. It's also the easiest way (or so he thinks) to goad Phil into hitting him, like he's 'supposed to,' which would both prove to Clint that's he's right – he is a bad sub – and earn him the punishment he thinks he deserves.

He's been waiting for this, just like Phil has.

Shit, they're still not talking the way they need to, are they?

"I don't need your attitude," he snaps, matching Clint bark for bite. "I'll decide where and how you'll take your punishment thank you. Now buckle your pants and get your ass down to the car."

Clint tenses, going stiff and tight before he stands, jerking his tac pants up his hips and buckling his belt. He casts Phil a sneer like he's thinking about throwing a punch but settles for shoulder-checking him on the way out the door, and Phil doesn't even blink an eye. He's got another thing coming if he thinks he can provoke Phil into hitting him – he's got far more self-control than that and he has years of dealing with a pissy Clint Barton under his belt.

'He's not hard to figure out,' Phil laments as he locks his office and follows the fuming archer down to the parking bay. This is all a defense, against his own poor self-esteem and against this, what's between them. He's afraid that Phil's going to hit him as punishment for some offence – for arguing with him on the comms or for attacking Cody – so he's trying to regain control by taking that hurt on his own terms.

'God I love him,' he thinks as they drive home in silence, Clint a tight, angry ball in the passenger seat. 'Even when I'm angry.'

And he is angry.

Not for himself, no; just like Clint had been with Cody he's angry on behalf of his partner.

Angry that Clint still thinks so little of himself deep down, thinks that Phil deserves better, that he would so ferociously defend his Dom while accepting the derision of anyone who would wish to heap it on him.

Angry too that he thinks Phil will hit him, after all they've shared and talked about, that he thinks he can make Phil hit him.

Perhaps this was a long time in coming, but Phil will prove him wrong tonight.

Letting them both into their apartment, Phil locks the door and grips his submissive by the nape of the neck, drives him toward his office. He'll grab him by the ear and haul him in there if he has to – like Clint says, there's hurt and there's hurt – but his fingers at the curve of Clint's shoulder is enough, even if he's resistant with every step.
Foolish boy – still being good and he doesn't even know it.

Closing the door of the office behind them, Phil kicks a kneeling pillow over to the side of his desk, gabs Clint by the wrist and turning it up behind his back to stop him from shucking his pants a second time. He's not going to belt him or strap him, even if he begs for it, and he doesn't want to see him bend over for it again.

"On your knees," he rumbles, guiding Clint down onto the pillow. "Hands behind your back."

Clint's shoulders are still stiff and tight but he does as he's told, his jaw twitching as he clenches his teeth. Phil nods – good enough for now, and shucks his suit jacket, hangs it over the back of his chair. He takes his time even though his heart is pounding, his resolve firm even though all he wants to do is hold his submissive close. No, Clint needs this, and he'd promised to always give his submissive what he needed.

He can feel the man watching him as he moves around the room. Walking around the front of his desk where the sub will be able to see without straining his eyes, he removes his tie and his cufflinks, pops a few buttons at his throat and his wrists, rolls up his sleeves. It's not about being comfortable or even having a greater range of motion, but he's not interested in telling Clint much at the moment. Let him sit in it, stew in it for a while. He's not down, not at all – this is an angry agent, not a sub.

Not yet anyway.

Phil collects a stack of loose-leaf paper and a handful of pens from a filing cabinet. He has plenty in his desk but he wants Clint to see, and true to form the man's gaze follows him back to the desk where he sits down, gets comfortable, and sets himself up to write.

"Eyes front," he says sternly, because Clint will know what he's doing without being able to see it and because it will limit his sightlines, force him to stare off across the room at the far wall.

He would never blindfold him for something like this, would never take advantage of or betray that weakness, but limiting him this way will be just enough to rub him wrong and that's exactly what Phil needs, to irritate him into breaking.

Phil suppresses a sigh and uncaps his pen, pulls the paper toward him and gets started.

It takes a lot longer for Clint to crack than he expects. The man had practically strangled his fellow agent defending Phil less than an hour ago – he'd thought he would catch on a bit sooner. It's the whole point of this part of the exercise really, punishing himself because sadly it's the easiest way of punishing Clint. Punishing himself would hurt the sub far more than a whipping would, making it a far more effective tactic. In addition he hopes that it won't alienate Clint from him the way taking up a whip would, wouldn't break the trust between them so wholly.

He's not counting but he's three pages in, double-sided when Clint finally makes a sound.

"Sir what are you..."

"Quiet," he commands, but it's smooth and gentle, no sharp edges to it.

The rhythmic scratching of his pen continues, the steady flap of pages turning, and now Clint is actively listening, not just fuming silently and grinding his jaw. Another page gets turned over and he starts to squirm, to whine as he finally catches on to what's happening. Phil doubts that writing lines was among the things Clint had imagined as his punishment – certainly his Dom writing them for him wouldn't have been on the list.
"Sir you shouldn't..."

"I said hush," he chastises.

They're not there yet.

It doesn't take long – he can see the trembles as soon as Clint starts to shake, can see the way his shoulders hitch and the way his cheeks glint even though he resolutely keeps his chin high and his hands crossed loosely at the small of his back. Putting down his pen, Phil cracks his knuckles and fists his hands, stretching out his fingers. It's intentional of course - he does paperwork all day, he could keep going - but the point is to foster a little bit of guilt, as shitty as that is.

It does its job though – Clint makes a small choking sound and rises up on his knees, makes to get to his feet before checking himself.

"Sir you shouldn't..." he yelps, his voice cracking. "I'm the one who..."

"The one who what Clint?" he asks calmly, sitting back in his chair, because this, this is the important part.

"It wasn't you," he argues instead, "You didn't do anything. I mean, I know I said..."

"You were angry," Phil explains for him, because the man is having trouble getting enough air into his lungs let alone explain the tangled emotions he's trying to express. "You wanted me to hit you as punishment for arguing on the comms and lashed out to needle me into doing it. Right?"

Clint swallows hard, doesn't answer.

"Right?"

"Yes Sir."

It's barely a breath, an ashamed, broken whimper, and it tells Phil everything he needs to know. Pushing his chair back and turning it to the side, he opens his knees and makes room for Clint between them.

"Come here."

Clint flinches and that nearly breaks Phil's heart, but he steels himself, doesn't allow it to shatter him, doesn't allow himself to hold it against the submissive who crawls over and settles between his feet, staring down at his knees.

"Did you want to be punished Clint?" he asks, lighting his hands on Clint's head and combing his fingers gently through his hair.

"Not... want," he mumbles, sounding terribly small and wounded. "But..."

"But you feel like you need to be."

Clint shivers and nods his head miserably.

Phil hums, considering.

"I agree," he concludes, and Clint hunches his shoulders beneath him. "Silly boy, you don't even know why."
"I..."

"You downed yourself," Phil says sternly, because that's the point he needs to make tonight, the only one. "You dogged yourself, in front of all of them."

"But I..."

"Clint if what you said was true, then what Cody said was true as well," Phil explains patiently, though it stings at the back of his throat to say it. "If you really are such a horrible submissive, then what does it say about me that I chose you? That I let you get away with all the things I do? That I love you as you are?"

"But you're not..."

"Exactly. You defended me so hard sweet boy," he murmurs, gentling his voice and his hands both as he pets Clint's bowed head. "How could you say those things about yourself?"

"Because I'm..."

"You're uncommon," he says, "Unique. One of a kind. You're the same as I am Clint, fit me so perfectly. I'm disappointed that you would say those things about yourself but that is the only thing you did that upset me today. Do you understand sweetheart? Arguing on the comms, sassing me, changing mission parameters when you have more information than I do – none of those things are worthy of punishment, none of them worthy of my anger. Putting yourself down in front of anyone the way you did... that is."

"I'm sorry Sir."

It's a hoarse whisper, full of apology, and it wrings his heart out like a damned sponge as Clint shivers and shakes beneath his hands.

"I'm sorry I..."

"You're sorry you snapped and me, and fought me, and needleed at me," he acknowledges. "But Clint, do you understand why I'm upset that you would say those things about yourself?"

"Yes Sir."

"I'm not sure you do sweetheart," he replies with a heavy heart.

"Let me,“ he begs, cheeks wet and eyes pleading. "Sir let me finish it, please. It's mine, it's for me to do."

Phil looks at him carefully, waits until Clint meets his eyes.

"You have thirty-five lines left," he says. He doesn't, not really – Phil hasn't been counting. "If you start the rest you'll finish them all."

"Yes Sir."

Phil nods, stands up and Clint follows, as if to take his seat at the desk but Phil stops him. Picking up the last sheet he'd finished, he opens his top drawer and takes out three permanent markers before putting his hand between Clint's shoulder blades and guiding him out to the living room. This would...
be easier on the bed but he doesn't want to take this there, doesn't want their bedroom, their safe space to be associated with a punishment.

Taking Clint the edge of the couch, he guides him back down onto his knees, no pillow this time, just the thick, plush carpet beneath him.

Then he starts to undo the rest of his buttons.

"Sir what are you..."

"Hush."

He's said that a lot tonight.

Slipping out of his shirt, he tosses it over the back of the arm chair and rolls his shoulders, hands the markers and the sheet of paper down to his submissive. Clint takes them but doesn't even look – he's too busy staring at Phil with wide, horrified eyes as he lies down on his belly on the couch, his arms folded under his head so that he can turn his cheek toward the archer and watch.

"Thirty-five lines," he repeats, gauging Clint's reaction as his eyes roam over the bare skin of Phil's back and shoulders. "When you've finished each one you'll stop and read it, aloud or to yourself but you will read each one Clint. And then you'll count it."

He looks shocked. Disgusted. Scared. No, he certainly never expected this when all the possible punishments he might face had scrolled through his head, and Phil wonders if now he might not prefer a whipping.

It's too bad – he won't be getting one.

"Get started," Phil commands gently, and Clint whines deep in his throat.

"Sir, I... you can't... what if someone sees!"

"Then they'll know what I know," he says calmly. "But just in case, you better make sure it's not the usual chicken scratch I see on your AAR's."

It's gentle, teasing, meant to be a reassurance that everything will be alright, but from the stricken look on Clint's face and the broken sound he makes it doesn't quite do the trick. Clint's hands shake as he twists the markers in his hand, but he uncaps it all the same before setting the others aside.

Turning the paper rightside up in his hand, he scans the lines and makes a sound like he's been shot. No, worse than that – Phil's heard the kinds of sounds he makes when he's been shot and they lean toward vicious cursing, not this thready, broken cry.

Clint sags forward and presses his forehead against Phil's shoulder, hides his face against the backside of his armpit. He's sobbing now, and Phil can feel hot tears rolling down the back of his arm, the tickle a painful contrast to the way his heart aches. He lets Clint cry, knows he needs it, then, when he's gotten his breath back a bit, he levers himself up on his elbow and curls his hand around the back of Clint's neck, pulls him in to nuzzle at his cheek.

"Clint Barton is an amazing archer," he murmurs against his ear, "an incredible agent, and a remarkable man."

Pressing a long, lingering kiss to his damp cheek, Phil settles back down on the couch, folding his arms beneath his head.
"Thirty-five lines Clint. Don't forget to count them."

It takes him a while to get started. He repositions himself over Phil's back several times, trying to get the angle right before placing the tip of the marker against his left shoulder. It stays there for a long time before it starts to move slowly across his shoulders, damp and cool against his skin. He tries to follow the letters, trace its path in his mind but he can't hold on to it – he knows Clint's messy scrawl so well that this careful, even penmanship is throwing him off. He finishes the first line and pauses, his fingertips tapping against Phil's spine, and he doesn't read it aloud but he follows the words along before he clears his throat.

"One Sir."

It's a hoarse whisper, nothing more, but he does it and takes up the pen again, just beneath the first line. As he continues it's clear he's attempting to keep the letters small, the lines short, so as to stay within the borders of skin that would be covered by a vest or Phil's tactical jacket, but as his waist narrows the words stop fitting and each sentence takes up more than a single line across his back. He reaches twenty-seven lines before he runs out of space at the waistband of Phil's slacks.

"Sir..."

Phil doesn't reply, just shifts to pull his right arm out from beneath him, silently offering up more unmarked skin. Clint makes another choking sound and his hand trembles at the edge of Phil's vision, but he takes a deep breath and steels himself before placing the marker back to his skin.

He's steady as a rock as he writes.

He continues on his way down Phil's upper arm, makes it to thirty-three this time before he hesitates, seemingly unwilling to go below his elbow.

Sighing, Phil sits up on the couch, shifts around until Clint is kneeling between his feet once more. Leaning forward, he rests his elbows on his knees, offering his forearms - smooth, pale, unmarked skin. Clint squeezes his eyes shut, two more tears rolling free, and he licks his lips before lifting his chin, taking Phil's wrist in his hand. He brushes his thumb over the sensitive skin there before steadying his arm, working in an even line from the base of his thumb to the crook of his elbow.

He finishes it silently, eyes reverent before counting it and moving on to the last.

It takes him far longer than it should to finish the final line. He writes slowly, carefully, almost as if each individual letter is separate from the rest until he's done, the line dotted with a tiny period near the base of his palm. Clint swallows hard, brushes his thumb down the length of Phil's forearm before pressing a kiss to his wrist.

"Clint Barton is an amazing archer, and incredible agent, and a remarkable man," he reads aloud, his voice low and rough. "Thirty-five Sir."

"Good boy."

Tugging the marker from Clint's clenched fist, he opens the collar of his tac vest and peels it down, writes it one more time across the man's collar bone.

"Clint Barton is an amazing archer, an incredible agent, and a remarkable man," he repeats, and it seems that that, after all of this, is what breaks his sub.

Clint surges up off the floor and into Phil's lap but after all this time he's used to the man's sneak attacks. He lets him clamber on up, keeps a hand on his elbow to guide him, and then just holds him
to his chest as he cries. There are tears falling onto his chest and Clint's fingers are clutching at his sides so hard he'll probably have bruises but he doesn't care. This is what they've been working toward, what they need, and Clint can't keep it up forever.

Slowly the heaves and sobs start to taper off and the whimpers take their place.

"'M sorry, 'm sorry Sir, Phil, I..."

"Hush now," he shushes, petting at his hair, at his neck and shoulders. "It's over. You took your punishment so well for me sweet boy; it's over now. Forgiven, forgotten."

It takes quite a while for him to calm down, but once he does Phil gets them situated on the couch so that Clint is lying half on top of him, half between his thighs. They snuggle up as close as they can, Clint's arms slung around his waist, his cheek pressed against Phil's ribs, a for a while they just breathe quietly together.

"Alright?" he asks eventually, and Clint has to clear his throat, but he sounds like himself when he answers.

"Yeah. Yeah I'm ok."

"I know it's not really fair to punish you for this," Phil murmurs, leaning down to press a kiss to the top of Clint's head. "For something you feel. But Clint, what you do, the things you say... trying to get me to hit you..."

"I needed to know," Clint mumbles against his skin, and Phil tightens his arms around the man's shoulders.

"I know you did," he replies. "We should have talked about it before now. But I promised you I wouldn't hit you and I meant it Clint."

"I know," he murmurs. "Um, Phil?"

"Hmm?"

"Just so you know? This really sucked."

Phil chuckles, can't stifle the sound.

"Good," he says with mock-sternness. "It was supposed to. You're meant to learn from this Clint – I don't care if you argue with me on the comms, or that we do things differently than other people, but it upsets me very much when you say things like you did today. Do you understand that?"

"Yes Sir."

"Just so we're clear," Phil continues, rubbing his thumb behind Clint's ear. "If someone sees... I wouldn't be embarrassed. I'm not ashamed of you, or of what we have."

"I'm not either!" Clint insists, lifting his head to stare down at Phil with huge, honest eyes. "I never meant..."

"I know," Phil reassures him. "I know that. But Clint, every word is true."

It will take more convincing, he knows. Endless reassurance. He'd been honest in what he said – he knows that punishment will do nothing to heal the wounds of Clint's past or convince him that he really is good and loved. This was meant to be a consequence of his behavior, not his emotions. He
thinks that message has been made, and he's more than ready, more than happy to spend the rest of his life working on the other half of it, convincing Clint of just how well they match, just how perfect Clint is for him.

Later he'll find the top sheet of paper that he'd given Clint to copy from, fold it up tight and slip it into a coin envelope before sealing it and signing his name over the seam. He'll wait until Clint's watching before tucking it into the inside pocket of his tac vest, where it will rest over his heart whenever he wears it. Later they'll talk, about what happened this time and what they'll do when something inevitably again.

For now he just holds his submissive close and promises him that he's still loved.
Chapter 15

He brings it on himself, he supposes, making Clint write all over him the way he did.

It affects him far more strongly than he expects it to.

It's possessiveness and want and clinging and a strong, strong need to mark him right back, to scratch and bite and grip and bruise. It's the need to strut and preen and smirk at all the other Doms in S.H.I.E.L.D, all the other agents who have ever ogled his submissive and crow.

It's juvenile he thinks, nonsensical, especially when his handwriting is still scrawled across Clint's collarbone, the neat, familiar loops of his penmanship. The archer has been remarkably careful to hold on to the ink as the week goes by, even as he surreptitiously tries to wash it from Phil. He sneaks into the shower with him nearly every time he goes in, offers to scrub his back, but he's easy enough to distract and the words are still there on Friday afternoon, smudged and faded but still visible when he rolls up his sleeves.

They're in a good place, he thinks. Now that the ghost of unrendered punishment no longer haunts them it's like the last door between them has been unlocked, like everything has finally clicked into place. They touch and they kiss and there's more laughing and smiles than there's been in a while, and he hadn't even realized how heavy things had gotten until now, with everything so very, very perfect.

He's subconsciously tracing Clint's handwriting at the edge of his wrist as he walks down to the cafeteria, hoping to find his submissive already there. They've both gotten a little better about the way they interact at work, a little more settled, reconciled with what they want. They've been eating lunch together in the cafeteria for a while; an extension of Clint's not-so-secret plan to make sure that he eats halfway properly. Phil can't deny that he likes it, that it plays to his own not-so-secret domestic service kink, but it's more than that.

It's... nice.

He's got a smile on his face when he steps into the cafeteria, the noise assaulting him all at once, the smell of macaroni and cheese thick in the air, but it's Clint's laughter that his singles out, that reaches him over the din and chatter of the other fifty people in the cavernous, white-tiled dining hall. His eyes immediately seek him out, zero in on him sitting at a table against the wall, and his heart drops into his stomach like a stone.

Oh.

Clint's sitting across the table from Agent Adam Hart, another Level Five that he's always got on well with, a fit, dark-haired retrieval specialist that Phil himself had found attractive at one time. Clint's grinning, his hands moving animatedly as he tells some story, and Hart is leaning forward into his space like... like an intimate. For the first time since this all started, for the first real time, a hot, harsh wave of jealousy sweeps through him, thick like anger in his veins.

Clint looks up and it must show on his face, the possession, the hunger, because his eyes narrow, glint, and his grin sharpens, but it does nothing to stem the fire burning in the pit of Phil's belly. The blonde leans in to his companion, drops his hands onto the table top, kicks his feet out underneath it, and somewhere in the back of his head Phil knows it's a dare, a deliberate provocation, but it doesn't have the effect he knows (shut, he knows) that Clint wants it to have.
Jaw muscle ticking as he clenches his teeth, Phil turns on his heel and leaves the cafeteria.

**AVAVA**

Clint frowns as he watches Phil turn and storm back out of the caf, confused by the way he'd gone stiff and cold at the mere sight of Clint sitting with another Dom. He'd been friends with Adam for a long time and there had never been much dynamic at play between them, and besides, Hart was about as straight as a fucking ruler. They hang out all the time but he's smart enough to realize that knowing about it and seeing it are two different things.

Still, he hadn't thought that his having lunch with a friend (note: friend first, Dom second) would be something that would upset his.

In fact, he'd hoped to seduce Phil over to his side before the man had locked up, glared and stalked off.

He's puzzling over it, confused and quiet, when Adam finally sighs and kicks him under the table.

"You should probably go apologize dude," he says, jerking his head toward the door, indicating the direction Phil had disappeared in. "That wasn't cool."

"You're kidding right?" Clint scoffs before he even really tunes back into the conversation.

"I'd whoop my sub's ass for flirting with someone else in front of me."

"It's none of your fucking business!" Clint snaps, bristling. "Me and Phil aren't like that, and anyways, if you think that was flirting you're high."

Slamming back from the table, Clint barely recognizes the way Adam's gone startled, the way he's thrown up his hands in surrender. He knows it was accidental because he's never shared his or Phil's penchant for soft and sweet, knows that he hadn't meant to push Clint's buttons but still, fuck him. Clint's flirty, he's always been flirty, and leaning in, just entering Hart's space without any touching at all doesn't even factor on Clint's scale of passive attraction to full out fuck-me-please.

He knows that.

*Phil* knows that.

So what the hell?

Clint stomps down to the range, anger and guilt warring in his gut. He doesn't understand this, doesn't understand what just happened between them because things had been going to great. He knows he's not the only one with self-esteem issues but he also knows that Phil's are a lot less deep than his are, that his Dom is a lot more certain of himself than Clint is in this relationship. He also knows that he's talked to Phil about this, about his flirting and what it means and how it's got nothing to do with the two of them.

As he strings his bow and starts firing arrows down the lane, he chews over the problem, over what had passed between them and what Adam had said, and it's easy to start second-guessing himself in the face of all that. Phil had told him he understood hadn't he? He'd told him he got the whole flirting.

But... he'd also said he was possessive hadn't he?

He'd said he was... possessive.
And Clint... shit, Clint knew that.

He hadn't forgotten, hadn't put it out of his mind when he'd done what he'd done back there. He'd yet to really see any possessive moves out of Phil, not the kinds of things he understands possessive to be, and yeah, ok, that's because he mostly understands possession to be aggression. Bruises and welts and marks and... and that's not them.

But he's had hickies and he's worn Phil's hoodies and he's had Phil's handwriting over his heart, and he's loved all those things, loved them. They'd been private though, all those things, hidden beneath his clothes or behind closed doors and yes, ok, he had been trying to provoke Phil by coming on to Adam just a little bit. He's not big on examining his subconscious but as he slowly lowers his bow, he recognizes his actions for what they were.

They'd had nothing to do with Hart, had solely been an attempt to lure Phil over to his side, to needle a response out of him.

And fuck, that was exactly what he'd just been punished for wasn't it, in a way?

Sure, he hadn't been ragging on himself, which had been the primary lesson there, but Phil had still been unhappy with the way Clint had tried to goad him into providing a punishment.

It's not the same, not even close, but it's near enough that it makes Clint instantly uncomfortable, instantly angry, both with himself and with Phil.

Yeah, he probably should've just asked Phil if he wanted some sort of grand, public gesture, but fuck Phil for thinking that he'd actually been flirting with Adam.

It's a secondary concern really, stupid, because now, all of a sudden, all he really wants are Phil's bruises on his skin, put there by his hands and his mouth and his teeth for everyone to see, and as much as he hates the thought of overt acts of submission in front of other people, Jesus he's ready for Phil to slug his buddy in his smug fucking mouth before bending Clint over the nearest flat surface.

The anger doesn't make any sense damn it, and it puts a dull ache in him like a broken bone that's halfway to healing. As he packs up his bow and heads home it doesn't get any better; in fact a thunderstorm is rolling in and the heavy grey rainclouds hanging over head, the low, far away rumble of thunder only deepen his mood. Somehow between HQ and their apartment he gets it into his head that he needs to fix this, that Phil is pissed and will never give in to what he wants in that sort of emotional state. He's too careful with Clint, too wary of hurting him, and hell if he doesn't adore the man for it but god damn he wants to push.

He wants this thing, wants to take it from him and give it to him and this is all such a stupid idea but once it's there it won't go away and he doesn't know how else to change this without putting it all forward, without that shove.

He's meant to ask for the things he wants, but somehow it feels like asking will only hurt them both.

He's not going to ask.

God this would all be so much easier if they weren't them, but then it wouldn't matter would it?

Maybe...

Maybe a roleplay?

He could do that, he could work with that.
A complaint and a protest and an apology all at once, when it seems like words are just... failing him right now.

That would work for him, and he thinks it's something Phil would allow, something he'd be able to accept where he might run from anything else. If Clint asked for rough sex tonight, if he asked for Phil to suck bruises onto his neck or bite them into his biceps the man would probably either be hurt, pissed, or scared, and none of those are what Clint wants.

He's pretty sure it's not what Phil needs either.

COME HOME

It's the only text he sends, the only warning he gives, and he's honestly not even sure if Phil will follow the order but he hopes the word 'home' will convince him. It is still home after all, still theirs, because as far as he knows they're still a couple. Honestly that concern had never even crossed his mind – like hell Phil's going to dump him over this. Clint would like to see him try. After last week he's pretty sure they can get through anything, even if they have to fight their way through it tooth and nail, and they can get through this too.

He's got everything ready and nearly half sorted in his head by the time an unmarked SUV pulls up in front of the apartment and drops Phil off. It's raining hard now, a steady downpour, thunder still booming lazily over the city, and he's got a newspaper held above his head, so he doesn't catch sight of Clint tucked in against the side of the building until he's got one foot on the steps, until Clint calls out in a hard, rough voice.

"Bad day Mister?"

Phil actually startles, jerks as he turns to find Clint leaning against the wall, one foot kicked up against it as he slouches against the bricks, one hand in his belt, the other holding a cigarette to his lips. He watches with hot, sharp eyes as Clint takes a long drag, blows the smoke out in a steady stream, lets it curl around his words. He doesn't smoke, not really, but it fits his mood, fits the game he's starting. Tight jeans, white t-shirt, black leather jacket, his blonde hair scraped back from his forehead – he's going for something here and he's still not sure if Phil will bite.

"Bad day," he finally says, flat, cold, emotionless, but his eyes are tracing Clint from head to toe and it's enough of an acquiescence for him to take the next step.

Pushing off the wall, he flicks away the butt of his cigarette and crushes it with the toe of his boot, saunters up the stairs toward his Dom as the rain dots cold along his cheeks and his chest, quickly soaking through his hair and his thin cotton shirt where his jacket's open.

"Somebody been neglecting you?"

He's close enough now that he can see the way Phil's eyes dilate, the way he swallows as Clint's voice comes out deep and gravelly, and he wants to sway toward him, to cuddle up against his chest but he wants this other thing more, as big and scary as it is.

"I wouldn't do that," he rumbles, and he hopes Phil understands, hopes he can hear the sincerity and understand. "I'd take real good care of you. Whadda'ya say Mister, huh? Gonna let me take care of you?"

Phil's eyes narrow and a sneer touches the edges of his mouth and he takes a step back, away from the heat of Clint's body.

"You think I need taking care of?" he scowls, and Clint bites back a smirk.
"Oh yeah," he purrs, sidling closer, pressing his advantage, daring to reach out and fist his hand in the side of Phil's suit jacket. "Yeah, I think you got something all hot and twisted up in there you don't know what to do with and you need a boy like me to work it out of you."

It's truth, god, it's truth - he thinks for Phil and definitely for himself. All those things are things he's feeling too, something knotted up tight inside of him that he doesn't really get but this feels right and if Phil would just...

He can tell, the moment everything slips. It doesn't click – Phil still doesn't quite get what's going on and Clint can see that he's still angry and off his footing, maybe even surprised by his own reactions to what had happened earlier in the caf – but that's fine. He's in that same place, but even if Phil doesn't understand he's going to let this run its course, going to play along.

"Inside," he snarls, and Clint smirks like the bad boy he's playing, ducking inside the lobby and shaking water off his jacket, out of his hair.

Phil scowls but Clint just tosses him a wink and starts trotting up the stairs, his Dom slow to follow. He's watching his ass, Clint can feel it, so he puts a little extra sway in his hips and lets himself into their apartment with his own key. It's a break from character but one that he needs right now, a little bit of reassurance, and he thinks Phil needs it to because he puts his fingers over Clint's on the door knob to squeeze before he pushes it open.

He waits until they're inside, until the door is shut and Phil has put his briefcase down, taken off his shoes, then shoves him back against the wall with a jarring thud, one he can feel shaking up through his wrists where he's got his palms flat against his Dom's chest. He holds him there a minute, presses in on him and uses his larger body, his greater strength to keep him there, just to hold him, for the first time exercising a real power (at least in his head) to keep Phil where before he's only begged to be kept.

Phil doesn't struggle, doesn't fight against it, just glares as Clint steps in close and presses their bodies together chest to knees, and it's close enough to their normal cuddling when he ducks his head into the curve of the man's throat that he can't help one short chuckle. Phil's hand strokes down his spine just once, squeezes his hip, and it's a check – they both know it - but Clint's green and he wants to take this back. He's running this show and they're both still buzzing with... well, whatever this all is, so he nips sharply at Phil's neck and steps back, giving him another short, petulant push to bounce him against the wall before grabbing his lapel and dragging him into the living room.

"Sit," he growls, shoving Phil down into his armchair.

The man allows himself to be shoved, even though Clint knows he could've broken his wrist with a twist if he'd wanted to, so he takes that as his Dom giving his own green and slinks over to the turntable, puts on one of the low jazz records Phil favors. There's a silver tray on the table beside it – he'd made sure to set all this up before Phil arrived, and he's pleased to see that the ice is still frozen. Dropping two cubes into a lowball tumbler, he picks up the crystal cut decanter that normally lives in Phil's office and pours two fingers of whiskey.

As the music rolls Clint takes a minute to close his eyes, to breathe in this atmosphere he's created. The curtains are drawn, the living room dim and hushed and enclosed, and truth be told he isn't even sure what he's going for, but it feels right and it feels calm and that's all he needs right now. Picking up the glass and the rest of the tray, he carries it back to the chair and hands it to his Dom, placing the remaining items on the end table. Crawling onto Phil's lap, he picks up the slim cigar and gleaming cutter, clips the end and puts it between his own lips. Phil smokes as rarely as Clint does but it's a sexy prop, as is the little crystal ash tray and the strike-anywhere matches, which he uses to his advantage.
He scrapes the matchhead along the stubble of his jaw, actually lights it with a flick of his thumbnail – it's a flashy little trick he learned a long time ago in the circus that Phil won't catch. The man's pupils are blown wide, his chest hitching as Clint takes a long pull, tips his head back and blows a perfect smoke ring up at the ceiling before handing the cigar over and slinking back onto the floor again. Phil watches him go; takes a slow sip of the whiskey before dangling the glass and the cigar over the arm of his chair in one hand, looking the complete picture of a rumpled, irritated business man in a posh, dark club, waiting for begrudging entertainment.

His eyes are dark and there's still uncertainty lingering there.

It puts a spark of something in Clint's blood and his hips start swaying before it's even a conscious decision, before he even knows what he's going to do. The music is dark and slow and his hands start to run over his own body in time to the beat and Phil's gaze is like a physical touch that guides the way his body moves, dripping and arching sensually.

"What are you doing?" Phil growls, his voice hoarse and full of gravel, and Clint looks up from beneath his lashes, stares at him.

"Thought you might like a show Mister," he breathes, his heart hammering against his ribs, because it's a play and an explanation both. "That's all. Just a show, just for you."

Phil stares back, holds his eyes before nodding minutely, and just like that it's an apology made and accepted, all the weight off Clint's shoulders and out of his belly.

Grinning like a shark he picks his strip tease back up again, dancing slow and smooth. Phil watches with a hunger that's completely different but just as strong, smokes his cigar and sips his whiskey as Clint bends and curves, as flexible as he ever was. By the time he skims out of his leather jacket, leaving him in a wet, white t-shirt that's very nearly see through, Phil's adjusted himself in his chair, slouched low, legs spread to give himself some more room, and fuck does he need it. The bulge in his pants is already threatening his fly, and he takes a minute to adjust himself with his free hand, forcing Clint to lick his lips against sudden dry mouth.

Fuck he loves it when his Dom looks at him like that.

That's what he was going for, that was what he'd wanted back in the caf, just... just that.

He maybe speeds up the dance a little after that. He strips off quick while still trying to be a little sexy about it, and Phil doesn't seem to mind one way or another. In the end he just shucks his briefs and kicks them into a corner, drops to his knees and unceremoniously buries his face between Phil's legs.

"Gonna let me suck you Mister?" he mumbles, his mouth pressed against the stiff length of Phil's cock, hot beneath the fabric of his suit pants. "Be worth your while, promise. Got a real nice mouth..."

"Then maybe you should use it for something besides talking," Phil growls, low and whiskey-rough.

His free hand curls around the back of Clint's skull and drags him forward, his hips rolling smoothly and Clint whines, tugs at his waistband with his teeth until the button pops. He knows how to do the zipper too but it kinda sucks so he slides his hands up Phil's thighs instead, works his fly open and pulls him out through the slit in his boxers. His cock is thick and flushed, sticky at the tip, and Clint flicks his tongue out over the head before swallowing him straight down, dying inside for the sounds his Dom makes.

It's a fast, sloppy, aggressive blowjob, no finesse despite Clint's promises, despite his skills, but it fits
the game and Phil seems to be enjoying it just as well, fucking up into Clint's throat with lazy thrusts of his hips as he holds him by the back of the head. Clint pulls off for a breath and Phil catches him by the chin, draws his thumb across his bruised lower lip, then throws back the last of his whiskey and pushes him to his feet.

"Bed, now."

Clint pretty much gets thrown onto the bed and ravished after that. It's the only word that he can think of that fits, even if it sounds like it comes from some sort of dime-store romance novel. Phil tosses him down and devours him, and it's all hands and teeth and tongue, gripping, grasping, clutching at each other, and he's not the only one guilty of it. Clint's fingers are leaving just as many red marks behind. It's the roughest sex they've had, hard fucking and he loves it, loves that Phil is leaving marks, is doing it on purpose. He's biting at his chest, sucking bruises high on his throat, squeezing his wrists and dragging his fingernails down Clint's back and it's incredible because Clint is pushing right back, is meeting him push for push. It's fighting back, against all those things that are piled up behind them like a car wreck, and it's the best thing that's ever happened to him even as his heart threatens to pound right out of his chest.

It's easy too, so easy between them, just like it always is. Phil bites down a little too hard and things spark from pleasure to pain and Clint flinches, grips his shoulders.

"Easy," he hisses between clenched teeth, and just like that Phil's mouth gentles, everything smoothing out, and then they're racing each other toward the edge, panting open-mouthed, foreheads pressed together until they both come with a cry and fall, muscles giving out.

"Holy hell," Clint huffs a minute later as they both flop onto their backs, the mattress bouncing beneath them.

Phil chuckles deep in his throat, lifts his hand.

"Amen," he sighs, slapping Clint lightly on the thigh, his hand lingering there as his thumb brushes gently back and forth.

"That was... fuck."

"Sounds about right."

It's exhausted and amused and fond but very, very suddenly Clint's still unsure, licks his lips.

"Are we... Phil, are we ok?"

Phil flinches minutely and Clint immediately sits up, turns to look at him.

It was great, sure, but had he fucked this up even more?

"I feel like I should be asking you that," Phil finally mumbles, refusing to meet his eyes as he reaches out to touch Clint's side, low on his ribs where the scratch marks have curled around his torso. "That was... rougher than we usually get."

"Not that part," he says, shaking his head and turning to sit cross-legged facing his Dom. Taking Phil's hand, he lifts it to his cheek, nuzzles into it before pressing a kiss to his palm. "That part was good. Really good. Right?"

Phil chews his lip a minute, eyes running over Clint's body before he slides his hand down, presses his thumb against what is sure to be a spectacular hickey.
"Yeah," he murmurs, eyes caught by the mark he's tracing on Clint's throat. "Yeah, that part was good."

"Kay. Then I mean... about the rest of it?"

Ducking, Clint feels himself blush, rubs his thumb against a spot on his thigh.

"I mean, I did do it on purpose," he mumbles. "You said you were possessive and I guess I wanted... wanted you to show me. Or... everybody else..."

"You wanted me to mark you?"

Clint lifts his head sharply, shocked by how surprised Phil sounds.

"Why didn't you just ask me?"

"I was trying to," he explains, before shrugging and looking down at his lap. "Guess I didn't do a very good job. Didn't think you would get mad though..."

"Hey, Clint, no."

Sitting up in the bed, Phil hauls Clint into his arms, hugs him tight and hooks his chin over the top of Clint's head.

"That's not your fault," he murmurs, stroking his spine. "I was... a bit surprised myself really, by how strongly I... I know you and Hart are just friends. I know you flirt. I wouldn't ask you to stop..."

Sighing, Phil lets him go and scrubs a hand over his face.

"To be honest Clint I'm not sure what happened earlier today."

"Can I um... can I maybe suggest something?"

"Of course."

Clint bites his lip, takes a second to organize his thoughts.

"I don't really believe in signs," he begins slowly, "But I think maybe this is one? I mean we said we'd do it when the time was right, when it made sense for us..."

Phil's eyes gleam and a wonderous sort of smile touches his mouth, his whole face lighting up.

"You want me to collar you?"

Clint chuckles, looks pointedly at the marks littering his skin.

"Yeah I don't think I'm the only one putting off signals here Phil."

"No you're right," he says quietly, reaching out again to touch another of the many marks he'd left on Clint's body. "I do want to collar you. I was starting to think about it, in the back of my head at least. After last week it just seemed like a good time, like we finally... made it that far. I guess I just... didn't know how to bring it up."

"Hey," Clint murmurs, leaning in to press a kiss to his cheek. "You're allowed to ask for things too ya' know."
"Is that right?" Phil asks primly, arching an eyebrow, and then he's grabbing Clint around the waist and dragging him down into the tangle of sheets, cuddling him close. "Good. Because I was thinking that maybe we could do a semi-formal thing. A little ceremony and then a small reception. I wanted to invite my sister, and my mom if that was alright with you."

"Yeah, absolutely!" Clint agrees, and then he's frowning, brushing his thumb back and forth across Phil's chest. "Cause um, if we're really doing this... There's someone you're gonna have to meet."
Clint hangs up the phone, taps his fingers nervously as he chews his lip, looks up at his partner from beneath his lashes. Phil doesn't look angry, looks stunned in fact, so... that can't be too bad right?

He's stopped expecting to be hit now, but he wouldn't blame his Dom for being furious with him over this. It's... well, it's more an issue between Agent Coulson and Agent Barton than it is between Clint and Phil, but it's still a pretty big secret he's been keeping, a pretty important part of himself.

"Say something," he begs, his fingernails biting into his palms, and he feels Phil shift on the bed beside him, sit up to curl closer.

"Why didn't you tell me?" he asks quietly, his fingertips landing lightly on Clint's jaw.

"Nobody ever asked," he mumbles, ashamed, his cheeks burning even as he turns into Phil's palm, nuzzles into his hand. "I mean, I... I didn't lie. Nobody ever asked me about her, and government makes her nervous, and I didn't want..."

"Not that."

Clint's mouth snaps shut and he looks up at Phil in confusion, tilts his head.

"I understand why you didn't tell Fury, or SHIELD," he says, shaking his head. "I'm not blaming you for not giving up the Widow. Sure, it would have been nice to have that in the back pocket – we've actually had our eye on her for a while – but she's your friend Clint. I get it."

His mouth quirks, his eyes studying Clint's face, and then he shakes his head.

"And I don't," he confesses, moving to prop himself up against the headboard, arranging the quilt over his lap. "She's your friend."

This time it sounds a bit more like a question, and Clint nods vehemently, determined to have him understand this much at least, how important she really is to him.

"My best friend," he elaborates, "My sister. She... she was the most important person in my life for a really long time. She saved me, pulled me out of the fire and kept me alive, took me down when I needed it..."

Clint blinks, surprised by the scowl on his Dom's face.

"No, hey, don't be like that baby," he purrs, cuddling up to Phil's side and pecking kisses to the underside of his jaw as he curls up with his head in his lap. "She took care of me, and I do love her, but not like I love you."

Phil's expression softens and his hands land in Clint's hair, making him hum with pleasure even as a
smug little ball of happiness warms his belly, terribly pleased with his Dom's jealousy.

"You'll like her," he murmurs as sated exhaustion starts to creep back in on him.

Phil makes a quiet sound of consideration, his fingers scritching through Clint's hair.

"I'm sure I will," he says softly. "I'll be happy to meet her. She's clearly important to you - I only... I only hope I never made you feel like you had to keep her away from... us."

"Never," Clint promises. "She wasn't ready to meet SHIELD Phil, and I... well, I wasn't ready for her to meet us yet. But I love you, and I want to be collared by you, and she'd never forgive me if I got collared and she wasn't there to see it. I want her to meet you, to know you. She's important to me, and I think you guys would be friends."

"I hope so," Phil murmurs.

"Good," Clint slurs sleepily. "Now come down here and cuddle me. It's sleep time."

Phil chuckles but does as he's asked, scoothing down the bed and batting Clint's grabby-hands out of the way, tugging the covers up around them.

"Just so you now," Clint garbles around a yawn, "She's probably gonna give you a shovel talk."

Phil swallows, suppresses a shiver, takes Clint's hand.

"A shovel talk from the Black Widow," he mutters, stroking his thumb over Clint's eyebrow as his eyes flutter shut. "You're lucky I love you."

"Hmm, don't forget Win'er Sol'jer," Clint mumbles, drifting off.

Phil blinks, stares, and doesn't fall asleep for a long time.
Chapter 17

He manages to mostly put the Black Widow and the Winter Soldier out of his mind after that. Clint had woken up to find him quietly panicking and had laughed in his face, kissed him sweetly and told him not to worry about it. They would show when they showed, and there was nothing more they could do to prepare for their arrival or up their timeline. He'd then proceeded to well and thoroughly distract him from pretty much everything, and has continued to do so for the last two weeks.

They are preparing for their collaring ceremony though. It's been an incredible thing for both of them to experience, so different from their day-to-day lives. Although they've decided together to keep it small and intimate, it still calls up images and ideas of planning far more elaborate affairs; weddings decked out in white.

Well, it does for Phil at least.

Clint seems to enjoy the small bits and pieces they are pulling together – hors d'oeuvres, small flower arrangements. He shyly asks Phil to pick out a suit for him, doesn't even mention him picking out a collar because of course, that's a given. They set a real date, a Saturday two and half weeks out, more than enough time, and inform SHIELD that under no circumstances will they be working that day.

It's good. All the nerves are gone, all the insecurities, and they're just... them, the way they've always been. SHIELD's best, scourge of junior agents, Nick Fury's good eye.

Nothing changes.

The only thing Clint's worried about is meeting Phil's family.

He's met them before. At the time it had been in the capacity of an agent, a colleague – a subordinate colleague at that. He's not even sure Beth and Ellie Coulson know he's a sub. He's happy to meet them again, happy to actually get to spend more than five minutes with them this time, but he is nervous, and nothing Phil says is helpful.

"They already love you," Phil murmurs in the dark, his arms wrapped around Clint tight as he struggles to stop thinking and just fall asleep. "They love you because I love you."

"That's not... I don't..." Clint stumbles, chewing on his lower lip till it aches. "I just want to be good enough for them."

"You are," his Dom whispers in his ear. "You are good, you are more than enough. Clint I... I get what you mean, alright? I understand it. But I promise you, they are going to be so pleased with you."

"But I'm not..."

"They don't care what you're not," Phil argues insistently. "Yes, my mother is a traditional submissive, and my father was a traditional dominant. But Clint, they raised an atypical dom. They loved me, and they never treated me any less for what I was. Beth is a neutral, and her husband David is a switch, and they loved both of them."

Phil squeezes him tight, pulls him back even closer to his chest and buries his face in the back of Clint's neck, kisses him behind his ear.

"They love me, and I love you," he says, lips still brushing against Clint's nape. "Even if they didn't
love you on your own merit, that would be enough. But they will, because they'll see you as a person first, and then a sub."

"I wanna be a good sub too," Clint whispers, hoarse and pained. "You deserve a good sub."

"I have one," Phil hums, and Clint can feel his mouth turning up in a smile against his shoulder. "The best one there is for me. He's perfect."

"Just... tell me to be good tomorrow," he chokes, reaching up to grab Phil's hand and thread their fingers together. "Please? Tell me to be good."

"If that's what you need," Phil agrees quietly, and Clint feels himself relax just a little. "I'm not worried."

AVAVA

Clint sleeps in the next day, half because he's exhausted himself and half to avoid the cycle of anxious worry he'd trapped himself in the day before. Around noon he can't condone the laziness anymore and drags himself out of bed, heading down to the gym in the basement of Phil's building to run a few miles on the treadmill and lift some free weights until his arms ache.

As much as he feels like he needs the order to behave himself today he doesn't actually want to disappoint his Dom, so an hour later he heads back up to their apartment and jumps in the shower. He actually makes the attempt to get his hair into some semblance of neatness, and is halfway dressed in a nearly-brand-new pair of slacks when Phil slips up behind him and wraps his arms around Clint's waist.

"Wear your good jeans, the dark ones," he murmurs, kissing Clint's cheek. "It's brunch beautiful boy, not a formal dinner."

"I..."

"I know," Phil grins, pressing another kiss to the curve of Clint's throat. "But I can't have you outclassing the rest of us."

It's gentle and playful and he smacks Clint lightly on the ass before walking away, and it does make him feel a little better because Phil is taking this so easy, isn't concerned in the least. He digs the jeans out of his drawer and pulls on a neat, dark grey sweater, tugging the sleeves up his forearms despite the fact that his wrists are bare. He wears his combat boots because they're neat and well cared for, and because they remind him that he can run if he has to.

He won't, he knows he won't, but it's reassurance that he still needs.

Reassurance that his Dom seems to recognize he needs, because, while the ride to the café is quiet, he grabs Clint's hand and tugs him in close as they disembark from the car and start heading up the sidewalk.

"Behave for me," he says with an amused little smile, one that tells Clint no, he really isn't worried, but that he's willing to play along if it's what Clint needs.

"Yes Sir. Thank you Sir."

"Good boy," Phil murmurs, and then he's pecking Clint on the lips and dragging him inside.

There's a moment, a brief moment when the hostess is leading them through the café to a table near
the back that Clint has the time to panic. His chest gets tight and his lungs seize up and he can barely feel Phil's hand in his as he's pulled along, but it goes as quickly as it comes because before he can even make a squeak of protest they've been delivered to a sunny little booth near the windows and Phil's mom is taking his face in her hands and kissing him on both cheeks, moving on to her son like the whirlwind that she is, her voice all excitement and delight.

"Oh Clint, it's so good to see you again! How are you dear? And Phillip, oh sweetheart, look at you; you look wonderful. Oh, it's just been far too long!"

"Hello mum," Phil chuckles, and Clint is still a little stunned by her greeting but Phil is soft and smiling and just... melting for his mom and Clint kind of loves it.

"Clint?"

Blinking, he turns and finds Beth Bishop-Coulson holding out her arms to him, a look of amused questioning on her face. He appreciates the option and allows her the hug, surprising himself when he finds comfort in the warm, lingering embrace.

"It's so nice to finally get to meet you like this." Beth says, pulling back and smiling up at him even as Clint starts to frown.

"Finally?" he repeats with confusion, then feels himself blush. "I... Sorry, just... we met before..."

"Did we?" Beth asks with a sly smirk, tapping her cheek with her finger in teasing thoughtfulness. "Mmm, no, I think I met Agent Barton, the out-of-his-league archer my baby brother was hopelessly pining after."

Clint lifts his eyebrows in surprise and Beth laughs, puts her hand on his forearm.

"I'm looking forward to getting to know you Clint," she explains, "The man who makes my brother happy."

"I..."

"You do you know," she says, softer this time as she nods her chin toward Phil, who is still wrapped up in his mother's arms. "I haven't seen him like this in a long time."

Clint opens his mouth a few times but can't seem to find the words for the strange feeling that has filled up his chest, and Beth is just looking at him with a soft, contented expression on her face, so he does the only thing he can think of in the moment, the only thing he wants to do, and hugs her again.

"Alright, enough of this mushy stuff," she chuckles, rocking Clint from side to side a few times before letting him withdraw from the hug. "I'm starving!"

"Oh yes, please sit, sit!" Ellie Coulson insists, shooing Phil into the booth and then executing a neat little side-step that has Clint following in right after him. She and Beth take the seat on the other side and very suddenly Clint is directly faced with two women who are both smirking at him knowingly and he feels his cheeks heating all over again.

"So," Beth says, picking up a menu and peering at Clint over the top of it, eyes sparkling. "Formal collaring hmm?"

"Yes, on the seventeenth," Phil agrees, shifting so that his leg is pressed against Clint's beneath the table. "We'd like you both to come. And David too, of course."
"Just a small affair I hope," Ellie says, lifting the ceramic mug of coffee that had been sitting at her elbow to take a sip. "I hope you're not going to subject your partner to your cousins right off the bat."

Clint blinks, even as Beth and Phil both laugh. His eyes flick to Ellie Coulson's hands, where she has a collar of thin, delicate silver links looped double around her left wrist. It's a common practice for submissives who've been widowed to have their collar reworked into a cuff, and it's a strange sort of shock for Clint, who has his forearms resting against the edge of the table, his own bare wrists on display. She'd said partner, not sub, not boy, and it hits him then, really hits him, that he's here meeting Phil's family as his boyfriend, not his submissive.

"No, just you, and a few close friends," Phil replies.

"I don't mind..." Clint offers uncomfortably, out of politeness since he doesn't know Phil's extended family at all.

Ellie Coulson snorts.

"You would dear, trust me," she says, rolling her eyes. "My husband's nephews are absolutely dreadful."

AVAVA

Brunch turns out to be really, really nice and Clint enjoys himself immensely. Between the four of them they split a pitcher of mimosas and work their way through a mountain of eggs benedict and stuffed french toast, Beth and Ellie taking great delight in providing him with hilarious stories of Phil's geeky childhood and misspent teenage years. Phil grumbles god-naturedly but looks as happy as a clam to be there in the sunny little cafe getting teased by his family, and Clint's all full up of warm and happy feelings as the afternoon wears on.

Ellie Coulson and her daughter have mostly been read-in on what their son does for a living, so the conversation flows far more naturally than it typically does with most civilians. It makes it easier for Clint to open up about himself when the curiosity gets turned on him, though his stories are still cleaned up more than a little bit. He tells a few tales from the circus – the happier bits anyway – tells how Phil recruited him to SHIELD and helped guide him through his first few years of training. He waxes eloquent about how competent the man is in handling other agents, in getting things done with minimal fuss, and then has to suffer through his turn being praised when Phil talks about how quickly he'd learned to fly all the different SHIELD jets, how useful his insights are when planning strategy.

To both Clint and Phil's shy, blushing chagrin Beth jumps in on the fun, telling all about the way Phil had bemoaned his own hopelessness over the years while simultaneously driving his family crazy with his lovesick pining. Luckily the conversation turns to other topics as Clint gets brave enough to show an interest in Phil's family and asks questions of Beth and Ellie Coulson, getting to know them as best he can in a cafe. They seem delighted by the attention and his opening up, and answer readily with much laughter and many smiles.

All in all, it turns out far better than Clint had worried about.

When they finally part Clint's given more hugs and kisses and farewells than he knows what to do with, as well as two new numbers for his phone. Ellie insists on snapping a few pictures of him and Phil, and they should be awkward as hell the way they pose on the sidewalk but more than anything they're just sweet. They way they're touching each other, looking at each other makes up for it, and Beth promises to send him the photos as soon as she can get her mother's phone away from her.
The ride back to the apartment is quiet but it's a calmer, nicer quiet than the ride to the café was, the windows down to let in a warm breeze and some soft jazz playing quietly on the radio. Clint enters the apartment ahead of Phil and makes his way to the kitchen, stashing their meager leftovers in the fridge before turning around to find his Dom looking at him like he's never seen him before.

"What?" he asks, his fingers nervously finding the hem of his sweater, and Phil shakes his head softly.

"I love you, so much," he admits quietly, and it's all there in the way he says it, those few, simple words.

If it weren't, everything else is in his kiss.
"Tie me up?"

The way Phil blinks and goes very, very still is a testament to the fact that Clint's surprised him.

That's fair – it's not something that they do all that often and it's certainly not something that Clint typically asks for. It's his Dom's thing, not his, as much as he's come to enjoy the look on Phil's face as he performs the delicate ropework. It's something he likes giving to his Dom, and right now, he thinks Phil needs it.

He's nervous, see, Clint can tell. About next week, about meeting the Black Widow and the Winter Soldier, even if it's just as Nat and Bucky. Secretly, Clint's willing to put money on the possibility that he's already 'bumped into them' somewhere, but thinks that's a suspicion best kept to himself. He wants to reassure his partner, not panic him, but so far nothing he's tried has worked.

A nice distraction is the only idea he has left.

Phil licks his lips, takes a breath as his eyes roam distractedly over Clint's chest.

"What... what did you have in mind?"

It's the hesitancy that seals it for Clint. What he has in mind, it's not something he's ever wanted before, something he'd never thought he'd be comfortable with. Phil's been so twitchy lately though, and so sweet to make up for it, that Clint had started getting ideas, had taken a fearless inventory of himself and his relationship (if he does say so himself), and started planning.

He'd found what he was looking for in a thrift shop in the village, four bucks and proof that it worked. The old Polaroid camera had come with a box of film, battered but still usable, and it feels heavy and solid in his hands as he takes it from behind his back and pushes it into Phil's.

"Make me pretty," he says in a rush, his cheeks burning. "Make me pretty for you."

"Clint..." Phil breathes, holding the bulky camera reverently in his hands, the same way he holds Clint. "You..."

"I wanna see it Sir," Clint murmurs, stepping forward so he's tucked up against Phil's chest, head ducked to that he's staring down at the camera held between them. "I get to see the ropes and I get to see you, but I... I wanna see all of it."

Slowly Phil's hand rises and slides along Clint's jaw, lifts his face so that he can press the lightest, most gentle of kisses to Clint's lips.

"This is what you want?" he asks quietly, and the carefully controlled tone of his voice gives him away, his excitement, his own desire.

"Yes Sir."

"Go get ready then."

With a grin, Clint darts in and steals a hard kiss before practically skipping to the bedroom. He's already got most everything set up the way he wants it – has laid out crisp, white sheets, moved one of the bedside lamps to change the light to a warm, slanted glow, lined Phil's coils of rope up neatly.
on the divan – but he takes the time to get into the right mindset. Stripping off helps – his clothes hit the hamper without even looking – and the rest comes easily enough as he settles himself onto his knees at the foot of the bed.

He's half hard by the time Phil steps quietly into the room, and a shiver of anticipation runs down his spine as his ears hear the heavy, clacking whine of the shutter being closed on the camera.

"Beautiful," his Dom murmurs, and Clint sighs softly, a smile touching the corners of his mouth.

That's it.

That's what he likes, what he needs.

If he was still nervous at all about having his picture taken like this, that's all he needs to overcome it, that single, quiet declaration.

"Give me your color sweet boy."

"Green Sir."

"Good."

The floor creaks quietly as Phil moves about, and Clint keeps his chin tucked against his chest, eyes closed as he listens. The camera is set down, a low clunk on the end table, the rope bundles shift and rustles as his Dom makes his selections, and then there is a hand in Clint's hair and Phil's bare feet in front of him, those painfully sexy black jeans snug around muscled thighs and tight across his hips where a heavy hardon already threatens the zipper.

Clint takes a moment to lean in and rub his face against Phil's groin like a cat, reveling in the heat and the stiff length of his cock against his cheek. Phil lets him, hand in his hair as he presses his hips forward lightly, then guides him gently to his feet and shoves his tongue into Clint's mouth.

"I love you," he growls roughly, his hand on the back of Clint's neck, and he grins against Phil's mouth as he nips sharply at his lower lip. "Come here."

Phil guides him away from the bed into the center of the room, stands him in the middle of the soft, fluffy rug that warms the floor. He has a thick bundle of rope draped over one shoulder, a smooth polypropylene blend in black with checks of purple throughout – Clint knows this because Phil has, on occasion, waxed poetic about his favorite ropes – and there's a lot of it, enough to make Clint shiver with anticipation.

Phil sees this, of course he does, and he takes a moment to stalk around Clint in a wide circle, a predator around its prey. He stops directly behind Clint, runs his hands slowly over Clint's shoulders and down his back, sliding around his hips to cup his balls. Clint gasps, nudges forward into the sudden heat, enjoys the idle fondling until Phil's hands leave again. They don't go far, instead they slide down his thighs, callouses rough and erotic against his skin, urging his legs slightly farther apart until his feet are positioned under his shoulders.

"Stay," Phil murmurs, and Clint hums in agreement.

The quiet settles them.

It always does.

They're tried music in the background, but found they'd both preferred the whisper of skin-on-skin,
the slick slide of rope, the gasps and murmurs and groans they're able to pull out of each other. Clint watches from a low place of muffled alertness, his body heavy and still as he takes in every movement and purr and quiet smile his Dom offers. Phil goes deeper, losing himself in the tie and ritual of the rope.

He checks it first, he always does, sliding the countless yards of rope through his hands, testing it for weakness or roughness. Clint doesn't worry – he knows how well his Dom takes care of his rope – but it's good to watch the way Phil sinks into it. Finding the bite at the very center, Phil makes a quick knot, leaving a small loop at the top of the V that the rope falls into, and lifts it over Clint's head to situate it carefully at the nape of his neck, the pinnacle of the tie.

Clint sighs happily through his nose and smiles like a dope when Phil lifts an eyebrow.

Grinning back, his Dom uses his grip on the tails to pull Clint close and kiss him, long and slow, before he finally gets down to business.

He's taken him seriously, Clint realizes, as he begins to build a ladder down the center of Clint's body. This will be a full-body harness, a far more extensive set-up than they've ever played with, and his cock jumps with the realization. He knows just how much Phil loves Shibari, and a warm, excited pride swells inside his chest at being able to give his Dom his body like this, to provide him with such a playground.

Phil continues all the way down to his cock, knotting the two tails together every five inches or so, then he gives Clint's cock a nice, long suck before circling his balls with the rope and adding another knot that rubs just right against his perineum to drive him crazy. Clint whimpers and moans and Phil smirks up at him from where he's crouched, and Clint wonders if he hasn't made a very grave mistake.

The ropes go back between his legs, snug between his cheeks with another knot added to press right where he wants it most, and Phil knows it, the bastard, because he gives the tails just enough of a tug to rock Clint up onto his tiptoes and make him whine.

He's never understood the appeal of thongs before – let's face it, wedgies are not erotic – but he catches himself pressing his ass back into the cradle of his Dom's hips with abandon. Phil doesn't seem to mind the interruption; he drapes the tails of the rope over his own shoulders and grabs Clint by the hips, hauling him backwards and grinding his erection against Clint's ass.

"Behave," he growls, biting at Clint's shoulder before stepping back, slapping him lightly on the ass. "I'm not done."

Clint groans and pouts but stands still, lets Phil thread the tails of the rope through the loop at the base of his neck. With the ladder built, he starts to wind the ropes back and forth around Clint's sides, through the ropes down his middle to pull them outward between the knots, creating a pattern of diamonds from his collarbones down to his hips.

It feels good.

Beyond the fact that Phil is thumbing his nipples roughly, fistin his dick, sucking and nibbling as he goes, the rope itself feels good, the lacing snug around his torso, a net wrapped tight around him without any real restriction on his movement. He's distracted by the feel of it, flexing his muscles against the harness to test its strength, the give and the bit of the rope, doesn't realize that Phil has finished it until he hears the click of the shutter again.

Phil lowers the camera, his eyes gleaming and his face all hunger, and Clint's breath catches in his
throat. His Dominant takes a step toward him and Clint reacts on instinct, sinking slowly to his knees and presenting in a way he's never really done before. His hands go behind his back and cross at the wrists, his shoulders dropping to broaden his chest, his knees spreading wide as he puts all of himself on display for his Dom, chin tipped, and the sound Phil makes sings in his chest.

"Never get tired of this view," his Dom breathes, snapping another photo, and Clint flushes hot, pressing his chest forward into the ropes as his cock throbs and leaks freely. "So beautiful Clint."

"Thank you Sir."

"Climb up on the bed for me."

Clint goes without question, uses all his considerable athleticism to move gracefully from the floor to the bed. Phil hadn't told him how to go, but there's a thrill tickling at his spine knowing that there's a camera in the room, that his photo is being taken. He's never been an exhibitionist, has marked it as a pretty hard limit in fact, but this isn't really that is it? This is just them, just Clint and Phil alone in their bedroom, and the thought of Phil tucking those pictures away for the both of them to look at later makes him harder than he's ever been in his life.

Spreading his knees, he drops down onto his elbows and presents.

Phil's muttered curse is music to his ears, and Clint grins dopily into the pillow as he feels the bed dip under his Dom's weight. Big, heavy hands grip his ass, squeeze and knead and push, and he squirms under the attention, wags his tail.

Phil laughs, and that sounds nice too, so Clint wriggles a bit to turn and look at him, peer at him over his shoulder. Phil tilts his head and smiles, and suddenly there's a lightness and a silliness to the whole thing that Clint hadn't known he needed.

Phil sits back on his heels, lifts the camera, aims it for a long time before putting it down and grabbing the ropes over Clint's hips, pulling him back and up and then they're rolling over and over in the sheets, laughing and touching and rubbing off against each other, Phil biting him playfully all over and holding him close by the harness that presses wonderfully aching lines into his skin.

Clint ends up kneeling over his lap, Phil fucking the crease of his ass and jerking him off with one hand, the other holding the heavy polaroid over their heads to take a gorgeously filthy selfie. Later he'll slowly release Clint from his bindings and kiss each red line left behind, and Clint will collect up the polaroids scattered around like rose petals and squirrel them away in his sock drawer, before requesting that they play this particular game again with the use of a floor-length mirror.

He touches his neck lazily as he lies sprawled out on his back, sated and smug, and Phil rolls over half on top of him to press kisses to the hollow of his throat, where his collar will rest.

"I love you," he murmurs before dropping off to sleep, and Clint follows easily in the knowledge that he's done his job both as a partner and a submissive and worn his Dom out.
Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

You guys should probably check out chapter 4 of Animal Intelligence if you haven't yet - not *super* necessary to the chapter - but it's cute and who doesn't love a little Winter Widow? Soviet Spouses?

Nat and Bucky!

To say that Phil’s not nervous would be a lie.

He’s absolutely nervous, only, not for any of the reasons he expected to be.

Yes, he’s about to be confronted by the infamous Black Widow and Winter Soldier, but on the other hand, he’s really not.

He’s decided that today he’s going as Phil Coulson, partner to Clint Barton, not Phillip J Coulson of SHIELD. He’s going to meet his submissive’s friends, his *family* not recruitment targets. When he thinks of it that way, when he watches Clint dance and smile and laugh his way through the week leading up to their brunch reservations, it’s easy.

He’s nervous, but only because he’s excited.

Because he wants to make a good impression, wants to like Clint’s friends as his friends, and wants them to like him in return.

A part of him has been looking forward to this from the beginning.

“You’re gonna love Nat,” Clint chirps as he practically skips along the sidewalk beside him, swinging their hands back and forth after lacing their fingers together. “You remind me of her sometimes.”

“How so?” he asks, hiding a smile, not because he’s insecure, but because he wants to hear more, wants Clint to open up a little more.

Phil is quite sure he’s a little nervous too.

“You’re both good at what you do,” he explains. “Wicked smart, competent... you’re good at a lot of the same things.”

Phil lifts an eyebrow and Clint blushes, ducks his head.

“Not like that,” he grumbles, and this time Phil lets his grin show. “You’ve got a dirty mind Sir.”

“You can’t blame me,” Phil hums, squeezing Clint’s hand. “I’ve got an excellent muse.”

Clint flicks him a glance beneath his eyelashes, pinks up across his cheeks and the back of his neck, and doesn’t talk the rest of the way to the diner. It’s a nice day, warm and sunny, and Clint’s picked a place a few blocks south of downtown proper, where the traffic is light and lots of little shops are
tucked away from the crazy chain business of the inner city. As they approach the little café Phil catches a flash of bright red hair in the outdoor seating area and then Clint is pulling away from him, dancing up the sidewalk and calling out with a wave.

“Nat!”

The redhead – a beautiful, slim young woman who looks painfully familiar – gets smoothly to her feet and opens her arms, welcoming Clint into her embrace. They hug like old friends who haven’t seen each other in years, which he supposes is fair, but as he approaches at a slightly more sedate pace he realizes that he has seen Natasha Romanov much more recently. Sure enough, when she finally lets go of Clint’s shoulders and steps back, a man with shoulder-length brown hair takes her place, and yes, Phil’s seen him before too.

He has to bite the inside of his cheek to stop a smug sort of smirk – it’s warring hard with a heartbreakingly sappy smile – and he steps forward to stand at Clint’s side when he looks back at him.

“Nat,” Clint says softly, wrapping his arm around Phil’s waist and drawing him close, “This is Phil Coulson. Phil this is Natasha Romanov.”

“It is good to meet you Phil Coulson,” she says coolly through a thick accent, offering him her hand as she looks him up and down with piercing green eyes.

“Properly this time,” Phil agrees, because she’d said good, not nice or a pleasure. “I have to say, the red better suits you.”

The Black Widow arches a delicate eyebrow, a smile tugging at the corner of her mouth as she dips her head in acknowledgement.

“Thank you,” she says sweetly, taking back her hand and holding it out to the man who’d dumped Phil’s coffee over his shoes last week. “This is my partner, James Barnes.”

Partner, Phil muses as he shakes Barnes’ hand, not submissive. Well then.

“Barnes, good to see you again,” he says, and Clint narrows his eyes, looks between all of them suspiciously.

“Nat, what did you...”

“Shall we go inside and order a coffee?” Phil asks Barnes smoothly. “I believe it’s my turn to buy.”

“Sounds good,” Barnes grins, and Phil nods sharply, smiling at Clint and touching his arm before leaving him beneath the little table umbrella with his friend. The Widow watches him closely as does the Winter Soldier, and Phil is under no illusion that they at least are not playing both parts today.

Stepping inside the café, he’s not surprised when Barnes slips in behind him, tight on his heels. It’s a position of strategic power but he doesn’t let himself tense up, doesn’t let himself slip to the side to put them on more even footing. He can bear this, happily, if it means that Clint can keep his friends in his life.

“Did I pass your test then?” he asks mildly as he joins the line snaking back from the counter.

“Do you think we’d all be here if you didn’t?” Barnes quips back dryly.
“Well I’d like to think that Clint has *some say* in his own life decisions,” Phil replies, and the minute flash of surprise that crosses Barnes’ face tells him that yes, he *is* doing well.

“Have you *met* Barton?” the man asks a beat later, a grin tugging at the corner of his mouth as he finally cedes some sort of defeat and steps up next to Phil instead of looming behind him. "The guy can't decide on what t-shirt to wear most days, and that's saying something when they're all some kind of purple."

“Several years ago, yes,” Phil replies. “I might have agreed with you then. But he’s a different man now, and...”

“What, because of *you*?”

Phil blinks, surprised by the vehemence in the man’s voice, and wonders not for the first time if he really is a submissive as he’d played to be in their little encounter last week.

“Because of SHIELD,” he corrects. “He’s done well with us. A little leeway, a few classes... it took some time, yes, more than I would have liked, but he’s come to realize that he’s more than just a sharpshooter, worth more than just his aim.”

Barnes stares, and Phil holds his eyes for a few seconds, lets him search, then steps up to the counter without another word and orders for Clint and for himself. A small gesture brings him forward to add two more drinks to the order, and when he forks over his credit card without a word he thinks he sees approval in the man’s dark gaze.

They don’t speak while they wait for their order to be pulled. Phil leans against the counter and watches Clint through the windows, leaning forward to hold the Black Widow’s hand across the table. The sun’s pouring down on him and he’s all lit up from the inside, gold and happiness, his smile brighter than Phil’s seen in a long time, and he can feel his own heart squeeze as that joy creeps in on him. Barnes just waits and observes, but Phil, accustomed to the intensity of the Amazing Hawkeye’s gaze, doesn’t flinch.

Once their drinks are pushed across the counter they head back outside, approaching the table slowly so that their companions have time to pulls a few things back if they need to. The Widow’s face goes quietly impassive and Phil doesn’t react when Barnes slips around him, presents a steaming cup of chai tea to her with both hands and a quiet *Domina*. Clint cocks an eyebrow so it must be yet another test to pass, though he’s not sure what this one is meant to measure.

Placing his drink down on the table in front of him, Phil touches the back of Clint’s shoulder as he moves around behind him and sits down, glad at least that he’s found himself across from the Soldier and not his mistress.

*Mistress*, yes, he can see it now, now that they’re both allowing him to see it.

Not that he cares, not that it matters, it’s just... good to have another piece of the puzzle, to understand them all together a little better.

“Thanks Sir,” Clint grins, taking a hard pull from his straw – iced caramel macchiato with whip and extra drizzle – his favorite Phil knows, even if he doesn’t quite know what kind of Sir that was.

Doesn’t matter, he just smiles back, stupidly besotted and all warm inside from watching Clint through the windows.

The Black Widow breaks that spell neatly and with aplomb.
“Shall we take care of business first then, Agent Coulson?” she asks coolly, leaning back to wrap her arm delicately around the Winter Soldier’s shoulders.

“What business?” Phil asks calmly, refusing to be distracted from where he’s tearing open a couple of sugar packets for his black Americano.

She looks him carefully up and down, flicks a glance at Clint, who’s scowling at her.

“My partner thinks recruitment,” she answers slowly, her gaze returning him with a shuttered expression. “I think a warning... or a threat.”

Phil raises an eyebrow, looks at Clint feeling slightly and inexplicably hurt, but he just sighs and shakes his head.

“I told her neither,” he says, face scrunched the way it goes when he’s feeling uncertain and a little defensive.

Phil reaches over and takes his hand, brushes his thumb over Clint’s knuckles. He’s not thinking about his audience in that moment, only his boyfriend, but when he turns back to face the Widow she seems to have softened a bit.

“Miss Romanov, my only objective today is to get to know two people who are very dear to my partner,” he says carefully. “If either you or Mr. Barnes are interested in working for SHIELD that’s something I would be happy to discuss with you, but at a later date. I’m sure you know where to find me.”

She doesn’t thaw.

She’s still wary, still watchful, but... he thinks maybe he’s impressed her.

At the very least reassured her for now.

The tension relaxes significantly and all four of them settle back into light conversation. Phil lets Clint take the lead, not because he’s scared to jump in, but because he’s enjoying the view, watching him interact with his friends. He’s goofy and sweet and at ease in a way that he rarely is outside of their apartment, all bright eyes and wide, happy smile, and Phil soaks it up like gold, sunshine and heat and joy.

Natasha is smart and smooth and efficient in a way that Phil appreciates, and he better understands the comparisons Clint has drawn between them.

Barnes is unexpectedly funny, and he can see why the two men get along.

A brief ripple of anxiety rolls up his spine as he glimpses a future of prank wars and stupid jokes, immediately followed by the realization that he doesn’t care, that he will suffer it all happily if he can have Clint in his life, if Clint can have his friends.

They spend several hours at the café, ordering grilled sandwiches just before the lunch rush hits and talking about almost everything – the notable exception being their respective lines of work. While Phil picks at his house-made kettle chips Clint and Natasha fall into conversation about a job they’d shared in the past, and his ears perk up despite the fact that they’re speaking in Russian. Barnes drops in a word here or there, and Clint sends Phil a very blatant and obvious wink, so it’s clear everyone speaks and understands the language around the table. The only reason for the subterfuge is the content of the discussion, and it doesn’t take long for Phil to start getting slightly uncomfortable with the turn the conversation has taken.
It’s not that Phil wasn’t impressed by his partner before.

Clint’s always impressed him, even when he was a scrawny, underfed punk doing his best to feed himself through shady merc-work that only ever paid well half the time. He hadn’t lied to James Barnes – Clint had come a long way in SHIELD, and watching him learn and grow and hone his skills, develop new ones, has been one of the highlights of Phil’s own career.

Of his life.

There’s a sense of pride associated with the concept, because even though he’d argued the point with Barnes, Phil had had a hand in building Clint up to what he was. As his handler, he’d spent several years walking the archer through confidence-building exercises, carefully bolstering his esteem with gentle redirection and profuse praise.

This though, this...

Sitting here listening to Clint talk about an op he’d run with them in Budapest, an op Phil knew from the annals of the SHIELD archives, well...

Let’s just say he’s experiencing a whole new appreciation for his lover that he hadn’t before.

It’s funny really.

He’d spent so long preparing himself to meet the Black Widow and the Winter Soldier that he’s not prepared to be sitting next to Hawkeye. All the fanboying and all the professional admiration he’d so carefully packed away threatens to spill violently back out, but not over its originally intended targets.

On some level Clint must recognize it. Even as he falls deep into old stories and inside jokes with Natasha Romanov, he turns sideways toward Phil, who’s pulled his chair back, so that he’s angled toward him and nearly sitting between his knees. His hand lights on the inside of Phil’s thigh, squeezes comfortably, and it’s all Phil can do not to drag him into the bathrooms in a completely inappropriate show of appreciation.

If he didn’t know better he’d think the Black Widow could read his mind – she keeps flicking him these little unreadable looks – but she doesn’t say anything so he ignores her.

He can’t force her to like him, and he won’t change himself to make that happen, as much as he...

As much as he’s willing to do for Clint, to give for him.

If she finds him lacking, he suspects that there’s nothing he’ll be capable of doing to change her mind.

The thought that she might try to take Clint from him whispers through Phil’s mind and he feels his spine straighten, his expression harden. She flicks a glance in his direction, her own gaze like steel, and her eyes track his hand, which, apparently without input from his brain, slides down the length of Clint’s forearm and wraps lightly around his wrist. Half a second passes, just long enough for Phil to catch the frown touching the corners of her mouth before Clint turns his hand into Phil’s and laces their fingers together, before Phil lets him and gets a peck on the cheek in return.

Barnes barks a laugh, like he’s been paying attention this whole time, and Clint scowls at him, kicks him under the table.

Natasha looks at him, and for the first time today it is Natasha, not the Widow. A real smile melts the
ice from her demeanor, the stiffness from her shoulders, and her eyes brighten as she looks him up and down one more time, her head tilted like it’s the first time she’s seeing him.

“I think we may be friends yet, Phil Coulson.”

**AVAVA**

“Holy shi... Phil!” Clint gasps as Phil pushes him back against the door before it’s even fully closed. “What...”

Phil’s hands clutch at his hips as he steps in close, presses in between his thighs, against his chest, mouthing at his neck and throat hungrily. He hadn’t planned this, he hadn’t, but sitting there all afternoon watching his partner hold court with the Black Widow and the Winter Soldier like there was nothing incredible about it at all had lit a fire in his belly like he hadn’t felt in a long time.

“God I love you,” he pants against Clint’s collarbones, nosing at the collar of his v-neck to nibble on his skin. “Always knew you lived up to your name, but god Clint...”

“What the hell’s gotten into you?” Clint whimpers, curiosity and arousal warring on his lips as he lets Phil drag him deeper into the apartment toward the couch.

“Nothing yet,” Phil mumbles, a dark promise as he drops onto the cushions and drags Clint down on top of him. “So amazing. You’ve got this incredible ass...”

**Jesus**

“And these incredible arms...”

He pauses to get two handfuls of said ass and give it a squeeze.

“And these incredible arms...”

A long lick over the vein and a sucking bite.

“And this gorgeous smile...”

Clint wriggles and whines in Phil’s lap as he grabs his face and kisses him hard and deep, falling into it like Clint’s all he needs to breathe. Possession and pride burns in his belly, floods his limbs and makes his skin feel too small for his body, hot and sensitive, but more than anything he’s painfully in awe.

“So beautiful,” he murmurs, getting his hands underneath Clint’s shirt and rucking it up, pushing until he lifts his arms so Phil can drag it over his head. “Smart and strong and clever, and the Soldier, the Widow... Jesus Clint...”

“Liked that, huh Boss?” Clint chokes as Phil’s mouth latches on to his nipple, teases with tongue and teeth. “I mean, I get it. Nat’s gorgeous in that totally-could-kill-you-with-her-pinky kinda way. And Bar... Barnes always was a pretty boy.”

Clint stutters when Phil palms the bulge in his jeans, squeezes lightly in warning. Grabbing him around the waist, he twists them both around until he’s lying flat out on the couch and Clint lands on his chest with his knees on either side of Phil’s shoulders.

“Not what I meant Hawk,” he growls, turning to the side to bite at the inside of Clint’s thigh.

Clint sucks in a sharp breath, then falls forward to plant his hands on the arm of the couch above Phil’s head.

“Then what did you...”
“I know exactly how lucky I am,” Phil grits out, reaching up to run his nails lightly down Clint’s bare back, relishing the shivers it earns him. “But you make it easy to forget sometimes Clint. You can be so sweet and soft and kind and I love that part of you, but sometimes I forget...”

“Forget what?” Clint whimpers, eyes tightly shut as Phil gets his arms free again, starts working at his fly and drags him down by the nape of the neck for another bruising kiss.

“Who you are!” Phil rumbles wickedly in his ear, finally getting his cock free of his boxers. “The things you can do! The reputation you had before I found you; competent, dangerous, deadly accurate... god damn Hawk...”

He has to slide his hand into his own pants then, grip himself tightly to stop himself from going off. Lying underneath Clint, his weight trapping him against the couch, thighs caging his face... god it’s so good. Yeah, his motor had gotten a kickstart at the café earlier, but lying here now, praising all the sexiest parts of Hawkeye that so often get forgotten or ignored...

“So that’s how it is.”

It’s a dark purr, full of its own wicked promise, and Phil’s eyes snap open to find Hawkeye staring down at him with pupils blown wide, mouth set in a knowing smirk. His hips jerk but Clint just rides it out, rolling his own hips and reaching down with one hand to give his cock a few rough strokes.

Phil licks his lips, swallows hard.

“What are you going to do about it Hawk?” he challenges, and that smirk, the one he so rarely sees, grows bright and sly.

“I’m gonna start by tearing your clothes off... with my teeth.”

And that’s how Phil ends up naked on his couch in the middle of the afternoon with his submissive fucking his face, happy as he’s ever been.

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