(This is How it Starts) I Just Had a Change of Heart

by anthcnystark

Summary

Tony Stark is a mess, but no one seems to realize it. After Steve tips him over the edge into a breakdown, they begin to see the error of their ways, but it will take a lot of time to help him unlearn the things they helped to teach. Meanwhile, Tony and Bucky start to connect in ways no one expected.

Notes

**Warnings** for references to child abuse and depression/mental illness and everything that
entails. If that doesn't work for you, please don't read.

Title from the song Change of Heart by The 1975

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

“Iron Man, stand down!” Steve snarled as he pulled himself up from the crumbled pavement outside what might have probably at some point been a Pizza Hut just in time see his teammate swoop upwards to face off with the Enchantress. On another day, he might have made an attempt to avoid confrontation, but the battle had been raging nonstop for nearly twelve hours, and the exhaustion and dehydration had gotten past even the serum and got the better of him. It may have enhanced the good in him, but it he had to admit that it had given his temper a push for the worse as well. Despite their mutual apologies after the Battle of New York, tensions were still high between himself and Tony, and after several failed attempts at reconciliation, his patience had finally run out.

“Stark! I said stand down!” He orders fell on deaf ears as his teammate’s mocking voice as he took jabs at Amora filtered through the tinny headset, the one that the genius should have upgraded by now, Steve lamented. After the fighting ended, if it ever did, Steve was going to give Stark a piece of his mind. Before he had a chance to properly reprimand Stark to the best of his ability while in his current predicament on the field, his side exploded in pain as a chunk of building that had been flung aside by a wave of glittering, green light shredded the muscles in his torso. By the time his skull hit the cement, all he could register was the slick, hot puddle on the ground by his waist, and the faraway echo of a man’s panicked voice before his vision tunneled into nothing.

Before he even opened his eyes, Steve registered the acrid scent of antiseptic and murmur of voices beside his bed. The beeping of machines, a heart rate monitor he recognized, grated on his enhanced ears, leaving no doubt in his mind as to his location. Hoping for a few more moments of peace before the onslaught of doctors and chaos wrought by his teammates’ worry, he steadied his breathing and kept his eyes firmly closed. Only moments into his mental preparation, a pointy fingertip jabbed the center of his sternum and dug uncomfortably into the bone. He winced. “Come on, Cap, nap’s over. I know you’re faking,” Clint whined, because of course it was Clint attached to the annoying finger. Reluctantly, Steve cracked one eye open and then the other, groaning at the steadily increasing throb in his side. The serum healed him much more quickly than any of the others, barring Thor, but the increased tolerance to drugs made sure that he would get the full experience in the form of pain in the meantime, especially if the cringe-worthy headache he woke up with was any indication.

“Jesus, Clint, inside voice.” He winced at the cracking sounds of his dry throat and gratefully accepted a deep drink from the cup of water that was held to his lips by a dainty hand that could only belong Natasha. She confirmed herself as the hand’s owner when the cup suddenly disappeared from his mouth and moments later a pained grunt from Clint resounded in the room. He opened his eyes the rest of the way, feeling up to braving the glaring fluorescent lights of the hospital after the water. Both of his friends were still battle grimy and disheveled, but in civilian their attire, so Steve assumed someone had been by the tower already to gather the essentials. Natasha offered him a sympathetic smile and squeezed his limp hand. “Clint, go get Bruce and Dr. Navarre and tell them Steve’s awake.” Clint gave her a playful salute and sauntered out the door and down the hall. She turned back to face him. “How’re you feeling, Rogers? Ready to get back out there?” Her expression was soft, but took on a teasing edge. He cracked a smile in return. “I could do this all day, Romanoff. What’s our status?”

“The Enchantress is in SHIELD custody. NYPD is tying up loose ends, and Pepper’s with the legal team and PR reps. They’re working on damage control. Barnes, Wilson, and Thor are helping the
cleanup crew, and Banner is talking with your doctor outside. Stark’s God knows where. I don’t know what the fuck he’s doing.” Annoyance clouded her expression. Steve waved it off.

“Good. Everyone got out clean?” Natasha nodded in affirmation.

“Yes, you were the only casualty on the team. You took a nasty hit, люблю.”

“What’s the damage?” She glanced down at the note on the bedside table. Probably from Bruce.

“Aside from the obvious minor injuries, you sustained major soft tissue damage in your side, significant loss of blood, and a number of broken ribs. Your spleen was lacerated by a piece of bone, and your internal bruising is extensive, to say the least. Consider yourself lucky though. Without the serum, you’d have been dead. Even with it, Tony barely got to you in time.

Steve blew a sigh from between his teeth and sunk farther into the mounds of pillows. He was awake enough to feel the beginnings of hostility curling in his belly for Stark’s recklessness on the field.

“You really don’t know where he is then? I want to talk to him. The kind of behavior he showed today is unacceptable. Riling up our enemies like he does endangers the whole team, as well as civilians.” From the stormy look in her eyes, Steve could tell Natasha felt the same way.

“You don’t have to tell me twice, Cap. You know how I feel about Stark. I stand by what I wrote in my report.”

“You were right in saying it. At this point, I’m not sure why Stark’s still on the team. He was supposed to be a consultant if I’m not mistaken. It was only because of Loki that he was ever on active duty with the Avengers. I’ve been meaning to talk to you about something, actually.” She quirked an eyebrow at him and pulled a stool up to his bedside.

“Well, I guess now’s as good a time as any. We have a few minutes to ourselves. Knowing Clint, he’ll probably get distracted by a vending machine or hot nurse on his way down.” Steve laughed briefly, before gasping in pain and trying to dull the stab of pain in his side. Just as his vision grayed around the edges, he felt a soft, cool hand touch his forehead and press him back down into the pillows he hadn’t even realized he sprung up from. She murmured soothing noises until his breathing evened out and he could speak again. She sat back down. “Tell me what’s on your mind.”

“It’s about Stark.”

“Isn’t everything?” She grinned at him. Steve chuckled as well, with more caution this time.

“I think I should talk to Fury about removing him from the team, and I hoped you’d back me up. I don’t feel comfortable working with someone who isn’t invested in the safety of his teammates and insists on acting like a child on and off the field.”

“Steve, are you sure that’s a good decision? I don’t like Stark any more than you do, but as immature and egotistical as he can be, we need him. Iron Man packs a punch, one I’m not sure we can afford to lose. Even with Sam as aerial support, he can’t make up for the firepower that Stark brings to the table. Just the repulsors alone…” She trailed off, brow furrowed.

“I know, I understand what you’re saying, and I agree. That’s why I wanted to talk to Colonel Rhodes. He’s Stark’s friend, but he’s a reasonable man. I’m sure we could get him to come around to our way of thinking, and then we could see if he’d be willing to join the Avengers full time. He could be just as valuable an asset as Iron Man if we play our cards right. With War Machine on our side-”
“What’s that about my Platypus?” Both their heads snapped to the doorway as a grease-stained, wild-eyed Tony Stark blustered into the hospital room in all his manic glory. Steve blinked in surprise at the rudeness of the intrusion, although he shouldn’t have expected anything less from Stark. The man glanced to each of them with a Cheshire cat grin. “Captain. Widow.” Natasha glared at him, and then returned her gaze to Steve, giving him a questioning look. He took a deep breath to control his temper and offered his teammate a curt greeting.

“Stark. It was nothing, don’t worry about it.” The man’s smile faltered a bit at his tone, but he quickly recovered. “Where have you been? I’m sure the others would appreciate help with the cleanup.” He’d meant to say it in as neutral a way as possible, but he wasn’t surprised by the bitterness that had slipped into his words. Stark shifted slightly; if it had been anyone else, the captain might have pegged it as discomfort, but Steve knew better. This was Stark after all.

“Oh, sorry, Cap. Wish I could’ve helped, but unlike you slackers, I had more important things to do.” Stark’s smile and taken on a sharper edge, the one Steve had seen before as he dealt with especially rude reporters, and it rubbed Steve the wrong way.

“Enlighten me, Stark. What exactly was so important that you felt the need to abandon your teammates to do the grunt work? Fucking a groupie in our living room? You’re not interested once there’s no glory to be had, are you?” Something odd glimmered behind the man’s eyes, but before Steve had time to process what it might have been, Stark was responding.

“Actually, I went to my lab because—”

Steve felt something snap loose in his composure, and he gave in to the weight of the animosity that he’d been harboring since the day he moved into the Stark Tower.

“You know what? I don’t give a flying fuck what you were doing in there. If you’re going to be a member of this team, the least you could do is make something to help us instead of tinkering with your stupid toys all the time. You want to know why I was talking to Natasha about Rhodes? I want him to replace you, Stark. I know you think you’re special, but you’re replaceable. Don’t think for a damn minute that you aren’t. I hope you really love that lab of yours a much as you seem to, because if I get my way, you’ll be spending an awful lot more time there.”

Steve lurched to a halt in his rant, chest heaving from his outburst. He stared, waiting for the man to return the favor, but nothing happened. The Tony held his eyes, the intensity of the gaze making him want to look away. His expression was unreadable, unnervingly so. He was motionless aside from a slight twitch to his mouth. Finally, he inhaled, his intent to speak obvious. Before he could get a word out edgewise, Clint made his raucous reentry.

“The docs are on their way, Nat. Tony, bro, you’re back! Everything okay, man?” In the beat it took Stark to regain his composure, Clint had already bulldozed over him, talking a mile a minute. “Oh my God, Cap. You should’ve seen it! Stark totally saved your life back there. I mean, it was kind of his fault. Amora flung that chunk at him because he pissed her off, but she missed. You screamed so loud, dude. We all thought you were dead or something but Stark didn’t even hesitate, he flew right to you and picked you in one arm and offed Amora with the other. It was seriously badass.” Clint laughed and punched Stark in the shoulder, with a little too much zeal from the looks of it. Rationally, Steve knew he should be grateful, that the man had saved his life, and if it were anyone else, he would have thanked them graciously with a light reprimand and moved on from their mistake, but it wasn’t anyone else. It was Stark, and he’d disobeyed yet another order, endangering them all.

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“Is that true?” He nodded silently. “You were supposed to have Widow’s back, what if something had happened to her? And it’s not just on the field, it’s every day! You ignore your responsibilities, hide in your workshop all, and make everything more complicated. I’ve tried, my God, I’ve tried to
be civil with you but I’m done. I’m done, Stark. And I think everyone else is too. We’re sick of having to treat you like a child. You won’t listen to anyone. You’re a danger to yourself and others, and honestly, Stark? You don’t belong here with us, and you never will.” If he thought the other man had been stock still before, it was nothing compared to now. Tony finally nodded, and a strange smile took over his features as he started to laugh. Shaking his head, he gave Steve a lopsided grin that didn’t reach his eyes.

“Fuck you, Rogers.” Always the one to have the last word, Stark turned on a heel and stalked quickly out of the room, brushing past the startled nurses on their way in to check on Steve. Clint and Natasha were silent. Steve watched Stark disappear down the hallway, too focused on his hatred drilling holes into the man’s back to notice the way his hands shook as he pressed the elevator button.
Chapter Notes

Well, here you go. It's even a day early! Go me. Not gonna lie, this isn't a very eventful chapter, but if you like Tony angst, this is 2500 words of nothing but that.

**Warning** for drug/alcohol abuse

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tony tried to steady his hands as he slipped into the hospital elevator. The second the doors closed, he pressed his back against the wall, sliding down to the ground and tucking his knees to his chest. He tried to steady his breathing as it grew more erratic by the second. He shoved a trembling hand into the pocket of his jeans, grunting in frustration as the tremors of his fingers and sweat of his palms kept him from gripping his phone. Pulling it out of his pocket, he drew a shaky breath.

"Jarvis," he croaked. "You with me, buddy?" His phone whirred and glowed blue.

"Always, sir." He calmed slightly at the gentle tinge of concern in the AI’s voice.

"J, can you, uh… I need… Activate… Activate Protocol Mandate-Acquire-Roosevelt-Insight-Alcove." Tony blinked back the sting in his eyes, tucking himself into the corner. The AI hesitated, and then replied, softer than before.

"Of course. I’ve taken the liberty of providing some technical difficulties for the elevator. Take as much time as you need, sir. I’m activating Protocol M.A.R.I.A.” Tony nodded haltingly. The elevator stuttered to a halt and the lights dimmed. A small holographic orb was projected into the air from the phone, and Tony plucked it from the air to cup it in his hands. The orb began to pulsate slowly in gentle contractions as Jarvis’s voice filtered through the phone speaker. “Breathe with me, sir. In, two, three, four, out, two, three, four. Again. In, two, three, four, out, two, three, four. You’re doing perfectly, sir.” Jarvis continued his steady count to the pulse of the orb as Tony’s breath became a bit steadier. Eventually, he began to count along, voice a thin whisper, cracking, but there. Their counting slowly tapered off into silence, not tense, but companionable, if solemn.

"Okay, Jarvis. I think... I think I’m ready to go home now. I just want to leave… Just… Give me a minute to clean up.”

"As you wish, sir.” The lights stayed dim, but the elevator began to move downwards again. Tony pulled himself to his feet with the help of the bar, stroking the familiar feeling of metal. It would leave his hands reeking of dirty pennies, but he didn’t care. Metal was safe. Metal was soothing.

The elevator grated to a halt just as Tony finished buttoning his peacoat and straightening his oil stained tank top and jeans. Before the doors opened, fixed his posture and took a deep breath. Moments later he was glad he bothered. The second he exited the lobby, cameras flashed in his face. The shouts of reporters made his stomach churn with discomfort. All he wanted was to be home.

“Mr. Stark! Mr. Stark! What can you tell us about Captain Rogers’ injury?”

“Tony, over here!”
“Is it true that you endangered Captain America’s life?”

“Iron Man!”

“Some people are saying that his accident was your fault! Can you comment?” Tony put his head down and shouldered his way through the oppressive swamp of bodies. He didn’t respond, only shaking his head and releasing a chorus of choked no’s in between ragged breaths that fogged the cold autumn air. Breaking into a run, he covered ground until he was out of reach of the paparazzi’s shouts. He ducked into an alley and leaned his forehead against the damp brick of a warehouse. The overcast weather placed a merciful gloom over the shadowy space, concealing him well enough to catch his breath. He clutched the arc reactor as sharp twinges and spasms wracked his chest. His breath wheezed and whistled; Decreased lung capacity, scar tissue, bone weakness and muscle damage due to the arc reactor, his mind supplied. The sprint on top of the stress of his encounter with Steve wasn’t doing his lungs and heart any favors at the moment, and without a place to rest, the pain was even worse. For the second time that day, his eyes prickled with unshed tears. He stayed still and counted the seconds as the pain passed and his breath returned. He reached for his phone again.

“Hey, Jarvis.”

“Hello, sir. How may I assist you?” He sighed and ran a hand through his hair. The gel had long since worn out from the battle, and the moisture from sweat and humidity had freed his frizzy Italian curls, the ones his mother used to brush into silk with shaking hands and a black eye after Howard’s drinking binges.

“My head’s a little fuzzy. Can you help me get back to the car?”

“Apologies, sir, but in your current condition, I must advise against driving. Shall I send someone to retrieve it?”

“Sure, J. If I can’t drive, send me a suit. The Mark XIV should be operational by now.”

“Again, I’m sorry, sir, but powering the suit with you reactor would almost certainly cause undue strain on your body at the moment. I will call your chauffeur.” Tony bolted straight.

“No! I mean, no. I don’t want my staff seeing me like this just… I don’t know, got any other suggestions? As much as I hate to admit it, I don’t think I’m in any shape to walk that many miles right now.”

“May I suggest the subway, sir?” He was silent for a moment. “The chances of being approached are low, and there will be less pressure for socialization than in a cab. No one will expect to see you in such mundane public transit.” Tony hummed thoughtfully in response.

“What the hell, why not?”

“Very good, sir.” Tony steeled himself and stuck his hands deep into his coat pockets, ducking his head down as he rounded the corner. The walk to the nearest subway station was relatively short, but his body ached nearly as much as his soul. He knew that the pain in his chest was as emotional as it was physical. Night was falling as he descended the dark stairwell down into the station, he glanced back and forth at the shadowy people, some with their faces in ghastly illumination from their phones, others absorbed in their thoughts, staring blankly ahead or murmuring to one another. Every whisper and shuffle echoed off the concrete walls. He breathed through his mouth to avoid the musty smell. Glancing over at the map on the wall to find the stops took longer than it should have. What little function he’d had left in his mind the last few months was slipping into oblivion, and he couldn’t find it in himself to care.
The train drugged into the station and he boarded it with the others, collapsing into a seat like a puppet with its strings cut. It was only then that he allowed himself to be overtaken by the bone-deep exhaustion that had been settling into his limbs. Before he had a chance to fully relax, he was startled by a woman’s quiet sob. He looked up at the lady in front of him holding a strap. He glanced around. All of the seats were filled. Her tearstained face and pregnant stomach were glaringly obvious, and she was gaunt and gray in the sickly lighting. She was counting the small wad of bills in her hand, clearly not enough based on the way she was holding back more tears. He labored to his feet by holding the bar, free hand slipping a handful of bills out of his wallet. He touched her arm, gesturing to the now vacant seat. Her face flashed with shock and recognition, and then gratitude and understanding when she saw his harrowed expression. She said nothing, sitting down with a sad but appreciative smile and tucking the money in her jacket. Under the guise of straightening her coat, he slipped the money into her pocket with the meager stack already there.

He half nodded off on the ride home, leaning against the rail. His body begged for rest, but he knew his mind would never allow it. The train ground to a halt a few blocks from the tower, and he forced his feet to carry him the rest of the way home, and he slipped into his private elevator unseen. He contemplated going to the penthouse for a shower and an attempt at a nap, but the pull to his safe space was too strong. The elevator let him out at his lab, where he was greeted with enthusiasm by the bots.

Tony stumbled forward slightly as a cold claw nudged his back a little too hard, followed by a rapid series of scolding clicks from U and embarrassed and apologetic beeps from Dummy. He shook his head with a ghost of a smile on his lips and allowed himself be herded haphazardly towards the threadbare sofa in the back of the shop. Finally in his haven, he flopped down across the couch, askew and uncaring as leg dangled off the edge of the cushions. Eyes closed, he relished in the hum of machines and scrambling of his bots. He felt another nudge, gentler this time, on his thigh.

He cracked an eye open and felt his heart swell with affection as Dummy did his best to cover him with a blanket. The attempt was clumsy, but heartfelt and innocent. He reached out a still trembling hand and haltingly stroked the metal body of the bot. “Thanks, Dummy. Good bot.” Dummy chirped in delight and spun joyful circles at the praise. From his other side, he heard Butterfingers approach, whirring curiously at his creator and clutching a mug of hot coffee in his claw. Tony took a deep drink. It burned his tongue, but he barely noticed. His insides felt icy and hollow, he needed the warmth. A shiver of hurt wracked his body, and he no longer had to hold back the quiet sobs that spilled from his lips. A chorus of distressed beeping and chirping erupted in front of him, and before he knew it, three metal claws were in his face, trying (and failing) to wipe his tears. U tried to offer a tissue, but just ended up bonking his creator in the nose in his rush.

“I, dial Rhody for me, will you, buddy?” Tony sat up and tried to make himself look slightly less pathetic. Rhodey picked up on the second ring, and Tony felt a bit of the tension bleed out of him instantly.

“Tony! Hey, man. How’ve you been?” Tony’s mouth twitched slightly upward at his friend’s voice.

“Good to hear your voice, honey bear. How’s the Hum Drumvee? Where’d they cart you off to this time? Afghanistan?”

“Not for long, we’re shipping out to Iraq tomorrow morning at 0600. Great job out there with the Enchantress, by the way. The new suit looks like she’s handling like a dream. You didn’t answer my question though. Are you doing alright? I know it’s been awhile since we talked.” Tony hesitated. What if Rhodey agreed with Steve? He wasn’t sure he could bear to hear that from the lips of his best friend as well as his childhood hero, let alone in the same day. No, Rhody wouldn’t do that. He
decided to trust his friend’s loyalty.

“Thanks, platypus, I appreciate it. Actually, there’s something I wanted to talk to you about.” Tony took a breath to continue, only to stop at the sound of commotion on the other end of the line.

“Shit. Shit! I’m sorry, Tones. I have to go. There’s an issue outside, but I’ll call you back as soon as I can. Hang tight.” Before Tony could respond, the line went dead and he was left with the buzz of the dial tone. Sighing, he scrubbed a hand over his face. Jarvis’s voice came softly through the speakers.

“If I may, the colonel seemed very apologetic for the interruption. I have no doubt that he will help however he can very soon. Please hold on, sir.” Tony shook his head.

“No, J. I shouldn’t have bothered him anyway. He has responsibilities. If he calls back, reject it.” He felt the tension in the silence.

“As you wish, sir.” Standing on shaking legs, he made his way over to his medicine drawer. He rifled through the unopened bottles of painkillers and antibiotics he always refused to take until his brushed over a bottle morphine. Expired, but not by much. He assumed the effect would be the same, at least it had been in college. He stared at the bottle, shame creeping up his spine to settle in his brain. Taking a deep breath, he shook several pills into his hand and dry swallowed them. On second thought, he reached for the bottle of scotch on his auxiliary workbench, then decided on vodka instead. He wasn’t drinking for the taste, so there was no point in wasting the good stuff. He’d cut his drinking back since the palladium incident, trying to walk the walk of a real hero, but he supposed that didn’t matter as much anymore. He’d failed anyway. Not bothering with a glass, he took a couple good pulls from the bottle. It was the cheap shit, probably Barton’s, and it tasted like rubbing alcohol and turpentine. He cringed at the rolling in his stomach. Lacking the willpower to go to bed, he sat down on the floor, covering himself partially with the blanket he’d drug over with him. He choked on a laugh. After all of Rhody’s hard work to sober him up after grad school, he was throwing it back in his face. As the blissful haze of pills dulled his senses, he decided he was just glad that the man wasn’t here to see it.

Chapter End Notes

I’m sorry for the lack of Rhodye. The next chapter, and probably the one after that is going to have more than enough to make up for it though because I adore him.
Rhodey growled at his phone screen and tossed it with more force than necessary at the bed, missing it entirely and hitting the wall. It was Starktech. It would be fine.

“Dammit, Tony. Talk to me.” Face in his hands, he collapsed on the bed and fished his phone out from between the mattress and the wall, staring defeatedly at his friend’s contact picture, one of them together, in the suits with their helmets off; tired, but smiling at the camera. He didn’t bother calling again. Tony and his phone were inseparable. Besides, no matter where he was, Jarvis would inform him of incoming calls. If Tony wasn’t answering, it was because he didn’t want to. Tony was like a brother to him, but he was as stubborn as he was self-destructive, and the fact that he’d swallowed his pride and self-loathing long enough to call him at all didn’t bode well. With that at the forefront of his mind, James Rupert Rhodes made a decision. Stepping out into the blistering sunlight of the base, he brushed past his superiors, ignoring their commands.

“Rhodes! Get back here! The hell do you think you’re doing, Colonel?” Rhodey was silent as his armor scanned his biometrics and he stepped in. “I’m going to take some time off. I understand the consequences of my actions, and I’ll be prepared to accept the necessary disciplinary actions when I return. I have complete faith in my airmen to hold down the fort while I’m away. I’m sorry, General, but my best friend needs me.” He powered up War Machine without waiting for a response and blasted into the sky.

“Jesus fuck, Tony, what did you do?” Despite his friend’s waxy skin, he was able to find a pulse, thankfully strong, if a bit slow. “Jarvis?”

“Jarvis?” Rhodey felt relief flood his body at Jarvis’s confirmation, quickly followed by rage.

“Why the fuck didn’t you tell me about this? Aren’t you supposed to be looking out for him?”

"I apologize, Colonel. Sir forbid me from answering your calls, and I was unable to override my programming in order to contact you. In an effort to avoid worrying you, sir does not allow me to"
inform you of any incidents unless his life is in imminent danger. In this case, my calculations indicated that sir was not in mortal danger, however reckless his action may have been.” The AI’s voice was regretful, but Rhodey was too worried to be forgiving.

“Whatever. Tony might be self-destructive, but I thought he was over this kind of stupidity. Drug and alcohol cocktails were for College Tony. He’s always drank more than I would have liked, but he worked so hard to sober up after MIT, and as far as I know he hasn’t been more than buzzed since his birthday party in 2010. What the hell brought this on?”

“I’m afraid I’m not at liberty to say, Colonel.” Rhodey hissed in frustration.

“It’s fine, Jarvis. We’ll deal with that later. For now, I’m going to get him up to his room.” Rhodey hauled his friend into his arms, and Tony stirred briefly at the shift, just long enough to wrap his arms and legs around Rhodey like a drunk koala. Rhodey sighed and gave his back a pat. Knowing that Tony would try to sneak down to the lab without something to do when he woke up, Rhodey fumbled for his tablet off the desk. He noticed briefly that whatever happened must have been abrupt since the beginnings of a project were taking shape on the desk. He glanced at the specs, some sort of star-spangled body armor dated from today. It had been abandoned just a few hours in. Rhodey snorted. Good. He’d never gotten along with the Captain after how he’d treated Tony on the Helicarrier. He was a bit of a prick anyway.

Rhodey lugged Tony out of his lab and to the elevator, only having to stop and rest once. Wearing the War Machine armor had given his upper body strength a serious boost. Jarvis opened the elevator and moved them towards the penthouse without instruction. Once they arrived, he laid his friend out on the bed and sat down in the armchair beside it, face in his hands. He glanced over at Tony, who was still dead to the world. Rhodey was in it for the long haul, so he gave one last searching look at the still body on the bed and wandered into the walk in closet. Rifling through business suits and band shirts, he finally came across the drawer he was looking for, the one with “Platypus” emblazoned on the front in Sharpie. Tony insisted it stayed there permanently for when he roped Rhodey into impromptu sleepovers. He pulled his old MIT sweatshirt out, as well as some threadbare sweatpants. He stripped off his uniform and tugged them on. Maybe it was inappropriate to strip in a friend’s closet, but he doubted Tony would wake up. Besides, it wasn’t like he hadn’t walked in on worse in college. It would serve him right.

Rhodey wandered back into the bedroom where Tony was still down for the count, and on second thought, headed for the bathroom to get Advil and a glass of water. As he rifled through the drawers, his phone buzzed in the pocket of his sweatpants. His eyebrows shot to his hairline as he saw Steve Rogers’ caller ID. The only time any of the Avengers besides Tony called him, it was to get backup in a battle, but there hadn’t been any indication of a call to assemble.

“Hello, Captain. Is everything okay?” There was a pause on the other end.

“Yes, Colonel, everything’s fine. I was calling to set up a meeting with you, actually. Are you available anytime soon?” Rhodey’s brows rose impossibly higher.

“I’m on active duty at the moment, and I should technically be in Iraq right now. I’d need to get permission from my superiors to stay in New York.”

“Oh, you’re in the city? Why’s that?” Rhodey chose his words carefully, not wanting to get Tony into any trouble.

“Tony’s not feeling well, so I’m staying with him until he’s on his feet again.”

“Is that so? He seemed fine yesterday.” There was an edge to the Captain’s voice that set Rhodey on
“With all due respect, Captain, I’m not sure Tony’s health is any of your business, seeing as it’s never seemed to matter to you much in the past.” When he spoke again, Rogers’ voice had lost its veneer of civility.

“The meeting, Colonel!”

“The meeting can wait until my best friend is well again.” Rogers growled under his breath.

“Fine, but we need to talk.” Rhodey hung up on him.

By the time he returned to the bedroom, Tony was half conscious. Rhodey sat down on the edge of the bed and gave his shoulder a gentle push and a half smile.

“Honeybear?” Sleepy confusion painted Tony’s features, but he sounded pleased, if a bit perplexed. “Shouldn’t you be… somewhere?” Rhodey hummed in affirmation.

“Probably, but you didn’t return my calls, brat.”

“You flew all the way here because I didn’t answer your phone call? That seems dramatic, sourpatch.” Rhodey flopped out on his back on the bed and rolled to face Tony.

“Tones, you and I both know that I called more than once and that Jarvis lets you know about incoming calls from Pepper and I. You were ignoring me. Besides, if you of all people actually wanted to talk about your feelings, shit must have gone down, and recently too. Rogers said you were fine the last time he saw you.” Tony’s face darkened.

“Yeah, I’ll bet he did say that.” Rhodey bristled.

“What is that supposed to mean? This breakdown you just had is about Rogers, isn’t it? What happened, Tony?” He rolled away and Rhodey grabbed his shoulder and rolled him right back. Tony slapped an arm over his eyes, already half asleep again. Rhodey knew his window with a conscious Tony was limited, so he cut his losses.

“Fine, but I’m sure as hell going to find out, the easy way or the hard way works for me.” Tony groaned.

“What’s the easy way?”

“You tell me right now and we deal with it together. Calmly.” Tony raised a dubious eyebrow.

“And the hard way?”

“I take Rogers up on the meeting he asked for drag it out of his ass, and then we do damage control for the fallout instead of taking preventative measures.” Tony bolted upright.

“Shit!” His voice dropped suddenly after his initial outburst. “He asked you for a meeting…? He sure works fast, doesn’t he?” The broken look on his Tony’s face moved him from worried friend to protective older brother in a split second. That expression made his best friend, the CEO, genius engineer, and superhero, look like the scared, lonely fourteen-year-old he’d been when they met in college.


“Look, he said he was going to replace me on the team. With you.” Rhodey went rigid as white hot anger bubbled from his core. His knuckles blanched with the force of the clenching of his fists. He
trembled with righteous rage. “Come on, Rhodey. He’s not wrong… I fucked up today, and it’s not the first time. War Machine is better for the Avengers and you know it. Come on, buddy. Don’t freak out on me.” Rhodey stood silently and left the room. Without missing a beat, he pulled out his phone and dialed the one and only Captain America. When the phone connected, the colonel didn’t wait for a greeting.

“My schedule has opened up. I’ll be waiting in SHIELD conference room 12 at 6 pm. That’s not a request.” Ignoring the stammering on the other end, he hung up and returned to the bedroom. Tony was already back to sleep. Rhodey steeled himself and retrieved his uniform from the closet, sending it off to have it express washed. Once he felt that everything was in order, Rhodey descended to the lab, ready to take a polish rag to War Machine. After all, he had a meeting.

Chapter End Notes

I'm aware of how ambiguous the timeline for the chapter is, and I'm sorry
Chapter 4

Okay, wow. I'm so sorry for how long this took. I've been half dead with depression and anxiety because my meds are shit but I come bearing Tony angst and brotp.

Rhodey cut his repulsors with a flourish, metal boots clanking on the asphalt of the SHIELD landing pad. He could hear the blood rushing in his ears, waves of anger coursing through him. He briefly considered leaving the War Machine armor on the deck, before thinking better of it. There wasn’t a reason in the world not to go the full nine yards to intimidate Captain fucking America. Agents parted like water as he stomped down the hallways of the Helicarrier, face set with determination and body ready for a fight. When he approached the conference room door, he blasted it open with a repulsor, the door bashing into the wall with a bone-rattling crash. If he was going to be extra, he was going to be extra. Rhodey smirked in satisfaction when the sudden noise sent Rogers straight up in the air like a scared cat.

“Jesus Christ!” The captain collapsed back into his chair at the conference table and shot a scathing glare in Rhodey’s direction. “The hell was that for?” Rhodey bit back a smirk of satisfaction.

“My deepest apologies, Captain Rogers. I may have underestimated the power of the suit.” Steve raised an eyebrow at his response but didn’t contest it. Rhodey prolonged their eye contact, watching giddily as the great Captain America squirmed in his seat. “Well?” Rogers stared at him like a deer in the headlights.

“What?” he asked, confusion written on his features. Rhodey rose to his full height in the armor, towering over the seated man.

“You know, it’s proper etiquette to salute a superior officer.” Steve’s eyes widened as he clamored to his feet in a shockingly uncoordinated manner, snapping a sharp salute.

“Yes, of course. I’m sorry. I guess I’ve gotten out of the habit with things being how they are, you know what I mean?” The colonel narrowed his eyes.

“No, Captain, I don’t think I do.” Rogers looked taken aback, but relented, albeit with a look of confusion at the hostility he’d been met with thus far.

“No, Captain, I don’t think I do.” Rogers looked down at the floor.

“No, I don’t suppose you would.” He glanced back up briefly before straightening out and squaring his shoulders. “Shall we begin?”

“Yes, I believe we should.” With a nod, Rogers gestured at the empty seat beside him. After a moment’s hesitation, Rhodey stepped out of the suit, putting it in sentinel mode in the corner nearest to Rogers. He didn’t miss the captain’s nervous glance in the direction of the armor. A wave of dark glee washed over his body at his companion’s discomfort.

“So, I’m sure you’re curious as to why I’ve asked you here today, Rhodes. ” Rhodey glared harder.

“Colonel.” The captain looked taken aback, but relented, albeit with a look of confusion at the hostility he’d been met with thus far.

“Sorry, Colonel.” Rhodey offered a small nod for him to continue. “Like I was saying, I’m sure
you’re wondering why I asked you here. As much as it pains me for it to have come to this, I’ve
decided that, if you’re able and willing, War Machine should take on an active role in the Avengers
roster.” Just hearing the captain say it, so casually even, sent spikes of cold rage down his spine, but
he played dumb, feigning shock.

“Captain, while I’m honored by your offer, I’m also a bit confused. With Iron Man as an active
member of the team, it doesn’t seem like I’d be needed on active duty.” Rogers at least had the
decency to look apologetic.

“About that. I don’t know how much you’re aware of the inner workings of the Avengers Initiative
or the team dynamics that it entails, but it’s my professional opinion that Iron Man is not suitable to
work as a member of this team any longer and should return to his previous position as a consultant.
I’m sorry, Colonel. I know that Stark’s your friend. I truly wanted to make this work. I made an
effort on my end, but it has to go both ways. I’m sure you understand.” Rhodey looked at the
ground, faking contemplation. He cast his eyes upwards shortly after, meeting the captain’s eyes.

“I understand that you’re an asshole, Captain Rogers.” Steve’s mouth opened slightly in shock, eyes
widening like a cartoon character.

“Colonel, let’s try to keep this civil, can we?” He stared the captain down, jaw tense and fists balled.

“No, Rogers, I don’t think we can. Civility went out the door when you fucked with my best friend’s
emotions and treated him like shit after everything he’s done for your sorry ass, so no. I have no
interest in betraying my best friend in the world, the man who is like my brother to me, by taking
away the thing that gives his life meaning. If you kick him off the team, you can figure it out
yourself. Have a nice life, Rogers.” Before the captain could get a word in edgewise, Rhodey was in
the suit and out the door, taking a flying leap off the landing strip of the helicarrier, and on his way
back to the tower. Once back in the penthouse bedroom, Rhodey sighed in sadness at the sight of his
friend on the bed, shirtless and in sleep pants, head in his hands. Sitting down quietly on the bed,
Rhodey began to rub his shoulders, trying to soothe the shaking and feeling Tony lean back into his
touch without hesitation.

It had taken Rhodey about two minutes of conversation on their first meeting to realize how badly
Tony Stark needed love, and it never ceased to amaze him how few others saw it too. Even Pepper
had taken months to even get an inkling, but Rhodey knew. He’d known since the second he found
the small boy in his dorm room, short and slender, thick glasses sliding down his nose and hair
falling in his dark doe eyes, sitting in nearly the same position he was in now. He’d stuttered through
his greeting, Walkman in one hand, duffel bag in the other, barely just shy of fourteen and
completely alone. Rhodey had been aghast nearly beside himself at the thought of such a young kid
being left to fend for themselves without a second thought. All he could think of was his wonderful,
loving mama, and how she would’ve never allowed it. Tony’d been so different then, tougher than
he should have been, but still soft, softer than Rhodey could imagine. It had made it all that much
harder to watch the sweet boy from that first day grow and harden into a persona neither of them
recognized.

“Hey, Tones, how’re you doing, buddy?” He didn’t get a response, just a sad keen and a face full of
silky chocolate hair as the head it was attached to made its way onto his shoulder. “Agreed.” A sad
smile ghosted across his lips at the small huff of amusement that came from the armful of human he
was in possession of. “So I had a chat with Rogers.” That made Tony’s head pop up from its place in
the crook of his neck, face painted with fear and anticipation.

“The short version?” He could almost hear Tony’s eye roll.

“Sure.” Rhodey flop back on the bed in an exaggerated sprawl of limbs.

“I told ‘im to go fuck himself with a baseball bat.” He cringed at Tony’s crow of protest. He felt a thump on his left as his friend collapsed in the same position beside him.

“You’re such a dildo.” Rhodey swatted him in the face, ignoring the velociraptor shriek of protest. They both laid there in companionable silence for several moments before Tony broke the silence. “Thanks, honey bear.” He bit back a smile, reaching over to ruffle his friend’s hair.

“Anytime, kiddo. You know I’ve always got your back.” Tony snuggled closer.

“Yeah, I actually do.” Rhodey grinned for real this time, tugging the smaller man closer to him chest, half spooning. Tony laughed and tried to wiggle out of his grasp, just like he’d done for so many years, the habit comfortable between them like an inside joke, smooth and soft on the edges from years of wear. It was old as the sun to them, and Rhodey wasn’t sure what could be better.
When the sun rose the next morning, Rhody felt a knot in the pit of his stomach. He knew it was time to return to the base. He’d be in enough trouble as it was, and he couldn’t risk the loss of leave time in case Tony needed him in the near future. With a groan and a stretch, he shuffled across the penthouse towards the bathroom. He made quick work of his morning routine with the efficiency only a career military man could have. By the time he made it back to the bedroom, Tony was sitting up in bed, bleary and yawning adorably. Rhody laughed quietly and ruffled his friend’s bed head, messing it up even more.

“All right, Tones, it’s time for me to leave, but I’ll be back as soon as I can to see you, okay, buddy?” Tony whined and clung to Rhody’s waist. “I know, I’m sorry. I really do have to leave though. Should I call Pepper and have her work from the tower today? Just so you won’t have to be alone?” Tony sighed and shook his head as he collapsed against the pillows.

“No, I’ll be fine. Don’t bother her. The poor woman has more than enough to worry about.” Rhody hesitated.

“Are you sure? Because she won’t mind, Tony.” His friend looked anywhere but his eyes.

“Yeah, I’m sure. I’m just going to hang out in here anyway. Decompress, you know?” Knowing that the conversation was going nowhere, the colonel gave a playful salute, getting a weak smile and mimed hat tip in return as he turned and walked out the door.

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With Rhody’s exit, Tony fully allowed himself to process. Having his best friend around for the last day or so had improved his mental state immensely, but the joy he’d felt drained away just as quickly as it had come, as if the colonel had wrapped it up and taken it with him upon his exit. He rolled over and shoved his face into the pillow until he got light headed from the lack of air and was forced to turn back over and face the world. Just as he was getting settled in to go back to sleep, Jarvis spoke.

“Apologies, sir, but you have a visitor requesting access to the penthouse.” Tony furrowed his brow, at a loss for who it might have been.

“Really? Who is it, J?” He sat up, a bit more alert now.

“It appears to be Sergeant Barnes, sir.” Tony’s eyebrows shot upwards in surprise. He wasn’t sure what he’d been expecting, but it certainly wasn’t that. His suspicion warred with his curiosity.

“Barnes, huh? What does he want? Is it Avengers business?” There was a moment of silence, presumably Jarvis relaying the question.

“He says it’s a personal matter. He’d like to discuss it face to face if that’s alright with you.” Tony
scrubbed a hand over his face, somehow even more tired than before. Just the thought of the conversation to come sapped what little energy he’d regained over the last twenty-four hours. He waved a hand at the ceiling.

“Sure, why not. Send him up.”

“My I suggest you get dressed before meeting with the sergeant, sir?” Tony glowered at the floor.

“Yes, Jarvis, you may suggest that.” With a grumble, he grabbed some sweatpants off the ground, Rhodey’s it turned out since they were too large and hung obscenely low on his hips and ran a hand through his unruly hair. Shrugging, he leaned against the bed, unwilling to put any more effort into his appearance at the moment. Barnes could deal with it. “Alright, good enough. Let’s see what the man wants, shall we?”

“Very good, sir. Shall I direct him to the bedroom?”

“Yes, that’s fine. I don’t feel like moving anyway.” Seconds later, he heard the elevator doors open into the living area followed by careful footsteps down the hallway to his bedroom. There was a quiet knock on his door and Barnes entered the room, looking his usual mix of uncomfortable and defensive, emphasis on uncomfortable at the present moment. Going for faux casual, Tony flashed a blinding smile. Too many teeth and not enough warmth. “Frostbite! This is a surprise. What can I do for you?” Barnes seemed to notice the insincerity instantly, shoulders hunching impossibly more and his feet shifting awkwardly.

“I um, I wanted to talk to you about something, if you have a minute. I hope I’m not intruding on anything.” His eyes were cast to the ground, only occasionally darting up as he spoke. “I mean, I saw your, uh, friend on the way in.” Tony was briefly confused at the tightness in the man’s voice before he noticed his eyes on the too large sweatpants and put two and two together. Tony huffed out a brittle laugh.

“Rhodey and I aren’t together. He just came over to help me with something.” Barnes turned even redder, running a hand through his hair.

“Oh! I’m sorry, I just assumed. You know, because… Nevermind, I’m sorry.” Tony waved it off.

“It’s perfectly fine. You wouldn’t be the first person to suggest such a thing.” Barnes didn’t look comforted by that. “It’s not important. What did you come up here for?”

“I talked to Stevie today. When I got home from therapy.” Tony kept his face carefully blank. “He uh, said some stuff, About you. And what he wants. With you, I mean.” The pause drug on for a beat before Tony realized that Barnes was done and he was going to have to respond.

“I’m sure he did. Did he send you to do his dirty work?” The sergeant looked inexplicably sad.

“No, I came here on my own.” Tony waited for him to continue, but a follow-up didn’t come.

“Not a man of many words, are you?” A shrug from Barnes. “No problem, I do enough talking for the both of us. So really, what brings you here? You’re going to have to get around to it eventually.” Barnes took a deep, shuddering breathing and straightened his back.

“I came here to thank you, actually. And to tell you that I disagree with what Steve said to you.” Of all the things the sergeant could have said, that was not was Tony was expecting. His shocked silence allowed the man to continue unimpeded. “After he said… What he said, I got to thinkin’ about you. And what you’ve done for us. For me. You gave Stevie ‘n I a place to live, got me the best therapists and doctors out there… You give us your home and your money, and your expertise,
and never really get anything in return. I’ve never met a selfish person who does that. So… Yeah. I just wanted to, ya know, tell you that. That I think he’s wrong. And that you’re a real good guy. And I guess to make sure you’re doing okay. Steve means well most of the time, but when someone rubs him the wrong way he can really go off…” There weren’t very many times in Tony Stark’s life when he’d been rendered completely and utterly speechless, but he might as well have been made of stone for all that he could speak right then. “I hope that’s okay. That I just tossed that all on you. I didn’t mean to make things uncomfortable for you. I’ll go now.” Before he knew what was happening, Tony had launched himself forward and grabbed Barnes’ shoulder, causing the soldier to startle. He recoiled, murmuring apologies before speaking.

“Thank you.” Barnes stared blankly at him, still recovering from the adrenaline rush. “Look, I’m not very good at this stuff. Feeling and shit. But I appreciate it. As untrue as it is.” He saw Barnes open his mouth to retort, but Tony beat him to it. “I’m serious. I appreciate the concern, but I don’t actually disagree that much. He has a point, okay? Does it suck? Yeah. But I bring it on myself, so don’t worry about it. Anyway, I’m glad your therapist is working out for you. You deserve it.” Tony swallowed hard, taken aback by the emotional display on his part. “You should probably go now.” It came out a bit rougher than he would have liked, emotions caught in his throat. Barnes shook off his stupor, nodding quickly with wide eyes.

“Yes, of course! I’m sorry, you must be a very busy man, Mr. Stark. I’ll see you around.” Barnes turned to leave, just as he reached the door, Tony called out to him, a bit too loud for the room and their proximity.

“Tony.” Barnes, whipped his head around to shoot him a baffled look.

“What?” Tony internally berated himself for his lack of eloquence. That seemed to be a running theme today.

“My name. Mr. Stark is so formal. We’re living in the same tower, so we might as well be on a first name basis, right?” He was proud of how even his voice sounded. None of the tremors he’d been worried about were present. He hoped his nerves didn’t show on his face and give him away.

“Oh, yes. I agree. Tony. That’s a good name. It suits you.” Barnes flushed again. “Call me James. I mean, if you want. I’d like that. My therapist said it’s good to- to ask people for small things that I want. I want, I want you to call me James.” Tony offered a small, awkward, but genuine smile in return.

“James it is. I’m a little surprised though. I assumed you’d go back to Bucky.” James sighed wistfully, staring at something in the distance for a fleeting moment.

“No. Bucky… Bucky’s gone. I have his memories, but I don’t think that’s who I am anymore. I’m not sure I even want to be him again. I want to be me. The me that’s here right now. I don’t really know who that is yet, but James seems like as good a place as any to start. I guess that must sound weird, huh? Me, but not me.” Tony bit his lip.

“It’s not weird. I think I understand, kind of. People… Evolve. Some people more than others. I’m me, but I have different parts. Anthony is to me what Bucky is to you. Something old. Something that’s not there anymore. You want it to be sometimes, but you aren’t sure. After certain experiences, you don’t have a choice. So yeah. I think I get it.” They stood in silence for a bit, tense, but also companionable. Tony reeled from the overload of raw emotions he thought he’d left in the past, wondering what had come over him to speak so freely to a man he barely knew. From the look on James’ face, he wouldn’t have been surprised if they were experiencing the same thing.

“That’s… Pretty much it. I’m glad someone else gets it. Stevie doesn’t get it.” Tony nodded, not sure
what to say. “I’d better get going now.” Tony broke free from the odd trance he was in successfully enough to see him out.

“Well, I guess I’ll see you soon then?” James nodded.

“I think so, yeah.” A fond look passed over his face, oddly intimate for the lack of history between them. It was the kind of look you’d give an old friend, or maybe a lover. But not an acquaintance. For some reason, that revelation brought a soft warmth to Tony’s insides, not the discomfort or wariness he expected. James looked over him one last time, so quickly that Tony almost missed the way the man’s eyes lingered on his hips and the low slung joggers that adorned them. He needed a drink.
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

We're moving right along now! I'm really getting into a groove here, so let's hope it continues when my classes start up again in the fall.

The day after Tony’s rather bizarre encounter with James, the man was called away on a mission. It had been happening more frequently as of late as SHIELD slowly eased him into the superhero business. Apparently Fury decided that he was ready to go into active combat, although Tony disagreed in the privacy of his head. Even simply based on the brief interaction they’d had the previous day, he didn’t see how SHIELD could believe James was ready for that sort of thing. Whatever. It wasn’t his decision to make, it was James’. If James thought he was ready, well, power to him. Tony wasn’t worried. Even if he was, it didn’t have anything to do with his sudden and growing interest in the Winter Soldier. Which he didn’t have. He had no interest whatsoever.

Before he had a chance to hack the briefing file and learn the details of the mission (standard Tony Stark protocol, really), his phone buzzed in his pocket. He briefly considered ignoring the call, but a distraction would be welcome. With a sigh, he dug his phone from the pocket of his jeans. The call was coming from a secure number with no caller ID as if Tony didn’t know it was Fury. Normally he would have rolled his eyes and rejected the call, but today his stomach dropped to the floor and he answered the call with a shaking hand.

“Nick, what can I do for you?” The director was silent for a moment.

“How did you know it was me, Stark? Actually, nevermind. I don’t fucking care. I need you to come in for a meeting.” Tony tightened his grip on the phone.

“Is this Iron Man business? Is this a weird way of calling me in for a solo briefing? Because I have to say, Nick, it’s coming across as rather ominous.” Again, there was silence on the other end.

“Just come in, Stark.” His voice was gruffer than normal. He sounded almost apologetic, and if that wasn’t deeply unsettling, he didn’t know what was. Resigned to his fate already, Tony grunted an affirmation.

“Yep. I’ll be right in, Director.” Tony could almost hear Fury’s eyebrows raise at his cooperative response.

“Good. My office, one hour.” Tony nodded for a moment before he came out of his stupor long enough to realize that he was alone. He didn’t bother with a verbal response. Instead, he hung up unceremoniously and tossed his phone on the bed. He glanced despondently at his reflection in the mirror.

“Well, Stark, you really fucked this one up, didn’t you?” His reflection stared back at him, making him inexplicably angry. “The hell are you looking at, you piece of shit? You knew this was inevitable, so face the music.” With Tony’s help, the mirror relocated itself to the ground, shattered in pieces. Feeling no need to make himself look presentable for the humiliation to come, Tony shoved his feet into some beat up combat boots and left his (grease and ketchup stained) sweatshirt hanging off his frame. With the addition of his obnoxious sunglasses, it was good enough for now.
After breaking every traffic law in existence with prejudice on his way to HQ, Tony stalked his way to the elevators, pushing through throngs of star struck probies and junior agents. He was recognizable and visibly pissed enough that there were no security checks necessary. Even the biggest sticklers that usually stopped him for ID on the way Fury’s office stepped aside at the sight of a seething Iron Man. Hobo clothes or not, Tony knew he struck an imposing figure when he wanted to, and today he wanted. Tony blasted the doors to Fury’s office open without a second glance at the agents standing outside the entrance and met the director’s gaze head on, arms crossed and hip cocked out in faux defiance. Fury stared back dryly.

“How nice of you to make it,” he glanced at his watch, “forty-five minutes late. As always, I appreciate the discretion and formality with which you enter my office. And take off your goddamn glasses, Stark, this isn’t a GQ cover.” After a brief staredown, Tony ceded and took them off, not in the mood to fight for once. Fury seemed surprised by his agreeableness for the second time that day, but he shook off the expression as quickly as it came on.

“So I gather by your appearance that you already have some inkling of why you’re here today.” Tony said nothing, but flopped down in a seat, slouching like an indignant child. At this point, he figured he had nothing more to lose by being immature. “I spoke with Captain Rogers earlier. He said some interesting things.” Tony snorted in contempt.

“Yeah? I’ll bet he did. Look, Director. You and I both know why I’m here, so just cut to the chase and get this over with. Rip the band aid off, so to speak.” Fury narrowed his good eye.

“Don’t interrupt me, Stark. But yes, I have some… regrettable news. Due to recent circumstances, your presence on the Avengers team is no longer required. I’m going to have to request that you submit your resignation by the end of the week.” The longer he spoke, the tighter Tony’s grip on the armrests of his seat became. He’d known it was coming, but it didn’t make it any easier to hear.

“Well, that was fun. Short and sweet, I like that. Don’t worry, I’ll be on my way momentarily, just like you all wanted. I’ll send you my formal resignation by tomorrow night. Goodbye, Director.” Tony shoved his glasses back over his eyes just in time to hide the wetness gathering in them. As he turned to leave, he heard a throat clearing behind him.

“Stark. Wait.” Tony stopped but didn’t turn around. “Before you go, I just want you to know that I disagree with this.” The man paused for a moment. “When Rogers came to me, I told him he was out of his mind, but if there’s a matter concerning a possible change in the Avengers roster, it has to be looked over by the World Security Council. It’s protocol. Unfortunately, the Council sided with Rogers, not me. He went over my head. I have pull, but not enough to interfere with their decisions. You’re a big boy, Stark, so I’m going to be straight with you. The Council thinks you’re a liability. They always have, and they’ve wanted this since the beginning. Getting you off the team has always been their endgame, but this isn’t just about your conduct, not for them. This is personal. This is about New York.” That made Tony turn around, the pieces coming together in his head.

“The nuke.” Fury nodded grimly.

“The nuke. If you hadn’t flown that missile into the portal, they would have gotten their way. They’ve wanted you off the team for years now, but they’ve never had anything with enough substance to hide behind to give you the boot. Now they do. A complaint from Captain America was the leverage they needed to finally get off your pedestal.” Tony felt the emotions he’s bottled up crashing over him in waves.

“This is bullshit, Fury. It really is.” The director sighed and shook his head.

“For once, you and I agree. I can’t make any promises, but I’m going to make some calls, see some
people in Washington. I might be able to fix this.” Tony cracked a smile.

“Fury, I didn’t know you cared! All that trouble for little old me?” Fury frowned and glared.

“Don’t flatter yourself, Stark. The Council is teeming with corruption, and this could be the opening I need to root it out. It’s not about you.” His voice was cold, but there was a rare softness around his visible eye that said otherwise. Tony smiled a little more at that.

“Sure it’s not. See you around, Nick.” Tony walked towards the door again.

“See you around, Stark. By the way, Barnes will be back next Wednesday. In case you were wondering.” Tony turned once again to glare at him suspiciously.

“Why would I be wondering that?” Fury bit back an amused grin.

“Oh, I don’t know, Stark. I don’t know what I was thinking. Well, have a nice life.” Tony rolled his eyes and strode out the door with a huff.
Oh my God, I'm so sorry that this took so long! I've been a total mess lately. My meds got messed up and I haven't even felt human in weeks. I hope this makes up for it! I even threw in a touch of smut, so watch for the rating change! This was also a bit of a vent for me. There's an undertone of food issues that were inspired by my personal experience with Binge Eating Disorder. It's very mild, but be cautious.

BTW, I apologize for the POV change partway in, but I'm tired and there's only so much brain power I have left for editing.

“On your left, America!” Steve stumbled forward in surprise as Sam clocked him in the back of the head on the way past with a mischievous twinkle in his eye.

“Mother of Christ, Sam. Good morning to you too.” He rubbed the back of his head with an affectionate eye roll. Sam waited for him catch up, and they made their way towards the SHIELD training facilities in stride. It'd been several weeks since their last team training session, and the captain had taken it upon himself to instate it on a bi-monthly schedule.

“So, why exactly am I here? Last I checked, the Falcon was on the reserve roster in case an official Avenger was out of commission. Did something happen?” Steve ran a hand through his hair.

“Yeah, actually. Something did. I'll be discussing it at length with the team before our training.” Sam nodded agreeably.

“So I’m filling in for someone? Long-term?” The captain sighed deeply.

“You’ll be replacing someone, actually. Welcome to the Avengers, Wilson.” Sam stopped in his tracks.

“Hold up, I’m going to be a permanent member? Who the hell am I replacing?” Steve grabbed the man’s arm, shushing him vigorously.

“Not so loud. It’s not public knowledge yet, not even within SHIELD. You’re replacing Iron Man.” Sam gaped.

“Are you shitting me? Cap, with all due respect, what the fuck?” Dragging the smaller man along with him until they were in the solitude of the training area was an easy feat, despite the stream of protests against his manhandling. “What the hell, Steve?”

“We’ll talk about it when the others get here, okay?” He was met with begrudging agreement. They sat in tense silence, Sam stealing incredulous glances at Steve all the while. Over the course of the next ten minutes or so, the other Avengers trickled in, visibly unsettled by the heavy atmosphere. Not wanting to prolong their discomfort any longer than necessary, Steve lifted to his feet and addressed the group.

“Alright, now that everyone’s here, I think we can get started.” Before he got a chance to continue, Clint shot his hand up in the air. “…Yes, Hawkeye?”
“Dude, where’s Stark? He’s kinda important. We can’t start without him, can we?” The captain sighed.

“Yes, Clint, we can. And we will be doing so indefinitely since as of yesterday, Iron Man is no longer an active Avenger.” The reaction was instant and the room filled with chaos. Only Natasha seemed unsurprised. “I feel that in light of his recent behavior, it’s better for everyone that we move forward, as well as in our separate directions.” Content to end the conversation there, Steve moved forward with the training drills, ignoring the litany of questions from behind him.

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Late afternoon sun was filtering through the windows of the tower by the time James returned from his mission. Tony almost didn’t notice the soldier’s appearance outside of the elevator doors leading into the shared kitchen, too busy scarfing comfort food and lost in thought. After a moment of oblivion, Tony looked up from the empty takeout boxes, startling at the sight of James in the entryway. He scrambled to compose himself, trying in vain to cover the mess of greasy styrofoam.

“Barnes. It’s good to have you back. How was the, uh, the thing? In Romania?”

“Bulgaria, actually. It was fine. It’s taken care of.” He didn’t elaborate and a heavy silence followed. Sensing the growing discomfort between them, James tried again.

“That’s a lot of empty containers. If you keep eating like that, you’ll give Thor a run for his money.” Based on the other’s reaction, he had obviously said the wrong thing. Tony bristled and his eyes flashed.

“Well, it seems like it doesn’t matter if I stay in shape anymore, does it? You know, since your bestie dumped me from the team.” James winced at the biting response.

“I’m sorry, that was rude. I didn’t mean anything by it. It was just a joke.” Tony suddenly deflated with a sigh, like a puppet with its strings cut.

“I’m sorry too. Don’t mind me. I’m not going to be very good company right now it seems. Thanks for trying anyway.” James nodded, but made no move to leave, simply pulling his gun from the holster and buffing the metal with a kitchen rag. They sat in silence, James cleaning and Tony picking at the last of the food in the containers, finally leaning against the counter and showing a bit of the discomfort he must be feeling from the looks of the empty boxes. James was impressed he hadn’t vomited yet. Despite his failed attempt at conversation earlier, James reached out an unsteady hand to rest on the genius’s shoulder for a moment.

“You might feel better if you lay down for a bit. The couch is right over there. Only if you want, of course.” Tony sighed again, but agreed, making his way to the sofa and collapsed into a miserable heap on the cushions. James took a seat beside him, the quiet less tense this time.

“I’m sorry you had to see that. I usually keep my stress eating a bit more private.” James stroked his hand reassuringly, only belatedly realizing that that might have been weird. He pressed on anyway.

“You might feel better if you lay down for a bit. The couch is right over there. Only if you want, of course.” Tony sighed again, but agreed, making his way to the sofa and collapsed into a miserable heap on the cushions. James took a seat beside him, the quiet less tense this time.

“I’m sorry you had to see that. I usually keep my stress eating a bit more private.” James stroked his hand reassuringly, only belatedly realizing that that might have been weird. He pressed on anyway.

“It’s fine. Trust me, I’ve done worse things to cope.” Tony didn’t respond, but James saw his shoulder relax a bit. He counted that as a win. He reached for the remote, turning the TV onto some mindless infomercials. He figured they could both use a bit of a brain break.

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At some point that evening, they both must have fallen asleep because the next time James opened
his eyes; early morning light was entering the room. He groaned quietly and glanced at his phone, trying not to cringe at the glaring light of the screen. 5:14am. James groaned again, flopping his flesh arm over his eyes to block out the emerging light. As the events of the afternoon prior filled his mind, he spared a look at the cushion beside him, finding it empty, but not yet cold. He must have missed Tony by only a few minutes. Rubbing his eyes, James began his shuffle toward the bathroom, only to find it already occupied.

Having been tipped off by the sound of the shower on the other end of the room, he figured he’d simply slip in, grab one of the extra toothbrushes, and get cleaned up in the kitchen. He was stopped in his tracks by a breathy moan coming from the shower, just audible over the sound of the water. His eyes flicked to the shower before he could stop himself, landing on the distorted but visible figure through the glass wall. He was suddenly grateful for the cover of the half wall between himself and the shower, as he couldn’t tear his gaze away. He drank in the sight of his new friend, leaning against the wall of the shower, head thrown back, and wet hand curled around his flushed cock, stroking firmly. James stared, fixated on the sight, watching as his thumb swiped gently over the reddened tip, teasing the slit and underside of the head. The touch drew a pleased grunt and he began to tug faster. James raked his eyes over the body in front of him, watching as the water dripped down his chest, pooling in the divots of his hipbones. In a split second, James felt a wave of self-disgust wash over him, and he tore his eyes away, stumbling out of the bathroom in shame. Feeling like enough of a pervert for one day, he returned to his room.

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Tony rubbed himself lazily through the last twinges of his climax, sighing in satisfaction and turning the shower off. In spite of the stress of the last few days, spending time with James had sparked something in him, something he didn’t quite want to think too hard about just yet. He wrapped a towel around his waist and made his way upstairs to his own bathroom to finish getting ready. It was still well before he would have normally been awake, but after falling asleep so early the night before Tony felt plenty rested. Feeling a bit better after his chat with James, Tony picked up his phone and tapped Pepper’s contact on his speed dial. A sleep-rough voice picked up.

“Tony, hey. Is everything okay? You never call me this early.” He swore under his breath. He hadn’t thought about how early it would be on the west coast.

“Sorry, Pep. I just had to call you before I lose my nerve.”

“Tony, sweetie, what’s going on? Is this about you getting removed from the team? I talked to Rhody about it and I promise as soon as I finish up this conference I’m going to kick his star-spangled ass.” Tony huffed a laugh, small but genuine.

“Yeah, actually, it is. We need to talk about Avengers funding.” He could almost hear her grin through the phone.

“Mr. Stark, there’s nothing I’d love more.”
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

You guys. I'm sorry this took so long. I haven't been in the right head space to write until the last few days which is awesome because I love working on this fic! You've all left me so many lovely comments! They really make me smile so thank you from the bottom of my heart for your kind words!

In other business, thank you guys so for 2000 tumblr followers y'all are the best (if you haven't followed me and want to, my url is @anthcny-stark)

If anyone's interested, I've also started working on an angsty Stony high school AU which you can read here

When the Avengers, barring Bruce, saw Tony for the first time since his removal from the team, it was in a SHIELD conference room alongside a glowering Pepper Potts. They arrived in stride, a fashionable five minutes late. The crisp lines of Tony’s suit looked sharp enough to cut, and the sunlight from the window glinted menacingly off his Ray Bans. Pepper’s sleek ponytail and tailored skirt perched on her narrow body like the trappings of a queen. They both looked exquisite, almost cold. Scratch that, definitely cold. Despite their casual demeanor, the others could feel the ice that clung to their movements. Tony sat beside Bruce, offering his science bro a hint of a smile, small but genuine. Bruce visibly relaxed at the assurance. Pepper took her place at the front of the conference room.

“Gentlemen. And lady.” She offered a stiff nod at Natasha. “Before we begin, I’d like to excuse Dr. Banner from the proceedings.” Pepper turned to Bruce, giving the same pleased expression that Tony had given him previously. His features drained of their previous tension as he grabbed his notebooks, shoved his glasses up his nose, and scurried from the conference room before anyone could change their mind.

***************

About halfway through Pepper’s tirade (which to be fair was almost an hour) Tony stepped outside for some much needed air. The silence of hallway was a balm for his frayed nerves. As much as he appreciated his friend’s support in pulling the funding, it was still exhausting to watch. It’d been a long couple of weeks, and Tony was well past his wit’s end. Had been for several days to be perfectly honest. He paced up and down the small corridor, trying to expel some of the nervous energy that had built up in every cell of his body. He didn’t bother trying to eavesdrop. The conference rooms at SHIELD were soundproofed, and well. Stark tech didn’t fuck around with quality. His pacing and frantic hand-wringing was interrupted by a voice from behind him.

“Careful, Stark. You’ll wear a hole in the carpet if you keep pacin’ like that.” Tony whipped around so quickly he stumbled over his own feet. Barnes was standing behind him wearing a nervous half smile. His expression was soft, but there was still tension around his eyes. He was still in his combat gear, so he must’ve just gotten back from his mission.

“You would know. I’ll have to replace my hardwood soon with the way you abuse it.” James’s smile grew a touch at the tentative banter.
“Sorry, I’ll do it on the rug next time. Seems cheaper to fix.” Tony laughed softly and nodded.

“Sounds good to me. You can ruin all the rugs you want.” James grinned in return.

“Perfect. I’m just stopping by HQ to drop off my stealth gear, but I’m going back to the tower afterward. Are you heading there too?” Tony shushed Pepper’s voice in his head telling him not to fucking bail on the meeting, but hanging out at home with James sounded ten million times better than getting the death glare from Captain America and Black Widow for another hour and a half.

“Yeah, I am. You wanna cop a ride? I promise even my Audi is unfathomably better than the piece of crap SHIELD is probably toting you around in.” James nodded and beckoned Tony to follow him to the storage unit to drop off the gear. Once their brief errand had been run, Tony led him to the parking complex. The car chirped as it was unlocked and James’s eyes grew wide and he whistled.

“Damn, Tony. That’s a helluva ride.” Tony preened. It really was one of his better models. He was glad he’d chosen it for the day. Pepper’s eye roll and playful jabbing at the unnecessary gaudiness of the car was well worth the delight on James’s face.

“She’s a beauty. That there is a 2018 Ferrari Portofino. All the bells and whistles and custom upgrades by yours truly, of course. You wanna drive?” James’s eyes got impossibly bigger at the prospect.

“Ah, geez, Tony. I dunno know. I don’t want anything to happen to it. I don’t trust myself.” Tony bumped their shoulders together in reassurance.

“Well, I trust you.” He tossed the keys into James’s hands. He caught them on reflex and eyed them, then the car, dubiously. “Come on, soldier. She doesn’t bite. Hop in.” With a deep breath and a look of fierce determination, James slid in behind the wheel and pulled out of the parking lot. By the time they reached the freeway, James was laughing out loud with the wind blowing his hair back. His wild laughter was contagious, and Tony joined in spite of himself.

The drive back to Manhattan was over well before Tony was ready for it to be. They made their way back into the empty tower and to the kitchen. By the time James had made them both sandwiches, he was still smiling. A glance over at James showed his lunch companion in the same state. They ate their food under the cover of comfortable small talk. The good kind, not the awkward kind. The more time they spent together, the more open James became. His chuckles were more restrained than they had been in the car, but that was okay. As long as he was laughing. At least James liked him. That was enough for now. It had to be.

“Jesus, Tony. I’ve never seen anyone look so upset eating a sandwich. You’re like a cute little rubber band about to snap.” Tony’s head shot up to face Barnes.

“You called me cute.” James looked like a deer in the headlights. He blushed, refusing to make eye contact.

“Uh, yeah. I mean… Look, I’m sorry. That was weird.” Tony pushed back the heavy disappointment in the pit of his stomach.

“It’s fine.” James ran a hand through his hair.

“I’m just-”

“Still adjusting.”

“Yeah.” They sat in brief silence, eating. The bread had gone dry in Tony’s mouth. It didn’t taste like
anything anymore. James set down the crusts of his sandwich and turned back to Tony.

“You still look so tense. I could help if you want?” Tony raised an eyebrow, trying to play it cool.

“Oh? And how would you do that?” James bit his lip and glanced away.

“I could give you a backrub? In the army. We would do that. For each other. The other guys and I.” Tony stared, his mouth moving slightly, but no words came. James grew more anxious by the second. “You don’t have to, of course! I get it. I shouldn’t’ve-” Tony stopped his stammering with a gentle hand on his forearm. They locked eyes.

“No, that would be… Very nice, actually. Thank you, James.” The man’s blush returned and he nodded jerkily. Without a word, James led him over the sofa. “So, what should I do? Like, take off my shirt or…?”

“Um, whatever you’re comfortable with. Obviously. But uh, yeah. Then just sit down and lean your chest against the arm of the couch.” Tony gave him a quick thumbs up and tugged his shirt over his head. He tried to bite the dark wave of insecurity as he felt James’s eyes glued to his bare torso. Try as he might, by the time his shirt was over his head and on the floor, the feeling was eating him from inside out. He wished James would stop staring at him like that. His gaze was so intense. Not judgemental, but still unsettling. To Tony’s immense relief, James gestured loosely to the sofa. Tony hopped on, draping his body over the side and laying his head on his arms. He felt a weight settle onto the cushions behind him and warms hands came to rest on his shoulders.

“Comfy?” Tony hummed in response.

“Very.” Apparently pleased with the affirmation, James got to work.

James would be lying if he said he wasn’t screaming internally. But like, in a good way. He ran his hands over the tanned skin in front of him, first gingerly, and then a bit firmer. The breathy sigh from his companion shot straight southward on his body, but James was nothing if not a gentleman, and by God, he would keep it together and help Tony out in a friendly, non-creepy way. The soft gasps and moans continued from the prone form before him as he rubbed deeper into the firm muscles. He felt himself getting lost in the process, the hypnotic glide of his hands over flesh. Tony really was beautiful, all muscle with just a hint of softness. James choked back a groan of his own as his knuckled ran lightly down the sharp taper of the man’s slender waist. The slight give under his fingers was just as heavenly as the sight of the dip of his back disappearing into the waistband of his jeans (the tight ones that hugged his butt and curved hips just so). James struggled to keep his breath steady as he continued. It took every ounce of chivalry his mama raised him with to keep his hands from wandering of their own accord. Once he was satisfied with the lack of tension he found under his hands, James patted him softly on the hip. Tony grunted slightly, pulling himself out of the languid state he’d been in for the better part of ninety minutes. He rolled over to face James, lips parted slightly, eyes half-lidded and heavy. James coughed nervously and shoved his hands deep into his pockets.

“Feel better?” Tony laughed softly.

“Yeah, I actually do, soldier.” His voice was warm and raspy with sleep. “Hey, let me know if you ever want me to return the favor.” James nodded silently as Tony gathered his shirt from the ground. He watched with his eyes a bit lower than was socially acceptable as Tony walked away, hips swaying a bit more than usual. But that might have just been James’s imagination.
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

I'm back now! Endgame lit a fire under my ass so I'm hoping this will be quicker from now on, I have some ideas going forward (even though it's been so long I had to reread my own fic first oops). Sorry if this is a bit short, just getting back into the groove. I also have a new Stony fic in the works, I'm thinking some 616 identity porn! Stay tuned!

Also, I'm a sucker for soft Tony, so this is a very self-indulgent chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It was probably for the best that Steve never returned to the tower the night of the funding conference. The earlier interaction with James had left Tony surprisingly drained, mentally and physically, and definitely not in any state for further confrontation. With no one to bother him, Tony laid wide awake under the covers, still trying to process the events of the day. He had never been one for subtext, but the past few days had indicated he might have to get more familiar with the concept. Despite the exhaustion weighing him down, his mind was still racing a mile and minute. Between Steve, the funding, the Council, and… whatever he had going on with James, there was no way sleep was coming to him anytime soon. With a groan, Tony lifted himself from the mattress and wandered towards the master bathroom.

The tile was cold against his feet when he arrived. He wrapped the blankets he’d dragged with him off the the bed tighter around his body as he turned the faucet to the tub on. It had taken years after Afghanistan, but he had finally managed to enjoy baths again. Despite everything, he was grateful to have his old stress remedy available again. With sleep nowhere in sight, he resigned himself to emptying various bottles of oils and salts into the running water, taking a shaking breath as the lavender-scented steamed touched his face. He leaned back against the counter, hanging his head and letting the sheets slide down from around his torso, now held up only where the marble dug into his spine. He shivered at the chill that seemed to hang in the room even with the bath running.

“Jarvis, raise the temperature to 75 degrees and turn the tub jets on low.” He winced as his voice echoed too loudly against the stone.

“Of course, sir. Shall I have Dummy fetch you your tablet?” Tony appreciated the forethought in Jarvis’s lowered volume, and considered a moment before shaking his head.

“Not now, J. I just want to rest.” He dropped the sheet entirely and pulled a towel down from the shelf, tossing it on the floor by the tub.

“I’m very pleased to hear that, sir. Is there anything else you’ll be requiring for your bath?” Tony waved him off, but felt a smile tug at his mouth hearing the softness in the AI’s tone.

“Take five, buddy, I’m fine.” With a groan, he sunk into the water, letting the bubbles lap around his collarbones. He let his head fall back with a soft thump against the wall and closed his eyes, willing his nerves to calm. He let his hands trace over the top of the bubbles and watched the water drip from his fingertips onto the edge of the tub. What could have been minutes or hours later, Jarvis’s voice filled the room.
“Very sorry to interrupt, sir, but Agent Romanoff is requesting to speak with you.” Tony sat upright at that.

“It’s four in the morning. Tell her I’m asleep.” A pause.

“I’m afraid it may be too late for that.” Before he could respond, a quiet thud sounded from the other side of the door, along with the grind of a vent cover being pushed back into place. Tony groaned and rubbed his forehead.

“You know what? Fuck it. If she wants to see me so bad, tell her to come talk to me in here.” He rolled his eyes fully expecting to be left in peace. To his surprise, the lock on the bathroom door clicked open and Natasha slipped into the room. Tony’s brows shot up in shock, but he composed himself under her intense gaze. He wavered just slightly, feeling rather vulnerable in his current state. His eyes followed her carefully as she made her way across the room and stared down at him.

“What are you saying, Romanoff?” His voice sounded wearier than he intended.

“I’m saying I’m sorry, Tony.” His eyes widened, lips parted in surprise. “I’m saying that I was wrong. Talking with James gave me a lot to think about.” He kept his eyes on her as she sank down to sit on the closed toilet lid next to the tub. She still moved gracefully, but he noticed a slight slump to her shoulders, a shard of rawness that wasn’t normally visible. She rested her chin on her palm, looking back with a tinge of regret furrowed in her brow. They sat in silence for a beat or two, letting the admission settle between them. Tony shifted backwards into the water, letting his arm drape over the side of the bath so his knuckles grazed the floor. He stared at the ceiling.

“I don’t know what you want me to say, Natasha.” She swallowed hard.

“You don’t have to say anything. I just wanted you to know that. You helped my friend, and you’ve helped me, in ways I never thought about before. Thank you for that.” She let her breath out in a soft huff, and he nodded.

“You’re welcome. It was no trouble.” He tightened his jaw and refused to look at her until he felt a soft brush on the back of his hand and delicate fingers wrap around his in a loose grip. He glanced over at her and finally allowed a small smile to cross his face.

“No, it was. And I won’t behave so foolishly in the future.” After a second of hesitation, he reached
up and tucked a stray curl behind her ear.

“You did your best, Red. That’s all any of us can do.”

By the time their conversation trailed off, the bathwater was cooled and the sun peeking into the sky. Without saying a word, Natasha stood up, placing the towel down where she’d be sitting and left the bathroom. Tony rinsed the bubbles away and wrapped up in the towel, taking a moment to slick his wet hair back in the mirror. By the time he walked back into the main suite, she was gone.

Chapter End Notes

As always, my tumblr is still @anthcny-stark!

End Notes

Come say hi to me on tumblr @anthcny-stark!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!