1984: Our Love Was

by CarburetorCastiel

Summary

Steve is a closeted Brooklyn cop looking for someone to settle down with and finally have his family. Bucky is an alcoholic who works at his friend's record shop and is the only guardian of his two little sisters since their parent's died. When the youngest Barnes gets lost in Brooklyn, Steve and Bucky have a rushed but significant first encounter that ends in a promise for more. Set in the 1980s, this chronicles their days of falling in love, staying together against opposition, and fighting for what they want.

Notes

ATTENTION:
Please note that this work is meant to be seen as a sort of television show. The style of writing is very much a day-to-day (slice-of-life) episodic format with major plot points overarching over smaller points for several chapters much like seasons in TV shows. The seasons and episodes are denoted in the chapter titles. This work can be read as one very lengthy work, or can be read by seasons. This work always was meant to be seen like a long-running TV show sort of thing. It should feel more like a saga of something like a family drama and less like a very long novel. I write more movie scripts than I do novels so this flow just feels more natural to me. (However, this does NOT mean this is supposed to resemble a
script at all. The ideas of it being a tv show are more akin to the plots and themes and less the actual writing and format itself. See the paragraph below explaining the semi-RP-format.) My intent with this clear outline of seasons is also to make it easy for people to either read the chapter every week or to binge read through a season at a time and then wait for the next season.

This is Co-Authored by me (CarburetorCastiel) and K. Edited by me (CarburetorCastiel). Posted here with K's permission (K does not have an AO3 at this time.) This was originally an RP and remains in a semi-RP format with dividing lines between what I wrote and what K wrote. I am Bucky and K is Steve - we took turns with other characters. WIP, Updated every Tuesday or Wednesday - either one or two chapters per update. Any questions, please contact me here or on my tumblr https://friend-lover-janitor.tumblr.com/

So much love and thanks to K for being such a great co-author and making this project with me. I love this project so much and I am so grateful to K. I think we work so well together. Literally, can't thank you enough, Love.
Bucky ran from the school down the two blocks to the police station. Becca had been waiting at the pickup entrance for her older brother when school was out but the younger one - Lilly - wasn't there with her. Bucky had frantically asked where Lilly had gone and Becca said that she assumed she stayed home sick because she hadn't seen her all day. Bucky had just come from home and Lilly was definitely not there. He was worried that she was lost in Brooklyn or had made her way to one of the other Boroughs. Or worse, someone snatched her from the school before Becca or Bucky were with her.

Bucky left Becca with one of the teachers and ran. He reached the Brooklyn police station, flung open the door and marched in. "Lilly. She's missing. My little sister Lillian Barnes. She wasn't at school and I think someone either took her or she's lost in New York or run away or who knows. Please, I need help," Bucky said in a rush to a very displeased looking attendant at the front desk. "Excuse me?" Bucky pushed when he got nothing. "She could be in danger. She's just a little kid!"

Steve had been on street duty that day when he saw a little girl with brunette hair done up in a braid wandering around the street. It wasn't uncommon for kids her age to be out and about a little too young, but Steve knew a lost kid when he saw one. He approached her and she looked to be barely keeping calm.

"Hey, Kiddo. You lost?" He asked. She nodded her head. He brought her to the precinct and let the secretary at the desk know to leave a message on the number Lilly had told him so her parent would pick her up when they got home.

Steve had barely finished the milkshake he got for the two of them when a man around his age came rushing in asking for her. "Bucky! That's my brother!" Lilly said excitedly, running over to him.

Bucky slammed his knees into the ground so fast when he saw her coming and was kneeling down closer to her level when she attacked him in a giant hug. "Dammit, Lilly. I was so fucking scared." Bucky pulled back to look her up and down and put his hand on the side of her head. "I was so worried, you weren't with Becca or at home. What the hell happened to you? Have you been walking around Brooklyn all day?"

Lilly wiped her hand across her mouth and then wiped some tears that were forming in Bucky's eyes. "I didn't want to go to school today so I thought I'd just skip but then I couldn't find my way to the park and then I couldn't find my way back to the school and then I just didn't know where I was." Lilly whipped around and pointed up at a jacked officer wearing a uniform that was just slightly too tight for him in all the right places. "This cop found me."

Steve smiled warmly as the two reunited. He didn't wish that sort of panic on anyone, but he was happy to see that they were back together without too much trouble. As an officer, there were far too many tragedies he'd encountered not to take comfort in the happy endings.
Steve patted Lilly's shoulder. "Besides the whole cutting school thing, she was well-behaved," he said to Bucky. "I picked her up and we got some milkshakes. She hasn't been here too long." Steve saw the shine in Bucky's eyes and gave him a gentle look. "Would you two like a ride home? You look like you had one heck of a day."

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"Oh, well, the school is just two blocks down and we still need to get Becca. I think we can manage, but thank you." Bucky smiled at the man and let his gaze linger on his lips for a bit longer than he should have.

Just then Lilly pulled on Bucky's shirt and said, "No, please can we go in the police car? Becca will like it! And she can meet Mr. Steve too!"

Bucky looked from Lilly to the man who was apparently called Steve. He thrust out a hand and Steve shook it. "I'm Bucky, by the way. Thanks so much for bringing my sister here. I guess we will take that ride if you are still offering it."

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Part of Steve's job was to notice things, so he saw how Bucky's eyes lingered on him. The man was pretty easy on the eyes and he was always a sucker for someone who cared deeply about their family. He was disappointed when Bucky declined at first but Lilly came to the rescue.

Steve shook Bucky's hand. "I'm Officer Rogers, but Steve is fine, too. The offer for the ride is still there, but I'm not putting either of you in handcuffs. You'd be surprised how many people ask me to do that," he chuckled. When they got to his car, he opened up the back for the two of them.

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Bucky slid into the backseat and Lilly followed in after. He told Steve which school Becca was at and they went to get her. When they pulled up, she was waiting outside with the teacher since Bucky had called the school from the precinct to tell them that they were on their way.

When she saw the cop car parking in front of the school and her brother getting out of the backseat to come get her, Becca's jaw dropped. "What did I miss in the last ten minutes?" She asked and followed Bucky to the car.

"Your sister tried to skip school and got lost." Bucky took Becca's backpack and she got into the middle seat beside Lilly.

"Becca," Lilly gestured to the driver. "This is Mr. Steve. He picked me up."

"Officer Rogers, Lilly. Be polite," Bucky corrected her.

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Steve laughed. "It's okay, Mr. Steve works too," he said. "It's something new and new things are pretty cool, right?" Lilly nodded excitedly. From the looks of it, she was happy to have been found. He asked Bucky for the address and once he got it, he headed towards their apartment. "We left a message on the home phone for her parents, but I guess you can ignore it when you get home." He glanced in the rearview mirror at the three of them. "You didn't skip school too, did you?" He joked.
Becca smiled proudly and shook her head. "No, Sir, this year I have a perfect attendance record - not even one sick day - and I intend to keep it."

"Woah, that's really impressive." Steve was genuine about it but he played it up just a little because Becca was still a kid and deserved a little extra excitement.

Bucky rolled his eyes, "Yes, she's very proud. She's following right in our father's footsteps as the academic one, aren't you, Becs?"

Becca nodded again and said, "And Lilly is the athlete like our mom was."

Lilly piped up then too, thinking that it was sharing time and anything goes, she said, "And Bucky dropped out of college." Bucky shot her a sharp glance meant to keep her quiet but she wasn't quite done. "He had to quit so we could stay a family and not be put in one of those homes."

When they started talking about parents in the past tense, Steve started to worry but then it got full-blown awkward when Lilly talked about Bucky dropping out to keep their family together. He gave Bucky an apologetic look in the mirror - not so much pity as it was being sorry that a sensitive topic was brought up without Bucky's permission. "He made a big sacrifice for you two," Steve said finally after trying to think of something to say. "I expect you to behave a little better so he has a little less to worry about, okay? So no more cutting school," he said patiently to Lilly.

Lilly pursed her lips and scuffed her foot on the carpet of the car. "Didn't mean it like that. I just didn't want to go today. Wasn't trying to make anyone worried," she mumbled.

"I know, Kiddo. I'm sure you didn't mean anything by it, but there are still consequences for the decisions you make, even if you weren't looking to hurt anyone," Steve said gently.

Bucky sunk a little further in his seat but sat up once he saw their apartment building. "This, this is us." Bucky tapped on the window. "Right here. Thanks again for the ride, Officer."

Steve pulled over and put the car in park. He got out and helped the girls get their stuff and watched them both run up the stairs to the door of the building with their keys in hand while Bucky stayed out on the sidewalk to talk to him.

"Look, I really appreciate all your help today with Lilly and the ride," Bucky started. "And I'm sorry
for Lilly. She doesn't really get what is an appropriate conversation and what isn't. I'm just glad she didn't ask about your whole life's story or your family or girlfriend or how much money you make or anything. She tends to be nosy."

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"It's okay, helping's part of the job and kids are kids." Steve was quiet for a beat before he put his hands in his pockets nervously. "You have a lot on your plate," he said. "I probably could bet good money it's been a long time since you had a night out... so what do you say one of these days, I can ask my mom to look after your sisters and we can grab a few drinks?"

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Bucky stood up a bit straighter and grinned. "You're right, I don't really have the time to get out. Haven't gone to a club for a few years now. Used to go to Disco Dandy's all the time." He pocketed his hands and tried to keep the heat from rising to his face when he looked at Steve's chest and his eyes and his jaw and everything about him. "That girlfriend won't mind if I borrow you for a night, then?"

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Steve couldn't help but think how beautiful Bucky was when he smiled. He kept that to himself, knowing that men liking men wasn't exactly something most people were okay with. He cleared his throat and added, "The only woman in my life right now is my mom, and we've decided to be strictly platonic. So, yeah, I'm free for a night." He pulled out his notepad and wrote his home phone number on it so he could give it to Bucky.

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Bucky took the paper with a nod and refused to grin when Steve said he didn't have a girlfriend. It wasn't like Bucky expected this to go anywhere, but it was nicer to look at someone as handsome as Steve when Bucky knew there wasn't someone waiting back home for him. Except it also wasn't a good sign that this could be something when Steve hadn't made any visible reaction to knowing that Disco Dandy's was a gay nightclub that opened up when Bucky and Steve would have been in middle school.

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Steve patted Bucky on the shoulder and wished him a good night. Bucky seemed like a good guy and although Steve wasn't short on friends, he was always happy to have more. Especially when they were as kind-hearted as Bucky.
Steve was excited for the phone call and when they had a night picked out, he drove his mom over so she would stay at the apartment while he and Bucky went out. She had a bag full of baking supplies so they could make cakes and cookies while Bucky was away. Steve was dressed neatly but casually enough so he didn't look too stiff. He knocked on the door to Bucky's apartment.

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"Hey, come on in!" Lilly opened the door and ushered Steve and his mother inside. "Careful stepping around the boxes." She waved offhandedly at rows and stacks of cardboard and crate boxes filled with records.

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Steve's eyebrows lifted at the rows of boxes. It was as if the home was a second storage for a vinyl shop. Or maybe even the primary storage, going by how many there were. Steve peeked in one and noticed it was packed full enough that pulling one record out would have been a task. His mom looked like she was holding back the urge to tidy it all up. "Hey, Girls. This is my mom Sarah. She's always wanted daughters, so don't let her take you home, okay?" He teased.

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"Hello, Mr. Steve." Becca came up to him and shook his hand and then introduced herself to his mother. "Bucky will be right out. He had on one outfit then ran back to his room saying it wasn't good enough so he should just be a minute."

Little did any of them know, Bucky could hear their conversation through the wall and he swore to himself and said, "That little shit. I just want to look nice, right?" Bucky looked at himself in the mirror and tried to decide whether to put his long hair up or leave it down. "No crime in wanting to look nice next to an office of the law, right?"

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Steve looked down the hall where he assumed Bucky was before focusing on Becca again. "He should have let one of you pick his outfit," he said. "That way if he's not happy with it, he at least can't blame himself."

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"Oh, I've tried." Becca sighed. "But, no one tells Bucky what to wear. Even if it's been out of style for three years, if he wants to wear it, he's wearing it." He might come out wearing our dad's old Navy uniform just because he wants to and none of us could get him to change."

Bucky called from his room, "I'm not wearing Dad's Navy uniform, you sassy little girl." He swung the door open and stepped out towards everyone. "I'm wearing this." He gestured down his body at a shirt that was very blue and very tight in the arms and nice flared jeans with tan shoes. He had decided to go ahead and throw his hair up in a ponytail. He could always take it down later if he wanted. Bucky usually wasn't this well dressed. He actually normally hated wearing anything but t-shirts, but he really wanted to impress Steve. "And you must be Mrs. Rogers." Bucky moved to shake Steve's mom's hand and saw Steve following his movements out of the corner of his eye.
Steve wasn’t underdressed by any means, but Bucky clearly had the better outfit out of the two of them. He stared because Bucky really was gorgeous to start with and that was only accented by the smart choice of clothing. Something told Steve this was a special occasion outfit for Bucky, though, because he seemed like he was slightly uncomfortable in the tight shirt.

"Call me Sarah," Steve's mom insisted. "I expect you to have a fun evening out. My son told me you're long overdue for one of those and I won't have for you being responsible until you come back."

Steve loved his mom. Being an only kid had its perks because she got to give him all her attention. "Ready to go, Buck?" He asked.

Bucky turned to face Steve. 'Bucky' was already a nickname and not many people shortened it to just 'Buck' but it sounded nice coming from Steve's lips. Bucky nodded and grabbed his coat from where it had been draped on the couch. "Sure thing!" He kissed both his sisters on the top of the head and told them to be good for Miss Sarah to which they both emphatically promised that they would.

Bucky didn’t get quite excited until he was out in the fresh air of the evening with Steve and nothing to worry about. He hadn’t had a good drinking buddy for a few months now and the thought of drinking with a new buddy and just being able to relax for a while really got him going. Once his feet hit the pavement he rounded on Steve and asked, "So, where are we going?"

Steve doubted Bucky was a miserable guy, but he had to have been overburdened to take care of two kids at his age. Seeing him so lively and excitable was really nice. He laughed when Bucky fired out the questions as soon as they got on the sidewalk.

"Well, there's this bar that serves pretty good food that I go to for my lunch breaks. But if you want a quieter setting, there're a few restaurants I can recommend." He put his hands in his pockets and shrugged. "Really, this night is about doing what you want."

"Oh, god," Bucky started. "What I want? I haven't really gotten to do what I want in a few years." Bucky looked over to Steve. "You would not believe how many times I wanted something nice to eat but the girls insisted on pizza so pizza was what we had." Bucky thought for a moment trying to make a decision. "Well," he started again, "I think I need some drinks. And unless those nice restaurants don't mind me getting a little drunk I think the bar is our best bet. What do you think?"

The more Bucky spoke, the more Steve was amazed by him. "A bar works for me. And who knows, if my mom likes your sisters enough, maybe she can babysit another night and we can get some fancy food." Bucky sacrificed so much; Steve couldn't help but want to spoil him a little. The only person he had around to spend money on was his mom. Steve bit his lip and said, "So, uh... those
records. Are you some sort of world-class hoarder, or do you sell them?" Steve asked. "I saw a few good ones there. That Bowie cover is nice."

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Bucky flushed red in his cheeks. "Well, I guess I'm both. I collect records but I also work down at the record shop on third. I don't know if you know it." Bucky followed Steve as he turned the corner and started headed down a different road. "But I do collect an awful lot of them. That 'Aladdin Sane' original cover isn't going anywhere but in a frame as soon as I can get one for it. David Bowie is one of my favorites."

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"I've been to that shop a few times - not too often to buy records, but because your store's neighbors have a bad habit of dealing drugs from their basement," Steve chuckled. "Bowie's great. But I think I like The Police a little better right now. For obvious reasons," he joked. Steve felt comfortable with Bucky. Usually, there was a bit of a learning curve before he was chatty with someone he just met. "So what else do you like to do? Assuming you ever get free time."

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Bucky held in a laugh at Steve's dorky joke and tried his best not to make some snarky retort. "Well, music is my life, honestly. I was going to business school to try to start my own record label." Bucky sighed, "I wanted to discover amazing talented musicians and give them a leg up in the industry and get to say that I was a part of bringing beautiful music to as many people as I could." He sighed again because he knew that would never happen now.

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God, Steve wasn't really the swooning type but he was totally swooning right now. He played it cool, though. He just met this guy. "I know it's not really ideal, but there are plenty of people who are successful even after they're middle aged," Steve said. "You can still go back, even if you got to wait until your sisters are adults." He nudged Bucky gently. "You're passionate about this. Life can set your dreams back, but that doesn't mean they have to stay back."

The bar wasn't too far - after a few blocks they came upon it and Steve opened the door for Bucky.

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Bucky slipped into the bar in front of Steve and waited for him to show him where to sit. It wasn't a very large place and most of the people inside seemed to recognize Steve the second they saw his face. "Cozy place," Bucky said. He was definitely used to the bars that he frequented where there were tons of people, it was loud, and someone was always fighting somebody.

Steve gestured towards a booth near the back and Bucky walked swiftly towards it. This was nice. Just a night out with no little siblings to be in charge of and no stoner co-workers to keep track of and no goddamn noise. On top of it, the bar was playing some choice music and Bucky was more than pleased to hear it.

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Steve was pleased to see that Bucky approved of the spot. It would've been a shame if he picked a bar that didn't suit Bucky's fancy. "Yeah, this one isn't a cop bar, but I like it." Sometimes when he
needed a break from his coworkers he would eat and relax here instead. "What drink do you want? I'll get it."

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"My god, I didn't know cop bars were a real thing." Bucky giggled. "I thought it was just a television trope. And, uh, I'll take a whiskey neat, please," Bucky answered and watched Steve walk away to get the drinks. Bucky honestly tried not to stare at Steve but it was hard to when he was wearing those pants that were loose down on the legs and tight around the ass.

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Steve got Bucky's whiskey and got himself a beer before returning with alcohol in hand. He passed Bucky his before taking a seat. "So how old are they? Your sisters?" He asked. "Are they both pain-in-the-butt teenagers?"

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Bucky gratefully took his glass from Steve and sipped it before shrugging and saying, "Not too much pain-in-the-butt but, yes, pre-teens. Becca is fourteen and Lilly is eleven - so basically almost a teen according to her. What about you - any siblings?"

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Steve chuckled and sipped at his beer. His eyes briefly met Bucky's before he looked just past him. "I'm an only child. My dad passed not long after I was born."

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"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that," Bucky said after another sip of whiskey. "Your mother seems like a wonderful woman, by the way. I noticed she brought baking stuff. The girls are going to love that."

Bucky saw a drip of beer sitting on Steve's lip and he really wanted to lean forward and wipe it off with his thumb or kiss it off or something. But then Bucky remembered himself and where he was and the company that was around him.

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"It's alright. We all have stuff happen," Steve said. "My mom's amazing. I was telling your sisters she always wanted daughters, so she probably is having just as much fun as they are." He licked his lips clean of the beer and let his gaze settle on Bucky again. "So do you own the record store or just work there?"

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"No, oh no." Bucky leaned back in his seat. "That would be wonderful - ideal - but no. I just work there. Clint is the owner." Bucky leaned forward in his seat again and got closer to Steve to say something like it was a secret. "Want to know something interesting about him, though?"

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Steve leaned forward too, playing along and using it as an excuse to get closer to Bucky. "Oh yeah?
What's that?" He seemed more interested in having a better look at the man in front of him than hearing about his boss.

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Bucky eyed Steve as he moved closer and chuckled once he was in hearing range and said, "He owns a record store but... he can't hear. He says music is his favorite thing cause he can feel the vibrations of the sound but he doesn't actually hear that well."

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Steve looked surprised. "Oh, wow. That's actually really impressive," Steve said. "Had he always been deaf? Or did something happen to him?" He asked. Steve stretched his feet out, accidentally knocking his foot into Bucky's. "Sorry."

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A ghost of a smile crossed Bucky's lips, "That's okay. And I don't know. I've never asked." Bucky paused for a moment and moved his hands into a fist on the table. "Hey, can..." he cleared his throat. "Can I ask you something?"

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Steve bit his bottom lip, not sure what question Bucky would have but he supposed it couldn't hurt. He wanted Bucky to feel comfortable around him, so answering a few questions should be fine. "Yeah?"

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"Why're you doing this?" Bucky asked steadily. "Why'd you ask me to go out for a drink with you? I know you said you thought I needed some time for myself but why not just tell me to take some time and then just go your own way?" Bucky wasn't rude in asking. He wasn't trying to be sassy or snarky or anything like that. He was genuinely just curious as to what the two of them were doing here tonight.

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Steve paused, not really thinking that this would've been strange. But he supposed it was a fair question. "You're a good guy," he said. "I like keeping company with people who I think are good. As a cop, I see some really awful things happen. It's nice to see the best that humanity has to offer. Besides, everyone needs someone to have their back."

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"Ah, okay, so you got a bit lonely over at your police station, did you?" Now Bucky was being snarky and playful and hoped Steve could tell. Bucky wouldn't necessarily call it flirting but it was damn close. He was starting to like this Mr. Steve and wanted to push his luck with him just a bit further before he decided that they were only ever going to be just friends. Although, if Bucky knew anything it was looks, and Steve had been giving his body some surveying looks since they had met.
"Yeah, you caught me," Steve joked, leaning back casually in his chair and giving Bucky a smile. "You know, it was the other night that was the final straw for me. I was sitting at my desk filing another report while eating doughnuts when I said to myself: Steve, you’ve got to change your life. It's time to make friends with some long-haired hippie who works in retail." He nudged him lightly to show he didn't mean anything by it.

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"I'll tell you, man, us long haired hippies are the best company to keep. Even for a cop." Bucky took another sip of his whiskey and added, "Although, I got to say, getting to know you more, you don't strike me as the typical officer type. So what got you into it, huh?"

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Steve smiled and shrugged his shoulders. "I like helping people. I know a lot of people do it for the power and the pay and status. But really, I just want to be someone people know they can go to for safety," he admitted. "My ma wanted me to be an artist. It was the safer option."

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Bucky crossed his legs under the table and slide one foot so it was barely touching Steve's shin but Bucky could tell that Steve had noticed the move. "Do you still do art? I'm always impressed by creative people. Music is such a different form of art than things like painting or drawing."

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Steve nodded. "Sometimes. If I'm on break or get off work early I will draw. It's a good way to relax, especially after a stressful day." Steve leaned his leg a little bit against Bucky's foot. "Do you play music? Or just listen?"

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Bucky took in a sharp breath when Steve leaned into him. He knew it. This wasn't just two guys becoming friends. However, there seemed to be something blocking Steve and Bucky didn't know what it might be, but he hoped it was just the public space of a bar and prying eyes.

"I can play the piano somewhat, harmonica, guitar, and ukulele. Ukulele is a small Hawaiian string instrument if you didn't know. Pretty rad sound." Bucky seemed pleased with himself with how much he could actually do with music even if he didn’t consider himself a super talented musician or anything.

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Steve had felt this urge a few times before, but never so strongly as with Bucky. He was pretty certain this guy was into him, but there was so much riding on this he didn't want to risk misinterpreting.

"That's four more instruments than I can play," he chuckled. "I’d love to hear you play something sometime. I didn't see a piano hiding under your boxes of stuff, so maybe some ukulele?"
Bucky grinned and moved his hands up the table to get closer to Steve without touching him. "Yeah, definitely, we can do that sometime." Bucky thought to his old house when his parents were still around and he had a piano of his own. He had sold it for cash when they had to move into the apartment they were in now. "Yeah, my piano is gone but I can play you some ukulele or entertain you with some wicked harmonica action. I've been told it's pretty attractive when I guy can serenade someone but I'm not so sure. You'll have to let me know." Bucky knew it was bold but it also wasn't direct enough that he could pass it off as asking for a friend or asking in case a girl was coming over or something like that if Steve didn't roll with it.

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Steve couldn't believe his luck. Bucky had to be flirting with him. He was throwing all the fishing lines out there for Steve to catch the bait. He knew he had to be careful but, god, he wanted to give it a shot. He took a deep drink from his beer for a little bit of courage before lowering his voice so only Bucky could hear. "You don't need a harmonica in hand to be attractive."

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Bucky's eyes lit up and he gave Steve a cheeky grin as he looked up from his whiskey glass. "Did it hurt you to say that? Took you a while," Bucky said low and smooth. "Not like I didn't see you looking at me the way I've been looking at you, huh." Bucky immediately chastised himself for being too presumptuous. He shouldn't push Steve, especially if there was some serious reason for this block he felt with him.

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Steve's face heated up and he was thankful the dim lighting hid most of his blush. He would've gotten a little more defensive if Bucky's eyes hadn't lit up the way they did. He looked around to make sure nobody else was looking at them. "I'm a police officer," he reminded. "I'll get fired if anyone knows." Steve gave Bucky a bit of a pleading look, hoping he would understand why he was being as reserved as possible.

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Bucky softened again and uncrossed his legs and polished off his whiskey. "Think there is someplace we could go be by ourselves? No one around to narc on the narc?" Bucky laughed at his own joke and met Steve's eyes. God, this guy was a dork, but so was Bucky. He felt this would be good for them both if they could have some alone time, maybe talk about some of this. Who knows?

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As nervous as he was, and entirely too wound up over this, Bucky's joking around had Steve reluctantly giving in a bit easier than he expected of himself. "Well," he said after a bit of thought. "I can treat you to some fancy take out and we can head over to my apartment," Steve suggested.

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Bucky stated, "Fancy take out just so happens to be my favorite," and he followed suit when Steve stood up to get going. When they were out on the street. Bucky striding next to Steve, he asked in a hushed tone. "So, can I consider this to be a secret date, then, Officer?"
Steve walked a bit nervously out but he did at least stand a bit taller when Bucky asked if it was a date. He considered being coy but... well, Steve liked Bucky and he didn't want his own fears to get in the way of a good evening together. "Only if you plan on giving me a kiss at the end of it, Bucky."

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"Lead the way," Bucky said with a beaming glow about him. "And don't worry about it, if you deserve a kiss, you'll get a kiss." Bucky pocketed his hands to resist the urge of holding Steve's and followed after him as he trudged down the block in the cool autumn air. It was getting colder and Bucky was glad he wore a light jacket.

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Steve thought Bucky looked so beautiful. He was so charming and confident and it made it all the easier for Steve to talk to him. He led them to a nice Mediterranean place that did take out. Steve handed Bucky the menu because he already knew what he wanted.

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"Uh, oh god," Bucky started, staring at the menu with a confused glare. "I've never eaten anything like this I wouldn't know what to get for Mediterranean." Bucky shoved menu back towards Steve. "How about you pick for me, yeah? I don't know what any of this means."

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"You like seafood?" Steve asked. "Have any allergies I should know about? Any weird phobias from childhood trauma?" He joked as he looked over the menu in thought about what he should get for Bucky.

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"Yes, no, and probably," Bucky said in return and earned an eye roll from Steve. He liked how comfortable and friendly the two of them had already gotten in just a few days of knowing each other. It felt like they were just waiting for the other to smack into their life and find a place there.

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"Fair enough." Steve ordered his regular dinner and got breaded salmon on a bed of rice with shrimp cocktail as an appetizer. When they got their boxes of takeout, Steve paid and took the bags to carry. "I don't live too far from here," he said. "We can throw some show on and talk once we get there."

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"Okay, that sounds nice to me." Bucky walked on after Steve and took a minute to appreciate the curves and muscles of Steve's back and arms before coming up beside him and asking, "So what'd you order me?"

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"Sorry, but it's a surprise," Steve chuckled. When they got to his apartment, he let Bucky in first
before he switched on the lights and closed the door behind the both of them. It was simple, neat, and warm even though it didn't seem like Steve spent too much time in it. There was a bookshelf full of art books and other novels and an old TV that looked like it was from the sixties.

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Off next to the television there was a record player sitting on a side table next to a box of records. Just one box, Bucky noticed. He immediately gravitated towards it once he saw it and, once he got permission from Steve, he rifled through it to see what sort of music Steve considered important enough to own. A few of them Bucky recognized like some David Bowie and The Who, but the rest were old albums of big band jazz from the thirties and forties. Bucky slipped one out of the box and held it up. "You're into some old shit." Bucky held up a hand apologetically, "I'm sorry. You're into some *classic* shit." He emphasized ‘classic’ to take the edge off of calling Steve's interests old.

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Steve smiled, loving how much Bucky was a nerd about music. "Well, pardon me for stealing my dad's taste," he chuckled. "I love Irving Berlin. Especially since an immigrant was able to be one of the biggest staples in American patriotic music." He sat on the couch and started to unbox their food.

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"So you *are* into music..." Bucky said and put on one of the albums to play while they ate. "That's reassuring. I don't think this would have gone very far if you weren't." Bucky was handed his box of food by Steve and he popped the lid off of it and glared down at the contents that he couldn't decipher. "What is it?"

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Steve blushed a little at the thought of Bucky scoping his interests out as a potential boyfriend. "Um," he said dumbly. "It's baked salmon with a bread crust and rice. I got you some shrimp cocktail too. But if you don't like it, you can have my dinner instead."

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"I... have never had salmon before." Bucky tentatively stabbed at it with his fork and tore a piece off. It was a light pink on the inside and Bucky brought it up to his mouth to try it. He chewed it off the fork as Steve watched and he let the flavor sink in. "Oh my god," Bucky said and his eyelids fluttered shut. "Goddamn, that's good food. I've had fish loads of times but nothing like that."

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"You're joking," Steve said in disbelief. He'd been poor growing up, but his mom did her best to splurge once in a while. Thankfully, Bucky approved of the choice. "I love that place. They're great people, too." He started to eat his own dinner and every now and again, he would steal a little glance over at Bucky. "And they're pretty affordable, too. If you ever had spare change."

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Bucky shoved another bite of salmon into his mouth and spoke through it saying, "Yeah, I might have to take the girls there sometime if they will let me. This is amazing." Bucky met Steve's eyes and swallowed. "What're you eating? If it's good I might try it next time."
Steve offered Bucky his plate so he could give it a try. "Seafood pasta. It's a bunch of different fish and crab with a light sauce," he said. Steve licked his lips once and dabbed his mouth clean with a napkin. "So, um... have you been with men before?" He asked awkwardly.

Bucky's fork was midway to his mouth when Steve dropped the question that Bucky assumed he had been holding in this whole time. He laughed out loud and ate the bite of Steve's seafood pasta, which was very good too. Bucky made a mental note to get his own dish of that next time. "Almost exclusively," Bucky declared after swallowing. The second he said it, though, Bucky regretted his brash tone when he couldn't tell what the look on Steve's face meant.

Steve knew that Bucky didn't mean to be a little crude with his answer but it didn't stop an embarrassed blush from creeping onto his face. He ducked his head and focused on his dinner while he forced himself to cool down. For a cop, he got nervous easily over some things. "That's nice," he said lamely for the sake of saying something.

Bucky set his plate down on the coffee table and scooted a little closer to Steve. "Oh, man. Look, Steve. I didn't mean to sound like... well, whatever I sounded like." Bucky felt like an idiot - an insensitive, embarrassed idiot. "I just guess I was being a bit too honest is all. I'm sorry. I get that this whole thing makes you uncomfortable." Bucky tried to tell himself to stop while he was ahead but his mouth just kept running. "And you either haven't been with a dude or you think it's sort of taboo or are scared or embarrassed or whatever..." Fuck, Bucky cursed his endlessly running monolog that seemed to spew from his mouth without warning.

Steve felt a bit silly for being so sensitive about the whole thing. He envied Bucky being able to talk so freely about his history with men. "I'm not uncomfortable. I'm scared," Steve said. "I think you're gorgeous and wonderful and I'm scared I can't keep the way I want to look at you in control or else someone will find out and I could lose everything." He looked up to Bucky with a concerned frown. "How do you do it?"

Bucky searched Steve's face for a few seconds and his lips were held open while he tried to find the right words. "Oh, Steve," Bucky began. "I used to be really scared too. When my parents were alive I was worried about what they would think of me. And when I was still in school I was worried that none of my friends would want to hang around me anymore. And I was scared someone would try to hurt me or whoever I was with at the time." Bucky slipped his leg up under himself so he was sitting with one leg dangling over the couch. "I guess I'm not so scared now because I don't have anything left to lose. My parents are both gone and they never knew. I'm not in school anymore and don't keep up with my old friends. The girls don't care who I like and just want me to be safe and happy. And my coworkers are all too stoned all the time to realize what's going on or even give a fuck." Bucky winced. "Damn, I probably shouldn't have said that to a cop."
Now knowing why Bucky wasn't scared, Steve figured he shouldn't envy his openness so much. "I know my ma won't care. But being a queer cop won't fly with the precinct or the community," he said miserably. He gave a small wave of his hand to show he didn't give a shit about stoner kids at a record shop. "I guess what makes me the angriest is that it has to be hidden at all. As if there's something wrong with us."

"Maybe telling your mother is a good place to start then," Bucky suggested quietly. "Not trying to tell you what to do but it might make you feel a bit better." Bucky reached out his hand for Steve to take and waited for him to slip his fingers in with his. "I can't relate to what it must be like being a queer cop in this world but I do understand the anger and the confusion about why people treat us like some disease."

Steve looked down in surprise at the hand that was now in his. He laced their fingers together and gave Bucky's hand a firm squeeze, looking emotional in a good way to be able to do this. He smiled and brought Bucky's hand to his lips so he could kiss the back of it. "I'm glad I can talk about this with you."

Bucky loved the little kiss Steve gave to his hand. It was really sweet. "I'm really glad I met you, Officer Steve Rogers," he said with reverence. "But I guess it's my turn to ask you if you've ever been with a man before? And it's okay if you haven't. I just sort of would like to know what I'm working with here for any future dates you might let me share with you."

"I guess we're lucky your little sister decided to be a troublemaker," Steve said. "And, uh... I've kissed a few guys, but it never amounted to anything. One of us was too scared to do anything more or sometimes the other guy did it just to experiment. That sort of thing."

"So you've never gotten further than this?" Bucky gripped Steve's hand and leaned forward to place a delicate kiss to Steve's lips and adjust himself to be even closer to Steve's side. "You know what happens after kissing or will I have to hope that I'll eventually get to teach you about that too?"

Steve's breath caught when Bucky kissed him. It was soft and sweet, but it had Steve's heart pounding in his chest. He smiled dumbly and let an arm wrap around Bucky's waist. "Well, the kisses I had involved a little more tongue," he admitted. "So you are not the person I've gone the farthest with. Yet." His fingers brushed over Bucky's side once gently to tickle him.
Bucky squirmed with the tickle and let out a giggle that he would deny later if anyone asked about it. Once Bucky righted himself again, he leaned into Steve's strong arm around him and looked into his eyes and cataloged every line of color he could see. "Can I kiss you again, Steve?"

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Steve loved the honest intimacy Bucky gave him - his gentle tone, a small laugh, looking into his eyes - all little things that made him trust the guy so easily. He leaned forward and pressed their lips together again, this time deepening it almost immediately. He cupped the side of Bucky's face and held him steady.

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Bucky was surprised that Steve had moved on him this time but he smiled against the kiss and let his mouth fall open to give Steve as much access to him as he wanted and was comfortable with. This was all about Steve right now. Bucky hummed into Steve's mouth when he felt Steve reach up to pull Bucky's hair from its tie so he could card his fingers through it. Bucky didn't want to go much further tonight for fear of not being able to control himself and scaring Steve off so he put his hand on top of Steve's other wandering hand that had made its way to the small of Bucky's back right above his ass.

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Steve was a bit over excited. The last time he was able to make out with a guy, it was hiding in a broom closet at the art school he dropped out of. Here, he didn't have to rush. He licked his way into Bucky's mouth and tried touching him everywhere all at once. When he felt Bucky's hand stop the one that was trailing a bit too low, he pulled back with a bashful smile. "Sorry," he apologized. "Got a little ahead of myself."

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"Hey, it's okay. It's all okay. Great even," Bucky reassured him. "I just know that if you get me going anymore then I won't want to stop and I don't want to pressure you into anything you aren't ready for." Bucky combed through his hair with his fingers. "You took my hair tie out." He chuckled and slipped the tie around his wrist for safekeeping.

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"Yeah, I may just have to arrest you for harassment if you do," he joked. Steve placed a sweet kiss against Bucky's forehead. "Your hair's easier to play with when it's loose." He gave a strand of hair a very gentle tug. "Now how do you expect me to work all day tomorrow without you running in my head?"

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"I don't expect that at all," Bucky said. "No, I'm actually counting on the opposite. Don't want you to forget about me, do I? Especially if you were planning on those other dates?" Bucky looked hopefully into Steve's eyes and saw no hesitation in them. Today was a good day. He had a pretty reasonable day at work, his sisters didn't give him too much trouble, and he got a night out that he hadn't had in a long while. On top of it all, he got to kiss a very, very good-looking Brooklyn cop who seemed to really like kissing him back.
"Yeah... yeah, I suppose you got a point," Steve chuckled. Nobody had to know that Steve was daydreaming over a man. They would just know that he was totally smitten for someone. He seemed to have forgotten about dinner and was interested in snuggling with Bucky. He pulled the man against his side and kissed his temple again. "So what kind of date would you like next?"

Bucky nuzzled up against Steve and felt entirely safe and adjusted by his side. He hadn't had this kind of intimacy for a long time. Most of the interactions he had on dates ended up just being a one night stand because Bucky was losing his mind without being touched for so long. But none of those guys seemed to want to stick around with a deadbeat record store employee with two little kids in his care. Steve was different. Bucky could feel it. "Well, guess we could go to a movie if you like? Sit in the back and hold hands where no one can see. Then we could come back here and have a couple beers and be alone and free. What do you think of that?"

Steve blushed pleasantly when Bucky snuggled with him. He played with his long hair and kept the guy tucked against his side, loving the way he just fit like he belonged there. "That sounds like a perfect date," he said. "And I'm sure my ma won't mind babysitting either." Steve paused for a moment before adding, "You know, if you ever need help with your sisters, even if it's just picking them up from school, I'll do whatever I can to help."

"Thanks, Steve." Bucky leaned his head against Steve's shoulder and listened to the big band music. "I think they both really like you. And Lilly wouldn't mind going in the cruiser again." Bucky sat up and curled his hand into a fist against Steve's chest. "You could kiss me again if you wanted."

Steve smiled over at Bucky and leaned to capture Bucky's lips in a gentle kiss. He had to keep it pretty chaste or else he would get a little excited and push his luck again. "Let's just hope she doesn't purposely cause trouble for an excuse to get a ride in the car again."

"I can never really tell with her, to be perfectly honest," Bucky said and rubbed a small circle into Steve's chest. "Some days she is fine and reasonable and other days she's acting out and throwing punches and yelling." He saw a twinge of concern pass over Steve's face and he sighed and said, "Uh, sorry. I shouldn't complain to you about that. Maybe we should get going back to my place so I can make sure the girls haven't driven your mother up a wall."

"Hey, it's okay," Steve said. "She's going through a lot and she's a kid. She can't bounce back from stuff like you can as an adult." He kissed Bucky's temple. "And I'm planning on dating all of Bucky, not just the happy part. So if you're having a bad day, you're allowed to tell me. It isn't like you have to pretend everything is fine and dandy." Steve started to pack up their dinner. "We can still head
back if you want."

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"I think that's a good idea," Bucky said and helped Steve clean up. "I know it's dumb, but I don't like leaving them for too long. It makes me antsy." Bucky readjusted his shirt and jacket and ran his hand through his hair and pulled it back up into a ponytail.

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"That's fine," Steve said. He stole one more kiss before standing up and heading towards the door. "I got to steal you for a couple hours, so that's good enough to satisfy me until... Friday, eight o'clock?"

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"The new Indiana Jones movie is playing still. Temple of Doom, I think it's called," Bucky said and started putting his shoes and coat on. "Did you see the first one?" He asked Steve and tried not to fall over getting his shoes on.

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Steve playfully gave Bucky a tiny push when he bent down to tie his shoe. "I haven't seen it, no. But I can see the second one without the first one right?" Steve held the door open for Bucky and waited for him to head out before following.

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Bucky stepped out the door and waited for Steve to lock up. "I guess it's not a problem. If there is anything you don't know I'll fill you in." Bucky straightened up and stepped a few feet away from Steve so if anyone was watching it wouldn't seem like anything was up with them. "Just a few minutes from my place I think, yeah?"

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Steve felt his heart sink a little when Bucky had to walk a little ways off from him. When they got back to Bucky's place, it smelled like cookies and chocolate cake and the apartment was a few degrees warmer than when they left it. Steve's mom was pulling out a tray of cookies to be cooled.

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"Bucky!" Lilly jumped on him when he came into the apartment. Bucky caught her and gave her a big hug.

"Someone's got some sugar in them, huh?" Bucky asked and nuzzled Lilly's forehead with his. "Did you have a good time? Were you good to Mrs. Rogers?" Lilly jumped off Bucky and let him go over to give Becca a hug.

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Sarah set the tray down and walked over to the two men. "They were exactly as they should be," she said sweetly. "Did you boys have a good night out?"
Steve nodded. "Yeah, this guy eats like a wolf," he said, nudging Bucky gently.

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"Well, you bought me food I'd never had before and I really liked it." Bucky ran his hand down Steve's arm and smiled at him. Then he pulled away a bit too hastily when he saw Sarah watching them. Bucky turned to the girls and said, "You two have got to try Mediterranean food. It was delicious and I'm sick of pizza."

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Lilly made a face at Bucky when he suggested Mediterranean. "But I like pizza," she said stubbornly. "I'll have Mediterranean if it is on a pizza."

Steve snorted and messed up her hair gently. "Trust me that you'll like it. And you can trust me cause I'm a cop."

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"Just cause you're a cop doesn't mean you're right all the time," Lilly said sternly. "You might be a good one but the police is filled with racists and dangerous people who work for the man."

"Fuck." Bucky squatted down to be closer to Lilly's level. "You been listening to me too much, Girl." He looked up to Steve and Sarah whose eyes were wide in surprise. "I just meant you need to only trust people who prove they can be trusted. Steve's a good cop. You can trust him, Lilly. And you trust me, right?"

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If it was an older person saying it Steve would've been a little offended but he let out a bark of laughter, especially with how Bucky scrambled to placate her. Steve put an arm around his mom's shoulders. "Yeah, my ma raised me right," he said.

Sarah smiled and added, "He got a good spank on the behind if he ever was rude. I'll spank any cop's behind if they act up."

Steve put his face in his hand. "Mom," he sighed.

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"I'm so sorry." Bucky turned to Steve and Sarah, "She just repeats half the shit I say all the time. And sometimes she's got to hang around the record store after school until my shift is over and those guys will tell you all kinds of stuff."

Bucky felt incredibly embarrassed. It's not like what Lilly said was anything he didn't believe but she just had no filter when she spoke and just thought everything was fair game to mention around anyone. And Lilly's mouth had definitely gotten Bucky into trouble countless times before.

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"Yeah, well," Steve said, shrugging a little. "I guess she'll get to hear it sometime when I speak my mind about someone throwing a blanket statement on the police." He gave Bucky a chiding look to
show that he wasn't upset over it but he wasn't the sort to let those kind of rants go unanswered. "I'll see you later?" He asked.

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"Yeah definitely," Bucky said. "Let me walk you two down to your car." Down by the car, Steve opened the door for Sarah and shut it before turning to Bucky to say goodbye. Bucky was mad that he couldn't kiss him goodbye but he would just have to wait until the next time. "Listen, Steve, I really am sorry about what Lilly said. She doesn't really believe you're a bad cop or anything. She likes you a lot - I can tell. She's just a little sassy sometimes like our mother was. I had a great time tonight. Honest."

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Steve was sad that they couldn't kiss but he didn't make a big deal out of it. He let out a sigh and said, "I'm not mad at her. But I know where she heard it from and... I'm not saying that cops aren't bad a lot of the time, but I'm not a huge fan of people talking about them completely poorly or in generalizations."

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Bucky nodded and tried giving an apologetic smile. "I understand. I'm sorry. My dad did always tell me I need to watch what I say. Guess I need to work on my assumptions too, yeah?" He bit his lip and blinked a few times and asked, "You still want that next date?"

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Steve reached out so he could squeeze Bucky's shoulder. "I'd rather you speak your mind than not," he said. "I'll see you on our next date. I'll let mom know to keep the night open so she can look after your sisters." He smiled at him and playfully tugged the hair tie out of Bucky's hair before getting into the car.

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Bucky caught the hair tie before it fell and lightly cursed Steve under his breath. He worked on putting his hair back up as he turned to go back to his apartment. He was pretty worried that he had fallen hard and fast for Steve and didn't know how he was going to be able to wait for Friday to come. But right now it was back to being the adult of the house and getting his sisters ready for school the next day.
Steve called Bucky's apartment twice during the week after he got home from work, unable to wait until Friday to speak with him. When Friday rolled around, he dressed in slacks and wore a button-down with a tie. He did his hair as neatly as he could and his mom gave him a knowing look. He didn't have to tell her for her to know. The two arrived at Bucky's apartment again and Steve knocked on his door.

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Bucky opened it this time and gave Steve a once over and smiled before inviting them in. "You both look very nice tonight," Bucky said diplomatically.

Sarah went in first and Steve followed. Bucky closed the door behind them and walked past Steve, brushing his fingertips over Steve's hip as he went. He wanted to squeeze his ass while no one was looking but he refrained.

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"Miss Sarah!" Lilly said excitedly. She rushed over and hugged Steve's mom.

"Hello, Lilly. It's nice to see you again." Sarah said and gave Becca a wave, who looked excited to see her again but not as energetic as Lilly.

Steve kissed Bucky's cheek when he knew no one was looking. "Hey, you look nice."

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"Thank you," Bucky whispered back at him. "I'm ready when you are." Lilly and Becca promised to be good at Bucky's request and Lilly immediately pulled Sarah towards the couch to talk. Bucky was slightly worried about what they might discuss since their only connection happened to be Steve and Bucky.

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Steve gave his mom a hug and then walked out with Bucky. It was so tempting to put his arm around him and kiss him silly but they were out in public now. "I was looking forward to this all week," he said. "How was your day?"

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"It was okay," Bucky said and trudged down the stairs of the apartment complex. "One of my co-workers had his girlfriend in the shop for hours today and it was incredibly annoying. He didn't get anything done and I was stuck doing double the work."

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"That's rough," Steve said. "You shouldn't have to do someone else's work. Hopefully it's not a regular thing?"
Bucky made it to the door with Steve close behind and turned on him and had his face close to his for a split second to ask, "How was your day?" Then he slipped open the door and gestured for Steve to go through.

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Steve scratched the back of his neck and shrugged. "It was good. Had to make a few drug busts. But I prefer those over domestic cases. Those can get messy."

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"Domestic cases?" Bucky asked. "What's that mean exactly? Like abuse cases?" Bucky remembered when the police talked to him after his parents died. At the time, he was so confused and angry that he took out his rage on any cop who tried consoling him. He regretted it later, knowing that they were just trying to do their jobs. It was a rough time for Bucky.

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"Yeah, things like abuse or divorce issues or sometimes it's children getting hurt. It's rough to see and people are more defensive about family issues than drugs." Sometimes working as a cop was draining. "I don't like answering domestic cases but it also means I help people that really need it."

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"I think it's great you like helping people so much. I've never been very... giving? I guess." Bucky's life was always pretty much about him until he became in charge of his sisters. Music was his life, school was the most important thing for him, he chose to go out with his friends instead of spend much time with his family, he never gave a thought as to what his actions rot on others. Steve was so different than Bucky. But Bucky was admittedly much different now than he used to be. Maybe Steve would be good for him.

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"Are you kidding? You dropped out of school so you could keep your sisters together. And you work your ass off to take care of them," Steve said. He gave Bucky a gentle look. "And so you know, I plan on treating you whenever we go out."

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Bucky pursed his lips together and gave Steve a sideways look and stopped walking. "I'm not..." Bucky sighed and shook his head. "I don't need you paying for me." Bucky waved his hand around. "Don't want you thinking I'm just hanging around for some perks of getting to go out or whatever. I actually like you, you know."

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"I want to pay for you," Steve said. "I've got a lot more money to spare, so why would I let you use what you could use for food or school supplies..." Steve trailed off and smiled at him, happy that Bucky validated that he genuinely liked him. "When you're in a better position, you can treat me."

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Bucky wasn't so sure about it. He knew he would probably never be 'in a better position' enough to treat Steve to anything. But he also didn't want to push the issue anymore and potentially cause a fight. It was only their second date after all. Bucky made a silent promise to himself that he would pay his movie ticket before Steve could. "You like me that much that you're going to just pay for every day out like it's nothing?" Bucky asked with an edge.

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"Yes," Steve said confidently. He heard the edge in Bucky's voice and eased up a little. "Listen, it's not like... it's not like I see you as a charity case or anything. I'm not expecting something in return. You are so amazing to me. I'm pretty comfortable now but growing up, my ma and I were poor as anything and I remember how much it helped her when others showed her a little bit of kindness."

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Bucky nodded and looked down at the ground. "Mhmm, I understand." He looked back up at Steve and softened at the sight of his gorgeous face and the genuine look he was giving him. "I'm sorry, I'm just a little... I don't know. But we should probably get to the theater. The movie will be starting soon."

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"If it really makes you uncomfortable, I'm not going to force you to let me pay for you. But it would mean a lot to me if you let me," Steve said. He gave Bucky a concerned look, hoping he wasn't overstepping here. However, once Bucky reminded him to get a move on, Steve started to hustle towards the theater.

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Bucky never answered him and spent a few minutes trying to decide what to do. Steve ended up paying for Bucky's ticket anyway. They sat in the very back of the theater as Bucky promised and they sat all the way on the edge of the wall so they were in the absolute corner. No one would notice them at all back here. Before the movie started, Bucky, who had been fairly quiet, decided on what to say. "Fine." Steve looked over at him with a quizzical look. "You can pay for me and treat me or do whatever you like. But you have to find something I can do to make it up to you. You think on it and let me know."

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The silence had worried Steve. After he bought their tickets, he kept glancing at Bucky to see if he would say anything but at long last he spoke. He let out a breath of relief and reached over to give Bucky's knee a squeeze. "Deal," he agreed. Steve actually already had something in mind. "Do you know how to dance? Like to the big band music I have records of?"

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Bucky's eyes widened and he leaned a bit away from Steve. "Mmm, I take it back. I'll pay for my own stuff. You dance by yourself." He shook his head slightly and furrowed his brow. Bucky had tried formal dancing sometimes but he never quite got the hang of it. Club dancing, though, he could do that. You just swung your hips a lot and made sure you rubbed your ass against the thigh of someone cute.
Steve gave a small pout. "Hey, we can still come up with something else," he said. So being taught how to dance was out. Steve didn't want to pick out something that took up too much energy or time. "What about... hmm... how about you pick places around here you think are special and take me to them. You know, like pretty benches that are nice to sit on or a corner of the park that's particularly relaxing. That way no matter where I'm at work, if things go poorly I have a place I can go to cool down."

Bucky felt bad. He shouldn't have joked with Steve about that. Clearly the guy wanted to dance with someone and clearly that someone was now Bucky. The lights went down in the theater and Bucky took the opportunity of the darkness to slot his hand with Steve's. He brought his head close to Steve's and whispered low in his ear. "I'm sorry, Steve, how about we do both, huh? I'll show you a nice bench near the station and I'll let you teach me how to... dance." Bucky coughed in his throat in indignation. "But, I will complain just a little bit at first. I'll do it, for you. But I'll complain for me."

Steve felt his heart pick up when Bucky held his hand, partially because he loved touching Bucky and partially because he was worried about getting caught. "Sounds fair enough to me," he said. He didn't talk throughout the movie to be polite but Steve had a habit of turning to look at Bucky during every interesting moment to see how he reacted.

To Bucky's credit, he didn't actually forget that Steve was there. He simply became so invested in the movie that Steve sort of took a place on the back burner. He did catch Steve looking at him occasionally and the screen would light up Steve's smile so Bucky could see it from the corner of his eye. He liked being watched by Steve. It made him feel like he was the most special man Steve had ever laid eyes on and Bucky decided to pretend that he was. During intense moments Bucky would squeeze Steve's hand tightly and he hoped he didn't mind. He would apologize after the movie if Steve brought it up.

Steve really was smitten over Bucky. It was so easy to talk with him and even when they said something that upset the other, they were quick and eager to try and make them feel all right again. Steve wished the movie was longer. He liked holding Bucky's hand in public and he wanted to watch more films and Bucky reacting to them. But once the credits rolled and the lights came up, he let go of his hand. "What did you think?" Steve asked. Bucky always had thoughtful answers and Steve adored that.

"Well," Bucky leaned back in his seat and pulled his hand into his lap, already missing Steve's touch. "The first one was better. I'm sad you didn't get to see it first but that's okay. The lady in this wasn't as cool as Marian from the first one but I honestly don't know how someone could top Marian. I liked the kid in this one, though. He was fun - added a new family element that the first one was lacking. And that Harrison Ford is still sexy as ever."
Steve listened attentively. He loved how Bucky had a breakdown of everything. All Steve saw was a fun movie but Bucky could break down all the elements and explain why it was fun. He was taken by surprise a little when Bucky called Harrison Ford sexy and it showed on his face. But then he let out a laugh and shook his head. "You're really something."

"What'd I do?" Bucky asked with an intrigued smile. By this point, most everyone had left the theater but the two of them. Bucky stood up to leave so the workers could come in and clean. He didn't envy them having to clean up everyone’s crap and snacks after a movie. He did plenty of cleaning up at the record store and people left a lot of shit around.

"I spent the whole movie admiring you and you spent the whole movie admiring Harrison Ford," Steve teased. He didn't sound jealous. It was funny to him. "That, and I think you would be able to write a five-page essay about the movie if asked and all I've got it 'Well, I thought it was entertaining.'"

Bucky gave Steve a glare and said flatly, "I wasn't admiring him only. The sets and effects looked so real I was convinced this was a documentary. And the directing and the music score were perfect." Steve brushed up against Bucky's side for just a second and Bucky wanted nothing more than to jump his bones and kiss his face off right there in the theater’s atrium.

"I think I saw a bit of drool come outta your mouth, you were admiring him so much," Steve teased. "So were the effects better than the first movie?" He asked, blushing when their hands touched as they walked. He nudged Bucky gently and then held the door open so he could exit the building.

"I'm not sure. I'd have to see both movies again and compare," Bucky said with his hands up in front of him in small gestures. "I hope they make a third, though." He walked as close to Steve as he could without touching him. "So where are we going now? Your place?"

"If I had a VCR I would offer to buy the tapes when they both came out," Steve said. He looked around the street to make sure no one was in earshot before saying. "Yeah, my place. I can't wait to wrap my arms around you and kiss you silly."

"I'm perfectly okay with that, Sir," Bucky said with an edge of sass to his voice. "I was thinking about getting the girls a VCR player for Christmas but I'm not sure yet if I can. But I think it'd be a nice gift for them."
Steve smirked at the sass and had to hold back flirting in return because they were in public. "I think they would love that," he said. "Do Becca and Lilly like movies as much as you do?" He asked. "I can almost imagine all three of you going on and on about them to each other."

Bucky gave Steve a sideways glance. "Okay. Next time we are bringing the girls. You won't be prepared. The Barnes' love movies and music and stuff and talking about it constantly. We also love Star Wars far too much."

Steve shook his head. "Don't shoot me, but I've never seen Star Wars." He had a feeling Bucky would have something to say about that one. Most Star Wars fans did.

Bucky stopped in his tracks. "Excuse me?" How could he have not seen Star Wars? Those movies defined the decade, the century, all of film, probably. Bucky realized he had a major crush on someone who probably didn't know who Luke's father was. "We are fixing that as soon as we can, Steve," Bucky said sternly back at him.

"I figured you would say something like that," Steve said with a little smile. "Any excuse to spend more time with you, I'll take it." He unlocked the door to his apartment and pulled Bucky inside. He locked it just in case someone tried to come in and speak with him while he had his hands all over Bucky. "Do I still get a kiss even though I never saw Star Wars?"

"I haven't decided yet," Bucky said but let Steve pull him close to him by his hips. "What if I said you had to see every film before I kissed you ever again?"

Steve pressed his forehead against Bucky's and looked into his eyes. "I would wait," Steve said. "But I would be a pain in the ass about it and find a way to make you wish you didn't make me wait so long."

"How very accommodating," Bucky said and started to move them over towards Steve's couch. "But I won't make you do that. But if I'm going to dance for you, you have to watch Star Wars for me." He pushed Steve onto the couch and hovered over him.

As soon as Steve was pushed onto the couch, he pulled Bucky into his lap and hugged him close. "I
can handle that," he said. Steve's fingers ghosted over Bucky's side as he looked into his eyes. "So does this mean I get to kiss you now?"

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Bucky shrugged, "I suppose you can if you must." Repositioning himself so he was straddling Steve, Bucky put his hands on either side of Steve's face as Steve slowly slipped his hands under Bucky's ass.

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Steve leaned up to kiss Bucky slowly, starting off sweet and gentle but was soon licking his way into Bucky's mouth. He gave his ass a small squeeze before sliding his hands over Bucky's back to give him affectionate, soothing touches.

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"How much time do we have?" Bucky asked quickly and caught Steve's mouth in another deep kiss. He wanted to know how long he was going to be able to stay with Steve like this - safe and intimate. But he also needed to know how far they were going to go tonight. He didn't want to push Steve but he didn't want to stop him either.

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"As much as you want." Steve knew Bucky would get antsy about leaving his sisters at home with someone else sooner than Steve would want to part. He nibbled gently at Bucky's lower lip and rubbed the back of his neck. "You're so handsome."

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"Shut up." Bucky giggled and moved his hands down Steve's chest. "I really like you, Steve. But, I need to know where you see this going tonight? And what, I guess, your intentions with me are." Bucky leaned back so Steve couldn't just kiss him to keep him quiet. "It's just that I have the girls and if you just want to fool around behind closed doors or whatever then I need to know. They can't get attached to you if this isn't going to be... more."

---

Steve could tell Bucky was being serious here, so he reached for his hands and held them both in his own. He kissed his knuckles and looked him in the eye. "I'm all in with you," he said. "I know you just met me and you don't have much reason to trust me. But I hope I can show you that I'm worthy of staying around with you and your sisters."

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Bucky thought for a second and squeezed Steve's hands. "Okay. So you're stuck with me, then?" He relaxed a little into Steve and nodded. "Not going to up and leave us?" Bucky had only really known people to leave.

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"I'm not stuck with you. I'm just with you," Steve said. He pressed a little kiss to Bucky's cheek.
"You're such an amazing person and I feel happy when I'm with you. I get to be myself - my true self. And I'd be a big jerk if I didn't give your sisters the same care I give you."

---

Bucky flopped next to Steve on the couch and laced their fingers together. "Sorry for all the questions tonight. I've been a bit needy. We can make out again now."

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Steve looked at Bucky and leaned over to give him a chaste kiss. "We can still talk, Buck. I want you to be comfortable talking with me. I don't want our relationship to be full of uncertainty but copious making out."

---

"I'm okay with copious making out, too, though, just so you know." Bucky leaned into Steve's side and let him play with his hair. "Where did you see tonight going? If I can ask that? I don't want to kill your vibe if you had something planned."

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"Um," Steve said, getting a little flustered. "I don't know," he admitted honestly. "I don't want to go too fast, you know? But I mean... we're not kids, so we don't have to act like making out is the new third base..."

---

"Well, which base did you want to get to tonight?" Bucky asked and put air quotes around 'base' lightly making fun of Steve. "Because I don't want to go all the way until you are absolutely ready but I can help you with... other things." Bucky nodded his head towards Steve's crotch.

---

Steve caught Bucky's look down and blushed brightly. Bucky was dealing with a very repressed Catholic cop and it wasn't often he had people be so forward with him. He bit his bottom lip and nodded his head. "I think I can do that. So, uh... second base-ish?"

---

Bucky smiled slowly and let his eyes flutter a bit in excitement. He moved to get on his knees in front of Steve. "Has anyone ever...? For you." Bucky rubbed Steve's hips and felt him push up into the touch.

---

Steve tried to not get too worked up when Bucky kneeled in front of him. He was a bit embarrassed to admit it, but he was truthful with Bucky. "No," he answered. "Didn't feel right stringing along a girl I wasn't attracted to." And Bucky already knew that Steve never got a chance at a proper relationship with a man.
"Well," Bucky said. "Lot of pressure on me to make this good for you, then." He laughed nervously and moved his hands over the button and zipper on Steve's pants. "May I?" He wanted to double check with everything he did before he did it just in case it wasn't okay with Steve or he needed to stop.

---

Steve was already half hard from just talking about it. He wasn't sure if he should be ashamed or not for being so eager. He reached out to cup the side of Bucky's face. "Only if I get to do something for you, too."

---

"We can discuss that later," Bucky said urgently. "Right now I really want to suck you off. You do things to me, Steve." Bucky undid Steve's pants and gently released his dick. "Just need to hear you say you want it too. Need to know this is okay with you."

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"I want it," Steve said, voice thick with arousal. He loved that Bucky wanted him and he was desperate to experience this with him. "I know you'll make me feel real good." He tangled his fingers in Bucky's hair.

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"Okay," Bucky quirked a smile before taking Steve down all at once. He wasn't necessarily the best at blowing guys but he had had lots of practice. Steve wouldn't know the difference anyway. That was Bucky's saving grace. So long as Steve enjoyed it, then Bucky did a good job.

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"Bucky!" Steve gasped. He wasn't expecting the man to take him all at once. His mouth was hot around his dick, which felt amazing but, Christ, it was so much all at once. His head tilted back and rested on the back of the couch. "Be gentle with me," he panted out, rubbing his neck as he tried to catch his breath.

---

Bucky eased up and stuck to just licking at the head of Steve's dick. He wasn't sure how long Steve was going to last but Bucky didn't want to give up the head and risk not being able to swallow Steve's load when he did come. This was the first blowjob Steve ever had and, by god, Bucky was going to swallow.

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Steve gasped at the licks to his cock. "Christ," he swore softly. "You drive me crazy," Steve breathed out. His hips tilted upward by their own say. His hands scratched softly at Bucky's scalp to encourage him to continue.

---
Bucky hummed in agreement around Steve's cock and ventured to take it deeper again. He didn't go as far or fast this time, not wanting to over stimulate Steve but he wasn't going to let up much more than this. He could feel his own hard cock pushing against his jeans and screaming at him to be touched. But this was about Steve right now so he ignored the urge to pull out his own dick and stroke.

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Steve didn't last long. His back arched and despite his best efforts, his hips still jerked forward once or twice while Bucky blew him. He was at least able to give him a few moments' warning before he came.

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Steve tried his best to let Bucky know right before he came and lucky for Bucky he was ready for it and only choked a bit by the surprise. As he promised himself, he sucked down everything Steve gave him and pulled off of him with a pop.

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Steve sat back on the couch, sated and panting. His lips remained parted as he tried to catch his breath and he couldn't help but look over at Bucky with an adoring smile. "Come up here and let me kiss you."

---

"Yes, Sir," Bucky said and scrambled to get up to the couch by Steve. He curled his body next to Steve's and let himself indulge in the slow sloppy making out that Steve initiated. He was obviously pretty tired and Bucky was satisfied with his work. But Bucky's own dick was still angry and leaky and he hoped Steve wouldn't notice the dark wet spot on his jeans.

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Steve wasn't so exhausted that he wasn't going to treat Bucky back. He slowly eased Bucky back so he was lying down on the couch and Steve hovered over him, still kissing him lazily. He trailed his fingers down his chest and belly until he touched Bucky's cock through his pants. He rubbed his palm in slow, smooth circles between his legs. "Can I keep going?"

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"Of course. Yes, please," Bucky said and his eyes lulled back into his head with the first touch on his hard cock. "Steve," His breath hitched for a second. "Don't do anything you aren't ready for."

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"I know. I won't," Steve promised. He undid the front of Bucky's pants and shoved them down so he could wrap his fingers around Bucky's cock. He pressed hot, open-mouthed kisses over his neck while he started to slowly stroke him.

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"Okay. That's good. Yeah, Steve." That's all Bucky could manage because Steve was going at it as
best as he could. It was a little dry but Bucky didn't mind because Steve was also starting to suck hickey's into his neck and that definitely felt good.

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Steve couldn't help but mark Bucky up a little because he was just the slightest bit possessive. He thumbed at the head of his cock as he nibbled at Bucky's neck. "You look so good like this," he murmured.

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"You don't look too bad yourself." Bucky smirked. "Like watching you touching me." He added as an afterthought. He really was smitten with Steve. He hoped it wouldn't end up biting him in the ass.

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Steve palmed at Bucky's balls, rubbing them firmly before going back to stroking his dick. He kissed lower and started to tease one of Bucky's nipples through his shirt. He lifted the shirt to graze his teeth over his nipple before soothing it with his tongue.

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Bucky squirmed a little under Steve's tongue. He was severely ticklish and Steve had now found two places on his body that were sensitive to it - his side and the base of his chest. Bucky giggled and covered his mouth quickly.

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"Bucky," Steve laughed, kissing the middle of his chest. "I'm trying to be sexy here," he chided softly, not genuinely upset because Bucky couldn't help how ticklish he was.

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"I know. I'm sorry. Go ahead. Go ahead." Bucky gestured down at his body and let out a small laugh. "Promise I'll try not to giggle anymore." But he really couldn't promise anything with how light Steve's fingers were brushing up against him.

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Steve kissed over Bucky's chest, but this time made sure each kiss was firm and would be less likely to tickle. He moved lower and lower until he pressed a kiss just above Bucky's hip. He gave Bucky a nervous look, hoping that he was doing alright.

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Bucky wasn't even looking at Steve anymore. His head was back and he was staring up at the ceiling just feeling every touch from Steve. He knew he wasn't going to go all the way with Steve tonight and he tried his best to put it out of his mind because he wanted Steve so badly right now. He just kept telling himself that when they did finally do it, it would be so much better after waiting for Steve to be ready. Especially since it would be Steve's very first time. Bucky's body shivered at the thought of being the first to get to be with Steve in that way.
Steve's hand worked smoothly up and down Bucky's dick. He was glad that Bucky was so relaxed right now, but he was just childish enough to want to make Bucky look at him. He lowered himself down the couch even more and let his tongue flicker once over the tip of his dick.

"Fuck!" Bucky's head shot forward so he could see what Steve just did. He was tempted to remind Steve not to do that if he wasn't ready, but then Steve licked his head again while keeping perfect eye contact under his hooded lashes.

Steve got a satisfied look on his face when he got Bucky looking at him again. He locked eyes with him as he took what he could into his mouth - just a few inches - and he bobbed his head along Bucky's cock while sucking him off.

Bucky kept his eyes on Steve and watched his dick disappear bit by bit into Steve's mouth and then come back out again. "Steve. Gorgeous. Fuck." Bucky managed and held his own hair back so it wouldn't get in his face. Steve caught his teeth on him a couple times but it didn't hurt enough for Bucky to say anything or want to interrupt him.

Steve hadn't ever done this before and he did his damnedest to make it feel as good for Bucky as it did for him. He stroked whatever he couldn't put in his mouth.

After a few minutes in, Bucky felt really bad. He knew he was going to last a lot longer than Steve had and he thought it was kind of shitty that the first blow job he had given would be longer than it might have been if he had sucked off a fellow teenager back in high school like Bucky had. Bucky didn't know if he should stop Steve and just finish himself off so Steve didn't have to or should he just let Steve carry on.

Steve gave it his all, awkwardly blowing him while trying to be good at it. He wanted it to be good for the both of them but he could see Bucky thinking. Steve had enjoyed himself way too much to even have a single thought other than 'wow', so he took the hint. He pulled back a little, looking a bit disappointed in himself. "I'm not doing that great of a job, am I?"

"Hey, no," Bucky said quickly, "It isn't you. I was just thinking that it's your first time giving head and - you were doing well - just I was sort of taking my time coming." Bucky blushed and reached down to keep jerking himself while he talked. "Didn't think it was fair that I was making you go on for that long." He sped up his movements up and down his cock and saw Steve look down at it a couple times. "But, I'll admit, Stevie, you learn real fucking quick."
Steve gently moved Bucky's hand away when he saw the guy stroking himself. "Well, it isn’t like something you can force happen." He pressed a kiss to the curve of Bucky's jaw and started to stroke his dick again. "I want to do it. No matter how long it takes because I want to make you feel good."

"Jesus fuck, you say more sweet shit like that and it won't last much longer." Bucky whimpered at Steve's touch and pulled his face up so he could stick his tongue in his mouth. They kissed slow and deep and messy while Steve jerked off Bucky and every second of sweet making out and Steve's amazing scent pushed Bucky a little closer to the edge until he was moaning into Steve's mouth and trying to tell him that he was about to come.

Steve kissed him languidly and easily, working his hand smoothly over Bucky's dick. "Let me see you come, Beautiful," he said softly. "You're going to feel so good. And you look so good, too."

Bucky's body shivered again and he let himself release his load all over Steve's fingers and onto his own stomach. The automatic smile that was brought to Steve's lips when he felt the come running down his hand made Bucky want to shove him against the wall and suck his come off every one of Steve's fingers.

Steve felt pretty damn satisfied with himself when he saw Bucky's body tense before he released his load. He smiled and kept his eye contact with Bucky as he licked some of the come off his fingers. It didn't taste good, but that wasn't the point. "So I guess I wasn't bad after all."

Bucky reached out for Steve's hand and began kissing and licking where there was still come. "Never said it was," he said against Steve's palm. "Like I said, you learn fast, Officer. You watch a lot of porn or something?" Bucky leaned back against the couch and waved Steve on to come lay on top of him and cuddle.

Steve made a small noise and snuggled in close and wrapped his arms around him, relishing in his warmth. "I'm a good Catholic guy. I don't have any porn," he said. "All I had to do was watch the best." He winked at Bucky.

"Steve," Bucky put one hand behind his head so he could admire the man on top of him. "I hate to break it to you but I don't think good Catholic boys do what you just did. Or let other boys do what I did to you for that matter." Bucky chuckled and hoped Steve knew it was a joke. They were still new to this after all. They were still getting to know each other and know the others personalities and
tolerances.

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"Please don't say that," Steve said softly. "Even as a joke." He laid his head on Bucky's shoulder. "I do everything else right and... and truly don't believe God would disapprove of anyone who cared about another. No matter what parts they have."

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Bucky backtracked immediately and rubbed a thumb across Steve's cheek. "Hey, what I always say is if the big guy didn't want men to have sex with men then he wouldn't have given just us prostates. And if he didn't want women fucking women then he wouldn't have made vaginas impossible to figure out unless you've got one of your own."

---

"They're not that hard to figure out," Steve said, turning his head to kiss the palm of Bucky's hand. "It's called the clitoris." Steve's mom, who had assumed he'd been straight growing up, sat him down and made sure he wouldn't be a selfish lover to any future girlfriends. "You've got a big mouth," he said in an amused tone to Bucky.

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"Is that a complaint or an observation?" Bucky asked with a twinkle in his eye. He added, "Also, please never say 'clitoris again' - automatic turn off. You look much sexier discussing dicks." But then again Bucky figured any girl who dug some girl on girl action wouldn't want their partner talking about foreskin while they were eating her out so it was kind of a two-way street.

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Steve pressed a kiss to Bucky's lips. "Clitoris." He purred in the most seductive tone he could manage. Another kiss. "Vagina." One more kiss. "Labia." He fell into a fit of giggles and snuggled close. He pressed his face against Bucky's neck. "What're you going to do about it?"

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"Think I might just leave if you keep it up, Rogers," Bucky threatened and wrapped his arms around Steve. His dick was still sitting pretty outside his pants but he didn't really feel like moving to tuck it back in at the moment.

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"No, you won't. You're too comfy right here. And you secretly think I'm rather charming," Steve answered with a confident grin. He slid a hand up Bucky's shirt and touched his abs with his fingertips.

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Bucky feigned surprise and said, "Who told you that? That's a secret." But Steve was right. It did feel really nice to be here with Steve and to feel him run his fingers over Bucky's abs and chest. Bucky tried looking around for a clock to see what time it was. He really didn't want to leave the
Well, you're really bad at keeping secrets. Luckily, that's a character flaw I'm willing to overlook." Steve saw Bucky's glance over at the clock and he kissed his cheek. "We can do this again soon. I think your sisters will start wondering how long that movie really was soon enough."

"Hey, about that..." Bucky moved to sit up and Steve followed suit. Bucky really quickly fixed himself up so his pants were properly done up again. "I wanted to ask you if it'd be okay with you if I told my sisters what you are to me now? I mean, can I tell them we are dating and more than friends?" Bucky didn't let Steve say anything yet he just kept going for a second. "They wouldn't tell a soul and they will be happy for us cause they're kind of like God, they don't care who you love so long as you're happy. But you can say no and that'd be fine but that doesn't mean they won't figure it out on their own."

Steve's face fell a bit and he looked away. He had enough experiences with Lilly blabbering that he didn't exactly trust that she wouldn't say something eventually, even by accident. It wasn't a risk he was willing to take on a kid and he hadn't even told his mom yet. "I'd rather not," he mumbled.

Bucky was silent for a second then he nodded his head and gave a sad smile. "Okay, Steve. That's fine." He tried smiling again. It was fine and it wasn't a big deal at all. Bucky just hated keeping anything from his sisters. He never wanted them to feel like they needed to keep secrets from him or be afraid to share what they are feeling so he made a point to set that example.

Steve sat up and started to button his pants back up. "I'm sorry," he said. "You can blame me if they find out. I don't want your sisters upset at you for anything." He rubbed the side of his face. "I was dirt poor. You know how hard it is to put food on the table. And now that I've got a job and built a good life for myself, I don't want to risk losing that."

Bucky sighed and shook his head. "No, Steve, I get it. I do." He placed a comforting hand on Steve's thigh. "I know exactly why you don't want to and I understand and I won't push you. I'm not upset or angry or anything. It's just something they don't get to know and that's fine. They probably know too much about me anyway."

Steve decided to grab his jacket because it got a little chilly out now that it was dark outside. "I wish I didn't have to hide. I wish it wasn't something that was even an issue. But... once they're older, we can tell them. Not for a little while, though."
"You plan on being around when they are older?" Bucky asked and tried not to sound hopeful that someone else besides his sisters was going to be a constant in his life. He also didn't want Steve to see how much it worried Bucky how long they would have to keep this from them. How could they possibly hide it from such intuitive little girls?

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"Well... yeah," Steve said. He told Bucky he wanted to be more than just two guys who fooled around, but he supposed that Bucky may have had others give empty promises in the past. "I want to be in a committed relationship with you, Buck. I want to get to know all of you. And someday, hopefully soon, you and your sisters to be as good as family. And I know my mom would accept you all as her family, too."

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Bucky honestly didn't know what to say to that but he felt compelled to kiss Steve so he caught Steve unprepared and kissed his lips and his cheeks and his nose and back to his lips. "I'll keep you," he said and nestled his head in the crook of Steve's neck and shoulder.

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Steve made a surprised sound at the first kiss but melted into the rest. He threw an arm around Bucky's shoulders and kissed the top of his head. "You're special, Bucky Barnes," he said. "I'd hate to let someone else sweep you off your feet."

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"And you're full of shit, Steve Rogers," Bucky said, "Hey, what's your middle name by the way?" One less thing to have to ask about later. One more thing he got to know about Steve. One more night of being alone together. One more kiss. One more touch.

---

Steve let out a laugh at Bucky's response. "I'm trying to be romantic here, you nut." He pinched Bucky's cheek lightly and then answered, "Grant. It was my grandfather's name." He kissed him one more time before nudging him towards the door because they had to start heading back.

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"Grant. That's nice." They got to the door and Bucky had his shoes and coat and everything ready. "One more," he said and kissed Steve again and felt his way down his side. "One more," he repeated and kissed him again. "Last one." Another kiss. "Seriously, last one, I promise."

---

Steve was so taken by how sweet and dorky Bucky was that he pressed him against the door and cupped the sides of his face to plant a heated but loving kiss to his lips. "There's only one upside to having to hide this," he sighed against Bucky's lips. "If we could kiss anywhere we would never get anything done."
By the time they got back to Bucky's place, Bucky was so tired. He knew he still had to make sure the girls had done whatever chores they might have needed to do today and they need to have showered and brushed their teeth and Bucky had about a million other things that he needed to do before he would be able to go sleep. Steve almost had to catch him at one point just to keep him from collapsing on the stairs.

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Lilly took one look at the sleepy Bucky before turning to Steve and putting her hands on her hips. "You broke my brother!" She scolded.

Steve rolled his eyes with a little smile. "No, I didn't, I found him this way," he joked. "Now help me get him into bed before he falls asleep on the floor."

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Bucky honestly didn't remember even getting home. He just knew one second he was kissing Steve against a door and then the next he was at his place on his bed with both his sisters and Steve hovering over him each wearing a different shade of concerned.

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Steve herded Bucky's sisters out of the room and told them to make sure they cleaned up any mess they made today before he came back to Bucky's room. He put a hand on his forehead to check his temperature. "You okay, Pal?" Is there anything I can do?"

---

Bucky blinked slowly and trying to focus in on Steve. He said very low and mumbling, "You can stay the night." Bucky's eyes closed and opened again several times, each time getting slower and slower to open again. He grumbled something else but Steve couldn't make out what it was he said.

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Steve leaned down and kissed his forehead. "I've got an afternoon shift tomorrow, but I'll stay." He could get the girls off to school and back to his apartment in time to change. He stayed there until Bucky was asleep and then he went out to the girls. His mom stuck around to make sure the girls showered and went to bed. Once she went home, Steve spent a couple of hours cleaning the house to tidy up spots Bucky probably had no time to take care of. He made everyone lunches for the next day and when it was time to get the girls up, he knocked on their doors with breakfast in hand.
Bucky heard rustling and laughter coming from past his door. "Fuck," he said to himself. "Got to help girls..." He tried getting up and realized he had a raging headache. He didn't know why, though, since he hadn't gotten drunk the night before. Honestly, he figured it was stress and annoyance, both with things at home and work. He managed to get up and trudge out into the kitchen where he found his little sisters and... "Steve?"

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Steve looked up to Bucky from his spot in the table. "Hey," he said. "You asked me to stay last night, I uh... figured you'd want to sleep in, so I got them ready for school."

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"Don't you work?" Bucky furrowed his brow and went over to kiss Lilly and Becca on the head. "Why the fuck did I ask you to stay? No, better yet, why'd you listen?" Bucky was flustered and stressed and just a little too wound up at the moment.

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Steve frowned, suddenly worrying that he overstepped some boundary. "I don't know. You asked, so I just... thought I'd do what you asked," he said. "I can go if you want. Their lunches are already packed."

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"No, I meant..." Bucky cleared his throat and noticed both girls watching them closely. He had to choose his words carefully for Steve's sake. "I mean when do you work?" he asked very calmly. "I don't want you to be late because I asked an unreasonable request while I was very, very tired."

---

"I start at three," Steve said. "I've got an overnight shift tonight, so they're having me go in late." He would have just enough time to have a good nap before having to go out to work.

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Bucky breathed a sigh of relief. "Okay, good. I'm sorry I made you stay. I don't even remember it. That's not fair of me to ask you. Let me make it up to you?" He asked and hoped Steve knew what he meant and hoped his sisters thought he meant paying for Steve's dinner or something.

---

"You don't, uh... you don't have to worry about it. This really wasn't any trouble. But if you want to, I won't stop you," Steve said.

Lilly looked over at Bucky and asked, "Do you have a hangover, Bucky?"
"No, Lil. I think it's just a stress headache." Bucky pulled up a chair between Steve and Lilly. "You remember when mom would get them? She had them worse and more often than me. I just think I didn't sleep well for a few nights and work sort of overwhelmed me the other day."

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"Yeah, Mom's headaches were totally your fault," she said. "Me and Becca were angels." Somehow Steve didn't believe that Lilly was ever an angel. "Why don't you go to sleep earlier anyway? Becca and I know how to make breakfast. And we know how to clean up after ourselves."

---

Bucky couldn't argue with her right now. Even though he knew that they still needed some guidance when preparing for the day. And he also didn't want them not to need him anymore. Bucky turned his face to Steve and said, "I guess since they don't need me at the moment I should just go back to my bed." But he made no move to get up.

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"Oh, they're always going to need you," Steve said. "But go to sleep anyway. You deserve all the rest you can get." He patted Bucky's shoulder in a friendly way even though he wished he could've kissed them. "I'll walk them both to school."

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"Are you sure?" Bucky asked and couldn't help but scan his eyes over Steve's face. "They can walk themselves if you need to get going." Bucky felt bad for being so grumpy with them all when he got up and he really did want to make it up to Steve but he didn't think he'd get to today.

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Steve shook his head. "It's fine, really," he insisted. They all finished their breakfast and Steve had the girls say goodbye to Bucky before he headed out. About a half hour later, after both girls were dropped off at school, Steve knocked on the door to come back in.

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Bucky was lying in bed trying to get back to sleep when he heard a knock on the door. He rolled out of bed and went to answer it. He looked himself up and down and noticed he was still wearing his clothes from the day before that he had fallen asleep in. He really hoped it wasn't Steve at the door because he certainly didn't look very cute. He opened the door and there was his handsome Officer Rogers looking just as disheveled wearing the same clothes he stayed the night on the couch in.

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"Hey," Steve said softly. He walked into the apartment and closed the door before reaching out to stroke his fingers once through Bucky's hair. "I wanted to come back and make sure you were okay," he murmured. Steve kissed his forehead gently; doing his best to make Bucky feel cared for.
"Yeah, I'm okay. Think I was just so tired." Bucky melted into the kiss and wrapped his arms around Steve. "I'm really sorry I was a grump earlier." Bucky nestled his head on Steve's shoulder and rubbed his nose against his neck.

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"It's alright. You didn't remember last night and I'm sure it was a confusing sight to wake up to," Steve reasoned and rubbed a hand up and down Bucky's back. "You want to go lay down? You still look pretty beat."

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Bucky nodded, "Uh huh, sure. I don't work today so I might just lay around and do nothing." He let Steve lead him to his room and to his bed and gently help him back under his blankets. "Thanks, Babe," Bucky said without realizing it was the first time he'd called Steve a pet name.

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Steve blushed at the pet name, feeling happy to have been called it. "You deserve a day doing nothing," he said. Steve snuggled behind him and pressed his face to the back of Bucky's neck. "I'll cook a dinner for you to heat up so it's less work for you later."

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"You don't have to do that." Bucky reached a hand back to pull Steve closer to him. "The girls can eat cereal for dinner and I'll just eat a sandwich or something." Bucky sighed and closed his eyes.

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"Cereal for dinner? No way, they're getting a cooked meal," Steve said. He kissed the curve of Bucky's jaw and closed his eyes. "And you're getting something better than a sandwich."

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"But I like sandwiches..." Bucky mumbled tiredly and barely felt Steve's arm come up to rest on his chest. "Think I might fall asleep on you, Stevie." Bucky wanted to turn around and face Steve and give him small sleepy kisses but he also loved the feeling of his ass cradled in Steve's crotch and Steve's strong arms holding him close.

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"Oh yeah? What's your favorite sandwich?" Steve asked, petting Bucky's hair gently. Steve was being an utter sweetheart, loving that he was able to dote on Bucky in this way. "Also, it's okay if you fall asleep. I'll let myself out when I have to go to work."

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Bucky hummed contentedly. "Put a little avocado in between some turkey and cheese, too much mayo on the bread, some lettuce and tomatoes if you want. Then nice white bread slices that are like pillows for your mouth..." he said and moaned a little, satisfied mumble at the thought.
Steve brushed the hair out of Bucky's eyes and kissed his face again. "Sounds delicious. You got good taste in food and in men." He smiled dumbly and pet his hair some more.

"Cheeky bastard," Bucky said and curled his hand around Steve's. "There's a nice little sandwich shop downtown a ways that's got my order on regular and everyone knows what to make when I walk in." Bucky was pretty proud that he was a regular there.

Steve squeezed Bucky's hand lightly, "Oh yeah? What's it called? Maybe I'll check it out." He loved getting to talk with Bucky and just sit and look at him as much as he wanted to.

"Rustic Rocco's," Bucky said. "You should go there. Tell them you know me and ask for what I get and then you'll know exactly what you've been missing all this time." He reached a hand back and started feeling up Steve as much as he could access very slowly.

Steve nodded his head at the suggestion. "Sounds like a plan," he agreed. "I'll go there during my break today. So long as I'm not posted somewhere super far like Queens." Steve let out a happy sound when Bucky started to touch him.

"If Martia is there tell her I still owe her for the casserole." Bucky rolled over to face Steve. "She brought us a casserole a few weeks ago when Becca was really sick. She's got a soft spot for that girl. Thinks the world of her." Bucky ran his hands from Steve's thighs up to his neck and warmed his fingers there.

"Becca is nice. I think I like her slightly better than Lilly because Lilly might beat me up one day," Steve teased.

"I can almost guarantee she will beat you up." Bucky breathed against Steve's cheek and kissed it lightly.

Steve slipped his hand under Bucky's shirt and touched his stomach gently. "What kind of casserole was it?"

"It was a breakfast casserole. You know, with eggs and bacon and cheese and some vegetables all cooked together. It's really good. And Martia makes the best I've ever had." Bucky leaned in and
gave Steve’s jaw a tender kiss.

"That sounds good but you're going to have to have some of my mom's cooking to have the best food you ever had," Steve said with a happy grin. "My ma makes the best potatoes. She's straight from Ireland. Though, she's got a Brooklyn accent since it's been so long since she's been there."

"You're mom came over from Ireland?" Bucky didn't know that. There was so much he didn't know about Steve. But he was looking forward to learning it all. "How old was she when she got here?"

"She was about fifteen. She had to come here alone because my grandpa was a part of the IRA and got in some pretty bad trouble with the English," Steve said. "He'd probably be really pissed that I turned out to be a cop, actually. But it's what the Irish do here. We become cops and firemen."

"I've noticed," Bucky said and thought of all the Irish cops he'd met in New York. "But you Irish make very sexy public servants, just so you are aware." He really wanted to sleep but he also wanted to touch Steve again. Maybe he could just give him a quick hand-job while he made out with him and then he could sleep. Bucky still had to decide what he wanted to do.

"The Irish can be sexy at anything," Steve informed him. "Why do you think there are so many of us?" He chuckled and squeezed Bucky to his chest. "I've always wanted to go back to see my mom's hometown, but she says she's happier here."

"She doesn't want to go for just a week or so?" Bucky asked as he moved his hand over Steve's stomach and started to undo his pants so he could get access to his dick again. "That seems like a good vacation for the two of you."

"Nah. She doesn't like planes and she'd rather spend the time gardening." Steve felt his face heat up when Bucky unbuckled his pants. "You sure you're up for that right now, Buck?"

Bucky kissed Steve and whispered, "Just let me get you off, Steve. I want to do it. I'd love to." He emphasized 'love' so Steve would know exactly how much Bucky liked doing things like this for him. "Baby, I want to watch your face when you come on my fingers, laying on my bed together." He slipped his hand into Steve's underwear and carefully began to pull his dick free.
Steve really couldn't say no when Bucky used pet names on him and spoke to him sweetly like that.
Steve let out a soft moan when he felt Bucky's fingers on his dick. "Alright," he agreed, nosing at
Bucky's neck. "You know how to make me feel good."

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Bucky started to pump him carefully. "I'll try my best at least." He smiled and let Steve stick his
tongue in his mouth and start tying his chest up in knots with the feeling. This man was good at his
trade regardless of his paler experiences in comparison to Bucky's. He really did learn fast.

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Steve breathed out Bucky's name and kissed him back desperately. He pulled Bucky flush up against
him and rocked his hips into Bucky's hand to encourage more. He sucked at Bucky's lower lip
before ducking his head to mark up Bucky's neck just as he had done the night before.

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Just like before, it didn't take very long before Steve was coming through Bucky's fingers wrapped
around him. Bucky pulled his hand up to his lips and started to lick the come from them and smiled
at Steve as he went. Steve tasted so good.

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Steve's eyes fluttered shut as he felt his orgasm surge through him. He forced them back open
because watching Bucky lick up his come was sexier than he cared to admit. "You really know how
to make a fella feel special."

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"Wanted you to have something nice before you had to work later." Bucky's fingers were a bit damp
from licking Steve's come off so he reached over Steve to grab some tissues from his side table.
"You need one?" He asked Steve.

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Steve took a tissue and cleaned off Bucky's hand before wiping off the tip of his dick. He tossed the
tissue onto the bed stand and settled back into Bucky's side. "Now all I'm going to think about at
work is you in bed where I could be with you."

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"Maybe you could come back after work and stay with me?" Bucky suggested hopefully. He figured
the answer would be no because it would be too much of a risk but he wanted to ask anyway. Bucky
reached for Steve's hand.

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Steve hesitated before answering. "Can you pretend that you're sick or something and need help so
the girls don't suspect that I'm coming over for the hell of it? I won't be back until around three or
four in the morning."
Bucky nodded and let out a small smile. "I can do that. Feel a little sick anyway so it won't be a stretch. You're sure, though? It's okay if you don't want to, Steve. Don't want to push you too far."

"It's nice to have someone to go home to. I don't mind coming over - all I would have done at home anyway is fall asleep." He kissed Bucky's cheek and then settled down into the pillow with his eyes shut. "You make me happy. You're not pushing too far at all."

"Okay, I believe you," Bucky watched Steve's face and chest as he breathed. He looked like he was sleeping and Bucky liked the look of it so much he just leaned his face in close and stared at Steve until Bucky's own eyes couldn't stay open and he slipped into a fast sleep.
Steve napped until around noon. He slipped out of bed and hurried home to get changed before he headed out on his shift. Steve didn't show up to Bucky's apartment until almost five in the morning. He was exhausted and looked a little run down.

"Hey, are you okay?" Bucky asked immediately when he let Steve in. He looked dead on his feet like Bucky must have looked the day before. "Come sit down." He gestured at the couch and asked if he needed any water or food or anything.

Steve laid down on his side rather than sitting like a normal person. "I chased this guy by foot for over an hour," he groaned. "Took forever to process cause he had a criminal history a mile long. Why couldn't he have the decency to show up at the beginning of my shift?"

"Oh, man." Bucky brought Steve a cup of water and set it on the coffee table. He knelt down on the carpet so he was facing Steve. Just then, Becca opened the door to her room to see who was here. She was a light sleeper and must have woken up when Steve came in. Bucky made a hand motion at her to go back to her room and Steve, thankfully, had his eyes closed and didn't see it. "You want to sleep here or in my bed?" He asked and ran his fingers over Steve's still slightly sweaty hair. "You can borrow some of my clothes to sleep in too if you like. Do you want to take a shower?"

Steve sipped at the glass sideways and put it back down once he was finished with it. "I'll go to your bed if the girls won't go into your room at all. I can stay there until after they go to school." So that way they wouldn't know he was here at all. "I'll shower in the morning."

"Yeah they won't come in," Bucky said and started helping Steve up off the couch. In Bucky's room, he started pulling Steve's clothes off gently and putting them in a pile on the dresser. He managed to get Steve down to his boxer briefs and socks and figured that was good to sleep in. "Want some sweats of mine to wear?"

Steve nodded. "Yeah, that would work," he said through a yawn. He peppered kisses over Bucky's shoulder and sluggishly followed him around the room. Once he got the sweats on, he collapsed into bed and wiggled under the sheets.

"Goodnight, Steve," Bucky said and joined him under the covers. He kissed his forehead once and sought out his hand to hold. Bucky had just a few hours to be like this with Steve before the girls
needed to be up and getting ready. He wasn't going to waste a moment of it.

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Steve was out like a light. He slept right through breakfast and didn't rouse from his slumber until well after the girls were sent off to school. His hair was a complete mess and he definitely was in need of some washing up. He stifled a lion-sized yawn and sat up.

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Bucky was waiting in the living area on the couch just listening to music and hoping Steve would wake up soon. He felt bad for the guy for being so dog tired the night before. It was great being able to have him close while he slept, though. That was certainly something Bucky had loved experiencing and on top of it, neither of the girls had asked him about who came over in the night. If they did know something, they kept their mouths shut.

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Steve slipped out of bed and looked around for Bucky, smiling when he saw him listening to music on the couch. Steve draped himself over Bucky's lap and smiled up at him. Looking to steal his attention, Steve reached up to touch his cheek.

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"Morning, Steve," Bucky said and leaned in towards his face to give him a quick kiss. "You work today?" Bucky had to go into work for the late shift - the close shift. He hated having to work that one because it meant the girls would have to be home alone for a few hours. At least he didn't have to go in until well past when they would be back so he could see them safely home first.

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Steve shook his head. "Not until late. The way it works is I get two night shifts, a day off, then three day shifts," he explained. "Except this one I go in from eight at night to eight in the morning. So, is there anything I can do to help?"

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Bucky was enjoying himself just looking at Steve. "Oh, I see. So tomorrow is the day off, then. I've not really got anything to do around here. It seems someone's tidied up when I was asleep the other day." He rubbed Steve's shoulders and smiled at him. "I've got to go to work at six so I'm just going to be here until then. Anything you want to do?"

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"Well, I figured you had enough on your plate and the house did need a good tidying," Steve said with a shrug. "You want to show me some of your favorite albums and be lazy all afternoon? Because I could do for some of that."

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"Sure, we can do that!" Bucky lit up but didn't yet move. He liked Steve being on top of him like this and he didn't really want to move and ruin it. "Oh, yeah, I still need to let you make me dance."
Steve loved the way Bucky's eyes lit up like that. He leaned up and kissed his cheek sweetly. "We can dance on one of your days off. If you ever have one," he snorted.

"I'll have one again eventually," Bucky said and threaded pieces of his hair together absentely. "Clint is usually pretty good about my schedule being as convenient for me as possible. He knows I'm the only one who really does anything around that place so he can't afford to lose me." Bucky chuckled. "Not that I would leave either."

Steve nodded and gently brushed his fingers up and down Bucky's arm. "If you were to go back to college, would you still work there? Like, would you try and do business outta his place or something?"

Bucky smiled, confused, and asked, "I'm going back to college?" He hadn't really considered if or when he would go back and how that would really work out for him. "Don't know if I really could do that so I don't think I've got an answer for you."

"I said if you were to," Steve corrected. "You know, hypotheticals." Not that Steve cared what sort of education Bucky had. He adored the man just as he was. Steve didn't go to college anyway. He went straight to the police academy.

"Okay, well, hypothetically speaking," Bucky began, "I'd work at the store through college then work until I could start a record company here or Los Angeles. I mean, that's wishful thinking but that would be the goal."

"And then what'll Clint do when his number one employee makes the big time?" Steve asked. "You going to send Lilly off to work for him?" Steve joked. He laced their fingers together and kissed Bucky's knuckles.

"Well, that honestly probably wouldn't be too bad for Clint," Bucky said and wrapped his other arm around Steve's back. "She could be a hard worker and even though she is loud and talks a lot it wouldn't matter since he couldn't really hear her anyway."

Steve let out a laugh at that. "They're a perfect employment match," he chuckled. "So what sports
does she play?" He asked. "I know what you like, so what do they like?" He sat up a bit more so he could place affectionate kisses over his neck.

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"Well, she's in soccer," Bucky said and lightly pushed Steve so he could get a record playing for them. "And her school just started a lacrosse program and she was first in line for it. We had never seen lacrosse this far from California." Bucky put on an album from the Ramones.

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Steve rolled over to the side so he could watch Bucky put the music on. "Have you always lived around this area or are you guys originally from California?" He asked.

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"No, we've always been in Brooklyn." Bucky couldn't help but sway a little to the music as he walked to the kitchen to get a snack. "But we did take a trip to California not long before our parents died to see my dad's brother and our cousins. They all play lacrosse."

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"You know, Long Island is starting to get a real big lacrosse scene. It's a bit of a hike, but I'm sure they've got some pretty cool camps she could try out." Steve watched Bucky with a warm gaze as the man walked around. "How long has it been since your parents passed?"

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Bucky stopped as he was washing some strawberries and grapes. He knew he'd have to talk about his parents eventually but he really didn't want to. "Uh, four years and two months."

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"I'm sorry," Steve apologized. Maybe it was a bit too early to be asking that sort of stuff. "So it must have been a while since you guys got to see your cousins."

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"We haven't seen any of our family since the funeral. They call sometimes. We get Christmas cards but that's it," Bucky said and brought two bowls of fruit over to the coffee table. "Our grandma lived near us for a while but she died not long after our parents."

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"Oh, Buck," Steve said with a frown. Family meant a lot to Steve and he knew he would've been gutted if he didn't get to see his mom for years just because she lived in another state let alone if anything happened to her. "How old are your cousins?"

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Bucky popped a strawberry in his mouth then said, "They are around our ages. Oldest is twenty, I think, then seventeen, then thirteen, then six. The youngest won't remember my parents at all when
he's older."

"And how about you? How old are you, exactly? And when's your birthday so I know which day I get to really spoil you?" Steve gave Bucky a playful wink.

Bucky chuckled and said, "I'm twenty-four. March tenth. Name's James Buchanan Barnes. Born in New York, raised in New York, we will see if I die in New York." He finished and ate some more grapes.

"Okay, now all I need is your social security and bank account numbers," Steve said, pretending to pull out an imaginary pen and paper.

Bucky threw a grape at his face and said, "You ass. You're supposed to say 'Oh, wow, March is such a good month.' Or 'What a handsome name for such a handsome guy.' Then you tell me your birthday and age and social security number, Steven Grant Rogers."

Steve threw his head back and laughed. "Well, March is a good month. That's when Saint Patrick's Day is," he agreed. "And you are quite handsome, but I'm sure you've heard that already." He lounged back and said, "I'm twenty-three. Born July fourth. My social is 128-26-0023 and my bank account is 86723 with Bank of America."

"Steve!" Bucky put a hand over his mouth. "Oh my god." He laughed. "What if we had another wiretapping scandal like back with Nixon, huh? They just heard all your numbers, man," Bucky joked with wide eyes. "But, I guess with being born on America's birthday, you might just be immune to anything the government might try, yeah? America's baby boy."

Steve rolled his eyes and reached out to tickle Bucky's side. "Quit that, I got enough teasing about my birthday from my ma," he laughed.

"But I like it, Mr. America," Bucky said and giggled underneath Steve's tickling fingers. "Unfair with the ticking, Steve," Bucky added and tried to squirm away.

Steve yanked Bucky into his lap and held him put so he could tickle the hell out of him. "It's totally fair when you're being a jerk," Steve laughed.
Bucky laughed until he couldn't breathe then he was crying from the lack of air. This was definitely not fair and he swore to himself that he was going to find something that got to Steve as much as tickling got to him.

Steve let Bucky go once he felt like Bucky learned his lesson. "Next time I'll tickle you until you pee yourself," he threatened playfully. "Never poke at a guy who knows a dozen ways to bother you." Steve winked at him.

"I don't think pissing myself is very attractive, Steve," Bucky said after he got his breath back. Steve was still holding his hands above his head with one firm grip and Bucky couldn't really move. There were still songs from the Ramones playing in the apartment and Bucky noticed how happy he felt and how he really hadn't felt this nice in a long fucking time.

"That's fine. One of us has to be the attractive one in this relationship and it may as well be me." Steve leaned down and pressed a sweet kiss to Bucky's lips. He could see the happiness in Bucky's eyes and he couldn't help but want to bring more joy into his life.

"I might take offense to that if I didn't think you were so damn cute," Bucky said. "What do you want to do, huh? You can't possibly be having a good time staring at my ugly mug and listening to music.

"Well, I genuinely am having a good time doing just that," Steve said. "But..." He got a little flustered. "I was thinking, um, maybe I could give you a massage. And then get a little more practice... you know." He mimed sucking dick because he was too embarrassed to say it.

Bucky's mouth fell open in a laugh. "Alright, buddy, first step is you're going to have to tell me in words what you want to do to me. The first step to conquering the unknown is knowing what to call it." Bucky waved a hand in a go-ahead motion. "Tell me what you've got."

"Bucky," Steve huffed, making a face at him. He didn't know how to say it and sound sensual and sweet. It all felt a little too crass but he went ahead anyway. "Can I give you a massage and suck your dick?"
"Yes, you may," Bucky answered and put his hand on Steve's thigh. "But first you need to tell me in a different way. Just one more and then I'm all yours."

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Steve smirked and rolled his eyes, “Fine. Bucky Barnes, would you permit me to put my mouth on your penis?” He asked and rubbed a hand down Bucky’s thigh.

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"Ah, gross, Steve!" Bucky leaned back. "Why’d you have to say it like that? I expected you to ask to give me head or something not say it like that." Bucky flopped his head on Steve's chest. "Jesus Christ, Steve, you're too cute."

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Steve cackled when he was able to gross Bucky out. "Serves you right for being demanding," he teased, slipping his hand into Bucky’s shirt to rub circles over his stomach. "There's more bad dirty talk where that came from. I'll have you squirming from secondhand embarrassment."

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"I'm already regretting all of this," Bucky said but placed a hand over Steve's under his shirt and helped him start to pull it up over his head. "Maybe I should just tell you no," he said as he guided Steve's hand into his hair. "Tell you to leave. Make you wait." Bucky took Steve's other hand and placed it on the tie of his sweats and said, "Go ahead, Babe."

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"Don't worry, my Ma told me not to talk with a full mouth so you won't have to hear me soon enough," Steve joked. He didn't take Bucky's pants off right away. Instead, he slid his hand under the waistband of his pants and started to grope him through his underwear. He nibbled affectionately at Bucky's ear and hummed low in his throat.

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Bucky let his head drop onto the pillows of the couch and breathed in deeply. "Am I going to have to teach you dirty talk too, Steve?" He whispered and flexed his fingers into fists.

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"Depends. Are you really going to trust a smartass like me to take control of the mood?" Steve asked. He sucked marks down Bucky's neck as he massaged his balls. Once he got Bucky aroused enough that there was a wet spot in his underwear, he started to strip his pants off.

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"Good point." Bucky was breathing heavier now. "I'll be in charge of dirty talk then." Bucky watched as Steve took his pants off of him and tossed them aside. "And you can be in charge of sucking me off."
Steve moved off the couch to kneel in front of Bucky. He pressed slow kisses to the insides of his thighs and let out a soft groan, excited that he got to do this with him. He felt lucky that Bucky trusted him so much. He didn't want to rush it. He wanted Bucky to feel loved and cherished rather than that he was a quick way to get off. Steve sucked love bites onto his thighs and spent a good few minutes doing so before he looked up at Bucky through his lashes as he licked a long stripe up the shaft of his dick.

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By the time Steve got to his dick, Bucky's inner thighs were peppered with red marks and lines of Steve's saliva. The second his tongue touched Bucky’s dick, Bucky jumped and gasped and rolled his head to the side.

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Steve grabbed the base of Bucky's cock and held it steady while he took the first few inches into his mouth. He sealed his lips around him and started to slowly bob his head.

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Bucky could already feel improvement in Steve's technique as he went. It was similar to last time but he hadn't yet clacked his teeth into him like he had done before. Bucky felt a sense of pride well up in him. It wasn't like he had anything to do with Steve learning how to give head but it still made him feel special that he got to be the one who Steve learned with.

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Steve couldn't take all of Bucky's dick, but his hand worked over what he didn't put in his mouth. He moaned low so the vibrations would feel good, but he was also enjoying himself as well. All the pent up sexual frustration was being let out and there was no one better to experience this with than Bucky.

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At the feeling of the low hum, Bucky said, "Oh, please do that again," and laid a hand softly on the back of Steve's head. "You're so gorgeous with my dick on your lips, Steve. I love seeing you like this. I'm so glad you are here," Bucky praised him and played with Steve's short hair.

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Steve's face heated up when Bucky spoke to him and gave him compliments. He wanted so badly to do a good job for him. He slowly took just a bit more into his mouth and let out a low, unabashed moan because no one else was around to hear them.

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Bucky flung his head back and damn near yelled, "Oh, fuck, Steve!" He could feel himself getting closer and closer and as Steve got more of his dick inside his mouth, Bucky got closer faster. "Almost... almost there."
Steve sucked him off in earnest, watching Bucky hungrily and soaking up every pleasurable expression that crossed his face. He palmed at Bucky's balls, taking just enough of Bucky's cock that he could feel the tip hit the back of his throat.

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Knowing that Steve had gotten far enough that he was brushing up against his throat was too much for Bucky. He was coming down Steve's throat before he could warn him and he immediately felt bad for not giving him time to pop off if he didn't want him to come in his mouth and especially down his waiting throat.

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Steve wished he had taken it with a bit more grace. The first spurt made him sputter and pull back before Bucky was totally finished and the last string of come shot onto his face. He couldn't even give Bucky a chiding look because no one would take a guy seriously with come across his lip and cheek. He quickly grabbed Bucky's sweatpants and wiped his face clean.

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Bucky launched forward and grabbed Steve's arms and held them tight while he looked into Steve's eyes worriedly. "Oh, Steve, I'm so sorry! I didn't have time to warn you and I bet you weren't wanting to swallow or get come on your face. My god, but Steve you look so fucking sexy with a little bit of my come on your face and I hope you know that."

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Steve had a small grimace on his face but he didn't look too upset. "You're lucky you're cute, Barnes," he said as he sat back on the couch with him. "Tell me more about how sexy I looked and I'll forgive you," he said, kissing his cheek.

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"Your eyes were so beautiful and haunting staring up at me and your lips looked perfect stretched around me. And those gorgeous moans you gave me. And the little surprised blush when I compliment you." Bucky licked at the spot where Steve had wiped the come from his face and found some that he had missed. "You're so perfect and handsome no matter what you're doing."

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Steve felt his face warm and he hugged Bucky to his chest. "I don't know what I did to deserve an amazing partner like you. But I'm glad that I have you in my life." He pet his fingers through Bucky's hair. "I could listen to you praise me all day."

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"Well, we could do that or I could return the favor?" Bucky asked and moved a hand over Steve's dick. "Or would you rather just snuggle up for a bit and wait it out before you have to leave for work?"
"I kind of want to just snuggle the hell out of you," Steve said. "But in your bed. I like being under the blankets," he admitted. "But hey, if you wanted to give me a lazy hand-job while we're there, I won't complain."

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"Sure, let's go to my room." Bucky got up and grabbed the bowls of strawberries and grapes so he could eat them in bed. "Mind if I take these with us?" He asked Steve and shook the bowls.

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"Only if you plan on sharing them," Steve answered. He kissed the corner of Bucky's mouth and happily padded into the bedroom. He dove into bed like a damn child and snuck under the covers soon after.

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Bucky chuckled at Steve's leap into bed and followed after him. "That was enthusiastic. My bed really that nice?" Bucky laid down and set the bowls on his chest and stomach to make a make-shift table for them to eat off of.

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"It is when you're in it," Steve said with an affectionate smile. He stole a kiss before plucking a strawberry from the bowl and eating it. "You make me really happy, you know that? I didn't think it was possible to feel so good with someone."

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"You make me happy too," Bucky answered and reached for some more fruit. "I wish I was able to tell everyone how much I like you, though. I wish no one gave a fuck about who was queer and who wasn't and just let us be who we are. I'd scream from the top of this apartment building that I get to make out with a drop dead gorgeous Brooklyn cop."

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Steve played with Bucky's hair and smiled at how vehement Bucky was about adoring him. "One day," he promised. "Even if public opinion doesn't change... I want to be out. What's the point of New York making it legal if we got to hide still?"

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"What will the precinct say when you come out?" Bucky asked and put the bowls on his side table so he could snuggle up against Steve with his head on his chest. "I mean, I know what I'll say, but what about them?"

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"I don't know," Steve admitted. "Some won't care. And some will be uncomfortable not but be rude about it. But I know some will give me some real grief," he mumbled. "It's a shame. I'd take a bullet for any of them."
Bucky crinkled his face and asked incredulously, "Why? I mean, if they are the kind of people who'd rather tease you or force you out or see you not be yourself just to keep themselves happy... I don't see why you'd want to sacrifice yourself for them let alone be near them." Bucky finished his rant and eased up his grip on Steve's arm which he hadn't noticed he'd been squeezing hard since he started talking.

Steve noticed how Bucky gripped onto his arm but he didn't say anything. "Because it doesn't matter what they think. It matters that I do my job right and part of that job is defending them from harm," he said. "I'm still an officer, even if they don't treat me right."

"I just don't think it's fair if they don't give you the same respect that you're willing to give them." Bucky sat up and ran his fingers through his hair. "Not saying they have to like you but they shouldn't be dicks to you just because you are different from them. It's so fucking typical. People can't stand what they don't get." Bucky was getting worked up now and his mind was going blank except for his rage at thinking about anyone wanting to hurt or make fun of Steve for any reason.

"Buck, sweetheart," Steve said softly and pressed a gentle kiss to his forehead. "Life isn't about what's fair or not. It's making a difference. If they see I'm still me, even if they don't treat me like a normal person, they'll learn eventually that they were wrong. And if I don't do my job, they'll just use me being gay as an excuse for it."

Bucky sighed and touched his forehead to Steve's. "I just really like you a lot, okay? And I can't stand the thought of anyone thinking less of you or sabotaging you just because you like me a lot too." He nuzzled his nose to Steve's and added. "I know what it's like and I don't want you to experience that shit."

Steve brushed their lips together sweetly. "I'm envious that you were brave enough to come out," he said. "I'm so sorry you had to deal with people being awful to you, Bucky. But now you don't have to deal with that alone."

"Okay, but what about if people who know me start to notice I'm different?" Bucky thought to his coworkers and his sisters. He didn't have any friends so he didn't have to worry about that but what if Clint asked him who the man was who was making him smile like a dope at work. Or what if Becca asked him if it was Steve who she heard come in the other night.
Steve looked away for a moment and then said, "You don't have to say it's me. You can just say that someone's making you happy." He thought and asked, "Do your sisters definitely know that you're gay? Or do you just think they don't care either way?"

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Bucky looked down at his hands folded in his lap. "They know..." He looked back up at Steve and nervously chewed his lip. "After our parents died, and I was responsible for the girls... we moved into this apartment because we couldn't keep the house." Bucky shuffled. "Well, I wasn't coping with the loss and automatic responsibility very well so I kind of went a little haywire. Slept around pretty heavily for about a year. Never the same guy twice. A few times it was a guy and a girl at once... By the amount of men I brought through these doors to 'hang out'," Bucky put air quotes around 'hang out', "there's no way they don't know."

---

"Christ, Buck," Steve swore. He didn't really disapprove that Bucky had so many past partners. He didn't think any less of Bucky for it, but he knew he probably would've scolded Bucky for being so reckless at the time. He was going through a lot, Steve reminded himself, and he didn't have people to help support him. "I'm a little annoyed that your sisters had to see all that," he said honestly. "But I understand." He pet his fingers through Bucky's hair. "Maybe we can let them know. Only them, though."

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Bucky stopped Steve's hands on his head and moved so both their hands were over Bucky's heart. "Believe me, Steve, I wish they never saw a single one of those guys. I wish they never knew. I wish I wasn't so stupid to bring strangers into our home." Bucky choked in his throat and tears formed on the rim of his eyes lids. "I wish my father would have been around to tell me off. I wish I didn't have to be the reasonable one all the time. And I wish my sisters had a less selfish guardian."

---

Steve could tell that Bucky was sorry for his bad decisions and it broke his heart to see him like this. He brought Bucky's hands to his lips and kissed the backs of his knuckles. "You're only human," Steve said. "And humans are selfish and flawed." He let go of Bucky's hands so he could wipe the tears in his eyes before they fell. "And you don't have to be the reasonable one all the time anymore. You've got me now, okay?"

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Bucky wrapped his arms around Steve's middle and sighed. "You're going to be reasonable?" He chuckled and sniffled. "Earlier you couldn't even tell me you wanted to blow me."

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"My career is all about being reasonable," Steve said. "It's not my career to proposition myself to handsome men." He kissed the top of Bucky's head. "I mean it, though. Even if we don't work out, Buck, I'm here for you and your sisters. You deserve a friend and they deserve someone to go to for help if you're having a bad day."
Bucky gave Steve a sharp glance. "I hope you aren't expecting this not to work out because I've kind of gotten attached to you now." Bucky reached for the bowl of strawberries again and said, "The girls should be getting home in about an hour. I told them they could walk home together today." Bucky paused and assessed Steve. "Were you serious about telling them?"

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"Well, I plan on us working out," Steve said. "But I wanted you to know that you can still count on me even if it doesn't." He kissed the corner of his mouth. Steve looked a little nervous but then said, "If they kept quiet about you, then I'll have to trust they will keep quiet about me. But... you have to swear, Bucky. Swear that they will."

---

Bucky pulled back a little and shook his head. "Steve, you're so scared and I can tell. You need to put a little faith in me if this is going to be okay. Becca and Lilly are smart. They know how the world works and who gets privileges and who doesn't. They are some of the youngest feminists I've ever met and they know when it's safe to share things and when it isn't." Bucky sighed again and licked his lips absently. "One of the older brothers of one of Becca's classmates is gay." Bucky paused. "Was... some assholes found out and beat him bad enough that he had to go to the hospital. Both his lungs were punctured and he didn't make it. The girls know that breathing a word of who I am could get me in serious danger and they can't afford to lose me too." He slipped his hand with Steve's. "I know you think I'm out but I'm really not. It's just a few people outside of the queer circle who know and they are people who would never say anything."

---

Steve hadn't come out to anyone before - even the guys he made out with, he never officially said he was gay and they just assumed he was experimenting too. When Bucky spoke about one of the kids that got beat to death, Steve got a sad look on his face and laid his head down on the pillow. He felt awful now even though Bucky was saying it as reasons to trust him and his sisters. "I'm sorry," he apologized. "I trust you guys."

---

"It's not your fault. It's just the risk that's taken when we decide to be who we are meant to be." Bucky scratched at his shoulder and breathed deeply a few times. "It's all up to you, though, Steve. If you want to tell the girls we will. I'm sure they will be thrilled. Lilly might demand you ask permission first, though."

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Steve still looked nervous but he was determined. He wanted to show Bucky that he was serious and he wanted to be there for him through everything. Hiding something from his sisters would only be an added burden. "We can tell them today," he said. "I'm sure."

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Bucky smiled at Steve and willed his heart not to beat too fast. He was very excited about this next step with Steve. "Okay, today then." Bucky breathed out slowly and checked his watch. "We've still got some time," he said and a mischievous grin swept over his face. Bucky sidled down Steve's body
so he was hovering over his crotch. He gently placed a hand over Steve's clothed dick and asked, "May I have this?"

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Steve looked at Bucky with his heart full and excited eyes. He felt his heart pounding in his chest in a good way. He wanted this with Bucky. The hand on his dick came as a surprise and his face heated up. "Christ, only if you plan on giving it back."

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Bucky chuckled low in his throat and slipped his fingers past the waste of Bucky's sweats that Steve was wearing. "Did I tell you that you look fucking gorgeous wearing my clothes?" Bucky asked and started pulling the sweats and Steve's underwear down to reveal his cock.

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"If you think I'm gorgeous wearing your clothes, just wait until you see me wearing nothing at all," Steve said with a confident smile. He was fairly modest but he felt so attractive with the way Bucky looked at him.

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Bucky rolled his eyes and gave a quick lick up Steve's cock before pulling back off him again. Bucky straddled Steve's lower leg so he was in a good position to kneel down to his cock. He pulled at Steve's growing dick until there was some pre-come leaking from the top. Bucky wiped it off with his thumb and rubbed it into his own left nipple until it was taught.

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Steve's hips stuttered forward when Bucky licked up his cock. His eyes drank in Bucky when he took his shirt off - he thought he was the most gorgeous guy in the world. Steve thought that getting jerked off was great but he let out a groan when he watched Bucky rub pre-come on his nipple. "What makes you even think of that?" He complained, "And why is it so fucking hot?" He reaching out to hold the back of Bucky's neck to pull him in for a kiss.

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Bucky wiped some more pre-come from Steve and said, "I think of it because it feels good. Here." He carefully rolled Steve's shirt up to reveal his chest and began rubbing Steve's own pre-come into one of his nipples. "It's nice, right?" He asked and licked at the other nipple. Steve was fully hard now and his dick was pushing against Bucky's leg. Bucky wanted to get to it soon but he also liked watching Steve become undone from the stimulation he was giving him.

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Steve licked his lips and watched Bucky rub some onto him and he squirmed a little because he was sensitive there. He wrapped a leg around Bucky's hip and rutted up against his thigh. "So nice," he breathed out. "What else do you think I'd like?" He asked.
"Ooh, I can think of a lot but I don't know if you are ready for them," Bucky said and moved back down towards Steve's dick. He kissed the head and licked down the shaft a few times before heading down to his balls and nosing there. "You smell fantastic, Steve," Bucky said. "I'll try one new thing with you today." He winked up at Steve and took Steve's balls into his mouth and sucked.

---

Steve leaned his head to the side so he could look down at Bucky. He was so fucking sexy down there, kissing his dick and somehow turning oral sex into something sweet. "Buck!" He gasped, hips jerking forward when Bucky sucked on his balls. "Don't stop," he moaned, fisting his hand in Bucky's hair.

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Bucky thought to himself, 'I don't plan on it,' and kept suckling at Steve's balls and rolling them around in his mouth. Steve's dick was lying on his face as he went but Bucky didn't mind at all. He reached a hand up and started jerking Steve as he sucked his balls. With his other hand, Bucky went back to massaging his own nipples.

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Steve didn't want to admit how hot it looked having his dick pressed against Bucky's cheek while he sucked his balls. Steve rocked his hips, fucking Bucky's hand. He reached down and cupped the side of Bucky's face and looked at him with hooded eyes. "You look so fucking hot." He blushed and then tried talking a little dirty. "How hard are you going to make me come?"

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Bucky popped his lips off of Steve and growled low, "You'll see black, Baby." Then he took Steve's length down all at once like he had done the first time. Hand on Steve's balls, Bucky hummed down his shaft like he was testing a microphone. He couldn't wait until Steve was ready to come. He wanted to swallow again but he also wanted Steve's load to shoot on his chest or his face or his hair.

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"Bucky!" Steve gasped out, moaning his name like it was the only word he knew. Steve's back arched off the bed and his toes dug into the mattress. He had a blush all the way down to his chest and his nails dragged slowly up Bucky's back in an attempt to try and make himself last longer. But god, Bucky was a fucking pro and Steve felt himself finishing in no time. "Buck, I'm gonna come," he gasped out breathlessly.

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Bucky pulled off of Steve quickly and hurriedly said, "Come on my chest, Steve," and he rolled them both so Steve was hovering over him. He jerked Steve the rest of the way until he was coming in several short strands all over his chest.

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Steve didn't need telling twice. He let Bucky maneuver him and his whole body tensed as his orgasm hit him, making him paint white strings of come over Bucky's chest. He was left breathless as he stared down at the fucking hot mess beneath him. Steve suddenly grabbed Bucky's arms and pinned
them over his head as he surged forward to claim his lips in a biting kiss.

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Bucky's heart raced when Steve moved on him so quickly and he wrapped his still clothed legs around Steve's middle. They kissed for a few long seconds before Steve was pulling back for air. "You want to lick me clean, Steve? Or you want to feed it to me?" Bucky asked, indicating the come still staining his chest.

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Steve couldn't help the possessive growl that rumbled in his throat as he kissed down his neck. He wouldn't have thought to do either of those things if Bucky hadn't suggested it, but Steve deliberately dragged his tongue over a line of come as if it had been his plan all along. But then he swiped another with his finger and held it to Bucky's lips.

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"Both is good," Bucky gasped out and greedily took Steve's finger into his mouth. He sucked off the come and said, "More, Steve." Bucky ran his fingers possessively up and down Steve's sides and his arms and closed his eyes to pay attention to all the feelings he was experiencing at once.

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Steve was convinced he was dating a sex god who was also the most adorable human being on earth. Steve licked his lips and swiped another spurt of come from Bucky's chest and offered it to him. "Do you have any idea how sexy you are?"

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"Yes." Bucky chuckled. "Turn myself on every day." He was joking, of course, but he also knew he wasn't the least sexy person so he was at least somewhat good on that front. Steve, on the other hand, was sexy in such a lovely innocent way. He could hardly vocalize anything sexual but he still opened up so much once they started doing something with each other's bodies.

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Steve rolled his eyes at the response but gave him a kiss with a smile anyway. He raked his eyes over Bucky's body, drinking in how beautiful he was. Steve cupped the side of his face and gave him a gentle look. "I love you," he said, like it had been waiting to burst out of him. "I really do."

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"Excuse me?" Bucky stared up at Steve with wide eyes. "You what?" He asked again and could feel his heart rate quicken again and his body clench up. He didn't know if he could believe that. They hadn't been together for long and they hadn't even properly fucked yet. How was Steve that sure?

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"I..." Steve's face fell a little, afraid he messed up but he went for it anyway. "I love you," he said, this time meekly. He moved over to Bucky's side, embarrassed and worried he upset the man. "You... don't have to feel the same way," he mumbled. "But I know how I feel."
"Steve," Bucky cupped his face with his hands and kissed him full on the lips. He rolled on top of him so he was straddling Steve again and kept kissing him. "Steve, you've got to know that I want to say that back to you. And I'm so over the moon that you said it to me. But I can't... I can't yet. I have to think this through for a lot of reasons. I really, really like you and I want to be with you and get to the point where I feel secure enough to say that back to you." Bucky took a breath not realizing he had rushed through his last one. "I'm... enamored with you, Steve. Is that okay?"

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Steve felt a bit better when Bucky was kissing him but there was still that lingering embarrassment. He held Bucky's hand in his own and rested it over his heart. "I wouldn't want you to feel rushed to say it, Buck. I don't expect it. Enamored is more than alright with me." He kissed the back of his hand. "But can I keep telling you that I love you? Cause I don't want you to go a day without hearing it."

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Bucky blinked a few times then nodded slowly. "Uh, huh... That's fine." He smiled tentatively at Steve and rubbed his thumb down his neck. Just then there was a rustling outside Bucky's room and a slamming of the door. "Fuck! The girls are home," Bucky said and jumped out of bed reaching for his shirt. "Find your pants!"

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Steve felt like cold water was dumped over his head. He scrambled and grabbed his clothes from the night before so the girls wouldn't see him in their brother's clothes. "Shit, do I wait in here?"

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"Fuck, I don't know." Bucky was flustered and running around his room cleaning stuff up. He ran to a mirror and made sure he didn't look like he had just given a man a blowjob. "Do I smell like come?" Bucky asked and crowded Steve. "Um, just come with me and we will just pretend we were chatting in here or something okay?"

---

Steve looked around and found some lotion, which he put on his hand and smeared a little over Bucky's chest unceremoniously just so he smelled like that instead of anything else. "Bucky, I'm a terrible liar. I can't go walking up to your sisters like we didn't just do stuff."

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"Just don't blurt out that I just had your dick in my throat and we will be fine," Bucky said. "They already know what sex is anyway." He slipped his shirt on and gave Steve a quick kiss. "Okay, let's go." He opened the door.

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"Bucky, that doesn't mean-" Steve started to argue in a low whisper, but Bucky was already on the
Lilly was unpacking her homework when she saw them. "What's he doing here? Is he paying rent now?" She asked her brother and then smirked over at Becca for approval of her wise crack.

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Becca flicked her in the arm and Bucky put his hands on his hips, "Do you pay rent?" He asked Lilly with heavy sass. "No, you don't. I do. And Steve is my guest. And need I remind you he saved you from the jungle of New York not too long ago."

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"Typical man. Thinks I need saving cause I'm a girl," Lilly said with a flip of her hair.

Steve barely held back a laugh but he managed. "You were two minutes away from crying and you know it," Steve shot back to her. "I could have sold you to the Brooklyn zoo instead. I bet they pay good money for mouthy kids."

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"Plus," Bucky added and moved slightly closer to Steve. "It's got nothing to do with you being a girl and all to do with you being a kid in a big city. If it were me at your age it would have been the same thing." Becca giggled from the other side of the room at that.

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"I don't know. Guess we will never find out," Lilly said, unwilling to admit defeat. She plopped her notebook on the table and took a seat. "So what are you and Mr. Steve doing?" She asked curiously, this time not trying to instigate something.

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"Having a little chat," Bucky said and walked towards the fridge to get some water. "Been a pretty good day, huh, Steve? We listened to some Ramones." Bucky nodded and gestured for Steve to give his input on the day.

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"Yeah," Steve said, his voice going just a little higher in pitch. The girls may not notice but Bucky would. "And we had some fruit," he added. "Talked a little trash about you two," he joked.

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Steve was definitely right. He was horrible at this. Bucky was filling up two glasses of water and trying his best not to look too surprised at Steve. "Yeah, we did talk about you two a lot. Talked about lacrosse, Lilly." Bucky brought the water over to Steve.

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Steve took the glass and fidgeted nervously. "Yeah. Did you know that lacrosse is popular on Long Island?" He asked. "That's not too far from here - it's where all the rich people with cars and back
yards live," he chattered to her, hoping he was playing it cool enough.

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"I know what Long Island is," Lilly sassed back. "Just don't like Long Island."

Becca motioned for Bucky to come over to her and Bucky obeyed. She adjusted his shirt, which was apparently askew enough to be noticeable. Bucky swore in his mind and hoped Becca wouldn't understand the implication. Instead, she looked into his eyes sadly and mouthed 'careful'. She knew exactly how many times Bucky's heart had been broken by some guy who didn't stick around and she didn't want Steve to be just another notch on Bucky's bedpost.

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"How can you not like Long Island?" Steve asked and his eyes drifted over towards Bucky and saw him and Becca having a silent conversation. He saw a sad look in her eyes and he frowned with concern. "Is everything okay over there?"

---

"Uh, yeah." Bucky rubbed his face with his hands. "Becca's just helping me out. Right, Becs?" Bucky gave Steve an apologetic look. Becca was way too used to her brother to not know that he and Steve were together in some way. Bucky figured Becca just didn't want it to be like it was with all the guys before. She and Lilly couldn't handle that again.

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"Alright," Steve murmured. He felt a little out of place now and he was also nervous because these kids were going to know all about him soon enough. "Do you want me to head out?" He asked. Maybe it would be better to wait for some other time or to let Bucky explain it to the girls on his own.

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"No!" Bucky said a little too quickly and cleared his throat. "We've got plans still, right?" He asked referring to talking to the girls. Bucky guessed neither of them were very subtle because the girls were just staring at them with furrowed brows and frowns.

---

Steve looked at Bucky and then at the girls who definitely knew that something was up by now. He nodded and decided he may as well just come out with it. "Yeah we do," he said to Bucky. He looked over to the girls and apologized. "I'm sorry I'm acting funny. Your brother and I - well, we've been dating and I've been too nervous to tell you."

---

Becca and Lilly looked at each other and then from Bucky to Steve. "Is he good to you?" Lilly directed to Bucky then turned to Steve for the answer.

Becca and Bucky both sighed, "Lilly," and rolled their eyes at their predictable sister.
"Uh, well... I believe I am," Steve said, becoming a bit of a nervous idiot. "I cleaned the house and got you all set for school, didn't I? And I made dinner for all of you while he was sleeping." He looked to Bucky to confirm.

Bucky nodded and said, "Steve's good to me. I promise. He isn't like..." Bucky stopped and looked at the ground. "It's not going to be like..." He tried again and looked up to Lilly and then to Becca. He bit his lip nervously. He never really actually apologized for all the people he fucked in their home. He never wanted to talk about it.

Becca piped up then and asked quietly, "If you can promise me, Bucky, that this isn't going to be like before, then I don't have a problem." Sometimes Bucky was surprised by Becca's lack of a bullshit tolerance. She was so quiet that he would forget she had strong opinions like Lilly.

Steve wrapped an arm around Bucky's shoulders and gave him a small squeeze to show his support. He looked over to Becca and said, "I want to be here for all of you. You guys are so important to Bucky and so that means you're important to me now, too."

Becca nodded slowly and looked Steve up and down as he slid his fingers with Bucky's "Are you going to tell Miss Sarah? Or is it just a secret for us?"

Lilly interrupted, "You're not moving in here are you?"

Bucky breathed out in exasperation. "No, Lilly, Steve's got his own place. We just wanted to... I just wanted to tell you both. I hate keeping shit from you and don't you two pretend you didn't already know."

"I'll tell my mom soon. But nobody else besides that knows - and nobody else can know," Steve said. He gave Bucky's hand a squeeze, feeling a mix of vulnerability and happiness that he was out in the open to them. "Also, why would I want to move in here?" He asked. "I found dirty socks under the couch and you don't wash your dishes right," Steve teased.

"Those would be Lilly's socks," Bucky said and made a face. "All those sports produce some really terrible feet odors." Things felt normal. It wasn't like this was some giant reveal for anyone. Steve was probably the only one who this was a big deal for. Bucky looked to Steve and quickly kissed the side of his face because he could.

Steve blushed brightly when Bucky kissed his cheek. He smiled stupidly and hid his face briefly in Bucky's shoulder. He straightened up his posture soon after and then tugged lightly at Bucky's shirt.
"Can we talk in your room?" He asked, making sure that he said it in a way that wouldn't make Bucky worry.

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"Sure, of course." Bucky nodded and turned to the girls. "There are leftover noodles in the fridge you can heat up. Remember I've got the close shift tonight so I'll be leaving in about an hour and a half."

---

Steve walked into the other room and pressed a kiss to Bucky's temple. "That went better than I expected," he admitted. "I was wondering if, uh... I mean, I'm not looking to move in but I was wondering if it would help you out if I made a habit to be around for you and the girls. Making dinners and keeping an eye on them when you're at work and that sort of thing."

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Bucky nodded. "Well, I mean if you want to I don't have a problem with it. You might want to double check with them first, though. You can just ask them if it'd be okay if you hung around sometimes even if I'm not here. Becca will probably be a bit resistant because she remembers more of what I used to be like back then but Lilly will be fine with it."

---

Steve nodded. "I know I can't swoop in and act like I'm a part of the family, but I want to be there for all of you and help any way I can." He brought Bucky's hand up so he could kiss it. "I'll show Becca I can make an honest man out of you," he said with a wink.

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Bucky tried to smile but looked down sadly. "Honestly, Steve, I don't know if she'll ever completely trust me with guys ever again. I'm at least glad Lilly doesn't know as much as Becca does. At least it's the quiet one." Bucky rubbed his hands down Steve's arms.

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Steve cupped Bucky's chin and lifted his head up to give him a kiss. "I'll get her to trust me in due time. And then she'll definitely have to reconsider her stance on your taste in men," he said.

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"Okay, Steve," Bucky said and wrapped his arms around him once more. "I wish neither of us had to work tonight."

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"I wish so, too. But hey, I get my day off tomorrow. That's something to look forward to," Steve said.

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Bucky stood up. "You want to go talk with the girls some more before I need to leave for work?"
Also, if you plan on getting on their good side you shouldn't mention that you haven't seen *Star Wars* yet."

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Steve cuddled up to Bucky where they stood and kissed his cheek. "What do I talk about to them? Will they want to chat with me? I'm like twice their age."

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"Just talk to them about school and their interests. Ask about their friends." Bucky remembered Steve was an only child and probably didn't have much experience with teen girls. "Just be yourself. I like you and that's all that actually matters. Oh, you could talk about me because I'm a great subject!"

Bucky joked excitedly.

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Steve snorted and playfully messed up Bucky's hair. "You are a great subject. And an even better boyfriend." Steve sweetly kissed his lips and then led him back out by the hand to go back to the girls. Lilly would be easier to win over but he was going to have to work more with Becca. "So what are you guys learning in school?"

---

Bucky let go of Steve's hand and went to put on some music. He grabbed for a Bowie record before Lilly shouted, "The Clash, Bucky, '77 self title, please," and then turned to Steve. "I've got a project about World War II I've got to finish by next Monday." She offered as Bucky rummaged through a different box of records for The Clash.

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Steve smiled. Lilly was like a louder version of Bucky in a way. "My granddad fought in World War II," he said. "Did you know the Irish hate the British but they fought in their army to make sure that Hitler didn't win?" His mom always told him how his grandfather complained about that.

---

Lilly lit up. "Hey, so do you know a lot about the war?"

Bucky finally got the music playing and he came back over to them and sat on a chair across the room so he could watch Steve interact with his sisters. "Lilly, maybe if you ask really nice, Steve will help you out with it, huh? It's just a paper isn't it?" Bucky leaned his body so his legs were flopped over the arm of the chair.

---

"I mean, I'm no expert. But my ma told me enough war stories from my grandfather that I think I could help out at least a little," Steve said. He snuck a kiss with Bucky before sitting at the table with Lilly. "What do you have to answer in your paper?" He asked.
Bucky smiled and wanted nothing more than to pull Steve into his lap and snuggle him. "She's got just to write about someone's story from the war. She was going to do a famous general or something but maybe the stories about your grandfather would be better?" Bucky said and reached for his water on the coffee table. He knew he shouldn't be but he couldn't help but think about the next step with Steve. They had just taken one leap today by telling his sisters and with Steve confessing his love and Bucky hoped the next big leap would be either telling Steve's mom or finally getting to have sex with Steve.

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"My granddad is no famous general, but he's a really cool guy. He's still alive, you know. He sent my ma a few letters and I'm sure she would let you borrow one of them that he wrote from the front," Steve offered. He gave Bucky a happy smile, relieved he was getting along with her.

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Lilly thanked Steve because that was perfect for her project then she turned to Bucky. "Okay, Buck, you may date Steve it's fine."

Bucky swung his legs back over the chair and came over to the table. "Excuse me? I may? Who said it was your decision, huh?" He flicked her in the head playfully and smiled at Steve cheekily.

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"You hear that, Buck? I knew you were having doubts before but now that we have Lilly's approval, we're good," Steve joked back. He captured Bucky's hand and kissed it. He spent the rest of the time telling Lilly old war tales from his dad and left out anything that wasn't child friendly. A little later though, Steve knew that it was time for them to get going. "Want me to make dinner before I go?"

---

"Nah, they'll be fine," Bucky said as he was lacing up his boots. He had to walk to the record shop and it took him about ten minutes and he was supposed to clock in in seven minutes. He may have gotten a little distracted with Steve. "They have spaghetti in the fridge and carrots." Bucky made quick rounds to each one of them giving each a kiss to the top of the head including Steve. "Okay, Clint's going to kill me I have to get going."

---

"Alright. I'll see you later, Buck," Steve said. He was disappointed to see him go but he knew the guy had to work. After Bucky left, he wanted to give him a little surprise so he asked the girls what sandwich they wanted for lunch tomorrow and then ran to Bucky's corner shop to get his regular and lunch for the girls. He returned and dropped off the food. Steve had to get going, so he gave the girls his home number and precinct phone number in case of emergency.

---

Bucky was having a pretty slow day at the record shop and Clint was spending his time rearranging the slow rock section. Neither of them had spoken much yet but Bucky knew Clint noticed the way he was acting. He noticed the lighter step that Bucky had - the occasional smile that ghosted his lips for no reason. Clint was just too sneaky a person to come right out and mention it. No, he would
collect some more information first - like a spy.
Steve’s relationship with Bucky only flourished more and more as time went on. Becca was still hard to win over but Lilly almost always had something to talk to him about. Today, Steve had chosen to invite Bucky on a date, this time to a museum where they could at least pose as history buffs. He showed up a little after midday to Bucky’s place.

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"So, where exactly are you taking me, Officer?" Bucky asked and pulled Steve by his belt towards him for a kiss. "You said museum but you never said which one." He ran his fingers up through his hair and pulled it back in a loose ponytail wanting it out of his eyes.

---

"The Brooklyn Museum, of course." Steve found out that there was a temporary exhibit on the history of rock and roll, so he figured it would be a fun outing with Bucky. "Trust me on it. Have I led you wrong yet?"

---

"Not so far, but there is a first time for everything," Bucky said and slipped his jacket on. He kissed Steve on the lips once, then on the jaw, then on the neck. "Can’t we stay in where I can do this to you?" Bucky asked and licked into Steve's mouth.

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Steve let out a soft moan at the way Bucky kissed him. He pressed himself up against the other's body and stroked his hand over Bucky's cheek. "Next time," he promised. "At my place."

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"Okay," Bucky breathed out. "It’s been about seventy-two hours since I’ve had your dick in my mouth and I really, really miss it." Bucky moved his hands down Steve’s back and pocketed them in his back pockets so he could squeeze his ass. "Oh, well, guess we should get going," Bucky said and peeled himself off Steve to head to the door.

---

Steve's face went a bright red. He'd always been so careful about showing Bucky that he loved him and didn't just lust for him but Bucky had no problem telling Steve exactly what he wanted to do with him. "I don't know how that mouth hasn't gotten you into more trouble," he chuckled. He stole one more kiss before heading out the door.
They were standing outside Bucky's door and he was trying to get it to lock when one of his neighbors walked by. "James," He said, "Good day, isn't it?" He didn't let Bucky answer before going on, "I seem to recall you told me your sisters would no longer run up the stairs to get home. I seem to recall you said you'd make sure to tell them to stop. But, it would seem they have kept doing it. They nearly knocked me over the other day, the hooligans."

"Are you finished, Dale?" Bucky asked flatly and folded his arms.

"And who is this I keep seeing about?" Dale asked and held out his hand to Steve. "Finally made an adult friend, James?"

---

Steve frowned when this guy showed up and started criticizing Bucky's sisters for being typical kids. Seriously, who complained about running upstairs? But when the guy offered his hand, Steve smiled and shook it. "I'm Officer Rogers," he said. "The NYPD takes petty complaints very seriously. When I heard talk of two girls running around, well... I had to come here and put an end to that."

---

Bucky cleared his throat and elbowed Steve in the ribs discreetly. "I'll talk to them again, Dale. Anything else?" He hoped desperately that that would be it so he and Steve could get going but he never quite knew with Dale. One day Bucky just invited him into his house and had him sit at the table to complain just because Bucky had bags of groceries to put away.

Dale shook his head and bid the two of them goodbye before turning his back and going into his apartment. While he wasn't looking, Bucky flipped him off for good measure.

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Steve snorted when Bucky flipped the guy off. "Pleasant man," he said sarcastically. Steve didn't think he was particularly mean, but he didn't seem like the life of the party either. "At least tell me your other neighbor is nicer."

---

"Never met her," Bucky said and started down the hall. "She's an artist and a vampire. Never comes out during the day and never talks but is always covered in paint. Only ever seen her in passing and when I waved she looked away quickly. Think she's got anthropophobia or something."

---

"Oh," Steve said. "Well, I guess she's nice, at least. Or not a bad neighbor." He was tempted to throw an arm around Bucky but refrained - just barely. "I need to show you my art sometime," he said. "I think you'd find it neat."

---

Bucky looked to Steve and said, "Steve, there is nothing I'd like more." He wanted to grab his hand and was caught up in a moment of anger because he couldn't. Bucky expected today to be a fun day
but he was so pissed that he wouldn't get to hold Steve close to him at the museum like other couples would be doing. Also, he wasn't sure if it was in Steve's plan for the date to go back to his place and goof around. Bucky hoped so. He wasn't lying when he said he missed Steve's dick.

---

Steve got a bashful but happy look on his face when Bucky said that. He was going to say something back but he heard a distant shout from a few blocks away. He froze like a dog that'd just seen a rabbit and strained his ears to listen. "Did you hear that?" Steve started to walk in large strides towards the source of the noise.

---

"Steve, what... wait!" Bucky shouted after him and ran to catch up. Steve wasn't paying any attention to him now and was only quickening his pace towards the noise. Bucky was confused and worried about what was happening and about the hard scary look that came over Steve's face.

---

Steve had zeroed in and went from dopey boyfriend right to cop-mode and sure enough, he found a bunch of young teens beating down a kid with darker skin. "Hey!" He shouted. He ran right at them and the kids scattered like roaches from light. Steve was able to catch one of them by the back of his shirt. "I'm an officer of the law, son, what's your name?"

---

"Fuck!" Bucky shouted as he saw what was going down. He didn't want to interrupt Steve doing his job so he ran over to the injured kid. "Oh my god. Kid, are you okay? What happened? It's okay, we're going to help you." Bucky helped the guy sit up and told him to just take it easy as he gave him a once over for any broken bones he could detect.

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The kid had a busted nose and cuts all over him. He looked like he was just barely holding back tears. "I didn't steal anything, I swear," he said to Bucky.

"This spic stole my watch!" The other kid exclaimed at Steve.

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"Watch your fucking mouth!" Bucky shouted at the other kid and turned to the kid by him and apologized on behalf of the other boy.

---

"Do you have any proof of that?" Steve asked with his hands bunched in the kid’s collar.

The kid gestured wildly at the smaller boy by Bucky's side. "Yeah, just look at him!"

---

"You didn't take his watch, right? I want to fight for you but you can't make an ass of me if you actually did it," Bucky said as diplomatically as he could.
The kid shook his head. "I didn't, I swear!"

Steve couldn't lose his temper since he was a cop. He kept a good grip on the bully and pulled out his pager to call one of his on duty coworkers. "You're going to take a ride to the precinct and have papers filed for assault. There, you can call your mom or dad."

Bucky sat back on his heels and breathed out a long sigh. Neither kid looked like he was older than fourteen. So much for a relaxing day out. "Here, Kid, Bucky took the smaller kid’s hand and helped him up. What's your name then, huh?" He asked and gripped his shoulder. He knew what it was like to fight your way out of tough situations. Bucky knew what it was like to get beaten up. He felt really bad for the kid. He was probably in pain and embarrassed.

"Manuel," he said meekly. He ducked his head and wiped his bloody nose on his shirt. "Can I go home now?" He asked. Manuel was thankful for their help but didn't want to stick around for the cops to show up.

"I can't believe you're taking this spic's side!" The other boy shouted.

Steve gave him a shake. "Say that word again and I'll write you up for hate speech too."

Bucky piped up the same time Steve did but was much angrier, shouting, "What did I tell you about watching your damn mouth?" Bucky wasn't sure if Manuel was allowed to leave or not. He kind of wanted to take him to the hospital just to be sure nothing was wrong - no broken ribs or something. "Steve, can Manuel go or do we need him to call home at the station?"

"Keep an eye on this kid and I'll take a statement from Manuel," Steve said. He made sure Bucky had a grip on the offending kid before he came over to Manuel. "Hey, Kiddo. I'm a police officer, so you can tell me what happened and I'll let the fellas know at the precinct. Then we can walk you home or to the hospital if you want."

Manuel looked back to Bucky. Clearly, he wasn't interested in talking to Steve. He was probably afraid of the cops and could tell Bucky wasn't one. Bucky nodded once to indicate it was fine for him to talk to Steve. "I don't really know what happened. I was just walking home and they saw me and yelled at me. I ran but they were faster and caught me."

Steve pulled out a writing pad he always kept in his pocket. "And do you know these kids at all? Are they in the same class as you?" He gave the kid a gentle look. "You're not going to get in trouble for
telling the truth. You don't have to be scared of them."

---

Bucky looked on and kept quiet. He didn't want to disturb Steve in his element. Bucky's adrenaline was still high and he couldn't help the overwhelming sense that came over his body about how sexy Steve looked being a big good cop.

Manuel spoke again slowly, "They are on my soccer team."

---

Steve's face fell. "Oh, I'm so sorry." He motioned for him to sit down. "If you wait there, we can take you home soon." Steve asked Bucky to sit with Manuel and spent the rest of the time scolding the other kid until his coworkers showed up.

---

Bucky sat in silence next to Manuel, occasionally looking over at him to make sure everything was still okay. Once the cops got there, Steve spent several minutes explaining the situation to his fellow officers. A few times, one of them would nod towards Bucky and Bucky knew they were discussing him. He wondered what Steve told them to explain why he and Bucky just so happened to be here at the time. He wondered if he even claimed he knew Bucky or if he said he was a random stranger who helped out.

---

They patiently packed the swearing, kicking kid into the back of the car. Steve walked back to the two and said, "He's got it taken care of and I gave him the statement." He turned towards Manuel and asked, "Do you want to go home or to the hospital?"

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Manuel immediately said he wanted to go home and also said he could walk himself. Steve adamantly refused to let him but Bucky offered, "Hey, he's a smart kid. He told me he only lives a few blocks down and I don't think he'll have any more trouble on the way back." Bucky stated it more like a question so if Steve out-rightly told them no, then it would be fine.

---

Steve wasn't all right with letting the poor kid go on his own, but when Bucky told him to let him go, he sighed. Steve wrote down his home number and passed it to Manuel. "If you or your mom get any grief, I want you to call me, okay?" He let him go once he took the paper. Steve watched the kid sadly as he walked away. "Poor kid. I can't believe his teammates did that."

---

"He's different from them," Bucky said and assessed Steve. "Teenagers who don't understand 'different' just beat it up instead. He's probably a better soccer player and they all got jealous. He'll be okay. He seems like a smart kid. And I think you scared the others too bad for them to try again."
Steve looked back in the kid's direction once more before nudging Bucky lightly and heading towards the museum again. "It isn't fair," he said. "We're a nation of immigrants. This kid should be supported by his friends. It's just... incredible in the worst way."

---

Bucky nodded and started to walk on. He realized then how shaky his body was from the intense adrenaline spurt he had had during the whole exchange. He tried his best to walk the same pace as Steve and not look like he was wobbling. He had a couple rushes of memories come to him about being attacked by the baseball team in high school for 'turning their pitcher gay' - to which he responded that he was “…no pitcher, more like a catcher, if you know what I mean.”

---

Steve could tell that Bucky was feeling off. He reached out to gently hold his shoulder, figuring that was safe enough that people wouldn't stare. "You okay?" He asked. "You're shaking, Buck." Steve was seething, but this was by far milder than some of the stuff he'd seen as an officer.

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"Uh, yeah, I'm good," Bucky said and walked a few more steps before saying, "A-actually, can we sit down for a second? I'm..." Bucky found the nearest bench and slumped down in it. He raised his hands up to his face and they were shaking so hard they practically vibrated.

---

Steve had a worried look on his face. He rushed over to sit down next to Bucky where he rested and he rubbed his back gently. "It's alright, Bucky, take your time." He had to pull his hand away when he saw some people turning the corner. He didn't want to appear too friendly with Bucky.

---

Bucky looked over to Steve and wanted to lay his head on his shoulder. "I'm sorry, Steve. That was just so overwhelming." He looked at Steve's worried eyes and felt incredibly safe with him. He rambled on, "It just made me think about when I was in high school and also what would happen if Becca or Lilly was in a situation like that and maybe they have been and I never knew and you were pretty intense and scary but also really fucking hot and I'm just overwhelmed."

---

Steve really wanted to show Bucky the exhibit, but the poor guy looked so wound up right now and he knew he needed a bit of comforting too. "Well, I have to be intense as an officer," he said. "People don't listen to easygoing cops." He sighed and looked into Bucky's eyes. "You want to go to my place for a bit? The museum can wait."

---

"No," Bucky said and forced himself to get up. "You planned this day out and I'm going to have to just calm the fuck down and enjoy myself." He stopped to think for a second. "Although, I might want to stop by a phone and call the girls to make sure they are fine."
"You don't have to force yourself to calm down for my sake," Steve said. "You're practically a dad, Buck. My ma would sit home and cry if she saw some plane go down cause she imagined how she would feel if I were up there when that happened." He tried comforting Bucky as best as he could. "We can stop for a phone call."

"I just need to hear their voices and then I'll be fine," Bucky said and started walking again. "Also, Steve," he said with a harsh edge, "If you ever want me to blow you again, don't ever call me a dad again. I feel old enough already." He made a grumpy side-glance at Steve so he would know he was mostly being a good sport about it.

He started dialing the number of their landline. He waited for a few rings and when no one was picking up he gave Steve a quick worried look and his heart started to race. Then there was a click and Becca's soft voice asked, "Hello?"

Bucky immediately relaxed and let out a huge sigh of relief. "Hey, Becs, how's it going?"

Steve was worried no one would pick up and Bucky would worry without need, but he saw the sigh of relief and was thankful that one of the girls answered.

"Bucky?" Becca sounded confused. Her brother had only just left the place. "It's... going alright. You're not already on your way back, are you?"

"Nah," Bucky said, "We just had a bit of an incident and I wanted to call and make sure you both were okay." He looked to Steve for reassurance. He wanted to joke to Becca that Steve had said he was practically a dad but he was worried it would make her dislike Steve since their dad wasn't around to fill his role anymore.

"An incident?" Becca asked. "Steve didn't do anything did he?" She sounded genuinely concerned and getting defensive for Bucky's sake. There was a faint meow in the background that got to the 'me' part and Becca repeated, “Did he?” Before the 'ow' part came.

"The fuck was that?" Bucky asked. "No, Steve's fine. Saved the day. Do you have a cat in the apartment?" Bucky said hurriedly. "Where's Lilly? Did she bring a cat home?" If Dale got wind of an unpermitted animal in the apartment, he would have a hay day.

"Bucky, Lilly knows better than to bring home a cat," Becca scolded. "She's got the TV on really loud." Neither of which was a lie. Becca and Lilly often fed this stray cat and if they happened to leave the window open while Bucky wasn't home and it happened to jump in...
Bucky furrowed his brow and thought for a minute. "Hold on, Becca." He lowered the phone so she
couldn't hear. "Steve, you're a cop. Find out if she's lying about having a cat in the apartment." He
thrust the phone at him and took a step closer so he could hear.

"What?" Steve squawked quietly, frowning when Bucky thrust the phone at him. "Hell, no, I'm
trying to get on her good side. I'm not going to rat her out if she's lying," he said to Bucky in a
hushed tone.

"You want to get on my bad side?" Bucky whispered back and shoved the phone back towards him.
"Just figure it out and then I'll decide what to do, yeah? Dale could have the landlord charge us for a
pet this month if he finds out."

Steve grimaced as he took the phone and slowly held it up to his ear. "Becca?" He asked. "It's Steve.
Did you bring a cat into the apartment?"

"...No."

Steve glanced at Bucky briefly and then asked, "Is there a cat in the apartment?"

"...I don't have to answer that."

Steve nodded his head to Bucky.

Bucky took the phone back from Steve and said, "Becca, you get that cat out of there. We can't
afford extra on rent this month. Steve and I will be back later. Put the cat out." He hung up then and
looked to Steve and sighed.

"Bucky-" Becca started to protest, annoyed, but the phone cut off. She really didn't see the problem
with letting the cat in for a couple hours every now and again, but whatever. She wasn't going to risk
getting into more trouble.

"Well," Steve said awkwardly. "At least you know they're alright."

Bucky rubbed his face with his hands. "They better listen to me and put that cat out." He sighed and
pocketed his hands. "I'd love for them to be able to have animals like we did when we were at our
parents’ place but I just can't afford the upcharge to keep one."
Steve paused for a moment and said, "You said it was 200 a month, right?" He shrugged his shoulders up and said, "I could... I could give you that if you wanted. You don't even have to tell the girls it's from me."

"No," Bucky said flatly. "Thank you, though. I can't take that. They will have to deal with it. Maybe if I can get them a VCR soon they won't be so mad. But I can't take your money like that every month, Steve."

"Buck," Steve said softly. "You're not taking my money. Your landlord is. And if you think they'd be happier with a pet, then it's no question to me on whether I want to do it or not."

"Well, my landlord can't have your money, either," Bucky said, "And I don't know if it would make them happier. It would probably just end up being one more thing I have to take care of if they don't remember to feed it and shit."

"Alright," Steve said. "I just... I wish I could take the weight off your shoulders, Buck. There's nothing that would make me happier than making your life better and easier." Steve had already cried to his damn mom over all the things that Bucky had to deal with.

Bucky squared his shoulders and stopped Steve on the sidewalk. "Then take me to a nice museum, show me a good time, then take me someone private and ruin me." Bucky bit his lip. "That'll help with the stress."

Steve blinked dumbly at him and then nodded. "Oh...okay," he said. They arrived at the museum a few minutes later. Steve dragged Bucky past the art exhibits straight to the rock and roll history setup that they had. "I saw this in the paper and knew I had to show it to you."

"Wow, fuck yeah," Bucky breathed when they walked into the exhibit. Bucky immediately forgot about Steve and started towards a large picture of The Rolling Stones that had a lot of history and interview quotes underneath.

Steve couldn't even be offended at Bucky abandoning him. He knew how much of a nerd the guy was with this stuff, so it came with the territory. He followed Bucky around, interested in the history behind all the bands but not as much as Bucky was.
Bucky had his nose stuck in every word as he read. He would nod and make little ‘Mhmms’ when he saw something he knew and would occasionally whisper, "Huh, didn't know that." He came to a collage of pictures of The Clash and wished he could take a picture of it for Lilly.

Steve quickly found himself more interested in watching Bucky enjoy the place than he was in the exhibits, themselves. He loved how Bucky stuck his nose right against the display case to read the text and how his eyes lit up whenever he learned something new. After about an hour of Bucky almost ignoring him, Steve came up to his side. "Enjoying yourself?" He teased.

"Steve, this was perfect," Bucky said and reached for his hand before pulling back quickly. He silently cursed himself for being so careless. "Anyway, you really do know me. This was exactly what I needed for a fun day out. I should try to bring the girls here one day before it's gone. Lilly loves The Clash."

Steve stood stock still when Bucky reached for his hand and was grateful that Bucky quickly realized what he was doing. "You should," Steve agreed. "And I bet you'll enjoy reading all of this. Again. I don't think there was a single letter you didn't look at."

"Well," Bucky said, "I did sort of skim over that section for The Police. I know you love them but they're just okay, Steve." Bucky chuckled. "Anything else we want to see in the rest of the museum?"

"I bring you to an awesome exhibit and you thank me by stomping on my favorite band," Steve said dramatically then lowered his voice and added, "I'm a little more interested in ruining you than looking around here."

Bucky cleared his throat. "I am interested in being ruined, Officer. Especially after such a dramatic opening to our day, I could use something relieving." Bucky followed Steve towards the exit and watched his ass move as he walked. He was looking forward to getting his hands him as soon as possible.

Steve blushed at the knowledge that he had such an effect on Bucky. He walked out of the place with him so they could head back to his apartment. He'd decided that they weren't going to ever do anything at Bucky's place so the girls didn't have to feel uncomfortable. "So, what are you thinking for today?"
"Do you mean what am I thinking of doing to you? Or what are we having for dinner?" Bucky sassed at Steve. He had kind of hoped Steve was ready to go all the way but he also didn't want to pressure him if he wasn't. Maybe he could casually bring it up and ask him if he thought he was ready for it. Bucky was happy enough just blowing him again but he did miss full-on fucking.

"You know what I mean," Steve huffed, giving Bucky a slightly grumpy look that was still fond. He knew Bucky liked breaking his balls over talking about sex and things that related to it. "What do you want to do?"

"How about we wait until we get to your place then we can discuss it," Bucky offered. They were only about two blocks away and Bucky didn't really feel like asking Steve on the street if he was ready for sex.

"Fair enough," Steve said. He walked the rest of the way with a nervous sort of excitement. When they got into his place, he pulled down the blinds and walked over to give Bucky a huge hug and a kiss. "Been wanting to do that since we left yours."

Bucky pulled him back for another kiss and then another before letting him go. "Today was a whirlwind," Bucky said. "Saved a kid. Almost passed out. There was a cat. Ignoring you at the museum. And now here we are." He slipped his hands underneath Steve's shirt and felt the ridges of his muscles.

Steve made a happy little noise when Bucky touched him. "I'll admit that this was one of my more eventful dates. I can't promise they all will be this packed," he said. Steve cupped the sides of Bucky's face and drew him in for a slow kiss. "You look adorable when you're all into your music," he said. "It's so much fun to watch you."

Bucky leaned his forehead against Steve's for a moment and then rested against his shoulder. "Thank you for taking me to the museum, Steve. I really loved the exhibit. I wouldn't have been able to go if it weren't for you and I appreciate you thinking of me."

Steve smiled and stroked his hand over Bucky's hair, doing his best to not mess it up. "I'm always thinking about you," he said sweetly. "Don't know how you're not tired after running through my mind all day."
Bucky laughed against Steve's neck and said, "You big dweeb. I'm starting to feel really grateful I met you. And, ironically, we have Lily's antics to thank for that."

"I'm glad I met you too," Steve murmured. "You make me so happy. Life was a little too boring without you in it."

Wrapping his arms tightly around Steve, Bucky asked, "I'm a little hungry. Do you have some cereal?"

Steve snorted. "How about I cook you a real meal?" He was dumbfounded by the Barnes family obsession with cereal.

"I'm fine with cereal unless you just feel like making something." Bucky trailed his fingers across Steve's back and hummed against his neck. "I was thinking if I eat something easy and fast then it would quicker that we could get to something fun. You did promise to ruin me, didn't you?"

Steve smirked and pressed a few more kisses to Bucky's face. "Spaghetti takes ten minutes and it's more nutritional than cereal. I'm sure your poor old dick can wait a few extra minutes, Buck."

"My poor dick has been waiting all fucking day." Bucky slumped down into a chair and watched Steve work around the kitchen to get what he needed. Steve was tall but some of the higher shelves he still had to reach for and his shirt rode up a bit when he did. Bucky wanted to lick his lower back when it peeked out to greet him.

"It can wait a little more," Steve said in a no-nonsense tone that still managed to be gentle. He was a stickler about not having junk for meals. Steve could feel Bucky's gaze on him and pointedly ignored it while he pottered about making their meal. "Do you always eat cereal for whatever?"

"Yeah, usually. Cereal is easy and it's cheap." Bucky flipped through a novel that was sitting on Steve's table absently. "We usually have cereal, noodles, fruit, toast and eggs, sometimes waffles, microwave chicken." Bucky couldn't cook for shit. He could boil water and make noodles and that was about it.
"That's that. I'm cooking for you guys. I can make a week's portions on the weekend and then all
you have to do is heat it up when it's dinner time. You freeze it until you want to eat it," Steve said
and drained the pasta and added sauce.

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"Steve..." Bucky started but then decided he wasn't going to win this one so he just sighed and
crossed his arms. He did like watching Steve cook so maybe it would be nice. He could have Steve
over while the girls were at school and he could help Steve cook if he was willing to teach him.

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"Hush, you're getting proper food," Steve said. He made a healthy helping of dinner for Bucky and
took a seat with his own plate. He leaned over to kiss his cheek before digging into his food.

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Bucky smiled up at him and thanked him for making dinner before he started wolfing down his food
as well. He didn't like admitting it but Steve was a good cook and the food was delicious and he was
looking forward to having meals from him for a while.

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Steve gave appreciative, little looks at Bucky while they ate. Bucky always ate like he was running
out of time. Steve found it endearing and he leaned over to give him little kisses here and there.
When he finished his plate, Steve stood up so he could wash off their dishes. "Much better than
cereal, yeah?"

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"Yes, but I still hold my belief that cereal is good for anytime food. And you can't sway me on that." Bucky came up behind Steve and hugged his back while he washed dishes. "Can I help?"

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Steve hummed and leaned back into Bucky's chest. "It's okay," he said. "I'll only be a few minutes.
It'll be nice if you keep holding me." Once he finished up the dishes he turned and pecked Bucky's
lips.

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Bucky hummed into the kiss and smiled at Steve. "You're really cute, Officer." Bucky felt really
lucky in this moment. He got to be with Steve who was so good to him. And they had told his sisters
and they were basically okay with it. Everything was pretty much going well.

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Steve picked Bucky up and hooked his arms under Bucky's ass as he brought him to the bedroom.
"You aren't half bad looking, yourself," Steve said in a flirty way.

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Bucky was gently dropped on the bed and Steve loomed over him. Bucky desperately wanted to get at Steve's cock but he also wanted to ask Steve if he was ready for more. "Steve... I want... I want to ask you something," Bucky said shyly. "And your answer can be 'no' and I won't mind at all."

---

Steve started kissing down Bucky's neck and he was about to take his clothes off when he heard that shy tone. Bucky was never shy when it came to this stuff. He looked up and cupped the side of Bucky's face. "You can ask me anything, Buck."

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"I was wondering if you were..." Bucky stopped for a moment. "Well, I guess I have two questions." Bucky pulled Steve close to him and cuddled against his arm before pulling back to ask, "You're a virgin, right?"

---

Steve kind of had an idea where this conversation was going but didn't want to open his mouth and assume Bucky's questions. "Yeah, I am," Steve said, a little embarrassed but hiding it well.

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Bucky nuzzled back into him, "Okay." He tried to stay calm but something about the whole situation was getting Bucky really worked up. He would be the very first person to fuck Steve Rogers. Assuming, that is, Steve let him be the first person to have sex with him. Bucky's brain was shooting off primal signals that he would be the first and only person to be with Steve in that way. He didn't plan on getting rid of Steve anytime soon and something about knowing he would be the only one to touch Steve sexually was really overwhelming.

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Steve had a bit of a blush on his face that wasn't just from arousal. He stroked his hand over Bucky's chest before slipping his it under his shirt to touch him affectionately. He nudged Bucky slightly to get him to look up so he could pepper a few kisses onto his face. "You said you had two questions," he prompted cautiously.

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"Yes." Bucky was distracted by Steve's hands on him and the bulge in his pants that had been being ignored for several minutes now. "Steve, Babe, I wanted to know if you thought – and, again, it's okay if the answer is 'no' - if maybe you were ready to... make love with me?" Bucky bit his lip in anticipation and looked up at Steve with hooded eyes.

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Bucky looked so good right now. Steve laid down next to him but kept feeling up his torso, unable to keep his hands off him. "Can you promise me something, Buck?" He asked. "I want to... but I only want to if this isn't just fooling around." He kissed the curve of his jaw. "I love you. I don't need you to love me back right now, but... I just need you to promise that you want this to be long term."
Wiggling as close to Steve as he could, Bucky said, "Steve, I don't plan on getting rid of you unless you say it's over. I know you say it's okay that I don't say 'I love you' yet. And I'm very, very grateful that you don't want to pressure me like that. And I don't want to pressure you into sex either if you aren't ready. If you want to wait, that's fine. I can tell you I am getting closer and closer to saying it every day. I just have to be cautious. If I didn't have to worry about the girls and their feelings and needs then it would be so much different." Bucky breathed in deeply. "Steve, I'll wait for you. I'll wait a long time until you are ready because I believe this," He gestured between the two of them, "and you are worth it."

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Steve pressed himself against Bucky and couldn't stop looking into his eyes as he spoke so honestly. He only looked down when he reached to grab Bucky's hand and bring it to his lips to kiss it. "I want to," he insisted softly, looking nervous but eager. "But, um..." he started awkwardly. "I mean. Are you usually, uh... giving or taking?"

---

Bucky's heart started to race. This was happening. This was happening with Steve. His whole body couldn't contain itself. "Honestly, Steve, I like going either way. It's whatever you are more comfortable with. And if you want to try it one way tonight and the other way some other time I'm fine with that."

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"Can I, uh... can I be the one giving today?" Steve asked. He didn't really feel sexy with that sort of awkward way of asking, so he tried to save the mood a little by dragging his fingers lower and groping Bucky's balls through his pants.

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Bucky stuttered at the feeling but said, "Yes, you may. I'll teach you, okay?" He cupped Steve's ass and nuzzled his head into his neck.

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Steve pushed Bucky's pants down and nibbled at the shell of his ear. "I know how sex works, Dummy, I ain't that much of a virgin," he laughed. He knew Bucky was trying to be encouraging, though.

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"You know what to do to get me ready, Steve? Don't want you hurting me, now." Bucky relaxed into Steve's touches and felt the slip of fabric over his skin as Steve started undressing him. His heart was pounding out of his chest like he was the virgin and he couldn't wait to get Steve inside.

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"Well, duh. I shove everything all in at once on the count of three," Steve said in a know-it-all tone but then smirked to show he was just messing with him. "I saw the way you've been looking at me," he murmured as he reached to his bed stand for lube and a condom. "I went shopping." He gave
Bucky a happy smile as he set them on the mattress.

"You already planned for this, Steve?" Bucky asked and captured his mouth in a harsh kiss. "That is so hot." Another slow kiss. "I need you, Steve. I've wanted this so long. Please."

"Well I wasn't going to let us be unprepared," Steve said breathily and moaned into the kiss. He dragged his hand down Bucky's front and rubbed circles over the inside of Bucky's thighs before grabbing the lube again and hastily pouring some on his fingers. Hearing Bucky say he needed him did things to him. "Tell me if I need to slow down."

"I've done this before. I'm good," Bucky grunted out. "Just go slow with the first and massage a lot, okay?" He moved his ass down the bed a little so he would be closer to Steve and he spread his legs out.

Steve let out a short whine when he saw Bucky spread his legs for him. "You're so sexy, Bucky," he breathed out. Steve looked him over, taking his eyes from top to bottom before he pressed a slicked finger against Bucky's hole. He teased it a little, circling the tip around the rim a few times before slowly pushing in.

Bucky keened and sat up a little when Steve pushed his finger in. "And, you're entirely sure about this, Steve?" He stuttered out. "Just need to know this is what you want and you aren't just doing it for me." He reached a hand out to feel Steve's chest as he moved his finger around inside him.

"I'm sure," Steve said. "I want you, Buck." He couldn't take his eyes off him. He pressed kisses all down Bucky's neck and across his collarbones. He moved his finger freely inside of Bucky and once he could see him get impatient, he added a second.

"Ugh, fuck," Bucky said in a desperate whisper and squirmed on the bed. "It's been a while since someone's been inside me, Babe, I am so glad it's you. I'm so happy I'm with you. Only you, Steve." Bucky was going to go on but suddenly there were three fingers and he couldn't speak anymore.

"I'll take care of you, Sweetheart," Steve said softly. God, Bucky looked so fucking good beneath him. He watched the man squirm as he opened him up with three fingers. Once he got the go-ahead, he pulled his fingers out and tore the condom packaging open. Steve's hands shook a little in excitement as he put it on and bit his bottom lip before settling back between Bucky's legs and angling Bucky's hips up a bit more. "I've got you," he promised, lining himself up and slowly
pushing in.

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Bucky knew how big Steve was from the times he had sucked him dry but he wasn't quite ready for it when it was pushed inside him. Steve was incredibly gentle, though, and tentatively started pushing in and out with slow meaningful movements. Bucky knew exactly what Steve must have been feeling. Bucky's own first time was a little bizarre but also fascinating. He was glad he got to share this with Steve.

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It was so overwhelming. Steve's mind clouded and he didn't even try to stop the moan that left him. "Oh my God, Bucky," he gasped out. He didn't stop moving but he was nothing but gentle with him even though he wanted more. "You feel so good. Christ," he swore, leaning down to claim Bucky's lips in a heated kiss.

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Bucky was a little surprised at the language Steve used just because he said anything like it so infrequently. "You can go harder, Steve. Not gonna break me, I promise." Bucky wanted to feel it. He wanted to feel it deep inside and harsh. He wanted to be sore the next day and know it was Steve who did it.

---

Steve dragged his nails down Bucky's sides until his hands rested on his hips. He gripped tightly to hold him steady as he started to thrust into him in earnest, making the mattress creak under them. "Fucking hell, Buck," he breathed out. Every time he buried himself inside of Bucky, Steve would roll his hips upward and force Bucky's ass into the air an inch or so to fuck him even deeper.

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Bucky gripped the mattress tight and moved with Steve. The only thing he could think was a stream of 'finally, fuck, Steve, love, more, please, need, come' as he felt every thrust into him. Steve's dick managed to find his prostate easily and he paid attention to every hit. He reached for his own dick to start jerking himself while Steve was deep inside. Being Steve's first time fucking, Bucky wasn't sure how long he would last and he really wanted to come with Steve.

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Steve took one of Bucky's hands and laced their fingers together before pinning it over Bucky's head. He smiled at Bucky, moaning in his ear about how amazing he felt but as he felt himself get closer to orgasm, he stopped talking and his thrusts got more erratic. When he came, he rode out his orgasm, shuddering as he slammed himself into Bucky one last time.

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Bucky jolted when Steve came and he felt a rush of pride come over him. A couple more pulls on his dick sent him over the edge as well and he was coming on his stomach and hands. He brought the hand up to Steve's mouth and had him suck the come from his fingers as he watched with sleepy eyes. He could almost feel himself falling more in love with Steve.
Steve was quick to suck and lick Bucky's fingers clean. He didn't feel like pulling out of Bucky yet and he felt so goddamn happy. He wiped some of the come off of Bucky's belly and rubbed it onto his boyfriend's nipple. "You look good when you're fucked out."

"I feel good when I'm fucked out," Bucky mumbled and ran his fingers through his long hair. "How do you feel? Are you okay? Was this okay?" Bucky really hoped Steve was doing okay and didn't regret losing his virginity to him.

Steve peppered kisses all over Bucky's face. "It felt amazing, Buck. It's... it was better than I could've ever imagined." He grinned and settled down next to Bucky. "You're lucky I was too afraid to have sex before they legalized sodomy here. And I haven't had my eye on someone since."

"Ugh, gross," Bucky said with a crinkled up nose. "Please don't call it that. Makes me feel disgusting." Bucky rolled so he was pressed to Steve's side and he kissed a line across his shoulder to his collarbone. "Thanks for doing that with me, Steve. Thanks for choosing me to do it with for the first time."

"Well that's the legal term for it," Steve said. "And what God calls it. So what? Sodom-me. Sodom-you. I'll sodom all day." He smiled dumbly at his joke and kept smiling because Bucky was so adorable.

"Just," Bucky huffed out, "Just say anal or so help me, Steve. He tried to tickle Steve's sides and was met with absolutely no response. "You're a fucking rock," he said with a disappointed edge.

"Sodom-anal," Steve bargained. He smirked when Bucky failed at tickled him. "Come on, a cop can't be ticklish. What'll I do if a perp tries to tickle his way out of trouble?" He asked.

"I couldn't be a cop, then," Bucky said and added quickly, "And don't you fucking dare tickle me because I will leave this bed immediately." As much as he wanted to stay here with Steve forever, he knew he had to get going back home eventually. The girls may or may not still have a kitten with them and he also needed to get them food.

"Nah, you're too nice to be a cop," Steve said. "And your hair is too long to be a cop." He pet a hand
over Bucky's chest and looked up at him with a lovesick expression. "You make a better music nerd anyway."

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"You love that I'm a music nerd," Bucky defended and ran his hand through his too long hair. "But you are right about my hair." He looked at his watch. "You want to go to my place soon? The girls have been alone too long."

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Steve pouted at the thought of having to move but he didn't want Bucky to have to worry about the girls. "I suppose. They could've invited a whole pride of kittens by now."

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"That's is exactly what I am fearing," Bucky said and moved to get up. "We'll be doing this again, Steve," he added, giving a quick kiss to Steve's forehead.

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Steve grinned brightly when Bucky promised more. "I count on it." When Steve got up to get dressed, he practically strutted without realizing it. Apparently, the 'just had sex' walk was a real thing.

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"You okay there, Officer? Looks like you're a bit big for your britches at the moment." Bucky chuckled as he finished pulling his clothes on. He was just a little sore but in all the best ways.

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Steve gave Bucky a confused look. He looked down at himself, trying to figure out what Bucky meant because Steve hadn't taken notice at all to the way he walked. "What, do I have a bulge showing?" Steve adjusted himself in his pants.

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Bucky laughed, "No, never mind, Babe. You're so cute." Bucky grabbed Steve's hand and pulled him in for a kiss. "Are you going to be able to be cool around the girls? Not going to be painfully awkward like last time?"

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"No promises," Steve said. "I can't become sneaky overnight. You think Becca won't like me cause I had sex with you?" He asked, getting a nervous look on his face. Steve made sure he had everything in order before heading towards the door.

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Bucky followed him saying, "Becca will be fine. Just don't announce it and everything will be okay. She probably assumed we've been having sex this whole time so..." Bucky thought about his sisters.
He really wanted them both to like Steve. He didn’t plan on Steve leaving anytime soon so they were going to have to see him a lot for the foreseeable future. "Don’t worry about what Becca thinks too much."

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Steve looked scandalized when Bucky said Becca probably assumed that they’ve been having sex this whole time. "But I wouldn’t ever do that without loving someone first," he said. Steve stepped out of the door and lowered his voice. "I can't help but worry. They're an important part of your life. I want them to be an important part of mine, too."

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"Well, maybe you wouldn't, but that's not what Becca has seen from me and since she doesn't know you that well..." Bucky grunted, "It's fine, honest. They are important but what they think can't be too big of a deal otherwise we would never be happy and always be fretting about what they would say." Bucky knew from experience what it was like to constantly need reassurance from his family that they still loved him. He was responsible for his sisters and their wellbeing and he was no longer just the older brother - he had to be the authority. Being the authority was hard and made them dislike him a lot sometimes. Steve was right... he was practically a dad.

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"Are you sure?" Steve asked. "I don't want them to resent you cause they don't like me and you're with me." He paused and said, "And for the record, if they ever do give you some sort of ultimatum and say they don't want you dating me anymore, you got to choose them over me."

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"Steve..." Bucky stopped and bit his lip, turning to Steve he said, "They aren't going to resent me or you or be angry or anything. They want me to be happy. And Becca just needs proof that you are a good influence on me. Lilly already likes you." He rubbed his hand down Steve’s arm in a comforting gesture quickly. "And they would never give me an ultimatum. We are family. If they haven’t disowned me at my worst they won’t do it now." He smiled, "Besides, they have nowhere else to go - no one else to take care of them. They need me as much as I need them."

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Steve just had a habit of preparing for the worst and he did that before he was on the force. His mom always accused him of being dramatic. "Alright... alright, sorry," Steve apologized. "And how can Becca not see I'm a good influence on you? You showered today, right? There. Good influence."

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"Steve, I shower every day," Bucky said with a cheeky grin. They started walking again. "She just had to deal with too many..." Bucky hated talking about how he was before. But it was a big part of his story, and it was important to explain things to Steve. "...too many bad guys, you could say. Too many guys who used me and I let them. She just couldn't handle that again."

---

Steve still wasn't happy with the mistakes Bucky made but he was past the point of scolding him.
Bucky was already sorry. "You were in a tough place. You don't have to worry about that with me," he said. "There isn't going to be a day that passes that I don't show you how much I love you." Steve kept his voice quiet so no one would overhear.

"Okay, I believe you," Bucky said. He yawned, a little tired after such an eventful day. "I think I have some pancake mix I could make the girls for dinner," he mused to himself. "They better have gotten that cat out of there, Steve." They rounded the street corner and were just a few blocks from Bucky's place.

"Pancakes for dinner?" Steve asked incredulously. "That's breakfast, not dinner." He thought for a moment then laughed. "Also, if you think about it, it's literally a Schrödinger's cat since we don't know if they still have it or not."

"Schrödinger's cat implies that there may or may not be a dead cat in my apartment and I'd rather that not be the case," Bucky said. They tromped up the stairs to get to Bucky's, "And, Steve, we like breakfast for dinner at the Barnes'. You're just a food snob, I think."

Steve pouted when Bucky put his foot down on the whole 'breakfast for dinner' thing. He considered before saying, "Fine, but I better see at least three of the food groups involved. That means fruits or meats or eggs."

"We have apples." Bucky shrugged and unlocked the door. It was the moment of truth as to whether there was a cat around. Part of Bucky really wished they could have an animal for the girls. The rest of him was logical about it and knew that they couldn't afford it and he would be the one feeding and cleaning up after it anyway.

Becca had thankfully kicked the cat out of the apartment but she still didn't look too happy about it. She and Lilly were sitting on the couch watching TV. "Can we find a way to get Dale evicted?" Lilly asked casually as Bucky walked through the door.

"'Hello, Bucky,'" Bucky said in a mock Lilly voice, "'How was your day? Anything crazy happen like with the police, for instance? Did you go to a cool music exhibit?'" He folded his arms and answered his fake Lilly, "Yes, it was overwhelming - I almost had an adrenaline high. And, yes, it was a great exhibit and I learned a lot."

"You're with a cop. Something happens with the police for you every day," Becca commented
smartly.

Lilly, on the other hand, exploded with jealousy when Bucky spoke about the music exhibit. "You got to go to a music exhibit? Did they have The Clash there?" She asked excitedly.

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Bucky gave Steve a look when Becca sassed him. It was expected at this point. "Yeah, there was some pretty rad collages of pictures of The Clash and some early demo recordings that you can't buy anywhere." He leaned over the back of the couch to give both sisters hugs. "And to answer your question, no, we can't get Mr. Peterson evicted."

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Steve grinned, glad that he got to avoid daily sass from Becca for now. "Can you take us to the museum?" Lilly asked. "Becca and I both got good grades all week. And you made us give up our cat, so we deserve something so we're not sad."

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"You both got good grades?" Bucky emphasized 'both' and looked at Lilly intently. "You're going to have to show me them, Lil. I know you weren't passing math or science about two weeks ago. And it wasn't your cat to give up anyway. It's a stray or some old person's cat." Bucky put a hand to his temple already getting a small headache. "How about we discuss the museum some other time." He turned to Steve. "I'm sorry I just need to go lie down for a bit. Will you hang around here for just a few minutes? You can eat pancakes with us."

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By Lilly's terms, getting a C or B minus was a good grade because it was passing. By Becca's terms, an A was the only acceptable grade to be called golden. "Fine," Lilly sighed dramatically.

Steve nodded his head at the request, pretending like it was the first time he heard it. "Sure," he agreed. "Lead the way."

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Bucky went towards his room, Steve following him worriedly. Once there, Bucky flopped on his bed and curled up in a little ball. "Just need a couple minutes. I'm sorry, Steve. Can you just hang out with the girls for about five to ten minutes and then I'll be back out?" Bucky pulled a blanket over himself and made a low groaning sound. "Then, pancakes."

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Steve frowned in concern but didn't fuss too much over Bucky. He was a grown man; he could deal with it and would come to Steve if he needed help. Steve headed back out and took a seat next to the girls. "So," he said awkwardly. "Did you guys name the cat?"

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"Lilly Jr.," Becca said. "Even though it's a guy and it's not a fair name." She crinkled her nose and cocked her head to the side, "Bucky in his room?" She asked before getting up to go check. Lilly watched her go with a frown and tried to get her to leave him alone.
Steve gently patted Lilly's shoulder to let her know to let Becca do her thing. Steve wasn't going to get in the way of Becca and Bucky or else she may think he'd done something wrong.

"What did the cat look like?" He asked Lilly.

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Lilly and Steve kept talking as Becca quietly opened Bucky's door. "Bucky?" She asked tentatively. "You okay?"

"Mhmm," Bucky answered and rolled over to face her. "Head just hurts. What's up?"

"Why's Steve here again? Thought he'd not be coming around by now." Becca crossed her arms and sat on the bed. "You're really into this one, aren't you?"

Bucky sat up, "Yeah, I am." He gave her a gentle hug then got out of bed. He figured he shouldn’t wait ten minutes to make his sisters’ dinner. Lilly would be starving pretty soon. "Let’s go have pancakes."

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Steve happily chattered with Lilly about the cat and perked up when he saw Bucky and Becca coming out of the bedroom. He was definitely head over heals for the man and looked relieved that he didn't look under the weather too much or upset. "How’s it going, Buck?"

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"Still a little headache but I should be fine," Bucky said and pulled a sweater of his off the back of the couch and put it on. "You ready for pancakes, everyone?" He asked and managed a small grin. "We will teach Steve that breakfast for dinner is delicious."

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Steve naturally went to look for some medicine for Bucky and found some ibuprofen in the cabinet. He got two pills out and a glass of water for Bucky and left it on the counter for him. "I don't doubt that it's delicious. I doubt that it's nutritional."

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Bucky noticed the medicine and quickly took it giving Steve a grateful look. "I think we value delicious over nutritious in this household." Lilly nodded in agreement as she started setting the table. "Besides," Bucky said in a low voice so Steve was the only one who could hear. "Pancakes might win over Becca. Who knows?"

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"You can have delicious and nutritious," Steve defended lightly. But as soon as Bucky whispered that it could win Becca over, Steve suddenly seemed more interested. "So what can I do to help cook?" He asked.
"Well, Lil can wash some fruit and chop them up if you want to help me mix the pancake stuff," Bucky offered and reached for Steve's hand. "See? We are doing fruit just for you." He said and squeezed his hand and started pulling supplies out of the cupboards.

"Good. Fruit is good for you guys. Helps young girls become tough, young women." Steve held Bucky's hand and followed him happily around the kitchen. "And it fills you up so you don't overeat on junk food."

"Are you trying to turn me into a Rogers? Because Barnes' like food that is bad for us." Bucky pulled Steve in for a quick kiss to the cheek before starting to pour the mix into a bowl and add the eggs. "Want to mix those together and I'll get milk?"

Steve mixed the ingredients together and hummed in thought, “Maybe I am, Bucky Rogers. Kind of flows well don’t you think?”

"Bucky Rogers does not flow well," Bucky said and put some milk into the bowl. "Steve Barnes... now that flows," he joked as he turned the stove on and put a skillet on top. "You want to start cooking those?"

"James Buchanan Rogers sounds good, though," Steve said pleasantly. "Besides, I kissed you first so I get dibs on what last name we have." Steve coated the skillet with some butter and started making tiny pancakes.

"That's definitely not how it works." Bucky nudged Steve and gave a pout. Also, he was pretty damn sure that he kissed Steve first, but he didn’t want to argue the point. He really, really liked this one. He might even love this one but he still needed time. He should probably discuss this whole thing with the girls too on his own before anything did get more serious. "And, if we are going by that logic," Bucky leaned in close and whispered, "I gave you head first and I think that tops kissing."

Steve blushed brightly but quickly turned to whisper back, "I stuck it in you. That tops all." He kissed the tip of Bucky's nose and smirked proudly. He made a plate full of a dozen or so pancakes before making more.
Bucky let him think he had won because Steve just looked so cute with that edge of pride. Bucky didn't tell him that if it weren't for him then Steve would still be a virgin and that is the real trump card. "Alright, I think that's all we need for now," Bucky said to Steve and then called the girls over to eat. They sat down together and Steve somehow got placed between Lilly and Becca, across from Bucky.

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Steve looked at each of them. He was so happy to be here right now. He turned to Bucky and asked, "Do you guys pray or anything before you eat?"

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Lilly already had a fork full of pancakes halfway in her mouth when Steve asked about praying. Bucky cleared his throat and said gently, "You can feel free to pray, Steve. We don't mind." He wasn't going to pray with him but he wasn't going to tell him no. Bucky and his sisters weren't the church-going type and they didn't grow up in an Irish Catholic home like Steve did.

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Steve hadn't ever sat at a table that didn't have some sort of ritual before eating and he felt a little silly being the only one praying. "It's okay," he said. Steve would just pray a little longer before bed. "Did the pancakes come out okay?"

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Bucky noticed a tick of awkward disappointment in Steve's tone but he decided he would address it later if he needed to. "Yeah, I think they are great," Bucky said and looked to Lilly who had already scarfed down half of her plate, "Lilly doesn't seem to mind them. Becs? What do you think?"

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"It's okay," Becca said in a noncommittal tone. She shrugged her shoulder up and went back to eating.

Steve picked at a few pieces of fruit. "So what's everyone's day like tomorrow?"

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Bucky gave Steve an apologetic look about Becca. "It's Sunday tomorrow. Lilly has practice. I've got work in the morning until three. Becca... I don't know what Becca is doing."

"Nothing," Becca piped up, "I was going to go to the Natural History Museum with my friends but they can't."

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Becca was moody. Teenagers tended to be moody, but Steve wasn't really used to having little siblings like Bucky was. Steve shrugged it off. "Do you want me to go with you?" Steve offered.
"Yes, brilliant!" Bucky said and shoved Becca gently. That would give the two of them some time to get to know each other. "You can take your notebook and write down what you wanted to know and Steve will be there so you won't be alone." He gave Steve a hopeful smile and mouthed 'thank you'.

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Becca didn't look as thrilled as Bucky was, but she supposed a day out with Steve wouldn't kill her. And she really wanted to go to the museum. "Alright," she said. "But I don't want to wake up too early."

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"I'm sure Steve doesn't mind when you wake up," Bucky said and rubbed his foot against Steve's leg under the table. This felt good being here with his sisters and Steve together and not hiding who they were to each other.

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Steve smiled and gently nudged his foot back against Bucky's. "Yeah, I don't mind. You just call my apartment when you wake up and I'll head over," Steve said. "And if you ask nice enough, maybe I'll bring something from the diner."

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"I can just eat cereal," Becca offered.

Bucky laughed at that thinking that Steve was probably worried no one in his family ate anything else. "Becs, it's okay, Steve doesn't like us eating cereal all the time. He's happy to bring you some food. I'll just pay him back later for it," Bucky said and shoved more pancakes into his mouth. He looked over at Lilly who had managed to get some syrup in her hair.

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Steve got up and wet a napkin so he could pass it to Lilly to clean off her hair. "Yeah, you didn't get the memo, Becca, but I'm cooking for you all from now on."

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"But we like cereal," Lilly said as she took the wet towel.

Bucky gathered up his plate and cup and utensils and took them over to the sink. He checked the time and noticed it was probably getting time for the girls to have their showers and wind down before bed. He hoped Steve would stay with him tonight but he wasn't going to pressure him if he couldn't. It would be more convenient for him to take Becca to the museum tomorrow if he was here, though.

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"And I like candy but that don't mean I should eat it all the time," Steve said wisely. He watched Bucky clean up and admired his ass. When Bucky finished and sent the girls to wash up, Steve came
up behind him and gave him a hug. "Has your headache gone away, Beautiful?"

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Leaning back into the hug, Bucky said, "Yeah, it's all gone. How are you? Feeling a bit more confident with the girls?" He turned to face Steve and held him close with his hands cupped around his ass. "Also, thanks for helping me make food."

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"A little bit more confident, yes. Do you think Becca is more convinced that I want to stay?" Steve smiled as he looked into Bucky's eyes and then he pecked his lips. "And don't worry, I'll make you food any time. 'Food is love', that's what my ma always said," Steve explained.

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"Becca probably more convinced, yes. Doesn't mean she's pleased about it yet. She wants me to be happy but she always wants to pick who I'm happy with. She can't have it her way all the time." Bucky rubbed his palms down Steve's chest and abs. Being a cop meant a lot of working out for Steve and Bucky appreciated the results.

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"Well, I would prefer her approval," Steve said. "But I'm not going to let her walk all over me to get it." He kissed his cheek and smiled. "You're really having fun with my muscles there, hippie," he teased fondly.

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Bucky snorted an indignant laugh. "It's because I like them so much. And you aren't ticklish so I can do this and it won't bug you."

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"Well I guess I got to keep working them out just so they stick around for you," Steve said and eased his hands lower down Bucky's body.

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The girls were both in their rooms with the lights out and everything was quite. Bucky kissed down Steve's neck then asked, "I'd really like you to stay tonight if you would?"

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Steve made a pleased noise at the kisses and hugged him closer. "If it would make you happy, I'll spend as many nights with you as you want."

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Bucky blinked slowly a couple times and bit his lip. "I want them all with you. Every night with you." He clasped onto Steve's hands and led him to his bedroom. Bucky sat on the bed and hugged Steve around the hips. He nosed at Steve's crotch and started to pull at his pants.

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Steve felt his heart skip to hear that. Any sign of commitment from Bucky made his feelings soar over the moon. "Fuck," he swore when Bucky was already pulling his pants off. "How could I say no?" He chuckled breathlessly, petting Bucky's hair. "When I got you to fall asleep with."

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"I like it when you swear, Officer," Bucky said and tugged at Steve's boxer briefs. "Shows me I've gotten under your skin. Makes you more like me. I love that." He now had a hand around Steve's cock and was slowly pumping it. He wanted Steve in his mouth tonight and maybe tomorrow he could see if Steve would let him top.

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Steve was quick to get hard. Knowing how much Bucky wanted him did things to him. Wonderful things. His hand rested possessively on the back of Bucky's neck and he looked down at him with nothing but love and desire. "You know me," he hummed. "Which means you can get under my skin whenever you damn well please."

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Bucky started licking up Steve's shaft and took the head in and swirled his tongue around. He was licking and sucking for about two minutes before there was a loud thump and a shrill "Bucky!" coming from Lilly's room. Bucky popped off Steve quickly and wiped his mouth. He got up off the bed and went for the door hurriedly.

"I'll be right back," Bucky said and zoomed out the door, shutting it behind him hastily.

---

Steve had been really getting into it, hands in Bucky's long hair, and soft moans spilling from his lips so he jumped out of his skin when Lilly yelled for her brother. "Buck?" He asked worriedly. Steve wanted desperately to go help but he couldn't just go out there with his dick hard in his pants.

---

It was several minutes before Bucky was quietly sneaking back into his room. He came over to where Steve was waiting on the bed and sat down next to him. "Lilly had a bad nightmare." He scooted closer to Steve and rested his head on his shoulder. "She gets them pretty bad every so often. More so since our parents have been gone."

---

Steve was almost able to be presentable to go out there to see what happened. He pulled his pants back up and sat on the bed debating what to do. Thankfully, Bucky came in before he had to make a decision. "Oh," he said as he wrapped an arm around Bucky's shoulder. "Poor kid," Steve sighed. "Does she have a stuffed animal or safety blanket?"

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"Oh, she's got plenty of animals and a nightlight. Just doesn't seem to help her that much." Bucky said, "When she was younger she had to share a room with Becca because he was so scared. They
only really slept in separate rooms after we moved in here." Bucky looked on at Steve's face and then down at his pants. "Steve, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have even instigated it tonight. When we are here, there is always a potential of the girls needing me and I should have just waited for the early morning or something."

---

Steve still looked concerned and had a thoughtful expression, like he was trying to figure out how to help with the nightmares. Maybe he could ask his mom tomorrow if she had any ideas. Steve kissed Bucky's temple and said, "It's okay, Sweetheart, I'm not upset." He rubbed a hand up and down Bucky's back. "Why don't we just cuddle and talk until we fall asleep?"

---

"Sure, that's fine with me," Bucky said and curled up against the pillows. "Come here," He gestured for Steve to curl up against his side and he yawned as Steve adjusted himself. "I hope she sleeps the rest of the night because I'm way too tired to get up again to help if she has another nightmare."

---

Steve fit against Bucky's side like he was meant to be there. "She may need her brother, but I can try and calm her down if you'd like me to." He stroked his fingers through Bucky's hair and kissed his face. "Like I said, I want to help you guys as much as I can."

---

Bucky hummed at the soft feeling of the kisses and smiled. "You might be able to, yeah. Though, I should go with you the first time. She can get a little disoriented and I don't know if she would recognize you at first. Might make her scared." Bucky yawned again and closed his eyes. "If you want some pajamas you can borrow a pair mine," he said as he stripped down to his underwear and yanked the covers on top of himself.

---

"We can do that," Steve agreed. So that way in the future they could take turns helping Lilly out. "It's alright. I've slept enough times in my day clothes to still be comfy." He kissed Bucky a few times and asked, "Do you think Lilly would like sharing a room again?"

---

"Lilly I'm sure would be fine with it. Becca, on the other hand, would object. She has gotten used to her own room these past few years. And trying to change it up on her would probably invoke the subtle quiet wrath that is Rebecca Barnes," he said as put his hair up in a ponytail.

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Steve snorted at the thought of an angry Becca. "Something tells me that it's something I won't want to invoke. What's the worst thing she's done when she was pissed?" Steve asked.

---

"Uh, well, I guess..." Bucky thought for a second. "One time she was so mad and neither of us were
paying attention to her and arguing with each other instead. She's just so quiet it's easy not to realize when she's trying to talk over you. So she smashed a plate against the wall..." Bucky chuckled, "No one would have ever expected it. It shut me and Lilly up immediately."

---

"Oh my god," Steve said, equally impressed and horrified. "What a little villain," he laughed. He stroked his hand over Bucky's arm and looked up at him. "Funny question, but when was the last time you went for a checkup? Or brought the girls to one?" He asked.

---

"You mean like a physical? Like at the doctors?" Bucky asked. Steve nodded. "Uh, well, I don't know. The girls probably had one four years ago and I had one in high school once." Bucky stroked Steve's hair and ran his fingers down the skin of his neck. "Why? You going to make me go just like you're making me give up cereal and be a Rogers instead of a Barnes?" Bucky joked at Steve.

---

Steve nodded his head. "Pretty much," he said. "The doctors can catch something before there's a problem. Or let you know an easy fix to something you thought could never go away." He nuzzled Bucky affectionately. "It would give me a lot of peace of mind. Wouldn't it be easier to find out with a checkup that Lilly needs her tonsils removed rather than having to rush her to the emergency room? And I want to make sure you live as long as possible so I can spend more years forcing you to eat cooked meals and hiding your cereal."

---

"Lilly needs her tonsils removed?" Bucky asked confused. "How can you tell?" He didn't think that was something you could really see. He thought it was more an inconvenience that some kids had pain enough to have them cut out.

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"What? No, I was just using that as an example. I don't know anything about tonsils," Steve said with a small endearing smile.

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"Steve, I don't know if we could go to the doctors. We don't have any health passes so we wouldn't be able to just afford a trip. And I don't want you paying for that shit too."

---

"You guys are orphans. Even if you are not covered by social programs since you are an adult, I know they will be. And I'd happily cover stuff for your visits because I want to know that you're okay." Steve rubbed his hand on Bucky’s chest.

---

Bucky turned his face away from Steve. He hated the word 'orphan'. Too many well-meaning adults called his sisters that right after he acquired full guardianship - like they had no one left - like their parents wouldn't always be with them in some respect. "I don't know, Steve. We can find out if they
can see the doctor but, if I can't, I don't want to have to been indebted to you for something like that."

---

Steve felt bad when Bucky turned his face away, having a feeling that the word 'orphan' wasn't something that he liked to hear, even when someone meant well. "Bucky," he said softly. He laced their fingers together. "I'm not offering all this to have you be indebted to me. I'm offering because I'm so in love with you and I want us to have a happy, comfortable life together. We're a team now. Sometimes, I'll be doing all the stuff. Some things will be all you. And some we get to contribute together."

---

Bucky sniffled and squeezed Steve's hand. "Would they even let you pay for me? We aren't family, we aren't married, and I don't think they'd let you pay for someone who is a stranger to you in their eyes. The government doesn't like shit like that. Messes with the system they have going on."

---

"They don't have to know I'm paying for you," Steve said. "All I have to do is give you cash. You put it in your bank account or pay them with it. Say it was money you saved up from work. Or that you sold a few records." Steve kissed Bucky's temple. "If they don't know anything about me, I doubt you'll get in trouble."

---

"You're really going to make me go to the doctor, aren't you?" Bucky asked nervously. "What if I need you there?" He blinked a couple times and put his forehead to Steve's. He didn't want to admit that people like doctors terrified him. The idea of somebody like that being in control of him and probing around his body and testing him made him squirm.

---

"I won't force you, Buck. But it's the smart thing to do, Baby. What if you've developed something from stress or working so hard? Hell, what if one of those guys gave you something you didn't know about?" He cupped the sides of Bucky's face and kissed him. "I'm only a phone call away. If you get nervous, find the nearest pay phone and I'll answer. Or if you want me there, we can tell them we know each other from church."

---

Bucky snorted. "Church! I'd rather say you're my cousin. No respectable doctor or nurse is going to believe I could even step foot in a church without bursting into flames." Steve did have a point about those guys, though. They might have given him some sort of VD that he wasn't aware of. If that were the case, he would want to know so he could get it taken care of and make sure Steve was fine too.

---

"Fine, cousin," Steve snorted. "But it'll make me feel weird the next time you blow me after that. Incest isn't a sort of thing that my ma told me I was allowed to do," he teased. Steve snuck in a kiss. "It really means a lot to me that you're at least considering going for a check-up."
"I'm not really your cousin, you dope," Bucky said with a flash of a smile. "But, yeah I'm considering it. We will get the girls there first, okay? I'll tell them it was my idea so if they get mad it'll be on me not you." Bucky laughed to himself and added, "Oh and Steve... if I'm practically a dad, you're clearly practically the mom. You've been hounding us about food and stress and doctors for days."

Steve nuzzled Bucky gently and smirked. "I'll be the mom, I don't care. My Mom is amazing and showed me all the best ways I can take care of people." Steve didn't get wound up like Bucky did at the parental role.

Bucky huffed to himself and closed his eyes. "Think it's time for sleeping, Steve." He tried opening his eyes again but it didn't work. Bucky was dog tired and his brain was entirely gone from him at this point. He mumbled low and quietly, "Night, Babe... love you," and fell asleep.

Steve's face lit up like a damned Christmas tree when Bucky told him he loved him. He nuzzled his neck affectionately and stayed up for another half hour or so just admiring Bucky until he fell asleep. When he woke up, Steve's arms were still wrapped tightly around him.
Bucky stirred softly and woke up with a headache. "Fuck me..." He breathed with a frustrated, pained tone. He rolled away from Steve and put a pillow over his head. He had to go in for work in about an hour. He was going to leave Steve and his sisters to go grumpily shuffle records and boxes around and wait for people to come in.

---

"Hey, Baby," Steve said gently. He reached out and massaged his shoulder gently to try and help ease his pain. "Do you want me to give you some pain medication?"

---

The only answer Bucky gave was a low groan and a deep sigh. He would need about half the bottle to help this morning. He tried sitting up and when Steve asked again he nodded and started slowly stripping his clothes so he could shower. Bucky couldn't remember the night. He was so tired. All he knew was he tried being sexual with Steve but Lilly had a nightmare that interrupted them.

---

Steve got up and found some pills and got Bucky another glass of water. He interrupted Bucky in the shower to give it to him. "Have you gotten headaches like this before, Baby?" He asked. "Is there anything I can do?"

---

Bucky was feeling a little better with the rush of water over him. "Yeah, but I usually don't get them this bad." He took the pills and downed the entire glass of water before handing it back off to Steve. "I don't really know what's going on... guess I'm more like my mom than I thought I was." Bucky tried a short laugh. "Can you just go make sure Lilly is awake and getting ready for practice?"

---

Steve took the glass and had such a worried look on his face. He had questions, but Bucky asked him to go take care of Lilly. "Alright, Baby," he agreed. "I'll be back soon." Steve went over to Lilly's room and knocked on the door. "Hey, Kiddo, can I come in?"

---

Bucky stayed under the water for longer than he should have. He was idly turning the temperature from scorching hot to freezing cold. It felt really nice and seemed to be helping send his headache away. He slowly turned the water off and got out of the shower. He stood naked and wet in the bathroom and just let himself feel the air around him. Bucky heard soft voices coming from Lilly's room and he could pick up the occasional phrase like, "You have to go to practice" and "Bucky won't mind if I skip today" and "Maybe you should double check."

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"Lilly?" Steve called again softly, a little concerned from the voices on the other side. "Lilly, I'm
coming in." He gave her a few moments before he actually opened the door to see what was going on. "Lil?"

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Lilly was sitting on her bed by herself with her window wide open and her rucksack on the ground by the foot of the bed. She gave Steve a sad look and hastily got up to toss her bag into her closet.

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Steve caught the look and felt his stomach drop. "Hey, Lil," he said gently. Steve sat down on the bed as well to be less imposing but didn't sit too close to her. "What's the matter, Kiddo? Why's the window open?"

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"Nobody," Lilly said quickly then made a face scolding herself quietly, "I mean, nothing's the matter. Just don't want to go to practice today. Not feeling well." She paused. "Where's Bucky?"

Bucky was just dressed and gathering what he would need to take with him to work. It wasn't much - just his wallet and keys and a jacket. He figured Steve would have been back by now and he got a little worried that Lilly hadn't been cooperating.

---

"Lil, you can't lie to a cop," Steve said patiently. He got up and went to the window to see what was going on. He was always amazed at how thick people thought he could be. He looked out the window and caught some young boy trying to sneak off down the fire escape but Steve grabbed him by the collar of his shirt and hauled him back in. He held the poor kid up in the air as he gave Lilly a deadpan look to start explaining.

---

Just then, Bucky turned the corner from his room to Lilly's and saw the scene before him. Steve was holding a kid by the back of his shirt and Lilly was sitting on her bed dressed for the day and looking guilty. "The fuck?" Bucky said under his breath, "Who the hell is the kid?" He noticed Lilly's bag sticking half way out her closet. "Where the fuck do you think you're going, Lilly?"

---

"Bucky," Steve said sternly, certainly not approving of Bucky swearing at his sister. He didn't like swearing around kids but hadn't said anything just because this wasn't his house. But when they got swore at, he had to say something. "Let her explain fully and no interrupting," he said.

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Bucky shot Steve a warning glance indicating that this was still his house and his family and would deal with his sisters however he thought appropriate for the situation. "She's got about a minute to explain herself," Bucky said crossed his arms. "Who's the kid, Lilly?"

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"He's on my lacrosse team," Lilly started. "Lives on Long Island," she added with a jealous hint to her tone because of the big houses and yards that she didn't get to see in Brooklyn.
Steve may have toed the line but he didn't regret it. He set the boy down but gave him a look that promised he would get caught if he tried to run off again. "You're going to need a bit better explanation to get yourself out of trouble," Steve prompted.

"He was going to let me stay at his place for a few days," she said and started picking at her sleeves. Bucky blinked a few times. Then asked with a sad and angry lump in his throat, "You were going to run away again?" He sighed and went to his sister slowly. "I thought we had gotten past this." He leaned down to give her a long gentle hug that showed he still loved her and understood but he was just a little mad. Bucky took a step back and looked at his watch. "Goddammit, I need to get to work."

Steve wanted to cry but he held it in. It hurt him to know what running away would do to Bucky. "It's okay, Buck. Go to work and I'll take care of the kids," he said. He very nearly went over to kiss him but remembered that the boy was there. "You two," he said to Lilly and the boy from Long Island. "Are going to practice and then going to the Natural History Museum with Becca today. I'm not going to risk taking my eye off you until this whole running away business is taken care of."

Bucky cleared his throat and rubbed his palms into his eyes. "Lilly, be good for Steve. If you must act out, save it for me later, okay?" He sighed and walked towards the door. "Steve, you're okay with... taking care of this whole thing?" He asked and Steve nodded. "Thank you." Bucky smiled weakly and left Lilly's room to go to work.

Steve had no idea how Bucky managed to do this all on his own for over four years - the poor man. He gave him a wave goodbye and then told Lilly to get her lacrosse gear ready. He looked down at the boy and asked, "What's your name, Son?"

"Thomas," the boy answered.

Lilly packed up her lacrosse stuff grumpily and plopped it on the foot of her bed when she was ready. "Can't believe Bucky left you in charge. He never trusted the other ones like this, why should he trust you?" She added with an indignant glare to Steve. She didn't mean it, of course, she was just so frustrated.

Thomas asked meekly to Steve, "Are you another brother?"

"Because I'm a cop and I've dealt with scarier things than angry, little sisters." Steve was stern but he
still wasn’t going to push buttons because he was afraid of Lilly outing him in frustration. "Cousin," Steve corrected Thomas. "I came over to take Becca to the museum today cause her friends couldn’t go." It was a good enough excuse. Speaking of, he had to tell Becca the change of plans.

---

Becca was just waking up as Bucky was leaving and she stood in the doorway of her room to stop him before he slipped out. "What's going on?" She asked.

"Lilly was going to run away again," Bucky said as he bent down to tie his shoes.

"And you're still going to work?" Becca asked. "Shouldn't you stay here?"

"Can't just cancel the day whenever Lilly feels like fucking with things." Bucky strode towards the door and bid Becca goodbye. "I'll see you later. Have a good time at the museum with Steve."

---

Steve walked towards the hallway but still stayed where he could keep an eye on Lilly. "Becca, I'm really sorry but the museum is going to have to be pushed back until after Lilly's practice and we are bringing Lilly and her friend with us," he said apologetically. "You can pick what we have for dinner to make up for your wait, alright?"

---

Becca gave a confused look to the two kids hiding in Lilly's room. She repeated Bucky's sentiment with a, "Who the hell is that?" and pointed at the boy.

"Thomas." The boy waved.

"Steve, Bucky just left," Becca said. "I think he should've called in and told Clint he couldn't work because of an emergency. He should be here."

---

"Becs, Bucky would've stayed if he could. But if he misses a whole day's worth of work, then he has even less money to buy you food or keep the roof over your head," Steve said patiently. "If he called out for every emergency he had, Lilly would have no home to run away from." He reached out to nudge her gently. "Besides, I've got it under control. This little event is nothing compared to my high-speed chase last summer."

---

Bucky arrived at work a little late and one of his stoner co-workers quipped, "Barnes is late!" when he quickly slipped through the door. Bucky flipped him off and went in the back to shuck off his jacket and throw on his nametag. One of the people he worked with had tried to play a practical joke and scratch off part of the 'B' so it looked like an 'F'. So 'Fucky' was always ready to work.

Bucky ran into Clint on his way to the floor and signed that he was sorry he was late and there was an emergency. He didn’t need to sign because Clint was an expert lip reader but he still liked to do it to keep in practice. Clint nodded and said it was fine - he was never angry with Bucky. Bucky spent the entire day worrying about his sisters and Steve. During his break, he dialed his house to see if
they were there.

---

When Bucky called, Steve had just gotten back from a long day out. He tried to entertain Becca while Lilly had her practice but she wasn't really warm to his conversation. She was a bit happier once she was at the museum but then Steve had to deal with Lilly being moody at him for being dragged around. Thomas was the only one who didn't shit on Steve at some point during the day.

Becca answered the phone before Steve could even put their bags full of takeout dinner on the table. "Hello?"

---

Bucky let out a sigh of relief. "Becca, hey! Is everyone home? Can I talk to Steve please?" He moved a box around with his foot absentmindedly and drew circles on a piece of paper.

"Steve is occupied making sure Lilly and Thomas don't try running off," Becca said back. Bucky heard Steve's voice through the phone but couldn't make out what he had said. It was just a few seconds until Steve was on the line with him.

---

Steve unpacked the food and got the silverware on the table. When he was given the phone, he took it and held it up to his ear. He was already emotionally exhausted but he didn't want to give Bucky any reason to worry while he was at work. "Hey, Buck," he said sweetly. "How's work going for you?"

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"Better, now that I'm on break," Bucky said. "I'll be home in about two hours." Clint walked into the break room then and sat down at the small table with a cup of coffee. "Did everything go okay today?" He hoped Lilly wasn't too much trouble and he hoped Becca didn't try to quietly and sweetly rip Steve limb from limb.

---

"Everything is going alright so far," Steve said. "Thomas is getting picked up by his parents in an hour. We're just about to eat and I picked up some dinner for you, too." Steve's voice dropped to a lower volume and he said, "I miss you. I'm looking forward to seeing you come home."

---

"Fuck, I sort of forgot about Thomas," Bucky said offhandedly and stretched his legs out on the chair in front of him. "And I miss you too," he said before noticing Clint staring at him. "Like I said, I'll be home in about two hours. Maybe sooner if Clint will let me go," Bucky said and shot a quick smile at his boss and best friend who shook his head once with an apologetic frown. "I guess not."

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"You don't have to leave early," Steve said. "The world won't end over here if you show up home at your regular time. How about you do your best to relax for the rest of your time there and we can
catch up later tonight?” He offered.

---

Bucky nodded as he said, "Yeah, that's fine. Just wish I was home with you all right now. Sort of want to have a talking to with that Thomas kid." Bucky paused. "Wait... what did you tell him? Did you say you were a babysitter or something?" Bucky let out a laugh at the idea of a full-time nanny Steve - his big cop as a full-time nanny.

---

"Go easy on Thomas. I think he was just trying to help his friend out and he was even fibbing to his parents to try to protect her," Steve said. "He's been really well behaved, outside of the whole running away thing." He smiled and said, "Told him we were cousins. I think he thinks all of the others were brothers or something. You should check with Lilly about that."

---

"Oh, I'll be checking with Lilly about a lot of stuff when I get to her," Bucky said and stood up. It was almost time for him to go back to work. "She's got to explain herself to me still. She hasn't tried this shit for over a year. Last time, it was Becca who caught her as she tried going out the fire escape. The time before that it was her soccer coach who found her all the way in Manhattan in Central Park with a tent."

---

"I'm so sorry you have to deal with that stress," Steve said. It made him scared to think of any kid running off where there were rapists and murderers all around. "At least now you've got an officer around who has close ties with the missing persons team so if she runs off she won't be gone for long."

---

"I just think she gets down on herself too easily. She gets it in her head that we would be better off without her around so she just up and leaves." Bucky sighed and checked his watch. Time was up. "Anyway, I need to go. I'll see you soon."

---

After a while, Steve sent Thomas off on his way with his parents and set Lilly up at the kitchen table to do her homework. Becca was watching TV on the couch and Steve moved to sit next to her. He shifted his weight a bit nervously before glancing over. "Hey, Becca," he said softly. "Can I talk to you about Lilly?"

---

Becca gave a sideways glance to Steve then nodded before turning her attention back to the television. "What about Lilly?" Then she added, "Is Bucky almost home?" She wanted it to sound to Steve like she wasn't going to let him be her new brother or let him and Bucky become the parents of the house.
"Becca," Steve said with a frown. He could see her tone and body language. "I'm your brother's partner. I'm not trying to take over your life. I'm trying to help him out and I want to help you, too. I don't want you to feel forced to like me, but don't let Bucky see it, alright? He's got enough on his plate." He crossed his arms. "My question is: did Lilly want to run away because of me?"

---

Becca bit her lip and turned her body to face Steve. "Not really, I guess. Not exactly." Becca paused and looked to Lilly who was still trying her best at her math homework completely unaware of the two of them. "As much as I can figure from what I know about Lilly... she felt like an extra wheel - like a burden. She does that sometimes. She'll say something about leaving us alone so no one has to worry about her anymore. Maybe she felt like she was pushed out by you."

---

Steve's face fell a little. He was relieved that it was nothing he'd done personally but he felt awful that a little girl would feel like extra weight to her family. "Thank you for telling me," he said genuinely. "And what about you?" He asked. "You ever feel pushed out?"

---

Becca scoffed. "I'm the damn glue of this family," Becca swore. "Without me, Bucky would've probably had his guardianship removed and he would be lost and alone without us." She turned back to the TV. "Don't you worry yourself about me, Steve. Bucky may be the adult but I take care of him more than you know."

---

"Hey," Steve said sharply, giving her a scolding look. "If you have a problem, you talk about it. Bucky breaks his back to take care of you two. It's real easy to sit there and criticize when you're not the one who has to watch two kids and do the work that two parents usually split between them."

---

"Yeah?" She said with a bit of fire behind her eyes. "And who parents Bucky, huh? A new guy every couple days and new scars from the fights down at the bar?" She noticed Steve's confused face and laughed. "He hasn't told you about the nights he'd stagger home drunk and bleeding and I'd wake up and have to clean him up."

---

"No, he hasn't told me that. He's told me how you've had to see him at his worst and how he regrets every second of it," Steve said back at her. "He knows he was wrong for it. And it ain't fair you had to take care of your brother after losing your parents, but you have to play the cards you're dealt. So here's your new hand, Becca. I love your brother. He's part of my family now, which means you are too. I'm not your brother. I'm not your parent. But you can sure as hell bet I'm going to make sure all of you are taken care of to the best of my ability. If Bucky goes out and gets in a bar fight, it's my job to take care of him."

---
Becca's face crinkled up in confusion. "You love him?" She asked simply. She hadn't really considered that. She knew that Steve and Bucky kept saying that Steve was going to be sticking around for a while but she just figured one day he would be gone. Love was a different thing. She didn't think anyone besides her family had ever loved Bucky before.

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"Of course I do," Steve said firmly. "It would be so wrong of me to put myself in your lives like this if I didn't love him." He frowned at the thought of Becca thinking that he was putting up with them for the sake of being able to screw around with Bucky. "If he got hit by a car tomorrow and needed someone to feed him and help him go to the bathroom cause all his bones were broken, I would do it. Because I love him that much."

---

Becca nodded slowly. "And he loves you?" She asked more cautiously - almost sympathetically. She had seen the way Bucky went through partners and she didn't know if Steve was the one Bucky had decided to keep around because it was convenient or because he actually felt the same way back.

---

"I'm pretty sure he does," Steve said. "He said it last night, right before he fell asleep. He was really tired so he maybe said it by accident. But I'm sure he'd say it again." Steve got all dreamy talking about the one little 'love you' he got from Bucky.

---

Becca pursed her lips and looked at the TV again. "Okay, fine," she said with little emotion, which was her own way giving the two of them her blessing. "I just want Bucky to be happy. And if you're part of that..." she trailed off and folded her arms unable to continue.

---

Steve couldn't believe his ears. Becca was actually giving them her approval. Steve wrapped his arms around her and gave her a bear hug. "You're a good sister to your brother."

---

Becca squirmed under the hug as there was a rustling of keys at the door. Bucky opened it with his head down staring at his shoes. He said, "I tied these motherfuckers when I left the store and I walk about seven blocks and they are untied again - stupid useless goddamn laces."

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Steve let Becca go so her pride wouldn't be ruined by Bucky seeing her being hugged by his boyfriend. "Hey, Beautiful," Steve said happily. "You got to tie it in two knots. It doesn't look as pretty but it won't come apart every few blocks."

---

Bucky closed the door and took off his shoes and jacket. "Maybe they should make the ties better to begin with," Bucky grumped. He went over to the kitchen table where Lilly was working and he
squished her against him in a big hug. "Please tell me you were good to Steve today?"

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Lilly grunted softly when she was hugged. "I didn't run off on him," she answered back. Lilly still looked sorry for trying to run away again but she didn't seem to be too open to talking about it either.

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"Okay, thank you for not running off on him," Bucky said diplomatically but didn't let up on his hug. "We are going to have to discuss this later but right now I'm hungry and tired and I really want to kiss that man over there." Bucky went for Becca first and gave her an equally big hug before turning to Steve and pecking him on the lips.

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Steve patiently waited his turn and smiled happily once he got his kiss. "I got you your favorite," he said. "Becca picked the place we went to." Steve stood up and excitedly trotted into the kitchen so he could show off the dinner he got for Bucky. "Take a seat and I'll heat it up for you."

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"What?" Bucky smiled and watched Steve bounce around the kitchen. "What'd you get me, huh?" He had had a pretty long day at work and worrying about Lilly all day didn't help. He was very happy to be home and eating dinner with Steve. Soon he would be able to get his hands on him too.

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"Your favorite," Steve repeated. "Want to know how I know it's your favorite? Cause anything is your favorite when you're this hungry." He popped it in the microwave and got a glass of water for him. "It's chicken parmesan and pasta, by the way," he answered.

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Bucky groaned and took the water. "Ugh, I love chicken parmesan pasta. How'd you know?" Steve was right, though, Bucky did scarf down his food pretty much every time they were together. He was in a constant state of wanting to eat more.

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"Becca may have ordered it for you. I just paid." Steve pulled it out of the microwave and put it on the table for Bucky. He kissed Bucky's temple and stood behind him to gently massage his shoulders. "So how was work?" He asked.

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Bucky blew on a forkful of food before shoving it in his mouth and swallowing. "The same as usual. My coworkers were mostly being idiots. Clint asked me about a thousand times who I was on the phone with during break. And I still don't have a new name tag so I am still 'Fucky: Reporting for duty!'"
Steve blushed, still a bit nervous about being found out but after realizing how happy he was with Bucky, he wasn't so scared. "Well, Fucky is a fun name to say," he teased. "When is Clint replacing it?"

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"He claims he ordered a new one but I think he secretly thinks it's too funny to replace." Bucky took another few bites of food. "Hell, for all I know he's the one who did it in the first place. I wouldn't put it past him, the cheeky bastard." He looked up into Steve's eyes, "Anyway, how was today? How was the museum?"

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"It is kind of funny," Steve murmured. "The museum was nice. I think Becca dragged it out a little cause she enjoyed having some peace and quiet. Lilly kicked butt at her practice today, too," Steve reported. "They kept me busy."

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Bucky chuckled, "Did you feel like a soccer mom?" He always felt out of place when he went to Lilly’s games. There were so many parents standing around or sitting in the stands and then there was Bucky and Becca sitting off to the side quietly cheering for Lilly but trying not to bring too much attention to themselves. Bucky had never been to one of her practices, though, so Steve had him beat there.

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"A little bit - I'm not gonna lie, I was a little upset at myself for not bringing orange slices for everyone. The kids were really working hard out there." Steve shrugged his shoulders and took a seat next to Bucky. "I'd like to go see a game sometime."

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"Orange slices?" Bucky asked with a giggle. "The next game is in a few days, I think." Bucky poked Lilly's arm to get her attention. "Would it be okay for Steve to come to your game? Your soccer game, I mean. We don't have to come to your lacrosse scrimmage." He looked back at Steve. "Apparently her team isn't good enough for us to come watch yet - according to her."

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"Her lacrosse team has her on it. That makes the team good enough to watch in my book," Steve said enthusiastically.

Lilly groaned. "Noooo," she protested. "Just go to my soccer game, okay?"

"Cool," Steve said brightly. He leaned his head on Bucky's shoulder. "Do you want me to stay over again? Cause I have work in the morning. I can go and grab a change of clothes quick..."

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"I don't want to keep you if you need to be home tonight," Bucky said and kissed the top of Steve's
head. "It's up to you." He ate some more of his food and wrapped one arm around Steve's middle. "Thanks again for looking after them today and bringing food home. I really appreciate it."

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"I'd like to spend some more time with you," Steve said and smiled when Bucky hugged him and he leaned forward to kiss his cheek. "Anything for you. Now, how about you get some quality time with your sisters and I'll be back in a little bit after I've gotten what I need for tomorrow?"

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"Sure." Bucky nodded and let go of Steve. As Steve was turning to go, Bucky grabbed his hand and pulled him back. He suddenly had a flash of worry in his eyes. A sense of dread came over him and he thought about what happened with the kids and cops the other day. He also thought of his parents and losing them and how dangerous Steve's job must be and on top of it, he was gay and gay people got targeted. "Be careful coming home, okay?"

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Steve saw the worry in Bucky's eyes and he gave him a tight, protective hug. "I will, Sweetheart," he promised. "I love you." He kissed the top of his head and went back home. Steve packed a duffel bag full of clothes, feeling ambitious and deciding that he should keep an extra few changes at Bucky's place anyway just in case he stayed other unplanned nights there in the future. He came back almost an hour later and knocked on the door to be let in.

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Becca let Steve inside since Bucky was arguing with Lilly about homework. There were shouts about how sports and academics need to be balanced and "No, it doesn't matter that I dropped out of college, Lilly! You are still in school!" and protests that school was stupid and for snoots like Becca.

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Steve smiled fondly when he heard the bickering. He gave Bucky a kiss before going over to Lilly and ruffling her hair. "If you're stupid, then you're going to have to rely on some man getting a job to provide for you," he said smartly to her.

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Lilly was quick to combat Steve's words, "I don't need academics. I can just go pro and be an Olympian. And who says I end up with a man. I might want a woman, you didn't even think of that, did you?" Lilly kept on as Bucky let out a forced laugh, "And maybe I'll just work at a record shop or be a cop, huh? I don't see either of you in school."

Bucky stood up and started backing his way towards his room and making big gestures to Steve to follow him. Lilly glared at him as he went. "We won't win. Let's just go make out instead."

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"Less than one percent of kids who do sports go pro," Steve said. "So I guess you've got a better chance at going pro than getting a good grade." He gave her a teasing wink and mouthed 'Do your homework' before following Bucky to his room.
Bucky closed the door behind Steve and pulled him to sit on the bed. He gently took Steve's hands in his and said quietly, "So... I had to learn from Becca that I might have said 'I love you' while I was asleep." Bucky paused and looked sheepish. "Did I really do that?"

Bucky looking shy was so fucking adorable. Steve nodded his head. "Yeah. I'm not going to lie. It was really nice to hear. But I also figured you were sleepy and... and didn't really know what you were saying."

"I was sleepy but..." Bucky squeezed Steve's hand. "I know what I said. I'm a little disappointed that the first time I said it wasn't more magical or memorable for you but... I really do love you, Steve." Bucky repeated himself like he was just realizing the truth of his words, "I love you, Steve. And I'm sorry, I wanted to say it sooner but I needed to know that this was stable enough. I have to think about my responsibility to the girls."

"How can it not be memorable for me?" Steve asked with a fond smile. "I was falling asleep next to the love of my life after having a wonderful day with him. It was memorable for me, Buck." He looked so happy to hear Bucky say those words again anyway. "And I know the girls are important. I wouldn't expect any less of you."

"I love you," Bucky said again and nuzzled his nose against Steve's. "I love you." He brushed their lips together. "I love you, Steve Rogers." Then he was sitting in Steve's lap and holding on to the side of his face with a twinkle in his eye.

Steve, the goddamned dork, got all teary-eyed and wrapped his arms securely around his boyfriend. "I love you, too." He slipped his hands into the back of Bucky's shirt. "You make me so happy, Bucky Barnes."

They held each other there like that for a while until Bucky reluctantly sighed and said, "I should probably get the girls ready for bed. Tomorrow is Monday and you know how Becca can't be a second late. They still need to shower and I need to make their lunches." Bucky groaned. "But I don't want to get up. I just want to stay here with you."

"I'll still be here when you get back," Steve chuckled. "I don't know how you do it. I was so damned exhausted by noon. And if one was on my side, the other had to be going off on me for something," he snorted.
"This is why I'm tired all the time, Steve." Bucky shrugged. "And why I get so many fucking headaches." He reached out for Steve one more time to give him another kiss. "If you fall asleep before I get back I won't blame you. Thanks again for handling everything here while I was gone. You make a good nanny."

"And you make a good dad," Steve shot back with an obnoxious grin, knowing how Bucky hated being called that. He got changed into pajamas while he waited for Bucky to return. Steve managed to still be awake by the time Bucky came back in.

Bucky slowly sneaked into his room and started stripping off his clothes. He hadn't said a word, just got naked to his bones and flopped onto the bed. "Can I call in tomorrow and say I'm sick, Steve?" He asked and scratched his chest absently. "I have the stupid mid-shift and I can't handle it."

Steve blushed deeply when Bucky got naked without warning, but he certainly wasn't complaining. He cleared his throat. "I mean, nothing's stopping you. But what's the point of calling in sick when I won't be around to pamper you?"

"I guess that's a good point. But I could be sleeping if I'm home." Bucky rolled to face Steve and he scooted his hips closer to him. "Which shift did you say you had, again? Morning shift?" Bucky traced delicate circles on Steve's side.

Steve nodded. "Morning shift," he confirmed. "Wish I could sleep in late with you, but I'll probably be gone before you wake up." He put his arm around Bucky and let his hand rest over his ass. "At least we have tonight together."

Bucky moved with Steve's arms so he was pressed up against him. "We do have tonight," Bucky said with a tired smile. "Have you decided that ass is yours, Steve?" Bucky asked as he felt calculated movements over his flesh.

Steve still wasn't used to being flirted with but he loved it. "I mean, I did call dibs on it," he joked as he gave Bucky's ass a little squeeze. "Need me to write my name on it in marker?"

"I'd rather you didn't." Bucky laughed, "might rub off on my underwear. Then all of them will say
'Steve's.' He yawned once and tried to cover it up with his hand. He was really tired after such a long day of work but he also really wanted to stay up and just talk with Steve.

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"Cool, then I'll get free underwear, too," Steve said and pressed their lips together. He started to rub little circles over Bucky's back. "Why don't you get some rest, Beautiful?"

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Bucky closed his eyes and nuzzled into Steve. "Okay, I will." He hummed a bit to himself and said. "Night, Steve. I love you." And he felt like a weight was lifted again when he said it. Steve might be the one shy about coming out but Bucky was definitely shyer about saying 'I love you'. But now, he had done it. And it felt so right.
Steve found himself staying over Bucky's more nights than not. The only time he went home was so the neighbors wouldn't get suspicious or so that he could leave Bucky to have family time with his sisters. Tonight, Steve came over still in uniform looking thoroughly worn and a little upset.

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"Hey, what happened? You okay?" Bucky asked as Steve let himself in with the key Bucky had made and sat in a heap at the table. The girls were both asleep by now and Bucky had been waiting up for Steve and listening to a new record he had gotten. "I'll get you some water."

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Steve took off his overcoat and sat at the table with a heavy sigh. He didn't look like he really wanted to talk but he also didn't want to keep anything from Bucky. "I had to shoot someone," he said quietly. "And I don't know if he's going to make it or not."

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Bucky sat down immediately next to Steve and took his hand. "Do you want to tell me what happened or do you just want to forget it for now?" Bucky pushed the glass of water closer to Steve to encourage him to drink at least some of it.

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"I don't know," Steve said. He squeezed Bucky's hand and took a drink because he knew Bucky wanted him to have some. "He was going to shoot my partner and I was so far away," Steve said. "I only wanted to stop him, but I didn't mean to get him in the chest. I just keep seeing it in my head over and over."

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"Steve, you were just doing your job," Bucky tried. "Getting him anywhere else wouldn't necessarily have stopped him. You were protecting your partner." He paused a moment, unsure what to say to help. "What do your superiors say?"

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"They're congratulating me," Steve said tightly. "Saying I deserve a promotion, but I don't think murder is worthy of a promotion. I could have been better, Buck. I could have taken more time to aim or maybe I could have run faster. I don’t know."

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Bucky sighed and leaned his head against Steve's shoulder. "You did what you could. Your reflexes and instincts did what they thought was best for the situation. And maybe you didn't kill the guy. You said yourself he could make it." Bucky felt lost, like the day he was granted guardianship of his sisters. He didn't know what to do. This was new territory. Bucky had no idea what police officers went through at work. All Bucky did was stack records and tell people not to smoke around the
Steve flinched a little when Bucky leaned his head on his shoulder. He wasn’t in a cuddling mood. He felt like he should have his senior officer shout at him until his ears rung. "I should go home," he mumbled as he stood up. "They may go there for statements or something."

Bucky had no idea what to say. He didn't think Steve should be alone but he also didn't want to stop him from leaving if that was really what was best right now. "Steve..." Bucky whispered. He reached out for him but his hand aborted the motion quickly and he brought it back down to his lap. He felt useless.

"Sorry," Steve said. "I should've just gone home in the first place and called." He was just so caught up in his own head that he didn't know what to do. "I'll see you soon. Stay safe," He hurried out without making eye contact with Bucky.

Bucky sat in silent shock at the table for a few minutes. There was a lump in his throat and his eyes were fixed on a scar in the tabletop. Eventually, Bucky stood and wiped his face whispering, "Jesus fuck..." under his breath and then going to the phone. He dialed Steve's number but didn't hit call yet. Bucky waited another minute or so before deciding to put the phone back and just go to bed.

Steve had tried for a few days to get back to work but when he got news that the person he shot had died, he immediately put in a request for a vacation. He was too embarrassed to admit that he felt too awful to pin the badge on his chest. After the second day of Steve being a shut-in, Bucky received a call from Sarah.

Becca came knocking on Bucky's door early one morning with the phone in one hand. She shook him awake and handed it to him. "Hello?" Bucky asked and rubbed the sleepy grit from his eyes. "Hi, Mrs. Rogers, no I haven't seen or heard from him in days." Bucky waved Becca off sleepily and rolled to get out of bed.

"James, I know you and Steven are good friends," Sarah said ‘good friends’ with a pushy, knowing tone, "So I was just wondering if you wouldn't mind going over and checking on him."

"Mrs. Rogers, I don't know if Steve even wants to see me." Bucky hadn't heard from Steve this whole time. He didn't even get a call saying he made it home safe. Bucky was just a little pissed and a lot worried.

"Of course he wants to see you," Sarah scolded, but it didn't have too much heat to it. "He's unhappy
right now. The young man he shot passed away in the hospital the other day," she explained. She only knew because she had called to check in on Steve and Steve was too good of a son to ignore a call from his mom. "You will cheer him up. I can come by in a half hour to look after your sisters."

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"Oh no," Bucky lamented, "He hoped so badly that he would live." There was no point arguing anymore with Steve's mom so he consented to go see him while she stayed with the girls. They promised to be good and Bucky left them some money in case they all wanted to go out to dinner. He figured that a Rogers would be cooking for them, though, so it probably wouldn't have mattered.

Bucky walked across the couple of streets it took to get to Steve's and he made his way to his apartment getting more and more nervous as he went. What if Steve told him to fuck off and leave him alone?

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When Bucky knocked on the door, there was some hesitation before a shuffling of feet could be heard. Steve opened the door dressed in the same sweats and hoodie he'd worn for three days. He was surprised to see Bucky but he really should've expected him to show up sooner or later. "Is someone watching the girls?" was what came out of his mouth.

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"Your mom," Bucky said as he pushed past Steve into the apartment. He took in Steve's appearance as he shut the door. He looked like he hadn't slept for a week and was living off of crackers. Bucky wanted to hold him close. He wanted to kiss him and tell him it was all right. He wanted to make him eat something then get him to rest. He wanted to get him showered and into something new and clean. What Bucky settled on was the defense mechanism he used with his sisters, which was misdirected frustration and swearing, "What the hell, Steve?"

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It didn't take a genius to figure out his mom must've sent Bucky over to check in while she kept an eye on Becca and Lilly. Steve felt a little subconscious when Bucky looked at him because he knew he was a mess right now. So when Bucky swore at him, he shrugged and moved to grab his blanket from the couch to cover himself as he sat down. "I'm allowed to have bad days."

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"Bad day?" Bucky spit out, "Try almost a week!" He folded his arms and blew some hair out of his eyes. "Almost a week with no word from you, Steve. You didn't show up at my place, you didn't tell me when you found out about the guy, you didn't even call to say you got home safe that night! I've been fucking worried about you!" Bucky felt the lump in his throat again and couldn't quite figure out why he felt like crying and smashing things against the walls.

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Steve was feeling awful but he was still a stubborn mule at heart and Bucky yelling at him wasn't going to make him apologize even though he did feel bad for worrying him so much. He knew how much the poor guy had on his plate. "Nothing was stopping you from picking up the phone and calling me. You waited until my mom stepped in," he shot back.
"I tried, Steve," Bucky said. "I was going to call right after you left and tell you to get your ass back home to me. But, I thought if you needed your space then I needed to give it to you." Bucky let out a shaky breath and noticed a bad headache starting to form.

"Well, don't complain about me doing the same thing you did," Steve mumbled. If he had ignored phone calls from Bucky it would be another story. "You don't have to have a solution for everything, Buck. Some things can't be fixed. You can't un-kill a person."

"I felt so useless. There wasn't anything I could do to help you and I hated myself for that. It felt like before with..." Bucky was going to say how it felt like when his parents died and all he could do was sit around and stare at the walls and hold his young sisters close to him.

Steve looked up at Bucky and had an idea where his sentence had been going. "Come here." He said and held his blanket open for Bucky to come cuddle up next to him.

"No, I don't want to," Bucky grumped and furrowed his brow. "If we are in this together, Steve..." He trailed off again. "I can't lose you, too," he said finally after a long pause. "And you going off alone and us not communicating with each other and it taking your mother to get us to see each other counts as me losing you."

"What? That doesn't count," Steve said strongly, narrowing his eyes. "I'm allowed to grieve. I fucking killed someone, Bucky. Do you know what that feels like? I couldn't talk to your sisters when we fucked around, you really think I could handle them finding out about me taking someone's life? It's barely been a week. You didn't lose me. It's not like I ran off and didn't leave a forwarding address."

Bucky gritted his teeth and nodded slowly. "I need to go home. I've got a terrible goddamn headache getting worse every second." He felt a drip fall onto his cheek and he couldn't tell if his eyes were watering because he was fighting with Steve, because he was thinking of his parents, or because of the pain in his head.

"There's medicine in the bathroom. Good seeing you, Buck," Steve ground out aggressively and then laid down on the couch with his back to Bucky. He hated seeing Bucky hurt and upset like this. But he really didn't have the capacity to be giving right now.
Bucky blinked slowly and felt a bit nauseated. He trudged to Steve's bathroom and opened the little mirror cabinet. He found the bottle of pills and grabbed it from the shelf. Bucky tried opening the top but it wasn't working. It was taking too much effort and it hurt too much for him to look down. Bucky's body then decided it had given up so he gently slid down the wall to sit curled up against the bathtub, cradling the pill bottle.

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Steve was on high alert from the argument so when minutes passed and Bucky was still in the bathroom, he knew something was wrong. He got up and walked over to see what was going on. When he saw Bucky curled up against the tub, his heart broke and he knelt down next to him to wrap Bucky up with one of his arms and held him to his chest. He opened the pill bottle with his other hand. "I'm sorry."

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Bucky let Steve put a few pills in his mouth and he obeyed when he was told to swallow. He looked up into Steve's eyes and felt the tears streaming from his own. He knew now it had to be from the pain. This was by far the worst headache he had ever gotten in his life. He sent a silent prayer to Steve's god for letting this happen while his sisters weren't around to see it. Bucky gripped onto Steve's shirt and croaked out, "Steve..."

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Steve set the pills aside and picked Bucky up in his arms. He carried him over to his bed and laid him down gently. Steve sat next to him and stroked his hand through Bucky's hair and massaged his scalp. "Do you need to see a doctor?" He asked, looking worried.

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Bucky's eyes were closed and he was trying to only pay attention to the lovely feeling of Steve rubbing his head. "Well, you were going to make me see one anyway," Bucky swallowed through a tight knot in his throat. "Guess sooner than later might be a good idea." He made a mental note to schedule something for as soon as he could be seen. Maybe someone could give him a better answer about why his head revolted against him all the time. If Steve still went with him, he wouldn't be as nervous.

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Steve leaned down to press a soft kiss at the bridge of Bucky's nose. "I wish I could do something right now to help ease the pain," he said softly. "If it gets too much, I can take you to the hospital, okay?" He kept petting his hands through Bucky's hair in an attempt to comfort him.

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Bucky reached his hand up to hold Steve's face. "We're alright, aren't we?" He asked and ran a finger over Steve's lips. "You need time, that's fine. Just tell me that you and I are okay." Bucky could live with Steve needing some distance and time to sort out what happened. He could live with waiting for him to feel better again no matter how long it took. He just needed to know that this event hadn't changed the two of them together.
Steve kissed Bucky's finger. "We are always going to be alright, Buck," Steve promised. "I just need time." His face fell again, now not as distracted by Bucky and remembering the weight of what he did. "I don't know if I should be a cop anymore."

Bucky held his hand in place on Steve's face and reached his other hand out to touch his thigh. "But, you love being a cop. You live to help people. It's your job and your life. You saved Lilly and brought her back to me. You defended a kid who was just a little different from the other kids. Steve... what would you even do if you quit the force?"

"But I'm not helping anyone if I'm killing them. That kid was eighteen. I know he was going to shoot my partner, but what if he didn't have anyone who cared enough to set him right? What if I could have talked him down the straight and narrow?" He frowned. "I don't know what I'd do. That's why I haven't decided yet."

Bucky wasn't aware that the guy was just a kid. He was closer to Steve and Bucky's ages then he thought at first. He was closer to Becca's age then to Bucky's. "It isn't healthy to beat yourself up with a bunch of what-ifs and should-haves," he offered and rolled on his side towards Steve. His head wasn't hurting as much as he had been but he still wasn't completely fine.

"I can't help it," Steve mumbled. He laid down next to Bucky and rested his head on the pillow and looked over at him a little helplessly. "I always used to think that I could get away without ever having to use my gun."

"Have you never fired in the field before?" Bucky asked as he tried to decide whether to reach out and touch Steve or leave him be. "Steve, that's part of being a cop." He wanted to hold him close to his chest. Bucky wanted to take Steve back to his place and just listen to music on the couch or watch some TV and just be.

Steve shook his head. "Never - not even a warning shot. And I've been in some bad situations before," he said. "I wouldn't have cared so much if he had lived."

Bucky closed his eyes for a second and noticed his headache was significantly better. "If you wouldn't have fired then he might have hurt your partner and you and who knows who else." He tried to make Steve see some sort of reason in all of this but it was mostly a lost cause. Steve was just going to have to work this out on his own.
Steve looked down and didn't answer. He knew that he saved his partner's life but he still felt pretty
damn awful. He ran his fingers through his hair once and sighed heavily. "Do you think I would be
this upset over it if I were straight?"

Bucky shook his head quickly in confusion. "What do you mean? What's that got to do with
anything - especially saving your partner?" There was a deep-set sadness behind Steve's eyes and
Bucky was slowly letting it settle in that Steve might not be okay for a long while.

"I don't know," Steve murmured. "It's just... all the other guys in my department are straight. And
they seemed fine when they've had to shoot someone. Some come from the army and have killed
before, too."

"Steve, they are fine with it because they don't care as much as you." Bucky didn't want to go into a
long rant about his disdain for policemen and how he thought it was filled with mostly bad guys and
a few good ones like Steve. Bucky refrained from saying anything about 'the man' around Steve.
"They don't care as much about the lives they have been tasked to help and you do."

Steve hesitated for a little bit and looked Bucky over skeptically. "So we aren't extra sensitive
because we're gay?" He asked. As liberal as Steve and his Ma were, it didn't stop him from being
exposed to all sorts of homophobia and doubting himself for it.

"No, Steve," Bucky laughed. "I'm gay as fuck but I'm also pretty callous, right? If it isn't about my
sisters or you I don't give two shits." Bucky gently ran a hand down Steve's arm. "Gay doesn't mean
extra sensitive. I've slept with plenty of gay men who pushed me around and used me and shit to
know that that stereotype is false. You are just sensitive to this because you are you."

"You're also sensitive," Steve reminded. The guy got headaches whenever he was stressed out. And
he worried about his sisters after being away from them for a half hours. Steve only doubted their
health on their sexuality out of sheer ignorance. He sighed and nuzzled Bucky gently. "Sorry," he
apologized. "I guess I was being dramatic. That's a gay thing too, isn't it?" He gave Bucky a small
smile to show he was joking.

"Yes, Steve," Bucky said flatly and rolled his eyes. "Once you realize you're gay you automatically
become a drama queen." Bucky ventured to take Steve's hand in his and held it over his own heart.
"I'm sorry I yelled at you earlier. I should have reigned it in but I didn't and I won't make excuses for
it."
Steve wouldn't lie and say that it hadn't hurt when Bucky yelled at him instead of trying to immediately support him when he was down and out. But he also was being difficult and appreciated that Bucky stuck around. "It's okay," he said. "You're here for me. That's all that matters, Buck."

"I also can't promise it won't happen again but I will try harder not to do that to you again." Bucky said, "Just ask the girls, I have a bad habit of going from zero to angry in ten seconds. But, yes, I'm here for you and I'll be here for you for whatever you need."

"I appreciate you being honest, Buck. I'd rather the honesty than setting me up for disappointment later," Steve said and wrapped his arms around Bucky tightly and kissed him. "I love you, Sweetheart."

"I love you too, Steve." Bucky sighed out and let his tired eyes drift closed. "What do you want to do now? What's best for you? You can come home with me or I can leave or..." He trailed off. He hoped Steve would choose to come home with him and stay the night but he also knew that Steve might not think it was a good idea.

Steve paused in thought and decided, "I think I should be alone tonight," he said. He knew Bucky wanted him to go back to his place. And a part of Steve wanted to, but he needed space to think. "I'll sleep over at yours tomorrow?"

Bucky nodded and gave a weak smile. "Okay, Steve, that sounds good." He got out of the bed and pulled his hair back in a ponytail low on his head. "I got to make sure the girls listened to your mom and went to sleep on time. Lilly was a little over energetic today so I hope she wasn't too much trouble."

"She's Lilly, she's always trouble," Steve said fondly. "Love you, Buck. Thank you for coming by."

When Bucky got back home, Sarah was in the middle of teaching the girls how to make chocolate chip banana pancakes. "Hey there, Dearie. How is my son?" She asked.

Bucky sighed when he saw both sisters wide awake, un-showered, and about to eat sugary pancakes. "He's going to need some time but I believe in him to pull through," he said and went to hug Lilly and Becca. "Thanks for sort of making me go over there, Mrs. Rogers. I think he and I both needed to be forced into seeing each other for a bit so we could work it out." Bucky hoped he
didn't sound too fond when he talked about Steve. He had a pretty secure notion that Sarah already knew about them - or was possibly told by Lilly - but he didn't want to assume.

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"I'm glad to hear that. I must say I'm surprised he didn't come over to spend the night again," Sarah glanced out the window. "Bless his heart. He's so careful with everything but he always forgets to water the plant I gave him. He spends so much time here that I've been sneaking over while he's at work so I can keep the damn thing alive."

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Bucky cleared his throat nervously and shoved his hands in his pockets. He gave Becca a quick glance and she gave him a shake of the head indicating they had no part in whatever Sarah thought was going on. Bucky figured he would just say the most neutral thing he could in regards to what Steve's mother had said. "Well, I'll tell him to make sure to water the plant more often so it can survive."

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Sarah eyed Bucky with that mom look before she rolled her eyes at all three of them. "Oh, for heaven's sake," she said. "With Steve's inability to fib and me knowing my son better than anyone else in the world, do you really think I wouldn't knows you two are canoodling?" She asked. "You don't have to hide it from me."

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"Uhhh..." was all Bucky's mouth let him say. Becca's eyes were jumping between Bucky and Sarah and Lilly was laughing nervously to herself. "Well..." He tried again. "We..." Words weren't working for him at all. Bucky made a pained noise and then finally said, "You got to tell him that you know."

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Sarah shook her head. "He will tell his mother when he's ready," she said. She wasn't going to make Steve feel self-conscious by letting him know she knew his secret. When he was comfortable, she knew he would tell her.

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Bucky nodded. He thought it might do Steve some good knowing he doesn't have to worry about telling his mom. "Is this okay with you?" He asked slowly. Not that her opinion would make a difference to Bucky but it might to Steve and that's what Bucky was worried about.

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Sarah walked over so she could give Bucky a hug. "Of course I'm okay with this," she said, all sweet and motherly. But then she added, "I've always wanted more children to boss around."

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Bucky chuckled and hugged her back. "In that case, do you want to boss these two off to get ready
for bed?” He asked and pointed to his sisters who were already grumbling about having to go to sleep.

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"It would be my pleasure,” Sarah said. She finished up putting the pancakes away to be stored and eaten the next day. Afterward, she herded the girls into the bathroom so they could wash up and get to bed.

---

Bucky went to a box of records and took out a slow album to play. He set it up and laid on the couch and thought of Steve. He still needed to learn how to dance. His headache now gone and the girls doing what they needed to, Bucky let himself relax a bit and before he knew it he was asleep.
As promised, Steve came over the next day after work. It'd been a weird day back but he was glad that he was able to start moving forward with his life. When he got to the apartment, he had a paper bag tucked under his arm that he carried gingerly.

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Bucky let out a big sigh of relief when Steve came home. He rushed to him and kissed him lightly but with as much love as he could. Then he noticed the bag under Steve's arm. "What's that?" Bucky asked and nodded towards it curiously.

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Steve smiled into the kiss, pressed closer to Bucky, pulled out a bouquet of roses from the bag, and offered it to Bucky. "For you."

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Bucky took them and gave a small confused smile. "What's this for?" He asked and peeked through the roses. Bucky had never been given flowers before except when his parents died and it felt really nice to have this small romantic gesture from someone as caring as Steve.

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"Cause I love you," Steve answered with a soft smile. He kissed Bucky's cheek and ran a hand up and down his arm. "I wasn't sure what your favorite flower was, but I figured roses were a safe choice."

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"I don't think I have a favorite flower but I like these ones because they're from you." Bucky knew it was a little cheesy but he didn't much care. He went to put the flowers in some water. He didn't have any vases so he just used a pitcher. "How are you feeling today, Babe?"

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Steve pet a hand over Bucky's hair and smiled over at him. "I'm feeling better. I went back to work today. They've got me at desk work for the next two weeks before they put me back in the field." Steve didn't mind that.

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"That's good, right? Sort of gives you some more time." Bucky hugged Steve's middle and rested his head against his shoulder. "I missed you so much, Steve," he whispered into Steve's shirt. "I hated not having you around."

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Steve nodded. He felt a little bad for being away so long. "I'm sorry," he apologized. "I don't think
I'm going to withdraw myself like that again." He kissed the top of Bucky's head. "I missed you too."

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"Even if you do, I'm still here for you," Bucky said and detached himself from Steve. He went over to the couch to grab a blanket and wrapped himself up. He was in his sleeping clothes and was very cold. It was definitely getting closer to winter. "You want to shower and go to sleep? Or you want some food?"

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Steve smiled and said, "I'm kind of feeling like just changing into pajamas and cuddling up next to my favorite guy." Once Bucky was wrapped up in his blanket, Steve scooped him up and carried him bridal style to the bedroom.

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Bucky protested slightly at being lifted off the ground but he stopped once he felt safe in Steve's arms. Steve gingerly laid him on the bed and starting undressing himself to get changed. Steve looked slightly bashful still while he got naked in front of Bucky even though they had been in far more compromising positions together.

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Steve gave Bucky a cocky grin in response to the protesting but he soon grew sheepish once it was time to undress. He still was a modest person. He kept his back turned as he changed and once he was in a tank and sweatpants, he laid down next to Bucky and gave him a kiss.

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"Time to sleep?" Bucky asked hopefully and wrapped around Steve. "It's been a long week," Bucky said even though it was only just Wednesday. Lilly had a soccer game coming up and lacrosse practice all week and Becca was going to have a big chemistry project due soon, too.

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Steve nodded. "I'd like that," he said. "Hopefully starting tomorrow I'll be able to go back to helping you out." Steve pet a hand up and down Bucky's back. "I'm sorry I haven't been around as much as I should."

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"It's okay, you were hurting and needed time." Bucky said, "I could have been far more understanding and patient than I was." He yawned and ran a hand through his hair. "It's okay you weren't around to help. I have been doing this for a while now," he said with a chuckle. "Just so long as you come to Lilly's soccer game tomorrow."

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"I'm less than a year older than you..." Bucky mumbled in retort and quickly fell asleep. He slept a lot better with Steve by his side and it surprised him because, before Steve, he slept perfectly okay but then after Steve came into his life he couldn’t sleep without him.

Steve woke up early the next day and left Bucky a little love note to wake up to once he left for work. He worked through lunch so he could leave early and turn back up at Bucky's house well before Lilly's game.

When Steve came back home, Lilly was a nervous wreck and Becca was dancing quietly to herself in the corner to some David Bowie music trying to keep out of the way. Bucky was giving Lilly fruit and water and trying to get her to calm down. This happened before every game. She was always so worried that she was going to mess up and ruin the whole game for everyone.

Steve hadn’t experienced pre-game Lilly before, but he knew the family well enough to know that Lilly and Bucky being frantic while Becca occupied herself was nothing new. "Hey," he greeted them. "What's the matter, Lilly?"

"I can't go to the game!" Lilly shouted in response. "I can't play tonight."

Bucky thrust out an apple slice to her and said, "Yes, you can and you will." Then he turned to Steve. "This happens every game. She's excited for days then gets anxious about it right before." Bucky slumped his shoulders and let out a shallow sigh.

"Anxious? About what? You're twelve," Steve said incredulously. "This game is hundreds of years old, Lil, chances are you're not the worst player this sport has come across," Steve reassured, nudging her.

Lilly seemed to take the bait for a second before realizing a greater horror, "What if I disgrace hundreds of years of soccer tradition?"

Bucky groaned and looked to Becca who was still ignoring them and swaying by herself. "Lilly, we've got to leave for the goddamn game in five minutes. We've been over this before and I'll say it again. You're gonna kick the other team’s ass and this year you all are bringing home that glorious fucking season trophy."
That certainly wasn't where Steve had seen this going. He groaned and looked over to Bucky with an expression that said 'how do you do this?' Before letting Bucky deal with Lilly on his own. "Hey, Becca," he said, going to the more reasonable of the Barnes sisters. "Is that the new album?"

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"Older one. Aladdin Sane," Becca replied and pointed on the cover sitting propped up against the player.

Bucky managed to get Lilly up on her feet and he started pushing her towards the door with her gear bag in tow. "Okay, we're moving! Anyone who's coming needs to come now because I don't know how long this push is going to last."

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Steve took Becca’s arm and playfully tugged her to the door when Bucky announced that they were on the go. He was incredibly excited to go to Lilly’s game. He never had little siblings to watch in sports and he had always been too small and sick to play sports himself.

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The four of them trudged down the block and eventually made it to the park with Lilly basically doing okay. She improved immensely once she saw her teammates and she ran to them happily. There were sets of removable bleachers set up and Becca led the way over to them. Bucky stayed close to Steve but was careful not to touch him.

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"So is Thomas on the soccer team too? Or just lacrosse?" Steve asked as they took their seats. His leg rested against Bucky's but he held back from having any more contact. "He was a nice boy, that kid. You should be nice to him."

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"I should do a lot of things," Bucky said simply. "And, no, he's just on the lacrosse team." Becca sat on the other side of Bucky and yawned. She had been up late the night before working on her chemistry project so she was beat. She leaned into her brother and put her head on his arm. Bucky wasn't going to be surprised if she fell asleep during the game.

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Steve looked around before whispering quietly into Bucky's ear, "I can tell you what you should do to me tonight." He pulled back with a smirk. When he saw Becca falling asleep on Bucky, he took off his jacket to put over her shoulders.

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Becca stirred a little then adjusted the jacket with a quiet, "Thank you."

Bucky turned his head to Steve and whispered low and jokingly, "This is a children's sports game, Officer, that sort of talk isn't appropriate." But Bucky was more than happy to imagine just what exactly Steve wanted Bucky to do to him when they got home.
Steve smirked when he was scolded. He turned his attention to the game and whenever Lilly got control of the ball, Steve would stand up and cheer her on loudly. He didn't mean to but he usually ended up being the loudest of everyone present.

Becca was startled out of her nap when Steve yelled and she tossed Bucky a look that said 'control your boyfriend' before sitting up and folding her arms against her chest. Bucky loved seeing Steve get so excited for Lilly and it sort of did feel like they were being proud parents watching their kiddo play soccer together. Bucky didn't let himself entertain that thought for too long, though.

When Lilly's team won, Steve was hollering and cheering so loudly that even some of the parents on the team were a little embarrassed by him. Some got a kick out of him, though. "Did you see that?" Steve asked, shaking Bucky's arm.

"I did," Bucky laughed at Steve and steadied the man. Lilly's team came running over to the bleachers to greet their parents and adoring fans like Steve. Bucky stepped off the bleachers and bent down with his arms outstretched so Lilly could smack into him in a big hug. "That was amazing, Lil!"

Steve watched Bucky and Lilly happily. A few parents came over to greet him and ask who he was, so he just introduced himself as their cousin. They all liked him well enough even though he'd been a bit overenthusiastic. "Can we go out for ice cream?" He asked Bucky.

Bucky was aggravated that Steve had to call himself their cousin. He was mad because he wished they could just be open about their relationship and he was also mad because Steve - the most honest guy he ever met - was forced to lie for Bucky. But, Bucky consented to them getting ice cream and he slung Lilly's gear bag over his shoulder to carry while they walked.

Steve usually was an awful liar but for the safety of their relationship, he easily feigned that they were family. As they walked away from the field, Steve patted Lilly's arm. "You did great, Kiddo," he said. "She really was amazing. Wasn't she, Buck?"

"She always is." Bucky smiled and gave Lilly a high five. "So, we can get ice cream before dinner but what do you all want afterward? And please don't say pizza, I am sick of pizza." They were closing in on the ice cream shop and Becca was once again leading the group.
In response to what they wanted for dinner, Lilly said pizza, Becca said Chinese, and Steve said gyros all at the same time. Steve laughed and then gave Bucky a look. "Time for you to be the tiebreaker."

Bucky rolled his eyes and said, "Jesus, you guys are all over the place." He already ruled out pizza and gyros were too fancy in Bucky's opinion. "Chinese," he said and clapped his hands together. "Becca wins."

"Well, now I see who you love more," Steve jokingly lamented in a dramatic tone. He held the door to the ice cream parlor open for them. "Becca, why did you have to sabotage my dinner choice?" he teased.

"No one likes gyros, Steve," Becca said and walked through the door without a 'thank you'. Bucky thanked Steve and flicked his sister on the top of her head.

"Maybe you and I can get them next time, yeah?" He offered to Steve and gave him a loving smile. "What ice cream are you getting?"

Steve nearly put an arm around Bucky but he held back from doing so and felt a bit awful that he couldn't. "I'm thinking vanilla with sprinkles," he said. Steve could be a very plain person sometimes. "You?"

"That's so boring," Lilly said and stood in between Steve and Bucky. Lilly was a very outgoing person but she could also get pretty shy in public and sometimes she needed to be close to Bucky or Becca to feel safe.

Bucky held her to him and shook her a little. "Steve can get whatever he wants, even if it's super lame," he said.

Steve stuck his tongue out at the both of them for criticizing his choice of ice cream. Once the orders were put in, he paid and took his own to eat. "So when is your next game, Lilly?"

Lilly was too far into her ice cream to answer so Becca piped up and said, "She's got a lacrosse game in three days that none of us are allowed to attend."

"I'm attending whether she likes it or not," Bucky added through a bite of cookie dough ice cream.
"I want to go too," Steve insisted. He nudged Lilly gently. "Come on, I’m your biggest fan," he said, grinning. "I was louder than the both of these guys combined. I hardly heard a chirp outta these two birds," he said as he gestured to Bucky and Becca.

"Well, Becca, was asleep and I was too embarrassed by you to say anything," Bucky said to Steve. "But, yes, if you can convince Lilly to let us go then we can all go again in a few days."

Lilly groaned and hit her head against the table. "Becca never has to deal with this pressure."

"Excuse me?" Becca started. "Let me tell you about pressure..." The girls droned on and started bickering while Bucky looked to Steve and gave a low sigh.

Steve was amazed at how the girls could go from totally amicable to bickering endlessly within moments. "Makes me wish I had siblings," Steve sighed to Bucky. He finished his ice cream and threw the napkin in the trash. "I always wanted a little brother or sister."

"Well, now you've got these two around so that should help fix that desire," Bucky said and finished his ice cream too. He stood up and started pulling his still arguing sisters by the arms to get up. Lilly had finished eating long before Steve and Bucky but Becca was still working on it. Bucky decided she could walk and eat because now he was really craving Chinese food. "Take-out sounds great cause then we can go back home and be ourselves," Bucky huffed out as he gently brushed up against Steve's side when he walked out the door.

Steve nodded in agreement. "Yeah, I can't wait to be embarrassingly affectionate with you," Steve said in a quiet voice to Bucky. When they got to the Chinese place, Steve made sure to complain about how much better gyros were to Becca before placing his order.

Becca simply ignored Steve and kept looking at Bucky almost to say 'why do you keep him?' Bucky ordered for himself and Lilly who was decidedly pissed at not having pizza. He refused to let Steve pay since he got the ice cream and Bucky claimed it was only a fair trade off.

Steve didn't argue too much over not being able to pay. He insisted only once after Bucky said no before letting it go. He mimicked Lilly’s pout and said, "Lilly, don’t be so upset. You get pizza every day. I'm sure you'll have it soon enough."
"Not every day," Lilly chided. "Just a lot of days."

Bucky and Becca carried their bags of food because Lilly had taken residence as Steve's human backpack. Bucky tried hard not to look at him too much because Steve giving his sister a piggyback ride was too damn adorable for him to take and he wanted to smack that dumb grin off Steve's face with a kiss.

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"A lot of days is pretty much every day," Steve countered. He let her ride piggyback on the way home, occasionally bouncing his step more to give her a bumberier ride. He never gave her too rough of a time because she smacked his shoulder whenever he bounced too much. Once they were inside the apartment, Steve carefully dumped her flat on her back onto the couch. "Today was a nice day out, you guys."

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"Yeah, it really was," Bucky said and attacked Steve in kisses after he got his hands on him. He missed touching him so much when he wasn't allowed to. "Steve..." Bucky breathed and put his forehead to his. "Want to just go to my room for a bit?" Bucky really wanted to make out like high schoolers and hold Steve's hand and pretend that they were the only people around for miles.

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Steve had kind of been looking forward to eating dinner but when Bucky said his name like that and looked at him with that expression, he couldn't say no. "Alright," he said, grinning like an idiot. He stealthily grabbed Bucky's ass before rushing into his room.

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The second the door was closed, Bucky was all over Steve licking into his mouth and running his hands down his back to cup his ass. He moaned into the kiss and adjusted his stance knocking over his lamp. "Shit, fuck, oops." Bucky started laughing and had to pull away from Steve because he was chuckling so hard.

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Steve missed Bucky on him immediately. He picked up the lamp quickly and brought the two of them together again. He lightly brushed his fingers over Bucky’s crotch and thighs and bit his lip gently.

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Bucky moaned low and quiet and kissed him for a few minutes but then forced himself to pull off of Steve. "Okay, let's get back out there. We should eat with the girls."

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Steve made a disappointed grunt. "Why drag me in here then make me go back out when I'm just starting to have fun?" He complained. Steve tugged him back down into bed and grabbed his ass while he kissed him a few more times before finally letting him back up.
"I'm sorry, Babe, I just needed to touch you a little bit. We were out so long today in places that we weren't allowed to hold hands or kiss and I just got worked up and upset," Bucky said quickly and tossed a jacket at Steve in case he was cold. "After the girls go to sleep we can continue this full-force."

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Steve's expression softened and he kissed Bucky one more time. "One of these days we won't have to hide," he reassured. "Tonight we are totally touching each other everywhere." He got up and held the door open for him.

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"That's what I like to hear," Bucky said and strode through the door. Becca and Lilly were already eating their food and Bucky wasn't surprised. He was sure he had kept them waiting too long. He sat at the table and pulled Steve's chair out next to him and started handing his food to him. Bucky leaned into Steve a little and said, "You can pray, Steve, I don't mind. I know you like to."

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Steve looked bashful when Bucky offered for him to pray. He set his food up on the table and folded his hands together. He said grace, thanking God for the people he loved and praying for them all to stay in good health. Lilly looked at him like he had five heads but by the time he was done, she had ducked her head back into her dinner.

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"Thanks, Steve, that was nice," Bucky said and gave a genuine smile. It felt good to do even the small things like that for Steve. He knew it all went a long way and he wanted to be the best, most accommodating, most understanding boyfriend that he could possibly be for Steve.

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Steve still looked a little embarrassed to be the only one saying prayers but he felt better for being able to pray before his meal. Steve leaned over and kissed Bucky's cheek before taking a bite of his dinner.

"Bucky, my class is going to Ellis Island tomorrow. Can I have twenty bucks?" Lilly asked.

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Bucky breathed tightly through his lips and reached into his pocket. "You sure you need that much?" He asked and began sifting through his wallet. "When did I sign a permission slip for Ellis Island?" He added as an afterthought. Bucky pulled what he had and it only added up to seventeen dollars but he gave it all to Lilly.

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"Don't need that much, but I always ask for more than what I need cause you always have less, which happens to be exactly what I need," she said smartly. "And I forgot to have you sign it so I forged your signature last week," she added.
Bucky's eyebrows shot up on his forehead. "You forged my - fuck, Lilly. You can't do that shit. That's just making bad habits." He looked to Steve to back him up on this even though he knew there was no way she was listening to either of them anyway. She'd already done it so there wasn't anything he could do to fix it now. "How'd you know how to do my signature convincingly anyway?"

Steve shook his head disapprovingly at Lilly as she said, "I practiced a lot. It takes a lot less time to study one signature than to study for all the tests you would've had to sign if I failed."

Steve rubbed a hand over his face. "You can't do that, Lilly. You need to be responsible."

"And just how many tests have you failed that I don't know about?" Bucky asked sternly and stared at Lilly. Becca was quietly looking on and eating her dinner like she was watching a train wreck of a movie playing right in front of her. "You know the drill is to bring me your grades every week. All of them!"

"What, so you can yell at me?" Lilly demanded, raising her voice back at him. "I'm not Becca. We all can't be as perfect as Becca. So long as I pass for the year, who cares if I fail a couple of tests?" She said. "You got to drop out."

"I had to drop out because Mom and Dad died and I had to take care of you!" Bucky stabbed a finger in Lilly's direction and shook his head at her. His eyebrows were furrowed and his eyes were blazing mad. Lilly made a move to get up from the table and Bucky quickly gritted out, "Sit down."

"Well, they were my mom and dad too!" She snapped back. Steve felt a little awkward in this conversation but he gently rubbed a hand over Bucky's back. "You never let us talk about them," Lilly defended. "You don't get to be the only one sad about it, Bucky."

"I never said you can't talk about them!" Bucky said and gripped a hand on Steve's thigh for support. "The fact remains that I have to play their role now for the two of you and that means getting a little firm where grades are concerned. Do you think Mom wouldn't be a little pissed that you forged my signature and lied about bad test scores?"

"Well, we won't ever know what Mom would think cause she's fucking dead!" Lilly said in a stubborn shout.
"Lilly -" Steve tried to interject calmly but Lilly pointed a finger at him to stop him.

"You're not my brother and you're not my parent," She huffed out.

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"Lilly, I think you should go to your room and calm down for a bit," Bucky said with tight lips. "We can discuss this later. You can take your dinner if you want."

Lilly got up with her plate and kicked her chair back under the table. "So goddamn unfair," She murmured and sauntered off to her room again.

Bucky looked to Becca who was looking pretty upset by this point, "You okay, Becs? I'm sorry about all that."

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Becca had her head ducked into her dinner and didn't respond at first. "Well, she has a point," she said evenly. "You don't tell us we can't talk about Mom and Dad. But you get weird whenever we do and change the subject." She pushed her plate away, not hungry anymore. "And you used to be fun. We kind of lost a brother."

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It was Bucky's turn to get up from the table and he slowly and evenly stood and took his plate to the sink to wash. He didn't respond to Becca as he just quietly cleaned his plate then went to his room saying, "I'll be back in a little while." He felt bad for leaving in the middle of such an ordeal and leaving Steve out there alone with Becca but he just needed a few minutes alone. He crawled into his bed and hugged a pillow to his chest. He hated having to be the authority in the house. He hated not being the fun older brother anymore. He wasn't cut out to be a parent to his sisters.

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Steve wanted to go comfort Bucky but he understood needing a few minutes to gather oneself. He would join him soon enough, but he would give him some space. He looked over at Becca and shifted awkwardly before asking, "Do you think it would make you guys happier if I was your guardian so Bucky could be your brother again?"

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Becca gave Steve a confused and offended look. "No," she said flatly and took another bite of her food. Then she sighed and looked back up at Steve. "I didn't mean it like we lost him, too. I just mean it's hard to want to listen to him since he isn't our parent and he used to be our cool older brother who was headed through school to be a record producer. Now he's at a dead-end job and probably won't ever finish school and he's sad a lot and a little difficult to deal with sometimes." She looked Steve up and down. "You do make him happier, though, Steve."

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Steve apologized, "Sorry, I just... I want to do everything I can to make you guys happy - all of you. I've lost one parent and know how much it hurts. I can't imagine losing both." He sighed. "Think he would ever go back to school if he could?"
"I don't know. Probably not," Becca said and got up to wash her plate too. "I think even if he was given the opportunity, he's sort of given up on that dream by now."

Steve sighed. He stood up and gave Becca a brief hug. "You're a good kid. I'm going to go check on your brother. Give a holler if you need anything." He headed into the bedroom and saw Bucky lying there. He gave him a sad look and went over. "Hey, Beautiful." He sat down and put a hand on his shoulder. "You are doing a good job, you know that, right?"

Bucky flopped his head into his pillow and mumbled something incoherently. He didn't much feel like he was doing a good job at the moment. He sat up suddenly and clung to Steve in a hug. "Today was such a normal day just going to the game and getting ice cream and it was fine. I should've just let it go that Lilly forged my signature."

Steve wrapped his arms around Bucky strongly. "You did what you thought was right," he reassured. "But, Baby, maybe it would be for the best you let some things go," he said. "I'm not saying to stop caring. But maybe try to not be the parent anymore," he said. "Big brothers can give guidance too."

"Big brothers don't have to constantly look after their little sisters. Big brothers don't end up with two dependents so suddenly. Big brothers get to be fun and I have to be my parents." Bucky balled a fist into Steve's shirt and shook a little. "I miss them so much, Steve," he said. "I wasn't even in town when they died. I didn't get to say goodbye."

Steve held Bucky tightly against his chest, wishing he could wash away all the grief. He kissed the top of his head. "Tell me about them," he prompted gently. "I've always wondered what they were like."

Bucky breathed in deeply and thought for a moment before deciding to talk. "Basically, they had the same personalities as Lilly and Becca. My mom was outgoing and loud and couldn't keep a secret and always running around and playing with us. My dad was quiet and reserved and wicked smart and hated being interrupted from a good book." Bucky paused. "Sometimes it hurts how much the girls are like them. And I hate saying that." He wiped a hand across his eyes as he concluded, "Guess I'm a bit of both my parents. I don't know."

Steve ran a hand over Bucky's chest and listened. He would interrupt once in a while by kissing his
cheek but otherwise let Bucky talk. "They sound like they were wonderful," he said. "What was it like when they told you that you were going to have a little sister?"

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"I cried," Bucky said. "At first I cried cause I thought it meant I was going to go to new parents, but they sorted that out quickly. Then I cried because I was excited about it. I was already nine and didn't have siblings yet so it was nice to finally have one."

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Steve giggled a little when Bucky admitted that he thought he was getting new parents. He stroked his fingers through his hair and snuggled him some more. "You are such a good brother, Beautiful," Steve sighed. "Do you think your parents would have liked me?"

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Bucky pulled their bodies down so Steve was lying on top of him. "They would have loved you. You're exactly their type of person - loyal, kind, generous, in love with me, funny, adorable, perfect, gentle, honest." Bucky kissed Steve in between each compliment and ran his hands down to hold Steve right on his lower back. "I love you, so they would have loved you, too."

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Steve blushed deeply at the compliments and ducked his head into Bucky's neck. "A yes or no answer would have sufficed," he said shyly. He rubbed a hand up and down Bucky's side and asked cautiously, "What if we moved in together? I can be around more often and I'm barely at my place anymore as it is. It's smarter money-wise, too."

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Bucky's eyes went wide and he smiled a surprised little grin. "Really? You want to..." He flipped them quickly so Steve was under him this time and he started sucking on his neck between saying, " Fucking yes, let's do it."

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Steve was worried about moving too fast but... really, he wanted to go to sleep and wake up next to Bucky every day of his life. When Bucky got excited and flipped them over, Steve let out a giddy laugh and pulled Bucky down so their chests were pressed together.

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Bucky stopped abruptly and sat up so he was straddling Steve. "Well... we will need the okay from the girls and you'd have to move in here instead of the other way around. Is that okay?"

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"I'm so okay with that, Bucky. I wouldn't want the girls to have to deal with another move," Steve said. "I don't have much at my place and whatever doesn't fit, I can sell."
"Don't sell your shit." Bucky shook his head. "I'll just have to ditch some records. It'll be fine. Probably needed to clean out some of the ones I don't listen to anyway." Bucky was going to have to really think about which ones he needed to sell or donate to the shop but he would do it for Steve. What he was most worried about was getting the okay from the girls. It would have to be asked at just the right time and very carefully.

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"If I want to keep it and there's no room, it can go to my mom's house," Steve said. He pet his fingers through Bucky’s hair lovingly. "We will figure it out. If the girls are okay with it, then we can go forward from there," he said with a big old grin. "I love you."

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"I love you too, Steve," Bucky said and nuzzled Steve's cheek with his nose. "Now, I should probably go check on Lilly and get the girls to bed. Then I think you and I should have a shower together." Bucky bit Steve's lip playfully and then kissed him. "You can chill out anywhere you like. Here or the couch or kitchen. I'll just be a bit."

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Steve nodded, perking up at the thought of getting to shower with his wonderful boyfriend. He leaned in to kiss Bucky one more time and waited for him patiently on the bed. He sent a little prayer in hope Lilly wouldn't give Bucky a hard time.

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After twenty long minutes, Bucky returned to his room where Steve was still sitting on the bed holding a Barnes family photo album and gingerly flipping through the pages. "The girls are both in bed. Lilly's still pissed, Becca apologized for what she said." Bucky gently took the photo album from Steve's hands and put it back on his dresser. He didn't have the energy to deal with pictures of his parents at the moment.

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Steve had been thoughtfully enjoying seeing the photographs of a young, carefree Bucky with his parents and giving his baby sisters kisses but he understood why Bucky put it away. "It will all pass," Steve said. "And things will get better." He reached out to take Bucky's hands in his. "I want you to think of something we can do together purely for you. When you think about it, let me know and we can make a day of it."

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"Sure..." Bucky said and gave a slight smile. "I'll do my best to think of something good." He gave Steve's hands a little squeeze. "Now, I believe we have somewhere to be." Bucky pulled Steve up off the bed and towards the bathroom attached to Bucky's bedroom. He loved these quiet unrushed moments with Steve. He wanted so many more of them. Once they moved Steve in, he could have that.

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Steve followed Bucky into the bathroom. Once inside, he slowly pulled Bucky's shirt off and pressed slow, open-mouthed kisses over his newly exposed chest. His hands moved down to undo the front of Bucky's pants and he slid those off as well.
Bucky was down to his briefs and socks as he pushed Steve against the wall and stuck his hands under his shirt as he kissed him. He pulled back then and stripped off the remainder of his clothes before tugging on Steve's and saying in a low voice, "Off." Steve was so perfect with the little embarrassed blush he got on his face. "You're so fucking cute."

Steve loved having someone be so interested in him. He had been so confident kissing Bucky but as soon as the man started to show an interest back, he got all bashful. He shrugged his shirt off and shyly started to undo his own pants.

Bucky slipped into the shower and watched Steve finish undressing quickly. "Water might be a little cold at first since Becca just showered, too." He warned and reached out for Steve's hand. He pulled Steve into the shower with him and turned on the water. There was a rush of cold and Bucky swore under his breath before it heated up to a comfortable temperature.

Steve shuddered and huddled close to Bucky when the rush of cold water hit him. "Fuuuuck," he cursed. He swatted lightly at Bucky's chest. "Why didn't you let me wait until it was warm, you big jerk?"

"Oh, you're a tough guy. You can handle it, punk," Bucky said and held Steve. "Feels nice now at least." Bucky reached for the soap in the slightly cramped shower and started rubbing it down Steve's chest and arms. The shower wasn't big enough for anything sexually adventurous but Bucky thought he might be able to give Steve a soapy hand job at least. He hadn't yet decided. They also could wait until they were back in bed and just do it then.

Even though the shower wasn't big enough to do much, Steve could at least suck little marks onto Bucky's neck, so he took the liberty of doing so. "Such a cruel boyfriend. Assuming I'm not sensitive just cause I've got muscle. Well, I've got news for you, Mister. Cause the strongest muscle is my heart," he teased.

"You're such a dweeb," Bucky breathed and kept soaping up Steve's body. "But you are very muscly. Like pretty damn muscular. Like I can't handle thinking about your body sometimes that's how muscly you are. You're so handsome. So fucking gorgeous and you're mine." Bucky got closer as he talked until he was rubbing a hand down to cup Steve's ass and Bucky's erection was pushing against his stomach.

Steve let out a laugh as Bucky admired him shamelessly. He shook his head and pressed their lips together. "You're a dork," he said fondly. Steve's hand trailed from Bucky's chest down to his dick and started to stroke his fingers over it. Steve didn't realize it but he was giving Bucky the biggest set of bedroom eyes.
Bucky hummed into the feeling of Steve's hand on him. God, he missed this. They hadn't really done anything since before the shooting incident. Bucky needed Steve. He needed to be all over him. "Wait, Steve," Bucky said and stopped his hand. "I want to come with you. You want to dry off and go to bed? We can pick this up there."

Steve made a little pout when Bucky stopped him but he sure as hell wasn’t going to complain about fooling around together. "I guess I can wait a few more minutes," he said dramatically, smirking to show he was kidding. "Hurry and wash up."

"Yes, Officer." Bucky obeyed and started quickly washing himself. When he went for the shampoo, he picked up the bottle and gently grabbed Steve's hand. He poured some shampoo into Steve's palm and then turned away from him. "You mind helping me out?" He asked low and quiet.

Steve smiled adoringly at Bucky and started to wash his hair, massaging his scalp and kissing his shoulders. "I love you so much. You've got no idea," he said in a dreamy voice. "Can't wait until the girls say that I can move in."

Bucky had never had anyone wash his hair like this. Anytime he cut it, he did it himself so he'd never even gone to a salon - too expensive. He loved the feeling of the massage Steve was giving him. "You sound pretty confident that they are going to agree to this, Steve."

"If they say no I'll find a way to convince them. Free puppies for life, all the cats they can fit in here, no homework ever," he joked. Steve nibbled affectionately at Bucky's ear. "I've got it all planned."

"Oh, yeah," Bucky laughed, "Sounds like a real good plan to let them have animals running around all over the place." Steve finished up with Bucky's hair and Bucky stood under the water to wash out all the soap before he turned off the stream and hugged Steve close just to feel his wet body on his before he got out and dried off.

Steve wrapped a towel around his own waist and then started to fuss with Bucky, carefully toweling his hair dry and dusting the droplets off his shoulders. He smiled and brushed his fingers down his spine before walking into the bedroom. "So are you going to touch me now or what?" Steve asked playfully in a rare show of confidence as he flopped back on the bed.

Bucky immediately felt desire for Steve well up inside him and he jumped on top of Steve gracefully so he was sitting with his ass on Steve's thighs and his legs on either side of Steve's chest. "You got to tell me what you want me to do. I need direction," Bucky growled lightly as he spoke. "Explain
exactly what you need from me."

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Steve smiled up at Bucky and ran his hands along his sides in appreciation. Bucky looked so good sitting on him, bare as the day he was born. "I want..." he paused to think. They could do anything. "I want to do everything," he said. "But tonight..." Steve blushed and pulled him down against his chest. "Can we make love to each other tonight?"

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Bucky smiled slow and bit his lip. "Yes, of course," he said as he locked eyes with Steve. "I'd like nothing more." He brought a hand up to run a thumb across Steve's lips and cheeks. "Do you want to do me again like last time?" Wow, it surprised Bucky that they had only actually had sex once. "It's up to you how we do it. I'm fine either way."

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Steve's eyes lit up and he kissed Bucky's fingertip when he ran it over his lips. He looked over at him and pulled the blankets over the both of them. "Would you like a turn on top?" He asked shyly. "I see the way you stare at my ass."

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"Your ass is the stuff of dreams, Babe," Bucky said and nodded in agreement with himself. "I would love to be on top tonight but only if you are completely sure you want to. It's your first time like that and I don't want you rushing in if you aren't sure, okay?" Bucky let his fingers run comforting circles on Steve's skin. He knew that the first time being penetrated could be pretty nerve-wracking and Bucky didn't want Steve to be anxious.

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Steve, admittedly, was a little tense. Especially because, when he'd been on top, Bucky had been so tight and that was after fucking most of Brooklyn. He drew Bucky in for a slow kiss and smiled sweetly at him. "I want to feel the same connection you did with me last time," he said. "And I want to give all of myself to you."

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Bucky groaned and said, "I love you so fucking much, Steve. And if you are sure, I promise to be so gentle and open you up wide so it doesn't hurt at all." He started kissing down Steve's body and he moved under the blankets still talking between kisses as he got further and further down. "I'll make sure to lick you open and stretch you out so you'll be ready for me. I'll treat you so right, so good, just like you did for me."

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Steve blushed deeply at the promises Bucky gave. It still felt a little taboo to him since he was a good Catholic boy who promised he'd save himself for marriage. It killed him that he couldn't marry Bucky if they wanted to, but he pushed that thought out of his head. "Lick me? Is that normal?" He asked dumbly, lifting up the blanket to watch Bucky.

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Bucky was sucking a hickey into Steve's inner thigh when the blankets were lifted off of him. He
pulled his head up and tucked his hair behind his ears. "Yes, licking is normal," Bucky said and pointed at the dresser. "Will you hand me that hair tie? And it's called rimming, Steve, or eating ass, eating someone out..." He trailed off and gently pushed Steve's legs apart. "I forgot you haven't watched porn. I shouldn't be surprised you don't know."

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Bucky looked so damned good between his legs. Steve scrambled to grab Bucky a hair tie and reached down to give it to him. Steve's dick was already curled over his stomach, hard and aching. "Do they have books on this stuff?" He asked. "I don't think it's a sin to read a how-to." But he knew porn was a no-go for God.

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Bucky speedily pulled his hair back on his head in a small looped bun. "Probably. Don't know," Bucky said. "I always just rented porn. I don't think God would mind you watching if it was purely for educational purposes." Bucky chuckled to himself and adjusted so he was rested his head against Steve's thigh. He palmed softly against Steve's hole and stared at it.

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Steve snorted. "You don't even go to church, how would you know what God would mind? Besides, the only naked man I want to see is you." Steve shifted a little and spread his legs a bit more when he felt Bucky teasing his hole. He reached down to stroke his hand over Bucky's hair.

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Instead of a snarky response back, Bucky moved his hand away and give a quick lick to Steve's hole once. He watched it clench up quickly at the feeling and he knew he was going to have to really coax Steve into relaxing enough to let him do what he needed before he could actually get inside him. Bucky wasn't intensely well endowed or anything, but the first time was going to feel pretty odd for Steve.

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Steve made a quiet noise when Bucky licked over his hole. It felt weird, having something wet lave over him there. But all Steve had to do was close his eyes and imagined what Bucky must look like, face pressed against his ass and readying him to have sex. Once he did that, he felt himself relaxing a little more.

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Steve surprised Bucky by letting himself relax enough for Bucky to start licking around him with purpose. He spent about two minutes just wetting his hole and getting Steve ready for his tongue to press in. When he did finally stick his tongue inside Steve, he went cautiously and listened intently for any indication from Steve to stop.

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Bucky was being remarkably patient. He remembered when the roles were switched and he could barely wait to get Bucky opened up. By the time Bucky had chosen to push his tongue inside, Steve was dying for the man to make the next move. "Christ," he swore, digging his heels into the bed. He scratched his nails gently along the back of Bucky's neck. "Feels different," he said, his voice a little shaky from nervousness. "But good."
Bucky continued to move in and out of Steve with short thrusts of his tongue. After a bit of this, he ventured to stick a finger in and he pulled his mouth away so he could wiggle his first lubed finger in up to the knuckle. Bucky sucked more marks into Steve's inner thighs while he was quickly but gently working in a second finger next to the other one.

The first finger was uncomfortable but it didn't hurt. When Bucky started to work the second finger in, Steve's hand flew to hold onto his shoulder to get him to slow down but it was more out of fear of the unknown that he did that. Steve eased up and eventually let Bucky keep going. "Talk to me," Steve breathed out, touching the side of Bucky's face now that he was using his fingers more than his tongue.

"What do you want to hear?" Bucky asked and worked Steve opened much slower now. He hoped he hadn't hurt Steve at all. It was pretty surprising to feel fingers inside you like that. "I'll say anything you like. I can talk about how beautiful you are, or how much I love you, or what I'm going to do to you, or what life will be like once you move in."

Steve had a blush that went all the way down to his chest. He felt so overwhelmed by how much Bucky loved him and how perfectly they fit with one another. "Tell me about what our life will be like," he said. "I want to know if you're always so beautiful in the mornings."

"I'm definitely not a good sight in the mornings." Bucky laughed. "But, you'll see for yourself soon. And you'll get to be here with me for breakfast every day. And you can come home to me every night. And I'll learn how to dance so we can hold each other and listen to your records. And when we have the apartment to ourselves we can mess around anywhere we want. And this bed will be our bed and not just mine anymore. And this home will be our home. And you'll be mine and I'll be yours..." As Bucky spoke he managed to massage and scissor Steve open enough to comfortably get a third finger inside.

Steve was just the sort of idiot who loved talking about a future together more than dirty talk during sex. He was more excited than a man should be about having his address changed to share Bucky's and to make coffee for the both of them in the mornings. "Yes," he breathed out, writhing a little on the bed. "Buck, please. I'm so ready."

"You sure?" Bucky looked up at Steve with cautiously excited eyes. "I can keep fingering you open for a bit longer if you need it?" He added and kept pumping into Steve. Once day he would get his fist inside Steve and massage his prostate so he saw stars.

Steve nodded eagerly. "Wanna kiss you," he said. "I need you inside me. I'm ready for it," he insisted. Steve wanted Bucky to feel good and, god, Bucky had waited so long and was so good to
him for not making him feel any sort of pressure to do this sooner.

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Bucky nodded along with him and crawled back up so he could kiss Steve. He was sure he tasted like Steve's hole and he hoped he didn't mind. He broke off the kiss soon after he started and worked on lining his dick up with Steve's ass.

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Steve didn't give a damn what Bucky tasted like. He kissed him hungrily and pulled him closer with a strong grip. "I love you," he breathed out. Steve bit his bottom lip nervously as he felt Bucky line the head of his cock against his hole.

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One more nod from Steve was all Bucky needed before he was gingerly pushing inside and feeling the tight heat of Steve's ass pulling him in.

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"Oh -" Steve gasped out. When Bucky pushed inside, Steve gripped his shoulders hard enough to bruise. "Oh my god, Bucky!"

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"Too much?" Bucky asked hurriedly, "Does it hurt? I can stop." He didn't pull out of Steve but he didn't move at all either. He watched his face for any signs of pain and put his hand down on his hips for stability. Steve's fingernails were digging into his skin and he was going to be shocked if he didn't have marks for a few days afterward.

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"No, don't stop," Steve said breathlessly. "You feel good." His nails dug into Bucky's back a little bit and he tried rocking his hips slightly. "Go easy please," he said. "But, please, keep going." Steve already felt so full.

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Bucky nodded and started to ease out of Steve before easing back in. He vowed to make this a slow quiet fuck that just showed Steve how much he loved him. He wasn't going to go rough or fast. He was just going to take his time making love and loving Steve and thinking about their future and feeling his firm body underneath him and that tight hold around his dick.

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All he could think about was Bucky. Steve felt so open and vulnerable with Bucky's dick spreading him wider than he'd ever been, but he loved the intense connection it formed. Steve looked up at Bucky with big, shining eyes. His lips remained parted, panting softly because Bucky had him so worked up even though he was being gentle. "You can go faster," he said softly. "I know you want to."

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"Don't want to hurt you," Bucky breathed and watched his dick slide in and out of Steve. He liked
watching it disappear and seeing his body tap against Steve's every time. He was glad they had waited this long. They waited a while for their first time and at that time Steve was already in love with Bucky. Now Bucky was in love with Steve, too, and it was just their second time. Bucky hadn't had many real relationships before and none as calculating and sweet as what he had with Steve.

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Steve's body was coated in a thin layer of sweat. It hurt a little - he didn't expect it not to - but it felt so fucking amazing both physically and emotionally. He had his arms wrapped tightly around Bucky and every time Bucky pushed back in, Steve let out a quiet moan. When Bucky found just the right angle that hit his prostate, his whole body reacted and felt himself get closer and closer to orgasm. "Bucky," he moaned, kissing him messily. "I'm so close, Baby."

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Bucky kissed Steve back and his movements stuttered as he did. "Come whenever you like, Babe," he said and licked down Steve's throat. "I want to see it all over you. Want to know I made it happen - that I helped you feel so good." Bucky felt like a whole different person with Steve. The other people he had fucked before were one night stands and rough bangs just to get off. With Steve, Bucky wasn't even concerned with whether he was going to come or not, he just wanted to satisfy his boyfriend.

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Steve wished he could come up with the things that came out of Bucky's mouth. Within moments, he was seeing stars and he came messily over his stomach and chest. His muscles fluttered and clenched around Bucky's dick. Steve was still dazed and out of breath but he pulled Bucky in for a smothering kiss. "Wanna feel your come in me."

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Bucky gasped through clenched teeth. "Oh, fuck, Steve, are you sure?" Bucky asked and he couldn't help that he sped up his thrusts just a little more. He tore his nails through his hair to pop the hair tie off. It flung across the room in the dark and he figured he wouldn't find it until the next time he cleaned. He just needed to feel his hair down on his shoulders while he fucked into Steve.

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Watching Bucky let his hair down to fuck him was hotter than Steve ever would've imagined it being. He had to throw his arm over his face to cover his mouth as he cried out Bucky's name. He did his best to keep quiet, but he was sensitive after his orgasm and everything felt so fucking good. He wrapped his legs around Bucky's hips and used them to pull Bucky in closer after every thrust. "I'm all yours."

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Bucky bit his lip hard as he came deep inside Steve. He felt hot streams of come spill out around his dick and line the walls inside his boyfriend. He lowered himself on top of Steve but didn't pull out yet. He just let himself relax on top of him and lick into his mouth after breathing out a quick, "Fucking love you."

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Steve nearly got hard all over again just at the feeling of Bucky coming inside of him like that. He looked so good when he orgasmed and Steve loved that he was able to make him feel so good. He
gave Bucky a happy, fucked-out smile and raked both hands through his hair. "That felt amazing."

"Love you," was all Bucky managed to say again. He pulled out of Steve and replaced his dick with his fingers inside Steve. He wanted to feel him wet with his come. Bucky moved his fingers around a bit before taking them out and laying next to Steve with one leg heaped over him protectively.

Steve thought Bucky was done when he pulled his dick out but was surprised and a little aroused by him fingering him one last time. He didn't even mind the feeling of the come and lube leaking down his thigh. He turned to face Bucky and he scratched his nails gently over the leg that was draped over him. "Someone's a protective bear right now," he teased, patting the leg. "Making sure no one else swipes me up while I'm vulnerable?"

"Making sure you don't up and leave me," Bucky said with eyes closed. Part of him was still used to the men he screwed getting up and getting out right after he finished. He knew that wasn't Steve but he was just a bit scarred from it still. "We need to talk to the girls as soon as we can. I need this to be your home as soon as possible."

Steve cupped the side of Bucky's face and kissed him slowly. "You're too important for me to let go." He tangled his fingers idly in Bucky's hair. "Do you think the girls wouldn't want me living here?" He asked.

"I think they will say yes but be a little annoyed. Then after they realize that none of their stuff or their rooms are going to be taken away or changed then they will warm up to it. Then eventually they will get used to you being here all the time and probably feel safer with a strong police officer around," Bucky said. "I know I feel safer with you here."

"What're you talking about, my first order of business is to move them into the living room and take both their rooms for myself," Steve joked and kissed Bucky's face all over, loving that he could do this. He looked deeply into Bucky's eyes and made a promise, "I'll keep all of you safe."
The day for Steve to move in finally came. Bucky had been waiting for about a week since they got the girls to agree to it. It really didn't take much for them to sign off on the whole thing. Bucky made a plea to them about his happiness and Steve suggested that if he paid the extra money on rent then they might be able to get an animal. Bucky wholeheartedly disagreed but the girls were already on board as he complained.

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The only thing that wasn't clothes or art supplies that Steve brought over were a few records, some journals from his father and grandfather, and the plant his mom gave him. So moving in wasn't too long of a process for him. He couldn't help the big grin on his face as he set his box of belongings down. "Hey, Buck. I got some presents for you," he said as he held out a somewhat large bag. It had home stuff in it, like a welcome mat and a toothbrush holder that looked like a record player. Just some dumb household things that Bucky didn't have but it made the place more of a home.

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"Why'd you get me things? You're the one moving in here. I should have gotten you a housewarming gift." Bucky kicked himself for not thinking of that sooner. But he took the bag anyway and started pulling things out of it.

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"Because your house doesn't have useless house things," Steve answered. He didn't have them in his old place and now that he was moving in with his boyfriend, he wanted to have homey, little things.

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The welcome mat was a nice surprise but Bucky didn't think it was necessary. The Barnes' didn't really welcome people into their home much. The toothbrush holder was really clever and cheesy and Bucky had to give Steve several open-mouthed, laughter-filled kisses when he found it.

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Steve kissed Bucky back and smiled adoringly at him. Then after a few moments he took a deep breath, smiled at Steve, and said proudly, "Hey, I told my mom about us."

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Bucky's eyes got wide and a long slow smile spread across his face. "I'm so happy you did. What'd she say?" Bucky knew, of course, that she knew already, but Steve might not know. He was glad they were both on the same page now. It was killing Bucky knowing that Steve's mother knew and Steve still assumed she didn't.

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"She says she's happy that I found someone that I love," Steve said, smiling back at Bucky. "And that she expects you all to come over for Thanksgiving." Steve felt so lucky to have a supportive mom and that she was already welcoming them all into the family. "It feels good to talk about you to her."
"I'm really proud of you, Steve. That must have been difficult for you to do." Bucky started sifting through his boxes of records so he could rearrange them. He wanted to put Steve's on top so he could find them easily in Bucky's mess of a collection. He assessed the mountain of record crates and said, "You know what Becca told me the other day? She wants to get a piano. You know what I said? 'Where the fuck are we going to put it?'" Bucky huffed loudly.

Steve let out a laugh. "What about a keyboard?" He asked. "Let her figure out how she can fit it in her own room. Those things are small enough." He walked behind Bucky and put his hands on his hips. "We could always get rid of the record collection and put a baby grand right here," he joked.

Bucky pinched Steve and said, "I love you, but don't even joke about trashing my collection." He turned in Steve's arms to give him a kiss. "She might go for a keyboard. We can see." Then a thought occurred to Bucky. "Hey! You should come to the shop sometime and see it. You can meet Clint. You just can't arrest any of my coworkers."

"I promise I won't arrest anyone for their, uh... medicinal drugs," Steve said then gave Bucky a sad little look of concern. "But do they know you have a boyfriend?" He asked. Steve didn't know if he was completely out in the open with his coworkers or if they just didn't give a shit who Bucky was with.

"Clint knows because Clint is really good at getting secrets out of me and he is my best friend," Bucky said. "But, I'm pretty sure half my coworkers don't even know my name isn't actually 'Fucky' so, I'd be surprised if they even notice you come in." Bucky understood if Steve didn't want to come into the shop, though. He might be wary of people saying shit to him about being gay or whatever. Except, that Bucky really wanted Steve to see where he worked and he didn't even have to say anything about how he knows Bucky. He wanted his boyfriend to meet his best friend.

Steve just wouldn't introduce himself as Bucky's boyfriend unless it was to Clint in private, he decided. And he could tell that it was important to Bucky for him to see where he worked. "How about I surprise you at work one of these days?" he offered.

Bucky nodded, "A surprise works for me. Now, what do you want to do on your first day in your new place? You can teach me to dance or we can cook something or we can fuck or we can go for a walk or just be lazy. It's up to you. Becca and Lilly won't be home for another three hours."

"So many options. I wonder how much we can fit into those three hours," Steve said and nibbled at Bucky's neck. "I'd like to dance a little with you and then depending on how we feel, we can figure out which surface we want to screw on."
Bucky grinned like an idiot. "I like that plan." He walked over to the player and asked Steve which of his big band records he wanted. Steve came over and picked one out. Bucky watched him as he said, "I really like you being here. And I'm so happy you're going to be here with me every day."

Steve picked a slower song that had a little bounce so it would be easier to dance to but not boring. "I'm real happy too," he said with a big grin. "You make me feel on top of the world, Buck." He put Bucky's hand on his shoulder and his own hand on Bucky's waist. "I never would have thought I would have this - my own family."

"Barnes-Rogers or Rogers-Barnes?" Bucky asked and let Steve lead him in the dance. Bucky kept looking at his feet and Steve kept turning his chin back up to look at him instead.

"Rogers-Barnes because it sounds better," Steve said and grinned as he moved Bucky smoothly around the room. He really was so pleased to be here with Bucky.

"Rogers-Barnes," Bucky agreed with a smile and tried his best to keep looking at Steve and not the ground. "This is difficult," Bucky gritted out. "Club dancing is easier. Not so much stepping."

"It'll get easier. And it's more sophisticated than club dancing which is just clothed, standing sex," Steve said and held Bucky a little bit closer.

Bucky moved with Steve and it was getting progressively easier as he went. "Can I ask why you love dancing like this so much?" Not that Bucky didn't like dancing with Steve, but Bucky hadn't done slow dancing since he was at a middle school prom dancing with some girl and staring at the quarterback's ass. That poor girl probably had a shitty night.

"My ma said my dad was at his most romantic whenever he took her out to dance," Steve said. "I wanted to be able to make someone feel the same way my dad made my mom feel." He kissed the tip of Bucky's nose.

"Well, I don't know how romantic I'm really being since I can't do this properly," Bucky said apologetically. He vowed to practice with Steve enough so he could get better and be the perfect dancer for his perfect boyfriend. "I do love being this close to you, though," he added and rested his head on Steve's shoulder. "My big strong officer."

"You're giving it your best shot. That's enough of a romantic gesture for me," Steve said. He kissed
him quickly before dipping him low and kissing him again. "You got to learn how to dance so you can dance with your sisters on their wedding days."

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Bucky giggled at the quick dip and the rush of blood that went to his head. However, when Steve mentioned his sisters’ weddings, he shook his head with wide eyes. "No way. They aren't getting married. They aren't growing up. I won't dance or have to walk them down the aisle. They are going to be my baby sisters forever." Bucky was semi-joking but also sort of being real. He was pretty bummed out whenever he thought about his sisters growing up and being adults and leaving him. He was more like a parent than he realized.

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Steve chuckled at Bucky. "Don't worry, Beautiful. I'll bring my gun home to scare off any boys or girls who want to take them away," he teased. "You really are such a dad," he said, slipping his hand up Bucky's shirt. "And you're so good to them. But remember you still got to pick that thing you want to do so you can have a day to be you."

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Bucky groaned. "Oh, Babe, I don't know what I want. My life is just the girls and you and music and work - in that order. I can't think of anything at all." He felt as Steve's hand made it's way all the way up his abs to his chest and he was rubbing over a nipple. Bucky's shirt was pulled up by Steve's arm and he got goose bumps all over his exposed skin.

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Steve lightly pinched Bucky's nipple because he knew he was sensitive there. "I'm going to find something for you," he said in a determined tone. "A whole day dedicated to treating you. Remember the museum? You had so much fun doing your own thing that day. All I did was follow you from exhibit to exhibit."

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"I loved that day. The adrenaline rush and kitten nonsense, aside, of course," Bucky said and started teasing his fingers on Steve's belt. "I have sort of an idea but I don't know if it would even be possible." He kept one hand tucked in between Steve's belt and his pants and the other hand took residence in one of Steve's back pockets.

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Steve got close and couldn't help brushing his hips against Bucky's while they slow danced. "Oh yeah?" He asked, and then leaned down to kiss him sweetly. "Tell me what it is."

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"What if we went on a fishing trip?" Bucky said timidly. "We could rent a cabin and stay for a few days. Just do some fishing and swimming." Bucky bit his lip. "But I don't know because you'd have to get days off work. And who would watch the girls? And I don't even know if you like fishing or cabins or being out of the city," Bucky rattled off anxiously and huffed.
Bucky was so fucking adorable when he got all shy like that. Steve cupped the sides of Bucky's face and drew him in for a slow kiss. "I'll make it happen," he promised. "As soon as it gets warm again, we can spend an extended weekend together upstate. My mom can watch the girls." Steve wasn't a huge fan of the outdoors but he wasn't going to say it to Bucky if this was what he wanted.

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"Steve..." Bucky started in protest but decided to let it go. "Is it okay? We don't have to." There was only really one reason why he thought about it. "My father used to take me on fishing trips when I was a kid. We would go for a few days at a time and just spend quality time at the lake. He liked the quiet and the air. He got to just relax and read for a while every day. I know that if he were still here he'd want to take the two of us with him sometime. I was thinking we could go for him."

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Steve was now surer than ever that he would take Bucky out for a fishing trip. "Oh, Buck," he said, his face softening into a sympathetic and loving look. "I couldn't imagine a better way to spend a few days away with you." He kissed his forehead and gave him a smile. "Where did you guys used to go?"

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"Well, we went to Seneca but that's too far away for us to go," Bucky said. "I won't be able to go very far away from the girls. I'll worry way too much." The record had stopped playing and they were just standing there holding each other in the living room. Bucky was getting antsy and he really wanted Steve's body all over his.

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Steve wasn't going to argue with Bucky over it, but he was determined to find a way to have Bucky go to the same spot that he went to with his dad. Maybe he could find another place nearby that his mom could stay at with the girls so Bucky wouldn't worry. She had retired early anyway and wouldn't mind helping out. He smiled when he saw how antsy Bucky was. So he leaned in to nibble on the shell of his ear. "Where do you want to fuck?" He asked.

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"Jesus, I love when you swear, Steve. It's so hot and it makes me feel like you're picking up on my habits and I love that." Bucky was rocking his body against Steve's and holding him close at the same time. "I don't care where. I just want you inside me this time. Want you to christen your new home by coming in my ass."

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"I know you like it," Steve said with a grin. "And you really are a bad influence on me," he added teasingly before picking Bucky up like he weighed nothing. He carried Bucky to the bedroom only so he could grab the lube and then brought him into the kitchen and set him down on the counter. "I'm the boss in the kitchen now," he said with a cocky grin as he unbuttoned Bucky's pants.

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"Yes, Sir," Bucky said eagerly as he watched Steve work his pants off. "Does that mean no more pancakes and cereal for dinner?" He slipped his shirt off and let it fall to the ground beside Steve. They would clean up everything later before the girls got back anyway.
"Only when I allow it," Steve said. He wouldn't really be a dictator over dinner but he figured he may as well be a little authoritative just so Bucky could see him be at least a bit assertive. He knew Bucky liked that. Steve kissed down Bucky's neck and chest and tugged Bucky's nipple lightly between his teeth with a little growl.

"Fuuueeking hell, Steve," Bucky gasped out and wrapped his legs around Steve's waist. "You're wearing too many clothes. I want them off." He cock was already getting hard and his heart was racing like a high schooler getting kissed for the first time. Every sexual encounter with Steve was exciting and surprising for Bucky.

Steve's hand smoothed down Bucky's side and he grabbed a handful of his ass. He loved making love with Bucky, but he also was starting to understand that a little bit of mindless sex wouldn't hurt either. It felt good to take what Bucky wanted to give instead of pussyfooting around it. He shed his shirt and he worked his pants off so he was standing naked in front of him. "Better?"

Bucky nodded and bit his lip. God, Steve was gorgeous. He was so cut and built and hard and it felt so good having his body pressed against his own. "Now, open up my ass and fuck me raw," Bucky demanded and spread his legs wide. He tugged on his dick a few times before leaving it alone in favor of lasting to come while Steve was balls deep inside him.

As confident as he looked showing himself off to Bucky, Steve still got a bit shy when Bucky demanded to be fucked. But, god, Steve wanted it and couldn't say no with his boyfriend spreading his legs for him. Steve tugged him off the counter and spun him around so he was bent over it with his bare ass exposed. Steve dove right down, spreading his ass cheeks with his hands so he could lick a stripe up from Bucky's balls to his hole. He swirled his tongue around the ring of muscle before thrusting it inside.

"Okay, yes, fuck!" Bucky gasped out in surprise. He wasn't expecting Steve to rim him. It was a nice surprise, of course, but he still wasn't ready for the feeling. "Just work your tongue for a bit and then start adding fingers." Bucky guided Steve since he knew he'd never done this particular act before. "If you don't like it you can stop and just go for fingers and lube."

Steve knew how good rimming felt, so he was eager to return the favor for Bucky. Hearing him approve of it made Steve decidedly happy. "Hey, Babe?" Steve purred, biting Bucky's ass gently. "Unless it's to moan or shout my name, you shouldn't be saying anything," he said with a cocky, little grin. Bucky was definitely rubbing off on him. Steve took his time working Bucky's ass open with his tongue. When he had his hole wet enough, he pushed one finger inside of him and started to thrust it in and out.
Bucky couldn't manage any words back to Steve so he shut up and let him work. He was getting more and more impatient by the time the first finger was inside him. He rocked back on it as Steve fucked it into him. He'd never done it in a kitchen but he sure as hell liked it so far.

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Steve pushed a second finger inside of him and spread him apart so he could stick his tongue back inside and lick him deeper. He couldn't help but let out a little moan, so aroused by the fact that Bucky would willingly give everything up to him. Steve couldn't handle waiting anymore and he pulled his fingers out so he could coat them liberally with lube and spread it over his dick. "Are you ready for me, Buck?" He asked gently.

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"Yes, always," Bucky said urgently and started pumping himself again. "Want to feel you slide in my tight ass and split me open. I want to feel you now that I'm all yours and no one else gets to feel what I feel and no one else gets to love you like I do." Bucky wasn't quite sure when his dirty talk started to meld with gooey love declarations, but it was probably somewhere around the second time they made love together.

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As much as Bucky influenced Steve, Steve was also pleased to hear that he was starting to make Bucky out to be almost as big a sap as he was. Steve laid his chest over Bucky's back and kissed the shell of his ear. "You always know what to say, Beautiful." He rested his cheek on Bucky's shoulder and slowly guided himself inside of him. Steve let out a low moan, having nearly forgotten how good Bucky felt around his cock. His hips stuttered forward, snapping up automatically so he was balls deep inside of him.

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Bucky let out a slight wince at the quick draw into his ass. It only hurt for a second, though, and then he was encouraging Steve to move quickly after he pushed in. Bucky did feel stretched and kept thinking how this was the perfect way to welcome Steve to his official new home for the first time. "Steve, Baby," Bucky whimpered out, "I love you so much. Welcome home."

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Steve noticed the wince and felt bad for rushing it. He made sure to give Bucky time to adjust and he slowly rubbed a hand over the small of his back to help ease him. He looked down, admiring Bucky from his ass to his face. "We are going to have such a good life together, Buck." He kissed right between his shoulders. "Every day is going to be better because I get to wake up next to you."

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"You're such a dweeb." Bucky chuckled and rolled his hips back. He ran his fingers through his hair and held it in a ponytail. He forgot to grab a hair tie and his hair was flopping in his face. He decided to give up on it and just let it fall where it wanted to as Steve started to pull out to thrust back in.

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Steve noticed Bucky try and put his hair up but he had no hair tie. Steve had gotten into the habit of keeping one on his wrist for the times Bucky forgot one or the one he had snapped, so he reached out to gently pull Bucky's hair back and tie it up. He then put his hands on Bucky's hips and started to fuck him slow and deep, working his way up to a faster pace.
Bucky didn't have time to thank Steve before he was fucking him in such a good way that he didn't want to interrupt with words. He would just mention to Steve later how much he liked that Steve was prepared with whatever Bucky needed. There were two hands on his hips and a warm dick inside him and Bucky felt so safe and secure and loved.

Steve let himself get a little lost in how fucking amazing Bucky felt. His ass gripped his dick and the friction was electrifying. One of these days he had to stay home and just fuck him on and off all day. But after a few minutes, Steve realized he hadn't been considering Bucky's pleasure all that much and he was quick to wrap his hand around Bucky's cock and stroke it in time with his thrusts. "Want to feel you come, Baby."

Steve was lasting a lot longer than the first time and Bucky was impressed and pleased. His body made a jolting movement when Steve wrapped his hand around his dick. It felt great having the stimulation inside and outside of his body. "Come with me, Steve," Bucky said. "Come deep inside me, please. Want to feel it leaking out."

Steve moaned low in response. He picked up his pace, trying to hit Bucky's prostate, and bit down on his shoulder when he felt his orgasm rip through him. He rode it out, erratically pushing his hips into him and shoving his come deeper into Bucky's body.

Bucky was already on the edge but when Steve bit him hard on the shoulder his come exploded from his dick and coated Steve's fingers and shot a bit onto the counter. He quickly grabbed behind him to hold Steve's ass so he wouldn't pull out. Bucky basked in the afterglow of his orgasm and clenched his muscles around Steve a few times to feel the come slipping between the two of them.

Steve made a soft, aroused noise when Bucky held him and kept him inside him as his muscles worked around his dick. "Fucking Christ," he swore, groaning as he saw the come leak out around his dick. "You look so good, Baby."

Bucky reached back and rubbed around his hole before standing straight. Steve pulled out as he went and Bucky handed him some paper towels to clean himself up. "I'll be right back. Got to go to the bathroom and clean up," Bucky said and took short strides towards his room. Even though he could still count on one hand how many times they had fucked, Bucky loved every one of them.

Steve watched Bucky with a happy smile as he retreated to the bathroom. He cleaned himself up and got dressed before he obsessively cleaned the countertop where they'd just fucked so no one would know. He couldn't stop smiling because this was his life now.
Bucky went to the bathroom and stared at himself in the mirror for a while. He looked like he'd just gotten fucked for sure. The girls would be home in about another hour or so. He started wiping himself clean with his towel and sticking an end inside his ass to soak up Steve's come. His fingers were super sticky so he washed them thoroughly before going to his closet to get a new set of clothes on. He pulled on a pair of jeans and looked through his sweaters. Nothing really intrigued him to wear so he looked in the box of Steve's tops that they hadn't unpacked yet and found a dark red Henley that he decided was warm enough to wear.

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Steve washed his hands and combed his fingers through his hair so he was at least somewhat presentable. He went over to check on Bucky and smirked when he saw him in his sweater. "I move in for not even an hour and you're stealing my clothes."

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Bucky tucked his hands into his armpits because they were pretty cold. "Here, wear one of mine," he said and scanned over his closet again. He found a nice grey and black striped sweater that was a bit loose on him so it should fit Steve nicely. He tossed it to him and said, "I should probably pick up my clothes from the kitchen floor."

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Steve put the sweater on and shook his head with a laugh as it pulled across his chest. It fit but didn't have much room to spare. "You probably should. Wouldn't want to give the girls a reason to kick me out."

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Bucky quickly went to the kitchen and swiped his clothes off the ground. He dumped them in the laundry and went back to Steve. "What do you want to do now? If you want us to have a good home cooked meal for your first night then I guess we should start preparing it so we can put it in the oven when the girls get home."

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"Sounds perfect to me," Steve agreed. "I've been thinking about making some baked potatoes and grilled chicken for a little while," Steve added after a moment of thought. He kissed Bucky's cheek and hurried off to cook.

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"You want my help?" Bucky followed him to the kitchen. "Or am I allowed to lay on the couch, listen to The Clash, and watch you cook?" Bucky sort of hoped for the latter but he wouldn't mind helping Steve out. "Kind of want to stare at your ass while you bounce around your new kitchen. It'll probably be adorable."

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"I love it when you call this my home. My kitchen..." Steve turned and kissed the tip of Bucky's nose. "But it'll sound even nicer if you call it 'our home' and 'our kitchen'. Now go put on your music and enjoy the view, hot stuff."
Bucky picked an album and started it playing. He flopped on the couch on his back and folded his arms over his chest. "You look really good wearing my sweater, by the way," Bucky said and stared at the way it pulled tight across Steve's chest and arms. "You also look really good in our kitchen." Bucky emphasized 'our' and smiled at Steve.

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Steve beamed at Bucky and nodded. "It's nice to share everything - even our clothes," he said. Steve started to prepare and season the chicken with whatever little herbs he could find. "I'm so happy, Bucky," he said. "I knew you were someone special right from the start."

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Bucky blushed a little. "Shut up," he said with a grin and tugged the hair tie from his head. He ran his fingers through his hair and mused, "I was thinking about cutting my hair. I like it long but it's also sort of a nuisance at times. Not sure yet. What do you think?" He made eye contact with Steve when he swiveled around sharply and stared at him. "What?"

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Steve had a hard time believing that Bucky was going to actually cut his hair. "But you love your long hair." Steve kind of liked it long, too. But it was Bucky's hair and Steve didn't want him altering himself for his sake. "But I think you're going to look very hot either way."

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"I mean, I haven't decided yet," Bucky said and twisted a chunk of hair around his finger. "But I do really like it like this." He hummed to himself. He wasn't going to cut it. There was no way he would be able to work up the nerve. He had had it that long since he stopped cutting it when his parents died and he left college. Since then he just trimmed it up occasionally so it stayed near his shoulders.

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"What am I going to grab on to when I'm fucking you from behind?" Steve joked. He cut a slit into the potatoes and put them into the oven to start baking. "Even if you regret cutting it, it'll grow back soon enough anyway. What'll it take? Three months?"

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Bucky moaned low. "Dammit, Steve. Well, I guess that's that. I can't cut it. I like the thought of you pulling it too much." Bucky squirmed a little on the couch and took in Steve's taught ass when he bent down to the oven. "Guess I'll just chop off the dead ends and call that good." Bucky checked his watch. "Becca's going to be happy you cooked this. She loves potatoes. Lilly will complain but eat the chicken anyway. They should be here soon."

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"You should have let me know that. I would have picked up more potatoes," Steve said. "What is Lilly's favorite food that isn't pizza?" He could bake a pizza but he had a feeling she preferred a pizzeria to homemade stuff.

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"Who fucking knows..." Bucky chuckled, "That girl complains about anything home cooked you put in front of her. I'd say she complains the least about spaghetti, though. Mom used to make us
something homemade and then just have some hot dogs for Lilly. We would be eating something
delicious like lasagna and there's Lilly with some mac and cheese."

"That's adorable," Steve said with a dumb smile. "She's a pain in the ass sometimes but I love it," he
added. "Well, if she wants mac and cheese while we have some amazing food, then so be it. Or
spaghetti. I don't care. I just want to make her happy."

Bucky got up and moved to the kitchen table to sit. "You don't have to make her happy, you know
that, right? I'm the only one you actually have to make happy." Bucky smiled a cheeky grin at Steve.
"I'm the one that counts. She can eat the chicken and be perfectly fine." He put his chin in his hands
and watched Steve. "How'd you learn to cook anyway?"

"Yes, I know. But when they're happy, you're happy. So I'm going to make your sisters happy too." Steve paused his cooking so he could kiss the corner of Bucky's mouth. "And you really think a
single mom would let her son be lazy and not be able to cook for himself?"

Bucky shrugged, "I'm betting some moms aren't as great as yours. The girls love her, by the way.
Becca thinks the world of her. Told me that she was inspiring. Inspiring for what, I don't know."
Bucky yawned. How could he be tired already? It was a bit of a big day but they still had a lot of it
left.

Steve couldn't stop grinning when Bucky complimented his mom. "I love her," he said fondly.
"She's always been amazing. And she loves your sisters, too. She'll be happy to know that they find
her inspiring." He turned back to cooking and let out a happy sigh. "I know she's not a replacement
for your parents, but I know she will treat them like her own."

"Steve, I know I said it before, but I'm so proud of you for talking with your mom about us," Bucky
said and got up to clean off and set the table. "I'm glad she gets to know and be on board with this.
And I think it was really good for you, too." He paused to think, "Do you think you'll tell anyone
else?" Bucky expected the answer to be a flat no. Steve had already made it clear how careful they
had to be. Some people would probably start to notice, though, now that his address is changed and
his roommates are all one family. You don't just move in with a family for no reason.

Steve smiled happily when Bucky insisted that he was proud of him. He felt good to make Bucky
proud and it felt good that he could call his mom at the end of the day and gush about his wonderful
boyfriend but he wasn't sure about telling anyone else. "I don't know," he said. "I don't think I
should. It's one thing for my mom to know. I just can't let others know."

Bucky nodded solemnly. "Right, I understand." Maybe it was because he couldn't tell his parents
about Steve or because he loved him so much that he wanted everyone to know, but he was just a little disappointed. "Well, I mean, at least it's easy to keep track of who all does know. I can count them on one hand."

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Steve paused and then said, "You can tell Clint." Clint was someone who had no connection to anyone Steve knew besides Bucky and it was someone Bucky was around often enough and it must be hard for him not to talk about his boyfriend to his best friend. "Since I'll be visiting anyway."

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Bucky smiled shyly. "Sounds like a good idea. When you visit I'll introduce you as my boyfriend to Clint." Just then there was a rattle at the door indicating one of the girls used their keys to get in. Lilly flung open the door and it slammed against the wall. Becca winced at the noise and followed in after, automatically causing an ironically loud argument between them about Lilly needing to learn how to be quiet.
Steve was absolutely loving his life with Bucky. Every night he would call his mom and gush about his boyfriend. There were plenty of times at work where he nearly talked about Bucky when the others spoke about their wives and girlfriends. He held back then but one day he decided to come out about it. His heart pounded and, god, he was scared, but when one of his coworkers asked why he moved out of the apartment, Steve was honest. He clocked out early and rushed back home to let Bucky know.

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"Hello, my handsome officer!" Bucky called from the couch when Steve opened the door. Bucky got up and meandered over to give Steve an open mouthed kiss. "Lilly is at practice and Becca is studying with some friends." Bucky traced lines on Steve's shoulders with his fingers. "How was work, Baby?"

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Bucky was so sweet and loving but Steve was still a little distracted. He was shaking a little and when Bucky asked how work was, he blurted out, "I told my coworkers - about us," he said and held Bucky's hand nervously. "Nobody... nobody got angry with me."

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Bucky pulled back with furrowed brows. "Excuse me?" He said in surprise. "You told... what, Steve? I thought you weren't going to. I thought you were scared you'd lose your job." Bucky placed a comforting hand on Steve's cheek. "Tell me what happened. How are you feeling?" Bucky knew he was rambling and being a bit hovy but he also knew that this was huge for Steve and he might be a little shell-shocked at the moment.

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Steve rubbed at his face and felt his eyes well up with tears. "I couldn't hold it back anymore. I couldn't stand being quiet while everyone else got to talk about their wives and their relationships. I love you, Bucky. You are the light of my life and it hurt too much to keep it inside." He wiped his eyes. "I'm just scared someone won't be okay with it."

---

"Hey, hey," Bucky said quickly and gave his best hopeful smile. He wiped Steve's cheeks of the tears that had fallen there. "I love you so much, Steve. And I'm beyond amazed and proud of you every single day and especially right now." He led Steve to the couch and sat him down. Bucky straddled his lap and held Steve's face in his hands to kiss him. "I won't let anyone hurt you. You're mine and no one can take you away. You did a good, brave thing today, Steve. Do you believe me?"

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Steve leaned into Bucky and tried to smile at him but it came out a little pained. "Natasha’s response was pretty good. She tried to make things lighter since it was a little tense. She said it was just like a gay guy to make a dramatic scene.”
"Bit of a stereotype, but it seems like a benign response so I'll take it." Bucky kissed Steve again and leaned their foreheads together. "How are you feeling? Do you need anything?" Bucky held Steve close to him and tried to be as safe and secure as Steve needed him to be at the moment. "You know I love you, right? And even if someone gets pissy about it, that isn't going to change how I feel about you."

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"I feel guilty for not letting you tell anyone but Clint and then I went and blabbed to all of my precinct," Steve admitted and put his hands in Bucky's shirt and looked up at him. "You are so amazing, Bucky," he said. He kissed his cheek gently. "I wouldn't have been able to do this without you."

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"Don't beat yourself up about that, Steve," Bucky said and followed one of Steve's hands with his own to hold over his heart. "The only other person I know in this city is Clint so there really isn't anyone else I could tell even if I wanted to." He wasn't sure how much that would help Steve feel better but he at least tried. "Did your chief say anything to you about it?"

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Steve shook his head. "I wrote him a letter explaining what happened today and left it on his desk. He was out sick today and I wanted him to hear it from me before anyone else. So... I guess I'll find out tomorrow if I still have a job or not."

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"Steve..." Bucky sighed and rested against him. "If you do lose your job, it will be okay." He didn't know that for sure. "You'll find another job." There wasn't any guarantee for that. "We are going to be just fine." For all Bucky knew, they could be beaten in an alley the next time they went out. Then who would take the girls? "You've got me and the girls and your mom and that's all that matters."

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"It won't be okay," Steve said. "I can't be a burden on you," he said. "I'll find a job, but it won't be okay." He knew what sort of danger this could be. As a cop, it would be so easy to get hurt on the job and have them make it look like an accident. "Can we not talk about it anymore until I know if we are safe or not?"

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Bucky gave Steve a pained, concerned smile. "Sure, let's not discuss it any more right now. How about we just make some sandwiches and eat them in bed together. I have some whiskey hidden around here if you want a drink." Bucky had more like four bottles of whiskey, several six packs of beer, and one bottle of vodka. Bucky had a bit of a problem but he would never admit to it. "Then we can watch some TV or read or something until we need to sleep."

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Steve nodded his head. "That sounds like a good idea. I would love to get a little tipsy with you. Maybe even jerk each other off a little cause I really need to relax," Steve admitted. He picked Bucky up as he stood and carried him over to the kitchen.
Bucky loved it when Steve picked him up like that. It made him feel like a rag doll in his strong arms. "We have turkey, cheese, ham, mayonnaise, tomatoes, lettuce, I think some roast beef," Bucky said as Steve let him down. "What should I make for you? Also, the whiskey is in the laundry room in the cabinet behind the detergent. The girls don't do laundry ever so they'd never find it."

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Steve went to find the whiskey and chuckled at the stash behind the detergent. He had only seen Bucky drink a few times but sometimes when he came home from work, Bucky smelled pretty heavily of booze. But that wasn’t on his mind at the moment. He brought the bottle back to Bucky and hugged him from behind with it in his hand. “Found it.”

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Bucky started on Steve's sandwich and decided to make himself the same thing. When Steve came back with the bottle he grinned and had him pour some into his mouth. A bit slopped on his cheek but Steve was quick to lick it off. "So sandwiches and whiskey, then jerking each other off, then TV?" Bucky asked as he finished up Steve's sandwich and handed it to him.

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"That would be perfect, Buck." Steve picked up the sandwich and took a bite from it. "Love you, Beautiful," he said appreciatively. Steve was beyond grateful for such a wonderful, thoughtful, caring boyfriend. "Let’s go."

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As the laid in bed and ate their food, Bucky made sure to rub his leg against Steve's a lot. He hoped it would start getting him worked up so they could start the sexy stuff as soon as they were done. "I know you said you wanted to relax and so you suggested jerking each other off..." Bucky invaded Steve's space a little and said in a low growl, "But I was thinking instead maybe I could fuck you so deep and hard that you forget all about it." He leaned back again and waved his hand vaguely. "Of course, that's just a suggestion."

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Bucky rubbing his leg against Steve’s was doing wonders. Steve was already half hard in anticipation that he already couldn't wait to finish his sandwich and get a little drunker. But when he suggested fucking him, Steve's head turned. There wasn't even any thought needed. "God, please do."

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Bucky nodded slowly and took a long drink from the bottle. "Take your time with your sandwich. I'll still be here." He drank a bit more and handed the bottle back to Steve. "Always right here for you," he added and smoothed out the wrinkles on Steve's pants. "Do you still like it here, Steve? With us? You're not missing your old apartment or anything?"

---

Once he had the bottle back, Steve took a deep drink from it. It was very rare that he wasn't sober but he figured he had a good reason to drink today. "I love it here," he said. "I don't miss my old place for a second. Sure, it was nice. But this place is more of a home to me than that one ever was."
Bucky, having finished his sandwich, hugged Steve's legs so his head was resting in his lap. "Good. I want you to be so happy here," Bucky pinched Steve's thigh gently. "Do you want to see what else I have hiding in this apartment?" He asked with a sensual edge to his tone.

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Steve finished his sandwich and pet his fingers through Bucky's hair. He looked down at him with a curious expression. "What're you going do, Barnes, seduce me with your record collection?"

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"Pardon you, but that collection is sexier than both of us combined," Bucky joked and stood up from the bed. "But, no, I have something a bit better for this situation." Bucky opened his closet doors and stood on his toes to reach up to the highest shelf. He pulled out a dark navy blanket and unfolded it. His back was to Steve so he couldn't see what Bucky was hiding until he took the object in one hand and turned around swiftly. Bucky was standing there biting his lip in a grin and showing off a large smooth black dildo.

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Steve craned his neck to try and see what Bucky had but he didn't catch a glimpse of it until Bucky brandished it for him to see. His eyes went wide and his face turned red in embarrassment. "Bucky!" He scolded, "What're you doing with that in your room?" He looked around as if he was making sure no one else could see what Bucky had. "Why would I even use that when I have you?"

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Bucky set the dildo on the bed and started undressing himself. "Oh, that's not for you Steve." He unbuttoned his shirt. "That's for me." His pants were on the ground. "I'm gonna sit on that and then you're gonna sit on me and ride me until I come up inside you. Then I'll pull out and if you want you can take the toy out and come inside me while I'm open."

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Steve knew that Bucky was trying to be sexy and introduce new things, which he really was fine with, in all honesty. However, Steve wasn't a huge fan of the dildo. "But… I want to be the only thing inside of you," he said stubbornly.

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Bucky pouted, "Steve, you can't detach your dick and fuck me while I fuck you," he complained, standing naked at the foot of the bed. He refrained from stroking himself but his dick was pointing out towards Steve in a highly accusatory way so he tried to redirect it to point as something else.

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"Well, if you want something in you then how about you just ride me instead," Steve bargained. He reached over to wrap an arm around Bucky's waist and pull him back into bed. "Come on, Baby," Steve just liked the thought of being the only ones to penetrate each other. "I don’t want to use it."

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Bucky growled in defeat. "Are you going to make me throw out my dildo?" He massaged Steve's chest and made as best an angry face as he could.
"No, that'll be a waste," Steve said. "Turn it into a hat rack or a hair tie holder." He started to undress and hoped he hadn't hurt Bucky's feelings or turned him off from sex at the moment.

"You aren't much fun, Rogers. It's a good thing you're cute." Bucky hovered over Steve's erection but didn't touch. "I guess it's up to you who fucks who but I figured if you wanted to relax I could just do all the work."

"If you're the one riding me, you're pretty much doing all the work," Steve said. "And fucking you is pretty relaxing for me."

"You're a little punk, Steve," Bucky said in retort and then glanced at the dildo again, "I'll just hide it back in the closet before I decide if I'm going to keep it and toss you or toss it and keep you." Bucky sat up and started stroking himself and Steve at the same time. He was a little off-balance and both his hands were occupied. "Decide - you or me. Who gets it up the ass?"

Steve gave Bucky an apologetic smile. He didn't want him to get rid of anything that was his just because Steve didn't like it. Steve let out a little moan when Bucky started to stroke him. "You do this time," he said. "But I promise next time I'll let you fuck me."

"Okay, but I'm going to be a pillow princess and make you do all the work. It'll help relieve your tension," Bucky said and flopped back on the bed. He gracefully kicked the dildo off the mattress so Steve wouldn't have to touch it. Bucky was going to just keep it in the closet and just not use it. He couldn't get rid of Phillip. They had been through so much together.

Steve snorted and got on top of Bucky and rolled his hips. "You are such a brat," he said fondly. He grabbed the lube from the nightstand and coated his fingers with it before reaching between Bucky's legs. "It's one of the reasons why I love you." He teased Bucky's hole with one finger, not pushing in yet.

"Hey, Steve," Bucky started with a bold tone, "to make this faster you can just go ahead and start with two fingers. I can take it. Feels pretty good to have the little stretch and burn too." He wanted to really feel it this time and he wanted to get on with it so Steve could wreck him and get some relief too.

Steve's mouth went dry at the suggestion and he nodded. He leaned down and started biting lightly at his neck as he eased two fingers inside him. "Is that good, Baby?" He watched Bucky's face carefully as he pushed in a third right away.
"Yes, fuck, yeah, that feels great," Bucky breathed and squirmed down on the fingers. "Feels really good. Move a little more, please," he requested urgently. "One of these days I'm going to have you fist me before you fuck me." Bucky's eyes were closed tight and he concentrated on his breathing as Steve fucked in and out of him with his fingers.

Steve moved his hand quickly, aroused as all hell by the slick noises being made as he fucked Bucky open with his fingers. "Christ, you can fit a whole hand in?" He looked down at Bucky's hole as it easily took three of his fingers. He spread them as wide as he could inside of Bucky and watched his reaction. "Do you like being stretched wide?"

"It's one of my favorite things." Bucky agreed. "I love being filled up. Feels somehow secure and grounding. I'll bet you'll love getting your fist inside me, too." Bucky bit his lip and rolled his head to the side. "I'll make sure to show you a lot of new things, Baby."

Steve poured a little more lube around Bucky's hole and licked his lips when it became easier to move inside and out of his boyfriend. He pushed his pinky inside, now spreading him wide with four fingers. "I want to see it now," he said thickly. "I want to make you come with my fist and then fuck you deep."

"Yes, Sir!" Bucky said excitedly and adjusted so Steve had even better access. "Go a little slower with that fourth one - really take time to stretch me, okay?" Bucky guided him again and hoped Steve wouldn't be embarrassed or anything. Bucky just didn't want it to hurt and he had been with a couple guys who got overzealous about it. Steve was different from them, though.

Steve was excited to give Bucky what he wanted but he knew better than to go too fast. He remembered how sweet Bucky had been taking his time to open him up. "I got you, Baby," he promised. He kissed his stomach down to his dick and licked the length of Bucky's cock as he eased his four fingers in and out, twisting his hand a little with every thrust.

Bucky gasped at the stimulation in his ass and dick. "You're so good to me, Steve. I love you so much." He breathed out and pulled his knees up. "I can't wait to wake up to you every morning." Bucky wanted to watch Steve so he leaned forward and piled the pillows up so he could relax and still see what was happening.

Steve wanted desperately to fuck his boyfriend, but it was just as satisfying to watch him get taken apart slowly. He looked down as Bucky's hole took all four fingers readily. He kept that up for a few minutes, just easing his hole open like that. But when he was sure Bucky could take more, he began to add his thumb with the rest of his fingers.
Bucky moaned out loudly and stared at Steve. "You're getting really good with your fingers, Steve. Better and better all the time." He paused and felt Steve trying to move inside him more. After a bit, he flicked over Bucky's prostate and Bucky jolted his hips up. "Do that again. Hit it harder."

Bucky looked so good all riled up and wanting more. He kept his hand at that angle and started working it in deeper, moaning softly as he watched his hand start to disappear more and more into Bucky's ass while his longest fingers kept jabbing into Bucky's prostate. "God, look at you. You're amazing."

Bucky couldn't speak at all anymore and willed his leaking dick to hold out for a long while so he could feel every thrust against him. Bucky wasn't sure how deep inside him Steve was but he could feel him getting further little by little. His prostate was so sensitive and his dick was sticking up about to shoot come.

Steve watched his entire hand breach Bucky's asshole, staring in amazement as he pulled it out to his fingertips only to push back in past his wrist. "God, my entire hand is inside of you, Buck." He curled his fingers so he would massage Bucky's prostate. "Let me feel you come."

Bucky's vision blurred when Steve pulled out only to shove back in again. A couple seconds longer of Steve working his prostate had Bucky arching up off the bed. He came hard and fast with a loud shout of "Fuck, Steve!" and his come landed all over his stomach and abs. He flopped back on the bed and rolled his eyes back. He had to stay still after the shock to his system. That was definitely the hardest he had come in a long fucking time.

Steve kept moving his hand unrelentingly, wanting to see Bucky make a mess of himself. And, god, it was so worth it. Steve moaned low at the sight of him arching off the bed and the feeling of his muscles spasming around his wrist. Steve gingerly pulled out and kissed his thighs. "You look so good. Are you okay?"

All Bucky could do was nod quickly and run a finger through his come. He held the finger up to Steve so he could feed it to him. He let out a shaky breath and moaned a little. "That was fucking fantastic, Babe," he said finally, "Give me a minute then you can fuck me into next week."

Steve licked the come off of Bucky's finger with a soft hum of approval. "I never would have thought you could fit so much inside of you. Makes me feel less bad about shoving my dick in you when you can take a whole hand."
"Was that fun for you?" Bucky asked a bit shyly. "Cause it was for me. Haven't come that hard in probably about a year." He sat up and stuck his hand over his hole. It was covered in lube and all ready for whenever Steve wanted to fuck him. Bucky got on all fours and stuck has ass out for Steve. "This is a better position for you to rail me."

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Steve grabbed some tissues from the nightstand and cleaned off his hand, which was a slick and sticky mess. "I'm a little floored," he said, eyes glued on Bucky's ass. "The best foreplay I could get, to be honest." Steve got behind Bucky and leaned over to kiss between his shoulders. "Ready for round two?"

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Bucky nodded and wiggled. "Yep, I'm good to go." He reached back and spread his ass for Steve. It was gaping open and ready to take him. Bucky was sure Steve wasn't going to last very long after all this. Bucky had noticed how hard Steve was while he was fisting him. "Do what you need to do to me," Bucky said in a low growl with heavy eyelids.

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God, it was so fucking sexy to have Bucky on all fours, holding himself open for him. Steve couldn't wait any longer and he pushed himself inside easily. "Fuck," he swore, hips moving quick and hard, so thankful that Bucky was open and ready because it would've taken a lot of willpower to go easy.

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Bucky steadied his hands on the bed as Steve went fast and rough. He was still fucked out from his orgasm and couldn't help Steve out. He just held himself balanced on the bed and let Steve go at it. Bucky laid his head down on the pillows after a bit so he was entirely relaxed. He felt bad for not really participating but he was so worn out and Steve didn't seem to mind.

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Even though Bucky was beat, Steve did his best to make it good for him. He reached down and played with his balls and angled his hips to make Bucky most comfortable. "I'm so close, Buck- I'm gonna-" his orgasm ripped through him and he grabbed Bucky's hip tightly and slammed him back on his dick so he could push his come as deep as he could.

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Bucky choked out a moan and rocked back on Steve. He held his head up and cried out again. Steve pulled out and laid next to him and Bucky curled up in his arms. "How do you feel, now? I'm tired as fuck. We might have time to nap before the girls come home."

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Steve held Bucky tightly in his arms and kissed his face over and over again. "I feel so much better, Baby. All thanks to you," he said. He sighed happily and tucked Bucky's face against his chest. "What did I do to deserve such a wonderful boyfriend, huh?"

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Bucky shrugged. "Don’t know.” He asked himself the same question all the time. How did he, Bucky Barnes, manage to land the most perfect man he had ever met in his life? Bucky smiled over
at Steve and squeezed him tight for a second and said with a laugh, “I certainly am amazing.”
Steve's chief had responded the next day by calling him into his office. The long story short was that he didn't give a damn about what he did in his spare time so long as he wasn't too flamboyant about it and didn't let it affect his work. Steve considered that a win. Things were good for a week after that - his coworkers were supportive or were trying their best to come to terms with it, which he was fine with. But one day, he didn't come home. Bucky's phone rang about an hour after Steve was supposed to show up and Sarah was on the other end.

"What happened?" Bucky said urgently. He could already tell that something was wrong. It was in the way she had said 'James, it's Sarah.' It was the feeling he had in his gut all day - that tight energy building each second he hadn't heard from Steve. It was in the way Becca looked at him earlier and told him he looked nervous. He knew something had happened before it even did.

"Steve was hurt on the job today," Sarah said in a tone that suggested Steve had been hurt worse than a mere broken bone. "I just got the call from the precinct... they're... they're prepping him for surgery now." It was clear she was trying to keep as calm as possible.

"Surgery on what? Where is he? Which hospital? Brooklyn General or Mount Sinai?" Bucky picked up the telephone receiver and moved as far as the cord would let him to tug on his shoes and coat. After Sarah told him which hospital he said thanks and hung up. He turned to his sisters on the couch "Steve got hurt. He's at Brooklyn General. Are you two okay by yourself until I get back?"

"How hurt is he?" Becca asked, keeping calm even though she was afraid for both Bucky and Steve. Lilly instantly stood up and frowned. "Did Steve get shot?" She asked, looking visibly upset. She'd been bratty at him the last time she saw him and was afraid that she wouldn't get to fix that.

"I don't know if he's shot or what happened. All I know is he is going in for surgery and I need to be there when he wakes up." Bucky kept his voice steady and calm for his sisters but inside he was dying with worry. "If you need me, call the hospital. Don't open the door to anyone and don't leave. There is still some soup that Steve made in the fridge you can heat up. I'll call you later after I see him." Bucky hugged both his sisters quickly and told them he loved them before heading out the door and locking it firmly behind him.

Lilly's bottom lip quivered but neither of the girls fought Bucky about leaving. When Bucky got to the hospital, Steve was already in surgery. Sarah got up from her chair and pulled Bucky into a tight hug, crying quietly on his shoulder. It had been hard holding herself together. "Steve was shot," she said. "The bullet is lodged next to his spine. They don't know the extent of the damage until after surgery."
Bucky held her close and clenched his jaw. "Do we know how it happened?" He gritted out. "Will he be able to walk? Where's his chief? Where's a nurse?" Bucky wanted to shake someone and yell at them. He needed to know exactly what was going on. He needed to be right there for Steve. Bucky felt like this was somehow his fault.

"I am a nurse, Bucky," she said, rubbing his back gently. She obviously wasn't Steve's nurse, but she knew how these things went. "And the best thing you can do for him is sit here with me. Look," she said, going over to the chairs where a file was with his x-rays that she had been given. "Here," she said as she gave it to him. "The bullet didn't penetrate any organs," she said. "He could make a full recovery if all goes right. But where the bullet is stuck can potentially paralyze him."

Bucky gasped and touched the x-ray gently like it was actually Steve. "I need to know who did this," he said and turned to sit down clumsily in a chair. "I promised him. I promised Steve I wouldn't let anyone hurt him. Now he's been shot in the fucking back and I can't do shit to help him except sit and wait and worry."

"Oh, Bucky..." she took one of his hands and held it in her own. "He was breaking up a trafficking ring. He was shot by a criminal, there's no way any of us could have prevented that." There wasn't any hint of foul play yet - not until Steve woke up.

Because he wasn't family, Bucky wasn't allowed in Steve's room until they got verbal consent from him. His mother promised that she would get a nurse the second Steve woke up so they could have him approve Bucky. Once all that was over, he rushed over to Steve and clutched his outstretched hand. "Steve, my god, Baby, I was so fucking worried."

Steve had been put in a medically induced coma for a day so any internal bleeding wouldn't happen. The following evening he finally woke up dazed and disoriented. When his mom got Bucky, he reached out to hold his hand but Steve's grip wasn't as strong as it normally was. "I'm sorry," he apologized, voice rough. "I...I don't know how things got that bad. I was supposed to have backup."

Bucky kissed Steve's hand gently and shook his head, "What do you mean? You didn't have another officer with you?" He pulled up the chair so he could sit close to Steve. Sarah was sitting across from him on the other side of Steve's bed and looking on at them with kind, concerned eyes.

"I did. Brock was with me and he was going to take the west entrance while I entered the east," Steve said. "Is he okay? Was he hurt?"

Sarah shook her head. "You were the only one shot."
Steve was relieved, then confused, and then he got a hurt look on his face and shook his head a little. "Buck, can you help me to a phone?"

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"Steve, I don't think that's a good idea. You need to stay here and rest," Bucky said with a knit brow. "I can call someone if you need me to. I need to call the girls anyway so I can do that for you first." Bucky offered but Steve didn't look very pleased with the suggestion. Bucky waited for an answer.

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Steve was quiet for a moment and he wiped a tear from his eye. His mom came over and tucked the blankets around him and brushed her fingers through his hair. It was automatic for her to comfort him even though Bucky was there. "Can you ask Chief Fury to come down? And can the girls come visit?"

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Bucky bit his lip pensively and nodded. "I'll call the station right now. Then I'll go pick up the girls, okay? They will be glad to see you. I'll be back very soon." He kissed the top of Steve's head and smiled cautiously at him trying not to cry as well. "I love you, okay? You got to know that, yeah?"

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Steve closed his eyes when Bucky kissed him and he gave Bucky a little smile so his boyfriend wouldn't look so sad. "I know you do. There ain't a day that passes that I don't know that." He rested his cheek against the pillow, feeling a bit tired and worn.

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It took Bucky a lot longer than he would have liked to get on the phone with Steve's chief and then go get the girls. By the time they got back to the hospital together, Steve's mother was waiting out in the hall and Chief Fury was inside Steve's room talking with him. Lilly and Becca ran to Sarah and gave her a big hug but Bucky was curious about what they were discussing that Sarah needed to be out in the hall.

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Sarah didn't like getting left out of the room but she allowed it to happen because Steve asked her to. She hugged both of the girls tightly and kissed the top of their heads. "Aren't you two a sight for sore eyes?" Fury left the room a few minutes later. He looked between Bucky and his sisters before nodding once at them and walking out.

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Bucky didn't like the look Fury gave them but there was nothing he could do about it and the next thing he knew, Lilly was barging into Steve's room and yelling about how she was so sorry she was rude to him last time she saw him. The other three followed in after her and Bucky took in Lilly's pleaded eyes and Steve's soft chuckle at her. "Lilly, give him some space."

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The hospital room had been too serene and quiet. Steve didn't realize how dependent he'd gotten on the constant chaos and noise in his new home. "Hey, hey. It's okay. You don't think I can ever stay mad at you, can I?" He gave Lilly a weak hug and pet the top of her head. "The doctors say I can go
home in a few of days. But I can't work for a while."

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"How long is a while?" Bucky asked nervously and took the seat by Steve again. "I can ask Clint if I can have some time off to take care of you at home." Bucky wrapped his hands around Steve's and glanced at Becca as she pulled another chair up next to Bucky to sit in. She quietly said hello to Steve and gave a weak shy smile.

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"Hey, Becs," Steve said with a tired smile. He felt truly loved to have his entire family around for him. He looked back to Bucky and said, "At least two months. Fury says he's processing the paperwork so I get disability pay. Hopefully, it kicks in before my savings run out. And you don't got to take time off for my sake."

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"Disability?" Bucky asked. "Does that mean you won't be able to go back in the field when you get better? Or is it just a precautionary thing?" Bucky wanted to get Steve alone for a few minutes. He wanted to kiss him a lot and ask what he talked to Fury about.

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"It's too early to tell," Steve said. "I have to start a physical therapy program as soon as I am discharged. They'll know more as time goes by." Steve looked like he was handling the news well but that was probably because he was determined to make a full recovery. "Guess I'll just be around the house more often."

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"Okay, and we will do whatever we need to help you." Bucky nodded to the girls who agreed enthusiastically back. He checked the time and noticed it was around time for dinner. He reached into his pocket and pulled out his wallet. Handing some money to Becca he said, "How about you ask Mrs. Rogers very nicely if she will take you both to the cafeteria to get some dinner?"

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Becca took the money and Lilly scoffed at it. "As if Mrs. Rogers would take our money for anything. I call keeping the change!" Sarah smiled at them and ushered them out, knowing that Bucky wanted some alone time. Steve moved nervously on the mattress, knowing Bucky would want some answers.

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Bucky just stared at him for a few seconds before he broke down. "God, Steve, how did this happen?" Tears started welling up in his eyes. "I'm so fucking glad you're alive. When your mom called me I..." He went to worst-case scenario because that what he always did. "I thought I lost you too."

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Steve's lip quivered and he pulled Bucky into a light hug, unable to move much and unable to withstand much pressure on his torso. "I'm so sorry, Bucky. I swear... I fucking swear I would never go into danger without taking the proper precautions. I've done this type of bust so many times and it
"What happened?" Bucky pushed and locked eyes with Steve. "What did you talk to Fury about? I know something went wrong. I can tell. Please, you have to tell me." He felt a tear fall down his face and he ignored it as it made its merry way down his chin and neck.

Steve looked away, a little reluctant to respond but he couldn't hide anything from Bucky. He stiffly reached out to dry the trail left behind by the tear. "I think Brock abandoned me in there so I would get hurt," he said quietly. "I hope I'm wrong, but I can't think of any other reason why he'd leave so suddenly."

Bucky's eyelids fluttered in anger and he held his mouth open in a quiet snarl. "Who is Brock? Your partner on the force? Is that what you told Fury? Is he going to do something about it?" Bucky didn't realize he was shaking until Steve clamped a hand on his shoulder to try to stop him. "Goddammit," he spit out in anger at this whole thing.

Steve could see Bucky getting angry and he didn't blame him. Steve probably would've been livid if he wasn't so thankful that he was alive right now. "Buck, I need you to keep calm, please," he said. "Fury says he'll do an internal investigation." But anyone who knew cops knew that an internal investigation usually meant nothing.

Bucky didn't even try to stop the tears this time. He just let them fall and he shook and held Steve. "I'll fucking kill him," Bucky growled. He didn't mean it, of course, but he was already convinced this was no accident and someone had to be held accountable for what happened. He could have permanently paralyzed Steve.

"Hey, Baby, it's alright," Steve reassured softly. He rubbed Bucky's back and gave him a sympathetic look. "I've been thinking about this all day. And, you know, maybe it's a sign from God that this happened. I don't know what it means, yet. But maybe this is a blessing." It was a cruel injustice, but Steve was the sort of man to try and find the best in things.

That just flared Bucky up even more. "A sign from God?" He asked incredulously. "And what the fuck is God trying to tell you? And don't give me any of that anti-gay church shit." He didn't mean to take his anger out on Steve but he honestly couldn't handle anything at the moment. His emotions were all heightened and Bucky's brain was itching for a fight.

Steve winced when Bucky snapped at him. He looked hurt and offended that Bucky didn't believe in Steve's faith that there could be some good that could come from this. "Maybe that coming out was a mistake," he said, "and that the world isn't ready for us to be open. So this was a warning before
something worse could have happened." Which, to Steve, was merciful because God wanted him alive. "Or maybe he wanted me to be home for the girls if they needed my help when I otherwise would've been at work. Or maybe he wanted to remind me that I have a family at home now and I can't ever think myself invincible on the job."

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Bucky clenched his teeth together. "I like the last two much better than the first," he said in bitterly. He wasn't quite done with putting up a fight. "What if it isn't a sign from God? What if it's just that some prick you work with decided to make it convenient for you to get hurt or killed just because he doesn't like you anymore?"

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"God could be working through that one prick I work with," Steve said tensely. His heart rate monitor was beeping a little quicker but not dangerously fast. "Regardless, I will ask for a transfer if that's the case. I'd rather be alive with my family working at another precinct than risk it to prove a point to some jerk."

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Bucky heard the monitor and flicked his gaze up at it. He conceded with a sharp nod and said, "Guess you're right," just because he didn't want a nurse barging in wondering why his monitor was screaming at her that there was a problem.

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"Of course I'm right. That's why I got the badge. I'm always right," Steve said it in such a stubborn way it was ridiculous but he also would've given in to Bucky at some point because he didn't have it in him to argue today. He kissed his cheek softly. "I'm sorry I upset you."

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Bucky closed his eyes and melted into Steve. "It's my fault. I have no right to argue with you while you're like this. You didn't do anything wrong. You're just trying to be positive. Which is more than I can do. All I want to do is find that Brock asshole and beat the shit out of him."

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Steve pet his fingers through Bucky's hair. "Do you want to know what makes me the angriest about all this? The poor guy lost his wife and kid in a car accident a few years back. I went over there every day for a month to cook him dinner and do his shopping until he was back on his feet."

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Bucky pulled a remorseful, upset face. "Car crash," he said and let out a humorless laugh. "That's how my parents died, too." Bucky stood up. "I'm sorry, Steve, I got to..." He shoved a thumb towards the door. "I'll be back soon." He left without another word.

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Steve looked apologetically at Bucky when he explained that his parents died the same way. He hadn't gotten Bucky to tell him much about how they died until now. He felt so fucking useless not being able to help or follow Bucky out when he left. So he just put a hand over his bullet wound and closed his eyes with a defeated sigh, hoping Bucky would return to him soon.
The evening shift was starting to clock out for the day and the graveyard shift was taking over when Bucky came ripping through the building angrily demanding to see Rumlow. "Hey, Asshole!" Natasha yelled at him. "You got a problem with one of our men, you can stand in line and file a formal complaint with our administrative office." She clearly didn't know who Bucky was.

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Bucky twitched and shouted back across the room. "Where the fuck is he? He put Steve in the hospital! Steve could have died, dammit!" Bucky's fists were clenched at his sides and his whole body was shaking furiously. He looked the woman up and down and tried to decide if he would try to push past her if she tried to stop him or if he would let it go or have to fight her too. He hoped he wouldn't have to fight her off too.

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Natasha paused for a moment before a look of realization dawned on her. "You're Steve's boyfriend," she said. There had been rumors about what happened when Brock came back from his case early and Steve got shot but nobody thought too much of it. "Stop making a scene and come in here," she said, nodding at an empty interrogation room.

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Bucky grumbled but followed her anyway. He wanted to make a scene. Everyone should know what happened - what that piece of shit did. "I want him prosecuted," Bucky said flatly once the door was closed. "Or at the very least I want his badge."

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"There's this thing called ‘due process’," Natasha said. "You can't go throwing accusations about a goddamn police officer letting another officer get injured on the field." She crossed her arms and asked, "Does Steve believe that there's foul play?"

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"Yes, he does," Bucky pressured but stopped. "He also doesn't know I'm here." He rubbed his face. "I don't even know what my plan was in coming here. I thought about fighting Rumlow or yelling at Chief Fury or asking for Steve to be transferred or something." He looked at the woman and sighed, holding out a hand, "I'm sorry. I'm Bucky, by the way. I'm usually more pleasant than this but my boyfriend's just been shot."
"Listen. Fury may not be the cuddliest man on the planet, but he's the first black chief in this precinct. You think he'd tolerate his officers turning on each other?" Natasha shook her head. "If there's something up, he will sniff it out." She extended her hand to shake Bucky's. "Natasha," she greeted. "Is Steve doing alright? I've been at work since I heard the news that he was shot. I planned to come by the hospital as soon as I'm done here."

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Bucky sighed, "He's okay. He is awake and on a lot of medication for the pain. They said he should be able to make a good recovery. There was a potential of paralysis but that looks unlikely now." He pocketed his hands in his jacket. "I'm sorry for yelling and being a dick just now. I'm sure that's a great first impression of Steve's boyfriend... I should probably get back to him."

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Natasha gave him a teasing smile. "It's fine. The gays are known for being dramatic anyway," She said it in a way that was light so Bucky would know she was just trying to be a dick back at him and didn't actually have a problem with his sexuality. "Give him my regards. I'll visit soon."

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Back at the hospital, Bucky trudged up the stairs to Steve's room and thought about what to say about running off. He felt really bad for just leaving and not saying anything. But he knew Steve would try to stop him if he knew he was going to the station. The girls and Sarah were all back with Steve and eating dinner. Everyone got quiet when Bucky entered the room and said nervously, "Hey."

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Steve was trying to nap in the room when Bucky returned and Lilly was munching on dinner while sitting on the edge of his bed. "Steve talks in his sleep, do you know that?" Lilly said loudly. "I had a whole conversation with him and everything."

"I'm still awake," Steve mumbled.

"See?" Lilly pointed out.

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Bucky rolled his eyes and pulled her gently from the edge of Steve's bed. "I think you are being too loud for him to actually get to sleep, Lil." Bucky sat back down by Becca and she handed him a packaged box of hospital food. "Thanks, Becs," he said as he opened it to eat. He didn't realize how hungry he actually was. He hadn't eaten anything since he got to the hospital the night before.

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Steve peeked an eye open at Bucky and smiled lazily over at him. He looked happier now that he was back. "Where did you go, Baby?" He asked, reaching one hand out for him. Sarah already claimed Steve's other hand.

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Bucky took it, abandoning his box of food for a moment. "Uh..." he shifted uncomfortably in his seat. "The - the station," he offered with a nervous edge to his voice. He added a nod for good measure and tried not looking at Steve. He didn't want to see the disappointment or confusion that
was bound to be in his face.

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"Bucky!" Steve scolded, his eyes snapping open. He frowned at him and he would've sat up if he could. "What did you do? Who did you talk to?" Sarah rubbed Steve's shoulder to calm him down.

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Bucky looked to Sarah and the girls quickly and asked Steve in a low voice, "Can we talk about it in private later, maybe?" He rubbed Steve's hand with his thumb but Steve's pulled it back with a frown and knit brows. Obviously, Bucky wasn't going to get out of this very easily.

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Steve wasn't happy that Bucky went to the precinct. Not just because he didn't want to rock the boat but also because he didn't want Bucky getting attacked or arrested because they knew who's boyfriend he was. "Fine."

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Bucky sat back in his chair and felt shame and anger at himself welling up inside him. "I'm sorry, Steve," he stuttered out and stared at his lap. "I don't know what I was doing. It was stupid and I fucked up." He scanned the other faces in the room. Lilly and Becca were wide-eyed watching and Sarah was listening with her eyes averted respectfully. Guess they were doing this now after all. "I met Natasha. She sends her regards. Said she'll be over to visit sometime."

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"I don't want you to be sorry, Buck. I want you to not do something rash like that again," Steve said calmly but with a clipped edge. He hated seeing Bucky upset and he understood that he'd been hurt but he also made a stupid decision. "Did Natasha say anything smart to you?"

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Bucky nodded, "Yeah, called me a dramatic gay." He chuckled. "I'd be offended if I hadn't proven her right." He gripped Steve's hand again. "I'm a really spontaneous stupid ass sometimes, Steve. And I'll refrain from getting involved at the precinct from now on."

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"I don't know if it's safe there anymore," Steve said in a soft tone. "I don't want you to get hurt, too, Baby."

Lilly pounded her fist into her palm. "I'll kick their ass for you. They can't beat up a little girl. The papers would go nuts!"

---

Bucky tackled Lilly in a hug and gave her a noogie. "You're going to beat up a police officer, huh? Take him out with your lacrosse stick?" He laughed and tickled her. Then he sighed and said, "I'm thinking the two of you should probably get back home. You have school in the morning."

---

Steve smiled up at the two of them and then looked over to his mom as if to say 'See how amazing
they are?" He motioned for Becca and Lilly to give him a hug and kiss. "I'll be home soon, okay?"

---

Becca was incredibly gentle but Lilly was a little too rough with her hug. Bucky stood and said, "Baby, I'll be right back. I got to get them to bed and then I'll be back while they are asleep then I'll see them off to school in the morning." It wasn't going to be a very comfortable night for Bucky. He would just be sitting by Steve's side and watching the clock so he wasn't late to take the girls to school. He had already called Clint to get another day off so he was good to be here all day the next day.

---

Steve really wanted Bucky's company so he didn't even put up a fight about Bucky going so far out of his way. His mom stayed and chattered with Steve until Bucky returned. At that point, she gave both Steve and Bucky a hug and kiss goodbye so they could be alone.

---

Bucky kissed Steve slowly and then sat back in his chair. He locked eyes with him and held his hand over his heart. It still wasn't quite real to Bucky that Steve was here in the hospital. He figured he would open his eyes and it would just be a bad dream. He thought the same thing when his parents died. "Steve, I'm so sorry, again."

---

Steve put his hand over Bucky's and looked up into his eyes. "I know you meant well, Buck. I can't get mad at you for that. You just have to be smarter about your anger. You could have gotten hurt today and then what would we do?"

---

"I would have been in a hospital bed with you and no one would have been there to take care of the girls." Bucky sighed.

---

Steve brought Bucky's hand to his mouth so he could kiss the back of it. "My mom would have taken care of the girls. But she also would have swat you half to death with a newspaper for being dumb."

---

"See? I promise I can think through things when I'm not angry. It's just I wanted to get him back so badly. I love you so much and I went a little crazy. You make me really fucking crazy," Bucky said and bit his lip thinking about what he would have done had he met Rumlow. It wouldn't have been good.

---

Steve smiled when Bucky insisted how much he loved him. "I kind of noticed," he said with a smile. "You are so good to me, Bucky. I'm sorry you're stuck in a hospital with me right now."
"I'm just sorry you're in the hospital and not back home with me," Bucky said. He knew Steve would eventually be fine and be able to go back to work but it was still scary and he was in such pain right now. "How are you feeling? Can I get you anything?"

---

"I feel like I've been shot," Steve huffed, pouting a little. He was good with handling pain even though everything hurt right now, but he didn't like to be sick or injured. "Giving me another kiss will make me feel better," he suggested. "And let's switch jobs," Steve joked. "You can carry the gun and I'll deal with the stoners."

---

"Yes, I'm sure all the stoners will take kindly to a cop around and the precinct would definitely hire a long-haired gay hippie," Bucky joked back and gave Steve another gentle but meaningful kiss. He was so worried he was going to hurt Steve more if he was even the slightest bit rougher.

---

"It's a flawless plan," Steve snickered and made a soft sound into the kiss. He wrapped an arm around Bucky and sighed. "Think we can find a way to make you fit in this bed with me?" he asked.

---

"No," Bucky said sternly. "I don't want to hurt you more. I want you to heal as fast as you can." He checked Steve's morphine drip and the bottle of clean water they had brought for him. "Do you want some water, Steve? Need me to get a nurse for you before you fall asleep?"

---

Steve got a kicked puppy look when Bucky refused to get into the bed. He understood why, but it still hurt a little. He wanted to snuggle with him. "No, it's okay," he murmured. "I guess we just have to do our best to make ourselves comfortable for the night," he sighed.
"Steve's coming home today!" Bucky shouted in the apartment making Becca jump at the outburst. "Steve's coming home!" Sarah was bringing Steve over at any time and Bucky was readying the apartment to be as danger-free as possible. He knew it wasn't like bringing a baby home from the hospital but he still wanted to be extra safe with him.

---

Steve didn't realize how much stairs sucked until he was recovering from a bullet in the back. Sarah opened the door for him and Steve arrived on crutches with a big old smile. "There's my favorite family," he said happily as he walked through the door. "You guys cleaned up!"

---

"Steve!" Lilly shouted and went over to give him a soft hug.

Bucky followed quickly and kissed Steve's face all over. "I'm so fucking happy to have you back home." He said, "Here, come sit down. I'll make us all some food. Or at least I will try my best to." Bucky scampered over to the couch to grab a blanket and he draped it around Steve as he sat down at the table.

---

"Hey, you guys," Steve greeted happily. He kissed the top of Lilly's head and then stopped Bucky to get another kiss. He grinned brightly over at his mom, who looked pleased that Steve had such a good home life here.

"I'll make dinner," Sarah offered, not so subtly hinting that she didn't believe Bucky was the best cook.

---

Bucky held up his hands in surrender. He wasn't going to argue with anyone who wanted to cook for him today, especially Sarah. "Becs, will you play one of Steve's records?" Bucky asked and ushered for her to come over once she was done. "His is the box right on top."

---

Lilly didn't complain about Steve's music for once. Steve reached out for Bucky's hand and pulled him in close. "Hey, Love," he murmured softly. "Looking forward to having me home all the time now? I can try to spoil you more."
"Yeah, right." Bucky chuckled. "You're going to be sitting and recovering and not doing anything strenuous and I'm the one spoiling you now." He kissed Steve again and whispered low in his ear so no one could hear, "That means no sex or anything for a while, too."

---

Steve whined softly. "This is the worst thing about being shot," he complained. "Not even a little." he fell quiet when Lilly came over to sit with them.

"Bucky, can I stay home from school to take care of Steve?" She asked.

---

Bucky grabbed Lilly and held her in his lap. "No. You have to go to school. I don't even get to stay home from work to take care of Steve. Unfortunately, he may be here on his own a lot sometimes." Bucky leaned his chin on Lilly's shoulder and watched Sarah cook dinner. "Besides I think Steve would agree that you need to focus on your academics a bit more anyway."

---

"But what if Steve gets lonely and sad? Or if he needs help?" She protested.

Steve smiled and tugged on a lock of her hair. "I'll be fine, Kiddo. My mom can come over to help and Bucky's right. You need to be more diligent with your academics."

---

Lilly rolled her eyes and huffed. "Whatever. Like I said, I'm going to be a professional women's soccer player. I don't need science or math or English or history or anything."

Bucky's eyes went wide. "Are you failing all of those classes?" He shook his head. "Never mind, we will talk about that later. Now's not the time." He looked to Sarah. She already had to see Steve and Bucky fight at the hospital not long ago. She didn't need to see Bucky fight his sister too.

---

Sarah made everyone a full plate of food once dinner was ready. She gave Lilly a look and said, "Don't you want to know the history of soccer? Or learn science to figure out the best way to kick a ball? What about math so you don't get put in jail for accidentally misfiling your taxes?"

---

Lilly went to her own seat next to Becca and became engrossed in discussing the history of soccer with Sarah. She was already highly versed in that particular matter. Bucky laced his fingers with Steve's and started eating his food with his non-dominant hand. He wasn't getting much food in his mouth but he wanted to be touching Steve.

---

Every few bites, Steve would offer a forkful of food for Bucky to eat from to help him out. Once dinner was over, Sarah cleaned up and insisted on making lunch for the girls for school the next day. "What time do you have work tomorrow, Buck?" Steve asked.

---

"I've got close shift again," Bucky said and grumbled. "So I'll be here for the morning but I'm
leaving around three." He really hated the close shift. It meant he wouldn't see the girls back home safe and he wouldn't be back in until after one in the morning. "I can ask Clint if I can close up early."

---

"You don't have to worry about closing up early, Baby. I can handle waiting until you get back. Maybe the girls and I can find something fun to do," Steve said sweetly, giving Bucky an encouraging kiss.

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"You better not play board games without me," Bucky teased with a pout. "I have a vendetta against Becca with that damn train track game."

---

"We could play Scrabble. You don't like big words anyway," Steve teased back. Becca giggled a bit at the joke even if it was at her brother's expense.

---

"Yeah, good point. I really do hate Scrabble." Bucky stood to get himself some iced tea from the fridge. "Anyone want tea?"

---

"Some tea would be lovely," Steve said but Sarah shook a finger at him.

"Doctor says no caffeine for two weeks," She corrected.

---

"Dammit, Steve, no caffeine!" Bucky said remembering what Sarah had said when she gave him the low down on what the doctor had told her. Bucky poured himself some tea and came back over to the table. "Mrs. Rogers, can you write down everything the doctor said so I can be sure to follow it when you aren't around?"

---

Steve whined and looked to his boyfriend and his mom. "Come on, you guys. Everyone knows that the doctors just make stuff up so you freak out over everything and come back to them for more checkups," he complained. Sarah swatted her son with a paper before writing it all down for Bucky.

---

"Steve, I know what you're doing and playing into my conspiracy side isn't going to work this time," Bucky said and hovered over Sarah as she wrote.

---

"I'm telling you, Bucky, we should really stick it to the man this time," Steve tried once more but to no avail. He huffed but behaved for the rest of the night.
Once the girls were off to school the next morning, Steve gingerly made his way into the kitchen. "Hey, Buck," he said softly. "Would it be alright if I had Natasha over some time?"

---

"Um..." Bucky cleared his throat. "I'm fine with that but depending on when she comes over I might not be here." He shrugged. "It's your place, too, now so you can have people over. Just if I'm not here, give the girls fair warning first because Becca doesn't like people coming over unannounced. She gets a little frantic."

---

Steve nodded. "I'll let her know," he promised. "Natasha's just bringing some of the stuff from my locker back home since I won't be around for a while. And she's bringing paperwork for me to file for disability in the meantime." He paused and then asked, "Does Becca get frantic cause of how you used to be?"

---

Bucky bit his lip and nodded slowly. "I'm guessing so. I kind of fucked up her trust in people and myself and I don't know how long it'll take to get better. It's just residual emotions, I think." He started making Steve an omelet and he glanced at a framed picture on the wall of his family back when his parents were alive. He wanted a new picture on the wall right next to that one with Steve in it. "She should be fine with Natasha, though. I have a weird feeling that they might get along."

---

"Who knows? Maybe she would've had trust issues regardless," Steve said. He was trying to keep Bucky from blaming himself too much. "I think she would like Natasha, too. Natasha doesn't put up with anyone's shit and she's as smart as she is tough."

---

"She's like Becca except she talks." Bucky laughed and added, "Will you apologize to her again for me about the other day? I still feel like an ass for yelling at her." Bucky thought about Natasha and the chief and Rumlow and if anyone had figured out yet if it was foul play like Steve suspected or not.

---

"Oh, Natasha doesn't accept apologies," Steve said in a matter-of-fact tone. "But I doubt she will hold a grudge. She's a reasonable person." Steve had a lot of respect for her for many reasons. "She does accept good vodka, though."
Bucky made a loud short laugh. "I guess we will always be at odds then because I cannot afford to buy good vodka. I can offer her a shitty beer or cheap wine or some of my good bourbon if she wants that. That's all I got." Steve's omelet was ready and Bucky placed it on the table before making his own breakfast.

Steve waited for Bucky to finish making his food to eat instead of eating alone. "She's a good person. I think she will find it in her heart to forgive you. If anything, I think she's happy that I have someone who gets emotional over me."

Bucky sat down with his plate and said, "And by emotional you mean irrational and crazy." He was about to take a bite of his food before it occurred to him that Steve might want to pray before breakfast too. He certainly had some stuff to ask God to help him out with. "You pray before every meal or just dinner? Never noticed before."

"I pray before every meal," Steve said. "I have to give God my thanks for seeing that I have food and a home and that I lived long enough to make it to the next meal." He gave a little smile. Steve shifted a bit nervously and asked, "I've been, um... thinking. I, uh... I know you're not religious. But because we can't get married legally I was wondering if maybe someday... if I could find a priest willing to do it, would you want to get married in the church at least?"

Bucky's heart clenched and he blinked rapidly a few times. "Uh... Wh- what?" He couldn't manage anything other than that. Of course, Bucky had been thinking about his life with Steve and how he planned for Steve to be around for the rest of his life. He also thought about how it was ridiculous and unfair that two men couldn't be married just because it made people uncomfortable. But he never thought that Steve would suggest something like that. For one, Bucky didn't even know that 'married in the church' was even a thing. Did that mean that to God they would be married? Or would it be more like an honorary title? Also, wasn't it sort of the church that prevented Steve from wanting to act on his sexuality anyway? "Steve, what's that even mean?"

Steve ducked his head shyly, nervous as all hell and feeling bad that he was getting Bucky worked up. "I mean... getting married in the church means that at least God knows we're married. So when we pass on, he'll reunite us. And it'll mean that someone down here knows we're married, too. It'll take years - decades, maybe - for laws to pass for the state to recognize us as married. But if we can find one priest who believes in our marriage, that's all we need."

Bucky breathed out slowly as he nodded, thinking this all through. Steve was right, he wasn't religious, but he could go to a priest and a church if it was what Steve needed to do. He wasn't sure about being married to Steve, though. Bucky was notorious for fucking up and making everything bad again. And what he had with Steve was so good he was just waiting for one big mistake of his to ruin everything and have Steve packing his shit to get the fuck out. But Bucky also wanted this. He
wanted this to last and be perfect for Steve. He cleared his throat and said, "Okay..."

---

Steve reached out to run a hand down Bucky's back. He knew Bucky loved him but he could hear the hesitation in his voice. "Buck, if you don't want to or you're not ready, we don't have to," he said gently. "It's just... I wanted to hear your thoughts on it before I started going around to churches asking priests to marry a couple of gay guys."

---

Bucky turned to Steve and placed a cold gentle hand on the back of his neck. "I want it, Steve, I do. I'm just terrified that I'm going to fuck it up. You know me. You know what my life has been like. You know that I'm really good at ruining everything and being a bit of a hot head and causing fights or trying to get my way," Bucky rambled off his flaws as he stared into Steve's loving eyes that never left him for a second.

---

"Baby," Steve said softly as he leaned in to kiss his cheek. "If you fight to get your way and your way involves staying with me, then I know for sure I want to do everything I can to be your husband," he said. "You make mistakes - that's human. And when you fuck up again, like all people do, I'll be there to help."

---

Bucky smiled cautiously and willed himself not to jump on Steve and make out with him. Instead, he gave him a light kiss and said, "I love you, Steve Rogers." He ran a hand through his hair and leaned back. "There is one thing you have to do, though, after you find the priest that is going to do this for us."

---

Steve couldn't stop smiling at all the affectionate touches Bucky gave him. He slipped a hand under Bucky's shirt and kissed him some more. "Anything," he promised.

---

Bucky let Steve feel his way up his chest and smirked. "Oh, you're gonna like this, Officer." He tuck his hair behind his ears and took Steve's face in his hands. He gave that cheeky grin again. "You have to propose to me," He said simply. "Full on, down on your knees, some sort of ring, 'Will you church-marry me, James Buchanan Barnes?', and then you wait for me to answer and look all nervous like you don't think I'll say yes."

---

Steve’s eyes lit up, “Of course, I will,” he said. “I’ll bring you flowers and have one of the girls ready to take pictures and I’ll take your hand in mine and wait for you to look at me and then I’ll get down on one knee. Then I’ll make us a wonderful dinner and we can make love nice and slow afterward and we will have a perfect life together and get old together.”

---

"Alright, Babe, you can’t get too sappy on me. I could still say no," Bucky teased and kissed Steve's cheek. "Thought you’d like that, though." He paused and looked to the side. "I never thought I’d get
proposed to in my life... Never mind, I don't think I can handle it. Just tell me when to be at the church." Bucky shook his head at the sudden overwhelmed feeling he had.

---

"Nope." Steve laughed at Bucky. "I'm proposing to you someday, James Barnes, whether you like it or not." He was a stubborn mule and wanted to really spoil Bucky with a good proposal.

---

Bucky groaned in defeat. "Guess it was sort of my idea." He stood to get Steve's medicine because, now that he ate, he could take it. He brought it over with a tall glass of water and the list of things to remember that Sarah wrote down. "Your mother has some of the clearest handwriting I've ever seen."

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"Of course she does. She had to write out prescriptions and all that. If her handwriting was misread, it could kill someone." Steve grumbled as he took the medicine but didn't put up a big fight over it.

---

"Good point," Bucky said. "Alright, Babe, you've got about seven hours before I need to go to work. I say we watch a bad movie then you can nap while I clean up Lilly’s mess in the living room then we can really carefully cuddle until I have to leave.
A few days passed and Bucky would soon find himself answering the door for Natasha, dressed in civilian clothes but still looking just as lethal in her casual clothing. She looked into the living room briefly and seemed unsurprised by the clutter. "Is Steve in?"

---

Bucky looked her up and down and said, "He's taking a nap. You can come in and wait for him." He let her in and closed the door behind her. She wasn't shy in heading for the couch and gracefully sitting down. "You want something to drink? Or some snacks? Or I can just go wake Steve up?"

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"Nah, don't wake him," she said as she made herself at home right in the living room. "A sandwich would be nice, though. I'm starving," she said with a shrug. "You can give Steve a message for me if you wouldn't mind."

---

"Sure what's the message? And what sort of sandwich?" Bucky asked and started pulling out all the sandwich stuff he had in the fridge. The fridge and the cabinets were decidedly fuller and had a healthier selection now that Steve was living there. He really was serious about them eating better and not eating cereal for dinner anymore.

---

"An everything sandwich," Natasha said. "With Russian dressing, if you have it." They probably didn't, but she would try. "Well, I figured Steve would be happy to know that Fury is taking the situation seriously," she said. "And while that happens, the rest of the precinct believes him."

---

Bucky mumbled 'Russian dressing' under his breath as he looked in the fridge. When Natasha gave her message he shot back up. "So they think it's foul play, too? They think Rumlow did something intentionally?" Bucky’s heart was picking up pace and he almost forgot about Natasha's sandwich entirely.

---

Natasha nodded her head solemnly. "A few officers overheard him trying to get Steve kicked out a day or so before it happened," she said. "And as soon as the investigation started, he had a few choice words to call Steve. I'm sure you've heard it all before."
Bucky nodded in anger. "I'm sure I have... God, I want to fucking destroy that man for what he's done to Steve. He can't do much on his own and has to have medicine four times a day and he walks slowly and we can't have sex or anything until he's healed." Bucky finished slapping Natasha's sandwich together and brought it over to her mumbling, "We don't have Russian dressing."

---

Natasha was conflicted as well. On one hand, Rumlow was a good officer who saved everyone's life at least once. On the other, Steve didn't deserve any of this either. "How is he?" She asked softly. "He gets stir crazy real bad. And he can have a bit of a temper sometimes, so don't take it personal." Luckily, Bucky hadn't had to see Steve truly mad yet.

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"He's doing okay so far. I think he's started to get more and more antsy every day." Bucky sat in the chair across from the couch. "I don't know if Steve's crazy goes higher than mine so I think it'll be fine. He deals with my crazy at least one a week. Hell, you know what it's like."

---

"Crazy, huh?" Natasha asked with a raised eyebrow. "Well for the longest time, you were outnumbered by two little girls," she joked. "Anyone would go crazy from that." She nibbled delicately at her sandwich. "He's a lot happier with you," she said. "I knew he was seeing someone just by the way he walked the day after he met you."

---

"Yeah?" Bucky asked with a shy grin. "I love him, you know. If that means anything to you as his friend, I really truly love him." There was a soft shuffling coming from his bedroom and Bucky thought Steve might be getting up from his nap. He'd be glad to see Natasha if he was awake.

---

"Ugh, no need to be gross about it," she complained, though it was clear she didn't want to hear anyone gushing about their significant other and not because of the gay part.

A minute or so later, Steve slowly made his way out of the bedroom with the help of his crutches. "Oh, hey."

---

"Hey, Steve." Bucky's face lit up and he stood to help him take a seat next to Natasha. "Do you want a sandwich or something? You need your medicine in about a half hour and you need to eat first." Bucky turned to head to the kitchen and started making a sandwich for Steve anyway.

---

Steve made a displeased sound at the reminder of his medicine. He hated feeling so useless and weak. He was a little embarrassed to be down and out in front of his colleague but Natasha didn't tease him. "I brought some stuff from your locker, by the way," Natasha told him. "And papers for disability."

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Bucky listened in while they talked and he didn't make a sound. He wanted to see if Natasha would
tell Steve what she had told him or if she would just have Bucky do it later. He was also curious to see how Steve acted around his coworkers. Not that he thought he would be that different, but it would be interesting to see.

---

Steve got a bit into police mode around Natasha. He sat up a little straighter and spoke more properly. Natasha didn't tell him about Rumlow but she did reassure him that the precinct wished him a quick and full recovery. "I'll come over for dinner next week," Natasha said, totally inviting herself over. "I'll bring takeout." She looked up at Bucky and said, "I'm not asking for permission cause you yelled at me once."

---

Bucky handed Steve his sandwich and said, "I respect that, and I'm sorry again. Also, it's Steve's home now, too, so he can have anyone he likes over." Bucky paused and looked at him. "No, you may have anyone over who isn't a handsome man. No cute boys while I'm not around."

---

"So does that mean Thor isn't allowed over?" Natasha asked. She looked over at Bucky and said, "That guy is a big beefcake. Total wall of muscle."

Steve was a little reluctant to eat right now so he just took the sandwich and set it on the coffee table. "As if I could ever even think about anyone but you, Buck."

---

Bucky kissed Steve's head and said, "Eat, Punk." He brought the medicine over next and sat it on the coffee table with some water. "Food then drugs." He sat back down and crossed his leg on his lap. "Natasha, what do we need to do with the disability papers?"

---

Steve stared at the sandwich before mumbling, "I'm not hungry."

Natasha picked up the folder and showed Bucky the papers. "He has to fill out that he was shot and sign it down there. He can't mention anything about Rumlow, just that there were plans for backup and backup failed. Don't mention foul play or any of that or else disability services may give him the runaround."

---

Bucky nodded and said that he would make sure they got them filled out as soon as possible. "Where do I need to take them after he's filled it out?" He gave Steve a look and then pointed at the sandwich. He wasn't going to let him out of it that easy. Unless he felt like throwing up, he was eating that damn sandwich.

---

Steve gave Bucky a heated glare but didn't say anything because he didn't want to get into a spat in front of Natasha who said, "I'll pick it up and take it to officer affairs for you guys. While I'm sure most people wouldn't bother Steve, I figure it'll be safer for me to turn it in."
"Probably a good idea because I don't have the best track record in the precinct, I'm sure." Bucky checked the clock. The girls would be home any minute. "Natasha, are you staying for a while? You can stay for dinner. My sisters are probably headed home now," Bucky said and glanced at Steve and the entirely uneaten sandwich. "Fucking hell, Steve." He breathed out quietly.

---

"It's alright. I've got a cat at home that will scratch the furniture if I stay out for too long. I'll come by in a few days to pick up the paperwork and steal more food from you." She gave them both a brief hug goodbye before heading out.

---

Bucky locked the door behind her and came back to hover over Steve. "Why aren't you eating? Are you sick?" He asked in a sternly concerned voice. "You need food before medicine and you need medicine so you don't hurt. Please eat."

---

"I'm not hungry, Bucky," Steve complained. "I'm tired and I don't want to shove food down my throat that I don't want. The medicine isn't making a difference anyway," he said moodily. He didn't want to concern Bucky by being too grumpy but he also didn't feel much better from when he first came home.

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"Steve, the medicine makes it so you don't feel the pain as much," Bucky said and rested a hand on his thigh. "I know you're sick of this and you don't want to eat but please, please eat for me. I promised your mother I'd watch out for you when she wasn't here and so I have to make you eat."

---

"I said I'm not hungry," Steve said tensely. "There's no point in eating if I'm going to throw it up later. Or make my stomach too uneasy to eat dinner tonight." Steve frowned and looked away. "Missing one meal isn't going to kill me, Bucky, you don't have to worry."

---

Bucky frowned at Steve. "Have you been throwing up lately, Steve? How long has that been happening? Why didn't I know?" He stood to look for the doctor's phone number. "I should call your doctor about that. That can't be good. Maybe it's a side effect of the medicine."

---

"Buck, goddammit, I haven't thrown up but I will if I force myself to eat something I don't want!" Steve bristled and his voice was raised but not so loud that he was shouting. "I want to be with my boyfriend right now, not a nurse."

---

Bucky clenched his jaw and squared his shoulders. "You want me to make you something other than a sandwich?" He gritted out. "And I am your boyfriend, Steve. But I'm also in charge of your recovery and that means being vigilant with what we need to do to get you better. I'm only doing this because I care about you and want a quick recovery."
"No. I don't want anything to eat right now," Steve grumbled. He rubbed at his face. "I know you care, Bucky, but I can't stand being babied all the time. I'd rather fall on my ass than have anyone help me walk around here again. It's maddening."

"Maybe I will let you fall on your ass, yeah? Let you feel how much that's gonna hurt! You have a fucking bullet wound in your back, Steve! Try to loosen up on your damn pride for awhile and let us help you for once." Bucky was getting pretty mad. It seemed to him that Steve was only happy when he was taking care of Bucky. And that thought made Bucky feel small and weak.

"Won't hurt as much as being shot in the first place," Steve retorted, stubborn as ever and being even less malleable because Bucky was raising his voice. "Just cause I'm not hungry for one fucking meal doesn't mean I'm on a slope to killing myself over it."

"Excuse me?" Bucky whispered with furrowed brows and folded arms. "Steve, I think you might want to reconsider your words and who you are talking to." Bucky turned around sharply and headed for his room to get changed. The girls would be home soon and he needed to get to work in an hour and he wasn't going to wear the sweats he had on.

Steve slowly stood up, glaring at Bucky's back as he left and went to get the plastic wrap from the cabinet. He wrapped up the sandwich and tossed it in the fridge, hating how long it took him to do every fucking thing. When Lilly and Becca came home, he pretended to be too tired to talk and just laid down on the couch.

"Bucky!" Lilly called down the hall. "I'm hungry!"

Bucky swung open his door and rushed out into the kitchen. He tried to smile at the girls and be polite and calm. "Okay, Lil. What do you want?" He opened the fridge to see Steve's freshly wrapped sandwich and he pulled it out with a grimace and handed it to her. "Eat Steve's sandwich." He offered and slammed the fridge shut again. He headed towards the door, slipping on his shoes. "I'm going to head to work early and take the long way. I need a walk," Bucky said to Becca who was closest. He opened the door and quickly escaped, locking it behind him.

Steve was generally unresponsive all evening. He felt bad for upsetting Bucky but he still felt justified for not eating when he wasn't hungry. Lilly made her best attempt at a grilled cheese for his dinner and Steve sat on the couch and waited up for Bucky to return home from work.

After Bucky got out of work around one in the morning, he took another long walk around the city and ended up at a bar. He drank several rounds of whiskey and some beers that a lady who was flirting with him all night bought. They had short meaningless conversations and she left once he
started complaining that he was taking care of now three children - one of which was a grown ass adult man with solid pride that he wouldn't shake. After a while, Bucky stumbled back home and checked his watch - 4:37 - before opening the door and walking into the dark apartment.

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When an hour passed after Bucky was supposed to be home, Steve started to panic. He called the precinct and asked frantically if anyone matching Bucky's description had turned up or was brought to a hospital. Even though they said they would let him know, he called every hour. When Bucky finally came in, Steve nearly cried with relief. "Bucky, what the hell happened?" He asked, standing a little too quickly and grimacing at the shot of pain that went through his body.

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Bucky looked towards the source of the outburst with a confused haze and his eyes adjusted to focus on Steve over by the couch. "Steve..." He breathed out like he was surprised to see him. "Went drinking," he said simply and nodded his head causing himself to get dizzy. He started towards the cabinet and pulled out a box of cereal. Sticking his hand in to munch on some, he shrugged at Steve.

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"You went drinking? Fuck, it's almost five in the morning!" Steve whispered harshly at him. "You don't think to tell me first so I didn't sit up worrying that you got tracked down by the asshole who left me to die? Or that you got mugged or something?"

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Putting the cereal box down, Bucky made an offended face and said, "I gotta tell you where I'm gonna be now, Steve?" He gestured down his body with his hands and wobbled a bit. "I'm home now, aren't I? No one killed me." He didn't realize how loud he was actually speaking and he also didn't hear Becca tiptoe into the hallway to listen in on what was going on.

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"No, but you should tell me when you're not coming home right away so nobody worries about where you are. And keep your voice down." Steve was livid and upset but he didn't want to have Bucky wake the girls. "Please, just come to bed."

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"I don't want to," Bucky said with a childish edge. He folded his arms and leaned against the counter. "I don't work tomorrow. Maybe I'll just go back to the bar." He shivered where he stood and touched his chest. He must have slopped some beer on his shirt because it was damp and cold.

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"No, Buck. They're probably closed already," Steve said. He slowly walked over and touched Bucky's arm. "Baby, come to bed with me," Steve tried to tempt. He hadn't ever seen Bucky get this drunk before and he was upset that he couldn't stop him if Bucky refused to stay.

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"I said I don't want to," Bucky snapped back. "You can't make me either because you did the same thing to me earlier over a fucking goddamn sandwich!"
"Not eating when I'm not hungry isn't the same as getting piss drunk and staying out to ungodly hours," Steve growled back.

Bucky slipped nimbly away from Steve and flopped over on the couch. Then he noticed Becca hiding in the shadows of the hall. "The fuck are you doing up?" He asked with curiosity and a gentle sort of drunken annoyance.

Steve's shoulders went stiff when Bucky spoke to Becca the way he did. He didn't know she was even awake until Bucky said something. He rushed over as quickly as his body would take him and he gave her a soft hug. "It's okay, Becca," he said. "I'll make sure he gets some sleep. You go rest up, okay?"

Becca let Steve hug her, but, when he let go, she went over to Bucky saying under her breath, "I know how to do this." She leaned over Bucky and grabbed both his arms. Then she pulled him up and standing and leaned him against her. Bucky didn't even protest, he was so compliant as she started walking him towards his room. Once they were there, she got him inside the shower and pushed him so he was sitting down in the tub bowl.

Steve had followed and was watching Becca as she turned on the water. "Cold!" Bucky yelped and Becca ignored him.

Steve felt awful that Becca had to be the responsible one when he was supposed to be the one looking out for them. Bucky had been doing so good and it made Steve wonder if this was going to be the norm every time they had a fight. He sat down on the closed lid of the toilet and put a hand over his middle as he watched the two with sad eyes. "Becca, are you sure you don't want me to help?"

"No, it's better to just let me," She said and watched Bucky with disappointed eyes. After another minute under the water, she turned it off and started toweling Bucky's long hair dry. "I usually just leave his clothes on and push him into his bed with the towel around him but you can take off his clothes if you'd rather not be next to him all wet and cold." Becca sounded like a professor or a doctor explaining something complex to a group of pupils. Bucky hadn't spoken since the water stopped except inaudible mumbles from underneath the towel.

Steve looked down at her as she explained everything. He hugged her again and did his best to make her feel like someone was watching out for her. "Thank you, Becca," he said softly. "I'll take care of him from here." Steve tilted her head up so she would look at him. "Your brother loves you a lot, okay? And not everyone can handle stress as well as you do. I'm going to do my best so you don't have to see him like this again."
Becca nodded and left Bucky in Steve's care. Bucky got up of his own accord and wrapped himself in the towel like a blanket before slowly inching out of the bathroom and towards his bed. "Sleepy," he muttered and sat on the edge of the bed staring at Steve. "And I'm cold."

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Steve was so angry at Bucky for going out and worrying him sick. And he was even more upset that Becca had to see this all over again. But when Bucky was shivering on the bed looking absolutely pathetic, he couldn't fight him. "Come on," he sighed as he got out some warm pajamas. "Let's get you changed and we can cuddle up."

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Bucky nodded and wiped his face on the towel. "No cuddling. Don't want to hurt you," he said as he started peeling off his clothes. "Got to be gentle with Steve," he added in a haze. Once he was naked, Bucky reached a hand out for Steve to give him the fresh clothes.

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Steve handed Bucky his clothes and sighed softly when he continued to mumble in his drunkenness. "You're allowed to hold me, Baby," Steve said. "You can still be gentle with me."

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Nodding, Bucky got into bed and curled up in a ball near his pillow. He was still shivering as Steve took his time getting in beside him and wrapping himself around Bucky. "Night, Baby." Bucky whispered. "Hope you still love me..." he added with an odd clarity before quickly slipping off to sleep.

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Steve couldn't stretch his body out to completely envelop Bucky like he usually did, but he was at least able to wrap his arms strongly around him for a good cuddle. "I'll always love you, Buck." He fell asleep a while after Bucky did. When morning came, he felt like shit since he didn't get much sleep.

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Bucky took his sweet time in waking up, but once he did, he was met with a raging headache and everything seemed too bright. It didn't feel like his normal hangovers. This felt worse. Like one of his stress headaches on steroids - probably affected by the alcohol the night before. "Jesus, fuck," Bucky gasped and a few tears ran down his face at the pain in his head.

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Despite feeling like shit, Steve got up so he could send the girls off to school and made sure they had everything. He returned to bed and frowned when Bucky looked like he was in such pain. He hobbled over for some medicine and a glass of water so he could wordlessly offer it to Bucky.

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Obediently, Bucky took the medicine and the water and swallowed it quickly. "Feels like my head is splitting open," he said low and quietly to Steve. "Like someone's got a turkey saw in my brain." He reached slowly for Steve's hand and gripped it tight once he had it.
Steve considered not responding to Bucky but he decided that the silent treatment didn't solve anything. "Do you remember anything from last night?" Steve asked as he gave Bucky's hand a squeeze.

Bucky sniffled and his lip quivered a bit as he thought. Of course he remembered. He remembered stumbling home at nearly five in the morning. He remembered yelling and swearing and being a shit to Steve. He remembered Becca and being put in the shower like old times. He remembered getting into bed and not knowing if Steve would even join him. Instead of saying all this, Bucky just asked, "You think I'm a bad guardian, don't you?"

Steve shook his head. "No, I don't think that," he said softly. "I'm very disappointed in you, Bucky. I won't lie about that. But I know you'd give up everything for your sisters." He brushed his thumb over the back of Bucky's hand. "We have to talk about what happened last night and why it came to that point. Because we need to help you through it."

Bucky rolled so he wasn't facing Steve. He could feel himself starting to cry from the pain, hating himself, and knowing that Steve and Becca were both disappointed in him. "Told you I was going to fuck up again," Bucky choked out through the lump in his throat. "Jesus, I promised Becca she'd never have to do that again." He paused and wiped his eyes. "Surprised she didn't slap me like last time. She was probably too fucking tired to be angry."

"And what did I tell you I would do when you messed up, Buck?" Steve asked as he reached out to pet a hand through Bucky's hair. "I told you I would help get you through it. So we are going to have to find a way to make things right with her. You're going to have to apologize and prove to her that you have plans to make sure it won't happen again."

Bucky rolled back, not giving a damn that Steve see him crying. "Becca's not forgiven me after all the time I spent doing okay so she's certainly not going to forgive me after this."

"Well, you have to apologize regardless of whether you think she's going to forgive you or not because she deserves an apology," Steve said.

Bucky sat up too quickly and his head throbbed. "I don't even really remember what it was that pushed me over the edge. I just remember hiding in my room until the girls came back and then leaving. Then I had a shit time at work and thought it was an okay idea to go to a bar."

Steve sighed and made Bucky meet his gaze. "Did it occur to you at all last night that staying out so
late would worry us, Bucky? Why did you have to go to a bar when you had a rough time?"

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"I don't know why I went," Bucky said. "I just wanted too. It's what I used to do." He thought about back when he would go out every other night and come home late. Back then, nothing was okay and he was incredibly self-destructive. He wasn't sure if he did it because he liked it or because he knew that it was reckless and he already felt like dying all the time anyway. He stared up into Steve's eyes and gave a weak pathetic smile. "I'm really sorry, Steve."

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"Bucky, I don't mind if you go out late and get drunk if you let me know. But it's worrisome if you don't give anyone a heads up and you only do it when you're upset." Steve stroked his fingers through Bucky's hair some more. "I was so mad last night. You woke Becca up when she should've been able to have a peaceful sleep." He sighed. "I'll stock the fridge with booze if you want to get drunk. But you can't go back to doing this - for your sisters' sakes."

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Bucky nodded and sniffled. "She's got to be so disappointed in me. She told me the other day that she was proud that I was doing better. She said she thought being with you was helping me. Now I go and fuck up and bring her into it..." Bucky looked off in the corner of the room. "I wish my parents were here."

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"You can make it up to her. She loves you and if you own up to it, it's better than shying away from her." Steve sighed and kissed Bucky's forehead. "I wish your parents were here, too, Baby. It's not fair that you have so much responsibility."

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Bucky melted into the kiss and wished Steve would keep going. He felt terrible and just wanted to be held and loved, but he knew he didn't deserve that. "My headache has calmed down a little now." He wanted to ask Steve if he had taken his medicine but he also didn't want to go into yet another fight.

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Steve saw how Bucky leaned into the kiss so he kissed him a few more times. "I'm glad you're feeling better, Baby." He cupped the sides of his face and looked into his eyes. "No matter what, I'll always love you. Okay, Buck?"

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Bucky nodded and bit his lip absently. "I'm really sorry, Steve." He got off the bed then and started striding out towards the laundry room with purpose. Steve followed curiously and watched as Bucky rummaged in the cabinet for the bottles of whiskey and beer he had hidden. Bucky nodded and headed for the kitchen.

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Steve followed slowly and wasn't sure what to think when Bucky took the booze. "Why don't you take a day out with Becca?" He suggested. "Treat her to something nice that you know she's wanted
to do but hasn't asked for."

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Wordlessly, Bucky screwed off the top of the bottles and unceremoniously poured the contents out into the sink. Then he moved to the cabinet above the fridge and reached as far back as he could to find the triple sec, which he dumped right alongside the whiskey. Next was the wine in the fridge and he lined up the bottles next to the others after the contents were gone. There was one more hiding place behind where he kept the vacuum and it had several tiny bottles of liquor taken from hotel rooms.

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Steve watched with a sense of pride as Bucky poured out everything. When all was said and done, he walked over to hug him from behind. "I'm so proud of you, Baby. I know Becca will be too."

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Bucky nodded and detached Steve so he could turn to face him. "I'm done. No more. I'll go to the places I have tabs and close them this weekend." He didn't consider himself to have a drinking problem necessarily, but he could tell that it was enough of an issue that he was causing hurt to his family.

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Steve smiled and drew him in for a slow kiss. "You're doing the right thing, Bucky. I'm always going to support you, okay?" He hugged him close again. "You don't have to deal with anything alone ever again." Steve wanted Bucky to have a happy life and be able to deal with the bumps along the way.

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"I love you, Steve." Bucky said and kissed him. "Now, can I make you any food?" He asked cautiously and flat. He didn't want to make it sound like he was forcing him to eat if he didn't want to eat but he also wanted to give him the option if there was something Bucky could make for him.

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"Yes. You can make something for me to eat because I'm hungry this time," Steve said and took a seat at the table because he was a little exhausted already. "I didn't mean to get so angry with you yesterday. I wasn't feeling well and didn't want to be forced to eat."

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"We just need to work on communicating better or something because you didn't want to eat but I wanted you to have your medicine," Bucky said and opened the fridge. "Reheated pasta, soup, a sandwich... cereal, pancakes, eggs... or I can go out and get something really fast," he offered and looked to Steve.

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"I had my medicine later when Lilly made me a really...interesting... version of grilled cheese," Steve said. "And I'll have some pasta. I think I can't ever have cereal again after watching how much you guys eat it."
Bucky pulled the pasta out and put it in the microwave. "If you are planning on being a Barnes-Rogers or Rogers-Barnes - I forgot which one we settled on - you're going to have to get used to cereal and like it." He also took the milk from the fridge and made himself a bowl of cereal because all that talk was starting a craving.

"Rogers-Barnes cause it sounds better," Steve said. He pouted as Bucky made himself a bowl of cereal. "Cereal is great if you're uncultured or a child," he teased with a playful smirk.

Bucky stabbed a finger towards his mountain of records. "I'm cultured! Look at those records, Steve." The microwave beeped and Bucky pulled the pasta out and placed it in front of his boyfriend. "I'd say I'm more cultured than you. You haven't seen any of the Star Wars movies!"

"You can't be more cultured than someone who patrols the most culturally diverse city in the states," Steve said and started to eat his food once Bucky put it in front of him. "Can we do something today?"

Bucky sat down and ate his cereal. "Of course we can. What do you want to do?" He asked and smiled at Steve. "I've already dumped the alcohol so that's not an option." He grimaced. It was going to be hard to completely quit drinking. Maybe he could convince Steve to let him have the occasional glass of something.

"Maybe we can catch a movie before the girls get home. Or we can have a nice lunch? I don't want to have to use my wheelchair or crutches so we have to do something that isn't very active," Steve said.

"Sure, you want to go see that new movie? The Terminator - I think that's what it's called. I heard it was really good. It's got good action," Bucky suggested and reached out for one of Steve's hands. "Or we could go to the bookstore. I can pick up something nice for Becca to read and maybe find something that Lilly could like."

Steve paused in thought. "Let's go get something for Becca," he said. "Maybe... I was thinking taking them to a shelter to get a cat or dog. I'll be home for some time, so now would be the best time to housetrain whatever we end up getting."

Bucky smiled sadly and sighed. "We can't afford an animal. I don't make enough and your disability pay is going towards your hospital and medicine bills anyway. The girls will be fine with a couple books and maybe some new records for Lilly. Or I could spring for a VCR player instead."
"But it'll make them happy," Steve said. "We're both smart. We can figure a way to make it work. But... if you don't want an animal in the house, I understand," he said. "Don't want to saddle you on with anything you don't want."

"I don't mind having an animal in the house. It just can't become my responsibility. It has to be their animal and their duty to care for it. That means they feed it and pick up after it and take it out to shit. I'll just buy the supplies." Bucky finished his cereal and got up to wash the bowl. "That still doesn't take care of the two hundred extra dollars a month for rent."

"Well," Steve murmured, shrugging. "It's less than what I had to pay for my own apartment. We can wait and see what my disability pay is like before we make a final decision."

"Your disability pay is going towards your medical bills," Bucky repeated sternly then he sighed not wanting to argue. "You talk with the girls, you get them to agree to take care of it and not bother me about it unless it needs more food, and I'll just pick up some more hours at work. Clint owes me a raise anyway."

"Yeah but if I have anything left over from disability, I can help," Steve said. "I get good healthcare with the police force. Because I got shot on the job, I'll only have to cover the copays." Which added up after all his visits. "We'll talk about it more in a week or so," he said.

"Okay," Bucky conceded. "So are we going to the bookstore? I need to get out of these pajamas." Bucky adjusted and realized he wasn't wearing any underwear. He vaguely remembered Steve giving him clothes to wear so he must have just forgotten any.

"Yeah, a bookstore would be nice," Steve said. "Maybe I can find you a good cookbook. Or we can find something in the culture section," he joked as he went to their bedroom to change.

"You're an ass, Rogers," Bucky said as he stripped. He found a pair of blue jeans that weren't falling apart too badly then he shuffled through the shirts he had. It was fairly chilly outside and getting colder everyday as winter grew on the city. He pulled out a deep navy sweater and an old concert t-shirt.

Steve had to be careful dressing since his wound was just starting to really heal up. Once he was dressed, he put an arm around Bucky's shoulders and pulled him in for a deep kiss. "You look so good in that sweater."
"Thank you." Bucky smiled back and gave him another quick kiss. "And you will look much better with your collar fixed," he added and adjusted Steve's wonky collar. "You sure you aren't taking your crutches?" Bucky asked and pointed to where they were leaning in the corner.

Steve nodded his head. "I'm sure. I don't want to feel like I'm sick or anything. Crutches make me feel so... inept." He opened the door and let Bucky walk out first. "You really are a stickler about neat collars, huh?"

"Well, I don't want to be seen with a guy whose collar isn't folded properly. That's just ridiculous," Bucky said and checked his wallet to see if he had enough money for their outing. He had roughly thirty dollars and figured he could get three books - maybe four - if he picked them carefully.

Steve bumped shoulders with Bucky a few times while they walked. "I was thinking about finding Lilly a book or two on some female soccer stars. What kind of books do you think Becca would want?"

"Adventure books or biographies," Bucky responded. "She's a big fan of Eleanor Roosevelt. Maybe they have a book about her." Once they reached the shop, Bucky held open the door for Steve and trailed in after him. He was immediately overwhelmed with choices and didn't even know where to begin with everything.

Steve decided they would get Becca her stuff first before worrying about Lilly. He asked one of the associates for help, who started to really obviously flirt with him while Steve awkwardly tried to pick out a book without making her feel bad.

Bucky hovered close to Steve and kept eyeing the shop helper trying his best to convey without screaming that Steve was gay and taken. They were staring at the biography section when something caught Bucky's eye and he pulled it triumphantly from the case saying, "Sacagawea!"

Steve jumped a little when Bucky exclaimed some name that Steve hadn't heard since primary school. "You think Becca would like that one?" He asked.

The assistant looked at Bucky and offered, "There's a few books about her that are a little better-rated in the women's history section."

"Steve, she'll fucking love Sacagawea." Bucky nodded enthusiastically and tucked the book under his arm. He turned to the shop helper and thanked her for the advice. "Does women's history also
"Well, they're all historical women, so... probably," she said and led them over. Steve realized that they were going to have a hell of a hard time picking out from the mass of books that Becca would love in this section.

"Fuck me..." Bucky breathed out as he skimmed the books. "Steve, maybe I should just bring Becca here with some money and she can pick out which she wants." He wasn't quite sure if he could manage to pick good ones from the mass in front of him. He knew for sure he was getting a Sacagawea book. Bucky loved her and figured Becca would too.

"I guess we could do that. But I still want to get her something to surprise her at home," he said. Steve had to thumb through a few books before picking one on Eleanor Roosevelt for her. "And something for Lilly?"

"I wonder if they have a history of lacrosse book?" Bucky asked and shrugged at Steve. "Something with pictures because Lilly doesn't like reading a lot. Or we could just get her some snacks on the way home. Something sweet and sugary that I don't normally let her have."

"I think we should give her a book," Steve said. "So that way she doesn't feel like she's getting something less than Becca, you know?" He didn't want her to consider running away again or that she was dead weight.

"Clearly, you don't know the value of sugary treats to Lilly," Bucky said as he scanned the room for a sign pointing to a sports section. "Found it. I'm sure there is something in there for her." They made their way over to the sports section and Steve started looking through the books as Bucky watched his ass and held Becca's books.

Steve smiled and chuckled a bit. "Still, I don't want to risk it. Candy is cheap and we can pick it up any day." Steve braced himself against the bookshelf a few times when it became a bit much to stand for so long. But ultimately he found a book he knew Lilly would love. "Got it!"

"What is it?" Bucky asked, eyes still locked on Steve's body. He really missed fucking Steve. It had been a while and he was getting incredibly horny and worked up as the days went on. But he also didn't want to hurt Steve at all and that meant no sexual shenanigans.

"Check it out. A history of lacrosse, and it's written by a woman," Steve said as he proudly showed it
off to Bucky. "Look, it even has big text and plenty of pictures. It was like this book was made for her."

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Bucky beamed at his boyfriend. "Perfect, nice find, Steve." He looked at the two they had for Becca and the one they had for Lilly. "Should we find another something for her, too? Maybe a sports calendar?" He didn't really want to give Becca two books and only one to Lilly.

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"You think she would like that?" Steve asked. "What about a fancy water bottle like the one the Long Island kids have? I think she was eyeing one of them but didn't want to ask you to spend money on something for once."

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"I don't even know where to find shit like that." Bucky shrugged. "But I guess we can try to get her a fancy water bottle." He gingerly took the book from Steve and added it to the pile he had. "Are we good to buy these and head out?"

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"Yeah let's go," Steve said and headed to the counter. "I'll pay." He handed the cashier some money and waited for his change.

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Bucky shot Steve a glare and said through gritted teeth, "Fine." He was going to argue that Steve was hurt and wasn't working but he knew that Steve was going to bring up the disability pay again. He took the bag gratefully from the shop helper and let Steve lead the way out.

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Steve frowned when Bucky gave him that glare. "Buck," he said softly. "It isn’t because I don't think you can pay for it yourself. It's because I love them, too, and I want to be able to spoil them just as much as you."

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"Well, if you're getting them an animal, then I should get them these," Bucky said. "Because I'm having no part in getting the animal. Just the supplies." Bucky loved animals, especially kittens and puppies, but he couldn't let himself get attached to whatever they brought home cause he would end up taking care of it then.

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"Well, I was thinking the animal should be from the both of us, even if all you're doing is getting the supplies. That's too big of a thing for me to take all the credit for," Steve said. He knew the girls would have a hard time getting mad at Bucky for a while if he had a hand in them getting a pet.

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"I'm not picking it out," Bucky conceded but secretly hoped they would get a little fluff ball kitten or a rescue dog. "And I'm not training it. And if it pees on the carpet, I'm not cleaning it up. And the
girls have to keep up on its vaccines and stuff. I won't keep track." Bucky continued to list off various things that could go wrong and how he was decidedly not going to be involved.

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"Baby," Steve said softly so nobody else would hear. "I know all that. But wouldn't it be great to tell them together that we're going to a rescue and letting them pick out a pet?" Steve asked. "You don't have to choose it. Just tell them with me."

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Bucky stopped in his tracks and looked at Steve. He whispered, "Wish I could kiss you right now." Then he let out a defeated sigh. "Just tell me what to say and I'll say it. This animal's already causing me way too much trouble. You sure some books and a fancy water bottle isn't enough?"

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"We give them the books and water bottle today and we wait a few days to tell them about the pet," Steve said. He walked inside one of the stores and immediately found the bottle he'd been talking about. "They're going to be so excited."

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"And you say I'm like a dad." Bucky crossed his arms and waited next to Steve as he paid. They were certainly one of the strangest parental pairs that Bucky had ever seen. An injured gay cop and a beat down hippie with a giant ass record collection. They were pretty unique.

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"Well, you are," Steve pointed out as he paid and gave Bucky a happy smile as they walked out. I've always wanted to be a parent. Having kids now is obviously out of the question, so I got to make the most of watching Lilly and Becca grow up."

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Bucky's face wrinkled up in a pout. "I'd raise a baby with you if we were allowed one," he said in a mumble. No one would let Bucky adopt a baby while he still had two minors in his care and no one would give a baby to Steve now that his whole precinct knew he was gay and he also officially lived with a man. It wasn't very fair. If Steve had always wanted to be a dad and have kids then he should be allowed to. Then, Bucky just felt like shit. If Steve were straight he could have that wish. But being with Bucky prevented it.

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Steve stopped dead in his tracks. "You would?" He asked softly. He knew that it was practically impossible since no one would let a gay couple adopt. But he thought that Bucky wouldn't have any interest in raising another kid after suddenly having to bring up his sisters. Steve's eyes got all soft and lovesick. He wished he could sweep Bucky off his feet right now, but he was injured and they were in public.

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"Yeah," Bucky shrugged out a response. "But we aren't allowed to anyway." He frowned and clenched his jaw in thought. They were out in the open but no one seemed to be paying them any mind. "If you weren't with me you could have a baby," He said slowly and sadly. "You'd get to be a
Steve gave Bucky a concerned frown. "So what if I could? If I'm not with you, it wouldn't be worth it. I wouldn't trade our relationship for anything in the world, Bucky." He didn't want Bucky to feel like he was holding Steve back at all.

Bucky just turned and started walking towards their place again. He was incredibly angry at himself and the world. If only everyone would get their heads out of their asses and not give a shit if two men or two women raised a child together or got married or grew old together or held hands or fought for their rights. He shook his head at the thought and slowed his pace so Steve could catch up.

"Buck-" Steve started, about to remind him that he couldn't walk so fast. When he caught up, he hesitated and then on a whim planted a firm kiss on his cheek. If anyone saw, they were too busy going about their day to voice any concern. "I love you."

Bucky huffed out air quickly in surprise like he was out of breath. "What... Steve?" He said and touched his cheek where he was kissed. "Let's get back home. I want to hold you really badly and tell you how sorry I am that I can't give you a child."

Steve's heart pounded nervously in his chest, but he wanted to show Bucky that he wasn't ashamed and didn't regret that they were together. When they got back to the apartment, he pulled Bucky gently into a hug. "You have nothing to be sorry for."

Bucky leaned into Steve gently and rested his head against his shoulder. "But you said you've always wanted to be a dad. And I can't give that to you." Bucky's head was starting to hurt and he really wanted something alcoholic to drink. He didn't know what else to do except hold Steve to him and try not to let himself get too upset.

"So?" Steve said. "Life doesn't always work out the way we thought it would. I have a bigger family now than I've ever had. That counts for something. And, Baby, you make me so happy." He kissed the top of Bucky's head. "You take such good care of me."

Bucky reached a hand up to Steve's cheek and he pulled him in for an open mouthed kiss. "I love you so much, Steve. And if they ever let us adopt a baby, let's fucking do it." He smiled weakly and rubbed his thumb over Steve's cheek. "I really miss this."

Steve was so happy to know that Bucky was willing to adopt a kid. He knew it wouldn't be for a
while, both because they had to wait for Lilly and Becca to grow up and because nobody now
would let them adopt. Steve's eyes lit up and he smiled brightly at Bucky. "Let's lay down in bed,"
he said. "And touch each other everywhere."

---

Bucky groaned and said, "Okay, but we have to be gentle. Like really gentle. You're still hurt and I
don't want to go to the doctor and have to explain how you injured yourself again." He took Steve's
hand and sent a short prayer to Steve's god that he would heal quickly and they could fuck again. He
wasn't sure Steve's god would take to kindly to that request but he wanted to give it a try.

---

Steve rolled his eyes. "I'm not made out of glass. And you can barely see the wound anymore." It
wasn't entirely true and there was plenty of internal damage still. He pulled Bucky into the bedroom
and carefully laid down on the bed. "I can't stop thinking about making you come again."

---

"Steve, you know I want to jump your bones and fuck the lights out of you just about every day."
Bucky said, "It was getting so bad lately I considered taking Phillip out of closet and playing with
him. But I knew you'd get all mad at me." Bucky stroked a hand down Steve's chest.

---

Steve gave Bucky a grumpy look at the mention of his dildo. "You could have just asked me to fist
you again," he said bluntly. "I didn't get shot in the arm." He slowly took off Bucky's sweater and
began to kiss his neck.

---

"It still would have been too vigorous for your back anyway." Bucky's breath picked up and he let
Steve start stripping him down and kissing whatever was available.

---

"I could have just kept my hand there and let you do all the work," Steve joked. He got Bucky's
torso bare and started to bite gently at his nipples.

---

"Steve, I love you so much and I'm sorry again about worrying you and staying out late," Bucky
pleaded and whined at Steve's touch.

---

"I know, Baby, I know," Steve said. "I've already forgiven you." He gently rubbed a hand down
Bucky's chest and squeezed at his hips and thigh.

---

Bucky went quiet and felt Steve all over him. He really did miss this. Part of him keep saying that he
should tell Steve to be more careful with himself but he also knew Steve wouldn't listen to him at all.
Bucky hummed low and gratefully as Steve licked and bit his nipples.
Steve took Bucky's pants off and rubbed his palm over his dick and made a quiet, aroused sound. "Missed your dick," he murmured. "Can I suck it? I promise I'll go easy."

---

Bucky nodded and gasped. "Yeah, only if you go easy on yourself, Baby." He adjusted on the bed and ran a hand through his hair. It had been a while since they did this at all and Bucky was worried he was going to last only about a minute with Steve on him before he was coming all over himself.

---

Steve nuzzled at Bucky's stomach and kissed down to his cock. He licked a long stripe up the shaft and took the tip into his mouth, pressing the flat of his tongue against the head of Bucky's cock and then he started to slowly bob his head.

---

Bucky let out a tight gasp when Steve started to suck him off and his hand flew to Steve's head to gently hold him. "I missed this so much," he said with lust in his voice. Today had started out terrible and quickly made itself better.

---

Steve moaned low. God, he was so fucking hard already. He missed being able to fool around with Bucky just because they could. Faintly, he could hear the sound of the girls coming home from school. He groaned and started to rush a little, working his tongue faster over the underside of Bucky's cock.

---

Bucky didn't hear the shuffling of his sisters in the apartment and he let out a probably louder than appropriate noise when Steve sped up his tongue. He really wasn't going to last very long with Steve today. He hadn't been touched like this from him in a while. It only took a few more seconds before he was tapping Steve's arm trying to convey that he was about to come.

---

Steve swatted Bucky's hip lightly to scold him for being so loud. He fucked his mouth on Bucky's dick until he was coming down Steve's throat. He swallowed him readily and licked the tip clean before pulling off. "Christ, that was good."

---

Bucky nodded slowly with eyes closed and laid there for a few seconds. "You feel okay? Not hurting at all?" He checked. Then he heard the girls. There was faint discussion coming from the kitchen and Bucky sat up. He looked at Steve's dick and whined because he probably didn't have time to take care of it. Steve would have to do it himself while he went out to the girls.

---

"I'm fine," Steve said as he wiped his mouth. He laid down and looked lazily up at Bucky. "I'm fairly certain this won't be the last time I get an erection," he said. "I'll be out in a few minutes." Steve reached into his pants and started to stroke himself.
Bucky kissed him quickly and slipped his clothes back on as best he could before scampering out of their room to meet the girls. Becca was rummaging around in the trash and Lilly was hovering over her curiously. When Bucky came over to see what they were doing, Becca was angrily taking the empty bottles out of the bin and lining them up on the counter. When Bucky asked what she was doing, Becca turned on him quickly and snarled, "Is this what you've been doing all day? Drinking more?"

---

Steve froze when he heard Becca and Bucky arguing back and forth. It hurt a little that Bucky was getting blamed for something he didn't do, but also that the first thing she did was go through the garbage. He groaned as he shoved on a thick pair of jeans that would hide his boner and he slowly made his way into the kitchen. "Becca - Jesus, Becs, he dumped it all. It's okay."

---

Becca looked from Steve to Bucky still angry as all get out. She pointed at her brother, "Is that true?"

Bucky nodded quickly and said, "Yes, that's what I've been trying to tell you. I quit. No more alcohol - ever. I dumped it down the sink. You can smell my breath if you want." He was trying his best not to yell. He really wished they could have had this conversation in a calmer setting maybe after giving out their presents.

---

Steve walked over and put a hand on Becca's shoulder. "I didn't even have to ask him, Kiddo. We had a talk about what happened last night and Bucky went right to pouring everything out," he said. Steve gave her shoulder a little squeeze. "Have a seat on the couch. We can't have you angry when you're opening up the cool stuff we got you - both of you."

---

Lilly perked up then and said, "Presents?" with a wide grin. Becca went back to being quiet and skeptical but she followed Lilly over to the couch anyway. Bucky still felt like shit. Becca had no faith in him at all and he was going to have to do a lot to prove he could be trusted again. And some presents and a puppy or kitten weren't going to fix that.

---

Steve nodded his head. He knew this wasn't going to remedy Becca's trust issues with Bucky, but this was still something to show that they loved them. He got the two bags - one with Becca's books and one with Lilly's book and water bottle. He kissed Bucky's cheek and both he and Bucky handed the girls their gifts.

---

Lilly tore into the bag and pulled out her presents as Becca slowly and methodically reached in for hers. Lilly held her water bottle up in triumph and squeaked and Becca simply stared at the books before saying, "Dad loved Sacagawea," with a faint smile.

---

Steve was happy that they liked their gifts. "Bucky picked that one out for you," he said to Becca. "We were having a hard time figuring which ones you would like. They had a whole wall from
ceiling to floor of books like that."

---

Becca looked up at Steve and actually nodded to him in thanks. "Can we go back there sometime?" She asked and held her books to her chest.

Bucky immediately nodded and said, "Of course. Once you finish those two we can go get you more." He smiled at her and held out his arms for a hug. Becca hesitated but when Lilly jumped up and hugged Bucky, she joined, followed closely by Steve.

---

Steve grinned happily when Becca hugged her brother. He joined in on the group hug and kissed the top of all of their heads. "I love you all so much," he said softly. "I'm glad I get to spend more time with all of you." He let go and sat down on the couch. "So do you like Sacagawea because your dad did, too?"

---

Bucky nodded and said, "When we went on those fishing trips he always had a new book and a new story to tell me. One of his favorites to tell was hers." He sat in the chair across from the couch and pulled Lilly onto his lap and hugged her close.

---

Steve gave Bucky a warm look and carefully wrapped a blanket around him to keep himself warm. "He sounded pretty neat. Complete opposite of my dad - he was loud from what my mom tells me of him."

---

Bucky held Lilly close and kissed her head. He thought about his parents and missed them terribly. He looked up to Steve with gentle loving eyes and asked, "Do you think we should tell them about the animal now or later?"

Lilly whipped her head around to stare at Bucky. "What animal?"

---

Jesus, Lilly was on the ball when it came to stuff she wanted. "Yeah, we saw a pigeon stealing some lady's purse on the way back," Steve said, clearly lying. Lilly was unlikely to let it go, so he gave Bucky a small nod to let him know he could go ahead.

---

Bucky smiled and gave Lilly a squeeze. "Steve was thinking we could get you two a little rescue animal from the shelter to have as your very own." At Lilly's automatic yelping and Becca's surprised gasp, Bucky added hastily, "There are some rules! Steve, what are the rules?"

---

Steve watched the girls fondly. "Yes, rules. You two have to be the ones to take care of it. You have to clean up after it and schedule vet appointments if it's sick. Bucky is only going to pay for the supplies. I can help you train it since I'm here but the rest is up to you."
Becca nodded along with a serious expression and Lilly insisted that she could handle that. Bucky knew she couldn't. It would probably end up being all Becca. "Does that sound fair to the both of you?" Bucky asked and poked Lilly in the side. "Can you handle being in charge of it?"

Lilly rolled her eyes and insisted that she would help out. Bucky pushed her gently off his lap so he could get up saying that he needed a thicker sweater and headed towards his room. Becca followed after him. Clearly, she wanted to talk.

Steve watched Bucky and Becca head out to the other room. He reached out to ruffle up Lilly's hair. "You like your book, Kiddo? Bucky was the one who suggested you would like something like that."

Lilly smiled excitedly, "Yeah, I do! And I like the water bottle a lot. It's like the one the other guys on my team have." She paused then and looked towards Bucky's room. "Becca's really mad at Bucky. She told me he was out drinking last night. Don't know what she's saying in there now but she had some strong words about it on the way to school this morning."

"Your sister has a right to be mad," Steve said softly. "Your brother is doing his best but sometimes he messes up just like any of us. Becca is allowed to be upset. I don't like that she's badmouthing him, though."

Lilly adjusted and faced Steve. Nervously tugging on her shirtsleeve, she leaned into Steve slightly and asked, "Can I tell you something you can't tell Bucky?"

He hesitated at her question but nodded. "Alright. I won't tell him, but you should really tell him eventually whatever you're about to say to me."

"It's nothing like that..." Lilly started. "Becca's worried that Bucky's going to get drunk and try to overdose again like he did a few years ago. She thought he was doing better with you but then he came home drunk last night and she doesn't know what to think now."

Steve's eyes went wide. "He tried to overdose?" He hissed in a low voice. How could he - with his sisters in need of him? Steve knew that Bucky didn't handle stress in the best way but the girls already lost their parents. "Lilly, you can tell her that I'm watching over him now. And he may slip off the wagon now and again, but you guys don't have to worry, alright?"
Lilly went pale and looked sheepish. "Steve, I - I'm sorry. I thought you knew about that. I figured he would have told you." She pulled her hair out of its tie and tucked it behind her ears. "It was just after our parents died and our grandma was still alive. He'd just left school and started at the record shop." Lilly grabbed Steve's arm harshly. "Don't tell Bucky I told you about this. I wouldn't have said anything if I'd known you hadn't heard about it already."

---

Steve was so angry and sad on Bucky's behalf. He wanted to cry but he couldn't do it in front of Lilly or else she would feel even worse. "I won't tell him you said anything," Steve promised. He gave her a hug. "I'm glad you and your sister are looking out for your brother." He paused and then asked, "Is anything about this situation bothering you?"

---

Lilly looked down at her lap and chewed her lip. "Don't like it when the two of them fight. It's usually just quiet rage and dirty looks for a couple days but I still don't like it. Guess I don't mind if he drinks but Becca doesn't let me see him when he comes home drunk anyway so I don't know."

---

"Becca is headstrong and Bucky is...well, Bucky," Steve said. "Sometimes that's just how things go, but you've got me to talk to now if things aren't going so well between them." He tickled her side. "And soon you'll have a little animal friend, too."

---

Lilly giggled at Steve and gave him a quick hug before Becca popped out of Bucky's room with Bucky following close behind. They came to stand in front of the couch and Bucky looked to Steve and said, "Becca has decided that you have to come with me when I close my tabs at the bars." He put his hands in his pockets. "Even though I can handle it on my own, I told her you would join me."

---

Steve understood Becca's mistrust and didn't want to make a scene of it. "Sure," he said. "Even though you're able to do it, I think it's worth it to make Becca feel confident that it's all done." He slowly stood and wrapped Bucky up in a tight hug. He gave him an intense look and tried to think what Bucky must have been thinking when he tried to overdose, "I love you."

---

Bucky hugged him back and noticed Lilly looking away guiltily but he didn't say anything. "Becca also said she gets to pick dinner tonight."

"I want cereal, Steve," Becca said and crossed her arms. "I miss cereal."

---

"Cereal!" Steve exclaimed. "Bucky's the one that made you mad. Why do I have to suffer?" he said dramatically, but he did give in fairly quickly because he knew that Becca had to deal with a lot between last night and today and she deserved a break.

---

"Babe, you still have some soup in there I think." Bucky kissed him quickly and gave him a pout.
pretending that he cared that Steve didn't want cereal for dinner. Lilly grabbed onto Becca's arm and began asking a million questions like what kind of animal should they get and what are they going to name it and what color should it be?

---

Once Becca and Lilly were distracted, Steve sat Bucky down and cuddled up to him. He wrapped an arm around his waist and laid his head on his shoulder. "How're you feeling, Baby?"

---

"Little overwhelmed, but otherwise fine." Bucky kissed Steve's head. "Not drinking is going to be tough. I really like drinking. But I have to do it - for all of you." He held Steve close to him and ran a hand up and down his arm. He loved having Steve here and he was so glad that they at least could be open and affectionate in their own home.

---

Steve kissed Bucky's jaw. "I know it's a big step and I'm real proud of you." Steve laced their fingers together. "Just promise me something, okay? No matter how hard it gets, let me help. I don't want you to ever have to face something alone or feel like there's no way out."

---

Bucky smiled weakly and nodded. "Okay, I promise, Babe," he said and kissed Steve. "Man, I'm so tired. I think after dinner we should go to bed and just crash. I don't even want to change into pajamas. Just wiggle under the covers in this."

---

"Whatever we do now, we get to do together." Steve drew him in for a slow kiss. "I'm alright with that. But I can change you into pajamas. Or maybe just leave you naked," Steve purred.

---

Bucky nipped at Steve's lips and whispered back, "I still haven't helped you take care of something important yet today." He nodded down towards Steve's crotch. "Feel bad for not lending you a hand."

---

Steve blushed at the forwardness. "You won't hear me complain," he said. He smiled as he looked up into Bucky's eyes. "My life is better now that you're in it, don't ever forget that. No matter how much Becca yells at you."

---

"Oh, just you wait until she gets pissed off at you, Stevie." Bucky chuckled. "I don't know if you'll be able to handle it."

---

"I'll probably cry," Steve said honestly. Right now, he was just honored that she trusted him with Bucky's sobriety.

After food and nighttime duties were taken care of, Steve carefully made his way back to the room. It
was a long day and he didn't want to admit how much his back was aching. "I'm so ready to not get up for hours."

---

Bucky was already stripped down to his skin and under the blankets by the time Steve got to their room. His eyes were closed and he hummed low to himself when Steve approached. "I work the early shift tomorrow so I'll see the girls off to school and I'll be back home around noon or one."

---

Steve laid down on his side and placed his hand on Bucky's stomach. "Sounds good. I think I'm going to need to sleep in. Today really wore me out," he huffed. "It was nice spending it all with you, though."

---

"It didn't start out great what with the hangover and the headache and dumping my booze and feeling like world's worst brother, but it did get a lot better." Bucky pulled Steve's hand up his chest so he was holding it just over his heart. He also backed up his body so he was nestled against Steve as the little spoon.

---

"The day got better because you chose to make a difference for yourself and your sisters. That's pretty admirable," Steve said with an adoring smile. "Maybe one of these days Becca will be as proud of you as I am right now."
Today was officially the day. They were getting their animal after school and bringing it back to its new home. Bucky had already signed the new contract with the landlord agreeing to pay the extra money every month to keep a pet inside and Becca had already set up a little spot in the kitchen for its food and water. They still weren’t sure if they were going to get a dog or a cat but Lilly was far too ecstatic about all of it to care one way or the other.

---

Steve was excited for the girls. He loved animals but he was happier that they would have something to keep them company that was theirs. "Alright, you guys, ready to go? Any idea what you two are going to end up picking? How about a big, ugly, hairless cat?"

---

"I'd be fine with that," Becca said, but Lilly pulled a horrified face.

Bucky reluctantly went with them to the shelter even though he vowed he would have nothing to do with the animal and didn't want to get attached to it. "Just so long as it's not too big, whatever you get."

---

When they arrived at the shelter, Lilly went nuts going to all the cages to see which animals were the fluffiest and cutest. Becca was a bit more reserved but she was clearly excited. "Look at them," Steve said to Bucky fondly. "They are so happy, Bucky."

---

Bucky watched Steve watching his sisters and he felt a rush of pride and love and family come over him. He really wanted to hold Steve's hand and tell him that it was so cute how much he loved Becca and Lilly. "Hey," he nudged Steve, "Thanks for convincing me to do this for them."

---

"You're welcome. You're going to end up getting attached to this animal no matter what, though. Cause you're a big sap," Steve accused with a playful grin. "What do you think they're going to end up picking out?"

---

"Becca's going to want the saddest looking cat in this place and Lilly will go for the fluffiest dog." Bucky pointed at the two of them as they roamed down the line of crates. "Then there will be a fight and you'll get to make the decision so it's not on me."

---

As if on cue, both girls came up to them to plead their case - Becca had this big, pathetic-looking cat with a lazy eye and Lilly held a squirming fluffball of a puppy in her arms. "Bucky, which do you think is cuter?" Lilly asked.
"Nope," Bucky said and jabbed a thumb towards Steve. "He's going to help you train it so he's got to help you pick." He crossed his arms and gave a definitive nod to Steve. He wasn't going to budge on this.

---

Steve looked nervously at the two girls, who he suddenly couldn't say no to. Bucky would kill him if they got both. "Well, how about you both try playing with the other animal first to see if you like it."

---

"Sounds like a good idea," Bucky said. "Steve and I are going to go sit on that bench while you two try to make the decision, okay?" He led Steve to an old bench in the corner of the room and sat down keeping on eye on the girls.

---

The girls only needed about ten minutes to make their decision. Becca came over holding the cat in her arms but there was a huge wet spot on her shirt. Even though they picked her choice of pet, she still looked sour. "The puppy peed on her," Lilly explained. There was no convincing Becca to have the dog when that happened.

---

"So, you are going with the cat, then?" Bucky asked and scratched behind its little ears. He was going to regret this pretty soon once he got attached to those big sad eyes. "I'll go sign the adoptions papers while you pick out some supplies and toys, okay?"

---

They both nodded. The cat bumped his head lightly against Bucky's palm as soon as he pet him. Lilly rushed over to find a cute collar and leash, determined that if she wasn't getting a dog, she was going to make sure the cat would take walks with her. "You're doing a good thing, Bucky," Steve said. "And you know you're going to end up wanting it to sleep in our bed."

---

Bucky let out a long sigh and looked from the girls to Steve. "That thing is too cute. I think they chose it on purpose to try to win me over on this whole thing." After the adoption papers were signed and they had the cat in a little carrier and the toys and supplies in bags, they all headed back to the apartment to introduce the little guy to its new home.

---

The cat meowed softly when it was brought outside but seemed to be excited that it was out of the shelter. "Have you girls thought up a name for it yet?"

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Lilly mumbled, "I said it should be Lilly Junior but Becca says that's a stupid name."

Bucky grabbed Lilly and pulled her into a side hug. "It's also a boy cat, Lil."

"Boys can be named after flowers, too," Lilly huffed and pouted. "Lilly Junior is a good name."
"We should just call it Lilly so everyone has to guess whether or not we're talking about the cat or the other animal named Lilly," Steve teased.

Becca made a grumpy sound. "It's still a dumb name for a boy cat."

---

"I like Thunder. Or Doom," Bucky offered. "Or Hurricane. Oh! Hurricane the Cat! Doesn't that sound fucking amazing?" Bucky eyed the cat again and realized with shame that he was already horribly enamored with the little beast. And Steve was probably right; he probably would want to have it sleep in his bed.

---

"What about Clash?" Steve suggested. "It kind of sounds like the noises you hear in a hurricane and you all like The Clash so much."

Becca peered into the cage. "He's too fluffy for a name like that. We need to name him something refined."

---

"Fuck refined!" Bucky said. "Clash is a perfect name." But he shut up when Becca gave him a glare that said 'his name will be refined, dammit'. Bucky couldn't really think of any classier names for such a pathetic ratty cat except something snooty like 'Winston'.

---

Steve loved that Bucky was already getting so wrapped up in the new family pet. "Don't worry, Buck. No matter what Becca names him, he will always be Clash Hurricane Rogers-Barnes to us."

---

Becca and Lilly gave them both a quizzical look and Becca asked, "When was Rogers-Barnes decided on?"

Lilly piped up with, "Am I Lilly Rogers-Barnes now?" and she looked down at herself like she expected some grand change to have occurred in her.

---

Steve blushed deeply. "Um... I mean, it's not like we could ever change our names to it," He said. "But Bucky and I were just speculating whose name is first in the hyphen. I think Rogers-Barnes sounds better than Barnes-Rogers."

---

"You just wanted to be first," Becca decided with a curt nod. "Barnes-Rogers definitely sounds better."

Bucky flicked her on the top of the head. "Steve likes it with ‘Rogers’ first so that's what it is. And no, Lil, you are still just a Barnes." He also thought about the imaginary baby that they had discussed the potential of adopting. He hoped that one day soon they could have a Baby Rogers-Barnes officially.  

---
"No, it sounds better and I saved the best for last," Steve defended; playfully flicking Becca's shoulder right after Bucky flicked her head. He sighed happily and once they got to the apartment, he opened the door for all of them. "Welcome home, Destroyer," Steve said to the cat, purposely calling him an obnoxious name to annoy Becca.

---

"It's not Destroyer," Becca responded as she walked into the apartment. Bucky locked the door behind them and watched Becca gingerly place the carrier in the middle of the living room and open the door. The cat didn't move an inch, it simply stared at them and occasionally made a sad little meow.

---

"Give Ripper some time to adjust to his new home. I'm sure he will be looking for cuddles in no time," Steve wrapped an arm around Bucky's waist. "I love you," he said sweetly. "Can I have a kiss?"

---

Bucky held Steve and scrunched up his face, "Um... no," he said like a brat. But he caved when Steve started to tickle him and he couldn't do anything about it. "Okay, fine, fine." He kissed Steve lightly and smiled into it. "Love you, too."

---

The cat slowly came out of the cage and sniffed at Becca's feet. He looked up at her with those big eyes and jumped up into her arms as she bent down to pick him up. "Oh, look at him."

---

"Do you have a name?" Bucky asked the cat and pet its head. "Because I'm fine with calling you 'Cat' if you don't, but I think a name would be nice." He took a little toy out of the bag and dangled it in front of the cat so it could bat at it happily.

---

"I'm still thinking about it," Becca said.

Lilly watched with mild jealousy as her siblings played with their cat. "Well, how about you let me hold him while you're thinking about it?" Lilly demanded.

---

Becca handed the cat off to Lilly and she gripped him close and beamed at his little face. "Lilly Junior is still available," she said and shot Becca a pleading look.

"Becca wants a fancy name like Serge or Morton or Raphael or Karsten," Bucky listed off names in hopes that one fancy name would catch Becca's attention and she would pick it for the cat.

---

"Raphael works," Becca said, which made Lilly scrunch her nose up in utter distaste.

"Ew, gross. Why?" She complained.
Becca kissed the cat's head. "I like it even more now."

---

Bucky's face lit up. "Finally, okay! Raphael it is! Hello little Raphael," he said to the cat and slipped his hand into Steve's. He gave him a pleased look and leaned into him. He really was glad that they could do this for the girls. And he was glad Steve convinced him of it.

---

Steve kissed Bucky's temple. "Love you," he said again to him. The cat wiggled a little to get down so he could go explore his new home. "I've never had a pet before," Steve admitted. "I used to be extremely allergic."

---

Bucky and Becca both shot Steve a concerned look and Bucky asked, "You sure you'll be fine around Raphael?" He squeezed Steve's hand and searched his face for any signs of an allergic reaction like watery eyes or red skin but found nothing.

---

Steve nodded his head. "Yeah, when I became an adult, I got a lot healthier and I wasn't allergic to a lot of stuff anymore," he said. "Have I ever shown you pictures of when I was a kid?"

---

"No, you haven't," Bucky said curiously. "I'm betting you were adorable, though."

Lilly laughed to herself and Becca smiled at her and said, "We've seen Steve's childhood photos. Miss Sarah showed them to us one time."

---

Steve turned to Becca and ruffled her hair. "She did, huh? My mom still loves to embarrass me, it seems." He looked back to Bucky and shrugged, "I guess I could be called adorable. I was also skinny and small," he said.

---

"Why? How tiny were you?" Bucky asked and poked Steve's muscular arm and abs. "Because you're pretty damn big now, Babe. Can't imagine you as little at all." He thought about himself as a kid and how he really didn't have many childhood photos of himself anywhere. He kept a lot of his parents and his sisters but he trashed several dozens of his own.

---

"Just you wait..." Steve went rummaging through their bedroom for a photo album and found a picture from when he was about fourteen and came back to Bucky. He was stick thin and short next to his mom wearing clothes that were too big for him. "Have a look."

---

"Jesus, Steve!" Bucky snatched the picture up. "You're so cute and small. How old were you? Are those your clothes or someone else's? They look way too big on you." Bucky grabbed for Steve's hand and held it tight and he hummed happily while looking at the tiny Steve.
Steve blushed. "Fourteen," he said. "Those were my dad's clothes cause my Ma couldn't afford anything at the time." They'd been ridiculously poor for a while because his mom had to stay home all the time to take care of her sick son.

"I was right, though, you were adorable. I mean, you still are, of course, but look at you," Bucky said and stared at the photo. He was going to frame this and put it next to the one of his parents' wedding. "Hey," Bucky looked up at Steve. "We need a new family picture of the four of us." Raphael meowed at them from the ground. "I mean the five of us."

Steve gasped at the suggestion. "Oh my god, yes, we do." He was grinning from ear to ear and was even getting a little teary-eyed. It wasn't like he felt like he wasn't part of the family, but this was the first picture they would all have together. "I'm sure my mom will take one."

Bucky smiled warmly at Steve and hugged him close. "Sounds like a plan, then." He was glad Steve was so excited for it. He wasn't sure if it would mean that much to him or not. "We can do that soon, then. And I'll get a nice frame for it too." He turned to his sisters. "Does that sound good to you two?"

Becca eyed Steve for a few moments and then looked back at Bucky. By this point she was pretty convinced that Steve was in it for the long haul but having a 'family' portrait made it start to get a little too real. "We're not taking the one of mom and dad down, right?"

"No, god, of course not," Bucky said and gripped Becca's shoulders. "Never. We can hang it underneath that one. Mom and Dad aren't going anywhere. I promise." He gave her a quick kiss to the top of her head and looked to Steve for some help.

As excited as he had been to take a picture all together, Steve didn't want Becca to feel like he was trying to replace the family they used to have. "It's okay if you don't want to take the picture together, Becca," he said softly. "You don't have to give an explanation."

Becca nodded and looked over to the kitchen where their family picture was hanging. "It's okay. I don't mind it," she conceded and gave Steve a quick look. "If you're in our family now I guess we do need a new picture. And Mom and Dad won't mind sharing the space on the wall."

Steve gave her a hug. "Best future sister-in-law ever. Sorry, Lilly. You got to wait to be my favorite," he chuckled. Raphael came up to Bucky and batted at his shoelaces since they were coming undone. "What do you guys want me to make for dinner that isn't cereal?"
Bucky gently picked up the cat and held him close. He really was too cute for words and those eyes were so sad. "I'd be okay with chicken and noodles of some sort." He offered and scratched the cat's head. "Or some burritos." His stomach growled and he looked to his sisters. "Chicken, Lilly?"

"Chicken," Lilly agreed. "And Mac and cheese." It was a strange combo but Steve would do it. He gave them all a kiss and then started on dinner. "I thought you said you didn't want to have anything to do with the cat, Bucky," Lilly teased.

Bucky was still holding Raphael and he looked up from staring into his eyes. "Hmm? No, I'm not doing anything. I'm just holding the little guy. He's so sad looking." He handed him off to Lilly and went to help Steve make food. And by helping, he hugged him from behind and moved with him as he went around the kitchen.

Steve smiled and looked back at Bucky with a happy expression. "Hello, Mr. Rogers-Barnes," he hummed. "I can't wait to take that family picture. Can we all have a matching theme? Like the same sweater or something like that?"

"No, Steve, we can't match," Bucky answered and kissed his shoulder. "We can all wear blue or something like that." He detached from Steve and opened the fridge mumbled something about really wanting some wine just about now. Instead, he found some lemonade and decided that would have to be good enough.

"Why not? It'd be adorable. I bet I could even make something for Raphael so he would match." Bucky would get a kick out of watching Steve attempt to dress the cat, he was sure.

"Can you even sew?" Bucky asked and drank his lemonade with a sour expression on his face to match the taste of the drink.

"A little," Steve said. "Had to mend a lot of my clothes when they ripped and Ma was too tired to do it." He ran his fingers through Bucky's hair. "And I know I've said it already, but I'm proud that you're going sober for your sisters, Bucky."

"It's really difficult and all I want right now is some vodka or something. Doesn't that sound perfect, Babe?" Bucky really was having a hard time with no drinking. It had been close to two weeks without a drink and he was not handling it well.
"What sounds perfect is keeping your sisters happy, which vodka won't do." Steve kissed the tip of Bucky's nose. "And think of all the money you're saving."

---

Bucky nodded and drank some more lemonade. "I know, I know. I just feel like I could have the occasional drink and be fine." He sat on the counter while Steve cooked dinner and lightly tapped on the cabinets with his heels. "I'm going to have to take up smoking again just to get over drinking."

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"My mom is a nurse. You think she's going to let you take up smoking without having an earful? New studies are saying that it's incredibly bad for you," Steve said. "You should find a vice that doesn't kill you."

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"What sort of vice isn't going to kill me, huh?" Bucky asked. "I mean that's sort of the point of it, right? To do something a little self-destructive?" He scratched a hand through his hair and looked down at his lap. He was getting a little sad and a headache was starting to form. He wasn't sure why but he wasn't feeling all right all the sudden.

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"I mean, you can get addicted to... arcade games and waste all your pocket change. Or your new vice can be showering me with kisses." Steve leaned down to kiss him to prove how good of an addiction that could be. "We will find something that will help take that urge away, Baby."

---

"Cigarettes - that'll take the urge away," Bucky said with a pout. "Or excessive sex... maybe." He picked up an apple from the bowl next to him and started angrily munching on it talking through the bites saying, "I'm getting a headache again."

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"Quit eating. You're going to ruin your appetite," Steve scolded and massaged Bucky's head lightly and frowned with concern. "Do you want to lay down, Beautiful?" He asked. "I'll get you medicine."

---

"I don't know, maybe. I think it's been getting worse lately since I've been trying to be sober." Bucky put his apple down obediently and pulled Steve in close for a kiss. "Maybe I'll just go take a walk in the cold air for a bit. Might do me some good."

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"You could be going through withdrawals," Steve said. "Have you looked for a doctor yet? Or health insurance plans? You can still try for government assistance."

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"Withdrawals? It's not like I am an alcoholic, though," Bucky defended. "And no I haven't looked for a doctor for us yet. But I should soon cause Lilly's eyesight is getting bad I think. She could use
some glasses." She would protest, of course, saying she could see fine but she had been missing the ball a lot lately.

---

"You quit cold turkey. Alcoholic or not, if you were used to it being in your system, your body could be thrown off," Steve said. "We have to get all of you to the Doctor, Baby. What if Lilly gets a stinger right to the face cause she didn't see the ball?"

---

"I know." Bucky sighed. "I just hate the doctor's. It's just some guy telling me another thing that's wrong that I need to worry about and adding more money to our medical bills. And I think that half the time they are just making shit up so they get paid."

---

Steve pet his fingers through Bucky's hair some more. "I know," he said in a playful mock of Bucky. "But we can't grow old together if you have some preventable thing that goes undiagnosed for years until it catches up to you."

---

Bucky closed his eyes and groaned. "Fine, I'll go to the fucking doctor. I'll try to call someplace tomorrow if it'll make you be quiet about it." Becca came over then holding Raphael. She handed him off to Bucky and grabbed an apple to munch on as well. "Steve told me off for eating before dinner. You better watch out," he joked.

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Becca gave Steve a calculated look before biting into the apple. "He won't tell me off. He's too afraid that I won't like him and won't let him take a family photo with us," she said casually.

She took another bite and Steve huffed. "You don't own me," Steve defended as he seasoned the chicken.

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"I think she just proved that she does." Bucky laughed but he was also genuinely concerned that his sisters would decide that they didn't like Steve and didn't want him around anymore. It would break his heart but he would have to give him up. Not that either of them had really shown any signs of that, but Bucky was still paranoid.
A few days later, when Steve was feeling pretty decent, he decided to pay a visit to Bucky's job. He'd wanted to for a while but the walk was draining and he didn't want to risk driving under medication. He stopped at a newsstand to get a couple of small roses that he hid in a paper bag so Bucky’s co-workers wouldn't see. The little entry bell rang as Steve walked in.

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Bucky was in the back getting some boxes of stock ready to put out on the floor. He was having a pretty shitty day because two of his good-for-nothing coworkers were just sitting at the registers chatting and not helping him at all. Clint was also working on completely redesigning the classical orchestral music section because someone had complained that they mixed baroque into the Renaissance.

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Steve could tell by the way Bucky held himself that he wasn't having a good time. He walked up behind him and said, "Excuse me, Sir, I have a complaint about an order I received." Steve masked his voice as best he could so Bucky wouldn't recognize him until he turned around.

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Bucky steeled himself for the conversation to come and slapped on his best fake smile and turned around slowly. He let out a scoff and smiled when he saw his boyfriend, "Steve... cheeky bastard. What're you doing here?" He wanted to grab for his hand or hug him hello or give him a kiss. No customers were in the store right then and none of his coworkers were even facing them but he figured he probably shouldn't.

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Steve laughed and nudged Bucky playfully. "Man, I saw such resign in your eyes," he said. Retail was the worst. Steve knew how it felt. "I got something for you." He offered him the little bag of flowers. "Bad day, huh?"

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When Bucky saw the paper bag, he really hoped it was booze but he knew Steve wouldn't be bringing that to him. He opened the flowers and gestured for Steve to come to the back office with him. "Yeah, not a great day. We've been slow and Clint has been working on a big project all day and those other two dipshits haven't been helping me restock at all."

---

Steve paused for a moment and then offered, "If you want to watch a bit of a show, I can pretend I'm on duty and do a random search on them. Think they actually got weed in their pockets?"

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"They most definitely have weed in their pockets." Bucky nodded. "They were smoking in the bathroom earlier. Probably not a good idea to fake search them. They might freak the fuck out."
"Aw, man. But I could have gotten them scared and made them work harder here in exchange for not being turned in," Steve said.

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Now that they were alone, Bucky pulled Steve in and gave him a quick kiss. "Want to meet Clint? He could probably use an interruption from his project."

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"Now remember, Clint can't really hear but he can read lips. So you don't have to shout at him or anything." Bucky gave Steve another quick kiss then put his flowers down on the desk before heading back out to the floor. "He's going to love you, though."

---

"What if I silently mouth words to him the whole time?" Steve asked. He dragged Bucky back to kiss him slowly before they went out to the floor. He tapped Clint on the shoulder and signed 'Hi I'm Steve,' to him. Ever since he knew Clint was mostly deaf he learned a few greetings and such since he knew he would meet him eventually.

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Bucky was impressed and admittedly a little turned on when Steve signed to Clint. Bucky knew a significant amount of sign language that he had been taught in the years working with Clint and he was so proud that Steve knew some things too. Clint signed back that he was Clint then held a hand out for Steve to shake. Bucky looked around the room once to make sure no one but his coworkers were there before signing 'This is the boyfriend.'

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Steve shook his hand and grinned as Bucky introduced him as his boyfriend. 'Bucky say good things you,' he signed but then huffed and said out loud, “Bucky says good things about you.” He knew a few words but not all the ins and outs of signing. 'What new music?' He signed as he said, “Get any good music in?"

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Clint waved Steve off implying that he shouldn't push himself to sign if he didn't want to. "Well, I'm having to rework the entire classical section cause some son-of-a-bitch didn't like the baroque being mixed in with the Renaissance shit. Bucky's in charge of the newest shipment," Clint said then pointed to the other two by the register. "They are meant to be helping."

---

"There's a difference between classical music styles?" Steve asked to himself. He wasn't that smart about different types of music from hundreds of years ago. "So why aren't they working?" Steve asked and nodded towards the other two in the store. "Don't they know you're deaf and not blind?"
"Yeah, but they also know that we need them around to deal with the difficult customers because Bucky and I are both two snarky bastards and Bucky's got a bit of a short temper. While they are stoned, they can handle any shit head customer." Clint stopped and looked to Bucky. "Wait, this is the cop, right?"

"Yeah, but he's not going to arrest those idiots," Bucky said reassuringly.

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"Fair enough," Steve said. "And don't worry. So long as people aren't stealing weed or stealing money to get weed, I don't care. Too many kids are getting put in prison over it and becoming criminals while alcohol is a more harmful drug anyway."

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Bucky gave Steve a quick hurtful look. He couldn't help but think that was meant for him - as some play to get Bucky to feel bad about even thinking of drinking again. If they were alone he would probably argue that he should start smoking pot then. Bucky wasn't going to admit to feeling a little on edge while being sober, but he really was being pretty defensive about it.

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Steve hadn't meant it that way at all, but when he saw the look Bucky gave him, Steve's shoulders slumped a little and he gave him an apologetic smile.

Clint noticed the exchange, and while Bucky was reliable as a worker, he knew that the guy had a bit of a problem. "Bucky, why don't you take some extra time for break. Half hour, my treat."

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Bucky nodded and thanked Clint. "Want to go get some lunch?" He asked Steve and started walking away not waiting for an answer. He really wanted a sandwich from Rustic Rocco's and he figured Steve wouldn't mind going to his favorite spot for lunch either.

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Steve followed Bucky and touched his arm lightly. "Baby, I didn't mean to offend you with the alcohol comment," he said softly. "It wasn't directed at you. I wouldn't ever try to make you feel bad like that on purpose."

---

Bucky just kept walking and said, "You know this is hard for me, Steve. You know I hate being sober. It's way too much pressure not to drink and to make you and Becca happy and proud of me. I get so worked up with worry that I'm going to fuck up that I just want a drink even more to help ease that feeling."

---

"I know, Buck. That's why I would never try and make you feel bad for it." Steve sighed. "I'm not going to lie and say I won't be disappointed if you drink. But I know how much work it is to stay sober. My dad was never able to stop once he started," he explained. "Is there anything I can do to help?"

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"You can let me have the occasional drink. Or the occasional night at the bar. Just sometimes."
Bucky knew that this whole thing had been his idea. He was the one who dumped his booze. But he
did it for his family and he felt the slightest bit of resentment about it, which made him feel even
worse as a guardian and a boyfriend. He would probably feel like that for a while until he was used
to being sober.

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Steve paused in thought and said, "I'll say yes to that, but can we add the condition that whenever
you drink, I have to be around and Becca has to be out?" Steve wanted to make sure Bucky didn't go
overboard and that Becca didn't fly off the handle if she saw Bucky with a drink.

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Bucky didn't like that. It didn't feel like freedom to do what he wanted. It felt like controlled fun and
that's not what Bucky was looking for. He was looking to get slammed and forget himself for a
while. He liked being drunk because when he was he didn't hate himself at all. "I'll think about it."
He said with an edge.

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"Buck," Steve said in a soft tone. "I won't ever try to force you into agreeing over something you
don't want to do... but if you have a problem, please let me know." Steve gave Bucky a pleading
look. "I love you so, so much. I don't care if you get drunk. I care why you get drunk."

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"You don't know why I get drunk," Bucky said sharply. He drank because he liked it. He drank
because he forgot himself. He drank because he lost control when he was drunk. He drank because
he got hyper-sexual while he was drunk. He drank because his mother taught him how to love
whiskey. He drank because it helped him ignore when he felt like dying. He drank because he
couldn't feel the ache of his past late at night when he had nothing else to think about.

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"I know, Bucky, and that's what worries me," Steve said. "How am I supposed to know the
difference between when you drink to relax or when you drink because you're angry at yourself or
something?" Steve asked. "You do so much. You deserve to relax. But if you're drinking because
you're feeling awful, I want to be there to help lift you up again."

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"Steve, I'm always angry at myself for something," Bucky nearly shouted. "I've got two kids to take
care of and I'm not cut out for it and I'm worried every day that I'm fucking them up and they're both
going to end up like me!" Bucky was stopped in an alley with Steve and no one else was around to
hear him shout.

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"You are cut out for it, Bucky," Steve said. "Look at yourself. You dropped your whole damn life to
keep them with the only family they had. I'm a cop. I've seen some pretty fucked up kids and adults
alike out here. Becca and Lilly are nothing like that," he said. "And if they turn out anything like
you, I'd be proud."
"How can you say that knowing some of what I've put them through? You don't even know all of it but what you do know is enough to make me be disappointed if I were you." Bucky was feeling incredibly small and vulnerable. All he wanted was to go home and let Steve fuck him until he fell asleep in Steve's arms and then he just wanted to stay there for as long as he possibly could.

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"You can tell me anything, Bucky. But you don't have to tell me anything until you're ready." He crowded Bucky's space a little and kissed his forehead because nobody was around to see. "Baby, why do you think I fell in love with you?"

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Bucky looked at the ground and frowned. "I don't know. I never wanted to ask and risk you realizing you didn't know either and then you'd just leave." He moved around Steve and started walking on towards the sandwich shop. His break time was going to be over before he knew it.

---

Steve grabbed Bucky's hand and pulled him back. He got down on his knee so Bucky would see him even if he was looking at the ground. Steve winced a little since his back wasn't totally healed. "I fell in love with you because you work so hard and take so little for yourself. I fell in love with you because after you stood up for some kid you didn't know, the first thing you did was call home to make sure your sisters were okay. You lost so much, baby. And maybe you've given up on some of the dreams that you used to have, but we can do so much together. We can have new dreams."

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Bucky's lip quivered as he looked down at Steve and sniffled back tears. He didn't deserve this. He didn't deserve Steve or his love or his generosity. He pulled Steve back up from the ground and gave him a hug and a kiss before letting go. "I love you too, Steve. And I'm sorry for all the shit I've done or pain I've caused you. And I'm sorry in advance for what I might do in the future. If you are willing to be by my side and work with me and not leave even when I screw up then I'll do my best to be perfect for you."

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"Don't try to be perfect, Bucky, just try to do your best." Steve had to lean on Bucky for the rest of the trip because walking so much today was taking a bit of a toll and kneeling didn't help his case either.

Once they got to the shop, Steve ordered himself a sandwich as well and waited for Bucky to get his food saying, "So Clint is pretty cool."

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Bucky picked up his sandwich and the one he got for Clint and they headed back to the record store. They would have to eat and walk because he only had about ten minutes left. "Yeah, Clint is great. I'm really glad you met him finally. I didn't know you knew some sign language."

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"I didn't know sign language before. But I borrowed a book from the library to learn the basics... you know, like meeting someone and doing the alphabet," Steve said.
"You did all that just to meet Clint?" Bucky asked Steve with a smile. Steve was really special. He did these huge gestures like learning sign language just to make someone feel valued and special and worth his time. And Bucky couldn't help but falling more in love with him every time he did.

"Well, yeah. He's your boss and your best friend and someone you trust so shouldn’t I go out of my way a little for him at the very least?" When they got back to the store, one of the bozos hastily put out the joint he'd been smoking.

Bucky made his way over to Clint and handed him the sandwich that he had picked up for him. Then he went over to his coworkers and took the joint from them before opening it up, spitting in it and then tossing it in the trash. "We've talked about this, Reggie," Bucky said to one of them sternly. "Only out back and only during your break time. Don't make me tell you again."

Steve watched Bucky handle his coworkers and walked away with him saying, "Jeez, you spend all day at work taking care of two kids then you come home and take care of two more."

"Yes, but, at least only two of my kids smoke pot," Bucky said and looked to the stacks of records he still needed to put out today. "I've got about three more hours before I'll be home. Do you mind making dinner for the girls when they get back from school?"

Steve shook his head. "As if I'd ever mind making dinner," he said with a loving smile. "I'll make Lilly's favorite since Becca has been getting her way too much. She has me wrapped around her finger cause I want that photo together."

"Don't worry, Baby, we'll get the photo," Bucky assured him and gave him a quick kiss. "See you back home. Make sure Lilly feeds Raphael and cleans his litter. It wasn't done yesterday and Becca did it last time. Lilly already isn't pulling her weight with the cat."

Steve smiled into the kiss. "I'll make sure she does. Promise," he said. It was no surprise that Lilly wasn't helping out with the cat and he was happy they didn't get the puppy since they were more work. "Love you."

The rest of the day at the shop went slow and Bucky was ready to go home. He said goodbye to Clint and trudged on back home. When he got there, his family was all passed out in the living room with plates of leftover homemade pizza on the coffee table. Steve was asleep on the couch with Lilly curled up on his legs. Becca was asleep on a pile of blankets on the floor next to the couch. Bucky smiled and sighed and grabbed another blanket to toss on top of Lilly and Steve.
The three had kept themselves pretty occupied in Bucky’s absence. Lilly begrudgingly took care of the chores for the cat and helped Steve make pizza. When he came over to them, Bucky was quickly greeted by Raphael, who pawed at his leg lightly to be picked up. Steve peeked an eye open at the sound of Bucky’s footsteps. "Hey, Beautiful."

Bucky was holding the cat when Steve woke up. "Hey, Baby, how’s your back feeling on that couch?" He asked and rubbed a hand over Steve's head. "Let's get you into bed, okay?" He set Raphael down on the floor and scooped Lilly up in his arms. "I'll get them to bed first."

"Not that great," Steve admitted. "But I didn't want to wake her up." Steve had fallen asleep with an arm draped protectively over Lilly even though she didn't need protecting from anything here. Once Bucky scooped Lilly up, Steve carefully got off the couch.

Becca woke up once they started making noise and talking so she got up and silently made her way to her room. Once Lilly was tucked in, Bucky grabbed Steve's hand and led him to their bedroom. "How was your evening with them?"

"It was good. We watched some TV and played Scrabble," Steve said. "Lilly got really tired so she was the first to fall asleep. Then I guess I fell asleep and then Becca did," he said with a half smile. "They missed you."

"Good thing you played Scrabble and not that train game. I hate Scrabble," Bucky said. "Who won? Or did you all fall asleep too early to win at all?" Bucky slipped off his work clothes and put on pajamas before going to the bathroom to brush his teeth.

"Raphael thought the pieces would be fun to knock around so nobody won." The cat was usually good but sometimes he freaked out over the strangest things. Steve stripped down but couldn't be bothered to dress himself so he just laid naked in bed. "I love them so much. And you, Buck," he said. "Do you have work on Saturday? We should all go out to the movies."

"No, I don't work. I think a day out to the movies is a great idea." Bucky crawled into bed after having brushed his teeth and he snuggled close to Steve and ran a hand down his torso to his thighs. "It's been a long fucking day," he said with a sultry air about him as he continued rubbing up and down Steve's thigh occasionally brushing over his dick.

Steve snuggled in closer and gave Bucky an interested look as his hand brushed over his thigh and cock. "It has," Steve agreed. "I spent most of the morning trying to think of ways we could have sex
"without bothering my back," he said with a bit of a blush.

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"That's all you did today?" Bucky chuckled and rubbed at Steve's balls. "There isn't any way we can fuck without hurting your back right now. We just need to wait it out." Bucky held the base of Steve's dick and added, "But we can do this if you want."

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Steve spread his legs a little and pushed his hips forward into Bucky's hand. "But what if we do it with the both of us laying on our sides? Big spoon little spoon style," he said.

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"I have no idea what you mean, Steve," Bucky said but started pulling off his pants and underwear anyway. "Just tell me where you want me, okay?" He said and kicked his pants to the bottom of the bed. He'd deal with them later.

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Steve nudged Bucky so that he was on his side with his back pressed against Steve's chest. Steve rubbed his cock against Bucky's ass and nudged him so he bent his leg a bit. "Like this?" Steve suggested. "Have you never done it this way?"

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"So you're just going to grind on me until you come?" Bucky asked and started stroking his own dick. "You better take it easy, Steve," he warned and turned his head back to kiss Steve then started stroking himself faster. "This just feels like I'm jerking off. I can't see you."

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"No, Dumbass, I'm going to fuck you like this. Once I find the right angle," Steve said in a determined tone. Bucky wasn't the only one desperate for sex. "Or maybe you could ride me. You just got to take it easy."

--

Bucky did love hearing Steve swearing and that desperate tone that he wanted Bucky so much. But still, "No sex, Steve," Bucky said quickly and disappointedly. "Not until your back is all better. I'll just blow you and then jerk myself off." He really wanted Steve to fuck him and he wanted to fuck Steve back but he couldn't risk hurting Steve even more.

--

"Buck," Steve whined, putting on a pathetic tone that Bucky hadn't ever heard him use yet. Steve knew that he shouldn't have sex but Steve never did what was completely safe for him. He gave Bucky a big old pair of sad eyes. "At least we should try..."

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"Steve..." Bucky whined back and absently pulled at his cock. "You know we can't. What'll we do if you hurt yourself during sex and then we have to go to the doctor’s? I'll be embarrassed enough for the both of us." He chided but he really wanted Steve to win out and just start opening him up
anyway.

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Steve made an absolutely pathetic sound when Bucky turned him down again. "Then what if I just fist you again?" If Steve couldn't get the satisfaction of sex then he wanted to at least give Bucky something he wanted.

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"If you start on that then I'm going to want to let you fuck me," Bucky said and guided his ass closer to Steve's hard dick. He sandwiched it between his cheeks and made small light movements to grind against him. He was breathing heavily and his own cock was standing at attention waiting for him to do something about it.

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Steve groaned and rocked his hips, rutting up against Bucky's ass. He dragged his nails lightly up Bucky's torso and started to tease a nipple by pinching and rolling it between his fingers. "So is that a yes?"

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Bucky gasped out at the touch and couldn't help how he started grinding on Steve with more force. "Can you promise me you will be gentle on yourself? Go slow and careful and don't push it too much. And if you start to hurt at any time you need to stop, okay?" Bucky wouldn't admit that he was beyond desperate to fuck Steve.

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"I promise," Steve said a little too quickly. He would agree to anything so long as it meant Bucky would let him push his luck a little. It's been torture having a beautiful boyfriend he couldn't be intimate with.

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Bucky turned to kiss Steve quickly before saying, "How do you always convince me of things? You just do stuff to me, Steve. I want to you make love to me nice and slow and with purpose - even if it takes all night. I want to feel you. I want to know you are putting yourself in every moment."

---

Steve's eyes lit up and he kissed Bucky slowly. "I'll keep you up until the morning if that makes you happy, Baby," he hummed. "Would hate for you to ever doubt how much I love every bit of you." He carefully turned so he could grab the lube from the nightstand and started to coat his fingers with it. "Can't wait to make you feel so good."

---

Bucky nodded slowly and rolled so Steve had better access to his ass. "I love you, Steve. I hope you know that," He said and massaged his ass cheeks apart to show his hole to Steve. He was excited and grateful that Steve was going to fuck him but part of him still worried about Steve's back.
Steve made a desperate, aroused sound when Bucky held himself open for him. Steve teased the rim of his hole for a little while before slipping two fingers at once. "It's been a while since I've been inside you," he hummed. "So I'm going to make you come just opening you up before I do anything else."

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Bucky breathed out heavily and quickly at the intrusion of two fingers. "You don't want me to come with your cock inside me?" Bucky also couldn't help but wish he was a little drunk. He liked fucking drunk because everything felt floaty and light and every thrust was more impactful than usual.

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"Oh, I do want that," Steve purred. "So that's going to happen, too." He had plenty of lost time to make up for and making Bucky come twice in one night seemed appropriate. He slowly worked his two fingers inside and out, making sure that Bucky didn't get stretched too much too fast. "How's that?"

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"It's good. I'm fine," Bucky said quickly and reached back to feel Steve's fingers breaching his hole. "Steve, I missed this. I missed you. I want you so bad and I know you know it. Can't help but want you every second of every day." Bucky rambled on and moved his head back and forth as Steve pumped his finger inside him.

---

Steve leaned over to kiss at Bucky's neck while he spread his two fingers wide inside of his boyfriend and curled them to find the right spot inside him. "We get to have the rest of our lives to spoil each other and fuck each other silly," he hummed softly. "And that's going to be amazing, Bucky. I won't ever stop wanting you as badly as I do now."

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Bucky wanted to sass back that Steve wasn't going to want him when he was an old man but just then he added a third finger and Bucky's head lulled against the pillow as he breathed out Steve's name with a groan. He pulled at his dick and rubbed pre-come down from the head and wished he could have Steve's dick in his mouth while he fingered him.

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Steve kissed over Bucky's shoulders as he finger-fucked him. "And you know what, Baby? As soon as I get better I'm sending the girls off to my mom's for the day and you're going to take off work so we can fuck each other day in and day out. We can go to sleep full of each other's come and shower in the morning."

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"God, fuck, Steve," Bucky answered and quickened his pull on his dick. "I want that so much. I want that all that time. Want your come inside me and seeing mine leaking out of you. Want to be filled up with your cock all day. Want your hands all over me and inside me and holding me."

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"It's going to be so good, Beautiful," Steve moaned. He tucked his pinky in and started to open
Bucky up with four fingers. "You like how all that feels in your tight ass? You feel full yet?" Steve wasn't much of a dirty talker usually, but it had been a while and he was desperate.

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Bucky nodded and rubbed at his face before pulling his hair back into a ponytail. He rocked his hips in time with Steve's movements and let his ass relax even more. "Want you, Baby. Need your dick," he said low and slow as he let his body writhe with the feelings Steve was giving him.

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"Need you to come for me first," Steve said back. Steve was careful as he poured more lube over Bucky's hole and started to add his thumb so he could fit his whole hand inside of Bucky. God, his ass looked so amazing taking so much inside.

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Bucky's breath stuttered out when Steve added his thumb and he had to take a moment to let his body relax and take all of Steve's fingers together. He made short moaning sounds as Steve moved his hand around and Bucky forgot to breathe deeply as he went.

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"God, look at you," Steve hummed. "I wish you could see how good your ass looks right now, Baby, stretching to fit my whole hand in." He slowly pushed in past his wrist. He pulled out so Bucky's hole was stretched at the widest point of his hand before pushing back in, jabbing Bucky's prostate with his fingers.

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"Fuck!" Bucky choked out when Steve's finger made contact with his prostate. "There, Steve, God yes." He let go of his cock and held his arms above his head. He wanted to see if Steve would make him come all by himself. Bucky hoped he would take the hint and work Bucky's prostate and take his dick in his other hand.

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It took Steve a moment but he did take the hint in the end. Steve fucked Bucky relentlessly with his fist; hitting his prostate each time he pushed his hand deep inside of him. He grabbed Bucky's dick with his free hand and stroked it eagerly. Steve panted softly in Bucky's ear and he nibbled at his earlobe. "So good for me," he groaned.

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Bucky couldn't speak. He could only breathe quickly and make pleased little noises. He curled his toes and pushed his ass back against Steve as he slammed his fist inside of him. He couldn't wait until Steve was all healed and not in any more pain because he was going to ride him cowboy style and bounce up and down on his dick for hours. He wanted to fuck Steve every day after he got better to make up for the lost time.

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"When I'm not hurt anymore, I'm gonna fuck you so hard we'll make the downstairs neighbors think that an earthquake's happening," Steve rumbled in his ear. "You look so good, Baby. You're taking my fist so well." Steve's worked his fist in harder and harder, going rougher with Bucky now
because he knew he'd have to take it slow and careful once he had his cock inside him. He teased the head of Bucky's dick with his thumb. "Tell me how much you love this."

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"Love it!" Bucky gasped and craned his neck to look back at Steve. "Love you. Love what you to do me. Love you filling up my hole with your arm and love the way you touch inside me." He rambled out quickly and felt himself getting close to orgasm as Steve worked his hole some more.

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"Good," he breathed out. Steve probably shouldn't do this, but he did it anyway. He moved his hand off of Bucky's dick so he could hold Bucky's hip steady. Once he got a good grip on him, he started to really fuck Bucky good and thorough with his fist, jackhammering it in and out of his ass and hitting his prostate with every thrust. Slick, wet noises rang out in the air as Steve fucked him.

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Bucky had to shove his face down into the pillow so the noises he was making wouldn't be so loud in the apartment. He bit down and let Steve pummel inside him with his hand gripped tightly on his hip. He was going to be surprised if he didn't get little finger bruises from Steve. It only took about another minute before Bucky's body was jolting, his legs were curling up close to him, and he was coming all over his bed sheets.

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Steve refused to slow down. Seeing Bucky get so overwhelmed was a beautiful thing. When he saw Bucky's body curl up, he knew he was close. Even after Bucky came, Steve still kept his hand deep inside Bucky's ass and he slowly massaged his prostate. "Just tell me when to stop, Baby," he said softly, carefully pushing his hand deeper inside of Bucky.

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Bucky let Steve continue as he breathed heavy post-orgasm breaths. Steve did get gentler and let his fingertips work over the prostate with purpose for a bit longer until Bucky whispered. "Too much, little lighter please."

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Steve nodded and pulled his hand back a little so he wouldn't over stimulate Bucky. He only moved his hand back and forth an inch or so each way and kept the movements slow and steady. "I like taking you apart like this," he purred. "Makes me feel good that I'm the only guy who can do this with you now."

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"What would you do if I just fell asleep like this with your hand inside me?" Bucky asked with tired eyes and a deep blush on his face from being worked up by Steve.

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Steve smiled and kissed Bucky's cheek. "I'd see if I could still make you come in your sleep. But then I'd clean you up and cuddle you all night."
"How's your back feeling, Baby?" Bucky checked and barely opened his eyes to look back at Steve for a moment.

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Steve was a bit reluctant to answer the question because he could feel tightness in his lower back like something had twinged at some point. "It's not bad," he said, being honest without giving the whole truth.

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Bucky nodded slowly. "You gonna fuck me now or is your back too much for that? Wouldn't mind if you fucked me slow and steady while I fell asleep. Wake up with your come covering my ass and thighs."

---

Steve groaned softly at the thought of it. It was frustrating to be so unfit right now. "I can take it slow," he murmured, easily drawing his hand out of Bucky's ass so he could rub some lube over his untouched dick. "Been thinking about you for too long."

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"Just take it easy on yourself." Bucky yawned. "Thanks for fisting me, Steve. I really like that. Maybe one day you'll let me try it on you." He reached up to pull the hair tie from his head and ran his fingers through his long dark hair.

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Steve was just thankful that he didn't feel inadequate because Bucky liked taking things that were bigger than his cock. "Um," Steve said, getting all flustered. "You really think I could fit your hand in me?" He grimaced a little as he adjusted himself on the bed and he lined his dick up with Bucky's ass. It was all too easy to slide in and Steve let out a low moan.

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Bucky was quickly falling asleep when he felt Steve slide inside him. "We can try and if you don't like it we can stop. Or if you aren't taking it like I do." He mumbled out and laid still, letting Steve do all the work and move slowly in and out of him.

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"I'll give it the old college try," Steve said, still acting like a bit of a doofus when they were talking about sex. He still wasn't entirely used to how forward Bucky was about it sometimes. But being inside of Bucky felt so goddamn good and Steve couldn't help but suck little marks onto Bucky's neck as he slowly rocked into him.

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Bucky hummed and tried to pay attention to the calculated loving touches and thrusts from Steve. After about a minute of being held like that by Steve, Bucky slipped into a light sleep, cradled as the little spoon and being gently rocked by his boyfriend.
Steve moved a hand over Bucky's side and chest, touching him lovingly as he easily fucked in and out of his boyfriend. He huffed and smiled fondly when he noticed that Bucky was asleep. "I love you," he whispered softly. Steve gently made love to him until his orgasm came. He emptied his come deep inside of Bucky. He didn't feel all that inclined to pull out, so he fell asleep still inside of him.

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Bucky woke up around three in the morning and tried rolling over before realizing he still had a dick in his ass. He chuckled and gently pulled himself off of Steve and headed to the bathroom. He bent over the counter and touched at his still wet and open hole.

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Steve made a small noise in his sleep when Bucky got up. He remained asleep for a little while before the lack of warmth next to him roused him awake. "Buck?" He called out sleepily.

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"I'm here, Baby," Bucky said from the bathroom where he was cleaning himself up. He considered taking a quick shower but he would probably wake up Becca with the noise if he did. Instead, he wiped himself down and cleaned Steve's come off of him.

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Steve moved slightly in bed and he hurt all over. "Baby, would you massage my back a little bit when you are done?" He called and waited for Bucky to come to the bed.

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Bucky sighed in frustration. He knew Steve was lying when he said he was fine. Coming back to the bed he said, "Steve, I told you we shouldn't have done anything yet," but he moved to hover over Steve as he rolled into a better position so Bucky could massage his lower back. "Does the wound hurt?"

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Steve let out a relieved groan when Bucky started to massage him. "It was worth it," he said shamelessly, pleased as punch that he got what he wanted. "It feels like something's pinched," he said. "It's happened a few times but always goes away."

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"Do we need to go back to that physical therapist and have her take a look at it?" Bucky asked in concern. "Want me to go get you some pain medication for it?" He kept lightly rubbing Steve and gently kissing at his shoulders in encouragement.

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"Probably and yes, please." Steve sighed at the kiss before asking, "So what's it like getting a glimpse into the future where you'll have to take care of an old, retired officer after thirty years on the force?"
"It's lovely. Don't worry." Bucky kissed Steve's cheek then left to go get medicine. When he came back, Steve was sitting up and hunched over with his water bottle. "Here, take this and lay down again."

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Steve took the medicine only because he wasn't a completely stubborn mule. On a normal day, he typically refused any extra medicine. He was just about to lay down again when he heard a knock on the door. He gave Bucky a confused look since they weren't expecting anyone.

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"The fuck is that?" Bucky asked and quickly slipped on his clothes. He was about to leave his room when he decided to grab a jacket. "Be right back, Baby," He said and left to go see who the devil was at their door.

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When Bucky answered the door, a tall man in a suit held up a badge to him. "Hello, I am Martin White with child protection services," he introduced calmly but firmly. "Our office received a complaint I'm here to investigate. Are you James Barnes?"

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Bucky pulled a confused, appalled face as he said, "Excuse me? Investigate what? It's three in the morning. Who the fuck do you think you are?" There was an opening of a door from the hall and Bucky knew it must be Becca waking up from the noise.

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"Yes, I understand it is not a normal hour, Sir, but our tip was very urgent," he said. "If you have nothing to hide, then you won't mind me coming in and asking a few questions," Martin insisted in a pushy way.

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"I mind you coming in because my family is asleep and your 'tip' is wrong," Bucky said sternly.

Just then, there was a soft scared voice from the hallway and Bucky turned around to see both his sisters now in the hall looking on. "Bucky, what's going on?" Lilly asked shakily.

"Try to go back to sleep, Lil. I'm taking care of it," Bucky said with a soft smile but angry eyes about this whole thing.

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The man didn't seem very convinced. "I have the authority to call for their removal if I cannot guarantee that they are not in immediate danger," he said. "So I strongly recommend that you let me in." Steve had gotten himself dressed and slowly walked into the hallway to see what was going on.

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"What danger?" Bucky spit. "You can't take them from me! They are fine. They were sleeping soundly until you got here." Bucky stood his ground in the doorway and assessed the man again. He wondered if Steve could just arrest him for disturbing the peace or something like that.
"Bucky, is he taking us away?" Lilly asked in a panicked tone.

Steve put a strong hand on her shoulder and glared from his spot at the other officer. "Sir, I am a police officer and I can assure you that there's nothing unsafe going on here-"

He barely got the words out when Martin said, "Cops can be the worst offenders."

"Worst offenders for what, may I ask?" Bucky grit out and side-stepped as the man shoved his way into the apartment. "The girls are perfectly safe here with me. They have been for four goddamn years. What's the fucking problem now, huh?"

"Child pornography," Martin answered.

Steve immediately flared up with anger and even Becca curled her hands into fists. "Are you kidding me?" She said angrily at him. "You should listen to my brother and get the hell out of here!"

"Becca, take Lilly to your room and stay put while I handle this loathsome prick, alright? Lilly shouldn't be hearing this nonsense," Bucky said and stepped up to the man. He waited for the girls to slip into Becca's room before he turned back to the man in a dark rage. "Listen, you cocksucking motherfucker, those are my sisters, my family, my blood. I've never hurt them or done anything perverse to or around them. And you coming in here and accusing me of something as abhorrent as that is going to take a serious emotional toll on them. I'm not even sure if Lilly knows what child pornography is but now someone's going to have to explain it because she's going to want to know what sick twisted things your 'tip' suggested that I've been doing."

"Not you," Martin said, absolutely nonplussed as Bucky got in his face and got angry at him. He was used to people getting a lot angrier and more violent at him than this. "Him." He nodded at Steve.

Steve's face paled and his jaw dropped. "Me?" It made him sick to his stomach to be accused of that.

"Mr. Barnes, I'm going to have to ask you a few questions without him in the room," Martin said and put his hands in his coat pockets.

"You've got to be fucking kidding me," Bucky said and rubbed at his face. A headache was raging along the sides of his head and he felt like screaming and kicking this guy's face in and then curling up in a ball on the ground. "Who in the world told you that Steve was doing that? Was it Dale Peterson? He's mad that we got a cat. I know it."

"I'm not allowed to disclose who contacted us," Martin said. He gave Steve a look and Steve wiped at his eyes before going back to the bedroom so this could get over with. Martin crossed his arms and looked over at Bucky. "Listen, I understand this is emotional for you but I need you to be objective
when you answer my questions. Most child abuse - both sexual and not - happen by a friend or family member."

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"This isn't a child abuse case. It's some asshole lying to you to get at my family for some fucking reason," Bucky spit back. "Whoever told you that is wrong," He added and clenched his jaw together. He really wished Steve were by his side helping him. He also wished he had some medication because the whole room was starting to move around him and the pulsing in his head was getting worse.

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"Well, it's up to my department to decide that," he said. Martin pulled out a paper from his file with a list of traits of a sex offender. "Does he show any of these behaviors?" He asked. "How long has he lived here? Where does he sleep - this apartment only has three bedrooms. Is there a lock on the girls' doors?"

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"There's no lock." Bucky resigned to answer the questions and be done with this quickly. "He's lived here for about three months. He sleeps in my room." Bucky watched as the man scribbled down what Bucky was saying and looked down the hall at the closed doors.

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Martin continued to grill Bucky with question after question for about an hour before he finished taking his notes. "Thank you for your cooperation, Mr. Barnes. I see no reason to remove your sisters tonight, but the investigation will remain open for thirty days."

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Bucky nodded and locked the door behind the man as he left. He went to the couch and laid down, rubbing at his head. "He's gone!" Bucky yelled out and watched the three of them come back out into the living room. Bucky stayed on the couch and curled over on his side. He was in a lot of pain and was really confused and angry. He couldn't help the tears that slipped past his eyes absently.

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Becca and Lilly came running out looking apprehensive and upset. They only got worse when they saw that Bucky was crying. Steve wasn't in much better shape and was trying to hide that he'd been crying, too. He sat down and put a hand on Bucky's shoulder.

"He's not taking us away, is he?" Lilly asked.

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Bucky sniffled and looked up at her. "Not tonight apparently. But they keep the investigation open for thirty days so who fucking knows." He turned his attention to Steve. "I'm not letting them take you away, either." Then he paused and looked between Steve and the girls. "Steve, will you get me some medicine?" He asked. Once he was gone to the bathroom to get something for Bucky's headache, he pulled the girls close and said, "If anyone talks to you about Steve you have to be smart and careful. If you feel safe around Steve make that known but don't force it so it looks like you're being made to say it. Some fucking shithead is after our family and we need to work together to keep us together."
Steve had already considered moving out if that meant letting Bucky keep his sisters without the state prodding into their life. He got up and shuffled to the bathroom to find the medicine.

"Why does someone think Steve's doing bad things?" Lilly asked.

Becca paused and suggested, "What about that guy that let Steve get shot?"

Bucky nodded and smiled at Becca sadly. "I'm thinking you're exactly right, Becs. But there is no way for us to accuse him of this right now." When Steve came back with medicine, Bucky took it gratefully then stood up to get the girls back to bed. "Go back to sleep. You have school tomorrow. I'm walking you over tomorrow too. And picking you up."

Both girls looked angry that their brother and Steve were going through this and there was still the underlying fear that they were going to be taken away. They gave both men a hug goodnight and laid back down in their rooms.

Once they were back in bed, Bucky trudged past Steve to the door and slipped on his shoes and coat. "I'll be back, Steve."

"Where are you going?" Steve asked nervously. "It's dangerous to go out at this time."

"To the little twenty-four-seven down a few blocks. I'll be right back." Bucky smiled weakly at Steve and headed out. He made his way under the streetlights to the bodega and shoved a six-pack and a bottle of whiskey into his basket. He also found the store made little brownies and put those in his basket too.

When he got back, Steve was waiting at the kitchen table for him wearing a blanket around his shoulders and an upset tick to his lips.

Steve had a sinking feeling that Bucky was going to get some booze but he didn't have the heart to stop him. When he returned, Steve breathed out a sigh of relief. "I've ... I've been thinking, Buck," he said softly. "Maybe I should move out until the investigation is over. So we don't risk losing the girls."

Bucky shot Steve a look and put his stuff down on the table. He twisted off the lid to the whiskey and took a long drink from the bottle before offering it to Steve with a firm, "No," and fire in his eyes. He then opened one of the beers and started drinking it and eating one of the brownies.
Steve frowned but took a small sip of the whiskey anyway so Bucky wouldn't be drinking alone. "Then what can I do to help?" He asked. "I'm not going to sit around and let someone threaten to take away your sisters because of me."

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"You can go talk to your chief about that good-for-nothing son of a bitch Rumlow and his big lying mouth. You know this was him, Steve," Bucky said and offered a brownie to him. He took another deep drink of the whiskey and shuttered out a sigh. He missed this so much. Why did he ever give up alcohol? Soon he'd be a little tipsy then he could get a little drunk and he'd feel fine.

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Steve's shoulders slumped a little at the mention of the man. "I can," he agreed. "But I don't know if that will do much. We can't prove anything and Rumlow has been on the force for longer than I have. He could have plenty of people on his side," he warned.

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"I know he did this. He tried killing you and that didn't work out so he figured he'd just destroy my family and get you locked away instead." Bucky was about a fourth of the way through the bottle and he was feeling it. He tugged Steve's arm and pulled him to the living room where Bucky laid down on the ground and cradled the bottle.

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Steve followed and couldn't lay on the floor, so he sat on the couch next to him. "Buck," Steve said softly. "I'm going to do everything I can and then some, okay? But I need you to promise me that you won't do something rash when things get rough. Like marching down to the precinct." Steve was angry but he was good at keeping it below the surface.

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Bucky mumbled that he liked marching down to the precinct and then drank some more. He was feeling tired and floaty and getting a little lighter as he drank more. "Don't tell Becca about this," he said and handed the bottle back off to Steve in case he wanted anymore.

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"I won't," Steve promised. "But if she asks, I'm not going to lie to her, either." He would deflect or change the subject but he didn't feel right to lie to her face. He took one more sip and handed it back to Bucky. "Come up here with me," he said softly.

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Bucky reluctantly got up off the ground. He wobbled a little as he crawled up on the couch and curled up in Steve's open arms. "Can't believe that motherfucker did this," he stuttered out and let his tired head fall on Steve's chest. "Gonna fucking kill him..." Raphael had been snoozing on the coffee table but he hopped up on Bucky and pawed at his face gently.

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"No killing allowed. I'd hate for the girls to only be able to talk to you over a prison telephone." Steve chuckled when Raphael pawed at Bucky and he reached a hand over to scratch the top of his head. "The cat agrees - no killing."
"No killing - just drinking," Bucky conceded and looked down at the half empty bottle. "Should've bought two of these." His words were slurred and his eyes were closed as he felt firm hands taking the whiskey away from him. He heard it deposited on the coffee table and he dipped his head towards the noise and felt a dizzy rush come over him.

"Not too much drinking. You've already had more than you should," Steve said. "You shouldn't get into the habit of this, alright, Baby?" Steve stroked his fingers through Bucky's hair and kissed him a few times.

"I want to go to bed. Let's go back to bed," Bucky said and couldn't open his eyes again. "Have to sleep. Need to take the girls to school tomorrow." He stood up from the couch on rickety legs and immediately fell back on it again, unable to get two feet under him at all times. Steve was right. He did go overboard tonight.
The next few days were tense as all hell. During one afternoon while Steve was at physical therapy and Bucky was home with his sisters, they got a knock on the door. This time it was director Fury on the other side.

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Bucky cleared his throat in surprise and ushered for him to come in. "Uh, hello, Sir..." he said and introduced his sisters who were both concerned and afraid at the man's presence thinking he was from child protection. "Girls, this is Steve's boss. Chief Fury, this is Becca and Lilly. Can I get you anything, Sir?" Bucky was being unnaturally welcoming and trying to figure out whether Fury was here to give him good news or bad news.

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Becca and Lilly both hesitantly waved over at Fury but stayed polite because they were following Bucky's lead. "Is Officer Rogers in? I was hoping to have a one-on-one with him." He looked down as Raphael circled around his feet but didn't move to pet him.

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"He's at his physical therapy session but he should be back soon. You can stay here if you like." Bucky gestured at the seat across from the coffee table and the girls both sat with Bucky and Raphael on the couch. Becca was holding the cat possessively and Lilly was on Bucky's other side holding his hand nervously.

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Fury sat down and took a look at Becca and Lilly. "What's the matter? You're not afraid of a black man in your home, are you?" The two opened their mouths to argue but he put a hand up. "I'm just kidding. I know you got quite the scare the other night."

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Becca nodded and scratched Raphael's head. "Do you know if that guy who tried to get Steve killed is the one who set child protection on us?"

Bucky nudged her sharply and said, "I think Chief Fury probably wants to talk to Steve about all that in private."

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"She's allowed to ask," Fury said evenly. "I can't give you the answer," he said to Becca. "But what I can tell you is that we take these sort of false calls very seriously. And that Officer Rogers has plenty of other officers watching out for him."

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Becca and Bucky nodded and Lilly tightened her grip on Bucky's hand. "Was this all really because some asshole didn't like that Steve came out?" Bucky asked and pulled Lilly closer to him. "It's not like Steve flaunted himself around or hit on any of his fellow officers."
"Listen, I'm not saying that it’s fair but this sort of thing only stopped being illegal a year ago. You can't expect a world full of assholes to stop being assholes just because you're allowed to do something now," Fury said. "Twenty years ago if I dared to be a cop, I'd be lynched. And someone like me could be a cop for about two hundred years prior."

Bucky wasn't about to argue with Fury over this. He was right that he was at a major disadvantage because he was black and he could tell that he understood Bucky's disadvantage for being gay. He nodded and asked, "Do you think Steve or myself or my girls are in any real danger because of all this?"

"You're a queer couple who's very happy with their lives. There's always going to be some sort of danger, be it from this or not." Fury paused when the door opened and Steve came back home. Steve looked exhausted but pleased as he walked in but then surprised to see his boss. "Sir," he said. "I wasn't expecting you."

Bucky got up and pulled Steve down to sit on the couch. He then hovered over by Becca and watched as Lilly molded herself to Steve's side for support. "Chief Fury came a bit ago to talk to you. The girls and I can go get some food down the block while you two talk if you like."

Steve wrapped an arm around Lilly and kissed her cheek. "Hey, Lil," he greeted softly.

Fury nodded in response to Bucky's offer. "I'd like to talk with you after, but I need to speak with Steve in private first."

Bucky ushered the girls off the couch and told Becca to just put Raphael in her room for now. He pulled everyone's coats from the hangers and then smiled at Steve nervously before following the girls out the door. He really hoped that whatever Fury had to say was going to be good or at least semi-hopeful but he honestly couldn't tell.

By the time Bucky had returned, Steve felt happier with the news he got even though he was conflicted on what he should do. He gave his boyfriend a little wave and Fury pointed for Bucky to sit down. "Girls, I'll need you to go to your rooms for a little bit," Fury said.

Becca pulled Lilly into the hall and they both went to Becca's room to wait. Bucky sat next to Steve and slipped an arm behind his back gently. He didn't say anything, just waiting for Fury to start. He was nervous and just wanted this to be over with. He wanted to hold Steve and kiss him and forget this whole mess.
"Steve has some things he has to discuss with you, but there are some things that I have to say personally," Fury said. "Firstly, I'm going to make the child protection case disappear. So you don't have to worry about that anymore. But I want to make something clear - as much as I want to protect you from bullshit like this, I don't want you to start expecting me to shield you from everything. I will do what I can, but I am not in the position to stretch my neck out over it."

Bucky looked from Steve to Fury. "I understand. I didn't even expect this much and I'm grateful for what you've done for us so far. And I'm also incredibly grateful that you'll help with this case." He gingerly slipped one hand with Steve's and held it firmly on his thigh. "You don't seem like that's all you had to say, though."

"I gave Steve an offer that I think you both should accept. But I want you to understand that if he accepts it, then his conditions will apply to you and your sisters as well, or else the deal will be null," Fury said pointedly. "Steve can tell you about the offer and you both can give me an answer at the end of the week."

Bucky couldn't help the concerned look he gave Steve. His mind went to worst-case scenario imagining something like they were going to go into hiding or Steve was going to have to leave them or something. But Bucky just nodded and tightened his hold on Steve. He checked his face for any reaction and just got a stone-faced look back.

Fury gave them both a nod and stood up. "Well, it was nice having this chat. Hopefully, we will see Officer Rogers back on duty soon enough." He gave them a nod and left.

Bucky immediately turned to face Steve and shook his head curiously. "What deal? What did he say to you?" He asked urgently and gripped Steve's shoulder. He moved his eyes along Steve's face and gave him a quick few kisses.

Steve grimaced a little. "He says the precinct will pay a hundred grand over ten years if we don't breathe a word about what Rumlow did. He gets transferred and an off-paper restriction order from us. But he walks free."

Bucky blinked several times and looked down. "He walks free?" He asked with contempt. He was about to tell Steve not to take the deal and to have the precinct shove it up their ass but then he decided that he needed to see what Steve was thinking first. "What do you want to do?" He asked as diplomatically and calmly as he possibly could.
"I don't know," Steve said genuinely. "That's almost nine hundred a month just to keep quiet. But Rumlow... he left me to die, Buck." His voice cracked a little. "I want to fight. I really do, but it's going to be an uphill battle and I'm worried about the girls."

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Bucky thought in silence. They could use the money a lot. But he also wanted justice for what was done to Steve. And who knows where Rumlow would be transferred to. If it was still in New York City then Bucky wouldn't be satisfied. He wanted him out of the state. And how could Bucky trust that they would really give them that money every month? It wouldn't be the first time he saw the government screw people over.

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"What are you thinking?" Steve asked, looking over at Bucky with a concerned frown. This wasn't the sort of decision that he would make on his own because this would affect all of them no matter which way he went.

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"I don't know," Bucky answered. "Too much. Thinking too much." He pulled his legs up against his chest and held them there. "What's the best case scenario if we take the deal and if we don't take the deal?"

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"If we take the deal..." Steve paused and said, "we don't have to worry about the girls being taken away and maybe we could afford our own home. We could buy a place that's ours with no shitty tenants like Dale. But if we don't... we stop Rumlow from hurting anyone else he doesn't like and we set a precedent for discrimination against gays. Maybe even get a law passed."

---

"And you're sure we can't have both?" Bucky asked and leaned back against the couch arm. "Because I like the sound of both. What about we get a house and stick it to the man? And have enough money to take care of the girls."

---

"Well, Fury isn't going to give us a penny if we talk," Steve said. "I might be able to get a settlement if he's found guilty for abandoning me," he murmured. "But that's no guarantee. And remember the risk of it. I'd have to come out in front of the whole jury." Steve would go with whatever Bucky thought best in the end but he wanted Bucky to understand how deep the stakes were.

---

"If you do that, there's no way any jury is going to look twice at you." Bucky rubbed his face and twisted some hair between his fingers. "But if we take the deal then that guy can do this shit again and maybe even try to hurt us again. A restraining order isn't going to stop him if he really wants to do damage."

---

It was possible Steve would get sympathy because he was a cop. But gay people didn't get the time of day from many. "We have a few days to think about it," Steve said. "Do you think we should tell
the girls our options?"

"No," Bucky said, "You know exactly how it'll go. Becca will say to take the deal and forget the whole thing and Lilly will say don't take the deal and get revenge on the son-of-a-bitch. Then they will argue about it with Becca trying to show the logic and Lilly making threats against Rumlow." He paused. "Wow, I never realized how much I'm like Lilly sometimes."

Steve knew how it would go but he wanted to let the girls feel involved and heard. He leaned forward and brushed their lips together. "You both are real firecrackers," he said. "She's going to drive someone crazy one day, just like you do to me," Steve teased.

Bucky put his hands on either side of Steve's face and kissed him deeply. "I love you, Steve Rogers. Don't you dare forget that." He curled back up next to Steve and added, "Let's just go make sure the girls know everything is okay and we can talk to them once we have made the decision. After that, I think it's time for bed cause I'm exhausted and I just want to lay in bed with you naked and comfortable."

Steve got that dumb, happy smile on his face that only Bucky could bring about. "I love you too, Buck," he said happily. He got up and achingly walked to the girls' room. Lilly had clearly been listening with her ear pressed against the door because he heard her scamper to her bed as they approached.

Bucky flopped on the bed and pulled both his sisters close to him and kissed their heads. "I'm really sorry you two have had to go through all this recently. But just know that I'm never letting anyone take you from me and no one can threaten my family without me doing something about it." He already lost two members of his family he wasn't going to let any more go.

Steve leaned his shoulder against the doorframe and looked at the three of them. "My boss promises that you guys aren't going to get taken away and he's going to make sure that case gets thrown out," Steve said. "So we all get to stay here."

Lilly grumbled and said, "I still don't know what child pornography means." She looked to Becca with an angry expression. She must have asked and not gotten any information on the subject.

"Pretend you never heard those words, Kiddo. Your life will be better off that way." Steve gave Becca a grateful look for not telling Lilly what it meant. He knew that she probably hounded Becca all day about it.
"The important thing is that hopefully this whole mess will be over soon and we won't have to deal with this shit," Bucky said and played with Lilly's hair. "Now it's bed time. Okay? Go get showered up and go to sleep."

Lilly chuckled. "You just want to be naked with Steve."

---

Steve blushed deeply at Lilly's accusation and said, "No, we're tired, too. It's been a long day. I had a lot of physical therapy today."

---

Bucky sighed as he got up. "Give it up, Steve. Lord knows she was listening the whole time. You can't win with her."

---

"Fine," Steve said. "We're gonna go to bed and be naked and make out and it's going to be great."


---

Bucky pointed to his sisters from the doorway. "Showers. Bed. I love you." He waited for them to say it back before pulling Steve away and over to their bedroom.

---

Steve wrapped his arms around Bucky and leaned heavily into him. "At least we got good news today. That's got to count for something, doesn't it?"

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"At least we got some good news," Bucky agreed and held Steve close to him. "Now take off your clothes and get in that bed because I want to love on you and suck you dry," he said and gave Steve a gentle push to the chest.

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Steve blushed at the demand but was quick to comply. Steve stripped himself down before getting into bed and giving Bucky a big set of bedroom eyes. "Don't strain my back," he teased.

---

"I'll be really gentle," Bucky said and pulled off his own shirt before taking Steve's hands in his and putting them on his hips. "Let's just relax and forget all this shit for a little bit okay? I just want to hold you and just be us." He started unbuttoning his pants and waited for Steve to help him slid them off.

---

Steve nodded his head and smiled down at Bucky. "Alright, Baby. I got it," he said as he pushed his pants down. He was already half-hard just from thinking about what Bucky was going to do.
Bucky stepped out of his pants and kicked them across the room. He hovered over Steve and pulled him in for a kiss before gently leaning him back into the bed. "How are you feeling? Any pain? I don't want to have sex again because you hurt yourself last time but I can still be gentle and blow you."

---

"I feel fine so far," Steve promised. He leaned up to kiss him and stroked a hand over Bucky's ass. "Tired from therapy but no pain." He smirked. "Looking forward to seeing my dick on your lips."

---

"Then I should probably get to it." Bucky bit his lip and smiled. He shimmied down Steve's body and started stroking his cock. Kneeling down on the ground by the bed, Bucky kissed Steve's thighs and kept a steady hand on him. He took a few long moments to fondle his balls as he sucked deep red marks into his skin. "Ready?" He looked up at Steve through hooded eyes.

---

Bucky really knew how to rile Steve up. He spread his legs and made desperate, little noises as Bucky teased him. He loved being marked up by Bucky - it proved that he really was Bucky's. "So ready, Baby."

---

Bucky nodded quickly and licked a wet line up Steve's dick before taking the head in his mouth. He licked around it for a while before taking the rest of his dick into his mouth. He bobbed forward and back on Steve and gripped his own growing cock tight in his hand.

---

"Yes, fuck," Steve breathed out. His head dropped back onto the pillow and he moaned low. "Don't stop, Baby. Your mouth feels so good." It was pleasurable and relaxing as all hell to let Bucky blow him.

---

Bucky pushed forward again and let Steve's cock head push against the back of his throat. He hummed happily before pulling off and licking at the tip again. Bucky stood and crawled back onto the bed, ignoring Steve's whine when he stopped touching him. He straddled Steve lightly so their dicks were next to each other. Bucky took the lube out of the drawer and coated his hand before taking both of them in one hand and pumping together.

---

Steve couldn't help the disappointed noise when he suddenly went from Bucky's mouth all over him to nothing. But when he felt Bucky's hot dick pressed against his, he felt a bit better and he automatically jerked his hips up into Bucky's hand. "So good," he groaned, gripping Bucky's hip. "I love you so much, Buck. You're so good to me."

---

"Love you too, Stevie," Bucky breathed out and his head lulled forward. "I can't wait for you to get all better. I'm going to destroy your ass and then you are going to wreck mine and we are going to fuck for days straight." His pace had quickened on their cocks as he spoke and he watched pre-come
leaking from Steve's head.

"Destroy it, huh?" Steve couldn't help but laugh a little. "I can't wait." He could feel his orgasm start to build and he dug his fingers into Bucky's hips. "Go slower, Baby, I don't want to come so soon."

"Yes, you do," Bucky growled and held them tighter. "Want to see you come for me, Steve. Come over my cock and wait for me to follow." He pulled some more until Steve was shutting his eyes and shooting come out over Bucky's fingers. Bucky pumped him through it and then let go so he could finish himself off over Steve's chest until he was coming in short spurts on Steve's chest and chin.

"Buck," Steve groaned, wanting to drag things out but it still felt good to have Bucky jerk them both off until they were messes. He panted softly as he came down from his orgasm and he wiped a streak of Bucky's come off his chin and licked his finger clean. "What's the matter, Babe? Didn't want to let me enjoy myself a little longer?" he teased.

"Not tonight no." Bucky chuckled and gently flopped next to Steve and started rubbing his come around on his chest. "You want to shower or just fall asleep like this?" He asked and tweaked Steve's nipples carefully. "Because I'm good with either."

Steve snorted and swatted at Bucky's hand when he rubbed the come in. "It's not lotion, you dope," he said. "I don't feel like getting up. I'll probably regret that decision tomorrow, though."

"But I like knowing you have my come all over your skin," Bucky protested and kept going. "Makes you smell like me too. And I really, really love that." He kissed Steve again and buried his nose in his chest. "Love you, Steve."

"You're such an ass." Steve laughed, petting his fingers through Bucky's hair. "It doesn't make me smell like you. It just makes me smell like unwashed gay guy." He scratched the back of Bucky's neck as he kissed the top of his head. "Love you too."

"Unwashed gay guy is my signature scent," Bucky said in mock defense. "Why do you think I only shampoo every other day? It's not because it's better for my hair. It's so I maintain my musk."

"You're such a hippie," Steve said fondly. "What's my signature scent?" Steve asked, giving Bucky a smile and a look that said that Bucky's answer better be good.
"Repressed Catholic cop." Bucky nodded. "It smells like communion wine and shooting ranges and... sweating in church." He sat up and curled his legs underneath him. "But only in the very best way, of course."

---

Steve threw his head back and laughed. "You're such a jerk. I love it." He smiled and touched his fingers over Bucky's side. "But my Catholicism is going to get us married one day. I'll find one priest that will let us. I'm sure of it."

---

Bucky smiled warmly at Steve. "I know you will, Baby. And I can't wait for that day. We will have your mother and my sisters with us and I'll actually wear a suit for you so I look extra nice. How's that?"

---

Steve nodded. "That would be perfect," he said. "I'll let you pick where we go for our honeymoon. Cause we have to do a honeymoon," Steve said. "I don't care where so long as it's with you."

---

Bucky's face lit up and he asked quietly, "Seneca Lake? Where my father used to take me fishing at the cabin? We can stay a few days." He pleaded with his eyes and held Steve's hands. He wasn't sure if he would like that suggestion but he hoped it would be perfect.

---

Steve had already planned to take Bucky on a regular vacation there, but if that was where he wanted his honeymoon to be, that was where they would go. "A few days? Baby, we are doing a full week at the very least." Steve squeezed Bucky's hand and smiled. "I'd love to go there."

---

"You think I can leave the girls for a full week?" Bucky laughed. "I have a hard time when they go to school every day, Steve. If we are gone for a week you are most definitely going to have to let me have alcohol so I don't start panicking."

---

"It's our honeymoon. You can do whatever you want and Becca won't be around to scold you. And you won't have to be too worried. I know my mom will keep an eye on them while we are gone," Steve said.

---

"I know, but all this with Rumlow and the child protection service has made me even more antsy about them than usual and I just never want to let them out of my sight." Bucky huffed out a sigh. "Can I have a beer, please?" He asked hopefully.

---

"I understand," Steve said sympathetically. He was a bit more confident only because he knew Fury always kept his word. "Just one beer," he conceded. "I don't want you to get into bad habits. You've
been doing so well."

---

"I can drink and be fine. I promise. It won't be like before. I'll keep my head with me, Steve," Bucky said and didn't realize how desperate his tone sounded. "Trust me. You can trust me with alcohol now. I swear."

---

"Buck, I want to trust you. I really, really do," Steve said. "You just got to give me time to, alright?" He kissed him gently and gave him a small pat. "Go have your beer. I'll still be in bed waiting, alright?"

---

Bucky looked disappointed. "Don't want it anymore," he lied and rolled over on his side, facing away from Steve. It would be just his luck anyway for Becca to wake up while he was drinking and come out to see what was going on.

---

Steve sighed and draped an arm around Bucky's waist. "I believe in you, Bucky. But I'm scared," he said softly. "I've seen what drinking can do to people. I've seen what my dad's drinking did to my mom and he's been dead for decades," he murmured.

---

Bucky clenched his jaw and listened. He knew Steve was right and had more reason than most not to approve but Bucky needed something to help and he couldn't afford things like a therapist or medication and Steve already nixed weed.

---

"How come you can't talk to me about the things that make you want to drink?" Steve asked gently, not sounding accusatory in his question, just concerned. "You know I'd do anything to help you."

---

Bucky shrugged. "Don't know. I just don't like talking about them much. Doesn't make me feel good. There's just some shit you probably shouldn't know about me, Steve. Some stuff I've done or been done to me. It's not all pretty."

---

"Baby, I'm not with you so everything is pretty," Steve said. "I'm with you cause I love you to pieces. And if telling me that stuff has even a chance at making you feel better, then I want to hear it." He kissed his shoulder.

---

Bucky rolled back and held Steve's face in his hands. "I'd rather just drink," he said matter-of-factly. "I stopped some of the shit I used to do and drinking is all I had left as an escape and I just don't think it was a good idea for me to give it up."
Steve felt himself tear up. He didn't know if he was more upset that Bucky would rather drink than talk to him or that what happened to Bucky was so bad that he didn't want to speak about it. Steve just nodded, doing his best not to get too emotional.

---

"Why are you crying?" Bucky asked hurriedly and kissed some fallen tears from Steve's face. "What did I say?" He held him close and kissed his lips several times before pulled back to look at him again.

---

Steve felt his face heat up in embarrassment. He hid his face in Bucky's chest and didn't answer at first. "I just wish I could help," he said softly. "I don't know what you can't tell me, but I'm sorry that it happened to you."

---

Bucky put a soothing hand on Steve's head and kissed his hair. "It's not that I can't tell you. I'm just scared about it. About what you would say about some of the shit. Some of the reckless stuff I did. There's more than what you already know about the sex and drinking."

---

Steve knew some more than Bucky knew he did, but he wasn't going to rat Lilly out about her telling him about Bucky’s attempted suicide. "You shouldn't be scared, Bucky," he said. "It's in the past. I'll get upset and then I'll get over it. At least then I'll know what to look for and how to help you when things get bad."

---

Bucky pursed his lips and assessed Steve. He decided he could give Steve some things tonight. Not everything, but a few things. "I was a coke abuser in high school," he said with a nod of his head like it was normal for most high-schoolers.

---

Steve grimaced a little but he reached down and held Bucky's hand in his gently. "Were you getting a lot of pressure from your parents and your teachers?" He asked, doing his best to understand.

---

Bucky chuckled. "No. It's nothing quite as noble as that." He laced his fingers with Steve's and kissed them. "I had a crush on the football captain and he was an addict. I felt like I needed to try it to impress him at a party once and then I just sort of kept doing it for about two years."

---

Steve stroked his thumb over the back of Bucky's hand. "Did your sisters ever find out about that?" He asked. Steve thought he was handling this well enough, keeping the conversation open even though Steve abhorred drugs.

---

"Don't think so." Bucky sniffled. "My father was the only one who knew and only because I told
him on one of our trips and he helped me get out of the habit." He smiled and added, "I was willing
to tell my father that I did cocaine but I wouldn't tell him that it was because of a boy."

---

Steve kissed Bucky's forehead and smiled gently at him. "Your dad sounds like he was an amazing
guy. Coke isn't an easy thing to drop. And if he got you out of using it, he must have really known
you inside and out to know what would make you stop."

---

"I honestly couldn't tell you what got me to quit. I just know that when I was starting my freshmen
year of college he bought me a really nice bag as a reward for sticking with it and not doing it
anymore," Bucky said.

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"Have I seen this bag yet?" Steve asked. "Do you still use it?" He massaged little circles over
Bucky's back. "Thank you for talking to me about this, Bucky. It means more to me than you
know."

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"I had to sell it after they died to get Lilly new shoes for school." Bucky made a face. "She needed
black buckle shoes without any holes in them. She had black buckle shoes but they had little flower
cut outs and the teachers wanted perfect uniforms."

---

"I'm sorry, Buck," Steve said sympathetically. "My mom had to sell a lot of my dad's valuables...
watches, belts... She still regrets that she didn't save anything for me once I was grown up, but I
know she really needed the money."

---

"I understand her. It's hard raising kids on your own," Bucky said. "I've only done it for four years
so not as long as her but still." Bucky paused and breathed out a sharp breath. "Well... how'd I do?
That's one more thing you know."

---

"You have twice the amount of kids she did, though," Steve said and kissed Bucky gently. "You did
such an amazing job," he praised. "I don't... I don't really have any skeletons in my closet. None that
I know of, at least. But if there's ever anything you want to ask me, I'll answer."

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"That's okay, Steve. I've got a bunch for the both of us." Bucky smiled and kissed him back. It felt a
little weird telling Steve about the coke problem but it was also sort of nice getting it out there so he
decided to keep going. "I had an affair with a married professor when I was nineteen. He had three
kids, his oldest was my age and a good buddy."

---

"Jesus," Steve swore, giving Bucky's arm a little pinch. "I think I'm more disappointed in the man
who cheated on his wife with a kid who was his son's age." Steve shook his head. "I would never be able to cheat on you."

---

"He was gay as fuck but couldn't succeed in his field if he was out so he just fucked a couple of his students to get by." Bucky shrugged. "I'd never cheat on you either, Steve." He assured him. "That's a promise."

---

Steve pet his fingers through Bucky's hair and kissed the tip of his nose. "I know you wouldn't." He trusted him like that. Bucky hadn't ever given him a reason to doubt that trust.
This chapter sees them after having decided to take Fury’s deal and go with the payout instead of fighting Rumlow. (I'm not sure why we didn't write that decision but we didn't... I even checked our archives to see if I misplaced the document with the decision process but found nothing... so this is just after.)

Over the next few weeks, Steve was getting better. It was easier to walk now and he could do minor laborious tasks even though he still wasn’t cleared for duty. After some poking around, Steve was able to get Lilly and Becca to describe Bucky's bag and he went to some local pawn shops to see if they ever had one come through. After a few false leads, he finally came by one that was promising. When he knocked on the new owner's door and explained what had happened, they were more than willing to let Steve buy it back from them. He went to a party store to wrap it up in a gift bag and he came home proudly with a big smile on his face.

---

Winter was almost here and every day Bucky complained about the cold but he actually liked it a lot more than the hot. Bucky was really happy that Steve was doing better but he also didn't get to enjoy it much because he was always at work lately. He was getting a lot of late night shifts followed by the opening shift so he was only awake for a few hours at home with his family. Bucky still wouldn't let Steve try to have sex again. He was too worried after the last time made his back hurt so much. He had also missed Lilly's last game of the season because of work and she cried about it making Bucky feel like crying too. On one particularly bad day, Bucky was making food for them all because Steve had mysteriously disappeared without notice while Bucky was at work and he hadn't said when he would be back home. When he did eventually return, he was wearing the doofiest grin that Bucky had ever seen and holding a large gift bag in his hands.

---

Steve had tried to explain to Lilly that Bucky couldn't control his work schedule but she was still upset that he hadn't come. Steve had been there to root her on at least, but it wasn't the same. He knew Bucky was having a bit of a rough time because of that and his long hours, so he thought the timing was perfect for the gift. "Hey, Baby," he greeted. Steve came over and kissed Bucky's cheek. "I got you a surprise." He held the bag over for him.

---

Bucky kissed Steve and grabbed the bag from his hands. "What is it?" He asked with a confused look on his face. "It's not my birthday, is it? It would be just like me to forget," he joked and set the bag on the kitchen table. He ripped the first layer of tissue paper off and paused when he saw what was inside. "This is..." He pulled it from the colorful gift bag and held it up. "This looks exactly like the bag my dad bought me."

---

Steve just grinned brightly as Bucky opened it. "It is the one your dad bought you," he said proudly.
"Becca and Lilly described it to me. I called up the maker and was able to get the model, so I called a few pawn shops and...yeah."

---

Bucky held it out in his hands and stared at it. He could feel quiet hot tears falling down his cheeks but he didn't care. He sat down at the table and wordlessly unzipped the main pouch. Inside was a red sewn moniker of 'JBB' that his grandmother had sewn in after he got it. "This one's mine," Bucky whispered and ran his fingers over the letters thoughtfully.

---

Steve put a hand on the small of Bucky's back and kissed his cheek. "I know how important it was to you. The person who bought it didn't mind parting with it." He played with Bucky's hair gently and gave him a tight hug. "Love you."

---

Bucky dropped the bag on the kitchen table and whipped around to jump Steve in a huge hug. He kissed him furiously and held Steve close. He couldn't believe how lucky he was to somehow manage to have Steve as his boyfriend. No one else in the world would even think about trying to do this for him but Steve managed it.

---

Steve smiled brightly and returned the kiss, though Bucky was certainly more excited and with good reason. Becca came over to see what was going on and she gasped at the sight of the bag. "Whoa, you actually found it?"

---

"It's the same one, too," Bucky said excitedly and showed her his initials. "Steve found my fucking bag, Becs." He was still in shock and all he really wanted to do was have a date night as a thank you to Steve. They could order some dinner and sit around naked and then if his back was feeling okay, Bucky could fuck Steve slow and lovingly all night. Bucky whispered in Steve's ear. "You think your mom would take the girls for the night tomorrow? I want to thank you properly."

---

Steve loved making Bucky happy and he thought it a miracle that he managed to find it relatively quickly. He put a hand up Bucky's shirt to touch his stomach. "I'm sure she wouldn't mind. You taking me somewhere nice, Barnes?"

---

Bucky chuckled and pressed his forehead to Steve's. "No, we are staying in, if you know what I mean," he said just loud enough for Steve to hear. He put a hand on the back of Steve's neck and kissed him again. "I love you, Baby. You're my own perfect man and I love you."

---

Steve's face lit up and he was a cross between excited and bashful. He nuzzled at Bucky's neck affectionately after the kiss and sighed happily. "You deserve everything I do for you, Buck. Now come on, I'm starving. Let's get dinner going."
"Okay, Baby," Bucky agreed and ran off to put his bag somewhere safe before returning to finish up making dinner. He had done his best to assemble lasagna and he hoped it was at least sort of tasty to everyone. "Becca, will you get Lilly from her room so we can eat?"

Becca glanced at them and nodded her head. When she came back, Lilly came with Raphael in her arms looking miserable because she dressed him up in a suit from one of Becca's dolls from when she was little. "Look at him, Buck!"

"Jesus, Lilly," Bucky said and snatched the cat from her gently. "The poor little guy looks absolutely pissed." He set the cat on the coffee table and helped him out of the clothes before holding him close and petting him until he purred.

"But he looked so proper and refined. Just like how Becca wanted him to be." Raphael was looking at Lilly with an expression that said she was lucky he didn't scratch the shit out of her.

"You can't dress up animals in dolls clothes," Bucky said. "What if he would have clawed his way out of them and scratched you too. Then you would have had to tell Becca that her old dolls clothes were ruined and you'd have ouchies all over you."

"Ouchies? The hell, Buck, I ain't five anymore," she said with a roll of her eyes.

Steve laughed and gave her a hug. "No swearing. Not until you're eighteen," he chided softly. He led her over to the table so she would sit for dinner.

Bucky gave Steve a confused look. He personally didn't care if Lilly and Becca swore. Lord knows he swore since the day he could speak.

"What?" Steve asked, confused when Bucky gave him that look. He didn't think he had done anything off. He hadn't scolded her for real.

Bucky put the cat down and took his seat at the table next to Steve and said to Lilly, "No more playing dress up with the cat."
As they had hoped, Steve's mom had agreed to have the girls over to her place for the night. She insisted on a sleepover anyway since she missed getting to tuck in her own son and have him around in the morning. Steve promised his mom they would have lunch together on the weekend and once the girls were escorted out, he shut the door. "Buck? They're out."

---

Bucky was in their room getting himself cleaned up and waiting for his sisters to go spend time with Sarah. He had taken a shower and washed his hair and was finished shaving his face when Steve called out that they were gone. Bucky was completely naked and intended to stay that way until the girls were on their way back home the next day. He opened their door and made his way to the kitchen where Steve was searching in the fridge for something. Bucky decided to lay on the couch as seductively as he could manage so Steve could see him with his body on display.

---

Steve was excited to have a full evening getting to love on Bucky and not have to worry about staying quiet or being modest in case the girls were around. He turned to pour himself a glass of juice and caught a naked Bucky in the corner of his eye. "Holy shit, Buck," he said in shock, but his eyes were immediately taking in the sight in front of him. Steve clearly liked it. "You look like a model."

---

"You look like you're wearing too many clothes," Bucky responded with a cheeky grin. "You should fix that while I just wait here and relax." He adjusted so his legs were spread apart so his dick was lying in wait and his inner thighs looked like they wanted to give Steve a hug.

---

Steve loved how forward Bucky was. Out of the two of them, Steve was much more subtle with his advances. He did his best to give Bucky a bit of a striptease but, really, Steve was just awkward and overeager about getting himself naked for his boyfriend.

---

Bucky watched with heavy eyes and a growing sense of love and pride as Steve undressed himself. Once he was naked, Bucky patted his lap and said, "Now come cuddle me for a little bit and let me hold my adorable officer. We've got all night to just be alone and nude."

---

"So we're not putting our clothes back on at all?" Steve beamed at that and laid down over Bucky. He immediately melted into him and started kissing up his neck. "Mmm, I love you so much," he hummed. Steve ran his hand over Bucky's torso as if this was the first time he was ever allowed to touch him. "Man, I can't remember the last time we had a night to ourselves."

---

"Probably since before you moved in," Bucky said and smiled as Steve kissed across his jaw. "I was thinking about growing my beard out for a while? What do you think? I'll be even more of a hippie than I am now."

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"I would like it. I bet it would feel real good when it rubs against my thigh while you're sucking me
off," Steve said boldly. "You should do it."

---

Bucky groaned and said, "Oh, Baby, you are getting so much better at dirty talk. I'm so proud of you. You remember when you couldn't even say that you wanted to blow me? My little officer is a man now."

---

"Stop it." Steve laughed, swatting Bucky's arm lightly. "You know I was a virgin when you met me. And I'm Catholic. My mom raised me better than to talk that way like it was nothing."

---

Bucky laughed and nuzzled his face into Steve's chest. "Still proud of you, though. Imagine what you would be doing right now if you hadn't have met me. You might be home alone eating food and reading. Or jerking off by yourself. Or trying to go to the bar and stopping yourself from hitting on the cute boys. But instead, you're here with me in your new home and you're naked on top of me and your dick is hard. Don't think I didn't notice."

---

Steve blushed deeply when Bucky brought up his erection. "Yeah, yeah, we all know I was a sad and lonely closeted bachelor cop before you came rushing into my precinct like a damsel in distress," he teased. "My life is so much better now that you're in it, Baby," he hummed. "You know what would make it better?"

---

"If I fucked you nice and slow on this couch?" Bucky offered and cupped Steve's ass. "How does your back feel? Are you up to it? We can go to the bed if that's better." He was already spreading Steve's cheeks apart and running the tip of his finger over his hole.

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Steve got flustered because he had something else in mind but Bucky's idea was far better. He already spread his legs and pressed back into Bucky's hand when he felt him tease his hole. "I'd like that a lot," he breathed out. Steve sucked a few marks over Bucky's neck. "It's been a while since you've been inside of me."

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"Oh, I fucking know. I miss your ass so much, Babe," Bucky said and held Steve to him as he sat them both up so Steve was straddling his lap. "Where do you want to make love, Steve? Here or in bed? Either way, I'm keeping you like this so I can see your face."

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"Couch," Steve said, moving a hand to tease Bucky's nipple between his fingers. "We can be in bed any other night. Let's take advantage of this." Steve nipped Bucky's lower lip seductively. "We never broke in the couch anyway."
"Want me to go get lube really quick or do you want me to eat you out first?" Bucky asked with his hands trailing all over Steve's body. "Because I'm good with either one. If you want me in you quick you might want the lube."

---

"Lube," Steve said. He gave Bucky a sultry look. "I want you inside me, Baby. I want to fall asleep sore and thoroughly fucked by that gorgeous cock of yours." He gave Bucky’s nipple a little tug. "Got it?"

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Bucky's eyes flashed. "Yes, Sir, I got it. You want to go get the lube and I'll just wait here for you to come sit on my dick?" He bit his lip and looked at Steve with big eyes. He couldn't wait to be inside him again. "I promise I won't even touch myself while I wait for you."

---

"What happened to you getting the lube?" Steve teased. He stole a kiss and said, "Play with your nipples and think of me until I come back." It was easier to get up and move around now that he was healed up a lot more. He came back with the lube in hand. "You know, I heard they make all sorts of types of this stuff."

---

"Uh-huh," Bucky nodded and reached for the bottle. "Some is flavored. Apparently, I taste pretty good covered in cherry lube." He poured some out into his hand and rubbed it into his dick a bit and waited for Steve to give him access to his ass.

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Steve straddled Bucky's hips and touched along his thighs. "Can we try that sometimes? I'm okay with having a feel for new things. So long as it's not putting stuff inside each other outside of ourselves."

---

"Yes, of course, we can try that," Bucky said happily and moved to rub a finger over Steve's hole. "One day I'll convince you to at least let me have a plug." He didn't give Steve time to answer before he was pushing his first finger inside him and moving it around with purpose.

---

Steve started to protest but what came out instead was a moan. He gripped Bucky's shoulders tightly and he leaned forward to kiss him thoroughly. "You're mistaken, Baby. I've got a little bit of a possessive thing."

---

"I'm all yours, Baby. You know that." Bucky didn't warn Steve before shoving in a second finger and fucking in and out of him. "Once you are ready I want you to sit down on me and ride my cock until I come all up inside you and you shoot your load out on me."
Steve threw his head back and moaned Bucky’s name softly. He was still new to this and having two fingers inside him was already getting him hot and needy. “You going to let me draw you? Naked on the couch with my come all over you?”

---

"I’d love nothing more, Steve." A third finger. "Are you ready for me, Babe? I want you so bad. It's been way too long. I need to be in you. Need to feel you holding me inside your ass." He worked his fingers around and kissed a line across Steve's collarbone.

---

Steve was desperately marking up Bucky’s neck and shoulders while he opened him up. "So ready, Buck," he breathed out. "Want to feel you inside of me again," Steve murmured, sounding so needy for Bucky's dick. "Gonna ride it for all it's worth."

---

Bucky pulled his fingers out, leaned back, and growled, "Then get on me, now," with a dark twist in his tone. He was getting impatient and he wanted to see Steve ride him ‘for all it's worth’ like he promised.

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Steve quickly moved himself over Bucky's cock and held it steady. Oh so eagerly, he pushed his ass down and didn’t stop until Bucky was balls deep inside him but Steve had done it a bit too quickly for his experience. He threw his head back and let out a throaty moan. "Fuck!" He swore, gripping Bucky's arms hard enough to bruise.

---

"You okay, Steve?" Bucky asked through short excited breaths. "You can just sit there for a bit if you need time to adjust." He couldn't help the small rotating movements that his hips made in response. He was way too pleased about the whole thing even though he was sorry Steve sat down before he was entirely ready and hurt himself.

---

"Yeah... just got ahead of myself." Steve remained still for a few moments, making aroused noises as Bucky circled his hips. Finally, he held onto Bucky for support and started to lift himself up, dragging up Bucky's cock before easing back down, letting his hole swallow Bucky's dick down again.

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Bucky opened his mouth in a desperate moan as Steve slid up and down on him. He held Steve's hips in support and watched his ass make his dick disappear. "You're so beautiful, Steve. So lovely like this sitting on my cock and holding on to me."

---

Steve panted softly, overwhelmed and feeling so goddamn good. "Keep talking. I love when you say nice things like that," he breathed out. He bounced some more on Bucky's cock, his own bobbing up and down from the movement.
Bucky nodded and smiled at Steve. "I don't know why we haven't done this position before because, god, it feels so good having you in my lap and split open on my cock. I love being so close to your body and being able to hold you and see your face as you ride me."

Steve pulled Bucky in close and pressed their foreheads together. He looked into his eyes, demanding his full attention as he rocked his hips in tight, little movements. He kept Bucky's dick buried deep in his ass as he tried to find the angle that would have him shouting Bucky's name.

"Jesus, Baby," Bucky whispered through short tight breaths. "I'm not gonna last. You're so tight tonight. I love this. I love you. Make me come, Steve. Help me come inside you please." He kissed his boyfriend and slipped a hand over Steve's dick to start pumping it as Steve moved on top of him.

Steve let out a low groan as Bucky started to stroke him. He held the sides of Bucky's face and kissed him deeply as he rocked faster. When Bucky's dick hit just the right spot, he threw his head back and cried out Bucky's name as he fucked himself faster on Bucky's dick. In no time, his muscles twitched around Bucky's cock as he came.

"Ah, fuck, Steve!" Bucky choked out when he clenched his ass around Bucky's dick. He shot his load up into Steve and Steve's ass juiced him of it all. "Steve, that was so great," he said hurriedly and flipped them so Steve was lying under him on the couch as he kissed him. He felt Steve's come squish against his skin and he whined happily at the thought of it.

Steve was exhausted already and was quite happy to lay down and be kissed by his wonderful boyfriend. He let Bucky do that for a little while before he gave Bucky's hair a little tug. "I want you to keep fingering me," he growled softly in his ear, wanting to feel full even after Bucky came.

"Oh my god," Bucky breathed. "Yes, of course," he said and reached down to shove three fingers inside Steve while he kissed him. "Do you want me to try to fist you? Or will that be too much? You can tell me to stop." He moved his fingers in and out and rubbed Steve's chest with his other hand.

Steve loved how eager Bucky was to follow that demand. He groaned softly and spread his legs for Bucky but looked a little nervous at the mention of fisting. "Do you think I'd be able to handle it?"

"It's up to you, Baby," Bucky said and nuzzled Steve. "I can just finger you like this for a while. I don't want to push you to try if you don't want to."
"Let's keep it to three for now," Steve said. "We'll see how it goes later tonight." He looked up into Bucky’s eyes and grinned.

---

Bucky kissed him and rubbed his other hand up his neck to hold him close, just feeling their bodies close together and fitting like puzzle pieces. "Love you so much. You love me?"

---

"I love you so much, Baby. I'm going to make a husband out of you. And who knows, maybe even a dad," Steve answered and grinned at Bucky.

---

"Oh my god, that's so hot." Bucky picked up the pace as he fingered Steve. "That never used to make me feel so good, Steve. I want to be your husband and be a dad with you so badly. Let's have a baby. We'll find one that needs a home."

---

Steve writhed underneath Bucky as he kept finger ing him. It was so quick after his first time coming tonight but he was already getting hard again. "Let's talk more about this when you're not finger ing me."

---

"Okay, Steve," Bucky said and slipped off of him to kneel on the ground. He took his fingers from him so he could adjust Steve to get access to his ass better. He stuck two of his fingers back in and followed them with his tongue going in as deep as he could.

---

Steve laid back and enjoyed Bucky eating him out. He reached down and played with Bucky's hair, moaning and saying words of praise. Bucky made him come again and by that point, he was definitely sated and wanted to give his ass a break. "Kiss me, Baby."

---

Bucky obediently crawled back up on the couch and gave Steve several open mouthed kisses. He had loved every second of their night in so far and he very much expected it to just keep getting better. "Did you want to draw me now or do you want some food?"

---

Steve hummed and lazily kissed Bucky. He licked his way into his mouth and tasted himself on Bucky's lips. "Let me draw you first and then we can worry about dinner," he decided. He pet a hand through Bucky's hair. "Find a pose you'll be comfy in for a while."

---

Bucky readjusted as Steve got off the couch. He decided to lay on his side with his head on the arm of the couch. "Will you put on some music before you start? You can pick what we listen to. Also, I need some water if you wouldn't mind."
Steve put on The Police because he wanted to be a little selfish and it was rare that he got to pick his music because Bucky and Lilly were record hogs. He got a glass of water and passed it over before settling down to draw. "This was a great idea."

"Am I allowed to talk while you draw or do you need me completely still?" Bucky asked and drank some of his water. He still hadn't seen any of Steve's drawings so for all he knew Steve could be more of a blue period Picasso and draw him all abstract or he could be a realist and draw him like a picture.

"You're allowed to talk. I can't imagine you being able to keep that big mouth of yours shut for long anyway." Steve winked at him and ducked his head down to draw.

"You like my big mouth," Bucky chided. "My big mouth just helped you orgasm for the second time tonight. And it'll probably do it again after we eat so I mean..." He trailed off with a laugh and watched Steve as he glanced up at Bucky and went back to drawing carefully again. "Let's talk about our kid, yeah? What are they going to be like?"

Steve's eyebrows knit together as he concentrated on drawing the outline of Bucky's body. He couldn't stop the smile as he thought of their future kid. "I don't know if we would have a boy or girl. But no matter what, our kid is going to be smart as hell."

"You sure about that? If they pick up anything from me then it won't end up being that bright." Bucky chuckled to himself. "It'll love cereal for dinner, though, I know that. And have good taste in music or so help me I'll cry."

"You're smart, Baby. Anyone who can keep two kids in line and a roof over their heads single-handedly is smart," Steve said. But if you make our kid eat cereal for dinner, I'll give it the worst taste in music," he teased.

"It'll be half Barnes and that means loving cereal, dammit," Bucky said and moved his leg before remembering he needed to stay in the same spot. "What about names? What names do you like, Steve? Supposing we get a baby that still needs a name of course."

"If it's a girl, I would want to name it after my ma," Steve said. He gave Bucky a little look when he moved his leg but then went back to drawing. "If it's a boy we can name it James. Or Seamus. What names do you think?"
"Seamus? You are Irish." Bucky laughed. "We can name a girl after your mom but I get to choose the middle name. And our boy won't be Seamus or James. I don't want a James Jr. on my hands. What about Ricky? Short for Richard."

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"If you get to veto James Jr. and my Irish heritage, I'm vetoing Richard on the grounds that I'm not letting the kid of two gay men risk having the nickname of 'Dick',' Steve said.

---

"We'd call him Ricky!" Bucky grumped back. "Fine. No Richard. And no James Jr. for sure. What about Leland or Jeffrey? Or Steve Jr. if you want a junior." Bucky scratched at an itch on his arm and absentely stared at the wall. He was getting a little tired of listening to The Police but he did say that Steve could pick so he dealt with it.

---

"Where are you getting these name from?" Steve laughed. The two of them clearly had a different taste in baby names. "Your parents picked good names for all of you. Why can't you?" He teased playfully.

---

"Leland was my father's middle name and Jeffrey is just a nice name, you ass," Bucky said and was tempted to push Steve over but he didn't want to mess up his drawing. "Fine. Nicholas, Christopher, Brandon, Benjamin, Travis, Kenny, Peter, Marcus."

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"Well, Leland can be his middle name too," Steve said. "I like all the other names except Brandon and Marcus," he decided. "And what sort of things do you think our son or daughter would like to do? Maybe they will be a rock star."

---

"Maybe they will be able to draw," Bucky offered and beamed at Steve. "Or be athletic like Lilly. Maybe they will be loud and pushy like her too. Or subtle and pushy like me. Or shy and quiet like Becca. Or shy and innocent like you."

---

"Buck," Steve said, pausing for dramatic effect before continuing, "They're our kid. They're going to be good at everything. And they're going to have the best traits from all of us. You think your sisters would like being aunts?"

---

"I think they'll love it. It'll be one more thing for them to pretend to be in charge of." Bucky frowned. "Although, I wish it could look like the two of us, you know? My hair, your eyes, my nose, your jaw, your lips, your ears, your laugh, your smile."

---

Steve gave Bucky a longing glance. "I wish that could happen, too." He sighed. He would've loved
a baby that had long, hippie hair like Bucky and talked just like him. "Too bad science hasn't come far enough for that. It would be so nice to have a Baby Barnes around."

---

"A Baby Barnes? It'd be a Baby Rogers-Barnes. You wouldn't want a little five-year-old Baby Barnes with messy unwashed hair swearing up a storm and drinking a beer. Your little Catholic heart couldn't take that."

---

"Please, as if I would ever let our kid be unwashed and use foul language," Steve said with a dismissive wave of his hand. "Man, I'm going to love that kid so much. Just like I love your sisters, Buck."

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"That's what I'm saying, Steve," Bucky huffed. "I'll have to be doing a lot of compromising while we raise that kid, aren't I? I have a feeling my parents raised me a lot different than you were raised. Not saying either way is right or wrong. I'll just have to not be so much like my parents and be more like you."

---

"What?" Steve asked, sounding surprised. "No, Baby, I don't want you to be like me," he said. Just because Steve wanted to be the 'by the rule book' parent didn't mean that he wanted Bucky to do the same. "Why would you think that?"

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"Well," Bucky started. "I don't want us fighting about how to raise our kid all the time. And if I just go with what you say it'll be easier. I mean I've raised my sisters for four years my way so I can raise our baby your way and be fine. I'd hate for our kid to see us fight about something like that."

---

"Buck, I don't want you to go with my way just cause it's easier," Steve said. "Our kid doesn't have to see us arguing over which way to raise them cause we can talk about it behind closed doors. What if you have a better method for something? I don't want our kid to lose out."

---

Bucky looked at Steve for a second and decided to bypass the conversation instead. "So Sarah May Rogers-Barnes or Christopher Leland Rogers-Barnes? Right?" Or you want a different first name for the boy?"

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"This poor kid will have the longest name ever," Steve chuckled. "I like both names," he said. "Now all that's left is to get married and find a kid to adopt," he said, as if it were that easy.

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"Guess that's all that's left." Bucky sighed, knowing that it would take a long time for any of this to happen if it does even happen. "How's the search for the priest going?" He asked. "Also, have you
talked to the girls to ask for my hand, yet? I overheard you talking to your mom on the phone about how you thought that'd be cute and a special way to include them. Obviously, I think it's unnecessary to ask for permission to marry someone these days but I kind of like it too."

---

"I've asked a few priests so far during confession. Nobody at my church seems willing and I think I'm going to have to switch churches actually." Which was a shame since he went there since he was born. Steve blushed when Bucky admitted to overhearing him talk to his mom about the whole thing. "And, no, I haven't spoken to the girls about it yet. I don't want to do anything until I find a priest first...which could take a while." He sounded sad but determined.

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Bucky wanted to reach out and hold Steve. He knew this was hard on him. He was being rejected by one of the institutions he held so dear. His faith was important to him and being denied something this big was hard on him. Especially since he believed that God himself didn't have a problem with it. "You'll find one, Baby. Does it have to be Brooklyn? Even if we found one out in Buffalo or something, would that work?"

---

"I'll fly us across the sea if it means finding a priest who would marry us," Steve said. He was only looking in Brooklyn since he couldn't travel far while he was recovering. He finished up the drawing and passed it over to Bucky to look. It was very true to reality and Bucky looked absolutely gorgeous lying on the couch with deep shadows lining his muscles.

---

Bucky took the drawing and stared at it wide-eyed for a bit. "Holy shit," he said. "Steve, this is seriously impressive. I look hot." He rolled onto his back on the couch and held the drawing out so he could see. "How come you've never shown me your drawings before? This is really fantastic. Although I think you made my dick a little bigger than it is in reality. Are you trying to tell me something? Wish I was bigger for you, Babe?" He chuckled and glanced at his boyfriend.

---

Steve blushed at the praise. "I guess it never really came up, you know," he murmured. He was always a little hesitant to show off his artwork since he didn't know how to take a compliment. "And that's how big your dick actually is. You've got a real monster between your legs, Babe."

---

"Monster. Hah!" Bucky laughed. "It's the healthy side of average, let's say that." He reached a hand out for Steve and said, "Come here. I want to kiss you and thank you for the beautiful artwork. Then we can make some dinner or order something in."

---

Steve sat in Bucky's lap even though he was the larger of the two and he started to kiss his face and touch him affectionately. "It's better than average, give yourself some credit."

---

"Shut up, Rogers." Bucky giggled and let Steve kiss him all over. "I do love my picture, though.
Thank you, Baby." He held Steve close and nuzzled at his chest for a moment before pulling back to look at Steve. "I'm hungry. You want to cook or you want to order delivery? The Chinese place will bring us food. I'll just put on pants before they get here."

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"Let me cook. I like cooking and I don't want to have you put any clothes on until the girls come back tomorrow," Steve confessed. "What are you in the mood to have? And I swear if you say cereal, I'm going celibate."

---

"You wouldn't dare. All I'd have to do is jerk off next to you in bed and you'd be all over me in seconds," Bucky observed. "But, no, I don't want cereal tonight. How about baked potatoes? That's easy and fast. We can get back to something more fun quicker."

---

"I would dare. All I got to do is pray to God to give me strength and I can resist temptation. He probably thinks I need a break anyway," Steve joked. He already was going to the kitchen to start on the potatoes. "You want to eat some meat with the potatoes? We have chicken."

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Bucky smirked and said, "Dear God, hear my prayer. Please let me not want to jump my boyfriend’s bones at all times. He has an unhealthy love of cereal. Amen."

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"You're such a jerk," Steve laughed. He rolled his eyes as he started to prep some chicken as well. "Bucky, you're going to love this. I picked up some new spices so this chicken will have plenty of favor."

---

"I know I should have tried making some sort of joke about eating your meat instead but nothing felt quite right in the moment." Bucky chuckled to himself and got up from the couch to be nearer to Steve. "But, yes, new spices sound great. I'm sure it'll be delicious."

---

Steve smirked. "It would have been too easy to make that sort of joke," he said. "You got to wait for a real good time to make a joke like that. You know, something special instead of easy." He kissed his cheek and set the chicken in the oven. "So for Thanksgiving, do you want to do something here or go to my mom's?"

---

"Well, if your mom will have us, that would be great. I know Becca likes talking with her and her place is bigger than ours." Bucky carded his hands through his hair and pulled it back into a messy ponytail. He was feeling a little cold so he grabbed his jacket from the back of one of the chairs and draped it over his shoulders.
"My mom would love that," Steve said. "She may even insist that we all spend the night so she could make breakfast too. She really loves you. I know she spends more time with the girls. But she probably would go to lunch with you anytime you ask."

---

"I'd like that. I might take her up on that. I need to discuss Baby Steve with her. Get all the details of what you were like growing up." Bucky slumped into one of the chairs by the table and stared at his drawing again. He needed to figure out where to put it. He could put it in with his photo albums but he also sort of wanted to frame it but he also didn't want the girls coming into his room and seeing a framed picture of their naked brother.

---

"I was either sick or getting myself into some sort of trouble," Steve said. "Not much to hear about there." He was sad that he couldn't ask Bucky's parents what he was like when he was a little kid. Steve saw Bucky staring at his drawing again. "You know, I could do drawings of all of you guys. G-rated ones that we could hang up."

---

"If you can get Lilly to sit for as long as I did so you can draw her, I will be impressed," Bucky said and set his drawing back on the table. "The kid can hardly sit down for dinner. And I'm always getting calls that she's a distraction in class."

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"I'll tell her I'll help her play hooky from school one day if she sits," Steve said. "I worry about her sometimes. She's a good kid but she scares me that she won't finish school."

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"She'll finish," Bucky assured him. "It might be hard for her but she will finish. I doubt she will go to college, though. But she'll have to finish high school." Bucky was determined to see at least both of them through high school. Even if only Becca went to college, he was fine with that. He was even fine if Becca didn't go to college but he doubted that she wouldn't.

---

"She's going to be hell for her first boss whenever she gets that first job," Steve snorted. "No matter how much you try to teach her, she's going to try and get away with as much as she can. She's like... the exact opposite of Becca in some ways."

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"They are so much like my parents," Bucky said. "I really wish you could have met them because you'd know exactly what I mean. Becca is just like my father and Lilly is exactly like my mother. I don't know how they turned out that way and I got a mix of the two but somehow they did."

---

Steve nodded in agreement. "I'll meet your parents after we have a long and happy life together. And then I'll finally be able to see how similar your sisters are to them," Steve said.
Bucky knew what Steve believed in but he wasn't so sure about all that. He couldn't quite grasp the idea that people went somewhere after they died and you could see them again when you died too. To Bucky, it seemed like a hopeful dream that wouldn't come true. But he would never say that to Steve who believed so strongly in it.

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Steve chattered idly with Bucky as he got dinner ready. Once it was on the table, he took a seat and looked at Bucky with a loving expression. "So what else were you thinking of doing tonight?"

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"I have no idea, honestly." Bucky shook his head. "We could just watch TV for a bit and cuddle. Or I can try dancing again if you really want me to. Or we could play a card game for two players." He really hadn't thought this through. He should have planned some things for them to do - something fun and different.

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"We can play backwards strip poker," Steve suggested with a smirk. "If you lose, you got to put clothes back on," he said. "Or cuddling while watching TV sounds good still."

---

"Steve, you know you're bad at poker," Bucky chided and ate some of his potatoes. "Last time we tried to play, you ended up with all of Lilly's chores for three days."

---

"I know, but it's still fun to try and pretend that I'm good at it," Steve responded. "And if I practice, I can maybe beat her eventually."

---

"I wish I had some fun talent like you do with drawing. If we had a guitar or piano I could play something but that's all I really can do." Bucky looked around to the living room as if a guitar would miraculously appear for him. "Let's cuddle and watch TV until we want to have sex again or fall asleep."

---

Steve looked Bucky over once and said, "I'd love to be serenaded by you sometime. We got to get you a guitar. Maybe Santa will bring one."

---

"Santa, Steve, really?" Bucky laughed. "Not even Lilly still believes in him and it took her a while not to. But if you were to get me a guitar I wouldn't mind. But you don't have to. All I want this Christmas is to be able to get a VCR and some tapes for the girls and find you something really nice if I can."

---

"Aw, I met you guys too late for her to still believe in Santa?" Steve had been looking forward to making reindeer paw prints and baking cookies for Santa with her. "They're gonna have a great
Christmas this year. “I want to get something good for the girls as well. And you, too. Also, we've got the pay from the precinct coming in soon.”

---

"Yeah, I guess there is that," Bucky mumbled. He still felt like they might have made a mistake. He knew it was safer and more beneficial for his family to take the deal but it also meant no justice for Steve, and Rumlow got to keep working somewhere else and have the potential to do this again.

---

If he didn't have Bucky and his sisters to worry about, Steve probably would've gone after Rumlow without a second thought. "I know it wasn't an easy choice to take the money," Steve said. "But we got to make the most of it."

---

Bucky nodded and ate some more. "I know. I just hate that he didn't get any consequence for nearly killing you. He almost took you away from me and he still gets to live a normal life a few towns over and keep the same job."

---

Steve shrugged his shoulders. "I know. It eats away at me too," he said. "But I'm alive and we won't have to worry about finances for a long time. We got to count our blessings."

---

Bucky didn't like how Steve sometimes got a little churchy on him. Things like 'count your blessings' were things that people wrote in their condolence cards when his parents died. Like it was just that easy to take account of the good while you were in so much bad. "You're alive but you're still hurt, Steve."

---

"Like I said," Steve said softly. "I count my blessings. Because since I've been home from my injury, I had the time to find your backpack, and the days off to spend with you and the girls. And now we will have the money to give them a Christmas that they'll love." He gave Bucky a sympathetic look. "Rumlow will answer for what he did. And all I can do now is pray that he answers before he hurts anyone else."

---

Bucky finished up his meal before nodding and standing from the table. "It's off topic, but I have a little surprise for you. You may not like it but I thought I'd at least try. If you don't like it, you can just tell me and we can forget the whole thing."

---

Steve didn't mind the change of subject because he didn't want to risk upsetting Bucky by being overly preachy. "Oh yeah?" He asked, watching Bucky as he got up. "What is it?"

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"I have to go get it." Bucky smiled shyly and bit his lip. "I need you on the couch with your eyes
closed and you can't peek until I come back and tell you to." He quickly scampered off to his room
to get the surprise ready and hoped Steve was on his way to the couch.

---

Bucky looked so cute when he got all shy like that. It made Steve smile and he was quick to hurry
off to the couch. He closed his eyes obediently and didn't give in to the temptation of peeking.

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Back in his room, Bucky rummaged around his side of the closet for the bag he had hidden towards
the back. He gingerly removed the contents and hastily put them on before running to the mirror to
look himself over once before going back out to Steve. "Eyes closed. No peeking. If you don't like
the surprise, I'll fix it. I'll forget the whole thing and we can do something else." Bucky moved to
stand in front of Steve and added, "I know we said no clothes but..." He was standing in front of a
still unaware Steve wearing tight see-through green lace women's panties and an open leather jacket
that hugged his arms. "You can open your eyes now."

---

Steve waited until Bucky gave him permission to open. He blushed deeply when he saw what
Bucky was dressed in and poor Steve looked like he didn't quite know what to make of it. "Uh..." he
said dumbly. "I mean... you look good in anything, Baby," he said as he reached out to pet a hand
over Bucky's thigh.

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"You hate it," Bucky said and nodded. "I should've figured. You're Catholic. I'll just go take it off.
I'm sorry, Steve. I just wanted to try something new," he said and slipped the jacket off as he started
back towards his room.

---

"Buck-" Steve got up and grabbed his hand to stop him. "I don't hate it, Baby, I just don't...get it," he
said. He tried to guide him back towards the couch. "I'm happy you wanted to try something new it's
just..."

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"It's not to get. It's just fun and sexy. Just a little splash of something out of the ordinary - something
slightly taboo. Have you never worn women's underwear before?" Bucky asked and popped the
jacket over the side of the couch. "Everyone tries it at least once, right?"

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"I don't see what's sexy about covering up what I'd rather see naked," Steve said slyly in response.
He sat down with Bucky and kissed up his neck. "I never have tried women's underwear, Buck," he
answered. "I don't get the point in taboo either. I thought that we weren't supposed to feel like our
love is taboo, you know?"

---

"It's not our love that's taboo about it, Steve." Bucky huffed. "It's me in these." He pointed to his
crotch. "Whatever." He slipped the panties off quickly and stuffed them in the pocket of his jacket.
Bucky knew Steve was a pretty ‘Plain Jane’ sort of man, and especially lover, but Bucky was a bit
more adventurous and wild and doing things like wearing thongs or being tied up in bed were really exciting to him. He loved Steve but he was starting to see that he was probably never going to be tied up again and he wouldn't get to use toys again and he probably wouldn't be smacked on the ass either.

---

Steve was doing his best to be open-minded about this. It didn't exactly feel great when Bucky took the underwear off and looked disappointed. "I don't get what I'm doing wrong," Steve said in a frustrated tone. "I love you. I want to do what makes you happy and feel sexy, but I don't want you to give me that look when I don't react to something new the way you want me to."

---

"You're not doing anything wrong," Bucky said and slipped a comforting hand over Steve's thigh. "I just guess I need to get over that what I like probably isn't what you like. I mean I don't think it's fair that I'm not allowed to use my dildo but you said not to so I won't. But it just seems like every time I try to open up sexually and show you what I think is a good time you just shut it down because you aren't familiar with it."

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"Well, you can warn me a little next time, maybe. Cause the last two new things you wanted to try, I didn't have much time to process. I'm new to this whole gay thing. And I don't mean this in a bad way, but you've been with all sorts of people. I've only ever been with you, so you've had more time to play around with things," Steve sighed. "Talk to me," he said. "Tell me something that you like that we haven't done before."

---

Bucky retreated into himself a little more. "Doesn't matter. Let's just drop it and watch TV," he grumbled and looked to Steve before adding, "You know I don't do well with talking. I'm a man of action and spontaneity, not plans and discussion."

---

Steve frowned. He didn't like that Bucky didn't feel comfortable talking. He could've just dropped it, but Steve was determined to show Bucky that he was willing to try things. He grabbed the underwear from the jacket pocket and put it on. Steve didn't feel any different but he had that stubborn look on his face.

---

Bucky's face softened when he saw the green lace pulled across Steve's crotch. "If you don't feel comfortable you can take them off." He smiled up at his boyfriend. "For the record, you look fucking gorgeous in them. But I don't want you wearing them just to make me feel good."

---

"Well, tough," Steve said. "Cause I'm only wearing them to make you feel good." It was more important to Steve that Bucky got the things that made him happy than it was to understand why it made him happy. "And the only way these are coming off is if you take them off so you can put them back on."

---
"Do you want me to put them back on so you don't have to wear them anymore?" Bucky asked. "Honestly, Steve, you can stop this. I think we need to work on sexual compromise but we don't have to do that tonight. I don't want to fight about anything else while we have our night alone. I'll just go put the panties with Phillip."

---

Steve took them off and put them back in the jacket pocket. "Alright. I'm happy to cuddle and watch some crap TV," he said. Steve pulled Bucky into his lap and kissed up his neck. "I love you, Baby."

---

"I'm sorry, Steve," Bucky answered and curled up in Steve's lap and against his chest. "I'll work on talking more, I promise." He paused then looked up at Steve and touched his face gently.

---

"You don't have to be sorry, Baby." Steve kissed his neck and played with Bucky's hair lightly. "I know you are going to work on it. I know it's not first nature. But I am here to listen when you want to talk."

---

Bucky remembered how it was helpful that one night that Steve just sat and listened to what he had to say because he wanted Bucky to be comfortable talking to him about things. He thought he should try that again. "Lost my virginity at fifteen - to an eighteen-year-old college senior. He was very kind and gentle and nothing but good to me. We were at a party."

---

Steve was surprised when Bucky started to open up but he was happy that his boyfriend was still willing to talk to him. "Did you two stay together for a little while?" He kissed his cheek. "Was it good? I don't think it could top my first time having sex, though."

---

"No, we couldn't date," Bucky said. "He had a couple other boyfriends his age and he was worried that someone would find out about me and he'd be arrested for having sex with a minor even if he was only just eighteen by a couple months. It was good for my first time, yeah. Like I said, he was so good to me. I think he just wanted me to enjoy myself and get rid of my virginity with someone who was going to care. He did that for a lot of people, I heard."

---

"Is it a normal thing for people to not care?" Steve asked with a frown. "Is it just with gay guys? Or do people usually not care if your first time is good or not?" Bucky had been so amazing to him. Steve didn't know how he would react if someone was rough or rude with him.

---

"It can be pretty typical of everyone. I knew girls who had sex with their boyfriends who they had dated for a long time who still said they had a terrible time because the guys were insensitive," Bucky answered.
"That's awful," Steve said with a frown. "Makes me more appreciative that you made sure I felt good and comfortable." He smiled and kissed Bucky's temple affectionately. "Thank you for being so sweet with me."

---

"Of course, Baby. I care about you so much." Bucky pulled Steve in for a kiss and tugged him down so Steve was lying on top of him again. "Want another one or are you good for tonight?" Bucky asked, half hoping Steve wanted him to keep making these strange confessions and half hoping Steve just wanted to fuck again.

---

Steve carded his fingers through Bucky's hair. "I think we can put off talking for a little while," he hummed. "I'm a little more than just interested in hearing you shout my name, huh?"

---

"What are you going to do to me, Rogers?" Bucky asked with a sly grin and started massaging his hands down Steve's back to his ass. "And where do you want me while you do it?"

---

"I was thinking about the shower," Steve said. "It's kind of small but if I press you up against the wall, it could work." Steve seemed confident that they wouldn't slip.

---

Bucky bit his lip and smiled. "Okay, Steve. Let's take a shower," he said enthusiastically and wriggled out from under his boyfriend to get up. "You want to grab that lube and bend me over the sink and get started?"

---

"Nah," Steve said. "I want to bend you over the sink and eat your ass," Steve stated with a wide smile. He liked talking a bit dirty sometimes and it was still the truth - he wanted to lick him open.

---

"Yes, Sir." Bucky trotted towards their bathroom with Steve in tow. Once they got there, Bucky waited for Steve to take his body under his control and mold Bucky to wherever he wanted him first.

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Steve happily trotted to the bathroom and, out of habit, shut the door behind them. "Hands on the counter and spread your legs for me, Handsome," Steve purred.

---

Bucky obeyed and stuck his ass out a little to entice Steve. He could also see himself in the bathroom mirror and he was fully expecting for it to be pretty hot to see what sort of faces he made while Steve opened him up.

---

Steve kneeled behind Bucky and grabbed his ass firmly in both hands and spread his cheeks as wide
as he could. Steve leaned in and kissed over the hole a few time just to tease him before swirling the

tip of his tongue around it.

"Are you going to just play around or are you going to get it inside me?" Bucky asked with a

humorous edge. He did enjoy the teasing kisses but he was also pretty damn desperate to have at

least something in his ass.

"Patience is a virtue," Steve hummed. Just because Bucky complained, he purposely took more time

teasing him, pressing his tongue against the muscle but not pushing in. At long last, he finally pushed

one finger inside of him.

"Fucking finally," Bucky gasped out and pushed back against the finger. "More, Baby, please," he

said and gave a quick look back to Steve who was staring at his finger disappearing into Bucky's ass.

"It was a brilliant idea to have a night to ourselves."

"You're just saying it was a good idea cause it was your idea," Steve chided. He pushed a second

finger inside and scissored them so he could stick his tongue in the space it made.

"Ah, fuck," Bucky breathed. "Well, it was a good idea. I don't see you complaining about having

some time to ourselves." He shut up then and let Steve work him open. He didn't know if he was

planning on getting his dick inside him before they got into the shower or after but he knew that

Steve didn't grab the waterproof lube from the closet.

Steve didn't even know there was a different type of lube for water. He took his sweet time getting

Bucky ready and open. He pulled his hole open wide and thrust his tongue in a few more times

before giving Bucky's ass a small slap. "Alright, in the shower."

Bucky gave him a look. "You want to get inside me and we will shimmy over there or are we going

to use the waterproof lube? Cause there's no way I'm letting you try with a wet dick cause that can

hurt."

"Waterproof lube?" Steve scoffed, clearly thinking that Bucky was pulling his leg. "Quit messing

around, you dope," he said fondly as he pulled out a rubber mat he'd been meaning to put in the

shower. Now they wouldn't have to worry about slipping.

"Steve, I'm serious." Bucky gave a confused smile. "What do you think the point of lube is? If water

was okay to use then no one would need to buy lube anyway. We'd just wet your dick and get
going." He started for their room to grab the lube and came back quickly.

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"No, I mean the waterproof part. Why won't normal lube work? I'm a cop, not some scientist," he said. Steve wasn't going to complain so long as Bucky was comfortable and they got to have sex.

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"Oh, it washes off. Like in no time, it's gone and you've just got an oily residue on you that doesn't really do much," he said and handed the lube to Steve. "But this stuff, won't just wash right away."

---

"Oh." Steve took it and smiled up at Bucky. He set up the shower so it was the temperature that Bucky liked. "Well, let's get you in here, Baby. I wanna finger you while you wash your hair."

---

"While I wash my hair?" Bucky grinned. "I can do that. You have a thing for my hair, don't you? It's a good thing I didn't cut it after all. I am going to grow out a beard for a bit, though, see how you like it."

---

"Yeah," Steve said with a grin. "I like the idea of you doing normal stuff while I'm inside you." Steve kissed along Bucky's neck. "Please don't ever cut your hair. I love it so much. And I would love to see a beard on you, too."

---

"You got it, Baby," Bucky said and started pouring shampoo into his hands. "Do I still look cute with my hair all wet or do I look more like a drowned rat?" He asked right before Steve stuck two lubed fingers up his ass.

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"You look like a drowned rat," Steve answered playfully and moved his fingers inside of him. He kissed Bucky's shoulder and smirked. "The most handsome drowned rat I've ever seen."

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"You're the worst," Bucky gritted out and started to wash his hair. "But I also love you so there isn't much I can do about it." He kept on washing his hair and feeling Steve playing around inside him. He was getting a little antsy and really wanted Steve to just get his cock in and start fucking. That was the whole point of getting in this little shower together and putting the mat down anyway.

---

Steve knew that Bucky was desperate to get fucked and that was why Steve took his time. He waited until Bucky was done washing his hair before he looked even remotely like he was going to put his dick inside him. "Can you lean against the wall and show me how ready you are?"

---

Bucky nodded and turned to press his chest to the wall of the shower. His dick was shoved against it
too and he tried to not touch it. Instead, he reached back and held his cheeks apart and shoved his ass out towards Steve so he could see it open and want him.

---

"Christ," Steve breathed out. "You look so sexy." He started to stroke himself as he coated the lube on his dick. He stood behind Bucky and slowly pushed himself inside of him while he held him steady with one hand.

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"Yes, god, Steve, Baby," Bucky said and immediately pushed back against him to pull him all the way inside. "Fuck me, Steve," he growled and shot a look behind him at his boyfriend so he knew he wasn't waiting anymore.

---

Bucky deserved to get what he wanted. Steve grabbed his hip firmly and started thrusting hard and quick into his boyfriend. Steve let out soft, little moans because Bucky's ass felt so goddamn good. "You like that, Buck?"

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"Yes, I fucking love it. Love your cock. Love you," Bucky bounced with Steve's movements and held his hands on the wall to keep himself steady. "Want you like this every day - all the time. Want to be connected with you."

---

Steve bit marks onto Bucky's shoulder as he gave him everything he had. His balls smacked into Bucky's ass with every thrust and he could barely keep himself together. "Yes," he agreed. "We are going to get this every day, Baby. Cause we're going to be together for the rest of our lives."

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"You and me, Steve," Bucky barely got out as Steve was pounding into him. He loved this. This closeness was so important to them both and he liked when Steve let himself lose a little control and go all out.

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"Yeah, Baby. You and me," Steve panted out. His fingers dug in a bit more, bruising Bucky's skin a little. "God, you feel so good. You're gonna make me come, Buck."

---

"Come inside me, Steve," Bucky whispered. "Then stick your fingers back in so none of it can leak out. Will you do that for me?" He asked sweetly and pulled his hair back on his head. It was wet and sticking to his face and he was getting annoyed by it.

---

"Yes." Steve didn't last a whole lot longer. Within minutes, he was coming deep inside of Bucky. Without question, he pulled out once he milked his orgasm for all he had and he put three fingers easily inside of Bucky.
"Now turn me around, get on your knees, and suck me off with your fingers still inside," Bucky said and put a gentle hand on Steve's hip. "Please, Baby, I want your mouth on me," He begged and gripped Steve.

Steve's mouth hung open. He was all too willing to comply but Bucky's ideas still could surprise him in the best of ways. He sunk down slowly to his knees while still easily finger-banging his boyfriend. Steve leaned his face forward and licked his way up Bucky's shaft before taking the head into his mouth.

"Fuck yeah," Bucky grinned and started fucking into Steve's mouth. "I won't last long, Steve. I promise." He reached behind him to feel Steve's hand on his ass and he took another finger and encouraged it inside his hole.

Steve slipped another finger inside Bucky and met little resistance. He enthusiastically sucked him off, bobbing his head along Bucky's cock and swallowing him all the way down.

"That - that's it, Babe," Bucky said hurriedly. "I'm gonna come. I'm almost -" It took a few more seconds of Steve taking him into his throat before Bucky gasped out Steve's name and gripped his shoulders as he shot into his mouth.

Steve closed his eyes as he felt Bucky shoot hot come down his throat. He pulled back and coughed once before licking him clean. "God, you're the best, Baby." Steve didn't stop thrusting his fingers in and out of his ass.

"Kiss me," Bucky whispered desperately and looked down at Steve's loving eyes. "Kiss me. Please." An unusual sense of insecurity and fear came over Bucky and he just wanted to be held by Steve and loved and cared for. He wasn't sure where this feeling was coming from but he was anxious to be curled up against his boyfriend.

Steve obeyed immediately. He stood up and wrapped an arm strongly around Bucky's waist. The other tangled his fingers in his hair and he kissed him slow and deep. When he broke for air, Steve brushed their noses together. "I love you so much."

"I love you too." Bucky smiled weakly before adding. "Don't ever leave me. I need you now. I don't know what I would do without you, Steve." Bucky reached a hand up to start massaging the back of Steve's neck while he locked eyes with him.
Steve's face fell at the thought that Bucky would worry about him leaving. "Baby, you are so strong. You don't need me. But I still will never leave you," he promised. Steve hugged him tight and tucked Bucky's head against his chest. "Your family is my family now."

Bucky rested his head against Steve and held his hands firmly against his back. He slipped his tongue out to give a quick playful lick to Steve's chest before pulling back and asking, "You want to dry off and cuddle in front of the TV? I really want to be little spoon right now."

"Of course," Steve said. "No complaining allowed." Steve warned softly as they dried off and then picked Bucky up - which he knew would result in Bucky complaining about Steve's wound. He was working on carrying heavier things in physical therapy anyway. Steve carried Bucky to the couch and pulled the blanket over the both of them. He was a little out of breath but he still held Bucky flush against his chest. "How's that?"

"I think you overdid it, Officer," Bucky scolded but snuggled back against Steve anyway. "You could've hurt yourself and then dropped me then we both would have been in pain." He flicked the TV on and found a station that was playing 1950s sci-fi movies.

"But I didn't," Steve teased. He rubbed a hand over Bucky's chest and smiled fondly as he watched TV with him. "Is there anything I can do to make you feel for certain that I'll never leave you?" He asked. "I don't want you to feel insecure over us."

Bucky sighed and glanced back at his boyfriend. "I think sometimes I just get a little worried. It's just because people tend to either die on me or leave. And you almost died already." He paused. "I worry that Becca will go to college someplace across the country and I'll never see her. And I worry that Lilly will move out to South America to play soccer with better players. And I worry that you'll get hurt again but this time not make it. Or you'll wake up one day and realize that I'm not worth all the trouble and you'll move out."

Steve didn't have any control over whether he got hurt on the job or not. But he could reassure Bucky in other ways. "Baby, you've raised the girls better than to forget about you. It's possible they could move. But they love you and I'm sure they'd call every day and visit when they could. And why would you ever think I would feel that you're trouble for me?"

"I don't know." Bucky pulled Steve's hand up to his face and kissed it lightly before holding it to his chest. "I guess I just get so scared about it. I know you wouldn't leave me but what if I fucked up bad enough that you just couldn't be with me anymore?"
"Buck," Steve said softly, petting a hand over his arm. "You're not going to fuck up bad. You'll mess up, just like any of us will. But I couldn't ever leave you. I love you too damn much and anytime we have a fight, it won't outweigh all the good you've already given me."

---

Bucky nodded and nuzzled closer to Steve and watched some form of alien monster taking over what was supposed to be Manhattan. After Bucky went to see *The Thing* a few years before, nothing from the fifties and sixties looked very good with their practical effects. Mostly it just looked like weird puppets to him now. Even though he would have been terrified as a kid.
It was the beginning of December when Steve finally found a priest to marry them. It was a Presbyterian church on the Brooklyn and Queens border, which was close enough for him. Steve didn't tell Bucky yet but, instead, he took the girls out of school a little early so they could go ring shopping.

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Lilly was more than pleased to get out of school to go help Steve. Before Becca consented to it, she made him double-check with her teachers that it wouldn’t affect her perfect attendance record. Now they were all in a shop staring at rings and trying to find something for Bucky that would be just perfect.

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Steve picked up a really sparkly ring that wasn't too feminine but had plenty of gems in it. "What do you think of this one?" He asked. "It's got his favorite colors in it."

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Lilly nodded her head enthusiastically but Becca said, "No way." Steve gave them both a distraught look and Becca added, "It's not about Bucky's favorite colors, Steve. It's about simplicity. He's not going to want a lot of jewels on it - just one - or even a flat metal band."

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"But Bucky deserves better than just a plain old band," Steve countered with a pout. "What about something with nice etching on it? That way it's pretty but not overly jeweled up?"

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"You may have either one jewel or one with etching, yes." Becca nodded and looking to Lilly who was a little lost but nodded in agreement. "But nothing yellow gold. Bucky's isn't a gold sort of guy."

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"Who made you the ring police?" Steve joked as he nudged Becca. "I think a really nice silver would suit him. Maybe I can get it custom engraved somewhere? You know, just pick out a plain ring and get something done on the inside."

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"I bet they engrave it here if you asked." Becca crossed her arms. "And I made myself the ring police, just so you are aware."

Lilly walked along the glass cabinets until she found some plain silver bands. "Here they are, Steve!" She shouted back at them and Becca shushed her.

---

Steve walked to where Lilly shouted. She was staring hard into the glass case and assessing each ring as well as she could. "Which one do you think looks the best, Kiddo?"
She scanned them all again before stabbing her finger into the glass and saying, "That one." She was pointing to a dark shiny metal band that had a rim of light silver down the middle so it gave it a bit of character. "You can probably engrave that one, right?"

Steve nodded and asked for one of the sales associates to pull it out of the case. Once he had it in his hands, he showed it off to Becca. "What do you think?" He asked. He wouldn't get a ring without both of their blessings.

Becca gingerly took it and rolled it over in her hands before handing it back to him. "It'll do," she said with a quirk of a smile on her lips. "What are you engraving on it?" She asked as Steve looked at it closely again.

"I'm not sure yet," Steve said. "I'm thinking I'm going to just buy the ring today and get it engraved some other time. This is something that's got to last a lifetime, so I really want to make sure I come up with something good." He paused and asked, "Hey, do you guys have birthstone necklaces?"

Lilly made a face and asked, "What's that?"

Becca laughed and waved Steve off like he was making a bad joke. Of course, they didn't have birthstone necklaces. Their parents weren't the type to get them things like that and even if they did, they would have probably sold them for food money after they died anyway.

"Come here," Steve said as he herded them to show Lilly the row of necklaces with a different stone for each month of the year. "Every month has a different gem. Like sapphire or emerald or amber," he explained. "I'd like to get one for you guys if you would like."

They girls looked on at them and found the stones for each of their birth months. "That costs money, Steve," Becca said but she was clearly intrigued by the idea as she stared at the emerald in the case. She wouldn't hate having one. She would wear it but it still cost too much and she didn't want Steve wasting his money on them.

"Most things cost money." Steve gave her shoulder a little squeeze. "But I've spoiled Bucky this whole time and I haven't spoiled you guys." He wanted them to have something to remember the day they helped him pick out Bucky's ring.

"Guess there's nothing I can do to stop you if you decide you want to buy those for us, is there?" Becca asked, sounding a bit like her brother. "But we won't be able to wear them until you give
Bucky his ring anyway, cause then he will know that you have it.”

---

Steve smirked when Becca gave in. He added their necklaces to the total and paid the cashier once they were done. "You really think Bucky would know? I haven't even told him that a priest would marry us yet. I'm going to surprise him at Christmas."

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"He might not be the most clever person, but he is observant," Becca sassd. "For all he knows right now, you are still looking and haven't even talked to Lilly and I about being church married anyway." She turned to Lilly then. "So that means keeping our mouths shut and not wearing those necklaces until after Christmas, okay?"

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"Jeez, all right." Steve laughed. "I guess I ought to just hide them and give it to you guys as a Christmas present, too," he teased. Steve didn't mind giving it to them early so long as they didn't lead Bucky on at all. "I'm thinking about putting the box in the tree. But that may be too obvious."

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"God, Bucky's right, you are a dweeb." Becca was being uncharacteristically talkative today. It was mostly just because she was genuinely excited about doing something like this for her brother – something that she thought would be good for him. Bucky was a challenge and Becca definitely had her issues with him but she did love him and really thought that Steve was helping him be a lot better.

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"A dweeb?" Steve smirked. "You know, one of these days you're going to have a boyfriend or girlfriend that's just as excited as I am to pick out a ring for you and I'll do nothing but call them a dweeb, too."

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"I'm married to my work." Becca shrugged and took Lilly's hand as they crossed the street. Lilly noticed the candy shop and tried pulling Becca towards it but was met with resistance.

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Steve noticed Lilly trying to head for the candy shop. "Lilly, did you clean out the cat's litter box?"

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"No. But I'm gonna," Lilly promised. "I'll do it when we get home before Bucky's back from work so he doesn't see. Raphael doesn't mind waiting."

"Yes, he does. He hates dirty litter," Becca countered.

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Steve would've gone into the sweet shop but he couldn't if Lilly wasn't up to date on her chores. "You know you were supposed to do that yesterday," Steve said. "Becca already feeds and grooms him and the litter box has to get done at least twice a week."
Lilly wanted to snap at him that he wasn't her dad but she refrained. "I'll do it today, I promise."

The rest of the trip back home was uneventful. When they got back to the apartment, though, they were surprised to see Bucky huddled up on the couch under a blanket looking pale and sick with Raphael sitting on top of him.

When Steve saw Bucky home early, he hurried to pass Becca the bag and told her to hide it somewhere safe. He walked over to Bucky and knelt down next to the couch. "Hey, Baby, are you alright? Can I get you anything?"

Bucky's eyes barely focused on Steve. "Clint sent me home. Think I have the flu or something. Already puked nine times," he said and pulled the blanket across his mouth when he coughed. Raphael gently batted at his forehead before curling up on his shoulder again and purring.

"Aw, Buck," Steve said softly. He kissed his head and got up so he could get a glass of water and a straw. If he threw up that much he would be dehydrated. "Drink some of this, Baby, it'll make you feel better."

Bucky grumbled at the water but let Steve slip the straw into his mouth anyway. He drank some of it then pulled his head back. "Where were you guys? Came home and I was all alone except the cat. And he's decided that I'm not allowed to get up."

Steve wasn't expecting to have to answer that question and he hated lying. "We went out for a walk," he said. Which wasn't a total lie. "And Raphael is right - you need to lay down and rest up." He gave the cat a scratch behind the ears.

"I think I'll sleep here tonight, Baby. I don't want to get you sick," Bucky said and eyed Steve. "Can you get me another blanket? I'm cold as fuck. Also, if you make dinner I'll go sit in our room while you eat cause I don't think I can handle the smell of food right now."

Steve shook his head. "Hell no. You're sleeping in bed with me because I want to comfort you and make sure you're okay." Steve got up and got another blanket, which he laid over him. "I'll help you into our bedroom before dinner."

"But, Steve, I don't want to get you sick," Bucky protested before going into another coughing fit. "I hope this goes away soon. We can't afford for me to be out of work too many days in a row."
"Don't worry about money, Baby. Worry about taking care until you're better." Steve kissed Bucky's hand and started to pet his hair. "Is there anything I could do for you?"

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"Don't know," Bucky said and reached for Steve's hand. "You want to help me into bed right now? Could fall asleep pretty quick I think." He was feeling lousy. He really needed some sleep and wouldn't mind Steve holding him until he passed out.

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"Sure thing, Baby," Steve said. He held Bucky's hand and carefully helped him out of the bed. He carried him out and into the bedroom so he could tuck him in and make sure he was all comfy.

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Once Bucky was wrapped up in blankets in bed, with the glass of water on the nightstand, he relaxed a bit and yawned into his pillow. "Will you stay with me until I fall asleep or do you need to go make food?"

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"I'll stay with you," Steve answered. He got into bed with Bucky and kissed his cheek. "You're still gorgeous. Even when you're all pale and sweaty."

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"That's gross," Bucky mumbled and curled up against Steve's side. He held his hand tight in Steve's shirt while he felt himself drifting off. "I love you, Steve," he said slowly and shut his eyes.

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"I love you too, Buck." Once Bucky was asleep, Steve went out to cook dinner for everyone. He reminded Lilly to take care of the litter and once he got them all situated, he went back to bed and held Bucky close through the night.
Chapter Summary

This chapter finds them Christmas shopping for presents for the girls.

"How much did we decide to spend on each of them?" Bucky asked as he stared into the basket he was carrying around the bookstore. "Because Becca's books are adding up and we haven't found much for Lilly yet. And, keep in mind, I still need to get the VCR."

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"Well, I wanted to use all of this month's pay from the precinct, so... four hundred each. We can count half of the VCR towards each of them," Steve said. Bucky hadn't been too fond of using that much money when they could've put it towards something else, but between the precinct pay, Bucky's pay, and Steve's temporary disability pay, they had more to work with.

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"Are we really sure we want to spend that much on them? That's going to be a big fucking Christmas and it'll set a precedent so, if next year is smaller than this year, they are going to be upset." Bucky sat his basket on the ground and started rifling through the books he had already picked out for Becca.

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Steve nodded. "I'm going to make it clear that future Christmases won't be as big as this one. But also remember that we are also going to have the precinct pay for the next ten years and by then they'll both be adults. So we could always have a Christmas this big if we wanted."

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"We can't always use the money on things like Christmas gifts," Bucky said and put one of the books back on the shelf, deciding against it.

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"It's just one month a year," Steve said softly. "Buck, I understand what are you thinking. Because I was poor for a long time, too. And I don't want them to forget the value of a dollar, but I don't think that we will have to worry about money anymore."

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Bucky bypassed the conversation with a shake of his said and asked, "Where do you want to go next? We need to get some new cleats for Lilly and get the VCR. Becca is almost done but we don't have shit for Lilly."

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Steve put his hands in his pockets and said, "A sports store would be good. I was thinking about
getting a how-to book for re-lacing lacrosse sticks.”

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"Yeah, her lacrosse stick is sort of falling apart, isn’t it? And it would probably be better for her to learn to lace her own instead of buying new ones every time it breaks,” Bucky said and headed for the check out counter.

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"If she's going to learn some responsibility, it may as well be with something she cares about. She’ll learn pretty quick if we say we aren't buying another stick." Steve put a hand on Bucky's shoulder and grinned softly. He loved saying ‘we’ and ‘us’ and ‘our’. It felt so right. He loved that Bucky’s family was his family now and he was about to have an amazing first Christmas with his new family.

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Bucky nodded in agreement and hoisted his basket of books onto the counter. "I still need to go shopping for you, too. I'm trying my best to find something perfect.”

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"Becca's good at helping with gifts. She helped me pick out yours,” Steve said with a wide smile and warm, loving eyes. He was beyond excited to propose and get to give Bucky the ring that he picked out with the girls.

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Bucky shot a grin at Steve. "Oh yeah? Is it a guitar? It better not be a piano because we literally don't have any room for one." He was thinking about getting Steve some nice new art supplies. He wasn't sure what kind he would like but he could probably ask someone at whatever store he went too. He also wanted to get him some new records from the shop sometime soon – stuff that he liked like big band music and some crooners music like Bucky’s father liked.

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"No, it isn't," Steve said but the look on his face said that it totally was a guitar. But at least that wasn't the big surprise he had for Bucky. "What about a keyboard?" Steve asked. "Those are smaller and we could probably squeeze it in Becca’s room since she wants one anyway."

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"If there was a keyboard in Becca’s room, she would get way too annoyed with me coming in there all the time to play on it. Maybe one day if we get a house then we can get a piano," Bucky said hopefully. He had been thinking about that a lot recently - a house and a kid with Steve. Once his sisters were grown and had their own places, Steve and Bucky could easily get a house somewhere like Long Island if they saved up now.

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"I guess,” Steve said. He sighed dreamily at the thought of having a house with Bucky. "What kind of stuff do you want in a house? I mean, we can't do it anytime soon. But when we do, what do you like?"
"Something just big enough for us and maybe one kid if we can have one," Bucky started. "I'd like a porch. Something bright." Bucky thought about his old house back when his parents were alive. It was small but it suited their needs. It had great big window out front that let in a lot of light and Bucky used to sit and stare at the city from it.

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Steve grinned dumbly. "You think Becca and Lilly would be upset that we got a house for the baby but not for them?" He asked. Steve was worried that they might resent the baby a little for having it so easy.

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"By the time we are allowed to have a baby, don't you think they will be well into their twenties or even thirties?" Bucky really wanted to slip his hand with Steve's. It was cold outside as they walked down the street and he was bundled up in warm clothes but still wanted to be as close to another warm body as possible.

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"Like hell I'm waiting that long to have a baby with you," Steve said. "I'll fight tooth and nail to get to raise a kid with you." Because he was tired of hiding, Steve reached out and held Bucky's hand firmly. "I didn't survive getting shot to not have a good life with you."

---

Bucky's breath caught in his throat and his eyes went wide when Steve grabbed his hand. "Steve..." He whispered and looked around them. "What are you doing? It's not safe. You could get hurt again." A couple people had already noticed and given the two of them strange looks. Bucky tried pulling his hand from Steve's.

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Steve frowned when Bucky pulled his hand away. He let him, but it still stung a little. "It's not illegal," Steve said. "And it shouldn't be shameful. We may not have stood up to Rumlow, but that doesn't mean we have to hide from everyone else, too."

---

"What if someone on this street decides that they don't like what they see and attacks us, huh? Or what if someone starts verbally accosting us?" Bucky looked nervously at the faces looking on at them and tried to figure out if anyone was going to say anything. "How about we just go home for a bit? We can finish shopping tomorrow." He knew Steve was upset and Bucky was normally the type to stick it to the man and normally would have held Steve's hand proudly. Except, Steve had already been injured once because of him and he needed to think of the girls and he didn't want him and Steve getting killed before they could have that house and baby they were just discussing.

---

Steve's face fell when Bucky insisted that they go home. "I'm sorry, Buck. I swear I won't do anything else. Please, we can keep shopping," he said. He didn't want to ruin the rest of the day because he was being stupid. 
"Steve, I just..." Bucky sighed and looked down. "So far you haven't had to deal with a whole lot of people throwing slurs at you or beating you up. Yeah there's Rumlow, but that's one guy. I don't want you to know what it's like when fifty people are all calling you a fag and telling you to kill yourself. I don't want you to know what it's like to have the entire baseball team gang up on you and beat the shit out of you. And that's what people who don't understand us will do. And I never want to see that pain in your eyes."

---

Steve gave Bucky a sad look. It hurt to know that Bucky had gone through all that and while it was good that Bucky wanted to spare him from that, it still made a anger burn in the pit of his stomach. "The world doesn't get to decide how I show my affection for you," he mumbled. "And you don't get to decide what I do and don't face because of it."

---

"You're sounding like me," Bucky said and gave Steve a sad smile. "Let's just finish up at these last two places and then go home where I can hold you and we can talk. We can pick up food on the way home. Becca's been wanting Chinese again."

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Steve nodded. For the rest of the shopping trip, Steve didn't get close to Bucky and he didn't speak to him unless it was to double check a gift idea for Lilly. They got Chinese like Bucky had suggested and by the time they got home, Steve felt emotionally exhausted.

---

Bucky was getting increasingly more agitated with Steve as they went. Steve retreated into himself and was acting like Bucky had put him in time out. Bucky didn't feel like he had done anything wrong to Steve. He just didn't want their day to be ruined by a bunch of people telling them off on the street. When they got home, Bucky dumped the presents in their closet so the girls wouldn't see them and then he put on The Who and flopped on the couch. If Steve didn't want to talk then they wouldn't talk.

---

Steve lowered his head and didn't really acknowledge the girls when he set up their dinners on the table. He walked over to Bucky to kiss his head and mumbled, "I need to lay down," before retreating into the bedroom.

---

Bucky watched Steve leave and decided that he would give him about fifteen minutes before he checked on him. Becca and Lilly sat down to eat. Bucky pulled up a chair by them and dished out some of the Chinese take out on the plate Steve laid out for him. Lilly gave Bucky a look then asked, "Is Steve okay?"

---

Steve hadn't wanted to ignore the girls, but he didn't want them to see him crying. He couldn't help but lie down miserably and cry into the pillow because it was so fucking unfair that he couldn't hold his boyfriend's hand without worrying about people beating the shit out of them for it. He wasn't angry at Bucky for erring on the side of caution. But he could be angry at the world for its intolerance.
Bucky tried his best to explain without giving away what happened that they had had a bit of a squabble while they were out. The three of them ate together without either of the girls pressuring for more information and Lilly spent most of the time chatting on about her day. Once he was done eating, Bucky piled some rice, chicken, noodles, and vegetables into a big bowl and took it to Steve. "Baby, can I come in?"

"Yeah," Steve mumbled. He wiped at his eyes and tried his best to look like he hadn't just been crying, but he still had puffiness around his eyes. "I may not be good company right now, though."

Bucky sat down on the bed in front of Steve and put the bowl on the nightstand. "My handsome man..." he praised and wiped some of the wet tear stains from Steve's face. "Did I really upset you that much? I didn't mean to at all, Steve. I promise."

Steve shifted to lay his head in Bucky's lap. "It's not you," he said thickly. "It's everyone else. It hurts to know that people want us dead for loving each other. I can't even hold your hand in public without one of us getting scared about being attacked." He rubbed at his eyes again. "And it's not the bullet or the words that hurt me. It's the hate that leads to it."

Bucky put gentle hands on Steve's head and leaned down to kiss his hair. "I know, my love, it's such a hateful world we live in. But I love you. And that's all that really matters. And the girls love you and someday you'll find a priest to church marry us and we will get a house somewhere nice like Long Island and maybe even have a baby. It's just going to be us together against whatever they say."

"But it doesn't have to be hateful. And what if people never change their view unless they see us out in the street like normal people? Cause that's what we are." Steve snuggled closer to Bucky and closed his eyes. He had to hold on to the good things. He was going to propose to Bucky soon because he found that priest and they were doing this. "Can you keep talking to me about the good things?"

"Of course," Bucky said and lovingly stared down at Steve's head in his lap and his arms around his middle. "Once we find that priest and get married then we will get to go on our honeymoon. I hope you love Seneca Lake. It's gorgeous and the atmosphere is so clean. We can just have a little cabin for the two of us. Spend all day outside swimming or fishing and spend all night huddled together in the quiet of the woods. And the good part is that there's no city noise and not many people around so we can fuck as loud as we want as many times as we want. We could even have sex outside."

Steve had mailed for a brochure of the place and had already started looking through the information pamphlet to plan their honeymoon. It looked beautiful and he desperately wanted to go. "Can you
tell me more about how much you and the girls love me?" he asked softly.

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Bucky kissed his head again. "Lilly told me how she's going to miss coming home from school to hang out with you when you go back to work. She says it's been a lot of fun having you around the apartment. She also told me that you helped her with some history homework. Becca would never admit to it, but she does love you. And she knows that I'm better with you around and she never wants you to leave us. She feels safer with you here, I think. More confident in me and more confident being home alone since she's got a police officer as a future in-law."

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With all the hate they would receive for being who they were, Steve felt better being reminded about the different ways other people loved them. He sat up and gave Bucky a tight hug. "Thank you, Baby," he said softly. "It's just... I feel like I'm letting other people like us get hurt because we're hiding who we are."

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Bucky sighed and held Steve. "Well, I mean, people like us are going to get hurt regardless of whether we are open or not. More than likely, if we were open and got hurt or killed then it would just encourage others to keep hiding so they don't get hurt either. But I do understand what you're saying, and it kills me too that we can't be like straight couples in public."

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"We have to stand up for our rights, though," Steve said quietly. "People will see the wrongs. Natasha says that some people at the precinct have come around for the better after they saw what Rumlow did."

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"That's one very small precinct in a very big city," Bucky answered calmly. "It does make me feel better about you going back to work there knowing that you're going to have people on your side. But I just don't think there's much else that we can do, you know? Without putting ourselves and our girls in danger again, I mean."

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"There has to be something we can do," Steve said quietly. "I don't want to put any of us at risk, but I'll go insane if I have to be quiet about this." He would shut up about Rumlow, because he had to, but not the rest of the world.

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"What are you thinking, Baby?" Bucky asked and kissed Steve for a few seconds before he let him answer. He grabbed the bowl of food from the nightstand and handed it to Steve so he could eat and talk. Bucky didn't want him to forget about eating.

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Steve took the bowl and started to eat absently. "I don't know," he said. "I was thinking about helping other people who are gay. I don't know how or how I would find others, but... I don't know. I just want to help," he said lamely.
"Okay, well we can start brainstorming that," Bucky said and bit his lip in thought. "Until we figure it out, let's just try to be happy just being together and having your mom, the girls, and our friends on our side. How's that sound to you?"

Steve nodded his head. "Alright. Thank you, Buck." He went back to eating and when he finished, Steve snuggled Bucky just a little longer. "I should go out and see how the girls are doing. I feel bad for ignoring them."

"They're fine. Lilly asked if you were okay," Bucky said and played with Steve’s hair. "Maybe we can play a board game with them before they have to go to bed? Or you and I can just stay here and talk about our future house and baby again."

Steve smiled. "I think I would like to play a board game. Have some family time, you know? And then we can talk about our future house and baby once they're in bed."
Section Summary

This is the first half of Christmas.

Steve and Bucky were woken up Christmas morning by a very excited Lilly jumping on the foot of their bed and shaking them. "CHRISTMAS TIME!" She yelped and then moved to poke Bucky in the face. "Christmas time, Bucky. Let's go! You aren't making me wait again this year!"

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Steve was startled awake and he stared at Lilly with a bewildered expression for a few moments as he processed what was going on. He launched up to grab her and pulled her down into the bed so he could wrap her up in the blankets like a mummy.

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Mummy Lilly was struggling to get out of Steve's grasp as Bucky rolled away from them and groaned. "Lil, just give me another hour of sleep, okay?" he asked hopefully and sleepily before pulling a pillow over his head to try to block out the noise. This was the first year since their parents died that someone new was with them at Christmas and Bucky was glad that it was Steve. It felt more like family Christmas and less sad to him that he wasn't with his parents.

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Steve smiled and kept Lilly down just to be a pain in the ass. But really, Steve was excited for Christmas, so he was quick to turn over to Bucky, pull the pillow from him, and kiss him all over his face. "Come on, Baby, it's Christmas."

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Bucky kissed Steve once lazily and closed his eyes. "Get Becca up and ready and then come back for me," he murmured and rolled up into a tight ball. "Also make Lilly make me tea. I'm freezing my balls off already." He looked to the clock. It was already nine in the morning and he was surprised Lilly let him sleep in two hours more than the previous year. Maybe she stayed up too late the night before and slept in.

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Steve chuckled and ruffled up Bucky's hair. He let Lilly play with the cat and made the tea himself instead. Steve got Becca up and ready to open presents before he returned to their bedroom to a still very tired Bucky.

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Steve came in with tea in his hands and Bucky had no choice but to get up from bed, wrap up in a blanket, and follow him back out to the living room. He yawned and sat on the couch next to Becca who was also grumpily wrapped in a blanket. The two of them could have slept for six more hours and been perfectly happy. But Lilly was sitting on the floor already shaking a present and demanding
that they start opening them. "Lil, wait for Steve to sit down, okay?"

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Steve snorted at the excitement. He'd always been the excited one Christmas morning but now that there were kids around, there was even more spirit around him. Steve picked up a guitar-shaped present to hand to Bucky - but that one wasn't the guitar. He'd only shaped it to look like one and there were a few records in belly of the package, instead. "We ready to start?"

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Bucky took the present from Steve while Lilly tossed one to Becca. He pointed at a floppy green package labeled for Steve that had a set of brand new paintbrushes in it. "Give that one to Steve, Lilly," he said and snuggled against Becca for warmth. "Yes, we are ready."

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Steve took the present and opened it while the girls opened theirs. He smiled brightly and gave Bucky a kiss. "These are perfect, Buck, thank you," he said softly. Steve wouldn't have spent the money on himself to buy these types of fancy brushes.

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"I wasn't sure if you liked to paint as much as draw but I saw the state of your old brushes and figured you deserved better ones," Bucky said as he was opening his present. "This isn't a guitar." He laughed and pulled out some special edition deluxe demo recordings from The Who and The Beatles and even one from Genesis that he knew was a little more rare. "Thank you, Baby, I needed more demo recordings. I don't have many."

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They had a good, lazy morning full of opening presents and watching Raphael play with the empty wrappers. Bucky got his guitar and some other little things and Steve got mostly more art supplies. The last present Steve had to give was a medium-sized box. Inside of it was a picture he drew of all of them together - even the cat - with a ring tied to it on the ribbon. He'd decided to engrave the ring with 'I'm with you until the end of the line'.

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Bucky stared at the last present in Steve's hand. It was small and square and he tried very much not to get his hopes up about what might be inside. Bucky cautiously poked a finger towards it and said quietly, "Is that one for me?"

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"No, it's for the other guy in the house named Bucky," Steve teased him. He passed it over and kissed the corner of his mouth. Steve did his best not to look too excited over Bucky opening it.

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Bucky took in a deep breath and held it as he opened the box. Inside he found a perfect two-toned ring and a drawing of all of them together. He hadn't known what to do so he sucked his bottom lip into his mouth and bit it as he stared at the ring and willed his lungs to take normal breaths. He couldn't believe Steve had found a priest.
Steve moved down and got on one knee in front of Bucky. He took one of Bucky’s hands in his own and looked up into his eyes. "Meeting you was the best thing that ever happened to me. And I can’t imagine a better way to spend my life than being your husband." He kissed the back of his hand. "Will you marry me, Bucky Barnes?"

Bucky grinned wide and tackled Steve in a bear hug as he kissed him over and over. He completely forgot to say ‘yes’ as he was too busy cuddling up in Steve’s open arms and kissing all over his face and neck. "I love you so goddamn much, Steve Rogers," he said and felt a tight clench in his heart at the prospect of being husbands with Steve.

Steve laughed and returned every kiss Bucky had to give him. Becca and Lilly thought it was cute at first but then the two men kept going and they started to whack the two of them lightly with the cushions. "Stoooooop," Lilly complained. "Get a roooom."

"But I love him," Bucky protested and kissed Steve again. "And we're going to be church married. And we're going to go to Seneca and one day get a house and raise a baby and have old man sex." Bucky droned on as he slipped the ring onto his finger. He needed to get a ring for Steve, too. It only seemed fair. Especially since he didn't think they needed wedding rings too. That was just too much money to spend. One ring for the each of them would do.

"Gross," Lilly complained at the thought of old man sex.

Steve gave Bucky a small look for talking about sex in front of his sisters but he was too happy to scold him. Steve hugged Bucky tightly and said, "Becca and Lilly helped pick the ring."

"It's perfect," Bucky said and looked to his sisters. "Thanks for helping Steve pick it out." Bucky had so far not discovered the engraving. He slipped the ring on so fast that he didn't see it and then he spent more time locked together with Steve. "When did you find a priest? Where did you find a priest?"

Steve looked at the ring on Bucky's finger with pride. "A few weeks ago," he said. "The priest said he's already married a few gays and lesbians and that he's trying to make his church openly gay-friendly," Steve said proudly. "He's on the Brooklyn-Queens border. So we don't even have to go far."

"That's not far at all. Just a train from here." Bucky smiled happily at him and then rested his head on Steve's chest. He breathed deeply a few times and just felt the closeness of him. "Is your mom still coming over for dinner or are you going to have to call her to tell her you finally made it official?"
"Oh, she already knows," Steve said. "I told her the day I found the priest that I was proposing on Christmas. She's coming over and bringing extra cake to celebrate." Bucky was the only one out of the loop on this one.

"So I had to wait for weeks but everyone else got to know?" Bucky chastised. "You didn't even know if I was going to say yes for sure."

"Well, I didn't want you to know I would propose at Christmas," Steve said. "And I knew you were going to say yes. You love me too much."

Lilly tugged Steve a little and asked, "Can we have our necklaces now? I want to show Bucky."

Steve gave Bucky an obnoxious grin before giving Lilly his attention. "Sure, go ahead, Kiddo. You did really well keeping this a secret."

Lilly bounded away to her room to retrieve her necklace before coming back and sitting down by Bucky to show him. "Steve got Becca and I these birthday necklaces for helping him pick out your ring." Becca quietly produced hers from out of her sweater pocket and showed Bucky. She had been waiting all day yesterday and today before she got to wear it.

"Those are beautiful. Did you thank Steve for doing that for you?" Bucky asked and nuzzled Lilly's head with his chin.

Steve smiled happily at them all. "Do you have the same birth month as your mom?" He asked and then saw Lilly's frown and pulled her into his lap to hug her.

"Yeah they are both May," Lilly said and squirmed in Steve's grip.
Bucky handed the necklace back to Becca and flopped on top of Lilly. "Ugh, Lil, I'm so tired. Why didn't you let me sleep? And I'm hungry!" he complained and poked at her sides.

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Steve played with Bucky's hair a little bit and then gave them both a kiss on the cheek. "What do you guys want for breakfast? I'll make whatever you want."

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Bucky normally would have just said cereal except that today was special and he was also really, really hungry. "Eggs and bacon with bagel toast, orange juice and bananas. Maybe some waffles. Or pancakes I don't mind which. Oh! Chocolate chip pancakes!" He beamed at Steve with a childish grin.

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Steve kissed him sweetly. "Sounds perfect, I'll make all of it." He wiggled his way out of their cuddle pile and headed to the kitchen to cook. Raphael jumped up in his spot and started to rub his face against Bucky's jaw, purring like a motor.

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Bucky petted the cat and talked to him a bit while Becca and Lilly gathered all their presents and transferred them to their rooms. After a while, Bucky decided he should pile all of his and Steve's stuff too so he took all of Steve's new art supplies to the hall closet where Steve kept his easel and things and he took his records and books to his room before flopping back on the couch and grabbing for his new guitar.

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Whenever Bucky would strum a chord, Raphael would let out a big, loud meow in response to the sound. He didn't seem bothered by the music, but more like he wanted to participate. Steve laughed from the kitchen. "You've got a fan."

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"One fan is all I need," Bucky said and leaned back in the couch to think of a song to play. Eventually he settled on The Who's 'Early Morning Cold Taxi' and he started humming along as the girls returned to the living room. Becca went to help Steve cook and Lilly sat by Bucky and rested on his legs and sang the lyrics as he played.

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Steve's heart swelled as he listened to Bucky play. He really could get used to hearing this all the time. Steve would occasionally dance around Becca while they cooked and once breakfast was ready, he set the table and called the other two in.

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They had gotten through a good portion of singing and playing the entire The Who Sell Out album when Steve called them in for breakfast. Bucky scooted his chair as close to Steve's as he could and held his hand out to him. "Did you see this ring yet?" He asked and pointed to it. "We need to go get you one too."
Steve kissed Bucky's temple. "Oh yeah? You going to get me a matching one or something different?" He asked. Steve reached down so he could play with the ring on Bucky's finger, enjoying that it was there.

"Don't know yet. But I'm taking the girls since they already went with you," Bucky responded and laced his hand with Steve's. "Thank you for breakfast, Baby." He waited for Steve to pray over the meal before he started wolfing down some eggs and chewing on long strips of bacon.

"Sounds fair to me." Steve ate his breakfast after saying his prayer. Once they were done, the girls were off to play with their gifts. Steve looked over to Bucky and asked, "Can you play more music for me?"

"What do you want to hear?" Bucky asked. "Raphael seemed to like The Who. But I can probably figure out some other bands to play. Don't ask for The Police, though, because I don't have any of their songs memorized well enough to play them."

"Can you give me some Bowie?" Steve asked. He started to clean up the dishes from breakfast. "What's that song? The 'ground control to Major Tom' one?"

"Space Oddity." Bucky nodded. "I can do that one for you." He grabbed his guitar and came back over, giving Steve's ass a squeeze before sitting back at the table to play as Steve picked up. Bucky sang softly and slow and watched his fingers graze over the strings. He loved his new guitar - and his ring. Two perfect presents.

Steve grinned and swayed a little to the music. He felt himself falling in love with Bucky all over again. When the dishes were done, he walked behind Bucky and massaged his shoulders while he played. "I love you, Baby. You sound so good playing."

"I love you too." Bucky stopped playing and reached up behind him to pull Steve in for a kiss. "Do you want to go have some alone time, maybe? The girls are both distracted in their rooms. I'll put a 'do not disturb' sign on the door if you want."

"As if I could ever turn that down," Steve said with a grin. He ran a hand over Bucky's chest slowly and gave him a pair of bedroom eyes. "Let's get going, music man."

Bucky hopped out of his chair and took the guitar with him as he skittered off to their room. He tied
a hair-tie around the door handle and a hook on the side of the dresser to have a makeshift lock for them. He wasted no time in putting the guitar off in the corner and stretching out on their bed.

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Steve smiled and laid over Bucky, immediately taking his fiancé's shirt off so he could kiss over his chest. "We are going to have such a good life together," he said happily. "And we will be married. When do you want our anniversary to be?"

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"Won't our anniversary be the day the priest tells us that God's got us covered as husbands and all that?" Bucky asked and melted into Steve's kisses. He slipped his hands into the back at Steve's pajama pants and started massaging his ass.

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"Yeah, Dummy. So what day do you want to do that?" Steve asked with a giggle and then hummed when Bucky put his hands down his pants. He started to play with his tongue over one of Bucky's nipples. "He's around pretty much every day."

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"Let's not talk about the priest while you're licking my chest, yeah?" Bucky laughed. "And besides, I need to get your ring first away. I'll do that this week then we are free to go whenever the girls and your mom have time to join us. What day are you going back to work?"

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"I go back in two weeks," Steve said. They were giving him the week after New Year's off only because it was usually hectic and they didn't want to stress him out right away. Steve began to slip Bucky's pants down.

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Bucky hiked his hips up so Steve could slip his pajama bottoms all the way off. "Okay, then let's get married sometime next week," he concluded and moved his hands in between Steve's ass cheeks. Bucky grinned and gave Steve a seductive look. "First round of Christmas sex? Or just blow jobs and wait to fuck until tonight? Which do you want?"

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"Christmas sex, duh," Steve said, grinning over at Bucky. "I wonder how many times we can sneak off today and screw like rabbits." He began to kiss down Bucky's body, nibbling and sucking marks here and there.

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"Not as many as I'd like," Bucky said. "So, my new fiancé, who's getting it up the ass first today?" He probably could have been more romantic but he also was pretty eager to fuck. He and Steve had the rest of their lives to be romantic. Bucky had to be a little crude sometimes or he would explode.

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Steve laughed a bit at the bluntness of the question and he sucked a mark on Bucky's thigh. "You're
taking it first," he said. "But you're going to tell me three things you'd like to try. And I'll pick which
one of the three I want to do." He was going to try to open up more to Bucky and what he liked to
do sexually.

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"What? What do you mean?" Bucky asked with a glint in his eyes. He had hoped Steve would say
that Bucky was going to be the one to get fucked first. He was sort of dying for Steve's dick inside
him. "Like something... sexually adventurous?"

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Steve blushed but nodded his head. "Yes, Buck, that's what I mean," he said. Steve licked a stripe up
his cock. "I'm all ears this time."

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Bucky sat up so he was propped on his elbows. "Oh, fuck yeah! Um... three things?" How the hell
was he going to choose just three things that Steve could pick from to try today? Also, he probably
should stick with milder stuff so he didn't overwhelm him too quickly. "Tie me to the bed, blind fold
me, or maybe 69 if you would want to." He really hoped Steve would pick one of the first two.
Bucky felt like letting Steve take control of his body and having a sense of movement taken away
would do that for him.

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Those ones Steve could handle. He smiled and kissed the tip of Bucky's dick. "This morning I'm
going to tie you to the bed. And next time I'm going to blindfold you." He ran a hand up Bucky's
thigh. "Do you have rope somewhere in here?"

---

Bucky's erection was straining out from his body and he refrained from touching it. "Uh-huh, yeah, I
have special ties meant for this very thing." He quickly rolled off the bed and rummaged in a box in
their bathroom for his bed ties. He came back with four black velvet loops with heavy-duty ropes on
the end. "My wrists and ankles go in the velvet and the loops tighten up." He explained and handed
them to Steve. Then a thought occurred to him, "Wait do you have your handcuffs?"

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Steve's face heated up at the sight of the velvet loops. He started to work his way through untying
one of the ropes when Bucky asked about the handcuffs. He looked somewhat offended and his jaw
dropped. "W-what? No, I'm not using city property for our sex life."

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"Oh my god. Why not?" Bucky asked, surprised. "Using city property for gay sex sounds really
hot," he said as Steve worked on tightening the loops on his ankles. He wouldn't pressure Steve into
using the handcuffs but some day he was going to get his hands cuffed behind his back while Steve
took him doggy style - even if he had to buy fake cuffs.

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"Because I don't want to think about fucking you when I use the same cuffs to arrest some drug lord
or sex offender," Steve complained. He got both of Bucky's ankles secured and then started on his
wrist.

---

Bucky tried his best to arch off the bed to kiss Steve but his legs and one strapped arm wouldn't allow it. "You did a good job on these ties, Baby," he said and couldn't help how his hips jolted up so his dick could come in contact with Steve's body hovering over him.

---

Steve wasn't sure what tying Bucky up would change for sex but he was interested to find out. Once he had him all set, he kissed down his neck and played with his balls. "Look at you, Baby," he said. "You look so good all tied up for me."

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"Yeah," Bucky breathed. He loved that Steve was going to be entirely in control and also that he was going to have to get Bucky off without Bucky helping by touching himself at all. That's what he liked best about this. He could only come when Steve brought him to the edge. "I'm so ready, Steve. Do whatever you want to me."

---

Steve grabbed the lube and showed it off as he rubbed some between his fingers. "I'm gonna treat you real well, Babe. Give you everything you want." He moved his hand down and teased Bucky's hole a little bit before easing two fingers in at once.

---

Bucky clenched his ass around the fingers a couple times just to feel them then he relaxed so Steve could open him up. "I love you so much, Steve. You're going to get to have me like this for the rest of your life." He glanced at the ring on his finger and smiled at it. He still couldn't believe Steve had found a priest.

---

Steve worked his fingers smoothly in and out of Bucky's ass. "I know I am. Going to get to listen to you sing and play the guitar, too." Steve grinned at him and used his free hand to play with Bucky's nipple. "That ring looks good on you."

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"This ring can be the only thing I wear to bed every night if you want," Bucky said and squirmed under Steve's touch. "Baby, more fingers," he pressured and tried to look down at where Steve was touching him.

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"I like the sound of that, Buck." Steve obliged and pushed another finger inside of him. "Want to know the best thing about tying you up?" He leaned in close and whispered, "I can play The Police all day and you can't do anything to stop me."

---

"That's cruel and unusual punishment, Officer. Don't they teach you not to do that shit in the
academy?" Bucky strained to say as Steve started working in a fourth finger already. "But, really, Steve, that can't be the best thing about having me like this." He really wanted to know if Steve was enjoying himself or not. Bucky sure as hell was.

---

Steve worked his fingers freely in and out of Bucky's ass. He pulled his own pants down and settled between Bucky's legs. "You're right. I like that you trust me so much." He kissed him deeply as he pushed his dick inside of him. Steve moaned into Bucky's mouth and started to thrust, still holding on to him even though he was tied to the bed.

---

Bucky couldn't help the low groan that came from him when Steve pushed all the way inside him. He licked into Steve's mouth over and over as Steve started to rock in and out of him with purpose. "It's all you, Baby," Bucky whispered. "Only you until we die."

---

Steve fucked Bucky quick and deep. Hearing Bucky reinforce that they would spend the rest of their lives together made his heart soar. "Yes," he breathed out. "Going to make you happy for the rest of your life." Steve wrapped his fingers around Bucky's dick and started to stroke him with each thrust.

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Finally having his dick touched made Bucky's eyes lull back into his head and he panted short breaths while Steve fucked him. His brain couldn't hardly think of anything besides Steve's hand and Steve's cock and Steve's voice and those eyes and that gentle way he held Bucky at night and the ring that he gave him and the promise they would soon make to each other.

---

"So good," Steve breathed out. "You're so good to me. God, Buck, I can't wait to get to do whatever we want every day." Steve found the angle that had Bucky arching off the bed and curling his toes in pleasure. He fucked him just like that, hard and fast until he was spilling himself inside of Bucky.

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Bucky wasn't long to follow Steve and was soon coming all over Steve's fingers. Steve collapsed on top of him and Bucky tried to hug him before remembering the restraints. "How was it?" He panted. "Did you like doing that? Added a little something new?"

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Steve missed having Bucky's arms around him right after sex, but he did have fun keeping Bucky tied as he spread Bucky's come around his chest like he was finger-painting on his fiancé. "Mhmm," Steve grunted softly. "I liked it, but it didn't really change much for sex. It's fun right now, though."

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Bucky sighed and watched Steve make a mess of him. "Fine," he huffed out. "We can have vanilla Catholic sex tonight. You tried something for me, though, and I'm proud of you and love you." Bucky paused and chuckled. "'Vanilla Catholic Sex' sounds like a really weird ice cream flavor."
"Oh yeah, I think I'm converting to Presbyterianism now," Steve said with a disappointed laugh. "No Catholic Church that I found would marry us. I haven't told my mom yet, so that will be fun." Once he was done playing with Bucky's come, he slowly licked him clean.

"Oh, um..." Bucky mumbled. "Are you sure? You've been Catholic your whole life, Steve." He felt a little weird trying to start a serious conversation while he was still restrained on the bed and Steve was licking him.

"I didn't tell my mom this, but my childhood priest said that if he saw me in his mass again, he would out me as a sinner," Steve mumbled. He also hadn't told Bucky because he was embarrassed. "The other priests gave me the ‘burning in hell’ speech. But this priest at the Presbyterian Church... he explained to me how similar Presbyterianism is to Catholicism and I think my mom will understand."

"Hey, let my hands go so I can hold you," Bucky requested and nodded at the restraints. He waited patiently for Steve to undo them before he sat up and pulled Steve into his lap and gave him a close hug. "I'm so sorry that happened to you, Steve. I know how much that must have hurt you since your church is so important to you. If you want to switch to Presbyterianism then I support you and I'll sit with you when you tell your mom if you want me to."

Steve really needed that hug. He snuggled close when his fiancé cuddled him and took a deep breath. "Thank you, Buck. I know that religion isn't important to you, but I'm thankful that you're supporting me." He kissed along Bucky's jaw slowly.

"It's important to you and as your fiancé, future husband, and love of your life, it's my honor to support you in whatever you think will be good for you and make you happier," Bucky said. "No, I'll probably never go to a church service with you, but I'll never tell you not to go." Bucky kissed Steve's face when he got the opportunity and he laid back so Steve was curled up against him on the bed.

Steve smiled and reached up to tangle his fingers in Bucky’s hair. "Well, at least I get to live with the fact that I managed to drag you to church at least once in your life. Even if it was just to get married behind the state's back. I think you'll like the priest. I told him that you weren't religious and he said he'd still marry us even if neither of us were."

"That's at least nice of him," Bucky said. "It probably did help that you are a man of the church. Get your foot in there with God and stuff." Bucky rolled Steve off of him and undid the ankle restraints so he could lay next to Steve better. "What are we doing now? We should probably make sure the girls are still doing okay. And your mom will be here in a few hours. And we need to start dinner roasting at some point."
Steve kissed Bucky lazily a few times and said, "If you clean up the wrapping paper, I can get the chicken cooking in the oven so it'll be ready when Mom gets here." He sighed and stared into Bucky’s eyes. “I love you so much.”
Chapter Summary

The second half of Christmas.

Bucky was almost done throwing all the ripped wrapped paper into a big trash can when Becca and Lilly both emerged from their rooms in their snow clothes and boots. "Are you two planning on playing in the park or something? You know you aren't allowed to go there alone," Bucky scolded.

Becca stuffed her gloved hands in her pockets and said, "We're going to the cemetery since you never take us to see Mom and Dad. It's Christmas, and we want to talk to them."

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Steve would've offered to go with them but someone had to mind the chicken in the oven or else they wouldn't be eating until a ridiculously late hour. "Buck," he said. "Would you like to go? I've got to stay in and watch the chicken."

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Bucky thought for a moment and looked to his sisters and then Steve. "Will you go with them? I'll mind the food while you're gone." It wasn't that he didn't want to go see his parents. It was just that he always got upset and overwhelmed and depressed when he thought about standing in front of their graves. Today was a holiday and his engagement day and Bucky didn't know if he could handle the breakdown that always came from attempting to visit his parents.

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One day, Steve would want to go to Bucky’s parents’ graves with him but today, clearly, wasn't the day. "Alright, Love," Steve said cautiously. He went back to their bedroom to change into warm clothes and he gave Bucky a tight hug and a kiss before he left with the girls. "Love you so much."

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Becca was clearly upset as they walked to the cemetery. She grumbled directions at Steve until they came to their parents' headstones. She knelt down on the ground in front of them and said, "Merry Christmas, Mommy and Daddy. It's Becca and Lilly." She looked up at Lilly, "Say hello, Lil."

Lilly grabbed Steve's hand for support and wiped her eyes, "Hi... Bucky couldn't make it but we brought Steve."

Becca countered, "Bucky could make it, he just didn't want to."

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Steve could feel his own throat getting tight because he felt awful that the girls had to grow up without their parents. He held Lilly's hand tightly and he kneeled down next to Becca. "Hey," he said softly to the graves. "I'll bring Bucky down here soon," he promised. "He'll have some pretty big news for you guys, and I don't want to spoil anything by saying it too early." He put a hand on
Becca's shoulder and whispered, "What should I say to them?"

"You can tell them whatever you want." Becca nodded and gave a weak smile. "All they can do is listen." She stood up and pulled Lilly close to her. "They would be happy to know that you're around to make Bucky better. I know they'd like you."

Steve smiled and gave Becca a small nudge. "They don't only listen," he said. "They can talk back, but not in the same way you and I talk to each other. It could be in a breeze that cools you on a hot day or a flower you see growing somewhere they usually don't." He glanced at the graves briefly and said, "You girls should talk to them first. I'm sure they want to hear from you more than from me."

Becca nodded and ushered Lilly down to talk to their parents. As Lilly started chatting away about sports and what she got for Christmas, Becca pulled Steve a few feet away so Lilly was out of earshot. "Bucky never comes down here," Becca said with sad heavy-lidded eyes. "I think it's because he's afraid of how disappointed they would be if they knew the shit he's done for the past few years with the men and alcohol and overdosing. You're stuck with him now. That means you need to make him come here."

Steve hated seeing the sad look in Becca's eyes. No kid should be this sad on Christmas. He reached out to give her hand a small squeeze. "I'll get him down here, I promise. And... you know, you can ask me to take you and Lilly here whenever you want. I want you two to be able to see your parents, even if it's just to tell them you got a good grade on something."

Becca nodded and thanked Steve before going back over to Lilly who had pretty much exhausted her list of presents. Becca knelt back down and started discussing the books she got and how much she was learning about historical women that her dad always admired too. They stayed for a bit in silence and waited for anything - they weren't sure what. "Do you want to say anything, Steve?" Lilly checked.

Steve paused to think before saying, "I wish I got to meet you both in person. From what Bucky and the girls say, you were really amazing people." He managed a small smile. "The girls make me proud every day and you would love how Bucky plays the guitar." Steve picked up two stones and placed it on top of their graves to show respect. "Thank you for looking over them and leading them into my life."

Becca watched Steve with a growing sense of trust and admiration as he talked to her parents and Lilly started to cry again and flopped onto Steve in a hug once he was done. "Thanks for coming with us," she said and hid her face in his arm. "I know they miss Bucky but it's good for them to meet new people too."
Steve hugged Lilly close and kissed the top of her head. "You know I'd do anything for you, Lil. I'm happy you introduced me to them." He sat in silence with them for a little while before they had to go back for dinner.

Bucky was sitting at the table reading a book and listening to one of his new demo recordings from The Who. He had already hastily drank three beers that he had hidden away and disposed of the bottles in the big dumpster in the alley so no one would know.

Steve had carried Lilly piggyback to the apartment. He plopped her down on the couch and walked over to Bucky so he could kiss his cheek. "Hello, my beautiful fiancé. Did the chicken blow up while we were gone?"

Bucky pointed at the intact chicken cooking slowly in the oven. "I managed it." He smiled and kissed Steve's hand. He looked to Becca then and asked, "How are Mom and Dad?"

She folded her arms and gave him a sour retort. "Like you care."

Steve frowned at the tone Becca took with Bucky. "It's Christmas," Steve said softly. "Let's put aside our grudges for today." He did plan on having a talk with both of them about how they handled Bucky not going to visit their parents.

Bucky clenched his jaw and gave Becca a dejected look before turning to Steve. "Did you introduce yourself to them?" He asked and thought about disguising another beer by pouring it into a travel mug. Steve didn't even know he had the two six packs that he had hidden behind their extra blankets in the laundry room.

Steve played with Bucky's hair and tangled it between his fingers. "Yeah. I told them that you'll have big news for them soon." Steve could tell that Bucky had been drinking - he could just sense it. He didn't know where he got the alcohol but Bucky had it. But Steve didn't say anything or else Becca would freak out on him.

Bucky leaned into Steve's touches and hummed a bit to himself. "I bet they liked you a lot," He said absentely and closed his eyes. "When's your mom coming over? Dinner should be ready soon." He looked down at his pajamas. "I should probably put on some real clothes.

"She's coming any minute," Steve said. "Why don't you wear that new sweater I got you? It'll look real good on you, Baby." Steve kissed him gently and nudged him up. "Come on, go make yourself
presentable to your new mother-in-law."

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Bucky obediently trotted off to their bedroom to get changed. He rummaged around for the new navy and grey sweater that Steve had bought him and he slipped it on before pulling off his pajama pants and looking for his black corduroys.

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While Bucky changed, Sarah showed up at the apartment with one bag full of presents and another bag full of home-cooked desserts. She greeted Steve excitedly, happy about his engagement, and then rushed over to hug the girls.

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Bucky came back out to Sarah's open arms and gave her a gentle hug before showing her the ring. "I promise to get one for your son soon. He needs one so everyone knows he's spoken for," Bucky said and gave Steve a loving glance.

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Sarah gave Bucky a warm hug and then held his face in her hands so she could give him a kiss on the forehead. "You better get that ring quick or else someone will try and snatch him up," she joked. She put a cake on the counter that she made that had the text 'Barnes-Rogers' on it.

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Bucky laughed as Steve eyed the cake happily and then gave his mom a dopey grin. He couldn't wait for the day when the five of them went to the church and had the priest bless their union to Steve's God. Bucky wondered if Steve would tell his mom before or after that he was converting out of the Catholic Church.

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"Mom," Steve whined with a smile. "The last names go the other way around."

Sarah looked at the cake then back to her son. "Alphabetical order looks nicer," she said. Steve pouted as he got the chicken out of the oven. Sarah rubbed a hand up and down Bucky's arm. "So when's the big day?"

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"Sometime before Steve goes back to work," Bucky said and offered for Sarah to sit at the table. "So within the next two weeks at least. We don't know what day exactly. All we know is that it has to be after school is over for the day and on a day that you are available."

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"Well, I'm retired. So as long as it doesn't interrupt bingo night," she joked. She wouldn't be caught dead at a bingo night. Sarah helped Steve carve up the chicken into slices. "So how has Christmas been so far?" she asked. "Have you all given each other nice surprises?"

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Lilly and Becca started telling Sarah about all the things they got this year. Lilly made a point to tell
her how this was the biggest Christmas she had had in four years. Steve was quick to remind Lilly that this Christmas was only big because this was their first one together and it had to be special. Bucky rested a hand on Steve's thigh while he poured the two of them something to drink. It was only sparkling cider and it was non-alcoholic but Bucky thought if he excused himself to the bathroom and took it with him then maybe he could slip with whiskey in it. "Steve." Bucky smiled at him. "Do you want to pray for the meal before Lilly can't take it and starts eating?"

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"Of course, Love, thank you." Steve joined hands with his mom and said a prayer so they could all dig in. When Bucky excused himself to use the bathroom, Becca eyed him suspiciously as he walked out.

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Bucky pulled a small bottle of scotch from his nightstand and poured it into his cup. Then he took the picture of his parents from his dresser and sat down with it. "I'm really sorry I didn't come visit you today. It just hurts too much - especially on Christmas. I'll come see you soon with Steve. He's right - I do have something big to tell you." Bucky rubbed the light dust off the picture and held his glass up in a toast to his parents. "I miss you. I love you. Merry Christmas."

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Becca had missed Bucky talking to the picture. All she saw was the scotch on the nightstand. She angrily stormed in and grabbed the bottle. "You said you would stop!" She hissed quietly, not wanting to alert the others by raising her voice.

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Bucky stared at her intrusion and clipped back, "I did. I hardly drink anything at all anymore. And I haven't been back to any bars except to close my tabs since that night." He reached for the small empty bottle but before he could get it, Becca angrily crushed it against the wall. There were shards of glass on the floor and some sticking to the wall and Becca's hand was bleeding from where some pieces cut into her. She stormed back out of Bucky's room before he could help clean up her hand.

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The idle chatter at the dinner table stopped when they heard a bottle smash. Steve got up quickly to see what was going on and Becca rushed past him into the bathroom with tears in her eyes. "Buck, what's going on?" Steve asked. He then saw the bottle shards on the floor and he couldn't help the tired sigh that escaped him.

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"I didn't hurt her," Bucky said quickly with his hands up defensively. "She got mad and smashed it herself. I swear. And she wouldn't let me help clean her hand either." His breathing was picking up and he felt the tears welling up in his eyes. "Steve..."

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Steve rubbed his hands over his face. "I'll be right back." He went to go get his mom to take care of Becca. He had Lilly distract herself by telling her to make sure the cat was fed and then he returned to their room and closed the door for privacy. "Buck," he said softly as he walked over to hug him. "Are you okay?"
Bucky shook his head and curled up into Steve. "I wasn't getting drunk I just wanted a little bit. It's Christmas and I figured it'd be fine. Mom loved cinnamon whiskey on Christmas. This was sort of like that." He looked up into Steve's eyes. "Becca overreacted. I'm not drunk and I wasn't planning on having anything more today."

"Baby, she didn't over react," Steve said softly. "And you weren't crossing any lines, either. I believe you weren't trying to get drunk, but you have to accept that the past is going to affect her perspective on you drinking for a long time," he explained gently. "She's been hurt by it, so you have to let her react the way she feels necessary."

"Smashing bottles and hurting her hand isn't necessary," Bucky countered but rested his head on Steve's chest, feeling small and pathetic.

Steve stroked his fingers through Bucky's hair. "That's not for you to tell her." It would only upset Becca more. She needed to be able to feel the things she wanted to feel.

"You're mad at me too, aren't you? I'm sorry this happened while your mom was here. I'm sorry it happened at all," Bucky pleaded with him and his breathing started to pick up.

"I'm not mad at you, Bucky. I'm just sad that it happened, that's all." Steve kissed Bucky's temple. "I'm sure my mom will understand. And now my converting churches won't be the biggest surprise of the day."

"Fuck, Steve, Baby. I'm so sorry," Bucky said and he felt like he'd said it a million times. "I didn't know you planned on doing that today and now I've gone and fucked shit up again and your mom probably thinks I'm an alcoholic if Becca's talking to her. She won't want you marrying me at all."

Steve didn't want to say that Bucky really was actually an alcoholic because Bucky already felt guilty enough and he didn't want to add to it. And Steve didn't love him any less because of it. "My mom knows there's more than one side to the truth. And she also sees how well you take care of me," he reassured. "It's going to be okay."

Bucky held his face in Steve's chest and let out a shaky breath. "Where's Lil? Is she okay?" He couldn't help but think of the day that he woke up in the hospital with his sisters and his grandmother surrounding his bed. He had tried overdosing and apparently Lilly had been the one to find him passed out in his bathroom. He always did more harm than good.
"She's with the cat." Steve kissed the top of Bucky's head. "Let's go out there and talk with her until my mom calms Becca down. We need to face them sooner or later," he encouraged.

Bucky sniffled. "I guess I have to." He stood up and quickly downed his entire glass of cider and whiskey before nodding and heading out the door. Lilly was curled up on the couch with Raphael. Bucky felt bad for interrupting the beginning of dinner. Lilly was really hungry and now their food was going to be cold soon. "Hey, Lil," he said and scooted her over on the couch so he could sit down by her.

Steve was already starting to reheat their dinner so they wouldn't go back to a cold meal. Lilly looked up from petting the cat and she gave Bucky an upset and confused look. "What happened?" she asked softly.

Bucky pulled Lilly to him and hugged her close. He was so mad he let this happen on Christmas. "Nothing, Lil," he said and pet her head, "Everything's okay. Don't worry." He really didn't want Lilly to be against him for his drinking too. He already had Becca and Steve and probably now Sarah getting on him about it.

"Why is Becca crying?" She asked, snuggling Bucky a bit. She had already had an emotionally exhausting day after visiting her parents' graves. Steve knocked on the bathroom door to check on Becca and his mom.

Sarah let Steve in and gave him a concerned little look. Becca shot a glare at him and hissed, "Did you know?" She balled one fist and held out her injured hand in front of her so Steve could see it. Sarah had put a bunch of Band-Aids on it after taking the glass out with some tweezers.

Steve frowned at the glare and the tone Becca took with him. He shook his head. "I didn't know that he was drinking today, Becca," he said. "I'm sorry that you have to go through this."

"But you knew he was drinking again," she accused and her lip quivered. "He said he would stop and you said you'd look out for him." Becca wiped the tears from her eyes and tucked some rogue hairs behind her ears.

"Becca, I'm still looking out for him," Steve said. "He's not doing anything illegal and I can't force him to stop. But he is getting better. He doesn't go out to bars anymore. He doesn't drink nearly as much as he used to," he reminded. "He's trying so hard."
"He's a fucking mess," Becca swore and crossed her arms. "He doesn't go to visit Mom and Dad cause he thinks they'd be disappointed in him and then he goes and does shit like this that just proves him right."

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Sarah looked a little appalled by her language but didn't say anything. Steve remained calm. "Have you ever tried to understand why?" Steve asked. "Or have you always yelled at him instead?" Steve wished he could understand why. He only had bits and pieces of it. But Bucky had such deep hurt and he couldn't possibly understand it all.

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"I wouldn't have to yell at him if he just had some more self-control," Becca protested. "He's reckless and naive and never thinks about anyone but himself. I know Lilly told you what he did after he left college. And I know you can't think he's just not going to try that again."

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"Becca," Steve said in a tone he hadn't taken with her before. It was dark and stern. "I'm going to pretend that I didn't hear you say that your brother only cares about himself." He paused to take a breath. "I think it's time you stop holding him to the standard that you hold yourself to. Because Bucky is not you."

---

Becca clenched her jaw tight and gave a stare down to Steve. Sarah was meekly standing by assessing the situation and trying to decide if she should interject. Becca swallowed and gritted out, "I hold him to whatever standard keeps him here with us and as our guardian. Lilly and I have no one else. If Bucky were to leave or lost us because of his behavior then we would be put into the foster care system and probably split up. I love Bucky - and I've had to deal with him a lot longer than you have - but he needs to get his shit together, Steve."

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"Becs."

"You don't deal with your brother. And neither do I. We love him and that's all there is to it." He reached out to take her hand. "You don't have to worry about being split up - ever. I'm not going to let that happen. You're allowed to be upset with his drinking. But yelling at him won't solve anything. If you want to yell, yell about him to me."

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Becca took her hand back from Steve quickly and pocketed it. She was stubborn as she was ruthless. "He lied to me again. He said he'd stop drinking and he didn't. He told me he'd stop bringing guys home but it took him three years. He always promises me things and breaks them within a week."

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"He did stop. He's drinking nowhere near as much as he used to. And he did eventually stop bringing guys home, Becca," Steve said. "I'm not asking you to not be angry. I'm asking you to have faith in him. Or at least faith in the faith that I have in him."
Becca didn't have much else to say. She really was too angry to deal with this. "Whatever. He's going to fuck up again in a few days anyway. But I'm hungry and I bet Lilly is about to just eat without us if we stay in here any longer."

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Steve had more to say but he wasn't going to get into an argument on Christmas over it. When Becca went out, the food was still staying warm in the oven and Sarah gave Steve a small look. She didn't love Bucky any less but she knew what being with an alcoholic was like.

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Bucky jumped up from the couch when Becca came back and Lilly followed him. "Is your hand okay?" he asked quickly and reached for it. Becca held it out to him and Lilly and they look over the band-aids to make sure everything was okay. "Becca..." Bucky started. "I'm so sorry."

All Becca said was, "Save it. I'm hungry. Let's just forget it for now."

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Steve sighed and walked over so he could give Bucky a hug and kiss. "I love you, Baby." He knew Bucky needed support.

Dinner was kind of tense and awkward. The silence was broken when Sarah asked, "So how do you plan to celebrate your wedding?"

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Bucky wasn't eating, just holding one of Steve's hands and staring at his plate. He felt like total shit. When Sarah asked about the wedding, Bucky looked up and said quietly, "Uh, going to Seneca Lake."

Lilly, to her credit, was trying her best to make the tension dissipate. "Our dad took Bucky there a lot."

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"That's nice," Sarah said. She looked at the girls and said, "I bet we will have plenty of fun baking and making things while the boys are gone. Or we can talk about history or find some lacrosse game at a college to watch."

---

Becca shoved some food around with her fork and said, "The library has a couple documentaries on tape that I've been wanting to check out. We got a VCR player today so maybe we can do that."

Bucky squeezed Steve's hand once and added, "We still need to pick up the Star Wars tapes and make Steve watch them."

---

"We can do that," Sarah said sweetly. When they were done eating, she stood up and washed the dishes for them. "Steve, be a dear and get the presents from the bag." Steve nodded and did as he was told. Sarah had knit each of them a sweater in their favorite colors. She had taken to knitting after retiring.
Becca and Lilly thanked Sarah for the sweaters and Lilly went off to her room to change into hers. Bucky stayed at the table as still as possible the whole time and only got up when Steve ushered him over to the couch to sit with him. All he wanted to do was to lie in bed and fall asleep. He had a pretty bad headache going and he couldn't handle Becca's cold glares anymore.

Sarah had written a card for the Barnes family, including Bucky, saying that she knew that she would never be a replacement for their parents but she still considered them her children now. Steve knew Bucky was having a rough time, so he sat with him on the couch and wrapped an arm around his shoulders. "Buck, what do you think of letting Becca spend a weekend at my mom's every now and again? So she can have her own space."

Bucky nodded and curled up against Steve. "If she wants to do that then she can do that." He wasn't going to say anything to the contrary and if Becca wanted to get away from him sometimes then there was nothing he could really do. "Was that Becca's suggestion?"

"No," Steve said. "I think she's putting too much stress on herself and she deserves some time away where she doesn't have to feel responsible over what happens in this family." Steve hugged Bucky gently. "She's really hurting, Bucky. She loves you. But she's still hurt."

"I know," Bucky said and sighed, "I told you I wasn't cut out for this," he added more quietly and rubbed his face. "I try to be like my parents but I just can't. And I try to be a brother at the same time. But when I am a brother, I'm not being enough of a parent and, if I'm being too much of a parent, I'm not being a good brother."

"Bucky, if you don't think you're cut out for this, then why do you want to have a child with me?" Steve asked in as nonjudgmental and calm a tone as he could. "You're not supposed to be like your parents. You're supposed to be you. And your drinking and drug use aren't you."

"I don't do drugs anymore," Bucky hissed at him in a low voice so no one else could hear. "You know that. It's been almost four years." He sat up away from Steve and crossed his arms against his chest. "And raising a child from its birth is different than taking over for your dead parents."

"I know you don't do drugs anymore. But just cause you don't do it now doesn't mean that Becca's healed from when you used to," Steve said. He pet a hand over his chest. "Baby, you know I love you. And you know that I believe in you. I just think that there's been so much that has already happened that Becca has zero tolerance for any bad habits now."
"Becca never knew about the cocaine," Bucky said. He still wasn't aware that Steve knew about the time he tried to overdose on pills and ended up in the hospital. "And I'm doing okay with everything else. I'm doing a lot better than I was, I mean. I hardly drink at all and you're the only man I've been with since about six months before I met you."

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"I know you're doing so much better, Love," Steve agreed. "That's not the point I'm making. What I'm trying to say is that you've messed up and broken promises with her over this in the past. So, of course, the smallest mess-up is going to set her off. And it may not be fair to you, but this is the environment you've created because of the decisions you've made." He gave Bucky's hand a squeeze. "But I'm here to help you."

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"My head hurts," Bucky mumbled dismissively and stared at the ground. "I just kind of want to go to sleep. Sorry I fucked up our first Christmas together." He gingerly took Steve's hand and held it up to his lips to kiss it. "Is your mom mad at me?"

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Steve kissed Bucky's cheek. "You didn't fuck it up," he reassured. "And I won't lie... my mom doesn't like that you drink. But she doesn't love you any less." He stood up to take Bucky to their room. "I'm going to stay up with my mom and the girls. But I'll join you after everyone is tucked in."

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In their room, Bucky waited up for Steve for a bit but he quickly fell asleep after he took some medicine for his headache. When Steve came in, it was close to one in the morning. Bucky woke up when the door opened and he sat up slowly and reached out for Steve. "Are the girls in bed?" he asked.

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Steve got into bed and wrapped his arms around him. "Yeah, I tucked them in and everything," he said. He pressed a kiss to Bucky's cheek and sighed contentedly. "How're you feeling?"

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"Not great." Bucky sighed and molded himself to Steve. "Found the engraving in the ring, though. I love it. You're a bit cheesy, but I love it. It's perfect for us." He rolled so he was facing Steve. "Are they still mad at me?"

---

Steve massaged Bucky's head and kissed his face gently. "I'm glad you like it, Handsome," he said softly. "They are still mad, yeah." he sighed. "We are going to have a serious talk about drinking. Becca found the six packs behind the blankets and I had to stop her from coming in and yelling at you."

---

Bucky closed his eyes and buried his face in the pillows. He knew Becca probably went looking for them. She probably checked every place that might have a hidden stash and raided what was there. "I just don't think I can stop, Steve."
"You can, Baby," Steve said. He worked his hands down Bucky's neck and over his shoulders. "I bet you thought you couldn't stop doing drugs or bringing men home, too."

"That was different," Bucky said. "It's not like I was addicted to coke - I just did it sometimes. And it was dangerous to bring strangers into the apartment and around the girls all the time. It's different," he repeated and pleaded with his eyes at Steve.

"Baby, I know it's not easy, but you can do it. They have classes and everything for it. And you have me to support you no matter what." Steve stroked a hand up and down Bucky's arm. "Drinking can be dangerous too. You can say or do something that upsets the girls or me. And it's terrible on your body."

"I'm not going to some bullshit AA classes, Steve. I'm not an alcoholic," Bucky said sternly. "And I've never been abusive to the girls or you when I've been drunk." Bucky sat up and flicked on the lamp by his nightstand. He had taken to keeping medication in the drawer in case he needed it for a headache and he contemplated taking some more even though he'd just had some a few hours earlier.

"If you're not an alcoholic, you wouldn't have such a hard time quitting, Bucky. Being an alcoholic doesn't make you a bad person, it just means you need a little help," Steve said as he laid his head down on the pillow and frowned over at Bucky.

Bucky didn't know what to say. He didn't want to admit that Steve might be right. He had known bad alcoholics in his life and he really didn't think he was one. But Steve made a good point and Bucky was just feeling like everyone was ganging up on him too much.

Steve could tell that Bucky was feeling a bit shitty. He didn't want their first Christmas together to end on such a tense note, even though he wanted to talk about how he didn't like losing Becca's favor today. "Hey," he said softly. "Give me a kiss," Steve murmured. "You're going to be my husband soon."

Bucky snuggled up to Steve and kissed him. He placed their foreheads together and whispered, "You still love me even though I ruined our engagement day? And even though I'm not a good guardian and I can't even go visit my parents' graves and I made your mom upset with me and Becca got her hand hurt and Lilly has no idea what's happening," he rambled until he was crying again.

Steve wiped at Bucky's tears and kissed his forehead a few times. "Bucky, I'm marrying you. Not some imaginary person who's perfect." He gave him a tight hug. "Don't beat yourself up. I love you
"I don't know why, though," Bucky mumbled. "I don't love me or like what I've done. I don't see how you don't leave me. I'm grateful that you don't but I just... Are you sure I'm worth all this, Steve?" He crumpled a hand against Steve's chest and stared at it.

Steve cupped Bucky's face and guided him to look up at him. He pressed their lips together and gave him a reassuring smile. "You care so much, Baby. You are such an amazing, strong man- even if you don't feel that way. You've taken such good care of me and kept an eye out for me when I was in the hospital. You've helped me through when I needed the most support I ever have in my adult life. I can trust you. And I know you love me." He kissed him again. "And soon, I'm going to promise myself to you for the rest of our lives."

Bucky really couldn't help that he couldn't stop crying. The ups and downs of Christmas Day had opened a well in him and he just couldn't get it to stop. He kissed Steve again and let his tears flow across his face. After about a minute of this, Bucky slowly and smoothly shifted their bodies so he was sitting on top of Steve still attached at the lips.

Steve wished that he could erase all the hurt that Bucky felt. He wanted him to have a happy, easy life. He stroked his hands over his back and hummed softly into the kiss. "I love you," he whispered. And then he said it half a dozen more times so Bucky wouldn't forget.

Bucky had moved to sucking harsh deep hickeys onto Steve's neck and somewhere in the mess of Steve's declarations, Bucky had ditched his shirt and Steve's hands had found their way to rest on the dimples of his lower back.

Steve moaned softly as Bucky marked him up. He scratched his nails lightly up Bucky's spine before resting on his lower back. "Say that you love me too, Baby."

Bucky popped off Steve's neck and looked him in the eyes. "I love you so much. I love you, Steve. I'm going to marry you and I'm going to be good for you. And I've never loved anyone like I love you and I never will again. You're all I need. And I'm going to make love to you tonight and every night until I die. And you're going to feel me on you wherever you go and I'm going to get you a ring so everyone knows that you're coming home to me."

Steve smiled up at him and looked so happy as Bucky confessed his love to him like that. "Sounds perfect, Buck," he said. He pulled Bucky down for another kiss. "Now make love to me. I want to feel you all night long."
Bucky nodded in agreement and wiped the last of the fallen tears from his face before shimmying out of his pants. His cock was already hard and pressing against Steve's leg. "Help me with your clothes?" he asked softly and started pulling on the dark green shirt that Steve had on.

Steve slowly slipped off his shirt and he stretched his arms up so he could show off a little for Bucky. He wanted to see a smile on Bucky's face. "Let's do something new," Steve suggested, so desperate to make Bucky forget all the drama from today.

Bucky's heart skipped a beat and he locked eyes with his new fiancé. "New like how?" he asked. Bucky was just going to fuck Steve deep and slow for a long time and make it a night of gentle meaningful love making but he couldn't resist anything that Steve was willing to try to spice things up a little bit.

"Do you want to try tying me up?" Steve asked. "Or blindfolding me?" He knew Bucky liked having that done to him but he wasn't sure if Bucky liked doing it to others. "Or do you want me to only do things when you say so?"

"No blindfolds," Bucky said quickly. "I want you to see me tonight. But if you want to try being tied up I'd love to see you like that." He let out a shuttering sigh and trailed his fingers up Steve's torso. "You'd look so gorgeous not being able to touch yourself - waiting for me to help you get off."

Steve looked a little nervous to be tied but he trusted Bucky thoroughly and he loved him so damned much. He would do anything to make him happy. He reached down to grab a handful of Bucky's ass and he kissed him deeply. "Then tie me up," he growled.

Bucky's breath hitched again as he scrambled off Steve to get the soft velvet loops that he had discarded on the other side of the room after they were used earlier. "Off with your pants, Baby," he said in a sultry tone as he stood before Steve holding the ties and sporting his hard on.

Steve watched Bucky with interest, eyes focused on Bucky's hard cock. He gave him a coy smile as he slipped his pants down, giving Bucky a bit of a strip tease. "How do I look, Baby?"

" Fucking beautiful as ever," Bucky replied confidently as he watched Steve toss his pants across the room. He went for Steve's arms first and tied them to the headboards, looking at Steve occasionally to check that he was still okay with this. Once the arm ties were on, Bucky had a shy look come over him. "Do you think, if your back isn't hurting, I could tie your legs up on the headboard too? So you're stretched to show your ass off to me?"
Steve was already flustered when Bucky tied his hands to the headboard. He gave a few tugs and made a soft sound when he realized he really couldn't touch Bucky until he was let free. He blushed even deeper at Bucky's request. "Go ahead," he said. "I want to give myself up to you."

"Steve, I only want to do it if you want to," Bucky said and started touching gently along Steve's thighs. "I'll let me get better access to you and get deeper inside you but if you'd rather be flat tied we can do that."

"Bucky, you can't tell me you can fuck me deeper like that and expect me to not say yes," Steve laughed. "Come on, let me see how good it'll be."

"Okay." Bucky licked his lips and pushed softly so he could get Steve's legs up and close to his head. Bucky tied them up next to his hands so he could still see Steve's face but also be able to get to his hole so much better than usual.

Steve's face heated up once he was securely tied against the headboard. This was definitely not vanilla Catholic sex this time. "How do I look?" Steve asked shyly, glanced over at Bucky.

Bucky parted his lips to speak but his mouth had gone dry and his throat seemed to be closing up. He looked Steve up and down and placed his pointer finger on top of Steve's taught hole waiting for him. "Ah, fuck me..." Bucky breathed out and licked his finger generously before sticking it slowly and purposefully inside Steve.

Steve let out a little moan at the first finger. "Good already, huh?" he asked. Bucky sounded like he was enjoying himself even with just this. "I wish I could touch you, though."

"Do you want me to let just your arms go? You'll sort of be able to touch me. But you have to promise not to touch your cock," Bucky said and massaged his finger in and out of Steve's ass.

"No, I want to try this first," Steve said. "Let me have another finger." He hummed softly. "I don't want you to be too gentle tonight, Baby. Not too rough. But I can handle more now, Buck."

Without warning, Bucky pushed in a second finger and let it stay there for a bit waiting for Steve to get used to it. "Keep telling me what you want me to do to you while you're like this," he demanded and grabbed the lube from the nightstand. Bucky poured some over Steve's ass and started pumping his two fingers into him and scissoring them around.
Steve arched his back off the bed and let out a low, keening sound as Bucky worked him open.
"Fuck yeah," he breathed out. "So good for me, Bucky. Want your dick in me. God, I can't wait for your come to be inside me."

Bucky was getting more and more impatient as Steve talked. He spent a few minutes tonguing Steve’s hole and getting it nice and wet with spit and lube. "Can you take me now, Baby, or do you need more time?"

Steve was hard and leaking on his stomach. "I want you now, Bucky. I can take it," he insisted. "I want that thick, heavy cock spreading me open." Steve was being freer with his words in a way that surprised even him.

"God, Steve!" Bucky gasped and lurched forward to kiss him. "I love it when you let loose like this. You're so perfect for me." He kissed him one more time before adjusting so his dick was resting on Steve's ass. Bucky lubed himself up and push his cockhead past the ring of muscles.

Steve smiled happily into the kiss and let out a moan as Bucky entered him. "Fuck yeah," he breathed out. The friction was maddening and Bucky didn't prep him for as long as usual, but Steve loved how it felt. His hands tugged reflexively on the velvet loops.

Bucky cautiously pushed all the way inside so his balls were squished up against Steve. "How's that feel, Babe? Not too deep? Do you hurt?" He checked and slowly dragged his cock back out all the way before pushing in slowly again. He could keep this calculated purposeful pace up all night if Steve wanted.

Steve turned his head to the inside of his arm to stifle the loud moan that escaped him. "Fuck, Bucky, that feels so good." His toes curled and he let his head fall back into the pillows. "Keep going, Baby."

Bucky kept doing the gradual in and out pushes for a long while until Steve looked to be just about losing his mind from Bucky going so slow. He sped up and slammed into Steve repeatedly, keeping a firm grip on Steve’s hips so he really couldn't move anywhere.

Steve closed his eyes enjoying the slow fuck that turned into a rough pace. It wasn't long before Steve was asking for more, writhing under Bucky and making desperate noises. When Bucky started to really fuck him, he let out a soft shout and arched his back. "I'm so close, Buck."
"No, no, no, Baby," Bucky voiced quickly. "Wait it out. Not yet." He clamped a firm hand around the base of Steve's dick and held tight enough that it might help keep him from orgasming too soon. "Give it a few more minutes, Steve, I'll teach you to last."

Steve let out a sound that was a cross between a whine and a groan. He wanted to come so badly and he was aching for release. He bit the inside of his cheek, eyes focused on Bucky with a determined intensity to last.

For all his talk, Bucky wasn't going to last either. His movements were becoming more erratic and jolting and he was sweating a bit with the brutal pace his hips were trying to keep up with. He would be surprised if he wasn't sore tomorrow just from being clenched to keep as steady as possible. He let go of Steve's dick and gave him a wordless nod to go ahead and come when he needed to.

The mattress creaked under the pressure from Bucky's thrusts and Steve's ass clenched down tight on Bucky's dick as he did his best to wait it out. The second he got the approval, however, Steve shot off like a damn rocket. "Fuuuuck! Oh my god, Bucky," he cried out.

Bucky had to cover Steve's mouth out of worry that he would be too loud and wake up the girls. He rode out Steve's orgasm like that and kept thrusting inside him until he felt his own rippling through his body. He didn't get much warning before he was shooting deep inside Steve and could feel the gush of it around him.

Steve was grateful that Bucky covered his mouth because it would've been embarrassing to have woken the girls up by being too damn loud. He looked up at Bucky with a thoroughly fucked out expression when he was done. Some come dribbled out of Steve's hole around Bucky's dick. "That was so good."

Bucky panted and slipped out of Steve. He moved down so he could lick his come up as it made its way out of Steve's hole. He got what was there and then untied Steve's limbs so he could wrap himself up in his fiancé's arms nice and close.

Steve turned his head so he could watch Bucky as best he could as he licked up his come. The moment his hands were freed, Steve wrapped his arms around Bucky and hugged him tight. "Love you so damn much, Bucky Barnes."

"I love you, Steve Rogers," Bucky responded and nuzzled his head underneath Steve's chin. His body was damp with sweat and Steve's come that was squishing between them. "I love you and I
love that you love me and that you want to be with me forever. And I love that you love my sisters and you take care of all of us."

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Steve stroked Bucky's hair gently and kissed the top of his head over and over. "We take care of each other now. We're a team and we're going to be the best team there ever was." He closed his eyes and let out a happy sigh. "You've made my Christmas special."

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Bucky laughed. "I gave you an up and down, whirlwind, roller coaster Christmas. Which is all you'll be getting from here on out in the Barnes family." He breathed in Steve's scent and stretched his leg out from under him. "You want me to get us a towel to clean up real quick and then go to bed?"

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Steve kissed Bucky a few times and then said, "Let's clean up and get to bed. I want to fall asleep in your arms. Tomorrow is a new day and I can't wait to wake up on our first day as an engaged couple."
Chapter Summary

This chapter finds them a little after Christmas.

Chapter Notes

Beginning of Season Two

Lilly was passed out asleep in her room with the cat - she had had a long day. After Becca got Lilly all settled in bed, she curled herself up on the couch with one of her new books to read. Bucky was still at work for another few hours and Steve had spent most of the day cleaning up the apartment and re-alphabetizing Bucky's record collection by artist then album.

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Steve had given Becca her space after Christmas but now with their wedding coming up, he was desperate to make sure that she wasn’t terribly upset with him again. After he tidied the place up, he took a seat next to her. "How are you liking the book?" he asked.

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Without looking up she said, "Did you know that a black woman was a key component in getting John Glenn into space? I'm learning about what she and the space team did to get him ready for post-atmospheric flight. I'd like to go into space one day if I can."

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"No, I didn't know that," Steve said pleasantly. "So did your brother and I upset you so much that you want to go into outer space?" he tried to joke lightly.

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"That's not funny," Becca quipped and flipped to the next page in the book. "Besides, I don't try running away like Lilly does. Although, one time I did take a day trip to Coney Island by myself while Bucky was at work and Lilly was at practice. But that doesn't count."

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Steve sighed. "I know. I'm just trying to make you feel better," he said. "You know, I was thinking maybe you can spend some weekends at my mom's if you want. That way you can have some time alone."

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"Hah!" She let out a strained short laugh, "Bucky just wants me out of the apartment sometimes so
he can drink or do whatever and I won't be around. I don't think so, Steve."

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"This wasn't Bucky's idea. It was mine," he said. "Because as much as your brother wants to be
good, he probably will drink for a little while. And I want you to not have to worry or feel like you're
responsible for him."

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Becca shut her book and folded her arms against her chest. "I am responsible for him. And I have
been since far before you came around. I was ten when he tried to kill himself. Lilly was only eight.
And she's the one who found him like that. I've been responsible for Bucky since then."

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Steve got a sad look on his face when she brought up the attempted suicide. "Becs, you shouldn't
have to be responsible, as a kid, for your adult brother. I'm here for you - all of you. You deserve to
get to be a kid."

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"That's nice, Steve, but I stopped being a kid when my parents died." She opened her book back up
again and flipped to the page she was on, seeming to be ignoring Steve before adding, "But if your
mom wants me over some weekends, I don't mind doing that."

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"You didn't have to stop being a kid," Steve said. "You know I'm doing my best for you guys, right?
And I'm doing my best to get Bucky clean, too."

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"I know," she confessed with a quick glance at Steve. "What I'm saying is that your best and my best
might not be enough to get Bucky to stay sober. And, I mean, first, he's got to admit to himself that
he actually has a problem. I know he fights anyone who suggests he might be a bit of an alcoholic."

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"I told him he's an alcoholic. And he seemed to listen, even if he didn't admit it," Steve said. "It's
going to be hard for him to give up. And he may never fully be able to," he murmured. "But he
needs our unconditional love and support, Becca. If he's going to have any chance at this, he can't be
afraid of you if he fails."

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"Why would he be afraid of me?" She asked defensively. "If he doesn't know I'm disappointed then
it'll never make an impact to get him to stop. We can't just give him a hug and a free pass every time
he drinks cause then he will think it's okay again."

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"He knows you're disappointed in him. You don't have to remind him," Steve said. "He won't visit
your parents even when your dad forgave him for dumb stuff he's done just because he thinks they'd
be disappointed in him too." Steve sighed. "Listen, as an officer, I've dealt with people a lot worse
off than Bucky. And the thing I always hear from addicts is that they would've been better if they had support from their family."

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Becca shook her head and said, "He has my support. He just needs to decide that he's going to do this and stick with it and not sneak around behind my back to drink. When he decides that he is doing this for all of us, he has my support. But I won't be cleaning up after him anymore on the days that he fucks up. That's on him."

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"That's not unconditional support," Steve said sternly. "And that does nothing to help him, Becca. You don't have to approve of him messing up to support him through it." He sighed. "Maybe when someone falls in love with you and helps you through a mess you made yourself, you'll understand what I mean."

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"Maybe your love blinds you to what he does," Becca snapped back. She sighed and softened then. "If you're giving him time and grace and unconditional support then you have to give me the same. That means if I do snap at him from time to time you need to just gently remind me what we are trying to do. I need time and proof before I'll believe that Bucky really will change."

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"Becca, of course, I would do the same for you," he said. "I love you and I will always be there for you no matter what." He knew he wasn't her parent or even as much of a brother as Bucky was, but she was family to him. "Thank you for being honest with me. I really do appreciate you talking to me about this."

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"Whatever, Steve." She sighed and got up from the couch. "I'm going to go read in my room in peace."

A little while longer, Bucky came back from work and happily trotted into the apartment holding out three VHS tapes. "I bought Star Wars!" He exclaimed and thrust them out to Steve. "I know what we are doing tonight."

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When Bucky came back, Steve smiled brightly over at him and said, "That's great. I was planning on going out for a run, I'm sure you'll have fun with the girls."

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"No, Star Wars together, as a family, Steve," Bucky insisted and moved to trap Steve as best as he could. "You can run in the morning. Star Wars tonight." He kissed him a few times and impatiently nuzzled his chin.

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Steve smiled dumbly at the kisses and wrapped his arms around Bucky tightly. "Alright, alright, you win," he gave in right away. "But I want to have some alone time first. Just a few minutes."
"Okay, alone time then Star Wars," Bucky conceded and plopped the tapes on the coffee table. "Are the girls home? They haven't come say hello. I haven't seen them since they went to sleep last night."

Steve nodded. "Lilly is napping, I think. And Becca is reading a book in her room." He kissed Bucky's cheek. "I had a chat with her. I'm trying to get her to be nicer to you and I think she's going to try."

"Okay, well we will see," Bucky scoffed and slipped his hand with Steve's to pull him into their room. Bucky started taking off his clothes that he wore to work until he was down to his underwear and socks. "I need to shower before we watch movies."

"I mean it," Steve said softly as he watched Bucky undress. "I really think that things are going to get better." Steve touched along Bucky's back. "Can I join you in the shower, Baby?"

"Of course, you can." Bucky smiled and dropped his boxer briefs. "I'll get it warmed up." He went to the bathroom and turned the shower on waiting for Steve. Bucky knew Steve wanted to have a serious talk and he was going to do his best to distract him from it as long as he possibly could.

Steve knew that Bucky would try and avoid having this conversation. He didn't want to ruin a good night but he had to be a responsible adult too. So he would give into him just a little bit but he wouldn’t let Bucky get the best of him with this. Steve came up behind Bucky and ran a hand over his back. "Did you have a good day at work?"

Bucky turned and hugged a now naked Steve to him. "Yeah, it was okay. Clint was sick so I had to pretty much take care of everything. But Reggie did help with some asshole customers that I couldn't handle on my own so that was at least nice of him. How was your day?"

Steve liked to hear that Bucky didn't have too hard of a time at work. "It was good. I went down to the precinct to start setting myself back up again and to say hello while the girls were at school. I'm going to miss being around for them all the time."

Bucky hopped into the shower and ran his fingers through his hair. "You'll still be around for them, Baby. Just not all day like you have been. Don't you think it'll be nice to get back to work a bit? I know you miss it. Was Natasha there today?"

"I miss having a bit of action and surprise in my life. There's only so many things I can craft to
brighten this place up," Steve admitted. "And, yeah, Natasha was there. She says hello, by the way, and claims she's going to beat you up for not inviting her to the wedding."

"Why was it my job to invite her? If anyone should be beaten up, it's you." Bucky rubbed the soap up and down his body and cramped next to Steve as he tried to get his back washed. The shower really was too small for two grown ass men to share.

Steve took the soap and started to wash Bucky's back for him. "I don’t know. I think she's just looking for an excuse to beat you up," he answered pleasantly. "So have you picked out my ring yet? I can't wait to see it."

"I might have gone when you were sleeping in the other morning." Bucky leaned forward to let Steve wash his back. "I might have it hidden somewhere in the apartment. And I might be waiting to give it to you until we can have another quiet night alone when I'm not rushed to get to work in the morning."

Steve gasped excitedly and grinned. "Aw, but, Buck, I want to see it," he complained. Steve kissed along Bucky's neck and nibbled affectionately at his ear. "Come on, let me see. We have the whole night in and I can play with it while we watch Star Wars."

"Tough fucking luck, Rogers," Bucky said and turned to kiss Steve. "I'll decide when you get it. Might be tonight, it might not be. We will see if I think you deserve it. Also, you best pay attention to Star Wars and not be distracted by anything else."

Steve chuckled at Bucky's stubbornness and he gave him a kiss on the shoulder. "Next time I get you a present, I'm going to tease you forever over it before giving it to you," he said in an empty threat.

Bucky took longer than usual to get cleaned up and after he was out of the shower he wrapped up in a towel and curled up in bed. "I could fall asleep like this," he said as Steve was toweling himself dry and giving Bucky soft but knowing looks.

"I know you could. But somebody wants to watch movies," Steve said as he laid down next to him. He kissed Bucky's face a few times and sighed happily. "I love you, Bucky."

"I love you too, Steve," Bucky said and kissed Steve on the lips for a long moment. "Guess I should probably get dressed." He got up and dried himself off, stretching out a little bit as he went. He then pulled on a pair of dark grey sweatpants and a loose navy tee - completely forgoing any underwear.
Steve watched Bucky with interest as he dressed and smiled. "Pick out what I should wear for the rest of the night," he suggested lightly. Steve propped his head up on his hand. "May I suggest, though, that I'd look good if I wore a ring."

Bucky nodded and pulled one of his own sweaters from his stash. It was purple and grey and would be very tight on Steve. He also tossed Steve his other pair of sweatpants, which were black and fuzzy on the inside. "You'll get your ring when I say so," he added as he tossed the clothes to him.

Steve pulled on the clothes, happy that Bucky picked the more comfortable sweats for him. "What if I tickle you into giving up where the ring is?"

"That's cheating and you know it," Bucky said but went to rummage around in the closet anyway. "Sit on the bed, close your eyes, and be fucking patient."

Steve gasped excitedly when Bucky told him to close his eyes. He did as he was told and squirmed in his spot, anxious and happy. He hoped this wasn't a trick and Bucky was going to give him something else. But that didn't really seem like Bucky.

It took Bucky a minute to get the small box from where he had it hidden but soon he was down on one knee in front of Steve with it in his outstretched hands. "Okay, Punk, open your eyes."

When he was allowed to open his eyes, Steve had the happiest smile on his face. He rushed forward and kissed Bucky deeply as he took the box gingerly from his hands so he could open it.

Bucky couldn't help biting his lip in nervous anticipation while Steve took the box from him and opened it up. He wasn't sure if Steve would like it or not. He had Lilly tell him what sort of rings Steve had liked best while they were shopping and he also consulted Steve’s mother, but Bucky still wasn't sure if this was quite the best one for him. "Do you like it, Baby?" He asked quietly and stared up at Steve.

Steve felt tears welling up in his eyes when he saw the ring. It was perfect - a silver claddagh just like his mom's, except hers was gold. Steve liked that his ring matched Bucky's in color. He put it on and pulled Bucky into a tight hug. "You're so good to me, Baby."

Bucky hugged Steve and inhaled his scent. "I was lucky to find that one. Apparently, they just had a couple shipped in from Ireland. I got the last one available. I didn't know if it'd be good enough for
you but I hoped..." He nuzzled Steve's neck and kissed it. "I hoped you'd like it."

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"Buck, it’s better than I could have dreamed of," Steve said in a love-struck tone. He smiled over and then looked at how perfectly it fit on his hand. "I must have done something right to deserve a wonderful husband like you."

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"Don't know about all that," Bucky said and hopped up on the bed next to Steve. "But I'm glad you chose me. Wouldn't dream of being with anyone else. I love you so much." He moved to straddle Steve and kissed up his neck and face. "Are you happy now? Won't tickle me?"

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Steve wrapped his arms around the small of Bucky's back and smiled up at him. "No tickling. I promise." He slid a hand up Bucky's shirt and he leaned up to kiss him again. "We should probably get the girls. Tread lightly with Becca. I interrupted her reading already and she may still be a bit cross with me."

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"Isn't she always?" Bucky asked. He got up to get a jacket to pull on and caught sight of his dad's old navy uniform tucked in the back. He ran a hand down it carefully and wished his father could be there to meet Steve and go to Seneca with them sometime and attend their wedding. He knew his dad would have loved Steve so much. Bucky pulled his jacket on and readjusted the navy uniform one more time before closing his closet and heading out the door with Steve.

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Steve noticed Bucky touching the uniform. Bucky never showed it to him before but he also never saw Bucky wear it, so he suspected it once belonged to his father. Steve knocked on the girls' door before opening it. "Hey, we've got Star Wars. You guys want to join?"

---

Becca put down her book and her eyes got wide. "You bought the tapes?" She asked excitedly. She slipped quietly into Lilly's room and roused her from her nap, enticing her with Star Wars. Once the first movie was set up, they all settled on the couch with Steve between Bucky and Becca as a buffer and Lilly curled up in Bucky's lap. Steve was messing with his ring again and Bucky clamped his hand over it so Steve would pay attention as the movie started.

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Steve regretted not seeing it sooner. By the end of the first movie, he was on the edge of his seat and his mouth hung open. The best part about it was how much he thought the main character looked like Bucky. Sure, Luke was a little scrawnier and had lighter hair, but there was still a striking resemblance. Steve also loved the blush of denial on Bucky’s face when he told him this. But he could tell Bucky loved the compliment and being compared to one of his all-time favorite protagonists. "Christ, how did I never see this before?" Steve asked dramatically, throwing his arms out to gesture widely at the TV. "I'm calling my mom."
"You're going to call your mom to tell her about *Star Wars*?" Bucky said and Lilly giggled sleepily. "By all means, Steve, go ahead if you like. You've still got two whole movies to go through." He gave Lilly a squeezing hug. "But they can wait for another day cause my little monster is too tired and has a special school day tomorrow because she has to retake a history test before classes start up again," he said.

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Steve paused then realized the hour and decided he should probably wait until tomorrow to watch the next one. "Can't Lilly skip tomorrow so we can watch the rest?" Steve joked.

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"No," Becca said. "She has a test in math tomorrow as well. She forgot to tell Bucky she failed that one."

Bucky looked from Becca to Lilly. He thought for a moment. "Why didn't I know about this test? Did you study for it?"

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"Becca!" Lilly scolded, angry that she ratted her out. She hadn't studied at all and now Bucky was going to get angry with her. "I'll be fine," she insisted. "I did extra credit homework the other day, so if I get a bad grade it'll be not so bad."

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"What grade did you get on the extra credit?" Bucky asked in concern. "Because one or two points aren't going to save your grades in class." Bucky looked to Steve and gestured in a way that said 'help me out here'.

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"I got… a grade," Lilly said vaguely. Becca huffed and got up to go to bed because she didn't want to be annoyed more by Lilly's lack of diligence about school.

Steve rubbed the side of his face and said, "Lilly, we are studying right now. I need you to grab your review sheet."

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Lilly protested for a few seconds before slipping off of Bucky's lap and going to get her math things. Bucky rested against Steve for a second. "What are we going to do with her? She just won't stay focused on school." He felt responsible for Lilly's lack of academic prowess. Maybe if he had been more proactive about her getting her work done well, then she would be better off. He was at least grateful that now Steve was once again distracted by something so he wouldn't have a chat with Bucky. Bucky knew they had one coming and he was going to put it off for a long time if he could.

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"We could get her a tutor," Steve said. "Maybe if she has someone personalize her education, she will be able to focus more." He kissed Bucky's cheek and got up so he could go with Lilly to the kitchen. He stayed up for an hour helping her through her homework and explaining everything patiently to her even though it was getting pretty late. He sent her off to bed with the sheet mostly done. He could quiz her on the walk to school.
Bucky waited on the couch while Steve helped Lilly. He was shit with math and wouldn't be able to help at all so he just curled up under a blanket and listened to his fiancé helping his little sister with her homework. After a while, he started to drift off to sleep and was jolted from the beginning of a dream by Steve’s gentle voice by his ear telling him it was time for bed.

Steve carried Bucky off to their bedroom. He laid him down on the bed gently and curled up next to him. "I think Lilly is annoyed that I made her spend so much time on homework."

Bucky wrapped himself around Steve and sighed. "She will get over it. Don't worry." He reached for Steve's hand and clasped it tightly, feeling the ring there on his finger. He couldn't wait for Steve's mom to see it. He hoped that she would like it. "Natasha can come to our ceremony if she wants to," Bucky murmured.

Steve gave Bucky a happy smile at the suggestion. "Are you sure, Baby? I know it's an important day for you, too, and I don't want you to feel obligated to have people come for my sake."

"Natasha, your mother, Becca, and Lilly - that's it," he said. “And Clint,” he added as an after thought. "But only if that's okay with you, too." Bucky pressed slow, kind kisses to wherever he could reach on Steve. He was too tired to have sex but he was never too tired to praise Steve's body a little bit with kisses and touches.

"Clint is welcome. I trust him," Steve said. "And he's your best friend." He hummed happily at the kisses and he responded by touching up Bucky's back and playing with his hair. "You're beautiful, you know that?"

Bucky came up for air to say, "You've told me," before ducking back down to where he was sucking a hickey on Steve's collarbone. He had worked his purple sweater up Steve's torso so it was bunched at his neck and Bucky had his head inside so he could access Steve's skin.

Steve couldn't help the laugh that escaped him when Bucky stuck his head up his sweater. "I know you're trying to avoid talking to me," he said calmly as he massaged the back of Bucky's neck and waited a few seconds before saying what he really wanted to say, "I’d like to go into our marriage without any secrets."

Bucky stopped and bit Steve lightly before pulling back. "You just want to talk about how I should stop drinking and I don't want to have that conversation for the millionth time." He sat up in bed and pulled an extra blanket around his shoulders.
"I actually don't," Steve said. "Not right now, at least." Steve reached up to play with Bucky's hair. "I was actually going to talk about you and your parents," he said softly.

Bucky readjusted so he could stretch out his legs on the bed. "Okay." He nodded. "What about them?" He wasn't sure where Steve was going with it but he wasn't really in the mood to get talking about his parents just to get horribly upset and have a headache.

"You don't visit them at all," Steve started. He reached out so he could lace his fingers with Bucky's. "How come, Baby?" Becca had already said what she believed, but he wanted to talk to Bucky about it.

Bucky shrugged and looked away from Steve. "Don't know," he mumbled and scratched a hand through his hair. But Bucky knew exactly why he was too nervous to go down there but it embarrassed him to admit and he didn't want Steve to think he was a terrible son for being afraid.

"Sweetheart," Steve said gently. "You know I love you and I won't judge you. It's against my religion for me to judge," he joked softly. "You can tell me."

Bucky curled the blanket around him tighter and pulled his legs in against his chest. He sighed and glanced at Steve. "They'd be so angry and disappointed in me if they'd been able to see how I acted after they died. They'd know what a terrible brother I was and how much I went off the rails instead of being here for the girls."

Steve didn't want to stifle Bucky, so he kept a little distance as he continued to pet Bucky's hair. "You've been there for them, Buck. You dropped your dreams so you could keep them together," Steve said. "I know you messed up and Becca had to step up where you lacked. But you're not a terrible brother. Not in the slightest."

Bucky scoffed and pulled away slightly. "I self-destructed, Steve. Becca - who should have been able to grieve and be a kid - had to clean me up when I came home drunk and covered in blood from a bar fight. My sick grandmother had to go to parent-teacher meetings at school because I was downtown somewhere shacked up for the day with some guy. And Lilly -" Bucky stopped abruptly. He knew he needed to tell Steve about that night when Lilly found him but he hated himself so much when he thought about it.

Steve pet a hand up and down Bucky's arm in encouragement. "You were so young still when they died and had so much responsibility thrown upon you. Nobody would handle that well, Buck. You
did your best and you kept them together. You cleaned up and you're so much better for it." He sighed. "I think the only person around here who isn't ready to forgive you is yourself."

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"I don't know if I should be forgiven for that shit, Steve," Bucky said and reached for his fiancé's hand. "I fucked up so bad and if my parents knew..." He shook his head. "You don't even know the worst of it. And if they knew, they'd chew me out for being so irresponsible."

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Steve immediately brought Bucky's hand to his lips so he could give it a kiss. "Your dad forgave you when he found you doing hard drugs and he rewarded you when you cleaned up. Why wouldn't he do the same now?" he asked. "No matter what happened, Baby, I'll always love you."

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Bucky stared at Steve for a hard minute, taking in his determined and aware eyes. Steve wasn't confused or curious. He fucking knew. Goddamn it, he knew what happened. "Fuck." Bucky let out a humorless laugh. "Becca told you, didn't she? When? Christmas?"

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Steve had a guilty look on his face. "Don't get mad at her," he murmured. "She only said it cause she was worried about you." And Lilly told him even earlier than when Becca brought it up but she made Steve promise not to tell.

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Bucky clenched his jaw and nodded slowly, not looking at Steve. He didn't know what to say. He figured Steve was probably upset with him about it. Hell, Bucky always felt like shit when he thought about it. He never really sought helped after that. He couldn't afford a therapist or anything.

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Steve was quiet and gave Bucky an opportunity to speak first. But when he didn't say anything, Steve spoke instead. "I was angry at first," he admitted. "But then all I felt was sadness that I couldn't be there for you and the girls back then." He watched Bucky closely. "I just hope you never feel that drowned again."

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"Of course you're angry." Bucky breathed a hefty sigh. "I almost abandoned them." He paused and picked at a fuzzy on his sweatpants. "I assume they told you that Lilly had to find me passed out in the bathroom. She was only eight. Eight years old, parents dead, sick grandmother, and a suicidal guardian near dead in the apartment."

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"I'm not angry anymore, Buck. That feeling passed." Steve cupped the side of Bucky's face and stroked his thumb over his jaw. "It's in the past. And we have to leave it there. Have you ever spoken to Lilly about it?"
"Yeah," Bucky said and sniffled. "They wouldn't tell me what happened for about a year afterwards. But when they finally did... I almost considered giving up custody of them because I'd fucked up so bad already and they deserved better – they deserve better." Bucky sank back down into the bed and rolled to face Steve. "Apparently, Lilly's bad nightmares started getting a lot worse about right after that night. Seeing me like that traumatized her."

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Steve leaned in to kiss Bucky’s cheek before pulling him in for a tight hug. "Do you think a therapist would help for any of you?" Steve asked. "We can afford it now. I'll be going back to my regular work pay."

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Bucky laughed. "What's a therapist going to do at this point? We've all survived through much worse in the past few years. I think we're set." He chewed his lip and mumbled, "Nothing shakes a Barnes, apparently."

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"A therapist could help. Because Lilly still tries to run away and has nightmares, you still don't visit your parents' graves, and Becca can't let herself be a kid," Steve answered.

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Bucky thought for a minute. "I'll have to go visit them since you told them I have to tell them something big." He ignored the rest of what Steve said, too worried about the whole thing to think about it.

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"I'm glad you're going to see them," Steve murmured. "I think they'd be proud that you managed to get yourself together and keep your family under one roof."

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"Maybe," Bucky conceded and rested a hand on Steve's chest. "Becca believes that they can hear us when we talk to them at their graves. I'm not sure that's really true but it makes her and Lilly feel better at least."

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"I think she's right. I spoke to them a lot when I visited. Told them a lot of good stuff about you and how well the girls were doing," Steve said. "I think they'd be happy you came."

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"I think they are probably confused since I never told them I was gay while they were alive. They probably got a bit of an afterlife shock when you showed up." Bucky chuckled. "I know for a fact they wouldn't mind, though."

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"Well, at least you don't have to worry about answering a bunch of silly questions for it. Sometimes my mom asks things and I know she means well, but it's..." Steve trailed off and laughed a little.
Bucky smiled and nudged Steve. "What's she ask? Please tell me she didn't ask you if you were top or bottom. I'd be mortified if my parents asked me that." He imagined how that conversation would go, 'Actually, Mom, Dad, I give and receive - if you know what I mean.'

Steve groaned and hid his face in the pillow. "She did. She asked how sex worked. Do you realize how awkward it is to explain how gay sex works to your Catholic mom?" He made a pathetic sound. "She also gave me an AIDS pamphlet from her old hospital and asked me to get tested."

"Okay but she's a nurse. How could she not know how gay sex worked?" Bucky laughed. "But, I have heard that AIDS is becoming a big problem. They don't know how to cure it either. Pretty scary shit."

"She worked in the ER. She was more used to car accidents than guys fucking each other into an injury," Steve said. That was quite an image. He wouldn’t really put it past him and Bucky to have a serious injury from sex.

Bucky curled up close to Steve and kissed his nose. "What else did she ask about?" He almost wished he did get to have a chat like that with his parents. He felt like he was missing out on something just a little bit.

Steve sighed. "She asked if I ever tried being intimate with a woman first. And she asked if it's just you or if I liked other guys that she didn't know about." He basically expected that question from his mother but it still hurt a bit.

"What'd you tell her?" Bucky asked and slipped an arm around Steve. "Because, I know you made out with guys before, but did she like ask if you wanted to try a woman just in case?" He looked down. "I know your mom would probably rather see you with a woman."

"Well, I told her I'd liked other guys but you are my first true love," Steve said. "It's not that she would rather see me with a woman. It's just that after I got shot, she's afraid of what other people may do to us."

Bucky held Steve's gaze. "Does she want you to leave me?" He asked tentatively. "Since you got hurt because of me, and I'm not religious, and I swear and drink, and I'm a man, and sort of a hippie, and not really what a good Catholic nurse wants for her son."
Steve looked away for a moment with a frown. "She loves you and the girls. And she knows you make me happy," he said. He didn't want to say it, but he had to be honest with Bucky. "But the drinking is a problem for her, even if she won't say it. My dad was an alcoholic and it wore her down over the years."

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"I don't drink as much as I used to. You know I did," Bucky said urgently and rested his head on Steve's chest. "Christmas was just a disaster and I'm so sorry your mom was there to see it. I wasn't even drunk, though. I had a couple beers while you guys were gone and then about two shots of whiskey in my drink. I wasn't getting drunk. I was just having a little bit."

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"I know you cut back, Buck. But you still have a drinking problem even if you weren't trying to get drunk on Christmas," Steve said softly, not wanting to offend Bucky. "Christmas was a shock for her." He paused and thought for a second, "Things got bad for us, too, but… not in the same way they got bad for you."

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"What do you mean they got bad for you?" Bucky whispered, automatically assuming he was talking about Bucky. "Did your mom get upset with you because of me? Did Becca explode on you two?" He figured Becca had some choice words about Bucky and being alone with Sarah probably lent itself to a lot of time to vent.

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"What I mean is… We dealt with my dad dying and with poverty and a bunch of other stuff, but my mom is more... proper, I guess? And she had the church to help, so we still had some sort of support even when we went through tough times," Steve explained. "So when she saw how bad times were handled here, it was a shock for her that some families don't suffer as quietly as she did."

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"We don't suffer quietly," Bucky agreed. "We act out and we drink and smash things and yell and try to overdose or run away or barricade the door to our rooms." He touched Steve's face. "Guess your mom isn't used to Barnes'."

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"I know," Steve said fondly. "Thankfully, I'm the one marrying you. She will get used to it over time, I think. But she's being my mom and worrying for me right now."

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"Can I ask what exactly she's worried about? Even though Becca thinks differently, I'm not going to try to kill myself again. And I'm not going to leave you. And I love you so much and that should be enough, right?" Bucky rambled. "I just want her to feel confident that you'll be safe here."

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Steve sighed. "Outside of the-whole-world-being-homophbic thing," he started. "She's worried that things might get real bad for whatever reason and I'd be too committed to leave you even if it was hurting me to stay."
"That could be true of anyone you could be with." Bucky was confused. "She just doesn't have confidence in me anymore, does she?" He asked worriedly. "I fucked up once - once, Steve. I haven't hurt you or abused you or been mean to you - either sober or not. What does she think I'm going to do to you?" He was getting defensive now. He tried not to, since it was Steve's mom they were talking about, but Bucky usually couldn't help getting defensive about most things.

"Baby, she knows you love me. She knows you'd go through hell and back for me. She's allowed to be worried when she comes over for Christmas and has Becca talking about how much of an alcoholic you are and how you tried to kill yourself." Steve did his best to keep calm but he was always a little protective over his mom. "She doesn't know it's not as bad as it seems."

"I'm not an alcoholic," Bucky repeated for what felt like the thousandth time. "And why did Becca have to go telling your mom about me trying to kill myself? She had no right." Bucky was up off the bed now. Pacing his way towards his closet to get some clothes to go out in. He needed a walk around the block or something. What he needed was a couple of shots and a pint or two and then a nap. But there was no way Steve would let him have that.

"Bucky," Steve said in a tired tone as Bucky got out of bed and grabbed his jacket. "Come back to bed. It's late and you know how the streets can get at night," he said grumpily.

"I just want to go for a walk. I promise," Bucky said and shot Steve a look. "I need just a few minutes by myself." He would just walk down a few blocks to the park and then come back. He wouldn't cave and go to the bar. He'd just take a walk. So he left swiftly and headed down to the bodega. Bucky was only out for about an hour but when he got home, he was too tired and a little upset and wanted to be alone, so he crashed on the couch.

When Steve heard Bucky return and not come to bed, he felt a bit angry but let him have his space. Come the early morning, he woke up to start breakfast early for everyone and saw Bucky sleeping on the couch with bottles of Coca Cola on the table. He paused and then went to Becca's room to gently wake her up. "I want you to see something."

"It's early, Steve," Becca grumbled but followed him out to the living room anyway. Steve pointed at the sleeping Bucky and at the overabundance of Coca Cola bottles on the table. She picked one up and popped off the top. "Okay?" She nodded and headed back to her room to get dressed, taking the bottle with her to drink.

"Becs," Steve huffed out softly as she took the bottle and walked away. He followed her, stopping her before she walked into her room. "Bucky and I had a disagreement last night. He went out for a walk and came back with these. Not booze," he said quietly so Bucky wouldn't wake up. "He's
trying. And he's getting better."

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"He bought soda once." Becca tilted her head slightly. "One time after one disagreement. I'll feel better if he does it again," she said and slipped into her room.

Bucky tossed around on the couch a few times before rubbing at his face and sitting up. He noticed Steve and then noticed where he had fallen asleep and then noticed all the glass coke bottles. "I sort of forgot I bought those. Probably wasn't a great idea."

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God, Becca could be brutal sometimes. It drove Steve up a wall but he couldn’t blame her for being defensive. He returned to Bucky and sat next to him so he could cuddle with his fiancé and feel better. "It wasn’t so bad of an idea. Becca already stole one to drink."

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"Oh, good. Sugar for breakfast." Bucky chuckled. "Hey, tomorrow’s New Year's Eve, 1985." He smiled and kissed Steve. "Are we doing anything special or just having dinner the four of us and watching the celebration?"

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Steve smiled over at him and said, "I was thinking about making a bunch of food and celebrating just the four of us. I will make loads of snacks. Maybe even have snacks for dinner."

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"Okay, that sounds good to me." Bucky smiled and looked at the coke bottles again. "Oh," he remembered. "That’s why I bought the soda. I knew I wouldn’t be able to drink on New Year’s so I got those instead. Try to sort of trick myself." He wasn’t going to completely stop drinking. He was going to somehow convince Steve to let him have the occasional drink or night out. Just so long as Becca wasn’t around and Steve was there then he figured he could manage to get him to agree.

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"Smart," Steve complimented, smiling proudly at him. He squeezed Bucky's hand and then stood up. "I'm going to start making breakfast and packing lunches. Any requests?" he asked.

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"Here, I'll help you out." Bucky smiled and got up too and scratched at his stomach. "I should hide this soda before Lilly sees it and takes it all for herself." He laughed and rounded up the glass bottles into an extra record crate so he could put them away in the laundry room shelf, just a little bit proud of himself for the initiative to buy the sodas.
On New Year's Eve, Steve sent Bucky and the girls out to go do something while he got the house ready. When they returned, Steve had it decorated with streamers and the sort and cooked plenty of desserts and a cake that had '1985' written in frosting. He was pretty damn excited for tonight and had a few games for them to play as well.

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Bucky walked into the mess of streamers and decorations and choked on a laugh. He was very soon going to be church married to the biggest goof ball he had ever known. "Stevie, this is so nice and festive!" He said and jumped Steve in a hug. "It's great. Thank you, Baby."

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"It gets better - look!" Steve said as he showed off a bowl full of noisemakers and poppers for them to set off when midnight struck. He even had cheesy, plastic hats that had ‘1985’ written on it and he put one on each of their heads. "This is going to be the start to the best year ever," he said confidently.

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"Alright there, Rogers." Bucky's eyes were wide and he could see Becca in the corner of his eye taking off the hat and gently setting it down on the table. "You get into this shit, don't you?" He asked and gave Lilly a look. Lilly was already reaching for a popper, deciding it was best to give it a try before midnight.

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Steve nodded his head. "Come on, you can't expect me to not go all-out for the year that I'm marrying you," he stated. Raphael came walking up to Bucky and gave a big, pathetic meow because Steve clipped a bow tie to his collar to make him festive.

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Bucky picked up the cat. "Oh my god. Can no one in this house leave Raph alone?" He asked and pet his head and gave him a little kiss. "You poor baby." He handed him off to Becca and reached for Steve. "I'm marrying you in three days. Just three more days and at least the church and your god will see us as husbands. Then we just wait for the rest of the law."

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The cat mewed at Becca once he was passed off. Steve thought that he was being a little over dramatic about the whole thing. Steve smiled and wrapped his arms around Bucky tightly. "I can't wait," he said dreamily. "It's going to be the best day of my life."

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"Best day of mine, too." Bucky smiled and kissed Steve for a long moment. "I love you so much." He caressed Steve's face carefully. "When are we having dinner? Do we have some time for..."
Bucky bit his lip and nodded towards their bedroom discreetly.

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Steve laughed at the nod. "Lucky for you, dinner is cake, double chocolate chip cookies, and brownies and ice cream with this new brownie recipe I found," Steve said, very pleased with himself. "So we can relax for a bit." Steve was already dragging Bucky to their room.

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"Fucking great." Bucky shook his head with a smile and let himself be led to their room. Once they were there, Bucky gently shoved Steve against the closed door and started kissing him quickly. He was pretty damn impatient because they hadn't done anything in two days. Bucky's fingers were already unzipping Steve's pants and their lips were locked together.

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Steve was absolutely insufferable. He knew that Bucky would want to fuck on New Year's Eve so he even bought a pair of briefs that said '1985!' and was wearing them right now. He smirked against Bucky's lips and gave his hair a little tug while they kissed. "Someone's eager," he purred.

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"I want to usher out 1984 by riding your cock," Bucky said like it was the obvious thing to do. He could have added a 'duh' for good measure. "Now let's have it." He smirked and knelt down to pull Steve's pants off the rest of the way. He noticed the new tight fitting bright blue briefs and he felt a raised design when he cupped Steve's ass. He pushed Steve to turn around and saw the colorful '1985!' plastered on his cheeks. He chuckled, "You're a punk, Steve."

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Steve let out a loud laugh when he got Bucky to look at the text on his ass. "You like it? I bought it just to wear for you." He grabbed at Bucky's jeans and started to take them off. "I'll let you do the honors of removing them from me."

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"I'm not sure I want to touch those ever again," Bucky grinned cheekily. "Maybe I'll just lay on the bed and finger myself open while you take them off and get yourself ready to fuck me." He stepped the rest of the way out of his pants and quickly disposed of his shirt and socks.

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"But I love opening you up," Steve said in a pathetic tone. He usually was more reserved about what he wanted but when Steve liked doing something in bed, he was a bit of a stubborn ox about it. "Wouldn't you prefer to have me eat you out, anyway?"

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"You drive a hard bargain, Steve," Bucky said and flopped on the bed with his legs spread wide for Steve and his hand tugging on his cock to wake it up. "I guess I'll let you do what you want with me. You're a little pushy in bed, though, I'll have you know."
Steve drank in the sight of his fiancé on the bed working his cock for him, beyond thankful for how lucky he was to have him. "Jesus, you look so good," he groaned. He got the lube out but didn't prepare Bucky yet. Instead, he took his time to kiss and suck marks on the insides of his thighs. "I'm not pushy," he argued lightly, unaware of how stubborn he could get.

"Yes, you are." Bucky laughed and rested his head back against the pillows. "You're demanding when things don't go the way you planned, you can't handle me trying to punish you by taking things away like being able to finger me open, and you won't let me do certain things like play with Phillip or watch any porn. Admit it, Baby, you're pushy, sexually."

"What? No..." Steve started to protest but then he realized that Bucky was right. "Oh my god, I'm the controlling boyfriend," he gasped. Steve got a look in his eye that seemed to tell that he was questioning whether he was giving Bucky a healthy relationship or not.

Bucky sat up and pulled Steve into his lap. "Yeah, you are," he said matter-of-factly - not meaning anything by it, just telling it like it was. He kissed Steve's lips and hoped that his erection against Steve's hip didn't bug him too much.

"I'm sorry, Baby," Steve said. "Do you want to finger yourself, then?" Bucky would be able to see the physical strain in Steve's face for not getting the opportunity to prep Bucky tonight, but he would get over it quickly enough. Steve wasn't a total control freak.

"No, Baby, it's fine." Bucky laughed and tackled Steve to the bed. "Just lighten up a little. Let things flow. You don't have to dictate every next move for us to have a really wonderful and beautiful time making love, okay?" He moved around so his ass was close to Steve's mouth and his mouth was close enough to Steve's cock. "Go ahead and eat me out if you want."

Steve looked worried until Bucky tackled him to the bed. He was fine after that. Next time, he would let Bucky lead more. Steve dove right into Bucky's ass, spreading his cheeks and laving his tongue over the hole so he could get Bucky's ass nice and wet.

Bucky gasped at the sudden feeling on his hole and he gripped Steve's thighs tight. He wanted to do his best to blow Steve while he was licking him open so he swallowed Steve's cock down his throat and started bobbing his head up and down.

"Bucky-" Steve gasped out. It was incredibly hot to have Bucky blowing him while he ate his ass out. He pushed his tongue past the ring of muscle and once he deemed Bucky ready, he added a finger as well.
Bucky did his best not to groan too loudly when Steve stuck a finger alongside his tongue. He was, thankfully, stifled by the dick in his mouth but he knew he was still too loud. He also didn't want Steve to come before he was inside Bucky's ass so he popped off of him and scooted back so Steve's face was closer to his hole.

Bucky's mouth felt amazing on his cock and as much as he loved it, Steve was thankful that Bucky pulled off so he wouldn't come too soon. After he started to open Bucky with two fingers, he couldn't take much more foreplay. "Where's the lube?" He could've sworn he had it but he could've lost it in the sheets.

"Fuck, I don't know," Bucky said and moved off Steve to look. It had somehow made its way off the bed and onto the ground. Bucky hastily picked it up and shoved it into Steve's hands. "Here, Baby, here," he said and knelt face down, ass up on the bed for Steve.

Steve grabbed the lube and put some on his fingers. He kissed Bucky's open hole before pushing his fingers inside. "You ready, Buck? You want me to fuck you like this?" He smoothed his other hand over Bucky's back.

"Fuck me however you want," Bucky whispered and moved his hips impatiently. "Let's give 1984 a good send off," he added and pulled his hair back into a bun on the top of his head. "Need you, Steve."

Steve nodded and turned Bucky over onto his back. He stroked some lube onto his dick, hooked his hands under Bucky's knees, and pushed them up towards his chest so Bucky was folded in half. He leaned down to kiss him deeply as he pushed himself inside of Bucky.

"I like seeing your face when you get inside me," Bucky whispered and reached a hand up to card through Steve's hair. Bucky had just now started growing his beard out and it was just a stubbly little mess at the moment. He wondered if Steve would consider growing out a beard so he could see him with it. He didn’t even know if the police station would let him have a full beard.

Bucky always felt so goddamn amazing around his cock. Steve couldn't help the sound that came out of him as he eased his dick in further and further until he was balls deep in his fiancé. "I like seeing your face when I make you come on my dick," Steve purred, sucking a mark on Bucky's shoulder as he started to ease in and out of him.

"I like that you get better and better at dirty talk every day." Bucky smiled and wrapped his legs
around Steve so he was as close to him as possible. "I never get tired of you. I love every minute we get together. I hope you know that."

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Steve started to move freely in and out of Bucky. The mattress creaked under his movements as he said, "I learned from the best, Baby." He nipped at Bucky's ear and grabbed at his hips for more leverage as he fucked Bucky deeper.

---

Bucky went quiet except for the sharp gasps he made every few seconds when Steve hit his prostate. He was slowly losing focus on anything around him and was just paying attention to the feeling of Steve inside him. He loved how his fiancé could make him completely forget himself and just... be.

---

Steve kept going and had Bucky writhing beneath him. "That's right, Baby," he breathed out. "You're so good. I'm so close. Buck, Baby, I'm gonna..." Steve claimed Bucky's mouth in a kiss as he came deep inside of him. Steve moaned low in his throat and slowly rocked his hips in and out a few more times before finally pulling out. Steve stuck a finger inside Bucky, swiped some come from his ass, and wiped it off on his chest.

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Bucky flipped them both so he was sitting on Steve's chest so he could jack himself off over Steve's face. Once he came, he rolled off Steve again and let his head drop on his chest. "Happy New Years Eve, Baby." He smiled and licked Steve once playfully.

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Steve closed his eyes and held on to Bucky. "Happy New Year's Eve," he said in a lovesick tone. "Tell me something fun we are going to do this year."

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"Well, in case you forgot," Bucky started, "we are getting church married and going to Seneca Lake and having our first birthdays together as a couple and maybe going to Coney Island with the girls and definitely finishing Star Wars and having a lot more sex."

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Steve smiled and pet a hand up and down Bucky's arm. "I didn't forget about those," he said pleasantly. "What about Becca and Lilly?" Steve asked. "I want to have a family vacation together. What would make them happy?"

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Bucky scrunched his face up in thought. "No idea. They once entertained the idea of Disney World but we never could afford it and I honestly don't know if I could handle being in a place like that and not be worried about losing one of them."

---

Disney was a bit far. Six flags was in New Jersey, but that was... New Jersey. "What about Busch
"Gardens?" Steve asked. "It's in Virginia and there's plenty of rides in it. No Disney characters but they could have fun."

---

"I mean, maybe." Bucky shrugged. "I don't really know how we would be able to make that happen but we can discuss it sometime." He rolled off the bed and grabbed a towel to wipe himself and Steve off. After they were fairly clean, Bucky resigned to get his clothes back on.

---

When Bucky got up to put clothes on, Steve tugged him back down and wrapped his arms strongly around him eliciting a huff of laughter from Bucky. "We can save up," Steve said. "It'll be great, Baby. Wouldn't it be nice to see Becca being a kid? That's my goal for this year."

---

Bucky sighed. "I think Becca's past that now. She tries to act like she's thirty every day. I don't know if Busch Gardens would help that." He paused and thought. "Maybe we can see if my aunt and uncle would take the girls for a week in the summer. They haven't seen our cousins in four years."

---

Steve gasped. "That would be a great idea," he said. "But would you be able to handle them being away for a week so far away?" Steve asked. He played with Bucky's hair. "What about you going, too?"

---

"I can't go," Bucky said. "My aunt and uncle are too conservative. I can't stand it most times. And my cousins are too young for me to connect with but Lilly and Becca are around their ages. I don't know. It's just a thought."

---

"Oh," Steve said softly. "Alright." He laid his head on the pillow and looked over at Bucky. He took in the sight of him and how goddamn gorgeous he was. "You think you might go back to school?"

---

"Back to school?" Bucky scoffed. "Yeah, right, Steve. I wouldn't be able to afford it and I've still got to see the girls through school and I have a job to maintain and what would I even do with a degree now? No, there's no point." He ran his tongue distractedly over his lips in thought.

---

"You wouldn't have to go back full time," Steve said. "You can take a class or two here and there and it'll be cheaper," he suggested. "I'm not saying it'll be easy, but we have three incomes between the two of us. And you can try to be a music producer or something in the business like you said you wanted to do."

---

"Yeah, there's no way I'd be able to be a producer anymore." Bucky rubbed his face. "And I'm older now and wouldn't fit in with the kids in the classes anyway. I mean it's not likely that many of them
have shared life experiences to me." He moved to get up again. "Let’s drop it for now and go check on the girls, okay?"

---

Steve wasn't going to argue with Bucky over it. He exhaled in resignation and nodded his head. "Sure thing," he agreed as he got up and dressed himself. He kissed Bucky's cheek before opening the door. "Love you."

---

As they walked to the living room, they overheard the girls talking. Becca said, "Yeah, so that's how men do it. You understand?"

"Yes," Lilly responded, "I get both of those ways now but I still don't understand how two women have sex."

---

Steve's brain went to a screeching halt when he heard what they were talking about. He couldn't even get embarrassed about them talking about how gay guys had sex - but Lilly was entirely too young to talk about sex, period. "Becca!" He scolded in a scandalized tone.

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"What?" Becca sassed back and folded her arms. "She wanted to know." Lilly nodded and Becca turned her attention to Bucky. "She was going to have to learn eventually, right?"

Bucky shrugged and gestured loosely at them. "I mean, yeah. I think it's better you told her than her researching sex at the library like you did at her age."

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Catholic-raised Steve was flabbergasted that nobody else was bothered that a girl who was barely a teenager was learning about different kinds of sex. "She's too young. You are too young," he said, directing the last part at Becca.

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"Becca's fourteen," Bucky said and shrugged again. "Plus, she knew all about sex when she was eleven. She checked out anatomy books and asked librarians how things worked. Although, I'm not entirely sure where you got your information for gay or lesbian sex because I certainly don't think they have articles in the library about that."

---

"She's still too young. She shouldn't even be thinking about sex until she is older," Steve complained to Bucky. "Maybe if she wants to learn about herself and her own body, but certainly not sex with another person."

---

"I had sex at fifteen," Bucky stated before quickly adding, "I'm not saying that Becca should follow what I did by any means. But I think learning about it and teaching Lilly is fine. They both will have to know."
"They should learn from us, but not at such a young age. You shouldn't have been up to that at fifteen," Steve defended, not mad but still standing his ground.

"I'm sorry I didn't wait to be in love first like you did." Bucky was slightly mad, feeling like he was being chastised for his decisions on sex and how he raised his sisters for not minding that they were discussing this. "It's not like they are hyper-sheltered and I don't want them to be. Mom and Dad never raised any of us that way."

"I'm just saying that fifteen is too young for anyone," Steve said. "It's not being sheltered to not be concerned with something only adults should do." He crossed his arms with a pout. "I can't tell you how many kids I pick off the streets doing things they think they're ready for."

"Steve, it's not a big deal. They are smarter than most kids and me and won't do things they aren't ready for. They won't get peer-pressured like I did cause they are stronger than I ever was." Bucky scooted closer to his sisters protectively. He sort of felt like this was his and Steve's first parenting fight. The thing was, they were his sisters and not Steve's responsibility.

Steve could tell that he wasn't going to win this argument. And by the way Bucky stood protectively over his sisters, Steve knew that it would only get messier if he kept pushing his case. He sighed and shrugged. "Fine," he ground out unhappily.

"I-I'm sorry," Lilly stuttered out and looked between the two men. "I just wanted to know. And I much rather ask Becca about it then you guys. That'd be a really bizarre conversation."

Bucky ran a hand down her hair. "It's okay, Lil. You didn't do anything wrong by being curious. And you know I don't believe in keeping things like that a secret from you."

Steve took a seat on the couch so he wasn't so imposing. "You don't have to be sorry for asking," he agreed. It was Becca and Bucky he wasn't entirely happy with. He patted the spot next to him to get Raphael to come over.

Raphael jumped up on Steve and meowed to be pet. Bucky followed Becca's gaze as she looked to Steve then at Bucky and rolled her eyes discreetly. At least she was on Bucky's side sometimes. "Anyways..." Bucky sighed and pocketed his hands. "What do we want to do for New Year's first, huh?" He wanted to drop this whole thing. He and Steve would probably have to have a similar conversation down the road with their hypothetical child in mind anyway.
Steve readily gave the cat all the pets and scratches his little heart desired. He kissed the top of his fuzzy head and shrugged his shoulders. "I have a few board games. Or we could play poker. Or watch a movie," Steve suggested.

"Uh... the girls can pick I don't care one way or the other," Bucky said. "I'll be right back." He slipped off to the bathroom to get some medicine for the little headache he could already feel. He then went to the laundry room and grabbed several of the bottles of Coca Cola that he had stashed there the day before. He was so used to drinking after an argument and he was trying to retrain himself to be okay with soda instead of booze.

While Bucky was gone, Steve looked over at Becca and Lilly. "I'm sorry," he apologized. "I know you guys don't see things the same way, but I don't think that talking about sex at your age is appropriate," Steve murmured. "I don't think you can convince me otherwise, but obviously I can't stop you either."

"You were just raised different from us," Becca said. "I know our parents told Bucky a lot of stuff when he was young. They let us swear and let Bucky drink when he was fourteen." Becca caught the small squeak of a groan that came from Steve when she explained the beginning of Bucky’s drinking.

Bucky couldn't help that he double-checked his hiding places for any hidden bottles that Steve or Becca had missed. There weren't any and part of him was grateful that he didn't even have the temptation in front of him. He brought his bottles back out to the living room and handed one to each of them as he nodded to Steve in a way that said, 'Look, it's not alcohol. I'm trying.'

When Bucky returned, Steve pulled the man down to sit next to him and he gave him a firm kiss on the cheek. "Proud of you," he said softly. He looked back at the girls and asked, "What do you guys want to do?"

Bucky conformed to Steve and leaned against him so he was mostly in Steve's lap. He pecked Steve's lips and whispered, "Sorry, Baby," apologizing for the argument.

Lilly picked up Raphael from the couch and held him up to her face. "Raphael thinks board games are a good idea." She nodded at him and turned him to face Becca. "Unless Becca wants to watch a movie?"

Steve played with Bucky's hair and pouted when Lilly took the cat from him. "Board games it is! I have Monopoly or Life. Anything else and we will have to get creative."

"I hate Monopoly..." Bucky shook his head. "So I vote for Life or that train track game of Becca's or even Go Fish. Or you all can play Monopoly and I'll play Solitaire and avoid the Monopoly
"Go Fish," Becca said. She didn't want to play Monopoly after the last fight that broke out over the game. Lilly nearly lost a tooth. Steve nodded and disentangled himself from Bucky to get the deck of cards.

They played Go Fish mostly without incident for a while. Lilly spent most of the night eating cookies and cake and soda and Bucky tried not to think about how wrecked she was going to be after her sugar high wore off. When it was closer to midnight, they all gathered around the TV and watched *Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve* celebration.

Steve had a fun time with the three of them but once midnight came nearer, his attention was drawn to the television screen. "Guys, it's any minute now. You got your poppers ready?" He asked the girls.

Lilly had one popper in hand and several in her lap. Becca was holding one reluctantly and had Raph curled up on her leg. Bucky was glued to Steve waiting to kiss him at midnight and not really paying attention to anything other than his fiancé.

Steve had one popper in his hand but he planned on letting it off only after he kissed Bucky. He counted down with Dick on the TV and as soon as it struck midnight, Steve turned to Bucky and drew him in for a deep kiss.

Lilly immediately hopped off the couch and started exploding as many poppers as she could before pulling Becca up and demanding that she help her make them all go off. With both girls and the cat off the couch, Bucky was able to push Steve against the arm and kiss him for as long as he wanted with his hands held snug in Steve's hair.

Steve laughed when Bucky pushed him and he closed his eyes as they shared the moment together. Time seemed to stop for Steve and he stroked his hands up and down Bucky's back until Lilly finally turned towards them once all the poppers were set off. "Get a room, you two."

Bucky pulled off of Steve and flicked Lilly in the arm. "Happy fucking new year," he said with a grin. "It's 1985!" He grabbed both his sisters and pulled them down onto the couch with him and Steve so they were all in a big family snuggle puddle. "I love you all so goddamn much."

Steve grinned widely with all of them pulled together on top of him. He wrapped his arms tightly
around his family. "I'm so happy I'm with all of you," he said. "This time last year I wasn't half as happy as I am today."

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"This time next year," Bucky said, "We will have been church married and gone on our honeymoon and Becca will be fifteen and Lilly will be twelve... and I'll be twenty-five." Bucky sighed, "Oh, god, I'll be twenty-five."

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Steve laughed at Bucky's realization. "I'm marrying a senior citizen. Heaven help me," Steve said dramatically. "At least you'll be able to collect social security. It may be even more than you make now."

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"Steve," Bucky eyed him in mock offense. "That is not funny, I'm a third of the way through my life. And don't be laughing cause you'll be twenty-four soon and that's officially old, I think. You won't be a young cute twenty-three year old anymore, Rogers. Well, you'll still be cute but that's just cause you're lucky."

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"A quarter of the way through your life," Steve corrected. "We are both living to a hundred," he added confidently. "And, you know what, I'll always be a cute twenty-three-year-old," he decided. "I'm only as old as I act, you know."

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"Oh, if that's the case, you're actually seventy-five, old man?" Bucky teased. He blocked his side with his arms so Steve wouldn't be able to tickle him if he decided that was the best course of action in response.

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"Oh, shut up," Steve complained. "I guess that makes me your... what's the term again? Sugar Daddy?" Steve smirked and messed up Bucky's hair.

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"Oh, god, no." Bucky made a disgusted face. "Please never call yourself that again." He kissed Steve's cheek quickly and then kissed the top of both his sister's heads. "Happy New Year, you guys."

---

Steve smirked mischievously. He waited a few seconds for silence to settle then he repeated, "Sugar Daddy," like a goddamned teenaged boy. He hugged them all and sighed. "I can't believe my family tripled in size. But we belong together. All of us."

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Lilly looked up at Steve with pleased but sleepy eyes. "I like having you around, Steve," she said and yawned for a long moment. "So does Becca even if she doesn't like saying so."
"I never said I didn't," Becca countered flatly but snuggled a little closer in the family cuddle puddle.

"Alright, time for bed for you two." Bucky gently pushed Lilly off of him so she would start her way to her room.

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Steve grinned from ear to ear when Lilly stated hers and Becca's approval. In response to Bucky sending them off to bed, Lilly grumbled about not being that tired. It wasn't the truth. She could hardly stand. She was just complaining for the sake of complaining. After the girls were both settled in bed, he kissed Bucky. "Here's to the best new year."

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Bucky held Steve's head in his hands and kissed him over and over again slowly and deeply. He was beyond excited to be starting this new year off with Steve and that he was going to have every new year with him. "I really love you," he said. "You love me?"

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Steve played with a loose strand of Bucky's hair. "I love you so much, Sweetheart," Steve said. "I love you and your sisters and the constant mess and noise that comes with living here."

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Bucky and Steve had already planned on going to the church in three days. That would give them time to get some things ready and then give them two days afterwards before Steve had to go back to work. Sarah said she would stay with the girls the night that they get married and Bucky had made secret reservations at a fairly decent hotel for him and Steve. The new year was off to a pretty damn good start. "You want to go curl up in bed and fall asleep or do you want to watch some more TV?"

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"I kind of just want to curl up in your arms and sleep," Steve said with a little, hopeful smile because he was a dope like that. He leaned in to kiss him. "It'd be a perfect end for the night for me."

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"Okay, Baby, let's go to sleep," Bucky said and pulled Steve up off the couch to lead him to their room. He got into bed with a slow, tired slump and reached for Steve to join him. "I have work first thing in the morning," Bucky complained and held Steve to him. "I'd much rather stay here with you all day."

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Steve snuggled right up to Bucky and let out a pleased sigh when he felt Bucky's arms go around his body. "I don't know how I'm going to go back to work on the days that you have off. You have an amazing amount of self-control to have gone to work every day I've been around so far."

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"Yeah, it's true." Bucky kissed Steve's hair. "I hated having to be gone knowing you were all alone here. It was better on weekends when I knew the girls wouldn't be gone for school, too. Now I'm going to have to figure out what to do on days that I have off and you're at work and they are at school. I'm going to be all alone."
Chapter End Notes

Also, so far no one has commented on my dildo joke... Phillip the Dildo... like 'fill up'... cause it, you know, fills him up... get it? I'm quite proud of that joke.
On the day of their wedding, Steve was absolutely buzzing with excitement. He wore his best suit and spent far too long on his hair for the occasion. His mom was in similarly good spirits and borrowed a camera from a friend so she could take pictures. By the time they got to the church, Steve was almost insufferably happy. Becca had rolled her eyes at him more than once on the subway ride over.

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Contrary to Steve, Bucky was nervous as all hell. He hardly slept the night before and spent part of the morning standing under cold water in the shower wondering if he was going to ruin Steve's life. Bucky had considered for a second wearing his father's naval uniform since he wore it for his wedding, but Bucky wasn't sure if it was taboo for a civilian to wear. So he just put on the nicest suit he owned - which still wasn't as good as Steve's. Once they were about to enter the church, he started getting calmer and more determined to be the best he could be for Steve.

---

Natasha and Sarah could see how nervous Bucky was being. Sarah had the sense to be sweet and reassuring but Natasha was just the sort of pain in the ass to sidle up to Bucky as Steve spoke with the priest at the front of the church. "Did you remember to bring the candle?" she asked.

---

Bucky's eyes went wide and he gripped her arm tightly and whispered, "What fucking candle?"

Clint, who had actually been at the church before any of the rest of them got there, came over to Bucky and signed 'She's fucking with you, man.'

Much to Clint and Bucky's surprise, Natasha signed back at him 'You ruined my fun.'

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Natasha gave Clint a pout. "Relax a little," she said to Bucky as she smoothed a hand over his back. "You're marrying Steve, not an alien who's going to suck the fun out of life. He only does that on Thursday evenings."

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"But what if he changes his mind?" Bucky asked quietly and stole a glance over at Steve who was still with the priest. "What if he wakes up one day and doesn't want to deal with me anymore?"

Lilly had been unusually quiet and unobtrusive so far. She was incredibly uncomfortable in churches because the only times she had been in ones were for funerals. When Bucky started back up with his worried nonsense she slipped her hand with his and held it tight.

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"Steve is a stubborn mule. If he set his mind to marry you, he won't change it," Natasha said.

Moments later, Steve came up to them with the priest at his side. "Guys, this is Father Frank," he introduced. "Father, this is Bucky. And here are his sisters, Lilly and Becca."
The priest smiled warmly at them and shook all of their hands. "What a beautiful family you have."

"Thank you, Father." Bucky nodded awkwardly and pulled Becca and Lilly close to him for support. "My family is my world and I really admire and appreciate you for being so kind to Steve and being able to do this for us."

"If you love each other and are committed to each other, then you should enjoy the same fruits of marriage that traditional couples receive," the priest said. He walked over to put up a sign on the door that said that they were closed for the next fifteen minutes. The ceremony wasn't long and he couldn't close the whole church for too long when others sought refuge as well. "Your family may be seated," he said.

Bucky ushered his sisters to sit down with Sarah. Natasha and Clint scooted in together in the row behind them. Steve pulled Bucky up to the front carefully and Bucky couldn't look anywhere but down at his feet anxiously. It was like that first time dancing with Steve all over again. He was excited but unprepared and happy but scared.

Steve touched Bucky's elbow and gave him a gentle look. "It's okay, Bucky," Steve said. "It's going to be alright." Father Frank read out a few verses of the bible about love that were appropriate since they didn't specifically mention genders. When it was time to say their vows, Steve got a nervous, happy look on his face and he looked into Bucky's eyes. It was like Bucky was the only person who existed in the world. "A lot of people will say that we shouldn't be together. But the only person I'll listen to about that is you. And for as long as you let me be with you, I'm going to love and support you - even when I disagree with you." He squeezed Bucky's hands gently. "I'll never take you for granted, Buck. And I hope to make you as happy as you make me for every day left in our lives."

Bucky smiled and tried not to get emotional as Steve talked. Before he launched into his own vows, he looked to his sisters quickly to once more get their approval. Becca gave the slightest of nods and Lilly grinned at him. "Steve..." he started. "I surprise myself every day with how much I love you. And I can't imagine what I would do without you with me. You take me for what I am - even at my worst - and show me support and forgiveness no matter what kind of shit I pull. You've been the greatest gift I could ask for and you love my sisters as much as I do and have made my family yours as well. I may not be a perfect husband or father but I'll do my best to find guidance in my parents and your mom to help me be what you deserve. I'll love you forever and you better not forget that."

Steve, the big emotional idiot, was crying freely as Bucky said his vows. The tears silently rolled down his cheeks and all he could do was smile as Bucky confessed all the things that made Steve the happiest man on the planet. The second he had permission to kiss Bucky, he drew him into a tight hug and kissed him deeply, pouring in all his emotion.

Bucky kissed Steve back and raised a hand up to wipe tears from Steve's cheeks as he did. He got
his body as close to Steve's as he could and held the back of his neck firmly so he couldn't go anywhere. There was clapping and Bucky could hear Lilly and Clint's distinct voices shouting jovially.

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Steve smiled happily against Bucky's lips and when they parted for air he turned towards his mom and gave a happy thumb’s up. She had them take a picture with the priest, then with Lilly and Becca, then with Natasha and Clint. Then she had Natasha take pictures of her with Steve and her with Steve and Bucky. The poor priest had to awkwardly shuffle her out because he couldn't get in trouble for keeping the church closed that long. Steve thanked Frank profusely as they left. He was a regular now, so he would see him the following Sunday anyway.

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The second they got back outside the church, Bucky's heart sank. He couldn't hold Steve's hand on the way back home and he couldn't kiss him yet. They had left one sanctuary just to be thrust back into the cold, uncaring world. And that's how their lives would go for a long time probably. "Hey," Bucky nudged Steve. "Guess what?"

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Steve looked over at Bucky with a beaming smile. He also wished he could hold Bucky’s hand proudly the whole way back home, but that just wasn’t an option right now. "What?" he asked.

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"You're my husband." Bucky quirked a smile back at Steve as the group of them all made their way back to the apartment. Sarah and Steve had both prepared food for them all to munch on when they got back. And Bucky had a deal with Sarah that at six o’clock she was going to make sure to get Bucky and Steve both out of the apartment on some false errand so Bucky could take Steve to the hotel he had a room already booked at. He already had them checked in and their bags with necessities and clothes for the next day were waiting for them in the room.

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Steve grinned dumbly. "And you're my husband," he answered back happily. When they got home, Steve was all over Bucky, holding his hand and hugging him every chance he got. After they ate some food, Steve went to the bathroom to brush his teeth and was confused when his toothbrush was gone since Bucky had packed it. "Buck? Do you know where my toothbrush went?"

---

"Hmm? Uh..." Bucky looked to Sarah quickly then down at the cat. "Maybe Raphael took it. We can pick up a new one from the twenty-four-seven."

Sarah checked the time and then said, "Yeah, that's a good idea, James. The girls and I will hold down the fort just fine."

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"What? The cat wouldn't take the toothbrush," Steve said in a confused tone. Becca smirked into her cup of tea because she knew that Bucky planned something. "But I mean, alright. I guess we can pick up milk while we're out," Steve said as he got his shoes on.
Bucky followed suit and pulled on his shoes and coat and opened the door for Steve. They walked on down the street and Bucky made a turn a block before the bodega mumbling something about making a different stop first as he continued to lead Steve towards the hotel.

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Steve wasn't completely dumb. He was a trained officer and knew Bucky was up to something. "Hey," he said, grinning over at him as he caught on that Bucky had something up his sleeve. "What do you have planned, huh?" He nudged Bucky gently.

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Bucky huffed out a sigh. "Don't fucking ruin it," he said with a mock pout. "Just walk with me and be a good husband, Mr. Steve Rogers-Barnes." He loved saying that now and having it actually mean a little something. No, the law didn't care that they were church married, but they cared and their family cared and so did Father Frank and Steve's god and that's all that mattered at the moment.

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Steve beamed because now he definitely knew Bucky had something planned for him and that got him excited. "Yes, Sir," Steve said pleasantly. He had a little bounce to his step as they walked. "So Father Frank is pretty cool, isn't he?"

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"I was super nervous around him but, yes, he was really nice," Bucky said. "I hope he didn't notice that I swore in church. I didn't mean to, but it just slipped out." He rounded another corner and now the hotel was in sight ahead of them. Just two more blocks and he could go spend the entire evening and night and most of the next day alone in a quiet room with Steve.

---

"I don't think he would mind an accidental slip," Steve said. "If you're that bothered, you could go to confession." Steve doubted it but it was fun to tease.

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Bucky snorted a laugh and mumbled, "Yeah, I'm not going to confession, Babe. I went to church today for something other than a memorial service, I think I'm covered for a long time."

---

Steve smiled at Bucky but then noticed the hotel. He gasped and looked towards it. "Are we having a vacation night?" he asked.

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When Steve saw the hotel, Bucky had no choice but to cave. "I worked it out with your mom, she's staying at our place tonight with the girls so we can just be alone. I know we won't get to have the honeymoon until spring so I wanted us to at least have a quiet wedding night.

---

Steve would've swept Bucky up into his arms and kissed him if he could've done that in public.
"You're so perfect," Steve sighed dreamily. "Thank you for making today even more special."

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Bucky rushed the two of them to the hotel and up to their room. He wanted to be all over Steve as soon as possible. Once the door was locked behind them, Bucky rounded on Steve and kissed him loosely before laughing and saying, "Hey, doors that actually lock."

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"I forgot those existed," Steve joked. He scooped Bucky into his arms and kissed him deeply. "God, you make me so happy," he said in a tone full of wonder. "This is all thanks to Lilly cutting school."

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"I think we probably would have found each other eventually, don't you?" Bucky asked and held his hands tight against Steve's waist. "I mean, her antics might have sped up the process but I think we would have gotten to each other regardless."

---

Steve cupped the sides of Bucky's face and kissed him slowly. "Yeah, you're right," he agreed. "Maybe I would have gotten a call to pick up two stoners at this one record shop. Or Dale would have called the cops over some noise complaint."

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"Or we could have met one night at a bar or ran into each other at a grocery store." Bucky continued. "I am really glad for Lilly and her antics, though. Because who knows how long it would have taken without her."

---

Steve picked Bucky up and then laid down on the bed with him, just enjoying himself by playing with Bucky’s hair and looking happily into his eyes. "I guess that would make her our maid-of-honor today."

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"Guess it would." Bucky conformed himself to Steve's touch. "Don't tell Becca that, though." He held his hands on Steve's hips and kissed him slowly.

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“What? Do you think Becca wanted to be our maid of honor?” Steve asked. He seemed pleased that Becca would have that sort of interest in their wedding. “Here, grab the room service menu. Let’s order some cake or some kind of dessert.”

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Bucky nodded. "I don't know, but Becca certainly wouldn't want to be left out if Lilly got to be the maid of honor," he said and rolled to rummage in the side drawer for the room service menu. "You are going to let me fuck you tonight, right? Consummate this marriage or whatever they say."
Steve laughed. "Didn't we consummate our marriage about a hundred times by now?" He teased. "Of course you're going to fuck me tonight. But we got to be quiet, I don't want the next door hotel neighbor to complain."

---

"I can be quiet." Bucky bit his lip and grinned at Steve. "I prefer being loud but I won't make a sound if you need me to." He handed the room service menu to Steve and scooted close so he could read the options over his shoulder. "Ooh, chicken fettuccine sounds amazing right now."

---

"I know you like being loud," Steve snorted and looked over the choices. He had enough sex with his husband to have a good understanding of what Bucky's preferences were and just how loud Bucky could get. "Chicken isn't dessert," Steve added. "But fine, at least you're not eating cereal."

---

"Well, you can get dessert, Baby," Bucky said. "And no it's not cereal but don't think that I'm giving up on cereal for dinner. I'm just really wanting chicken right now." He pulled the phone up to start dialing the lobby to order. "What are you getting?"

---

"Get me some chocolate cake and vanilla ice cream," Steve said. He laid across Bucky's lap and smiled up at him with an adoring expression on his face. He loved Bucky so damned much and now they were finally married.

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Bucky called and ordered for them and then snuggled back against Steve. "They said it would be up in about twenty minutes. Want to find something on TV for us to watch? I think there is a Humphrey Bogart special going on if you want to watch that."

---

Steve touched a hand to Bucky's face and leaned up to kiss him slowly. "I'm up for anything with you," he said. "My wonderful husband," Steve sighed dreamily. "I'm going to have such a good life with you."

---

"Not to bring the mood down or anything," Bucky said and licked his lips. "But, are you going to wear your ring when you work? I mean, I figure people would ask about it if they noticed - and it's a police department with people trained to notice shit. But I wasn't sure if you were planning on explaining that we were church married regardless of the law and stuff."

---

"We aren't church married, Bucky. We are married. I don't care if the law recognizes it or not and I don't care if people agree with it or not. We're married and I'm wearing my ring and I'm not afraid to tell people how much I love you," Steve said pointedly.

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Bucky shuttered out a sigh and kissed Steve with an open mouth and hands tight on his neck. "Okay, Steve." He was scared that they were going to be targeted again or something would happen to his family because of all this but he wanted to be confident for Steve. "You're sure about that? I won't be hurt if you want to leave your ring at home so you don't put yourself in danger at the precinct again."

---

"It would hurt me if I had to hide," Steve said. "I can't stand it. I'd be holding your hand all the time if you would let me. It's not illegal," he murmured. Steve had been so scared at first but now he was determined to be out and unafraid. "I'm an officer of the law and I have other cops who have my back if people have something to say about it."

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"Steve, I love you," Bucky said. "And I'd love to hold your hand in public and kiss you and introduce you as my husband and go to fancy dinner dates on Valentine's Day... but what would we do if one or both of us were injured or killed because of it? What about the girls?"

---

Steve's face fell and he looked away. He went quiet for a little bit and he got a bit broody. "Why do we have to talk about this?" he asked defensively. They would have to go over this eventually but he didn't want to have to talk about how he couldn't be out with his husband.

---

Bucky closed his eyes and cursed himself for bringing this shit up in the first place. Tonight was meant to be just them together in peace - no worries. He whispered, "I'm sorry, Steve," and tried to convey that he was sorry for asking about this at all and sorry he had so many concerns and sorry that he was still so scared from what Rumlow did to be confident enough to be open with Steve in public. Sometimes Bucky felt like he and Steve had molded into each other and switched places in some things. Bucky never used to be the type to care, but now he had someone to care for.

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"I know you didn't mean to, but... fuck," Steve huffed, sitting up. "Why does it have to be like this, huh? Why do people have to care who loves who so long as we are both happy, consenting adults?" he grumbled. Steve ran his fingers once through his hair. "We shouldn't have to be afraid."

---

Bucky took Steve's hand carefully and kissed his knuckles. "If you can just give me some time to figure out how we can keep the girls safe and be open about our sexuality, I'll get on board and I'll hold your hand proudly. I just need to know that they are going to be safe."

---

Steve let Bucky hold his hand and he looked up into his eyes. "You promise?" he asked. He didn't want Bucky just to say that so he would feel better. Steve genuinely wanted to be able to be open about who they were to each other.

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"I promise," Bucky punctuated it with a squeeze to Steve's hand. "You know I agree with you about
the whole thing being unfair. And you know I'm not shy about who I am. I just got really messed up when you got hurt. And I felt like it was my fault. Give me a little more time to figure things out and then I'll be back to fighting the man like usual."

---

"Baby, it's not your fault," Steve said. "I got shot because someone was wrong and hateful. But I believe that God protected me that day. Just like he protects all of us every day." Steve knew Bucky didn't share that faith but he couldn't help what he believed.

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Bucky nodded solemnly. "I know you do. And if he did do that then I'm grateful to him. I just can't help that I feel sort of responsible anyway." He sighed and rubbed a hand over his face. "Guess I sort of started our night out poorly, didn't I?" There was a knock on the door for room service and Bucky hopped up quickly to answer it.

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Once Bucky got up to get the food, Steve allowed himself to be sad for a few moments. He let his lip quiver when Bucky's back was turned before straightening up. "I guess I ought to just think about how I'm going to make you happy." That'll make him feel better.

---

Bucky walked slowly back over to Steve and handed his desert to him and sat down with his chicken and several napkins. "I promise you, Baby, one day everything is going to be perfect for us. One day we will have our house and our baby and no one will bother us, and the girls and your mom will come visit all the time. Maybe I'll pick up a hobby or build our baby's crib by hand."

---

Steve's eyes lit up. "Can we make as many of our baby's things by hand as we can?" he asked and picked at his cake. "Maybe I could retire early by the time we have a kid. I've already got almost five years in. It's reasonable to retire after ten or fifteen."

---

Bucky chuckled and looked at Steve lovingly. "I mean, if you want to retire in five or ten years, then you should. And yes, we can try to make their things by hand. My dad taught me how to string my own fishing net so I've got that covered."

---

"Well, if I ever wanted a fish for a son, you're my go-to guy," Steve joked. He put a hand over Bucky's and brushed his thumb over the ring. "This is kind of embarrassing, but I always kind of dreamed about being able to be a stay-at-home dad. I like helping out and having a job, but it would be amazing to stay with our son or daughter all day."

---

Bucky felt his face lift in a dopey grin. "You're so fucking adorable. I think you'd make an amazing, loving, sexy, attentive, stay-at-home dad." He thought for a second. "What do you want to be called? By the kid, I mean. We can’t both have the same title."
“You think so?” Steve looked happy that Bucky thought that he would make a great stay-at-home dad. “We could both be ‘dad’,“ Steve said. “We will know which one of us our kid is talking to by what tone of voice. If they say it angrily, they’re talking to you. Otherwise, they’re talking to me,” he joked.

"You know I'm going to be the fun dad, so the angry tone will most definitely be directed at you.” Bucky pinched Steve's arm. "And what about ‘Pops’? Dad and Pops? Or you just want both of us to be Dad? Because I'm good either way."

"I can be the fun dad, too," Steve said in an unconvincing tone. He would be the strict one out of the two of them and he knew it. "I want to be ‘Dad’," he added. "Just thinking about some little voice saying that to me..." He had a dumb smile on his face. "Whatever works for you is fine with me."

"I guess I'll be ‘Pops’ unless I just end up not liking it then I'll be ‘Dad' as well." Bucky was finished with his chicken and he set it aside to curl close to Steve. "I like thinking about a little kiddo calling you ‘Dad’ and reaching out for you to be held. And getting excited when I come home from work and pulling my hair and trying on your clothes when you aren't looking and falling asleep in our arms..." Bucky trailed off and hardly noticed the shaking in his voice as he spoke and so desperately wanted it to be real.

God, Steve wanted all of that so bad. He ached for a son or daughter to read to every night and to watch Bucky play games with. He heard the shake in Bucky's voice and he was quick to set aside his plate so he could pull the man to his chest. "It's going to happen, Buck. And you're going to be such an amazing father."

"I'm going to try my best." Bucky nodded. "And hopefully sooner than later it'll happen." He sighed and hugged Steve and breathed him in. "I'll start getting better at playing guitar so I can sing to them to get them to sleep. And I'll start saving as much money as I can for our house."

"And their aunts Lilly and Becca will visit all the time," Steve said. "That kid will probably end up being more Barnes than Rogers since there are more Barnes people around than Rogers." He slid a hand up Bucky's shirt.

"No, I'm sure you and your mother will straighten them out to be just as much a Rogers, too," Bucky assured him and noted every movement of Steve's hand on his skin. "I figure I should learn some lullabies on guitar as well."
"I hope my mom will still be around when we have our kid." Steve sighed. A part of him worried it could take decades to be able to adopt a child and his mom may not have that sort of time. "What lullabies did your parents sing to you?"

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"She'll be around," Bucky assured him. He didn't know that for sure but Sarah was healthy and strong and determined - just like Steve - and Bucky knew that they were going to get their kid as soon as possible. "My parents didn't sing lullabies really. My dad used to just sing some of his favorite songs to me if I was being difficult and wouldn't sleep. I got a lot of Dean Martin and Perry Como from him."

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Steve chuckled. "I bet you're going to take your dad's approach and sing softer, g-rated versions of The Clash," he teased. "My ma used to sing me Irish lullabies. And the softer rebel songs. I didn't understand what they meant until after I needed to be sung lullabies."

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"Do you remember them?" Bucky asked. "I'd love for our kid to hear them from you. Send the tradition down the line so they spread their daddy's Irish heritage even if they aren't Irish." Bucky wondered what sort of kid they would get. Would it be Irish anyway because of the big population around town? Or maybe Italian or Armenian or Jewish? Or maybe it would be descended from Romania like Bucky's family was.

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Steve nodded. "My ma would hit me over the head with a rolling pin if I forgot them," he joked. She wasn't as radical as his grandfather was but she was pretty adamant about Steve remembering his Irish heritage. "A lot of Irish folk songs are fun. But also a lot have to do with hating the English."

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"Well, maybe we can just explain that the English aren't so bad." Bucky laughed. "Hell, half the music I listen to comes from Britain anyway." He tried to think of some good bands whose songs could be calmed down into more lullaby like tunes. Maybe Hall & Oates or that new band Tears for Fears. He would definitely try to sing some old crooners stuff too like his dad did.

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"Well, they kind of are," Steve admitted. "They enslaved Ireland, demolished their religion, killed their native language, then expected us to fight alongside them as second-class soldiers in all of their wars."

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Bucky stared at Steve as he talked. Steve didn’t usually talk that way. "Immigrants from Britain, Spain, and France did the same thing to the Native Americans. Also, there's what America did to black people with slavery. And there's now, with racism against black and native people still and also anyone who comes from Russia or Germany or Arabia... it's fucked up, man." Bucky nodded. He usually kept all this sort of stuff inside because Steve didn’t appreciate when he talked bad about cops or the man or the country or anything. But Steve was also getting more and more aggravated with the way society worked and the unfair expectations for those who were just a little different.
Steve chuckled and kissed Bucky's cheek as he went on his rant. "I know, Baby, I know," he said in an amused tone. Although he didn't always agree with what Bucky said, he did love how energetic he got when he spoke about stuff like this. And he loved that Bucky’s hippie side just seeped into conversation. Steve got called ‘man’ a lot when Bucky had something to say. "Love you, Baby." Steve played with Bucky's hair. "So are we going to do it nice and slow tonight? Take our dear, sweet time to come or are we going to fuck each other's brains out time and time again?"

Bucky hummed and kissed Steve. "Which do you want, my handsome husband? Because I'm okay with the first fuck as married men to be slowly making love... and then give ourselves a half hour and then fuck hard and fast and messy." Bucky laughed to himself and caressed Steve's cheek. "How do we decide who's top and bottom for the first sex of our married life?"

Steve thought for a moment and absently ran his fingers over Bucky's dick through his pants. "How about whoever jerks themselves off first is the bottom," Steve joked. "Or whoever is the tallest is the top."

"Fuck you, you're taller than me." Bucky bit Steve's arm lightly. "What about whoever can do the most push-ups is the top. Fuck... you'd win that one too." He paused to think. "I don't know. I've got nothing."

Steve had an obnoxious smile on his face when Bucky mentioned push-ups. That one he could definitely win, but Bucky shut it down quickly. He had to think for a moment and then he said, "How about we call the house? If Becca picks up, I'm on top. If Lilly picks up, I am. If my mom picks up, then we flip a coin."

"Wait, so you're on top if either of my sisters pick up, and if it's your mom then we flip a coin?" Bucky gave Steve a confused look. "That gives you like 75% chance of being the top." His hands had trailed down so he was softly groping Steve through his pants as Steve's hands kept a delicate hold on his thigh.

"I was hoping you wouldn't catch that." Steve snickered. He was being unfair and he knew it. "Alright, so flipping a coin then? Or what about we turn on the radio and first person to name the title of the song playing gets to choose?"

"I'd win that one for sure," Bucky said. "If you make the calling home one fair then I'll play that one. I get Lilly, you get Becca, and your mom makes us flip the coin. I'm heads. That's even odds for us both." Bucky slipped his hand inside Steve's pants so he could get his fingers around his warm dick. "Sound good?"
Steve nodded and moaned when Bucky slipped his hand over his cock. He swatted it away so he could call home without feeling wrong for talking to Bucky's sisters while he was being groped.

"Barnes residence," he heard Lilly answer on the other end.

"Hey, Lil," Steve said. "Buck and I just wanted to make sure everything was alright there."

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Bucky pumped a fist into the air and Steve rolled his eyes at him. Bucky pulled the phone from Steve's ear so he could listen in too. Lilly said, "Yeah, everything's fine. Miss Sarah made me spaghetti and made potatoes for Becca. Now Becca is boring Miss Sarah with a history lesson. Are you having a good time?"

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Steve said, "Yeah, we are enjoying ourselves a lot. This hotel is real cool, Kiddo. You should have seen the size of the ice cream they brought me. I mean it was enough for both of us even with your bottomless stomach."

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"You got ice cream?" She asked incredulously. "I want ice cream."

Bucky took over and said, "Lilly, Steve and I are going to go. We love you. Give Becca and Miss Sarah hugs for us okay, my little monster?"

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Steve waited as Bucky ushered them off the phone and he hung up. "I can't believe you won," he chuckled, ruffling up Bucky's hair. "You're such a brat."

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"Well, I chose Lilly because Becca only answers the phone when she absolutely has too." Bucky shrugged. So he stacked the deck just a little bit, Steve would probably forgive him once he had a dick inside him. Bucky ran a hand down Steve's torso and down into his pants again.

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"Damn, you're right," Steve huffed. He reached over and started to pull Bucky's pants down so he could groove at his ass. "You're so perfect, Buck. Perfect husband with a perfect ass." He smiled over at him and rolled on his back so he could pull Bucky on top of him.

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Bucky rolled obediently with Steve and started grinding down against his crotch with Steve's hands on his cheeks. "And you're my perfect husband with perfect eyes and smile and body and laugh and everything." He kissed Steve's lips and then trailed across his face. "My gorgeous love."

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"Perfect eyes, huh?" Steve laughed and returned the kiss lovingly. "Tell me how many times you're going to make me come before we go home tomorrow," he purred. "And how late you're going to
"We're going to be up all night for sure," Bucky said and worked his hardening dick with the palm of his hand. "And I'm thinking... three times... if we can manage it. Maybe more if miracles happen." He chuckled. "Definitely more than once I know that for sure. If I'm on top this time then you've got to fuck me next time so we have to do it at least twice."

"Should I pray to God for a little help getting it up so many times?" Steve joked. He spread his legs a little more for Bucky and then pulled him in for another kiss. "Twice tonight, once in the morning," he decided.

"We better get started then," Bucky dropped his tone low and growled slightly as he shimmied down Steve's body and gripped the waist of his pants. He slowly kissed Steve's clothed thighs and then his dick before working open the zipper and tugging them down to his knees.

"I love it when your voice gets like that." Steve sighed dreamily. He reached down to stroke his fingers through Bucky's hair, and then gave it a little tug. "You look so good between my legs, Buck."

"I look good no matter where I'm at on you." Bucky moved off the bed to strip off his pants and toss them on to the chair. Bucky's boxer briefs were soon to follow and he grabbed for Steve's and jerked them off of him as well. "How do you want to be opened up - tongue or fingers?" he asked as he pulled the lube from his bag and came back over to the bed.

"We're taking our time," Steve said. "So it's got to be tongue." He liked getting off with Bucky quick and frequently at home but it was rare they got to drag things out because Bucky's sisters could need something from them at any moment.

"Tongue it is." Bucky licked his lips and set the lube down on the bed for later. "Get yourself comfortable and spread out for me, Baby," he added and unbuttoned his shirt so he could peel it off slowly. "And just so you know, you aren't allowed to touch your dick at all this time. Only I can. If that sounds good to you."

Steve shifted on the bed to get real comfy before spreading his legs. He was all set to start jerking himself off a little when Bucky said he couldn't touch himself. "Buck," he huffed out with a small pout. Just to be a brat, Steve started to fondle his own balls because Bucky didn't make those off limits.
Bucky looked at Steve with a dark glare and stopped his hand. "Those are mine tonight, too," he said and leaned in to mouth over Steve's balls for a few moments before traveling down to his hole and teasing it once with a short lick. "Your hands can touch me all they want, though."

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"We're married now. My balls are yours every night," Steve snorted. He let out a little gasp when Bucky licked his hole. Reaching down and scratching his nails gently over the back of Bucky's neck, he said, "Keep going, Baby."

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Bucky spent several long slow moments just kissing and licking Steve's ass and around his hole. He didn't lick inside him yet because he wanted to hold out as long as he could. Steve said they needed to be quiet - and he would be - but he wanted to hear Steve begging him to stick his tongue in. So Bucky just kept teasing him.

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Steve knew Bucky could be a tease but minutes passed and Bucky hadn't so much as pushed the tip of his tongue in. He wondered if maybe he'd done something but he saw the look in Bucky's eyes and groaned when he realized what Bucky was doing. He spread his legs a little more and tangled his fingers in Bucky's hair. "Please?" he asked shyly. "I want you, Buck."

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Bucky pulled away and smirked at Steve. "Because you said please," he said and then dove right back down to Steve's hole and licked a few more times before pushing his tongue in quickly and abruptly and moving it slowly in circles.

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Steve let out a little moan and arched his back off the bed. "Yes, so much better," he sighed happily. "Perfect. I love when you open me with your tongue." Steve pulled lightly at Bucky's hair.

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Bucky chuckled in his throat and drove his tongue in and out of Steve relentlessly. He wanted to see if Steve would demand what he wanted again, so Bucky didn't add any fingers and instead just fucked him shallowly with his tongue over and over.

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Steve writhed on the bed, loving the attention but also desperate because Bucky wasn't moving forward. "More," he gasped out without realizing that Bucky purposely was trying to get him to ask. "Need your fingers now."

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Bucky kissed Steve's thighs and pushed two fingers inside him at once. "You're so wonderful, Baby. I love making you come undone with my touch and then getting to be held in your strong arms afterwards. I love every bit of you. I love this bit," Bucky kissed Steve's upper thigh, "And this one," he kissed his knee, "And here," he licked a line up his inner leg, "And this part of course," he said and finally took Steve's cock head into his mouth as he added a third finger.
Steve blushed at how sweet Bucky was being. He let out a small giggle as Bucky declared his love for the different parts of his body but gasped and moaned out Bucky's name when he took his dick into his mouth. "Oh, yes," he hummed. "I'm so ready, Buck. Please, can you make love to me now?" He ran his thumb over Bucky's cheek, feeling his cock pressed against the inside.

Bucky licked around Steve's dick for a few more seconds before popping off to lube up his own cock. "If you're ready, Love, I'm ready," he said heavily and pulled at Steve to get him to scoot down on the bed. Bucky held his shaft against Steve's ass and gave him a look like he wanted to be asked one more time before he fucked Steve.

Steve thought he was going to finally have sex with his husband but when Bucky lined up his dick but didn't do anything else, he gave Bucky the biggest pout in the world. "You're such a dope. I already asked you like, three times." He laughed as he saw the cheeky expression on Bucky's face.

"Tell me again." Bucky smiled. "I love when you get needy about it." He didn't wait for Steve to say anything or tell him to fuck him again. He held Steve's hips and pushed inside fast and grunted when his balls his Steve's ass.

"I want- oooh," Steve started to ask again just because Bucky wanted him to but he cut off with a low moan as Bucky pushed inside him. He felt so full with Bucky's cock buried deep in him.

"You happy now?" Bucky asked and bent down to kiss Steve. "You love me, Baby?" Bucky's voice was airy and quiet as he started to slowly and carefully ease out of Steve and then push back in slow like molasses again. "You love getting me all worked up and desperate for you?"

Steve's legs wrapped tightly around Bucky's waist and he stroked his hands down his husband's back. "Yeah," he breathed out. "I love everything about you. I love that I get to face the world every day with you. And I love that you're my everything."

Bucky chuckled and gritted out, "You better," as he picked up the pace ever so slightly. He laid down against Steve's chest and braced his hands on the mattress so he could be closer to him as he made slow intimate movements inside his new husband.

Steve caught Bucky's bottom lip between his teeth and gave a gentle tug. "Look me in the eyes, Buck," he said in a breathy tone. "I want you to see what you do to me." Steve's face was flushed and he was clearly desperate to come but he also loved the intimacy.
"Oh, god, Steve," Bucky whimpered and kissed him deeply again. "Sometimes I get so overwhelmed by how good you are to me that I just want to cry and figure out how I managed to trick you into being mine." He tried to keep himself from going harder at Steve but he really couldn't hold back and he found himself increasing his force with every thrust.

"We were put on this earth for each other. You can't trick fate," Steve answered. He put a hand on Bucky's chest and got him to go slower. Steve was drunk on the tenderness and he didn't let Bucky go faster until they bothered were desperate beyond belief for release. When Steve came, it shook his whole body and his thighs trembled from the force of it.

Bucky let out an excited little noise when Steve came and he sped up his thrusts even more until he was shooting his come far up inside Steve's ass. He panted and flopped on Steve with his dick still inside him and kissed his cheek and neck.

Steve immediately started to pet his fingers through Bucky's hair and massage his scalp. "You are the light of my life, Beautiful," he breathed out. He couldn't stop smiling and he was on an emotional high from his orgasm. "I am going to make sure you have such a good life."

"You've said that, Steve." Bucky laughed and nuzzled up close against him. He trailed his fingers across Steve's chest and pet lightly over his nipples for good measure. "Okay, what next? Shower then snacks then round two then a nap?"

Steve kissed him again and squirmed a little when Bucky touched his nipples. "Let’s save the shower for after round two. You wanted it to be a good fuck, we may as well let it be messy."

"Alright, whatever you say, Baby." Bucky smiled and sat up. "I brought some stuff from home. - pretzels, apples, animal crackers, those little gummy candies that Lilly likes. Or we could order room service again because all you had earlier was desert and you might want some protein in you."

"Protein, huh? Is that your way of telling me I should suck you off?" Steve joked. He reached for Bucky's hand and laced their fingers together.

Bucky looked down at his flaccid dick. "Well, you might have to give me a few minutes but I'm not opposed to some head."

"You know, it's so peaceful here it almost feels too quiet," Steve said. He had grown so accustomed
to having two kids around the apartment and having to cherish every small window of silent he got alone with Bucky.

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Bucky squeezed Steve's hand once and kissed his shoulder. "Yeah, it is really quiet with no kids around, isn't it? Sometimes it's nice having a day away from the girls but I always end up missing them and worrying about them too much."

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"It is nice. I kind of like how quiet it is for maybe about two hours. But then I start missing your sisters, too. And Becca complaining at Lilly for not cleaning out Raphael's litter again. God, I'm so glad we got the cat cause a dog would have been too much work."

---

"A dog would have been a lot of fun but there's no way Lilly would have taken any responsibility for it," Bucky said. "I really hope they are being good for your mom... maybe we should call again." He checked the time. It was just a little past ten. "They will probably still be awake since we aren't there to make them go to bed."

---

"We can consider a dog when we don't have two kids to take care of," Steve chuckled. He was a little amazed that Bucky wanted to call the girls again - it had only been an hour or so since their last phone call. But he wasn't going to discourage it. "Go ahead and give them a call," he said gently. "I'm sure they'll be happy to hear from you."

---

Bucky nodded and dialed home again. Sarah picked up. "Hello, this the Barnes-Rogers'."

Bucky chuckled and turned to Steve when he said, "Hello, Mrs. Rogers." He covered the receiver and whispered to Steve, "She still says 'Barnes-Rogers' instead of 'Rogers-Barnes'."

There was a clicked noise from Sarah and a huff of a sigh. "Bucky, quit calling. The girls are fine. Lilly is asleep and Becca is reading on the couch. Is my son boring you already?"

---

Steve groaned dramatically at his mom swapping the names. He liked the sound of his own being first. He did laugh, though, when he overheard Sarah accusing Steve of boring Bucky. "Your son-in-law is a worry wart," Steve countered from next to Bucky. "I'm the most entertaining guy he knows."

---

"It's true, he is," Bucky agreed and held Steve's hand. "And it is also true that I worry too much. Will you tell Becca to please not stay up too late and tell them both we love them?" Sarah said she would and Bucky thanked her and then hung up. He looked to Steve. "You think I worry now, imagine what it'll be like when he have our baby, huh?"
Steve brought Bucky's hand up to his lips to give it a kiss. "You'll be a mess at the slightest sign of danger," Steve said fondly. "Our kid is going to have the best dads ever," he decided. "And a pair of really cool aunts."

---

"You'll be a mess too, don't lie," Bucky said. "That kid is never going to get any time alone. I'm going to be with it constantly." He thought about Steve being retired from police work and being a stay-at-home dad. Bucky would inevitably get jealous sometimes but someone would have to work. Maybe he should go back to school. Get a degree and a career that pays better before they have a child on top of everything else.

---

Steve pulled Bucky into a bear hug. "No, we both are going to be there constantly," he corrected playfully. He messed up Bucky's hair and kissed his cheek. "You think it'll be too much to do homeschool? I don't know how I'd be able to send him or her away for half the day."

---

"Well," Bucky readjusted in Steve's arms, "if you think you can manage it then I don't see why not. I mean, there's always the question of social education and making friends but there are other ways of doing that, I guess. I think whether they are homeschooled or not is up to you, Steve. I won't be home every day to help teach so it'll be sort of like your full-time job."

---

Steve considered for a moment and said, "Maybe just until they're close to Lilly's age. I don't want them to not be able to make friends but it'll be good to start them with good study habits and all that. Besides, I'm not smart enough to teach them all the way through middle school."

---

"You're plenty smart." Bucky smiled at him. "I hope they pick up influences from Becca with studying and working hard in school."

---

"I hope so too. And I hope they're competitive like Lilly is," Steve admitted. That would be the best of both worlds.

---

Bucky rolled off the bed, took two apples from his snack bag, handed one to Steve, and took a bite from his. "You ready to fuck me after you eat that?" he asked and smirked.

---

Steve took the apple and looked at it briefly before setting it aside and staring at Bucky's cock. "I'm ready to fuck you now."

---

"Well," Bucky looked at his apple, "I'm still eating this one. Does that offer to suck me off still stand? You could blow me while I finish this then fuck me?" He licked some runaway apple juice
from lips and took another bite.

---

Steve laughed and nodded his head. "I'm spoiling you already... letting you have an apple while I get you off." He kissed Bucky's lips lightly and then started to trail slow, wet kisses down his chest. He dragged his teeth over Bucky's nipple before going lower.

---

"You love spoiling me." Bucky smiled and let out a content sigh as Steve worked down his body. He was going to eat his apple slow so he could keep Steve lips all over him. What he should have done was to bring his guitar. Then he could have played as Steve gave him head. That sounded amazing to Bucky. Maybe he could try that some time.

---

As Steve got lower and lower, he took more time between kisses. He nosed at Bucky's lower belly and then licked up his shaft slowly. He lapped the head of Bucky's cock, deciding he would be a pain in the ass like Bucky was by making him ask for everything too.

---

Bucky groaned around his apple and stared at Steve. "This apple won't last long, Baby. Might want to speed things up," he said and massaged one hand on the top of Steve's head. "You know, some time I want to take a picture of you with your mouth on me so you can see how good you look."

---

Steve chuckled and kissed the tip of Bucky's cock. "How about you ask your husband a little nicer?" he chided in a singsong voice. He didn't make Bucky actually beg, though. He went down on Bucky eagerly, moaning low and looking up at Bucky through his eyelashes as he swallowed him down.

---

"Ah, fuck!" Bucky hissed in surprise as Steve took him into his mouth. He held the apple in his hand but ignored it for a few moments so he could watch Steve. "You are seriously too handsome to handle sometimes. I'm worried I'll wake up one day and will have simply dreamed you up."

---

Steve couldn't smile too well with a dick in his mouth but the corners of his lips definitely lifted up. "Keep talking sweet to me," Steve said after pulling off of Bucky's dick to breathe. He dove right back down and fucked his mouth on Bucky's dick, hand reaching down to tease his husband's balls.

---

Bucky panted a few times and bit his lip. "What do you want me to say?" he asked. "Want me to talk about how I love falling asleep by you and getting to wake up in your arms? Or how I love your gentle fingers combing through my hair or touching my lips or stuck in my ass. And it kills me when you look at me like nothing else in the world even matters. And your eyes are so attentive and gorgeous. Is that what you want to hear about?"
"Mhmm," Steve moaned in approval. He bobbed his head along Bucky's shaft and laved his tongue along the underside. His hand shot up and he scratched down Bucky's chest until he found his nipple, which he rolled between his thumb and index finger.

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Bucky shuttered out a sigh and took several more quick bites of his apple until it was done. "Okay, apple is gone," he said hurriedly and gripped on to Steve's shoulders. "Now fuck me rough and fast like you won't ever get to again."

---

Steve grabbed the bottle of lube and slicked a few fingers up. Wasting no time, he pushed two fingers inside of Bucky at once, finger-fucking him as deep as he could. "You like it when I spread you nice and wide, Buck?"

---

"Yep," Bucky gritted out and clenched his teeth. "Go ahead with three, please. I need you quick. I can take it." He rubbed at his face and pulled his hair up on the top of his head but didn't tie it back. He wanted it to be down in case Steve would want to pull it while he fucked him.

---

Steve obeyed and was soon opening Bucky up with three fingers. Once he knew his husband was ready, Steve flipped Bucky over and put him on his hands and knees. He usually didn't go for this position but Bucky did want a rough fuck. He put one hand on the small of his back while the other guided his dick into Bucky's hole.

---

"Fucking yes," Bucky said excitedly when Steve turned him around. Bucky gladly put his face against the pillows and hitched his ass up for Steve. He braced his hands and knees on the bed and waiting for the sweet moment when Steve pushed inside him. "Ruin me, Baby."

---

Steve usually liked being sweet when making love but there was something goddamned sexy about how Bucky threw his ass up for him. Once inside, he gripped Bucky's hips hard enough to leave marks and he started to fuck him as hard as he could right away. His balls slapped loudly against Bucky's ass with every thrust and he reached between Bucky's legs to give his balls a small smack. "Like this?"

---

"Yes, fuck, do that again," Bucky demanded and panted hot breaths into the pillow. He wanted Steve to slap his ass and pull his hair and hold his cock tightly at the base. But he also didn't want to ask for those things and make Steve uncomfortable at all. He would just wait and see how it panned out and assess where Steve was at and if he was enjoying himself.

---

Bucky sounded so good when he asked him to do it again, so Steve did. The way that Bucky moaned in response had him thinking. Steve laid his chest over Bucky's back so he could purr in his ear, "Tell me to stop if you don't like this." When he pulled back, he gave Bucky's ass a firm swat
that left a pink handprint in its wake.

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Bucky gasped and then giggled maniacally. "You kidding, Babe. I fucking love that!" he assured and pushed back against Steve. "Think you can do it harder?" he asked and tried looking back at Steve to see what his face was saying in response.

---

Steve blushed deeply when he heard Bucky giggle. "Don't laugh at me," he complained childishy. He didn't want to hit too hard because he knew his strength. But the next slap that he did made an even louder sound. "Count them," Steve ordered before smacking him again.

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"Three," Bucky said and chuckled again. He was loving this. Steve was really letting loose and manhandling Bucky a little more than usual. "Four." He bit his lip when he was slapped again. "Do you like this? Five. Because I really like this."

---

Steve had a thin layer of sweat over his body from how much effort he put into fucking Bucky so hard that there was no way he wouldn't feel it in the morning. "I only want to hear you count or say my name, Handsome," Steve said, slapping his other cheek now.

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Bucky nodded and smiled. "Six, Steve." He bit hard on the pillow to keep himself from saying anything else until he felt the next slap. "Seven, fuck!" He could feel his dick straining with the desire to come and his legs were shaking with every hit to the prostate. He wasn't going to last much longer and he hoped Steve would be able to keep going for longer than him so he could be fucked through his orgasm.

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Steve kept his hips at a good angle so that his dick battered against Bucky's prostate with every brutal thrust. He panted heavily and then double-timed his spanks so Bucky wouldn't be able to successfully count them quickly enough.

---

Bucky came hard and fast with his face mashed into the pillows to muffle his moaning and his legs were barely able to keep him up. He reached one hand under him to feel around for his come. He felt a little bad that he had gotten it all over the hotel sheets but he also didn't have much time to care as Steve's movements became more erratic as he was nearing his orgasm.

---

Feeling Bucky's muscles spasm around his cock was arousing as all hell. Steve fucked Bucky hard and fast through his orgasm until he came deep inside of him. Steve let out a stuttering moan before he pulled out of his husband and rolled Bucky onto his back. He then pushed two fingers inside of him, playing with his hole as he kissed up his neck.
Once Steve made it to Bucky's mouth, Bucky hungrily kissed him and lazily wrapped his legs around Steve's middle as he had his fingers inside him. "That was fucking amazing," he breathed and pulled his hair out from under his head before holding his hands against Steve's cheeks. "I love you, Steve."

---

Steve smiled and snuggled up to Bucky, being utterly sweet and affectionate even though he was gently still finger-banging him. He did that for a few minutes before pulling his fingers out and kissing him. "I love you, too, Baby. I can't wait for our future together."

---

"It's already started, you goof." Bucky chuckled and kissed Steve again. He laid there with him for a bit and then moved to get up. "Okay, Baby, shower time," he said and offered a hand out for Steve. "Damn, Steve, my legs are so shaky right now."

---

Steve chuckled at Bucky. "I guess I don't usually go that hard, huh?" He got up and scooped Bucky into his arms to carry him to the bathroom.

---

Bucky gripped on to Steve when he picked him up and pecked him on the lips. "Not usually, no. But it was great and doing that occasionally is totally okay with me if you enjoyed yourself." He started up the shower and ducked his arm under the water to wait for the temperature to heat up. "Did you enjoy yourself?"

---

Steve stooped his head shyly and frowned. "Um," he said awkwardly. "I mean, I enjoyed how much you enjoyed it," Steve murmured. "It's not... really my style." He didn't like hitting or being so rough with someone he was supposed to pamper and cherish.

---

Bucky pulled Steve into the shower with him and let the water cascade over his head. "Well, I loved it. And you did so well for me, Steve," he said and rested his head on his husband's shoulder. "We don't have to do it like all the time but if you wanted to be rough with me sometimes when you feel comfortable about it..."

---

Steve wrapped his arms strongly around Bucky and kissed the top of his head. "I love you so much," he murmured. "I'd do anything for you - including being rough. But... even though I know I'm not abusing you, I can't shake the images I've seen of husbands beating their wives whenever I raise my hand to you."

---

"Hey, hey." Bucky nuzzled Steve and squeezed him in a hug. "You're aren't abusing me. And if it feels too much like the domestic abuse cases you've seen then we don't have to do it at all, okay? I don't want you to feel like you're being a bad person, alright, Baby?"
"I want to give you what you want, though," Steve said. "I know I'm being silly about it. I heard that lots of people do this sort of stuff with their partners. But still, I don't know. I guess I'm a bit sensitive about it from being a cop."

Then we will just not do it or... just lightly. How's that? And only as far as you are comfortable." Bucky grabbed the soap and rubbed down Steve's chest. "Besides, I like anything we do together during sex. You're the best I've ever had and the most loving and you're mine forever now and we have all the time in the world to be together."

Steve smiled in relief when Bucky tried to give him a few other options. "You're so perfect, Buck," he sighed. Steve placed his hands on his hips. "I love that you're so understanding. Who would have known you could turn a Catholic virgin into a gay guy who spanks his husband."

"God, Steve, when you say it like that it just sounds awful," Bucky quipped and sighed in exasperation but smiled anyway. They washed up and then dried off and went back to the bed. Bucky covered up the come splatter with a towel before lying down again. "Steve..." He said tentatively. "Would it be okay for us to order some celebratory wedding night drinks?"

Steve heard the hesitant tone in Bucky's voice. He was naturally wary whenever Bucky wanted to drink but he didn't want Bucky to feel bad or like Steve didn't trust him to drink responsibly on their wedding night. He put a hand on Bucky's chest and gave him a reassuring smile. "Of course, Baby. You pick what we drink."

Bucky grinned excitedly and attacked Steve in a kiss. "Thank you," he said as he took the room service menu out again to see what their selection of alcohol was like. "How about a nice bottle of wine and a cheap bottle of scotch. Maybe some beer too." Bucky was getting ahead of himself as he flipped through the list. They had some nice shit available and he just wanted it all.

Steve smiled weakly. "We can try a little bit of whatever you want. But we shouldn't have too much when you've been laying off for a little while. Don't want you waking up with a hangover."

"I won't. I'm fine," Bucky assured and picked up the phone to dial room service again. He ordered just the bottle of wine and the whiskey. "I should probably get dressed so when they come up I won't be naked answering the door." Bucky pulled his pajamas from his bag, dressed quickly, and then flopped back in bed with Steve. He was probably too excited about getting to drink than he should be.
"Get undressed a little. I want to see you naked as much as possible until we have to go back," Steve said. Steve held him once Bucky in bed and he smiled over at him. "So how excited are you for the honeymoon?"

---

Bucky nodded and removed his shirt again so he was just in his pants. "I'm so beyond fucking excited you have no idea. I haven't been there in years and it'll be great to go there with you and to talk about my dad and show you all the spots we would hang out. And we can fish and swim and have a cabin to ourselves. And we can fuck outside, and under the stars, and we can be loud. And I'll teach you how to grill over a fire."

---

Steve couldn't be happier with their destination. "Your eyes light up whenever you talk about it," he said. "It's beautiful how much you love that place, Bucky. I can't wait to experience all of that with you."

---

Bucky smiled and stared at Steve. "Thanks for agreeing to go there. If my dad were here, he would have already made us go with him. He would have taught you things about the trees and the birds and how to properly skin a fish. And he would have brought books that he thought might interest you. He would tell the same stories he told me. And he would tell you how Seneca was his favorite place in the world, second only to wherever his family was." Bucky looked away in thought and worked to hold back his emotions. "I really wish they would have met you. I think they would be proud of me for finding you and they would have loved you like their own immediately."

---

Steve wished that he could've met Bucky's parents. He loved Bucky and his sisters and it would've been amazing to have a dad again and his mom would've had an even bigger family for it, too. He cupped Bucky's face and drew him in for a slow kiss. "I've met you," Steve decided. "So I've met them." He slid a hand down to Bucky's chest, right over his heart. "All the stories you have of them is more I get to see of them."

---

"Okay," Bucky croaked and kissed Steve. He felt his eyes welling up as he moved to straddle Steve as he licked into his mouth. "You make me feel so safe," he whispered and held their foreheads together. "Like nothing can ever touch me or my family again. Like one day we will all be back together. Like nothing can tear us apart."

---

It was so important to Steve that he made Bucky feel secure and loved. "I know you don't believe in it, Buck, but I genuinely believe that God is watching over all of us and keeping us safe," he said. "And I'm going to do everything in my own power to keep us all together, too. There's not a thing on this earth that can separate us."

---

"I know, Baby," Bucky breathed and chewed his lip in thought. There was a knock on the door then and he jumped. "Shit, that scared me." He chuckled at himself and went to the door. The young girl who was on the other side was pushing a cart with the two bottles on fancy display for them. Bucky
took the bottles and then remembered he wasn't wearing a shirt when the girl averted her eyes from him quickly. "Uh, thanks for bringing this up." He said quickly and ducked back into the room and closed the door. "I think I embarrassed the poor thing."

---

Steve laughed and sat up so he could wrap an arm around Bucky. "That, or she might have thought that you look real sexy," he offered. "But you're all mine. Stuck with me now." He popped a bottle open and took a drink from it before offering it to Bucky.

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Bucky eagerly took the bottle of wine from Steve and traded him the whiskey to open. "I severely hope that wasn't the case. I don't want to be ogled by teenage girls - or women in general - or guys anymore. Just you. Only you can ogle me." He took a long drink from the wine and felt his whole being give in to the tones of alcohol. He breathed deeply and shut his eyes. God, he loved this.

---

"I'll die a happy man if I'm the only one who ogles you from now on." Steve genuinely was concerned with how much Bucky was getting into the booze. He wasn't really drinking too much, but he was a little too excited to have it. He didn't really know how to say anything about it without upsetting his husband. "But what if someone is ogling me?"

---

Bucky traded bottles with Steve again so he had the whiskey, which he preferred to wine anyway. "I'll fight them," he said simply and took a drink. "First, I'll tell them they have good taste, then I'll fight them. Even if I lose, you're still going home with me so it won't really matter too much either way."

---

Steve took a sip and then laughed. "Let's not start fights over someone hitting on me before they realize I'm spoken for," he said. He set aside the bottle because he didn't want to get tipsy. He wanted to remember every detail of tonight. "Speaking of ogling, I think some kids on Lilly's lacrosse team have a crush on her."

---

"No, stop it," Bucky said and pointed at Steve. "No one has a crush on Lilly. Lilly doesn't have any crushes back. She's not growing up and neither is Becca and they are never leaving me." He huffed disappointedly and drank again. "Alright, tell me what you saw."

---

Steve laughed and gave Bucky a kiss on the cheek. "Well, I noticed a few of the boys asking to carry her equipment for her. I don't think she knew it was flirting cause she got angry. I think she thought they were suggesting she couldn't carry her own gear cause she's a girl."

---

"That's my girl." Bucky nodded. "Good for her. She's going to be the type to either never settle down because she doesn't need a partner in her life, or have a rigorous screening process for whoever is interested before she even considers it."
Steve nodded his head with a little laugh. "I think she takes advantage a little whenever they offer her candy or Gatorade," Steve said. "It's kind of funny to watch."

"Well you know Lilly. She would sell us all for a life supply of candy," Bucky exaggerated. "And Becca will be fifteen in a few months. And she'll probably start to want to date people. And then she'll have a boyfriend or a girlfriend and then she'll go off to college and then I'll never see her except when she comes home for holidays." Bucky sighed and drank some more. "Now I've worked myself up."

Steve shook his head and kissed his husband's cheek again. "Becca loves you. Sure, she may want a little space at first but I doubt she will ever go too far for too long. She knows how hard you work."

Bucky kissed Steve and held his hand. "I know you're right." He huffed and took a look at the whiskey bottle, which was now about a third of the way finished, and he was feeling it. "What are we doing now? Sleep? Or TV until we fall asleep?"

"Let's get to sleep," Steve decided. "Would really like to cuddle with my husband and have a good, relaxing end to a perfect day." He brushed their lips together gently.

They fell asleep quickly and tangled around each other. When morning came, Bucky rubbed his eyes and yawned. There was light streaming in from behind the window curtain and it was gently illuminating Steve's sleeping face. "Hey, Steve, wake up," he murmured into his ear and waited for Steve to look up at him. "There's my husband. It's our first morning waking up married, I'll have you know."

Steve made a grumpy sound at first when Bucky woke him up. But then when he came to, his eyes sparkled happily as he looked over at Bucky. "It ought to be grounds for divorce to wake up your husband so early on the first day married," he teased and he pulled Bucky into a tight hug. "God, it's so good to wake up next to you."

"You are the one who said we need to fuck in the morning so we got to get a move on," Bucky said and crowded Steve so he would be able to feel his morning wood pressing against his side. "And I'll start without you, don't think I won't," he threatened and started slowly grinding against Steve. "I'll touch myself and finger myself open and you'll have to watch me come all by myself before you can fuck me. So you better get up if you don't want that."

Steve laughed as Bucky crowded him and tried to convince him to hurry up. It was an easy choice to
make. He loved having Bucky so riled up and wanting him so early in the morning. "So how's it going to happen? I get to give you your nice, slow lovemaking session? Or is it going to be a fuck this time?" He reached down and started to play with Bucky's balls.

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"Baby, that's up to you," Bucky said and nibbled at Steve's neck. "I'm good either way." He reached back and started massaging his ass cheeks lightly with his palms. "I just want to see that messy bedhead down by my ass. So however you want to do to make that happen is fine with me."

---

Steve let out a happy purr and then abruptly flipped Bucky onto his back and in a swift motion. He bent Bucky in half by hooking his hands under his knees and pushing them up to his chest. He dove right down and shoved his tongue into Bucky's hole over and over again.

---

"God, fucking hell!" Bucky shouted out when Steve fucked his tongue inside him. "Jesus, Steve." He was panting with the immediacy of Steve's actions and how much even his tongue was putting a stretch on Bucky's tight hole. He reached down to start jerking his cock and he moved his head so he had the best view of Steve that he could get.

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"Oh yeah?" Bucky smirked. "Prove it. I bet you won't be able to last three more minutes before you want to get your dick inside me." He squirmed a little under Steve's wandering tongue and propped his arms underneath his head.

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It was a mistake to bet Steve something. He was a stubborn fucking mule. He hummed softly and made good work of his tongue, sometimes fucking Bucky with it while other times teasing the rim slowly. He didn't show any signs of intending to get a move on.

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"You're going for it, huh?" Bucky asked and closed his eyes. "What do you want if you win? You got to make it good." He kept his breathing steady as Steve played around by his ass, not wanting to give in or ask Steve for more. He was going to try to last too.

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"I get to pick music for a week if I win." Steve didn't care so much about playing his own music- he just liked the idea of having control over the record player for once. He took one of Bucky's balls into his mouth and sucked.

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"You're-" Bucky shuttered out a breath, "You're going to have to fight Lilly for music because she's
not going to just give in." He reached a hand down to fist into Steve's hair. "I thought you'd pick something sexual. At least, I would have. But you decided to get me where it hurts, didn't you?"

---

Steve smirked. "Well, I don't need to win a bet to get what I want from sex with you," he said and licked up the shaft of Bucky's cock and kissed the tip before going back to eating his ass out.

---

Bucky sighed in exasperation and checked the time after a while. It had been over four minutes of this nonsense. "Steve..." he started and growled a little at his defeat. "Steve," he pressured again. "Please. Okay, fucking fine." He sat up quickly and pulled Steve up to him before roughly pushing him on his back on the bed and straddling him. "You win, goddamn it," he said and stuck two fingers inside himself and pumped in and out quickly before pushing in a third to make sure he was ready to ride Steve.

---

Steve popped his head up with a victorious grin. "I knew you would give in," he said proudly. He crossed his arms behind his head and watched as Bucky opened himself up. "I'm so damn pleased with myself, I don't even mind that you're fingering yourself. God, you look good."

---

"Well, you weren't doing it anytime soon so I had to," Bucky said and poured some lube over Steve's cock. He slicked him up well and held himself up over it. Bucky grabbed Steve's dick and sat down on it swiftly. His hole wasn't entirely ready for all of his cock at once and Bucky winced at the slight pain he felt as he went.

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Steve moaned low as he felt Bucky take him, but he did catch the wince. "Hey, Baby, take it easy," he crooned softly. He ran his hand over Bucky's ass and gave it a squeeze. "Just stay there for a second. Let me get a good look at you."

---

Bucky groaned softly and nodded. He tried to look down at Steve with as sensual of a face as he could manage. He didn't say anything, just rested his hands on Steve's chest and slowly moved his hips back and forth ever so slightly. His hair flopped down in front of his eyes and he tossed his head back to get it out of the way.

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"I wish you could see how gorgeous you look right now." Steve dragged Bucky down for a slow kiss and started to rock his hips up into him. "God, am I glad you're the only person I've ever made love to. I love sharing this with you."

---

Bucky hummed happily and licked at Steve's neck as he slowly humped up into him. "I'm telling you, we need a camera. Take some pictures of each other like this. Keep them forever," he whispered to Steve and then pushed back up so he was hovering over him. Bucky pulled himself off of Steve's dick and then sat back down again quickly. "Want me to ride you like this? Or do you
want to fuck me in a different way?"

---

Steve breathed out and let out a pleasant sound. "Stay like this, Sweetheart. I like watching you ride my dick. You look so damned good. Come here and kiss me again."

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Bucky kissed Steve firmly and then let Steve's tongue slide into his mouth. While he was pressed down against him, Bucky started moved up and down on Steve's cock. "Tell me how much you love me," he requested and held his hands around Steve's neck lightly.

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Steve moaned and couldn't help but give Bucky's ass a gentle swat as a little compromise for not liking spanking too much. "The first day I met you, I thought that you were the most beautiful man I ever laid eyes on," he said. "I couldn't believe my luck when you agreed to go out with me." Steve smiled up at him. "I fantasized about marrying you ever since our third date."

---

"You did not." Bucky laughed and kissed Steve's cheek. "Don't make shit up to be sweet." He rolled his hips back and gripped his own dick in his hand to lazily start jerking himself off as he tried to fuck himself as best as he could on Steve.

---

"I did so," Steve defended. "I loved you from the start. God, Buck, I couldn't wait to say it. I was afraid to move too fast but when we finally moved in together, I knew that I was going to get to spend the rest of my life with you." He held Bucky and rolled his hips up, angling so he was hitting Bucky's prostate.

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"You say 'finally moved in together' like I made you wait a decade," Bucky scoffed. "Steve, we haven't even been together for a year yet." Bucky swore when Steve gripped him tight and banged up into his prostate. "Let's flip, I want to be on my back so you can rail me if you want."

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Steve wrapped an arm around Bucky and flipped them easily. He leaned down to purr into Bucky's ear, "You don't get to ask me to tell you how much I love you and then give me sass when I say the truth." He smirked and grabbed Bucky's hands to hold over his head before he started to fuck him in earnest.

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Bucky gasped and his eyes went wide. Flinging his head back on the bed, he yelped, "Steve, fuck, oh my god!" and choked on air. He hitched his hips up towards Steve with every thrust into him. He was rendered speechless again and all he could do was watch intently and breathe in short hurried gasps.

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Steve rushed to kiss him to hush his shout. He rocked his hips into Bucky so hard that the bed rattled against the wall. When he came, he saw stars and he tossed his head back with a low moan. He rode out his orgasm, shuddering as he pushed in one last time.

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Bucky managed to come just about the same time Steve did and he had to squeeze his eyes shut for a moment while he shot come onto his stomach. He milked Steve's orgasm from him by clenching his ass repeatedly around his cock. Bucky turned his head to the side, exposing his neck for Steve and sighing happily and sleepily into the sheets.

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Steve whimpered softly when Bucky's muscles clenched down on his dick but he didn't pull out yet. He sucked a few marks onto his neck and smiled lovingly down at him. "Someone got loud."

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"Sorry," Bucky apologized but smirked. "Someone got rough." He wrapped his arms around Steve and pulled him down against him. "That was a perfect morning fuck, Baby. I'm still peeved you won but at least you fucked me well."

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Steve laughed happily and snuggled Bucky like he was a giant teddy bear. "You should know better than to make a bet with me and expect to win."

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"I couldn't help it. But I got too cocky and couldn't hold out," Bucky said. "You should be flattered and thankful that I can't resist your dick."

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"I worked my tongue off for that victory. I ought to be proud, not thankful," Steve teased. He kissed him one more time and then gave Bucky some space.

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Bucky yawned and grabbed a tissue to wipe at the come on his stomach. "We have some time until we need to leave. Want to order breakfast?"

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"Breakfast sounds perfect. We can take a shower while we wait for it to get delivered," Steve said and reached for a tissue as well.

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"You can go ahead and shower. I'll order the food and then lay here and watch TV or drift off again, who knows." Bucky reached for the phone and the menu and picked out, admittedly, too much food for them to share this morning. But he didn't much care, he had no idea when they would be at a hotel together again and he was really hungry.
Steve nodded. He trotted off to go clean up. His shower was pretty brief - he didn't want to let Bucky be alone for too long on their first morning as spouses. He didn't bother to dress after he dried - Steve just waltzed back into bed and plopped down next to him. "Hey, Handsome," he hummed.

"Are you talking to yourself there, Steve?" Bucky asked and flung an arm over his middle. "Food should be here in ten minutes they said. I got us eggs and bacon and some bagels and two breakfast sandwiches. I know it's a lot but I'm really hungry and we can take home whatever we don't eat."

"No, I'm definitely talking to you," Steve laughed. He drew him in for a kiss and smiled. "We deserve to spoil ourselves a little. I don't care if it's a lot of food. You're paying," he teased.

"That is true," Bucky said and lazily made out with Steve for a few minutes before breakfast got to their door. Bucky pulled on his pants and opened the door to find a bored looking young man with a cart.

The young man peeked into the room and saw Steve under the blankets and took in Bucky's shirtless-ness. He didn't say anything, just pushed the cart towards Bucky and turned to walk away saying something about 'just leave the cart in the hall when you're done'.

Steve was quiet as he watched the transaction and the happy little smile faded from his face. He wouldn't trade Bucky for the world but he wished he didn't have to feel so self-conscious when people saw them. He let out a little sigh as he sat up. "Think he will say anything?"

Bucky pulled the cart into the room and started handing Steve his breakfast. He shrugged and sat down, taking the left over whiskey bottle from next to the bed and drinking from it. "Don't know," he mumbled and looked away from Steve. "I mean, he didn't say anything about it just then so maybe he doesn't care."

Steve took his plate and started to munch on his breakfast. "You think one day we won't have to worry so much? I mean, only five years ago it was illegal around here," Steve murmured.

"Yeah, I think so," Bucky said and entwined his legs with Steve's. "When that day will be is another question entirely." He sighed. "Let's just eat our breakfast and enjoy the rest of the time we have alone."

"Yeah, I guess I got to enjoy what we already have," Steve chuckled and kissed Bucky’s cheek before going to town on breakfast, occasionally stealing a bite from Bucky. "I wonder how much the girls missed us."
"Lilly probably missed us a little and Becca probably didn't care one way or the other," Bucky said. "You know how she is. We would have to be gone for a week before she even noticed. I bet your mom missed us more than she did."

Steve nodded in agreement. "Yeah. Oh man, my ma would get so sad whenever I didn't visit her two days in a row after I moved out. But sometimes I just got busy, you know?"

"I know what you mean. Life gets busy when you become an adult. There's practically no time for the things you need to do on a daily basis let alone spend time with family. Especially now that you've got me and two kids, you are much more occupied than before, I would imagine," Bucky said.

Steve looked down at his food grumpily. "I'll be even more occupied once I go back to work," he sighed. "It was nice being a house spouse for a little while. But I'll at least be able to help people again."

"It was nice having you at home to help the girls and cook and things. But I know how much you've been wanting to get back to it." Bucky finished his breakfast and set the plates back on the cart. They still had some sandwiches left so he decided he would wrap them up later to take them home.

Steve snuggled and lazily kissed Bucky until they had to check out. It was hard to not be all over his husband on the walk home. When they arrived at the apartment, he pushed the door open and called out, "Guess who's home!"

Lilly jumped off the ground where she had been playing with Raphael and she shouted Steve's name and nearly knocked him over in a hug. Becca quietly helped Bucky bring their bags in and murmured 'Welcome home,' under her breath. Sarah was occupying herself by knitting on the couch.

Steve grinned so happily when he got an excited welcome from Lilly. He picked her up and spun her around once before setting her down. "I'm so happy to see you," he said. "You too, Becs." He walked over to his mom and gave her a kiss hello.

Bucky hugged both his sisters and then picked up Raphael and scratched his head. "Did you all have a good night? Were you good for Mrs. Rogers?"

Becca took the sandwiches from Bucky and started eating one. "It was fine. Lilly had a nightmare so she slept in my room. But other than that we were fine."
Raphael let out a happy meow and bumped his head lightly against Bucky's chin. "They were very well-behaved," Sarah said. "You need to go out more often. I'll get to pretend I'll have the daughters I always wanted."

Steve snorted. "Thanks, Mom."

Bucky let Raph down on the ground and started taking their bags back to their room. "Well, we will be leaving you alone with them for about a week this spring when we go to Seneca," he said and tossed the last bag into the room before coming back out to his family. Steve started work again in two days and he wanted to spend as much time with him and his sisters all together as he could before then. It would be over in a flash.
The first week back at work was both rough and refreshing. Steve had odd hours that took him away from his husband and he already had three homicide cases but he felt useful again. Today, he came home a little before eight after a double and he had some flowers for Bucky because he missed him.

---

Bucky was holed up in their room with a bag of ice pressed to his face and a bottle of Smirnoff stuck between his knees. The girls had already went to bed since they had school the next day and Bucky had managed to skip the drama of telling them what happened. He was waiting up for Steve and drinking and dreading having to explain to him what went on.

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Steve was a bit sad to see everyone in bed but he sucked it up and headed into their room. His jaw dropped when he saw the state Bucky was in and he rushed over to sit next to him and put a hand on his knee. "Baby, what the hell happened?"

---

Bucky lowered the bag of ice so Steve could see his face better. He had a pretty bad split lip and his right eye was red and bruising. His body wasn't much better with bruises of its own forming in various places and his knuckles were all crusted over with blood. Bucky thought about the truth of what happened and worried about what Steve might do in retaliation. Maybe he could just get away with a lie, "If I told you it was a bar fight, would you forgive me?"

---

Steve pet his fingers through Bucky's hair and kissed his temple before rushing off to get a wet, cool rag. "You're my husband and I'm a man of God, so I'll have to forgive you," he said. "Doesn't mean you won't hear about it from me."

---

Bucky sighed. He really didn't feel like getting chewed out for something he didn't do. He did go get a bottle of vodka after the fact, but he couldn't help it. He needed something and that was better than some alternatives. He was probably going to hear it for buying alcohol without Steve knowing and pretending he went to the bar would just add to it. Bucky took another drink from the Smirnoff and then set it on his nightstand. "I want to tell you what happened but..." he trailed off and stared at Steve.

---

Steve let Bucky have one last sip before he plucked the bottle from the nightstand and went to pour it down their bathroom sink. Bucky was allowed to have some, but he wasn't going to give him a free pass for the rest of it. He wrapped his arm around his shoulders and kissed his temple. "If you're in trouble, I don't care how mad I'll be. I want to help."

---

Bucky held back when Steve tossed the rest of his vodka. He couldn't argue with him about it today. Bucky pulled his legs up against his chest and pressed the bag of ice back against his eye. "Got
jumped," he said simply and looked away from Steve. "Sort of."

---

Steve took the ice pack and held it up to Bucky's face for him. He gently massaged the back of his neck to try and make him feel a bit better. "Sort of? Who was it? Did they steal anything from you?" he asked. "What did they look like?"

---

Steve was such a cop. Bucky was surprised he didn't pull out a notepad and take down everything Bucky was saying. "Wasn't a bar fight. It was just this guy I used to know," he mumbled. "He walked down the alley behind the record shop when I was taking the trash out. He must've been headed to the bar down the block and recognized me."

---

"Why would he hit you?" Steve asked. "Did you owe him money? What's his name, Buck?" Steve was getting a bit protective and looked one step away from going down to the precinct to and filing an assault charge.

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Bucky furrowed his brow and asked, "Why would you assume I owed him money?" Bucky tried not to be offended by what Steve might be implying.

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"Because people beat people up because they said something smart, they screwed their partner, or they owed them money. I figured it'd be the most likely of the three cause you didn't have any reason to instigate," Steve said.

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"Never mind." Bucky shook his head. "He was an old drinking buddy. We used to be friends, things went south about a year ago."

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"What happened between you two?" Steve asked gently and tilted his head to the side and looked at Bucky's eye that was swelling.

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Bucky shifted and sniffled. His head was hurting and he wanted to sleep. "I used to get in bar fights all the time and he was my buddy. He would back me up. One night we were in the men's room and he was helping me stop my forehead from bleeding. He was so close to me and I was so drunk and I kissed him. After that night, I never saw him again. He turned right around and left. He had me barred by the owner and I didn't see him again until just tonight."

---

Steve's stomach fell as he understood why Bucky had gotten jumped. He frowned and then rushed forward to hold him tightly in his arms. "Oh, Sweetheart," he said softly. "I'm so sorry." He hugged Bucky a bit too tightly because as awful as he felt for Bucky, he was livid at the man who did this to
"Gentle, please, Babe, my whole body hurts," Bucky winced and rested a hand on Steve's back. He was quiet for a moment before adding, "I was throwing the shit out when I got my knees kicked in under me and hit my head on the side of the dumpster. Turned around and it's him and his already drunken self and his fist coming right at me saying shit about 'goddamn faggot Barnes motherfucker, you cocksucking piece of shit'. So I fought back and ultimately he knocked me out on the curb and left. Reggie found me a few minutes later when he came out to smoke pot."

Steve wanted to cry. He couldn't imagine the sort of hate that would drive someone to beat up someone they called a friend just because that person liked them enough to kiss them once. "What's his name?" Steve asked, easing his grip up. "What's his full name?"

"Doesn't matter," Bucky whispered and tucked himself into Steve's arms. He really didn't want some big thing coming from all of this. He didn't want Steve to get involved and for him to be in danger or for the precinct to get involved, either. They already probably thought pretty low of Bucky as it was.

"Of course it fucking matters!" Steve said, getting heated and raising his voice a bit. "I'm not letting some bastard get away with beating up my husband. Give me his name, Bucky." Steve hadn't gotten this upset and angry in front of Bucky before.

Bucky's eyes went wide and he shied away from Steve slightly. "Turn it down. The girls are asleep and they don't know about this yet." He sighed and grabbed for Steve's hand gently. "I don't want this to turn into some weird man hunt, Steve. I'm fine and I shouldn't have kissed him anyway so it's no wonder he's still pissed."

Steve saw red but when Bucky shied away, he cooled off just the slightest bit. He held Bucky's hand and looked away. "This isn't your fault, Buck. He's an asshole. If he can't handle someone liking how caring he had been to you, then he's the problem."

Bucky pulled himself up off the bed. "Can we just leave it? It's not likely that I'll ever see him around again and I'm just a little battered up." He started pulling off his shirt so he could go shower but he thought better of it, not wanting Steve to see the bruises on his ribs where he had been kicked while he was down. "I need to take a shower. I feel disgusting."

Steve gave Bucky a sad look but didn't say anything even though he wanted to insist on pressing charges against the bastard who hurt him. Steve sighed and kissed Bucky's cheek. "Let me take care of you," he said softly. "I want to make you feel better."
"Okay, come with me then." Bucky started towards the shower and lifted up his shirt a little reluctantly. It hurt to peel it off of his sore body and he grimaced when he bent down to take off his pants. Bucky stared in the mirror for a second and cataloged the marks on his body. " Fucking hell," he breathed out and ran his hands through his hair.

"Oh, Bucky," Steve said softly. It broke his heart to see him so hurt. He helped Bucky take off his pants and boxers so he wouldn't have to move so much. "Are you sure you don't want me to press charges?" he asked. "He got you so bad," Steve murmured in a quiet tone. "I'm going to take care of you, alright?"

"I'm fine, I promise," Bucky mumbled and got into the shower. "Just come help me wash my hair and then cuddle me in bed, okay? I'm really sore and tired." He reached a hand out for Steve and waited for him to get undressed to come join him.

"Alright," Steve sighed. He got undressed so he could wash them both. He was loving and careful as he cleaned Bucky's body and washed his hair. "Can I do anything else for you, Baby? Want a massage? Or maybe I can blow you?"

"I hurt too much for a massage but maybe you can give me head when I'm laying down again. Might make me feel better," Bucky said and shut the water off. He stumbled out of the shower and wrapped up in the towel before trudging back to bed and just laying down as calmly as he could.

"I'd be happy to do that for you," Steve said. He dried off and laid down next to Bucky and took him into his arms. He played with his hair for a few minutes before massaging his head. "I love you so much, Buck. I'm so, so sorry that you had to go through this." He kissed his temple. "You are such a good person and you didn't deserve this."

"I love you too. It's okay." Bucky kissed Steve lightly. "I'll be okay. I'll heal up quick probably." He rolled a little to the side and gasped at the pain in his ribs. "No, okay, I need to lay on my back. Hurts too much on my side."

Steve looked into Bucky's eyes and then gave him another kiss. "What are we going to tell the girls?" he asked. "Becca can't know about the booze, so I'll get rid of the bottle on my way to work tomorrow."

"I don't know." Bucky sighed. "I don't really know what to do. Do they have to know?" He breathed deeply and felt his lungs shake. "I don't want them to get worried about us again. Not after
what happened to you. And I don't want to explain to them why this guy is so mad at me."

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"Well, you have a pretty nasty black eye," Steve said. "And you're hobbling a little. You can't really chalk that up to falling down the stairs or tripping over something," Steve placed a hand on his head. "I don't like lying to them. And I don't want Becca to feel like we hide stuff from her."

---

"Fine." Bucky sighed. "I'll tell them tomorrow when they get home from school. I'll probably be asleep in the morning still." He started tracing lines down Steve's arms and tried to keep himself from screaming about how much this whole thing was so goddamn unfair. "Can you get me some medicine for my headache?"

---

Steve nodded and got up to get a glass of water and some painkillers. Once Bucky took the pills, he went back to stroking his hair and gently sung one of the lullabies his mom used to sing to him to try to ease Bucky into sleep.

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Bucky was getting more and more tired as he went and having Steve hold him gently was really nice. He tiredly murmured, "This isn't a blowjob but it's nice," and closed his eyes as he felt his husband’s light fingers through his hair.

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"I believe you asked for a head massage. If you wanted more, you should have specified which head," Steve teased. He kissed and sung to Bucky until he fell asleep. When Steve finally succumbed to his slumber, he still had his arms thrown around his husband.

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Bucky woke up angry and in pain with a raging headache once again. Steve wasn't in their room and Bucky couldn't remember what he worked that day. The girls were probably eating breakfast or on their way to school and Bucky hoped that Steve was out there helping them get a move on. He waited a few more minutes before calling out to Steve in hopes that he was still in the apartment.

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Lilly was the one who answered by going to the bedroom with a plate of breakfast that Steve had left. "Steve left before he got up for work, Dummy. He made us all - oh my god!" She accidentally dropped the plate. "What happened?"

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"Fuck, Lilly," Bucky breathed and tried to sit up, holding his head. "Nothing... it's... I'm fine. Why aren't you on your way to school? You need to get going. You'll be late." He tried to wave her off but he moved too fast and hurt himself. "Clint gave me today off so I'll just be here when you get back then we can discuss it."
"It's a late start today cause of the snow," she said. Steve had seen it on the news and let them know by leaving them a note. "Who did this to you? Was it Steve?" She sounded scared. "Was it a stranger – a mugger?"

---

Becca came in then, hearing the noise and getting curious and concerned. She took one look at Bucky and her eyes got wide and scared. "The fuck happened to you?" she asked and came over to him to stare at his black eye.

Bucky groaned and shut his eyes tight. His head was still pounding. "I'm fine," he pressured again.

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Lilly ran to get in bed with Bucky and started to look him over. "Did someone try to break in? Your eye looks all bloody." Her own eyes were shining a bit with tears as she tried to understand why her brother was beaten up. She didn't see Bucky like this like Becca had in the past.

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Becca looked Bucky up and down and squinted at him, asking in a low quiet stern voice, "Did you get in another goddamn bar fight?"

Clenching his jaw for a second while he thought, Bucky looked up at the ceiling. "No," he said finally. "I didn't go to a bar." He looked to Lilly. "Steve didn't do this to me. No one tried to break in."

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Becca didn't look convinced that Bucky was entirely innocent in this because he wasn't giving them a straight answer. She crossed her arms, now looking more angry than concerned that Bucky was hurt. "Then what the hell happened, Bucky?" she demanded.

---

He looked between his sisters and then gave in. He had hoped that Steve would have been around to help him explain what happened to him to the girls. Bucky really didn't want them to get worked up and worried about his safety or Steve's or their own. He turned to Becca. "You remember Donnie Manix who would bring me home sometimes after we had been out on a bar crawl?"

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"Yeah, I remember him. He was a bit of a sleaze ball." Becca never liked him much but didn't say anything about it because he was the only friend Bucky had at the time who seemed to care that Bucky got home safe. Even though he sort of talked down to her and Lilly when Bucky wasn't awake or around.

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Bucky nodded and gestured down at himself indicating wordlessly that this was the handiwork of Donnie Manix. "He jumped me when I was taking out trash at work last night. Didn't see him coming and we fought for a bit before he knocked me out. You remember how big a guy he was."
Lilly looked angry. "If you know who did this what are we sitting around here for? Why isn't Steve arresting him?"

Becca was confused at first why Donnie would attack her brother but then she realized. "He knows you're gay, doesn't he?"

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"I kissed him." Bucky looked down at his hands. "About a year ago. I was drunk and we had just won a fight and he was patching me up and I just kissed him. Turns out he's still angry. He had some choice words to say about me and gay people, too." He shook his head. "I told Steve to leave it. I don't want to cause some big thing about all this."

---

Lilly was angry but she quietly cried because she was so upset that someone beat up her brother for being gay. Was this going to be a normal happening? She rubbed at her eyes. "Does everyone hit you when they find out you're gay? Why are they allowed to do this?"

---

Bucky gently curled himself around Lilly and pulled Becca over to join the cuddle. "Some people are filled with hate for what they don't understand," he said. "I don't know why, but they are. And, no, not everyone attacks me for being gay. It has happened a lot of times before and I bet it'll happen again but it's not an everyday occurrence, thank God."

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"If it happens so often, why don't the police get involved? Steve is a cop. They got rid of that guy when he had Steve shot," Lilly said, still upset and slightly more naive than Becca was. "I'm going to kick his ass."

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Bucky squeezed Lilly close to him in as good a hug as he could manage before it hurt. "It's complicated, Lil. It's really not as simple as having the cops get involved." He kissed the top of her head and checked the clock. "You've got to get to school now. The snow will slow you down and the delay is probably almost up. Do you want me to walk down with you?"

---

Lilly shook her head. "No, you should stay inside." She was worried about Bucky getting hurt again if he went outside. Becca gave Bucky a hug before taking Lilly out of bed and getting her to head out for school.

---

Bucky spent the rest of the day either laying in bed or laying on the couch. He listened to records or tried practicing on his guitar. Mostly, he just tried not to think too much and get himself worked up. Mostly, he just sat around and waited for Steve to get home from work. He hoped he had a good day and hadn't worried about Bucky too much.

---

Steve came home about an hour before the girls would be heading back from school. He'd picked up
a new record from the store that Bucky had talked about wanting and he wrapped it up in some newspaper. He gave Bucky a kiss hello as soon as he walked in. "Hello, Beautiful. Feeling any better?"

---

Bucky looked up at Steve and smiled sadly. "Honestly, I feel a little worse today than I did yesterday. All the bruises have formed and I think I could have a fractured rib, but I'm not sure." He reached for the package Steve had under his arm and asked, "What's this?"

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"Do you want me to take you to the hospital?" Steve asked, petting his fingers through his hair as he offered Bucky the package and said, "It's something that may make you feel a bit better."

---

Bucky opened it up and found a new record from a little band that no one had heard of yet that he had been eyeing for a while. "Thank you for this, Baby, will you put it on?" he asked and handed it back to Steve. "Also, no, I don't want to go to the hospital. I'm fine."

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Steve put on the record and then went right back to Bucky's side so he could massage his head. "I could finally give you that blowjob," he suggested, nibbling his earlobe lightly.

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"I'd love a blowjob, yes. And then some food. The girls already know what happened. They found me this morning when they were here during the snow delay," Bucky said and wrapped his arms securely around Steve to bring him in for a kiss.

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Steve carefully straddled Bucky's hips and gave him a few, loving kisses. "I'm sorry you had to tell them alone. I was hoping that they wouldn't find out until after I got back," he sighed. "Did they take it alright?"

---

"Lilly wanted to start a duel to the death, like usual," Bucky said. "Becca understood why it happened and why I didn't want you to do anything. She also remembered Donnie from when he would bring me home sometimes." Bucky forgot he hadn't given Steve the name of the guy and he also didn't realize he just let it slip accidentally.

---

Steve was such a cop and he perked up a little when he heard a name. He could probably squeeze the last name out of Becca or go asking around Bucky's usual bars for the guy. "You think Lilly would be able to beat him up?" Steve asked as he gingerly kissed down Bucky's chest.

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Bucky laughed humorlessly. "I know you're joking but she might actually get farther in a fight with him than I did. She's good at evasive movements in soccer and lacrosse so she could probably dance
around him and tire him out." He tried not to make any pained noises when Steve brushed up against
his ribs. He was pretty sure one or more were fractured and even the slightest touch really hurt but he
didn't want to worry Steve or have to go to the hospital.

---

Steve was as careful as possible as he kissed down Bucky’s torso. He sunk down to the floor and
opened up the front of Bucky's pants so he could guide his dick out. "Let's not worry about any of
that for now. I want you to focus on feeling good."

---

"Okay." Bucky smiled down at Steve and brushed his hair back from his eyes so he could see him
better. Bucky's beard was now coming in pretty well. It was mostly just short and dark all around but
he liked it. Although, honestly, he might shave it off soon because Reggie started growing his out too
after Bucky started. That kid practically pretended Bucky was his dad.

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Steve lapped at the head of Bucky's cock a few times before sinking down and taking a few inches
into his mouth. He let out a little moan and reached up to grab Bucky's hand and guide it to the back
of his head.

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Bucky cupped the back of Steve's head and lightly scratched his hair. "I love you, Baby. And no
matter how much people try to hurt me or change me because of that, I will fight my best and never
give up and I'll always come home to you."

---

It hurt Steve's heart to know that they had to worry about each other's safety in this way. He tried to
ignore it by giving Bucky the best head he possibly could. He moaned low and deep-throated
Bucky's dick, reaching down to jerk himself off while he sucked on Bucky's cock.

---

Bucky was getting a little overwhelmed. He loved having Steve's mouth on him but he was also
overthinking far too much. He was thinking about Donnie and if he was going to see him around
again and if he was going to have to fight him again. He was thinking about Steve and how much he
had already gotten hurt because of this and how much easier his life might be if he was straight. He
also thought about his sisters and how they had to continually see him getting hate for who he was
and they had to see Steve injured and Becca had to deal with so much from him and Bucky was
worried someone might target the girls next. He let out a quiet little gasp and finally noticed the silent
streams of tears that were staining his cheeks.

---

Steve tried to keep Bucky's mind off everything. He sucked his husband until he could barely
breathe and he palmed at his balls to make them feel even fuller, but when Bucky kept crying, he
couldn't act like nothing was wrong. He stopped and moved to sit next to him, pulling Bucky
strongly against his chest while still being gentle enough to not disturb his injuries. "Love, it's okay."

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Bucky let himself just melt into Steve and cry into his shoulder. Way too much had happened to
them lately and he had been bottling it up for too long. "I'm sorry, Steve," he stuttered through the
tears and pulled his legs up into his husband’s lap. "I'm sorry for all the shit that's happened. I'm sorry
we both got hurt just for being who were are and I'm sorry I can't go visit my parents and I'm sorry I
drank without asking you and I'm sorry that the girls have to deal with all of this."

---

Steve couldn't help the tears that fell down his face because it hurt to see his husband so upset. But
he held him and kissed him over and over so he knew he was loved and cared for. "Baby, you don't
have to be sorry," he said. "I didn't sign up for an easy life with you. I signed up for a happy one,
and that's what you give me every day." He sighed heavily. "What can I do to make you happy?"

---

"Never leave me," Bucky mumbled into Steve's collar bone. "Never leave me and promise we will
try to get a house and a baby and we will always be there for each other." He pulled away from
Steve for a moment just so he could stare into his eyes. "I love you so much," he said and held up his
ring finger to him. "I'm yours forever. No one can take me away."

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"Buck, I will never, ever, leave you," Steve swore. "We are going to raise your sisters and then we
are going to get a beautiful house and an even more perfect child that we will love and nurture into
such an amazing person," he reassured.

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Bucky sniffled and kissed Steve. "Speaking of the girls, they will be home soon," he said and slowly
stood up to tuck himself back in his pants. "Sorry I cried while you were sucking me off. That was
probably a big mood killer for you."

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"At least I know you weren't crying cause I was doing such an awful job," Steve chuckled. He
looked up at Bucky as he stood. "You going to be okay, Beautiful?" he asked, giving him a
concerned look.

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"Yeah, I will. I'm just upset." Bucky smiled weakly and wrapped his arms around Steve to give him
a hug. He just wished that he and his family could be safe and happy without having to look be so
scared all the time.
In the next few days, Steve did everything he could to get Bucky feeling better and get up and running again. On his day off, Steve was ready to relax for once but he couldn't find where his Bible was. "Buck, did you move my Bible?"

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"It's in the TV cabinet with the other books," Bucky said idly and strummed his guitar. He had been laying in bed for about an hour since he woke up just practicing and occasionally eating a carrot that Steve had left for him on his nightstand.

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"Why'd you move it?" Steve asked as he went to go look for it there. He found it soon after, buried under a bunch of Becca's collection. "You know I don't like it when my stuff is moved, Babe."

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"I know. I just figured I'd put all the books together so we knew where they were. I found it out on the kitchen table so I just popped it into the cabinet," Bucky replied without much interest and kept playing, glancing up when Steve returned with it in hand.

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"That's still moving my stuff," Steve complained as he sat down near Bucky and opened to one of the passages Father Frank mentioned last mass. "I got busy making the girls breakfast and left it there so I could pick it up now."

---

"Well, you found it. It's fine," Bucky said. "Not a big deal," he mumbled offhandedly and got up to put his guitar away. He had to leave for work soon and he was still in pajamas.

---

"Yeah, but if you weren't here when I was looking for it, I wouldn't have found it," Steve snipped to him. He knew things were more chaotic around here but Steve hoped that some things would be respected, like leaving Steve's stuff alone. "What time do you have work?"

---

"I have to leave in a few minutes." Bucky furrowed his brow. "Why are so pissy? I don't see why this is such a big thing. You found it and it's not like I threw it out or anything. And don't you have two more Bibles in a box in the closet?"

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"I'm not pissy," Steve defended. "But I have a right to be annoyed when I keep asking you and the girls to not move my stuff and then you keep moving my stuff." He looked back down into his Bible. "Also, this is my favorite one and the one I have marks and highlights in – the others don't have that."
"Okay, but you clean up all our shit all the time," Bucky said and pulled off his pajama shirt so he could put on one of his sweaters for work. "Half the time when she's going to school, Lilly can't find her backpack cause you've put it in the hall closet with Becca's and that's not where she last left it."

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"Because they leave their stuff where it doesn't belong. Shoes go next to the mat, backpacks in the closet. I mean, if you prefer me to not clean and let the place become a pigsty then I'll leave their stuff alone," Steve huffed.

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Bucky scoffed at Steve. "That's not what I'm saying. It's just they are kids and they are busy kids. They leave stuff everywhere so they can find it fast later. And it's not like you talked to them and set up an organization plan with them for what is supposed to go where."

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"They're young adults who are perfectly capable of hanging their backpacks on the hooks I clearly labeled for them. I even decorated it!" Steve said. It was frustrating to have done everything he could to make the house as organized as possible so the daily mess wasn't as big as it usually was. "I've told Lilly a thousand times to hang her backpack on the hook."

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"Telling Lilly to do things doesn't work." Bucky crossed his arms and looked to Steve. "She needs a plan and direction. And decorating a hook with her name on it and just expecting her to always put her bag there isn't a plan."

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"I'm a grown man and she's not even a teenager yet," Steve said. "If I tell her not to leave her backpack laying around, that's all there is to it. I don't step on your toes in front of them, but you give them too much leniency." Steve had to hold back a lot of the times when Bucky was too lax about some things with them.

---

"The fuck's that supposed to mean?" Bucky snapped and glared at Steve. "I'm lenient? They are my sisters - my responsibility. I'll raise them the way I see fit. And Lilly doesn't see you as her brother or her parent so she's not going to just obey you like she would if she did."

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"Well, the way you see fit is too soft," Steve said. He looked a bit hurt. "Lilly should see me as something considering I married you, I live here, and I make her goddamn breakfast, lunch, and dinner almost every day."

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Bucky clenched his teeth. "Lilly and Becca already lost two parents. Marrying me isn't going to just raise you to that status for them. You're their brother-in-law, and most kids don't have to obey their brother-in-law like a guardian."
"I know that marrying you isn't a fast track to guardianship but, Christ, Buck. I make their food. I do most of the shopping. I clean. I help them with their homework. What else do I have to do to get respect from them in my own damn home?" Steve demanded.

"You're the one who wants to do all that shit!" Bucky shouted. "We were fine making our own food and cleaning our own house and shopping on our own and Becca helped Lilly with homework. I handled it all on my own! You're the one who came in and said you wanted to help us with anything you could to make things easier. You're the one who said you didn't want us eating the way we were. You're the one who started controlling stuff and changing stuff and taking over because you wanted to and you thought I couldn't do it!"

"What's so wrong with wanting to be there for you guys? Now I'm the asshole because I'm making sure they have healthy meals instead of eating cereal all the time?" Steve put down his Bible and glared. "You're going to be late for work. You'll need some time to cool down anyway."

"I'll need some time?" Bucky asked incredulously then just laughed and shook his head. "You know what, that's fine. I'd rather be at work right now anyway," he said as he tugged on his socks and then stormed out into the kitchen to get his shoes and coat. He angrily yelled "Bye, Steve!" before slamming the apartment door behind him and heading down the street.

Steve was livid. He hated not being taken seriously by the girls and having no power to stand up for himself when the girls ignored any stipulation he had. He was still in a sour mood when the girls got home, especially since Lilly threw her backpack on the floor the second she got in.

***

Work had been an absolute shit show. Bucky had to deal with angry customers all day and at one point a kid knocked over a whole display that Bucky had to put back. Reggie left early because he got sick and Clint and Bucky were left to clear up and close the store by themselves. While Clint was in the back counting the money and putting it in the safe, Bucky went to lock the front door. He was greeted with an arm stuck between the door and the wall shoving its way into the store as Bucky tried to get the lock in.

Donnie practically shoved the door open as soon as he got his arm wedged in between. He was a little drunk and was on his way home when he saw Bucky alone in the shop as he passed by the window and decided to cause more trouble. "You've got some balls to be out in public, Fag."
Bucky's eyes went wide and he steeled himself for whatever might come. "I fucking work here, you prick. And we're closed. Get out." Donnie was a bit taller than Bucky and definitely wider and stronger - especially since Bucky was still battered up from the incident the week before and most likely didn't stand a chance against him tonight.

"Well, you shouldn't," Donnie scoffed. "You ought to be in the ground or out of sight. Like all queers." He gave Bucky a little shove. "Seriously, what made you think you could kiss me, huh? What made you think I was a dick-loving faggot like you?"

Bucky winced at the impact, his ribs not able to take even a slight push. "I was drunk, Donnie. I wasn't thinking. Just like you're drunk and not thinking right now. I made a fucking mistake. You should leave before you make an even bigger one." Bucky hoped against hope that for some reason Clint would come out to the floor for something and see what was going on. There was no way for him to get his attention by yelling and if he stomped the ground to make the place shake then Donnie would for sure retaliate.

"Mistake?" Donnie snorted. "Now that I think back more, I remember all the looks you gave me. The ‘fuck me’ sort of looks." He reeled his arm back and gave Bucky a hard hit right to his head. "You should have never left whatever hole you crawled out of. Cause I'm gonna make sure you won't be able to walk out of there again." His fists went flying, relentlessly punching Bucky's face and chest over and over.

Bucky fell back against a stack of record crates and half them collided onto the ground. He tried to hold his arms up to protect his face but Donnie easily yanked them out of the way and knocked into his jaw again. Bucky went down on the ground quickly and his last thought before he passed out was how the last thing he and Steve did was fight and the last thing he said to his sisters was that they better get to bed before he started taking away privileges. Bucky opened his eyes barely enough to see Donnie towering over him and he gasped out, "Steve," before everything went black.

Donnie kicked Bucky in the ribs while he was knocked out and Clint came rushing in when he felt the heavy thud on the floor. He grabbed a gun from behind the counter and scared Donnie off with it before calling the cops. He couldn't hear the other end and kept repeating that he was deaf and they needed an ambulance at the store immediately.

Bucky woke up briefly in the ambulance and saw Clint staring down at him. He tried to reach for his arm but his fingers weren't moving and he didn't realize his arms and body were being restrained on the cot. He slipped back into an unconscious sleep and stayed that way for a long while.

Steve was in the middle of preparing dinner when the phone rang. It was the hospital and thank God he had Bucky put an emergency card with his name and their house number as the contact or else lord knows when it would've been that the hospital would've contacted him. His face went white as a
sheet and he hung up the phone as soon as they were done. He did his best to remain calm as he turned to the girls. "Hey, uh... I have to run out, okay? I can see if my mom can come over."

---

Bucky was awake and laying on his hospital bed confused and in a lot of pain. Clint was sitting beside him and a nurse was talking to him about Bucky's injuries though Bucky couldn't make out what she was saying. None of his family was around and Bucky couldn't manage to speak to call out to Clint or the nurse to go get Steve and his sisters. All he could do was lay there and listen to the garbled noises around him.

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Steve told the girls to behave until his mom came over and he rushed over to the hospital. He wanted the girls to know but he had to see how bad it was first. When he saw his husband lying barely conscious in the hospital bed, he rushed past Clint and the nurse to gently take Bucky's hand in his. "Hey, Sweetheart. I'm here. God, I'm so sorry."

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It took a few moments before Bucky could register that Steve was standing over him. He saw his lips moving and heard the gentle but concerned tones of his voice but he couldn't decipher what his words were. Bucky's vision blurred a bit when he tried to focus in on Steve and he had to blink several times before he could lock eyes with him.

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Bucky looked absolutely wrecked. His face was swollen and patched up from all the cuts and stitches he'd received. "I'm here for you, Baby," Steve said. "I'm here for you. Always." He kept his hand on Bucky's but he looked to Clint and the nurse. "Who did this to him?"

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Clint shook his head and said, "Don't know his name. It was a big guy, blonde, tall. He seemed drunk and he definitely had some beef with Bucky. They seemed to be acquainted. Bucky's been passed out this whole time, he hasn't been able to tell us what happened."

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Steve's stomach sank and his blood ran cold. He got a dangerous, fired look behind his eyes as he put together who had done it. He could kill the bastard, but Bucky needed his support first. "Bucky's awake," he said. "There's something wrong with him," Steve insisted. It took Bucky too long to react to him. Usually, he would be immediately talking to him and reassuring him he was fine.

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Bucky was looking from Clint to Steve lazily following their movements as they spoke. He didn't understand why he couldn't hear what they were saying. He could hear the noise of talking but nothing got through and he wasn't a perfect lip reader like Clint so he couldn't figure it out that way. He raised his hands to his throat and gently pushed against it like it was broken and he made a groaning sound before trying his best to speak Steve's name.

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"Hey, Baby, go easy," Steve said, gently easing Bucky's hands down from his neck. He spoke
words of reassurance to Bucky for a little while but after a little bit, something dawned on him. He grabbed his pen and pad and wrote down, ‘Can you understand what I'm saying?’ and then showed him the note.

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Bucky touched the paper and read it slowly. He looked back up to Steve and moved his head back and forth ever so slightly. He was getting frustrated. He didn't know what was going on. He knew that something was wrong and that he was in a hospital but he couldn't for the life of him remember how long he had been there or how he got there or what happened. "Girls?" he asked quietly.

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'Home' Steve signed. He then wrote 'Do you want my mom to bring them here?' Steve turned to Clint and said, "I really appreciate you staying here for him. It means the world that you looked out for him."

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Clint nodded and signed as he spoke to Steve so Bucky could see what was being said too. "I wish I could help more but I don't know who the guy was. Could be the same one from the other day when Reggie found him out back. I can go get the girls and your mom if you want me too." He finished and looked to Bucky for an answer, but Bucky couldn’t think clearly enough to give one, so he just stared.

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"It's... it's okay, Clint. You've done so much already. If you'd like to go home, you can. I can look after him from here." Steve sat back down at Bucky's bedside and pet his fingers through his hair gently. He kept his eyes locked with Bucky's, waiting for any sign of him wanting or needing something.

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Bucky stared into Steve's eyes for a long time until he started drifting back to sleep and his eyelids began to flutter shut. He fell asleep and had strange dreams about nothing in particular. When he woke up, his sisters and Sarah were all in the room with him and he was reminded of how they had just done this last year when Steve got hurt. "Becca, Lilly," he said with more clarity than before and smiled weakly to his sisters.

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After Bucky had fallen asleep, Steve had decided to call his mom to bring the girls over. It wouldn't be fair to keep this from them. When Bucky woke up again, his sisters rushed over to hug him. Lilly was crying again and Becca looked upset but more put together. "Bucky, how bad did he hurt you? The nurses won't say."

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Bucky wasn't strong enough to hug them back but he nuzzled his head against both of them in turn. He could basically read Lilly’s lips but her question confused him, he still couldn't remember what had happened, "Who?" he asked calmly and cocked his head to the side.

Becca crossed her arms and spit out. "Donnie Fucking Manix," and then looked to Steve as if to say, 'You got that, Steve, you got his name?"
Steve had a name now. He caught Becca's look and he gave her one back that promised hell for Donnie. Lilly put her hand on Bucky's shoulder and her bottom lip quivered. "When can you come home?" she asked. "I promise I'll take out the cat litter every day." It was a bit of desperate nonsense but she just wanted Bucky back home.

Bucky shook his head, getting overwhelmed. He couldn't make out what Lilly had said. He only barely understood her before but this time he was really lost. "What?" he said and looked to Steve and searched the room for the notepad from before.

"I think his hearing is going," Steve said as gently as he could. Lilly just burst into tears at that and Becca gave Steve an angry look for upsetting her sister. He scrambled to grab the notepad and he wrote, 'Lilly wants to know when you'll be home'

Bucky read it and shook his head, "Ask… nurse," he answered simply and watched his heart rate monitor going up and down as he heard the quietest beeping as it went. "Hungry," he whispered absentely. He didn't know what time it was or if he was allowed to eat but things were slowly piecing themselves back together the longer he stayed awake. He got bits and pieces of the attack coming back to him and could see Donnie's enraged face and drunken but accurate punches.

Lilly rushed out of the room and shouted, "Hey, I need a fucking nurse in here! My brother's hungry and he has to come home!" Steve looked mortified and he rushed out to drag her inside. "Let me go, Steve!" she said angrily. Sarah sat there in utter shock at Lilly's behavior.

Becca jumped up off Bucky's bed and went to help Steve with Lilly telling her to calm down and stop shouting. Bucky knew something was wrong and tried to sit up in the bed. He wished he could grab Lilly and hold her and make sure everything was okay but all he could do was watch her cry in Steve's arms and struggle to get down.

"Lilly, Bucky needs us to be calm. I know you're hurt, Kiddo, I know this is scary. But we have to think about what Bucky needs, okay?" Steve tried to reason, sitting her down in a chair and trying to get her attention.

Lilly shook with rage but listened to Steve and got quiet. Becca pet a hand through Lilly's long hair and hummed quietly in her ear.

A nurse peeked her head in then and asked what was wrong and if Bucky needed something. Becca was quick to tell Lilly to let Steve handle it so she didn't start swearing at the nurse to get Bucky some food and send him home.
"Bucky is hungry," Steve said immediately. "I don't think he's eaten since lunch yesterday. And I don't think he can hear what we're saying. He knows there's sound. But he can't understand the words."

The nurse nodded as Steve spoke and rang for the kitchen to send something up for Bucky as soon as they could. She also assessed Bucky's hearing and then went to have a talk with the doctor. When she returned, she said, "Dr. West believes that Bucky has some temporary sensory loss because of the concussion he has suffered. The doctor also says that it should go away in no more than a few weeks as he recovers and his brain fixes itself."

Steve sat with his mom, quietly waiting as the nurse spoke. Once they got the gist of it, he breathed out a relieved sigh and asked, "What can I do to make his recovery easy for him?"

The nurse squinted at Steve and asked, "I'm sorry, your name was on the emergency contact but your relationship was not listed Mr..." She checked Bucky's paperwork again, "Rogers. Are you family? A cousin or brother?" She was allowed to have people in Bucky's room who were not family that he allowed to be present but she wasn't about to just give out more information to this man who she wasn't sure was authorized to have it.

Steve glanced back at Bucky for a moment before steeling himself. "He's my husband," Steve said in a tone that dared her to question it or deny him information. "And please don't take this the wrong way. But my mom here is a nurse. And if my husband is mistreated in any way, she will know."

The nurse smiled a confused little smile and said, "Excuse me?" with a chuckle. "Um, how'd you manage that?" she asked. She saw the defensive gloss that came over Steve and the two girls and held up her hands quickly. "No, no," she assured them and bumped the door closed so no one outside the room could hear. She took a step closer to Steve and lowered her voice. "My girlfriend and I have been together for seven years. No one here knows about it."

Steve was afraid for Bucky's sake that he wouldn't get the treatment he deserved because he was gay but when the nurse came out to them, he nearly cried in relief. He went to Bucky's side and held his hand. "There's a priest near Queens who marries homosexual couples. I... I'm happy to talk more about it later, but right now I'm worried about getting Bucky back on his feet."

"Sure." The nurse smiled and stuck out her hand for Steve to shake, "Veronica," she introduced herself and then began explaining all the best ways to get Bucky better as soon as possible and what to do to take care of him.

Steve listened to the nurse and Bucky just stared at the two of them in quiet sleepy contemplation.
After a while, he tugged on Steve's sleeve and said once again, "Steve, hungry."

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Steve listened intently but when Bucky tugged on his arm, he nodded his head. "Veronica, thank you so much. But I have to help him now." He planned on giving her the contact information to the church later. Steve took the tray that the kitchen had brought up and cut Bucky's lunch into tiny, little pieces. He stabbed a piece with his fork and then offered it to Bucky.

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Bucky ate gratefully and rested his head against Steve's arm between bites. When he was finished, he glanced over at the girls and Sarah and then shut his eyes for a minute. He could remember now what had happened. He was locking up when Donnie came in and beat him up worse than before. He must have been found by Clint and brought to the hospital. Bucky opened his eyes quickly in worry for Clint's safety from Donnie and for the girls' safety and Steve's. "Donnie?" he asked Steve and clutched as firmly as he could to Steve's upper arm.

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Steve grimaced at the name and then nodded his head. He got the pad and pen before writing, 'I'll take care of him.' He leaned down to kiss Bucky's forehead. "I love you," he said firmly.

---

Bucky knew what Steve was saying that time and he said, "Love you, Steve," in return before cuddling up against his pillows to drift off to sleep once more. He was lulled to sleep by the mumbled discussion of his family and this time his dreams were good.

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Steve gave Bucky a smile and tucked him in once he was asleep. He turned to his mom and the girls. "Can you keep an eye on him? I have to make a quick errand."

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Donnie Manix hardly ever left his favorite bar except to go to a different bar if the owner told him to shove off for the night. Today he was on his way from his apartment to his regular spot, taking his usual route and passing the usual bodegas as he went. He was far too sober for his liking and was smoking a cigarette to try to help ease himself before he got some drinks in him.

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Steve headed off to Bucky's old usual bars and started asking around for Donnie. After getting a few more descriptions from them - he pretended he was on duty investigating a disturbance - he was able to have an accurate understanding of what he looked like. After a bit of digging, he started going around where he was most likely to be and he found him crossing the street on Park and 51st. He rushed across and hid in an alleyway until Donnie was passing and Steve's arm shot out to pull him into the alley and slam him against the brick wall.
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Donnie dropped his cigarette as he was shoved against the wall and he tried grabbing for Steve yelling, "Who the fuck are you?" and "Look, man, I got no cash for ya and I don't wanna have to put you in the ground. You best think this through, fucker."

---

Steve gave him a harsh punch in the jaw and then grabbed his arm and spun him around so his face was pressed against the wall and his arm was twisted behind his back. Steve pressed his forearm across the back of his neck. "No, you should've thought this through before you laid a hand on Bucky again."

---

Donnie spit out blood onto the bricks and laughed heartily. "The little cocksucker sent his big strong daddy to defend his honor, huh? Tell me, is he as much a little bitch in bed as he is in a fight?" That earned Donnie a forehead slam to the wall and he groaned out in pain and used one leg to try kicking back at Steve.

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Steve dodged the kick and twisted Donnie's shoulder out of its socket. "You listen to me," he hissed. "If I catch wind that you do anything or say anything to Bucky. I will find you. And I'll make sure your shoulder bone never sees its socket again."

---

Donnie gasped in pain and clenched his teeth together. He was too proud of a guy to yell for help so he stayed down on the ground where he had dropped and glared daggers at Steve. "I'll tell the fucking cops about this, Faggot. Don't think they will defend two low life ass-fuckers over me."

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"I am the cops," Steve growled. He stepped on Donnie to keep him down. "I'm the cops, I'm the lawyers, I'm the goddamn President of the United States. Bucky is protected. Everyone is protected because I fucking say so. Tell me you understand and you're going to keep your hands and words to yourself."

---

Donnie spit on Steve's leg and smirked. "I'll admit I'm a little impressed with your strength. Didn't think queers were supposed to be fighters. That's partly why I never suspected Barnes. Just goes to show, you can't trust anyone to be a normal good man nowadays."

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Steve dragged Donnie onto his feet just to give him another punch. He held him steady and reeled his arm back to hit him again but then he thought for a moment and then he leaned in to kiss his cheek, knowing that would bother him more.

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Donnie squirmed out of Steve's grasp and tumbled back down to the ground, "Fuck off!" he yelled now. "Don't you have a broken baby Bucky to be tending to you? Why does this keep happening?"
he asked to himself and wiped angrily at the spot Steve had kissed.

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Steve picked him back up and pinned him to the wall again. "Tell me you'll never hurt anyone ever again and I promise I won't go around town telling everyone how much you begged for me to fuck you harder," he growled and then kissed his other cheek. "I'll tell them all how loud you moaned my name."

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Donnie's arm was still popped out and he couldn't choke out Steve like he wanted to. He didn't figure that this guy was kidding either. He didn't seem the type to be afraid of people knowing that he fucked men and he seemed the type to Donnie to proudly go around announcing whose ass he just had his dick in. Of course, this was just his perception of Steve but he wasn't going to risk it. "Fine," he gritted out. "Fucking fine. I'll leave Barnes alone."

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"Not good enough," Steve said, crowding Donnie and looking like he could murder him. Steve would never, though. "You leave everyone alone. You so much as suspect two men or two women are together, you look the other way and don't say a damn word or do a damn thing."

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Donnie tried backing his face away from Steve but found a wall close behind him. "I'll leave the fags the alone," he said with a snarl. "But if another one kisses me, man, I'm not just gonna let it happen, you hear? That's self-defense, that is, and I got a right to that."

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"You don't lay a hand on them. You tell them to stop. You get out of there. But you don't lay a fucking hand on them or else I'll find you," Steve warned. He shoved Donnie once more for good measure and stalked off to go back to the hospital to check on Bucky.

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Bucky was awake again when Steve came back and Lilly was using the pad of paper to talk to him. Becca looked up to Steve when he came back and noticed his shaking hands and the bruises around his knuckles. She pulled him back out the room before anyone else could notice Steve's hands and she grabbed one and held it up to look at it. "Steve, what did you do?"

---

Although he felt better knowing that Donnie wasn't going to hurt Bucky or anyone else, Steve felt rotten and unhappy. He hated being a bully and yet, he still felt he went too easy on a man who would rather see Bucky dead. He tried to push past Becca but she insisted that he go outside with her. "I made sure Donnie wouldn't hurt anyone," he said as he pulled his hand back.
She gave him a harsh look that mimicked one that Bucky might do and that showed just how much she and Bucky were related and how strong the Barnes genes were. "What did you do?" She asked again. "I only meant for you to have him arrested, I didn't want you to beat him half to death like he did to Bucky."

"Arresting him wouldn't have done any good. I only punched him a few times and dislocated his shoulder. I didn't beat him half as much as he hurt Bucky," Steve said tensely. He crossed his arms and glared for a moment before sighing. "Fighting him didn't work, so I just threatened I'd go around telling everyone he was gay if he hurt anyone else. I'm not proud of it. I just... couldn't have him hurting Bucky anymore - or anyone else."

Becca stared hard at Steve and couldn't hide that she was slightly disappointed in how he handled this. He was an officer of the law after all and could have easily arrested him and let the law do its job instead of going rogue.

"No," Steve said, pointing a finger at her when he saw that look. "Your brother is one of two people left in this world who have been with you through everything. And I'm not taking a risk of letting some homophobic, hateful man take him away."

Sometimes Steve acted similarly to Bucky and Becca wondered if she was the only sane one left of the lot of them. "You have to tell him what you did."

Steve looked back towards the room. "Yeah, now would be the best time. He can't get mad at me if he can't hear what I did."

"That doesn't count," Becca sassed. "Lilly's been writing things out for him for a while and he's been answering back in more complete sentences now than earlier. Hell, you can even just sign to him as best as you can if you want. Or you can wait for him to get better and find out on his own and then you'll have to deal with him being pissed that you didn't tell him first."

"Well, he's done stupider things and I've forgiven him," Steve said. "Listen, I'm not in the mood today to deal with self-righteousness. Are you going to let me go back to my husband or not?" It was rare that Steve got this snippy with Becca.

"Excuse me?" Becca said, once again mirroring Bucky's ways. "That's my brother first and foremost - your husband second. And don't you dare call what he's done stupid. You chose to forgive him and he's going to do that for you too but you have to tell him. What you should be worrying about right
now is how you are going to get me to forgive you. I never pledged to love you through sickness and health or all that shit."

---

Steve let out a bitter laugh. "You'd be first in line to call what he's done stupid, reckless, irresponsible, and whatever else you've already called him." He glared at her. "I don't need your forgiveness. And frankly, I don't give a damn anymore about your approval so don't expect me trying to kiss up to you anymore." Between his argument with Bucky the previous morning, Bucky getting hurt, and his conflicted feelings about beating up Donnie, Steve was emotionally spent. He stormed back into the room and took a seat next to Bucky. He took the pad from Lilly and wrote to Bucky asking if he needed anything.

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Instead of heading back into the room after Steve, Becca started down the hall towards the staircase. She was going to go spend some time in the cafeteria and then see if there were any babies in the NICU that she could watch through the window. She was fucking done with this madness for a while.

Lilly was a little peeved when the pad was taken from her but she moved to go sit by Sarah and let Bucky answer Steve with a solid, "Don't need anything," then he looked around again and asked, "Where's Becca?"

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'Went for a walk, I guess' Steve wrote back. He probably should've been more concerned but he was too angry with her.

Sarah could tell that Steve wasn't good company right now and probably needed to talk alone with Bucky, so she turned to Lilly. "Hey, do you want to go to the gift shop and find something we can give to another family here?"

---

Lilly agreed and slipped her sweater back on since it was slightly cold out in the hospital and took off with Sarah.

Bucky watched them go then focused in on Steve again. "Lilly said… have concussion," he tried his best to say and blinked slowly, "And lesbian nurse?" he asked with a tick of a smile.

---

Steve nodded and then signed 'She is very nice'. Veronica had gone above and beyond for his sake, so being gay had a perk for once. He then signed 'Important' to get Bucky's attention. He might as well get this over with. He wrote down, 'I fought Donnie. He won't be a problem anymore. Becca is pissed.'

---

Bucky read the note slowly and tried to understand what it meant. "How'd you find him?" he asked deliberately, still looking at the paper. "Becca's upset why? What do you mean 'fought'?" There was a strange tonal shift in the buzzing in his ears and it took him a second to realize that his heart monitors beeps were increasing.
Steve grimaced and pointed at the monitors to show Bucky was working himself up. He ducked his head as he wrote, 'Asked around the bars. Pulled him into an alleyway.' He showed Bucky that note while he wrote the next, 'Becca didn't like that I didn't go to the precinct.'

"How bad?" Bucky asked simply and took the paper that said that he went to the bars and held it close to his face. "How bad of a fight?" he repeated more clearly and finally noticed the bruises on Steve's knuckles as he took one of his hands gently.

'He didn't get me,' Steve wrote. 'I punched him. Dislocated his shoulder. He can still walk.' he chewed his bottom lip and wrote, 'Wouldn't promise not to hurt you until I threatened to tell everyone he was gay.' He gave Bucky's hand a small squeeze, hoping for his forgiveness.

Bucky comprehended about half of what Steve said but he got the general concept. Steve had gone to defend him and their relationship and he understood what he had to do even if he wasn't proud of it. Steve was quietly watching Bucky as he read the note and after he was done he made eye contact with Steve and nodded slightly to say, "Good."

When he got Bucky's approval, Steve felt a few tears run down his face. He cupped the sides of Bucky's face and kissed him slowly. He thanked him over and over for his forgiveness even though Bucky wouldn't understand what he was saying. He turned back to write on the paper, 'I know you didn't want to go to the cops. Becca won't see things the same.'

"Where is she?" Bucky asked again and held Steve back from him a little. He was worried about her because he knew how she could get during arguments. She could be a little like Lilly - needing to storm off and hide away - or she could be like Bucky - feeling like everything was her fault and wanting to melt out of existence. "Find Becca?" he asked Steve worriedly. "It's a big hospital."

Steve nodded. "Alright." Before he got up, he picked up the pen and then wrote on one of Bucky's bandages on his arm, 'I love you' and added a little heart before going off to search for Becca. It took a while, but he found her in the cafeteria and sat down next to her. "Bucky wants to see you."

Becca wiped the tears from her face and took another bite of the giant ice cream she had bought. "Did you talk with him about what happened?" she asked and moved a cherry around in the hot fudge. "What did he say?"

Steve had been so goddamned angry with Becca but when he saw that she had been crying, the fight left him. "He said I should've gone to the cops," Steve said, looking away because he was bad at
lying. "But he's willing to forgive me."

---

Becca pushed her ice cream over to Steve and plucked a wrapped plastic spoon from the bin on the table and offered it to him wordlessly. "You two just have to be more careful, Steve. This is now two times that one of you has been hospitalized just for being gay. And that's not even counting the damage Bucky took in high school. That's only two times since you've been together. Which hasn't been a year yet."

---

Steve thanked Becca for sharing her ice cream with him and he unwrapped the spoon so he could have some. "Donnie attacked Bucky out of nowhere. No matter how careful we are, there's so much hate in the world." He took a spoonful of ice cream. "But there's also so much love. Clint stayed with Bucky for almost three hours after he was attacked."

---

"Clint is Bucky's best friend - his only friend," Becca said. "He's an exception, Steve. Donnie used to be Bucky's friend. He cared for him just the same, brought him home after a fight or a bar crawl countless times. He made sure Bucky was safely in bed, sometimes he would crash on the couch in case Bucky tried going back out to the bars." She nodded. "He used to be Bucky's friend," she repeated solemnly.

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Steve sighed softly and patted her back. "It hurts the most when friends aren't who you think they are," he murmured. "Sometimes our best friends are the ones that hurt us most and sometimes, people we thought we hated are actually the kindest." He shrugged. "You have to look for the good in the world."

---

Becca took the ice cream back and ate some more before passing it off so Steve could finish it. She stood with a resigned, "Whatever, Steve. Let's get back to Bucky," and waited for him to join her so they could trudge their way back up to Bucky's room.

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Steve got up and started walking back. "I'm going to always protect him," Steve said as they walked. "God willing, one of these days we won't have to worry about stuff like this anymore."

---

Lilly and Sarah were back with Bucky and Lilly was showing off the candy that Sarah had bought for her while she had a lollipop stuck in the side of her mouth obstructing her words that Bucky couldn't hear anyway. Becca went immediately over to Bucky and gave him a light hug to which he responded, "You okay?"

---

Becca shrugged her shoulders in response. Both Steve and Bucky had been in the hospital for serious injuries within months of each other and this was just the beginning. This wasn't going to be an easy time for any of them. She took the paper and wrote, 'You and Steve have to be more careful.'
Bucky nodded and promised they would be. He motioned for Becca to hug him again and he pulled her in as tight as his body would allow before it hurt.

After a few more minutes of Lilly eating candy and chattering away about nothing, Bucky got Steve's attention and said slowly, "Ask nurse when I can go home."

---

Steve nodded and headed out to find when Bucky could leave. When he returned, he looked a little deflated. He wrote down "Two days, maybe three. They want to monitor your head injury." Which sucked because they were supposed to go to a museum exhibit that would now close before Bucky got out.

---

Bucky blinked a few times then murmured, "Okay, three days." He grabbed for Lilly's hand so she would look at him so he could say, "Just three days," and punctuated it with a little squeeze to her palm. She nodded and tried not to cry again. The girls would need to head back home soon. They still had school to worry about and Bucky wasn't going to be the cause of Becca's first absence.

---

Steve kissed Bucky's cheek and kept them all company until Sarah walked the girls back home. "I am going to have to head to my shift tomorrow. I've already taken off too much work," he mumbled. "But my mom can keep you company."

---

Bucky tried his best to understand what Steve said but he couldn't get it. He signed, 'Notepad' to Steve and pointed down at it. While Steve was out looking for Becca, Lilly had explained to him what the nurse had said about his concussion causing some sensory issues that should resolve as his head healed but he was still scared about it.

---

Steve kept forgetting that Bucky couldn't hear, so he wrote down what he had just told his husband. He worked his fingers through Bucky's hair and then leaned down to kiss his forehead apologetically.

---

Bucky read the note and nodded slightly. "I'll be fine alone," he said, "I have the lesbian nurse," he added with a smile.

They sat together quietly for a few minutes before Bucky decided he needed to address the argument they had had before he stormed out to go to work. 'Steve, I'm sorry for the fight.' He signed and then said, "Argument, yesterday," in case Steve didn't get what he was saying.

---

Steve's features softened and he brushed their lips together. He then wrote back, 'I'm sorry, too.' He sighed heavily and added, 'I need to stop trying to change your lives so much.' It wasn't gaining him any more respect anyway.
"Need to just work together more," Bucky said with a weak smile. He was feeling really tired and he pressed his hand to Steve's with as much strength as he could as a goodbye and said, "I need sleep."

Steve nodded his head and pressed their lips together one more time. He fluffed Bucky's pillow and then tucked him in so he could sleep. "I love you," he said firmly then touched the bandage he wrote it on. "I love you, Bucky."
During the remainder of his stay at the hospital, Bucky had become acquainted with Veronica and they had spent several hours talking back and forth with Veronica using the notepad. Mostly they discussed their partners and Bucky explained what had happened with Donnie to land him in the hospital in the first place. On the day that he was allowed to go home, both girls were at school and Steve was at work. Sarah came to the hospital to bring Bucky home and Veronica took her lunch break at the same time so she could help get him back safely.

---

Steve felt awful that he couldn't bring Bucky home and greet him, but there wasn't anything he could've done about it. Steve came home a few hours later and he rushed over to Bucky and wrapped his arms around him. "I'm so happy to see you home, Baby."

---

Bucky had been staying put on the couch since he got home and Sarah had promised to stay with him until Steve got back. She had just finished making him a snack when Steve arrived. Bucky still didn't hear everything perfectly but it was at least good enough that he could understand the words if he took a second to think about them. "How was work?" he asked Steve and leaned against him.

---

"Long," Steve said and wrapped his arm around Bucky’s shoulders to snuggle him close. He kissed his temple and gave him a concerned look. "Dinner?" he asked, not sure if Bucky wanted something cooked specifically.

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"Anything," Bucky answered. The girls came home from school a few minutes later and Lilly yelped when she saw Bucky and went to the couch to curl up next to him. "Easy, Lil," he said, still in a bunch of pain. Becca came over and kissed his head before heading to the kitchen to help Steve cook.

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Steve wanted to spend more time with Bucky but the girls got home sooner than he thought and they were hungry. When Becca came into the kitchen to help, Steve asked, "How was school today?"

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Becca shrugged with a frown, "Mine was fine. Passed a test, got a paper back - I got a ninety-seven percent on it." She turned around and leaned against the kitchen counter and stared at Lilly then looked to Steve. "Ask Lilly why she's limping."

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When she mentioned Lilly limping, concern crossed Steve’s face. He pretended that he had to go get something from his room but stopped as he passed Lilly. "Hey, Kiddo, what happened to your leg?"
Lilly, who was still cuddled up next to Bucky, looked from him to Steve. It was obvious Bucky hadn't understood what Steve had asked her so she tilted her head towards Steve and whispered in resignation. "I was fighting this kid and I was doing really well but he pushed me into a snow bank and I twisted my ankle."

---

"Why were you fighting with him?" Steve asked, taking a seat next to the two of them. "Does this kid usually give you trouble?" He gave Bucky a look that promised he would explain when they were done talking.

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Lilly licked her lips nervously then looked to Becca for help. Becca came over and gestured for her to go on. "He's in Becca's class. His dad is friends with Donnie Manix. He overheard them talking about us and he tried picking on Becca saying that our family was a bunch of queers. She was doing fine until he said it would've been better for Bucky to join our parents in the cemetery. Then I had to step in cause Becca can't fight."

---

Steve's face fell and it drained of color as he looked over to Bucky briefly. He couldn't imagine losing Bucky. He reached out and gave Lilly's hand a squeeze. "You shouldn't have to fight anyone. Especially boys older than you are. But I'm proud you stood up for us." He let go and sighed. "There's going to be a lot of mean people. It may be best to keep your head down so you won't get so hurt. Can I get you some ice?"

---

"The fucks going on?" Bucky asked as usual. He got that something was wrong with Lilly but no one was speaking loud and clear enough for him to understand what it was. Becca went ahead and fetched some ice for Lilly's ankle and Bucky watched her intently. "What happened to Lilly?"

---

"Fight," Steve said to Bucky. He wrote down in a notebook, ‘Donnie's friend's son was instigating Becca and Lilly.’ He let out a heavy sigh and patted Lilly's shoulder. "You don't have to fight for us. You know that, right?"

---

Lilly looked to Steve sternly and then held Bucky's hand. "Yes I do," she said with conviction and nodded at him. "I was fighting for Becca and Bucky and you and me. This is my family, dammit. No one gets taken away."

---

"And what if something happens to you because of that? Your brother and sister and I don't want you to get taken away from us because some jerk was saying bad stuff," Steve explained.

---

Bucky looked on and occasionally took the papers that Becca handed him with explanations as to what the two of them were saying. He spoke up then, "How about if you have a problem at school you go to a teacher or come tell me or Steve when you get home, okay?"
"Like that'll do any good," Lilly huffed, giving a shake of her head so Bucky would know right away that she disagreed.

Steve let out a sigh and nudged her gently. "Today it's a twisted ankle. Tomorrow you could end up like Bucky. We don't want that for you."

Everything was tense. Lilly was pissed because all she did was try to defend Becca at school. She thought she had done a good job but now it seemed like no one even cared that she was willing and strong enough to fight for her family. "Fine," she spit out, "I'll just leave you and Bucky to fight for us. You both have such a good track record of coming out of things perfectly fine after all." She sassed and then stormed off to her room taking Raphael with her.

Steve grimaced and ran his fingers nervously through his hair before getting up and going to his room to grab a small spray can. He knocked on Lilly's door before walking in. "Let me talk to you for a minute," he said softly.

Lilly glared at him when he entered and held Raph close to her chest. "I was just trying to help Becca. She isn't a fighter," she defended but let Steve come into her room and close the door. "What do you want?"

"I know you were, Kiddo. I know you were looking out for your family." He sat down next to her and held out the little can. "This is pepper spray. This should never, ever be your first line of defense. But if someone harasses you and Becca and you can't get an adult to help you, this is how you get them to stop without getting yourself hurt."

Lilly took the can tentatively and examined it. She could get on board with having pepper spray. She would just threaten dumbass kids to back off by showing it to them as a warning. "Thanks..." she mumbled. "Do you have one for Becca in case I'm not around?"

"I only have one on me. But I can bring another home after work tomorrow. But I'm serious - you may get in trouble for having this at school. But it's legal for you to carry it everywhere else," Steve said. "You can't abuse having this, even if you're just threatening someone."

Lilly pursed her lips and nodded. "I'll be careful with it. I promise." She handed the cat to Steve so she could go put the pepper spray securely in a pouch in her backpack and then returned to take Raphael back. "Thanks, Steve. I'm sorry I yelled."
"It's alright, Lil," he said. "I know your heart was in the right place and it's no different from what I would've done." He gave Raphael a kiss and then passed him back to her. "I love you, Monster. Please be safe." He headed back out to check on Becca and Bucky.

---

Bucky was lying with his legs propped up on the coffee table and leaning back against the couch. Becca was braiding his hair and talking to him about her day loud enough so he could get bits and pieces of it. When she saw Steve she said, "And Steve and I are going to finish making dinner. We went with tacos tonight. Hopefully, Lilly will eat it."

---

Steve kissed Bucky's cheek and made sure he had snacks and water available before he went back to finish up dinner with Becca. He called for Lilly and had them all gathered around the table. "So I toasted all of the taco shells a little in butter and herbs to give it extra flavor," he explained.

---

Lilly stared at them and picked one up to sniff it. "Lilly, just try it," Becca said grumpily and helped Bucky get food on his plate.

Bucky said, "Pray, Steve," mostly to remind his sisters to wait for Steve to do his thing before they ate the food that Steve put time into making every day. Bucky was going to do his best to make sure he and his sisters both showed Steve a little more gratitude and respect for all he did.

---

Steve gave Bucky an appreciative smile and then gave a quick prayer, thanking God for making sure they made it to the table as a family and then asking him to look over Becca and Lilly at school. He then gave them the go ahead to eat. He gave a thumbs up at Bucky with a hopeful look to ask if Bucky liked the food.

---

"Yes, it's good, you giant dope," Bucky said to Steve and quieted down so he could eat. After he finished he got up and went to the fridge to grab a paper from under the magnets and hand it to Steve. "Veronica left her number in case we need anything. She also wants us over for dinner sometime."

---

Steve got ridiculously excited over that. "Oh my god, we get to do a couples dinner?" He beamed. Steve worried that it would be too long before they could have dinner and hang around with another couple. "As soon as you're feeling better, we have to go over."

---

Bucky didn't get everything he said, but, clearly, Steve was excited at the prospect that they might have some new friends since neither of them really had any except Clint and Natasha. "She also said thank you for the information about Father Frank."

---

Lilly wrote what Steve said down for Bucky since Steve was too excited to remember that Bucky
couldn't hear him so well anymore. "I'm so glad - oh..." he signed 'Very happy. Veronica marry maybe?"

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"I mean, she said that she wasn't sure since neither of them are in the church," Bucky answered and signed at the same time so Steve could learn while they talked in case it came in handy later. "I didn't get her girlfriend’s name, did you?"

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Steve was always impressed with how much sign language Bucky knew. It was far better than his own. 'Laura,' Steve spelled out. ‘Also nurse.’ Steve had to spell out ‘nurse’ as well because he forgot the word in sign language.

---

Bucky signed by tapping an 'N' letter on his wrist to show 'taking a pulse' which was the sign for nurse. "Laura. Okay. Then I guess we can go to Veronica and Laura's sometime soon if you want to."

---

Steve let out a huff when Bucky showed him because it was so obvious and he couldn't believe he forgot that one. 'Yes,' he signed back. 'Do you want to?' Steve was all ready to make new friends but Bucky maybe didn't share the same sentiment.

---

Bucky shrugged and took a drink of his water. "If you want to, I will go," he answered and watched Becca start to clean up the table. Bucky wasn't good with making friends. He didn't really like sharing or talking about anything important or meaningful. Any friends he ever had had been surface friends who hardly actually knew him. They just saw his charm and humor and wanted to be around him occasionally. Clint was the only one who actually knew him.

---

Steve kind of took it that Bucky was only tolerating the meet-up for his sake. He could live with that. He would just have to hang out alone in the future if Bucky didn't want to go. 'Great!' he signed back. He leaned over the table to kiss him. 'Can you play guitar later?' Steve asked in sign.

---

"Guess I can," Bucky said. "I won't be able to hear if I'm messing it up but I can try." He let his family clear up after dinner while he went to huddle up in bed and rest. After a while, the girls went to get ready for bed and Steve came into their room after having made sure that everything was done for the night.

---

Steve was careful as he laid down next to Bucky. He missed being able to sleep next to his husband and was quick to wrap his arms around him. He brushed his lips against Bucky's cheek and signed 'Gave Lilly....' then he spelled out 'pepper spray' before signing ‘protect’. 
Bucky nodded and snuggled against Steve, careful not to disturb his injuries. "Did you tell her how to use it?" he asked, "She's never had pepper spray before." Bucky was grateful that Steve thought to do that. He wondered why they hadn't done that before. Other than the school not being too pleased about kids carrying pepper spray, it wouldn't have been a problem.

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Steve shook his head. 'Tomorrow' he signed, but the look on his face showed that he had a talk with her about not abusing the stuff. 'Kiss me?' Steve signed then leaned his cheek over for Bucky.

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Bucky gingerly took Steve's face in his hands and pulled him in for a gentle kiss. "I love you," he said and nestled his head against Steve's neck. "Let's not go to the hospital again for at least a year. Sound like a plan?"

---

Steve hummed in approval at the kiss and worked his hands through Bucky's hair. "Agreed," he said. "Especially when..." Steve spelled out 'Seneca' and then signed 'fishing'.

---

"How long until it's warm enough for us to go?" Bucky asked and pet a hand down Steve's chest lightly. He was getting tired of the cold. Not that he wasn't used to it, and it didn't really bother him too much but he was just ready for it to be warmer and for his walk to work to not be barricaded by snow banks on every block.

---

"August," Steve joked. Ideally, they could go in late April or early May if Bucky wanted warm weather. He picked up Bucky's hand and kissed the back of his knuckles. He signed to him, 'Will stop changing house. Will let you control'. He still felt bad about their argument.

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Bucky sighed and shook his head. "No, Baby, that's not what I wanted. I just want you and I to work together on things. We can set up an organization plan that you like that is also feasible for me and the girls to follow. They just need direction but not passive suggestions like backpack hooks. We just need to get it together and then keep it together, okay?"

---

Steve nodded his head. After a moment of hesitation, he signed, 'So I can still cook?' Steve loved making nutritious meals for them all. It made him feel good and like he was contributing more.

---

"Yes, you can cook." Bucky chuckled. "Just be the type of chef who allows cereal or pancakes for dinner every so often, okay?" He reached for his pain medicine from his nightstand and took it before sinking down into his pillow. "Alright, I'm so beat, Steve. I need sleep."
Tonight, Bucky and Steve were going to go to Veronica and Laura’s for dinner. After about two weeks, they finally found the time that lined up with all of their schedules. Between a cop, two nurses, and the only reliable closer at the record store, it was a small miracle that they found time off all together. Steve messed with his hair and put on his best button-down, wanting to make a good impression on their new friends.

---

Bucky was mostly moving around and functioning back to normal now. He could basically hear fine again but everything was just a little muffled and he and Steve still signed while they talked out of habit. He watched Steve fuss with himself and rolled his eyes a bit. "Babe, I don't think they are going to care what you look like," he said as he shuffled through Steve's cardigans to find one he wanted to wear over the blue button down that Steve told him he had to wear. Bucky didn't bother doing anything with his hair and just brushed it a little so it wouldn't be in the way. Becca had offered to braid it again but Bucky preferred it in his face.

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"But this is our first couples dinner. We have to look presentable," Steve defended. "We can't be the sloppy gay couple. We have to be the handsome, well-dressed ones. You got the handsome down, so I have to get the well-dressed." He adjusted with Bucky's hair a little. "The cardigan you're looking for is already hanging on the doorknob."

---

"Stop messing with my hair," Bucky huffed and shook out his head so his hair fell back in place. He grabbed the dark grey cardigan and slipped it on. "What if I don't want to play into homosexual stereotypes? What if I want to be the dirty gay hippie that you know and love? I mean Veronica's already seen me in a hospital gown and broken to bits."

---

"Well, you had an excuse for looking like shit back then. Now you've got nothing but pure laziness to justify your dirty hippie look." Steve smiled and pecked Bucky's lips to show he didn't mean anything by it. "Besides, don't we kind of not fit the stereotype anyway?"

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"We definitely don't fit the norm, no," Bucky agreed and adjusted his shirt a little. "Not that it's better one way or the other." He went to look at himself in the mirror and felt out of place in the collared shirt. He usually wore sweaters and t-shirts but never collared shirts. He felt too closed up and it was bugging him. But Steve had wanted him to wear this blue button shirt so he had to just deal with it.

---

Steve thought that the shirt looked gorgeous on his husband and it really brought out his eyes. But when he had a good look at how uncomfortable Bucky was wearing it, he sighed and walked up to hug him from behind. He kissed at his neck as he unbuttoned the shirt. "Fine, wear what makes you happy."
Bucky flicked Steve's fingers away and started buttoning the shirt back up. "No, I'll wear it," he resigned and pet his hand through Steve's hair. "I won't be pleased about it but I do like how you keep looking at me in it. And you just have to promise you'll take it off me when we get home."

---

"You just look so good in it," Steve hummed. "Shows off that chest of yours, unlike those loose shirts you wear." He nibbled at Bucky's ear and promised, "I'll take everything off you when we get home." He gave Bucky's ass an appreciative squeeze before swatting it to get him moving.

---

Bucky walked slower than Steve to Veronica and Laura's apartment. He was slightly limping still and his ribs still shook painfully when he breathed. They had to make a couple stops on the way so Bucky could sit down on a snowy bench and rest for a second. Once they got there, they were greeted by one very enthusiastic Veronica and a slightly shyer but still welcoming Laura.

---

Steve was patient and let Bucky rest whenever he needed to. He didn't rush him up and when they arrived a little late, Steve said, "Sorry we're late. I kind of took too long getting my hair right." He gave them both a hug hello and he introduced Bucky to Laura. "Your place is so nice. I love the art."

---

Bucky shook both their hands and looked around. While Steve was distracted by talking with Veronica about the art, Bucky searched around for a record player and eventually found it. He was looking it over when Laura came over and showed off her collection. It was decidedly much less than Bucky's but she had some good stuff.

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Steve chattered with Veronica, geeking out a little over art styles until she guided him over to the record player where Bucky and Laura were. "So how did you two meet?" Veronica asked, placing an arm around her girlfriend.

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Bucky nodded at the David Bowie albums that Laura had before easing them back into her record holder and moving to stand by Steve. "My sister ran away and Steve found her lost in New York," he said simply and gestured to Steve to give input if he liked. Steve was much more excited to be here with another couple and would probably be more apt to give both their life stories if asked.

---

"Was that the younger one who was swearing up and down the hallway to get you some food?" Veronica asked with an amused smile. She had liked Lilly even if she was a bit pushy.

Steve nodded his head. "She's a lot like her brother. She's real passionate about what she cares about and likes to swear."

---

"Both my sisters are that way. One is loud with her passion and one is quietly intense about it." Bucky pocketed his hands and leaned a little closer into Steve's space. "But, yes, we met because
Lilly decided to take a day trip in New York instead of go to school and then I came barreling into the station and right into Steve."

---

Steve wrapped an arm proudly around Bucky. "I drove them all home and Bucky looked like he hadn't had a night to himself in years, so I took him out to dinner," Steve said. "We didn't know for sure that the other was gay at the start of it. We knew by the end of it."

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"Well, I had reason to be confused," Bucky said. "You were either staring at me so much because you were gay or because you are a cop and it's just habit to analyze someone like that. But I dropped hints for you that you didn't pick up either. I mentioned Disco Dandy's, the gay club downtown, and he didn't even blink so I figured it was a lost cause."

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"I was raised Catholic, so going to a gay club didn't even cross my mind. While it's flattering that Bucky thought I knew the city so well enough to know all the gay bars around, that wasn't the case," Steve joked.

Veronica laughed a little. "It's nice that your mom is so accepting of you two, with her being religious and all that."

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Bucky nodded. "Yeah, she's pretty wonderful. She helps with the girls a lot and it's nice having a parent around again since mine are both gone." He gestured to the two of the women and returned the favor to ask, "How did the two of you meet?"

---

Laura gave Bucky a sympathetic look when he mentioned both of his parents were dead. "We met in nursing school," Veronica said. "I thought I was straight at the time but after I got dumped by my boyfriend, I got really close with Laura and we've been together ever since."

---

Laura gently nudged Veronica and said, "Ronnie, I think dinner should be ready now if we want to move this to the table."

Bucky noticed the nickname that Laura had for her girlfriend and he really liked it. It was kind of like how he wasn't 'James' to his sisters or Steve or Clint. Veronica was probably 'Ronnie' to their friends and family too.

---

Steve went to the table with the other two and couldn't stop the smile on his face. It felt so nice to have a couple's dinner and go out with Bucky where he could be openly affectionate. "I'm so glad you ended up being our nurse," Steve said. "I'm sure you know what it's like, but people who know we're gay aren't always the nicest. I was shot on duty and out of work for months cause my coworker locked me in a raid to die. How've you two managed for so long without getting into trouble?"
"Well," Veronica said and shrugged. "We just haven't told anyone out right about us. Two women living together is less 'out of the ordinary' then two men living together. People just assume we are sisters or spinsters or something." She paused and slipped a hand over Laura's, "Our families know, mine was understanding but Laura's family wasn't so much. They haven't talked to her since she told them she was with me."

---

Steve frowned and then said, "Well... I know it's not the same, but my mom loves having big, family gatherings. And you two are welcome over at any holiday." If their place was too small to fit them, he knew his mom would be happy to share her dinner table with them.

---

Bucky shot a curious look to Steve quickly. He really was such a welcoming guy. Which was pretty different from Bucky who could be charming but rarely invited people over for things like dinner or family gatherings. He wondered what it would be like once they had a house and Steve was a stay-at-home dad. Bucky would probably come home to hoards of housewives and their babies having a play date.

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Steve caught the look and gave him an apologetic glance as if to ask if it was all right if he had invited them. "Bucky can be talkative if you ask him about music. Or if you tell him that The Clash aren't as good as The Police," he said to the women, nudging Bucky lightly.

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"Steve just likes The Police because he is one. He knows their music isn't as good as the Ramones or The Clash or The Kinks or David Bowie or honestly most anyone," Bucky sassed back at Steve and took Laura's lead and started to eat. "I am sorry I'm not much company, though. I'm still in some pain so I get tired quickly and my hearing is still sort of muffled so I might not understand at first."

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Veronica smiled politely. "We're not huge music fans, but we like to listen to some stuff," she explained. "As for the pain, is there anything either of us can get you to help?" she asked. "I can probably make a few over the counter painkillers find their way to you."

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"No, I'm fine, honestly," Bucky assured her. "Thank you. You were very helpful at the hospital and even though I was out of it, I'm told by my family that you were very patient and understanding with us and especially dealing with Lilly. I'm just ready to be back to normal again. I made Steve promise that we won't be back in the hospital for at least a year."

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Steve took a few more bites of his food before leaning in to kiss Bucky's cheek lightly. "Yeah. We have to stay healthy for our honeymoon. And I think his sisters have dealt with enough of their family in a hospital to last a lifetime."
Bucky nodded in agreement. Between the last two hospital stays, his attempted suicide, their grandmother’s death, and when Lilly had the flu really badly, the Barnes’ had spent much too much time in the hospital in the past four years. After they all finished eating, they move to the coffee table to sit and chat for a bit. Veronica brought out a nice bottle of wine and offered to pour some for them all. Bucky looked to Steve hopefully and bit his lip waiting to see if he was allowed to drink or not.

Steve gave Bucky a small nod to show that he was allowed a little. Some wine with friends wouldn't hurt. "Thank you so much for having us over, by the way," Steve said. "The dinner was so good. It’s weird to not be the one cooking. I usually make everything at our place.”

Bucky gratefully took the wine and had a few generous sips of it before setting it down on the coffee table so he didn't down the whole glass in front of their hosts. ”That's the real reason why I keep Steve around. I don't like cooking and I'm no good at it anyway."

Laura shrugged. "It's a lot of work and a little over rated," she said. "I like the taste of a home cooked meal, though. So sometimes it's worth it."

Steve stared at Bucky warmly and decided, "It's always worth it for me. I love providing. And now that I have three people who need good meals, I get to do it a lot."

They chatted on a while more and Bucky and Laura both went through about two glasses of wine each. After about two hours, Bucky checked the clock and decided it was about time they head home. The girls were probably not in bed and they needed to be and he was getting tired but he really wanted to fuck Steve before the night was over. They hadn't done it since Bucky was injured because he hurt too much before but he knew he could take it today. "You think we should head back?" he asked Steve quietly and pointed at the clock, "Ten bucks says Lilly isn't showered yet."

Steve was having a good time out but he didn't want to force Bucky to stay any longer than he wanted to. "Yeah, they'll probably need some taking care of," he agreed. He smiled over at the two women. "He's such a good older brother. I'm sorry we have to leave so soon, but we really had a good time today."

"Time out by ourselves or with friends is definitely limited when I have two kids to take care of," Bucky said and shook Veronica and Laura's hands before heading to the door, waiting for Steve.

Steve gave both women a hug and promised to keep in touch. He left their place with a big smile on his face. "Aren't they so nice, Bucky? We finally have a couple we can have game nights with and stuff. Maybe we can even do double dates and it'll look like we're straight."
Bucky gave Steve a sideways glance as they walked down the street in the dark of the city lit only by dull street lamps. "I don't know if any of us could act straight while we have our partners sitting right next to us on a date. You stare at me too much and Veronica likes touching Laura at all times." He chuckled and didn't notice that he was still clutching tightly to Steve's hand as they went.

Steve brushed his thumb over Bucky's hand. He wanted to hold it the whole way home, but he also didn't want to see Bucky in the hospital again. He reluctantly let go. "We could still try," he said. "I think Becca and Lilly would love to have them around. Nothing like having good female role models in their life."

When his hand was dropped, Bucky apologized quietly, finally realizing that he hadn't let go when they got outside. He missed Steve's warm touch immediately and it made him angry all over again. "Good role models? Steve, we hardly know them. They seem nice but we don't really know what they are like. Besides, the girls have your mother and Natasha as the women in their lives already."

"They're two nurses," Steve said. "And they've been together for years. They've got to be doing something right. The more role models, the better. Natasha and my mom are amazing, but you can never have too many good influences."

Bucky thought for a few minutes as they walked. "You know I just worry about them getting attached to people," Bucky relented and held open the door to their apartment building. He trudged up the stairs behind Steve and wondered if he was ever not going to fret about his sisters and try to minimize potential hurt and heartache as much as possible.

"You can't protect them from life, Buck," Steve said softly. "They're going to make friends with plenty of people they won't talk to in a year's time. What matters are the people that stay." When they got into the house, Lilly and Becca were failing at an attempt of making chocolate lava cake.

Bucky took in the mess of flour and cocoa powder and lots of goopy baking utensils strewn about the kitchen. He also noticed Raphael huddled in the corner of the counter top with what appeared to be molasses on his paws that he was desperately trying to lick off. "Jesus fucking Christ," Bucky breathed and rolled his eyes. He slowly took off Steve's cardigan and tossed it on the couch. He rolled up the sleeves of the button down and dove into the mess to start cleaning up. "Why the fuck did you think making a dessert while no one was home was a good idea?"

The mess the girls made was gigantic. But it was also endearing to Steve - it reminded him how much he loved his home and his family. Becca looked up from her mixing bowl. "I borrowed a recipe book from the library and wanted to try it out. How was I supposed to know baking powder and baking soda wasn't the same thing?" she defended. Steve grabbed some wet wipes and began to
clean off the cat.

"Look at the label, Becs." Bucky sighed and shoved a finger against the bag of baking soda. "They do two different things. You're the one who's good at science, you should know." He tossed everything he could directly into the sink and passed a wet cloth to Lilly to start cleaning up the counter. "Just get the counter and the floor clean then get yourselves to bed. I'll wash all this shit before I go to sleep."

"But I'm not done baking," Becca protested.

Steve patted her arm and promised, "I'll help you two bake a cake next time, but it's late right now."

Becca scoffed as she turned to clean up. "You two are just rushing us off to bed so you can fuck."

Bucky let out a humorless laugh, "Well, thanks to your mess that I'll be up for a while cleaning, whatever plans I might have had with Steve are getting pushed back or maybe canceled since I'm already really tired and in pain... and now cranky, too."

"No one's asking you to clean it, Bucky, I'm capable of cleaning up everything myself," Becca snipped at him. "You've made messes worse than this that I've cleaned up." At this point, Steve ushered Lilly to the bathroom so she could wash up. He didn't want her to deal with her siblings fighting, either.

"I'm trying to make sure you get to bed at a reasonable time so you can wake up and get to school and won't ruin your perfect attendance that you care about so much." Bucky's voice rose as he spoke and he looked around quickly and found that Steve and Lilly had both disappeared. "And what messes are you even talking about? You haven't had to clean me up in a long while."

"Just cause I haven't had to clean you up in a while doesn't mean I haven't had to do it ever," she argued as she hastily wiped down the table. "I can handle going to bed late now and then. It's not like I'm out partying. I'm baking in my own fucking home."

Bucky was grumpily scrubbing the dishes and trying not to get anything on Steve's shirt. "It's fine that you want to bake a cake with Lilly but you know I don't like when you use the oven when no one is around. And just because you can stay up late sometimes doesn't mean you should on school nights. And Lilly for sure shouldn't be up late. It's hard enough getting her up in the morning as it is."

"Whatever," Becca said moodily before stomping out of the kitchen.

Steve got back and opened his mouth to tell her not to disrespect Bucky like that but he bit his tongue
and put a hand on Bucky's shoulder. "Go rest. I'll take care of this."

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Bucky watched Becca go and sunk into Steve for comfort for a second. "If we do it together it'll be done faster," he said and dried his hands so he could unbutton the nice blue shirt and drape it on a chair. He was just in a white A-shirt and his nice grey pants and he looked sort of like his father when he came home after a long day and wanted to lounge around.

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Steve kissed Bucky’s neck and went back to cleaning up with his husband. "Should I have told Becca not to give you an attitude?" He wanted to support Bucky but not step on their toes.

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"No, it's fine," Bucky sighed. "She wouldn't have listened anyway. Do you think I shouldn't have gotten so mad about all this?" he asked and gestured at the mess. "I mean, they know not to use the oven when we aren't here and Lilly needs to get to bed earlier than Becca."

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"I think you have reason to be upset. Using the oven can be dangerous and she should've been more mindful of their bed time," Steve said. "But it is rare that Becca gets to do the things she wants to around here. It's usually Lilly who drives what we do with them."

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"What should we do then?" Bucky asked and handed Steve things to dry. "Let Becca direct her own bedtime from now on? I mean it's hard to get Lilly to back down when she wants to do something so I don't know what would be a good solution."

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"Becca’s a teenager and she’s in high school," Steve said. "I don't think we should give in to her but I guess she's old enough to make the right decision or live with the consequences of her bad ones. We can tell Lilly that Becca earned this freedom and if she wants it too, she has to be just as responsible."

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"I guess," Bucky said and drained the sink after cleaning the last utensil. "She's the one who wants to keep her perfect attendance so I doubt she will be irresponsible with her sleep schedule." He leaned his chest against Steve's back as he finished drying the last of it. "And we can just do something else for Lilly maybe... I don't know."

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Steve reached back to play with Bucky's hair gently. "We will figure something out," he said. "You've dealt with a lot worse on your own. I'm sure we will come up with an even better solution together. But right now, I'm more interested in taking off the rest of your clothes." Raphael then let out a huge, hungry meow at them.
Bucky picked up Raph and scratched behind his ears before going to dig into his food bag to get him some more to eat. "Maybe not more responsibility for Lilly. Today was her turn to feed him," he said and set the cat down in front of his bowl. He then slipped his hands into the back pockets of Steve's pants and pulled their crotchets flush together. "Sorry I already started undressing. Just didn't want your nice stuff to get dirty."

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Steve wrapped his arms firmly around Bucky's shoulders and leaned down to kiss him slowly. "Well, I think I can forgive you so long as you let me take the rest off."

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"I'll allow it," Bucky said and started walking backwards toward their room. "Did you have fun tonight with Veronica and Laura?" he asked as he opened the door so he could push Steve inside and towards the bed.

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Steve nodded his head and slid his hands down to grab Bucky's ass before he was pushed down on to the mattress. "Yeah. I like being able to show you off to everyone as the best husband ever."

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"I was doing that same thing with you." Bucky gave Steve a cheesy grin and straddled him on the bed. "You know what I realized, Steve. I got hurt right after we got married so we haven't had sex since the morning in the hotel. That's nearly three weeks now. And the blow job doesn't count since I cried."

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Steve carefully felt up Bucky's sides, wanting to touch him but still be mindful of his injuries. "Well, I'm planning on changing that," he said. "But no crying this time, got it?" He slowly started to lift Bucky's shirt up, kissing at the exposed skin.

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"I promise. No crying." Bucky kissed the side of Steve's head and brushed his hand against Steve's short hair. "I want your dick in me," he whispered into Steve's ear and gripped at his shoulders. He knew it wasn't the most graceful way to say it, but he was a little desperate. "It's been way too long and my body isn't in as much pain anymore so I can take it."

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Steve let out a little moan and nodded. "Yes," he agreed. "I wanted you so bad. Now I know what it was like when you had to wait for me to heal up when I was hurt." He unbuttoned Bucky's pants and started to take them off. "I want to have you on your back so I can kiss you the whole time."

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"Put me wherever you want me." Bucky nodded enthusiastically and lifted up off of Steve so he could get his pants all the way off. "I'm all yours, Baby, every bit of me." He rolled back onto the bed and pulled Steve down with him into a kiss. He was still a little bruised up and he had to move Steve's hands off his torso so he didn't dig into the sensitive light purple bruises scattered on his rib cage.
Steve stripped Bucky down to nothing and sucked dark marks onto his body to try to mask the bruises and such all over him. "All mine, Sweetheart. Gonna fuck you real nice. Make up for all that time I didn't take advantage of having such a handsome husband."

Bucky shuttered underneath Steve's touch and made little gentle moans with every kiss and suck from him. "You know what makes me angry? Somebody other than you got to leave marks on me and there's nothing I can do to get rid of them quicker."

"Well, no one is allowed to lay a hand on you ever again," Steve growled softly, reaching down to stroke Bucky's cock lazily. "Or else I'll strike the fear of God into them for even thinking about harming you."

"Oh my fucking god, Steve, you don't know how much I love when you talk like that." Bucky could feel his dick hardening and he started to rut up into Steve's hand as he stroked him. "I love when you get possessive and just a little irrational. I love that you would do anything to protect me and you are my perfect brave officer."

Steve wouldn't say anything that wasn't true. So he kept talking. "I'll protect you and your sisters with my life, Bucky. There's not a person on this earth who can hurt any of you and get away with it." He moved lower and lower on Bucky's body until he could take his cock into his mouth and start to bob his head along the length of it. He reached for the lube in the drawer and poured some on his fingers so he could tease Bucky's hole.

Bucky eagerly spread his legs wide open for Steve and closed his eyes to pay attention to the feeling of his cock inside Steve's mouth. He silently waited for Steve to start fingering him and he took in rhythmic, patient breaths as he hooked his legs up over Steve's back.

Steve wasted no time pushing his fingers into Bucky to work him open and ready for his cock. He gave Bucky a bit of a messier blowjob than usual, wet and desperate and barely coming up for air because he missed this so damn much. When he couldn't take waiting anymore, he threw off the rest of his clothes and started to coat his dick in lube.

Bucky bit his lip and watched Steve strip his clothes off with excited heavy-lidded eyes. "I missed your body all over mine," he said, "I missed your tongue on me and your fingers stretching me and I miss that beautiful cock of yours fucking me like nothing else ever mattered."

"Fuck, I love you," Steve breathed out. He claimed Bucky's lips in a searing kiss as he slid into his
hole. He moaned into Bucky's mouth and started a slow, deep rhythm to fuck his husband thoroughly.

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Bucky relaxed his muscles and let Steve rock in and out of him methodically. He locked eyes with Steve and just watched the subtle shifts in his expression each time he pulled out and eased back in again. Bucky was so distracted that he gasped sharply when Steve sped up ever so slightly and hit his prostate a few times.

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"You're so beautiful," Steve said in awe as he fucked Bucky smoothly. He reached down to hold one of Bucky's hands above his head. "Just look at you. And you're all mine, Gorgeous."

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"Stop it." Bucky grinned and looked away, "It's just the beard. It's new and exciting." He reached down with his one free hand and jerked himself off while Steve fucked him.

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"It's all of you," Steve corrected. "It's your beard and your perfect body and your charming personality and your gorgeous eyes," Steve rattled on and on, kissing him in between each praise and letting out little moans as he went.

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"God, I haven't come in a long while and I really don't know if I'll last, Baby," Bucky said desperately and moved with Steve.

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Steve licked a long stripe up Bucky's neck and gave him a gentle bite by his jaw. "Let me feel you come, Baby. Want to feel your ass squeeze around my dick."

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Bucky stroked himself faster and moved his hips up and down. Steve went harder, too, and did what he could to mash up against Bucky's prostate to help him feel good. "I love this feeling. Love being attached to you and connected. And I love having you inside me and having you take me apart and-

" Bucky came unexpectedly and his ass clamped down around Steve's cock as he shot his load over his fingers and stomach.

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Steve drank in the sight of his husband, loving when he looked all hot and desperate like this. He pushed in deeper, muscles tensing at the peak of every thrust and he rolled his hips up each time to hit that sweet spot. He continued to fuck Bucky for a few more minutes before he spilled hot spurts of come inside of him.

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Immediately after Steve came, Bucky flipped them so he could lay on top of him for a post fuck make out session which elicited a soft growl of approval from Steve. He felt his come squish
between their bodies and it was warm and pleasant on his skin. "Steve, I love you. You know that, right? You know I'll never leave you?" he asked hurriedly between kisses. Lately, Bucky had been feeling insecure and scared that something bad would happen to them again and he wanted to do what he could to assure the both of them that nothing could take them away from each other.

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Steve dragged his nails lightly over Bucky's back and nibbled at his bottom lip. "I know, Baby, I know," he said. "I know you're going to be with me through every sunny day and every rainstorm."

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Bucky nodded and went back to licking into Steve's mouth. They kissed for a short while longer before Bucky moved off of him to cuddle up to his side. "Hold me," he demanded and pulled Steve's arms around him. "I was thinking," he began nervously, "that tomorrow before I go to work in the evening, we could go visit my parents."

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Steve snuggled close to Bucky and tucked Bucky's head into his chest. "I think that's a wonderful idea, Buck," he said softly. "I really wanted to tell them we were getting married, but I wanted you to be the one to give them the news."

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"I just..." Bucky grasped onto Steve's hand and held it tightly. "After hearing about Laura's parents disowning her, I felt like I should get the fucking courage to go talk to my parents' graves. They can't hear me anyway and they can't be disappointed with me for what I've done so I need to go see them. They need to hear from me what's been happening - both the good and the bad."

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"It's a big step for you, Buck. And I'm so proud of you for deciding to see them," Steve said. "I think you're going to feel a lot better for going there, Sweetheart. You may not think they can hear you, but I think they will. And they'll be happy you are there."

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"You're coming with me, right?" Bucked asked with a squeeze to Steve's hand. "I need you there and I don't want Becca as a substitute because if I chicken out then she will be harsh about it. What do you work tomorrow?"

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"Of course, I'm going with you, Beautiful," Steve assured him and kissed the top of his head. "I have the overnight shift tomorrow. If you let me sleep in, I can go with you before I head over to the precinct."

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"Yeah, I'll take care of the girls in the morning and then just come back to bed until you get up," Bucky agreed and yawned. "How do you feel about having your mom teach Becca how to properly make that cake she was trying to do today? We can ask her to come over while we are both at work in the evening."
Steve pouted. "But I know how to make that cake." Steve loved to do everything home-related. But it was undeniable that Becca got along with Sarah more often than with Steve. "I guess I can ask my mom. I'm sure she will agree to help."

"Well, Baby, if you'd rather teach her that's fine with me. I didn't know you could make it." Bucky placed a gentle hand on the side of Steve's face. "Do you think that Becca will ever not be constantly angry at one of us for something?"

Steve chuckled and leaned into Bucky's hand. "She's a teenager. If she isn't pissed at one of us, it's cause she's sick or she wants something."

"That sounds like her," Bucky said and kissed Steve again. "I just think she gets too fed up with having to listen to me as the authority. She hates that I'm in that role now because I never was a good role model for her anyway so now she just figures whatever I say isn't really supposed to be taken seriously."

"Well, she's just got to live with it. There are plenty of parents out there less capable than you are, but they still get respect as authority figures," Steve said. "Man, I can't wait to have a kid and leave them with Becca for the day and tell them to challenge everything she says."

"You won't do that." Bucky chuckled. "You'll get on them about being respectful to their aunts just like you harp on the girls about respecting me. But Becca will hopefully one day understand just how much of a struggle it was to take over as guardian for them and suddenly be basically a single dad of two pre-teens."

"Alright, true. Then if she has kids, I hope they give her a little hell sometimes. Just sometimes," Steve said. Becca would probably run an extremely tight ship. "You've done such a good job, Bucky. It's amazing that you went through so much but still managed to keep everyone all together."

"You've said that before, Steve." Bucky rolled his eyes. "And each time you say it, I don't get any closer to agreeing. I could have done so much better. And I will do so much better for our kid. I promise you that. They won't have to see me at my worst like Becca and Lilly had to so many times."

"I don't care if I've said it before. I still believe it," Steve said. He gave Bucky an appreciative smile, happy that he wouldn't have to worry so much about Bucky keeping it together for their kid. "I can't wait to see you cuddling our little baby in your arms."
"I want to come home after a long day at work and hold our baby while you hold me and just fall asleep secure in your arms," Bucky said. "I want to make their crib by hand and I want to teach them about music and help them name their first animal. And I want to take pictures of you helping them walk around and playing with toys or reading books."

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Steve smiled happily. "Christ, Buck, that all sounds so perfect. I want that future with you so bad." He kissed him slowly. "We are going to have all of that someday. I pray every night that all your wishes come true. So you keep wishing for that and it will happen."

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"Okay, I will." Bucky smiled warmly and kissed Steve for a couple long minutes. "Alright, I think it's time we both went to sleep. Especially since I'm getting up to see the girls off to school, I need to sleep as much as I can."

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Steve played with Bucky's hair and kissed him one last time. "Alright, I'll go to sleep. Good night, Handsome." He closed his eyes and fell right asleep. He let himself relax and sleep in until almost noon, which only happened on days like these since he was typically an early bird.

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Bucky had helped the girls to school and then went out to the store to get some things they needed like more cereal and fruit. He managed to walk past the liquor and only stare at it for a minute or so until he decided he didn't feel like getting yelled at today by Becca. However, he had picked up a pack of cigarettes and justified the purchase as a reward for not drinking. He hadn't smoked a cigarette in about a year and the first one felt terrible going through his lungs. He took the long way back to the apartment and ate some of the chocolate he had gotten in hopes that Steve wouldn't immediately notice the smell of cigarettes on his breath.

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Steve was able to smell the smoke on Bucky right away even though he tried to cover it up. "Hey there, Mr. Nicotine," Steve teased softly after he'd gotten out of bed and kissed Bucky hello. He ran a comb through his hair and splashed some water on his face to wake up. "How was your morning?"

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Bucky chewed his thumbnail and offered Steve some of his chocolate saying, "I only smoked two. You can check the pack. It's just for when I really want to drink and need something else. And I didn't buy any alcohol this time even though there was a price cut on some really, really good bourbon."

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"I'm not complaining," Steve said pleasantly. "I'm happy you abstained from the booze." He took some of the chocolate and popped it into his mouth. "So what are the chances of getting a blowjob?" he asked bluntly, giving Bucky a hopeful look.
Bucky thought for a moment and slipped an arm around Steve's waist. "Promise not to tell your nurse mother about the cigarettes and I'll blow you right now," he negotiated and lightly brushed his fingers against Steve's cock.

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"My lips are sealed," Steve promised. He pushed his hips into Bucky's hand and smiled over at him. "We got three weeks of lost time to make up for. Don't want to ruin that by being a snitch."

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"Snitches get stitches, after all, not blowjobs," Bucky said as he guided Steve over to the edge of the bed and sat him down. "Steve," he started and rested his hands on Steve's thighs. "Would you want to maybe try sixty-nine? Or do you want to lay back and relax while I get you off? Either way is fine with me."

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Steve tutted at him. "Here I am just looking for a nice, good old fashioned blowjob and you're mucking it up with your new-age sex moves," Steve said. He stroked a hand through Bucky's hair and said, "Let's try it."

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"Really?" Bucky perked up and squeezed Steve's thighs. "You're going to love it. My mouth on your cock with my dick on your lips, what's not to love about all of that?" he asked and began ridding himself of his clothes hastily. "You're going to love it," he repeated and pushed Steve back against the bed so he could kiss him and stroke them together to get hard.

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Steve let out a little laugh at how enthusiastic Bucky was about this. He already enjoyed this based on that alone. He rocked his hips slowly into Bucky's hand and hummed in approval. "Hey, aren't I supposed to get the other end of you right now?" he teased.

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"Yes, you want to be on the bed or do you want me on the bed?" Bucky asked and let go of their dicks so he could rub his hands down Steve's arms and chest. "It's a little easier for the person on top so I don't mind being under you if you want."

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"Let me on top for my first time at least," Steve said. "Besides, I like the sight of you under me," he added with a teasing smirk. "So come on, Handsome, let me see you all spread out and ready for me."

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"You got it, Baby," Bucky said and quickly lied down on his back on the bed. He spread his legs slightly apart and waited for Steve to crawl up on top of him. "Scoot back just a little bit, I can't reach you," he said and tugged at Steve's hips gently.
Steve angled himself so that his hips were resting above Bucky's face. It was hard to line up at first because they were different heights. He lowered his head and started to enthusiastically kiss and bite at the insides of Bucky's thighs.

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Bucky closed his eyes for a moment, loving what Steve was doing to him. He forgot momentarily that he was meant to be participating too and he hastily grabbed at Steve's ass and massaged his cheeks for a minute before taking the head of his cock into his mouth and licking around it.

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Steve swore when he felt Bucky lick the tip of his cock. "Oh my god," he breathed out. This was definitely a good idea on Bucky's part. He kissed up the shaft of Bucky's dick before slowly taking it entirely into his mouth.

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Bucky hummed around Steve's dick and leaned up into it to get as much of his length inside as possible. It was definitely more difficult for the person on their back. Of course, he could have just had them lay on their sides but it wasn't as good of a view that way. Bucky fucked his mouth on Steve's dick and gently pulled apart his ass cheeks so he could lightly rub at his tightly closed hole just for fun.

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Steve let out a desperate, little moan when Bucky teased his hole. He kind of wanted Bucky to fuck him but he knew that wouldn't happen right now. He supported himself on one arm and started to palm at Bucky's balls while he worked his mouth over his cock, hollowing his cheeks as he bobbed his head up and down.

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Bucky popped off of Steve just for a second to slick up his finger with spit. He took Steve's cock back into his mouth and tongued down the shaft as he gently and slowly pushed the finger into Steve's ass and started to lightly push in and out of his hole as Steve's cock pushed against the back of his throat.

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Steve moaned in approval, sounding so fucking aroused. "Yes," he gasped out, pulling his mouth off of Bucky's dick to gasp. "Just like that." He started to suck him some more, getting a bit messy because Bucky was driving him closer and closer. His orgasm came suddenly and in no time, he was shooting down Bucky's throat.

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Bucky wasn't ready for Steve's come and he choked a bit before swallowing. He didn't stop fingering Steve with the one lone finger yet and he sucked a little more on Steve's dick before letting it go and leaning his head against Steve's thigh.

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"I'm sorry," Steve said in a rushed tone, then went back down to suck on Bucky's cock. He felt extra sensitive after his orgasm, so Bucky fingering his ass felt great. He reached down beneath him and
began to tease Bucky's hole as well.

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Bucky bit lightly at the skin on Steve's leg and followed it up with a lick. "It's okay," he said and flopped back on the bed. He tugged his arms behind his head. "It's really nice having your ass this close to me, just so you know. I like seeing it while you suck me off."

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Steve pulled off to look back at Bucky and snorted when he saw how relaxed his husband looked. "You look like you're enjoying yourself too much," he joked. He mouthed sideways along Bucky's dick and licked along the vein that went up the underside. "I should take my time with this," he said thoughtfully. "I should make you ask to come."

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Bucky chuckled and bit his lip. "That's cold. You wouldn't do that to me after I swallowed your come so nicely just now," he said hopefully and stared at Steve's ass again. "If you don't let me come I'll just have to do it myself and I know you don't like that."

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Steve pouted because Bucky got him there. He liked being the one to get Bucky off because that's what husbands were for. He licked slowly up his cock, dragging it out as long as he could before slowly taking his dick into his mouth again. He wiggled his ass just a bit for Bucky's entertainment.

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"Told you," Bucky said with a satisfied grin and closed his eyes again. It only took about a minute more before Bucky's hands were on Steve's thighs and he was saying hurriedly, "Okay, gonna come."

---

Steve readily swallowed Bucky's come down and he lapped innocently at the tip of his cock a few times before turning around so he could hold Bucky to his chest. "I think I found my new favorite thing that isn't just sex."

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"Oh really?" Bucky laughed and wrapped his arms around Steve. "Sixty-nine is your new favorite thing, huh? Mr. I-was-raised-Catholic-and-new-sex-acts-scare-me," he joked and kissed Steve on the mouth so he knew he wasn't poking much fun at him.

---

"Well, I'm a Presbyterian now so I guess sixty-nine is back on the menu." Steve chuckled. "Buck, how did you deal with me before? I wasn't into anything out of the ordinary." Even now Steve was very tame but he sure felt like he dabbled in a few new things.

---

"No, you weren't," Bucky agreed. "You got real upset with me every time I tried to do what I wanted and tried to show you new things." He poked Steve's sides a little bit. "You trust me now?
You trust me to know things that you're going to like doing?"

---

"Well, I thought that I wasn't enough. You know, like normal sex was boring," Steve huffed. "But yeah, I trust you now. But I still don't want you using that damn dildo." Steve was more open sexually but still a bit possessive.

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"Normal sex isn't boring. It's great and magical and with you, it's the best thing in the world," Bucky assured Steve. "But it can be really exciting doing something other than missionary and just trading off who is top. Our wedding night was perfect. Remember? We had a nice slow love making and then a fantastic rough fuck." He kissed Steve's neck and rolled off of him to go get dressed. "And don't remind me how lonely Phillip must be not getting touched for so long."

---

"Yeah, I suppose you're right," Steve gave in. He watched Bucky get out of bed, admiring his ass quietly. "We have sex often enough - when one of us isn't injured, at least. And I'm sure your dildo doesn't have any hard feelings about any of it."

---

"We can ask him?" Bucky teased and pointed up into the top of the closet where Phillip was stashed away. He wasn't willing to let him go yet. Not because he thought that he and Steve would ever break up and he would need it again. But because he was still trying to get Steve to cave about the whole thing. He had obeyed and not used it at all but he was going to hold out hope until he knew for sure it was a lost cause... then he would toss him.

---

"I'm not asking a dildo for its opinion," Steve said stubbornly. He loved Bucky too much to demand that he throw it out or dispose of it in a blaze of fire or something. But Steve was unlikely to change his views on it. After a moment, he also got up and started to dress. "So are we heading out now?"

---

"Yes," Bucky said and held up a patterned green sweater and a solid purple one for Steve to help him decide which to put on. "Do you want to grab a sandwich from Rustic Rocco's before we go to the cemetery?"

---

Steve pointed to the green sweater. He liked the design on it. He dressed warmly, figuring he would change into his uniform once at work so they wouldn't get stopped by people needing him. Right now, Bucky was his priority. "Sure thing."

---

They headed out and down the street towards the sandwich shop and Bucky felt fine. He wasn't nervous yet at all. But he was just getting a sandwich first so he'd probably get worked up once they were done eating. Martia was working the register when they came in and she grinned wide and waved, yelling, "Bucky Barnes, you've not come see me for weeks. I demand to know why."
Steve gave her an apologetic smile. "His doctor told him he has to watch what he eats. But after a few weeks of that, he decided that he's meant to be here for a good time and not a long time," he joked as he nudged Bucky lightly.

"These are the best sandwiches in all of New York. I'd gladly die at the hands of one of these bad boys," Bucky said and nodded to one of Martia's sons who was in the kitchen already making their sandwiches since he knew their order by heart.

Martia cocked her head to the side and frowned, "What doctor says my family's sandwiches aren't good enough for you?"

"A bad doctor, that's who," Steve answered. "But don't worry, Martia, you can expect to see us regularly around here again." He gave her a smile, then paid and thanked them once their sandwiches were ready. He nudged Bucky towards the door because he was a bad liar and didn't want Bucky to have to explain the real reason he was away for weeks.

Bucky waved goodbye and followed Steve out the door quietly. "Steve," Bucky said and flicked his arm to get him to slow down a pace. "She knows, you know," he finished and gave him a sideways glance as he unwrapped his sandwich. "About us."

"She does?" Steve asked. He stopped in his tracks and looked back at the shop. "Shit, should I go back and apologize?" If she was kind enough to treat them well, Steve felt bad for lying to her about what happened.

"No, just next time explain that you weren't aware she knew and you were just being cautious," Bucky said and walked on. "One of her sons isn't straight. Not sure if he's gay or bisexual or what but she tried setting me up with him one time. She wasn't very sneaky about it."

"Oh," Steve said dumbly, then laughed a little. "It's nice that she's trying to find her son someone good. Too bad you're already spoken for." Steve sounded a bit proud to say that and he glanced down at their rings.

As they approached the cemetery, Bucky's heart clenched and he walked a little slower. He felt a lump in his throat and his head started to hurt just slightly. His hand shot out to clench onto Steve's elbow and he gave him a look, pleading for help. Bucky hadn't been to his parents' graves since they were dug four and a half years prior.
Steve gently placed his hand over Bucky's. "It's okay, Baby," he said softly. "You'll feel better for coming here. I promise." He knew the way to their graves by now- he would swing by once a week to make sure their graves were tidy.

---

Bucky let Steve lead him over to his parents and he didn't question how he was so well versed in the route to get there. He pulled back when they approached the headstones and he could clearly read his parents' names. It took him a few moments but then he moved forward again and flopped down in a heap on his knees in front of them. Bucky completely forgot Steve was there as he let loose and started to cry with his mouth hanging open.

---

It was probably the most heart-wrenching thing Steve had seen. At least when Bucky had been attacked and injured, the anger clouded the heartbreak. But this was just pure agony to watch. He knelt down next to him and wrapped a strong arm around his shoulders. He used his other hand to brush away the hair that clung to Bucky's face from the wet tear streaks. Steve didn't say anything just yet. He gave Bucky his time to grieve.

---

Bucky's eyes fluttered shut and he gasped in a sharp breath. Sometimes he could forget just what happened to his parents and pretend they were on a long vacation and would return soon. Then he was confronted with reality and he was ripped apart all over again. Bucky let the tears cascade down his face as he reached out a tentative hand to touch the top of his father's headstone then his mother's. He leaned forward ever so slightly and choked out, "I'm so sorry."

---

Steve rubbed smooth circles over Bucky's back and he waited until he was a little less hysterical. "It's going to be okay, Sweetheart. I know they've already forgiven you." He pet his fingers through his hair. "Do you want some time alone with them? I can sit on the bench over there."

---

"No!" Bucky said quickly and stared at Steve desperately. "Don't leave me. I need you here." He entwined his fingers with Steve's and held their clasped hands on his lap as he moved his attention back to his parents to say, "So you've met Steve before. Don't know how much you've gathered about us but he's mine. My husband, I mean. It's not legal yet because America hates what it doesn't understand, but Steve's God has us covered."

---

Steve didn't mean to scare Bucky. He had only been looking to give him a little privacy if he needed it. He remained at his side and gave Bucky's hand a squeeze. "We got married right after New Year's," Steve explained. "It was really nice. And Bucky took me to a hotel to celebrate as a surprise."

---

Bucky held his ring out to the headstones and said, "And the girls helped him pick out this ring for me." He leaned against Steve and wiped the tears from his face before continuing, "I don't really know if you two ever knew I was gay. I mean, it was probably pretty obvious and you heard what my classmates said to me in high school so I'd be surprised if you didn't know. I'm sorry I never told
you outright, though. I was scared. Everyone else was so harsh to me about it and it was careless of me to think that you would have been, too.”

---

"Someone who used to be real close with Bucky beat him up bad enough to send him to the hospital," Steve explained. "And I was shot because my partner wouldn't cover me and he wanted me to die." His voice was so sad. "I know you two would have been nice about it. It would have been great to have some family dinners with you. I probably would have been so nervous at first," he rambled.

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"You would have been great," Bucky corrected and gave Steve a warm glance. "And I know Mom and Dad would have loved you so much," he added and directed himself back to his parents. "I guess I should probably tell you a bunch of stuff that you missed, right? But I don't know, the girls probably told you all the shit I've done."

---

Steve played with an end of Bucky's hair before brushing his knuckles gently over Bucky's scruff on his jaw. "Tell them anyway. I bet they miss your voice," he said. "We don't want them to hear Becca’s side of the story on everything, either."

---

"I guess that's a good point," Bucky conceded and adjusted so he wasn't kneeling, instead, sitting cross-legged in front of them. "Becca's accounts of everything have probably all been pretty accurate, though," he suggested and sighed. "I'm sure she's talked about the one-night-stands and the drinking and the fights and the countless times I've been world’s shittiest substitute parent. She's probably told you about when I was in the hospital a bit before grandma died…"

---

"She's wrong, though. You've done a great job." Steve looked back at the graves. "We're going to have a kid together," he said confidently. "Bucky's going to play music to them and sing them to sleep every night," he told Bucky's parents. "He's been through some rough times but he's better now."

---

"We are going to have a kid. Somehow we will get one and it's going to be perfect," Bucky said and brushed a hand down Steve's back. "And I want to be a lot better for that kid than I have been for the girls in these past four years. I've been better with Steve around, though." He paused and looked at the sky. "I'm not supposed to drink," Bucky added. "And it's really fucking hard especially since I've been drinking for about a decade and I really like it and it's how I cope. Guess I got that from you, Mom."

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"He's been doing a good job staying sober. We cheat sometimes when we have something to celebrate. But he's doing so well," Steve told them. "I love him more and more every day." Steve gave Bucky's shoulder a squeeze. "Tell them about the couple we met."
Bucky cleared his throat and pulled his hair up into a loose ponytail. "Well, it’s this kind lesbian couple - Veronica and Laura. Veronica was my nurse when I was in the hospital a month ago. We had dinner at their place and I thought Steve was going to explode because it was the first couples date we had."

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"They’re so nice. I hope we can make more gay and lesbian friends," Steve said. "But I'd be happy even if it was only ever just me and Bucky for the rest of our lives. I mean, with Becca and Lilly, too, of course."

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"Becca, Lilly, and either Sarah or Christopher Rogers-Barnes," Bucky corrected. "That's what we've chosen for names if we get a boy or a girl. Sarah May - after Steve's mother Sarah - or Christopher Leland - with your middle name, Dad."

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Steve smiled. "Man, I wish our kid could meet you. But we'll bring them around to come talk to you, I promise," he swore. "They're going to love you. And Bucky will tell them all about you."

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Bucky sighed and his lip quivered. "I hate that my new family won't get to meet my old family," he said and couldn't help the tears that started again. "Steve and our baby won't get to see how wonderful you two were." He paused and looked to Steve for a moment before smiling weakly and changing the subject, "Hey, Dad, guess where we are going in the spring as a late honeymoon."

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Steve felt bad that Bucky was so upset that he couldn't share the good things in his life with his parents. "We're going to Seneca Lake. Bucky has told me all about it. He can't talk it up enough. I'm really excited to see it in person."

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"I'm going to show him all the places you took me, Dad," Bucky laughed and nodded. "And I'll take our baby there when they are old enough and tell them the stories you told me. And teach them to fish like you taught me. And Steve and I can help them learn how to swim in the lake."

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"Only after they've learned to swim in the pool first," Steve insisted. "Lakes can be dangerous." He made sure no one was around before kissing Bucky's temple. "I'm happy you came to see them, Baby. I'm so proud of you."

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Bucky leaned against Steve for a moment then stood up. "Time to go?" he asked and extended a hand to help Steve up. "Thanks for coming with me. I needed you here. It would have been maybe four more years before I did this on my own."

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"You know I'll do anything for you," Steve said with a loving smile. "We should do this again sometime soon. And maybe we can come with your sisters as well." He paused and then asked, "Are we going to tell Becca about today?"

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"You can tell Becca about today, I don't mind," Bucky said and started walking. "I don't necessarily want to announce it to her or anything. 'Look, Becca, I did it, get off my back.' But if it comes up we can mention it."

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"I just think it'll make her feel better to know that you did it. When I went with them on Christmas, they both seemed upset that you haven't gone," Steve explained. "I felt bad for them."

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"I hadn't gone because it's been too difficult to do it," Bucky said, "It's a little different being the one in charge and having to live up to your parents and not being able to handle anything. Then, on top of it, my sisters never seem to give me any slack and keep getting mad about one thing after the other and I'm just nothing like what my parents would have been for the girls in hard times." He felt like he had had to repeat himself about a million times about this. "The girls just don't get how hard this has been and how panicked I got every time I even thought about visiting Mom and Dad."

---

Steve sighed. "I know why you didn't go, Baby, and I understand. Becca can be really ruthless with you and I wish I could get her to ease up," he said. "All I was saying is that I bet they'll be really happy to hear that you decided to go today. And I hope you feel better for going, too."

---

Bucky nodded and pursed his lips. "I get it. I just feel like the second we tell them, Becca's going to have something snippy to say, don't you? I don't know. I just get the impression that I'm never going to be good enough for Becca ever again. She'll never see me like she did before our parents died."

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"Becca will learn one day," Steve said. "Someday, she's going to mess up big time. It's going to happen, just like it does to everyone. And you're going to be there to pick her back up and then she will understand how much you do for her," he reassured.

---

They approached the record shop and Bucky stuffed his hands into his pockets. He really didn't want to work today. "I love them both so much. And I've loved being their brother and their guardian I just don't like that since I've been their guardian, I hardly get to just be their brother again."

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"I get it," Steve repeated. "I just... I just wish I could take over that responsibility. I know it'd be weird. But I want you to get to be their brother again, you know?" He shrugged. "You deserve to get to have fun with your sisters."

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"Steve, I love you," Bucky prefaced, "but that wouldn't work for any one of us. The girls don't listen to you as it is and I could never give them up and that would sort of feel like I was. It's a good thought with good intentions but it would tear us apart, I think."

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"I know," Steve sighed. "I just wish you could have what you used to have with them. And I wish I didn't have to tiptoe around everything with them. Some days they love me, and some days they act like I should be grateful that they let me live with them. I went off on Becca real bad at the hospital."

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"What happened?" Bucky asked and stopped in front of the record shop. "What did she do? Or I guess, what did both of you do? I honestly had no idea what was happening the entire time I was in the hospital. All I know is Lilly was given too much candy from your mother to keep her chilled out."

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"Well, she was pissed that I beat up Donnie," Steve said. "She demanded that I come clean to you and that I should be worried about how I was going to get her to forgive me." Which he still felt was pretty shitty. "I forget the exact words but I pretty much told her I don't care what she thinks and I'm not going to try to be in her good graces." He shrugged. "After I spoke with you and you asked me to get her, I found her crying in the cafeteria. I lied and told her that you were upset that I went after Donnie, too."

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Bucky sighed and hung his head, "Oh, god... alright, I'll talk to her about the whole thing later," he said and pushed open the door to the shop. "No fucking wonder she's been so shitty lately. Well, maybe she'll be more angry at you for a while instead of me, huh?"

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Steve walked in with him - he still had some time before work. "Well, I was tired of it. I hate it, Buck. I want to have a good relationship with her, but I can't stand the way she acts like I need to be thankful she talks to me. And, god, she can be such a know-it-all," he ranted.

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Bucky laughed and led Steve to the back room with him. "You really are an only child, Steve. Becca's a typical teenager and a typical sibling. She's full of herself right now and thinks she knows what's best in every situation. She is a know-it-all, that's true. And I'm not saying you have to roll over and take it, but maybe try being more of a brother-in-law than a parent. I have to be the parent but you don't and probably shouldn't try to be with her anyway."

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Steve pouted. "But they already said I'm not their brother," he said. So he didn't feel comfortable trying to be their brother-in-law. It was a lot easier as a cop to be an authority figure instead. "And it wouldn't be fair to get to be their brother-in-law when you can't be their brother."

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"Yes, it is, Steve," Bucky said and stripped off his coat and jacket. "If my parents were alive, you
and I would still be married, and I'm still the brother, you are the brother-in-law. That doesn't change because I have two roles. When you came into our lives, I wasn't looking for a second parent for my sisters, I was looking for someone to love us and fill in where I couldn't. And you do that for them. You do. They do see you as family and they only said things about you not being their brother or dad because they were angry at the time. Trust me, Steve.

---

"I really just feel like they tolerate me for your sake," Steve mumbled. "Lilly's nicer but Becca can get really mean. And Lilly will follow her lead on that sometimes." He knew he was preaching to the choir here. Bucky dealt with that on his own for four years. "I guess I'll just have to trust your word on it."

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"Steve," Bucky whispered and locked the door to the back room before pulling Steve in for a hug and kissing his cheek. "They love you. They don't tolerate you. It's just... I don't know. Becca isn't good at expressing when she cares and Lilly is too prone to following her on whatever she does. But you've seen how much Lilly gets excited when you come home. She jumps you in a hug every time you're gone for too long. She completely ignored me when we got back from our wedding night out and only paid attention to you. And Becca just... I don't know about Becca to be perfectly honest."

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Steve leaned into Bucky's body and rested his head on his shoulder. "I know Lilly likes me when Becca isn't around to tell her otherwise," he mumbled. "I don't know. I didn't want to shut Becca out. And I don't want to make her feel like she can't come to me for help. But I can't keep giving and giving for the chance she may be nice to me."

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"Then just back up a little, let her see that you're still around but not going to fight her or try to be her friend or whatever. I'm sure there will be something that she will need to talk about and she won't want to come to me about it and then you'll be there silently and patiently waiting for her to ask for your help." Bucky had walked them over to the table and chairs and sat them down close to each other so he could hold Steve's hands and kiss him between sentences.

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Steve sighed. He really wished there was some way that they could just... be friendly and comfortable with each other. Becca ran hot and cold. He squeezed Bucky's hand and smiled over at him. "You always know what to say to make me feel better, Buck." He leaned in to kiss him slowly. "Thank you."

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Bucky smiled pathetically. "Well, you didn’t really get to pick my sisters so I feel bad that you’re stuck with all of us and don’t feel welcomed by Becca. She’ll lighten up, I promise. I mean, with you around now there is no more men in the apartment, no more going to the bars, no more bar fights, no more drinking… most days. She sees what you’ve done for me so far. She’ll get better with you. I know she will."
Chapter Notes

Just want to preface this by saying that everyone is fine. Nothing terrible actually happened to anyone.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Over the next week, Steve gave the girls their space and focused mostly on quietly cleaning the house and preparing food. Lilly would come to him a few times to play games or help with homework, but that was the extent of it. It was around ten at night on a Friday - Lilly was asleep in her room, Bucky was doing the closing shift, and Becca, uncharacteristically, was out at a party. He was surprised to hear the phone ring but he picked it up. "Hello?"

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"Shit, fuck, hold on." It was Becca's mumbled voice. "God, what street is this?" she said and squinted out into the dark trying to get her bearings while holding the pay phone up to her ear. "Steve?" she asked desperately, "Steve, I don't know where I am."

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"Becca?" Steve asked, worry sinking deep within him. "Are you alright? What happened at the party?" he asked. "Can you see a street sign?" He was already reaching for his patrol map so he could scan for cross streets.

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"Everything's too fuzzy and the lights are too bright," Becca answered and started to cry, "All I see is bar lights and some hookers." She turned around and stared at her surroundings again. "Holy fuck, am I in Chelsea?" she choked, "No, no way, that's like a three-hour walk from Brooklyn. I've only been out here maybe a half hour."

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"Becs, it's okay. It's okay. I'm going to come get you right away, alright?" He scanned the map some more. "I need you to be brave? Ask one of the women what the address of that bar is." If Becca couldn't read the sign herself, someone could do it for her. "Do you have your pepper spray just in case?"

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"Yeah, I got it," Becca said, "One second, there's a lady on the corner by me." She dropped the phone so it hung from the receiver and trotted over to the woman on the corner. She came back to the phone with the street name and hastily said, "Marlin's Pub, Winston Ave." and "I'm fucking cold, someone took my coat and my hat."

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"I'm going to be over there real soon, okay? Go inside that pub and stay in the first stall of the
woman's bathroom. Can you do that? You'll be warm in there and no one will bother you," Steve said.

"I'm fourteen, Steve, I can't go into a pub." Becca tossed her arm up in the air and got a little dizzy. A few of the hookers were staring at her now and the one she had talked to looked on with quiet concern. "Steve, I don't know how I got here."

"Then just stay on that phone. I'm going to hang up now and head over to you. Keep the phone off the receiver and keep talking it to it like there's someone on the other line, okay?" Steve said.

"Hmm, okay," Becca whined softly and heard the click of Steve hanging up. She immediately forgot what Steve had told her to do. Instead, she stumbled over to the pub and sat down on the ground with her back against the wall. The woman who had helped her slowly came over and stood a few feet away and, unbeknownst to Becca, stood guard over her until someone came to help her.

Steve left a note to Lilly to let her know he'd be back soon and he grabbed a blanket before rushing to his car. He switched on his patrol lights immediately and darted off to find Becca. He was able to cut through traffic but it still took nearly an hour to find her. He pulled over right in front of the sidewalk even though it was a no parking zone and he immediately scooped her off the ground into a tight hug. He gave the woman next to her a silent, thankful look.

"Steve?" Becca asked, confused. She had fallen asleep against the wall and was having a hard time remembering much of what had happened in the last few hours. She hugged him back and let herself cry into his chest. "Steve, I'm cold and hungry and I want to go home," she mumbled into his coat and then looked up at the woman then back to Steve. The rest of the hookers had scattered when they saw the cruiser pull up but this one had stayed and waited to make sure that this cop was here for Becca.

Steve pulled out all the cash in his wallet and handed it to the woman. "I'm not after any of you and I won't report," he promised. Thank you so much for looking after her." He would've spoken more to her to thank her and show his appreciation, but Becca was his priority. He wrapped both arms around her and kissed the top of her head. "I've got you, Kiddo," he said. "I brought a blanket for you. You can sleep in the back of the car and I'll make you whatever you want to eat when we get home."

Becca nodded slowly and felt Steve lift her up and gently deposit her into the back of the cruiser and tuck the blanket in all around her. Her eyes blinked shut and she tucked her legs up towards her chest to contain her warmth to a central spot. She passed out immediately once Steve started driving.
Steve kept checking on her through the rear view mirror to make sure she was okay. Steve had so many questions and he was scared that something may have happened to her between the party and Becca calling him, but he couldn't ask that yet. When they got to their apartment, he carefully picked her up into his arms again and carried her inside. He nudged open the door to her room and placed her on her bed.

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Becca woke up when she hit her bed, jostled by the movement of Steve pulling her covers over her. "Hey," she whispered and stared past Steve at Lilly who was standing silently in the doorway watching what was going on. Becca looked to Steve and grabbed his coat sleeve and said, "Water, please."

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Steve nodded and got up to get it. As he passed Lilly, he said, "Becca got sick. You don't have to worry." He ruffled her hair and went to the kitchen to get a glass of water and he made a quick peanut butter and jelly sandwich for her before bringing it back. "Need help sitting up?"

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Becca sat up on her own and downed the water entirely before grabbing for the sandwich and wolfing it down as well. She was panting with the lack of breaths she took between bites. "Thanks, Steve," she said with a far away look in her eyes. "Where's Bucky?"

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Steve put a hand on her back to support her as she sat up just in case she wobbled back. "Bucky's at work right now. He should be back in an hour or two," he said. "Do you remember what happened?" he asked gently, rubbing circles over her back. "You look like you feel a bit funny."

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"Don't really know what happened," Becca said and leaned against Steve's supporting touches. "I was with Nicole at the party and someone tried to get me to drink but I said no and had some soda instead. Nicole was getting pretty drunk and I took her to the bathroom to throw up a bit then I went back out to the party and waited around for her to come back but then I started to feel really bad and weird so I left. I tried coming back home but I got lost somehow and ended up at that bar."

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Steve gave her a sympathetic look. "I think someone may have put something in your drink. Nothing is hurting you, right? Do you just feel dizzy and funny?" He gave her a tight hug. "I'm so glad you got home safe. I was so worried about you."

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"Nothing hurts," Becca shook her head and flopped into Steve's hug. "Just dizzy and sleepy and confused." She sniffled and looked up at Steve, "I change my mind, my head hurts a little bit. But that's it." She rested her head back in the crook of Steve's arm and shut her eyes. "Where's Bucky?" she asked again and started crying once more.

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Steve frowned and gently wiped the tears from her face. "He's going to be home soon, Kiddo. Do
you want me to call and see if he can leave the store early? I don't think he can, but we can try." He brushed the hair from her face and gave her another hug. "While I'm up, I can get you some more food and medicine for your head."

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"Yes, medicine and food," Becca said and squirmed out from Steve's arms to curl back under her blankets. She had a big plush animal dog on her bed that she had since she was a kid - a gift from her parents - and she yanked it close and hugged it tightly.

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Steve started to make another sandwich for her because it was easy and quick to make. He tried giving Bucky a call at the store. "Buck? Hey, is it real busy there right now? Is there any chance that you can come home early? Becca needs you."

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Bucky waved to Reggie to come take over for him at the register and he went to the back room. "What do you mean? What happened? She was at that party, right?" he asked quickly and started pulling his coat on. He was coming home immediately, Clint would understand.

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"Don't freak out, but someone drugged her at the party. I don't think they did anything to her, but she's really out of it. Somehow ended up in Chelsea and some woman looked after her until I got there," he said. "I'm doing everything I can, but she's asking for you."

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"I'm coming home," Bucky said and hung up. He flew back out through the shop and quickly explained to Clint what had happened. He damn near ran the whole way back home and stomped up the stairs to their apartment. When he got there, he struggled with the key in the lock until Steve opened up the door for him. Bucky dumped his stuff on the ground and hustled to Becca's room. She was almost asleep curled up on her bed and Bucky went over and pet her hair. Steve was behind him and he turned to him to ask, "How did this happen, Steve? Where did you find her?"

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"I think someone drugged her drink when she wasn't looking. Her friend was really drunk so I think she was busy babysitting her. Based on what she's told me, I don't think anyone...did anything," Steve said, his voice getting quiet. "I picked her up in Chelsea, by some shady pub."

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"Chelsea? How the fuck did she end up in Chelsea?" Bucky kept his voice down so Becca could sleep. "So no one... hurt her?" Bucky asked and grabbed at Steve's forearm. "You're sure? She doesn't have any bruises? Didn't say anything about anyone?"

---

"She doesn't know. She thinks she didn't walk for more than a half hour." Steve placed a hand on Bucky's. "I'm pretty sure nobody hurt her. It's too early for her to show any signs of abuse but I'll keep an eye out. I wasn't going to strip search my fourteen-year-old sister-in-law for bruises."
"That makes sense. I understand." Bucky nodded and stood up to grab another blanket for Becca from her closet. "She can't have only walked for a half hour and made it to Chelsea. Unless someone dropped her off around there, she was out there for something like two hours at the least."

"I know. I'm going to call whoever lives at that house and get to the bottom of what happened. Becca didn't do anything wrong and tonight she could have been raped or kidnapped or god knows what else." Steve voice got a bit strained.

"Hey!" Bucky snapped at him quietly and held his hands protectively over Becca's ears, "Don't say that. We don't know what happened but it wasn't that. Probably just a kid being an asshole and pulling a prank. Or maybe it wasn't meant for Becca. But no one hurt her." Bucky's eyes had filled with tears and he looked away from Steve as he wiped them on his shirt. He laid his head next to his sisters and whispered low, "No one hurt my little sister."

Steve gave Bucky a surprised look when he was snapped at him but he didn't argue. He pulled Bucky into a hug and then let him go so he could lie down next to his sister. "I'm sure she's okay, Baby. Just a little shaken and tired," he reassured. He rubbed Bucky's shoulder and said, "Why don't you stay here with her? I'll stay up with you until you sleep then I'll go to our room."

Bucky nodded and moved to curl around Becca and hug her close. At least it was the weekend now and she wouldn't have to go to school when she woke up. Bucky didn't have work until the close shift also. "She's alright, yeah?" he asked Steve with pleading worried eyes and a shaky voice. "Does she know what's happened?"

"She just seemed scared," Steve said. "She cried a lot once she was home and wouldn't stop asking for you. She was ravenous, too, but I made her two sandwiches," he added. "I don't think she really knows but I told her I think someone spiked her drink." He looked over at her with a worried expression. "I'll pray extra for her tonight. Thank God nothing else happened to her."

"What was she drinking? Was it alcohol? Maybe she's just drunk or something," Bucky asked and already knew that couldn't possibly be the case. "Maybe some kid was smoking dope at the party and she was too close to it and got some in her system."

"She specifically said that she had a soda," Steve said. "And you don't get this messed up from secondhand smoke. You know that," he added. "Lilly saw me bring her in but I told her that she was just feeling sick. I think she's already sleeping in her room, but I haven't checked."
"I know," Bucky sighed. "I just want it to be anything else." He checked the time and saw that it was close to midnight. "Would you please go peek in on Lilly just to see she's okay? I'll stay here with Becs for a little while then come to bed."

---

Steve nodded his head. "Alright," he said. He brushed his lips over Bucky's temple and added, "She knew she had pepper spray, but didn't use it. So that's kind of telling me nobody went after her." He left and knocked once on Lilly's door and opened it to see if she was awake.

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Lilly was sprawled out on her carpet with a few small plush animals and stacks of sports trading cards. She was quietly flipping through them and rearranging the stacks. She also had a binder close beside her to put the cards into sleeves and, by the looks of it, she was trying to get every one in order to put in the sleeves.

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"Hey, Lil," Steve said gently as he crouched down next to her. "How're you doing down there? Shouldn't you be in bed by now?" It wasn't ridiculously late but she usually would be asleep by this point.

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"Couldn't sleep," Lilly said simply and held up a card of a linebacker from the New York Giants to Steve. "Couldn't sleep and I need to finish this," she said matter-of-factly. "Why'd Bucky could home early and make so much noise? Becca's trying to sleep."

---

"He came home cause he was worried about Becca. She asked me to get him to come home early, but it doesn't look like he had anything to be so worried about," Steve explained. "He's just going to stay in her room for a little bit to make sure she's definitely okay and then we're going to sleep," he explained.

---

"Okay," Lilly agreed and slipped the linebacker into a sleeve next to the rest of the Giants. "You want to help me?" She asked and pointed to the pile of cards for the Mets. "I need them in order of position and last name. I used to have them in jersey order but that was bugging me."

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"Of course," Steve said. He started to arrange the cards but sometimes he got the positions wrong by accident. "How've you been doing? I haven't chatted much with you outside of homework," Steve asked, trying to strike up a conversation.

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"I don't know. Guess I'm fine," She said and reached over to move a few of the cards that Steve had put in the wrong place. "I don't like the winter. There's no soccer and no lacrosse and I'm always stuck in the apartment. And Becca's been acting even more shitty than usual. Telling me to do stuff all the time. I can take care of Raphael. I don't need reminded every day to feed him."
"You know, there are some indoor sports facilities," Steve said. "If you get your homework done, we can kick a ball around sometime before dinner one day." Steve doubted that Lilly didn't need reminding about the cat but he didn't say anything to contradict her. "She's been kind of mean to me, too. But that's kind of what family does. They get annoyed with each other but then they realize they can't live without one another."

"Becca's always been mean to me. On and off. It's just how she shows she cares, I think." Lilly shrugged, "She isn't rude until she decides that she's going to take care of you. Then she can be terrible. She's quiet and kind to everyone else but us. But it's just that she could give two shits about people she doesn't know. I remember when our cousin Frankie really pissed Becca off, she started being real nice to him and polite because she gave up on him."

"How can you show that you care by being mean?" Steve asked with a pout. "Wouldn't it be easier to show a little kindness and love to the people you care about?" He nuded her gently. "Kind of makes me feel a bit better, though. I thought all this time she hated me."

"No, she doesn't hate you," Lilly said and started on the stack of cards for the Yankees. "She just puts a lot of pressure on you to take care of Bucky now. You came along and made it so she didn't have to watch after him constantly and so now all the things she got on herself for not doing right with him, she's going to get on you for." Lilly glanced at Steve and added, "I'm not smart like Becca but I know my brother and sister."

"Great." Steve snorted. "So I'm going to be criticized for the rest of my life by someone half my age," he joked. "You can be as smart, too. If you just did your darn homework without such a fuss," he teased, tickling her side a bit.

Lilly shoved him back when he tickled her and then rolled so she was pressed up against his side so he couldn't get her again. "Becca's not half your age, she's ten years younger. I'm half your age." She looked up at him and nodded her head, "See? I'm great at math, Steve."

Steve smiled when Lilly escaped the tickle assault. "Oh yeah? If you're so good at math, then tell me why you're half my age now but you won't be half my age five years from now," he said. "Sounds fake to me."

"I don't get it." Lilly scrunched her face up in thought.

Bucky opened the door slowly then and peeked in on them. "Hey, what're you guys doing?" he asked and took in the two of them lying on the ground surrounded by sports cards. Steve had a plush elephant sitting by his elbow and Lilly's little horse was tucked under her arm.
Steve got an apologetic look on his face. "I was, uh, just helping Lilly organize her trading cards," he said. He didn't realize how long he'd been in there and how late it was getting. Lilly really should have been asleep by then. "Are you ready to go to bed, Sweetheart?" he asked, already ruffling up Lilly's hair lightly as he got up to head over to Bucky.

"Yeah, Lil, you should be asleep," Bucky said without much emotion behind his words. He was tired and honestly wasn't too worried that she was still awake. If she slept in this weekend it would be okay. Bucky slipped his hand with Steve's and said good night to Lilly before pulling him off to their room.

Steve kissed Bucky's temple gently. "Lilly is alright and she isn't aware of any of this. I'll leave it to you and Becca to decide if you should tell her," he explained. Steve kissed Bucky one more time before pulling him into bed. "How're you holding up?"

"I'm alright. I'm just worried." Bucky said and laid half way on top of Steve with his leg thrown protectively over his middle. "I wouldn't be able to live with myself if anything happened to Becca. And there's no way we are going to know for sure if she's okay until she remembers what happened."

"I was so scared when I got the call, Buck. I don't know if I'd ever be able to forgive myself if something happened to either of them on my watch." Steve frowned as he pet a hand over Bucky's arm. "I know you'd be devastated. I got the cruiser and headed down there so fast. I'm so sorry for taking you out of work early, but she needed her brother."

Bucky breathed in deeply and let off a heavy sigh on Steve's neck. He really didn't want to think about all this anymore. "I need to shower. I feel like I smell like work."

Steve made a displeased noise when Bucky mentioned showering. He just wanted to hold him for a long while until they fell asleep. "Can't that wait until morning?"

"Just let me shower real fast," Bucky said, slipped off the bed, and started to strip his clothes. "Five minutes tops." He went to the bathroom and shut the door behind him. He stared at himself in the mirror. His eyes were bloodshot and his hair was a mess. Bucky looked up at the ceiling and said, "Hey, Steve's God. If you're really there, can you cut us some fucking slack for a little bit? Just a few months without any bad shit, okay?"

While Bucky showered, Steve got out of bed to kneel at its side and pray, thanking God for
watching over Becca but also asking him to prevent any more mishaps for a while because it was really stressing Bucky out.

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After he showered and dried off, Bucky slinked back to bed and stood off to the side by Steve pointing at his bruises on his ribs. "Look, they aren't as bad now," he said and gently poked at one. "Don't really hurt too bad anymore. Just a little sore still is all."

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"Hey, that's great," Steve said lightly. "You'll be all healed up just in time for our totally perfect honeymoon," he said. "I was thinking, maybe while we are there, we can get some lumber. Wouldn't it be great to make our kid's crib from wood from there?"

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Bucky's eyes went wide and he cupped Steve's face in his hands, "Steven Grant Rogers-Barnes, you beautiful genius!" he said and jumped on his husband to tackle him to the bed. He kissed him on the lips then on the jaw then the neck. He was still on a bit on an emotional high and switching over to covering Steve with kisses was the best way for him to cope. Bucky held his naked legs tightly on either side of Steve's and he mouthed at his collar bone for a moment before popping back up and saying, "But how are we going to get it back home? And where are we going to put it?"

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Steve didn't realize how much Bucky would like the idea. He thought it was a smart idea but he loved how happy it made his husband. "We could have it delivered," he said, grinning happily and running his hands over Bucky's back. He drew him into another slow kiss. "We can store it in the closet."

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"Guess we could," Bucky said and pet a hand through Steve's hair. "I don't know if we have room in our closet, though. Also, it costs money to have something delivered. Could we rent a pickup truck and bring it back ourselves? Or is that too much money, too?"

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"I'm sure if I ask nice enough at the precinct, someone would let us borrow their truck. There's got to be someone with something we can use to transport it. The wood will be pretty flat, so we could also just put it under all your boxes of records once we get it home."

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"That's a good point. Just add it to the mountain. It'll blend in," Bucky agreed. "If no one at the precinct will let you borrow a truck then we will just rent one from somewhere and do it that way. How's that?" Bucky had a hand up Steve's shirt and was rubbing small circles over his abs and chest as he occasionally kissed at Steve's neck again.

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"It sounds perfect," Steve said. He made happy little sounds when Bucky kept kissing and touching him. "I love you so much, Bucky," he said. "I can't wait until we go to Seneca together. It's going to be my best vacation ever."
"I can't fucking wait, either, Baby," Bucky whispered and pulled Steve's shirt up a little so he could lick Steve's nipples and rub his beard on his skin. "Just about a month and a half until it'll be warm enough to go." He tucked his hands underneath Steve's lower back and held him close.

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Steve moaned softly and arched his back off the bed when Bucky teased his nipples. "I look forward to it," he said happily. "Now get some rest, Beautiful. We've got work ahead of us in the morning."

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Bucky groaned quietly and shimmied down Steve's body. "But, I don't want to sleep. I want to make love with you." He squeezed Steve's thighs and sat up to straddle him so Steve could see and feel Bucky's erection against him. "Please, can we? It's been a long week and I just want to feel safe in your arms."

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Even though Steve was a little worn from a panicked evening, it was pretty much impossible to say no to his husband. "Fine, but you're either the one fucking me or you're riding me." He smiled up at him and ran his hands over Bucky's legs before palming at his erection.

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"Which do you want?" Bucky asked and leaned down to kiss Steve. "I'm good either way." He reached down to stick his hand down Steve's pants and started pulling lazily at his dick. "And we don't have to if you really don't want to. I just need to relax after having a shit week at work and dealing with motherfucking Reggie trailing after me everywhere I went and talking to me about nonsense. And then this whole thing tonight... I just want you, I want to calm down and forget everything for a bit. But it's up to you."

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"I kind of want to be inside you," Steve hummed, letting out a little moan when Bucky started tugging on his dick. "When I have three fingers deep in your ass, I bet I can make you forget about everything except how much you love me."

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Bucky's heart skipped a beat and he bit his lip in a smile. "Get on with it then, Officer," he said and grabbed the lube from the nightstand before lying back so he was sprawled out across Steve's legs and his ass was within Steve's reach. "You get me ready then I'll ride you like you want."

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Steve chuckled at how eager Bucky was and he spread Bucky's ass so he could pour lube directly onto his hole. He teased the tight ring for a little bit before pushing a finger in. "You like that so far, Baby?"

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"Yes, it's good, keep going. More," Bucky said and tucked his hands under Steve's legs as he spread his knees apart more. He was starting to feel Steve getting hard underneath him and Bucky wiggled
his ass just a little bit against it.

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Steve rocked his hips slowly up into Bucky to grind his dick against his husband. Slowly, he pushed a second finger inside of him and started to scissor him open. "Tell me what kind of sex we are going to have on our honeymoon."

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"Every kind," Bucky said, "Rough sex, slow sex, oral, sixty-nine again, sex outside, sex in the middle of the day, sex on a fishing boat, sex by the fireplace, sex under the stars," Bucky gasped when Steve stuck in a third finger and he couldn't keep listing thing off for him any longer.

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Steve let out a little laugh. "Aren't you worried about your dick falling off from using it so much?" He kissed him and started to press against his prostate. "Ready for my cock, Handsome?"

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"Yes, please," Bucky whispered and got up to pull Steve from his pants. Bucky held himself open and sat down on Steve slowly, just feeling himself filling up with his thick cock as he went. "God, fuck yes, thank you, Baby, I need this." He stayed still on Steve for a second and leaned forward to kiss him.

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Steve moaned out Bucky's name softly as he slid down on his cock. His ass felt so fucking good. Steve wrapped a strong arm around his shoulders and pulled him flush against his chest and started to fuck him hard and quick.

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Bucky clung to Steve as he fucked him. "Thought you weren't going to do any work?" He laughed and bit down a little harshly on Steve's shoulder. He rocked with the rhythm of Steve's thrusts and his cock was mashed between their bodies and leaking pre-come on their skin.

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"Decided you needed more distracting," Steve panted out. He groaned when Bucky bit him and gripped his shoulders with bruising force. "Want me to go slower?" he asked. Steve would do whatever Bucky wanted.

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"No, Baby, fuck me," Bucky said and licked Steve's neck. "Or go slower. I don't care. Do what you want, but just don't stop, okay?" Bucky squirmed in Steve's grasp. "Here, let me sit up so I can get to my cock."

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Steve let Bucky sit up but he gripped his hip with one hand and instead started to stroke Bucky's dick for him as he continued to fuck him. He panted heavily, eyes boring up into Bucky as he rocked up into him.
Bucky used his free hands to tease over Steve's nipples and rub down his sides. He loved the feeling of his husband working his cock and his ass. It made him feel loved and secure, Steve was taking care of him like he always did.

Steve let out a soft moan as Bucky teased his nipples. "Oh, fuck yeah," he breathed out. "You feel so good, Baby. Give me a kiss." He leaned up and claimed Bucky's lips in a brief kiss before fucking him even harder.

After the kiss, Bucky threw his arms around Steve's neck and sucked hickeys on his skin while Steve fucked him harder. "You glad I begged you for sex?" he asked and licked the red sensitive marks he made on Steve before rubbing his beard over it just a bit.

"Quit being so smug," Steve complained playfully before giving Bucky's ass a small swat. He could feel himself getting closer to orgasm, so he gripped Bucky's hips with both hands and slammed his cock into him, angling it into his prostate with each thrust until he was coming deep in Bucky's ass.

Bucky came when Steve did and shot his load all over Steve's stomach. He bit his lip and moved up and down on Steve's cock for a few seconds more before getting off of him and lying beside his husband. "Hey… I love you," he said in a low whisper and wiped at the come leaking down on his leg.

Steve panted heavily after their orgasms and he looked over at Bucky with a lazy smile. "I can't believe you've got me wrapped around your finger. You can make me do damned about everything."

"You love being mine," Bucky answered and kissed Steve slowly. "You know that you do. And I love being yours. And you love making love with me. So, really, I didn't have to beg you too much." He grabbed the box of tissues and started cleaning himself and Steve up. "Although, I sort of wasted my shower."

Steve smiled fondly as he watched Bucky clean the both of them up. "You'll shower again in the morning, I guess. But the girls will get pissed if you take up all the hot water," he teased.

"Ah, they'll be fine." Bucky chuckled as he tossed the dirty tissues and then sat back down next to Steve. He scratched a hand through his hair and gave him a serious look. "Becca will be okay, right?"
Steve reached out to lace their fingers together. "I think so," he said. "I think she's going to need your support for a little bit. You've been in party situations more often than her and I think she's going to need a little understanding from someone who's been there."

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"I mean, it's pretty different though," Bucky started. "I chose to go to those parties and get fucked up. Becca chose not to drink and wasn't given a choice at all whether she wanted whatever it was that was given to her." He sighed and looked up at the ceiling. "She's such a good kid and probably will never want to drink alcohol or do any drugs and now someone's taken away her clean streak from her."

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"I know it's not the same, but she still may like the support. And if you don't want her clean streak taken from her, we can say that the food or something made her delirious. Or she had a reaction to something. It's worth a shot if you don't want her feeling like that is over," Steve offered.

---

"I don't want to keep the truth of what happened from her either, though," Bucky said and rubbed his face harshly. "Besides she's too smart not to figure it out and then she'd be angry at us for lying, too. We will just see how she is in the morning and talk to her about it when she's ready."

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Steve sighed and squeezed Bucky's hand. "I guess you're right," he said. "How the hell are we going to raise a kid without freaking out over everything?" Steve sighed. "I'm going to be such a damn mess. I was so afraid for Becca when she called."

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"I'll be a mess too, don't worry." Bucky snuggled up on Steve's chest and hugged him close. "Thank you so much for getting her, Steve. I'm really glad she has you in her life to love and protect her. I can't be everywhere with them at once especially with work so I'm so grateful that you were around for her."

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Steve smiled shyly. "I love them both so much," he said. "All of you. You make me so happy." He hugged him tightly and kissed his face all over. "Let's finally get some sleep."

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"Okay, let's go to sleep," Bucky said and saw that it was past four in the morning. He pulled the blankets up over them and rolled the two of them so Steve was little spoon and Bucky had his arms wrapped tightly around him.

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Steve happily slept with Bucky until morning. He woke up bright and early to make all of their breakfasts. Becca came into the kitchen groggily, rubbing at her eyes. "Hey, Becs," he said gently. "How're you feeling?"
Becca took a plate from the cabinet and started piling eggs and bacon on it. "I don't know. Better. My head still hurts a bit. I feel like I could sleep for days but I needed to get up." She poured some orange juice for herself and some for Steve and handed it to him. "Lilly and Bucky are still asleep?"

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Steve thanked her and then nodded. "Yeah, they're both sleeping right now," he said. "Lilly doesn't know about what happened last night. I figured I'd let you decide if you want her to know or not."

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Becca sat down at the table and gave Steve a calculated look. "I don't even know what happened really so I probably won't say anything to Lilly." She ate some of her eggs and looked down at her fork. "Thanks for bringing me home and getting Bucky back early."

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"You don't have to thank me," he said. "You didn't do anything wrong and this is the sort of thing family does for each other." Steve gave her a little smile. "I'm just glad that you got home safe. You were smart for calling me as soon as you could."

---

"Steve," Becca started and licked her lips nervously, "What did they put in my drink? I know that's what happened... I remember some of the boys from my class laughing off in the corner of the room when I was drinking my soda but I figured they just thought I was ugly or something."

---

Steve's face fell. "Becca, you are such a beautiful person. Anyone who thinks you're ugly is straight-up wrong." He took a sip of his juice. "It sounds like they roofied your drink," he said. "If you go to a party again, I can give you some safety tips."

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Becca shook her head and sniffled. "I'm not going to a party again. I only went because Nicole wanted me to go so badly but then all she did was drink and talk to boys anyway. At one point she was flirting with college boys like she forgot she was fifteen or something."

---

He reached out to put a hand on her shoulder. "Maybe one day will you want to go to another party – some time with close friends or something like that. You shouldn't avoid being social because of this," Steve advised. "Who hosted this party and let high school kids get drunk with college kids?"

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"I don’t know," Becca said, "I think it was one of my classmates older brothers who invited his college buddies and let his little brother invite all of us. I just went where Nicole told me to go. Won't do that again."

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"Well, that was very irresponsible of them," Steve said. "Listen, Becca... I know last night wasn't your fault at all but I want you to know that if you needed help ever - even if you got yourself into
that situation and even if you think I'll be mad - I still want you to call me or your brother. Your safety is too important to us."

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"I know," she said and smiled faintly, looking a lot like Bucky when he was trying to seem like everything was okay. "Steve, you and I are both used to Bucky and his... mistakes - to put it lightly - and how he really doesn't ever ask for help or sometimes even realize he needs it. I'm not him, I won't willingly get myself into something like this again but, if I do, I'll know when to call."

---

Steve patted her shoulder and smiled. "I'm glad," he said gently and slowly got up from the table. "Love you, Kiddo. Now I'm going to wake up the rest of the house so they can have food. I hate scraping the food off the dishes after it's gone cold."

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Bucky woke up fairly easily when Steve came in. He shuffled into Lilly's room after Steve. Lilly was fast asleep under a mountain of blankets. After Steve's attempts to get her up failed, Bucky peeled the blankets back and scooped her up in his arms gently. She clung to him like a monkey and Bucky mumbled, "Alright, no more staying up at two in the morning for you."

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Steve smiled fondly as Bucky scooped Lilly up. He wondered if their kid wouldn't be a morning person either and if Bucky would have to carry them to breakfast as well. "Yeah, she can only stay up until 1:59 in the morning."

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"I was thinking more like ten at night," Bucky corrected and gave Steve a little push. He deposited Lilly on a chair at the table and poured her some orange juice before going over to Becca and flopping on her in a hug. Bucky kissed the top of her head and squeezed her lightly.

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Becca leaned into Bucky's chest and let out a soft sigh. "Thanks, Bucky," she said quietly into his shoulder. She kissed his cheek, which was rare of her to do, and she went back to eating, trying to play it cool.

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Bucky held back the emotions that threatened to boil over and make him cry again. Instead, he quietly sat down by Steve and thanked him for the food before digging in. He ate a few bites before noticing Lilly's head drooping closer and closer to the table. "Lilly," he said and poked her in the arm. "Wake up. You're going to end up wearing your food."

---

Steve got up to dampen a rag with cool water and plopped it on top of Lilly's head. "Hey," she complained, whining at Steve as she pulled it off. She was a bit more awake now at least.
"Why, Lilly, why did you think it was a good idea to be up so late categorizing your trading cards again?" Bucky asked and watched Becca feed Raphael a bit of bacon. "Steve told me you said you couldn't sleep? Did you have nightmares again?"

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Raphael hopped up into Becca’s lap and bumped his head lightly against her chin to try and get more bacon from her. Lilly shrugged her shoulders, not wanting to admit to having more nightmares. It was embarrassing to still have trouble sleeping from it.

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"Lil, did you have bad dreams last night?" Bucky tried again and looked to Steve. Maybe they should try to have Lilly see a psychiatrist. Bucky didn't want to have to spend the money on one for himself but if someone could help Lilly then it would be worth it.

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"I just wanted to sort my cards, okay?" Lilly said in an annoyed tone at Bucky.

Steve frowned and reached out to hold his husband's hand. "Lilly, Bucky's just worried about you," Steve said gently.

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Bucky tensed up and looked down at his plate like he had been scolded. "Okay, if Lilly doesn't want help then she can deal with her nightmares on her own. One less thing for me to worry about, right, Steve?" he asked and shrugged like he was bored of this whole thing.

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"Buck..." Steve said softly. He got up and stood behind Bucky to rub his shoulders in an attempt to make him feel better. Lilly was still stubbornly keeping quiet and not apologizing. "You want to take a walk, Buck? It's a good morning for a walk."

---

"No, I'm fine," Bucky said and stood up to clear his plate regardless of having about half of his food left.

Becca gave a soft look to Steve and chewed her lip. She turned to Lilly and gently touched her arm and asked in a quiet voice, "How come you're so defensive about this today?"

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"Mind your own damn business, Becca," Lilly said grumpily. She stood up and took Raphael so she could stomp into her room. She made sure to slam the door behind her. Steve just kind of stood there, utterly dumbfounded.

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"Jesus...alright," Becca breathed with wide eyes. "She took the cat, too. I was holding him." She got up and began helping Bucky with the dishes, saying to Steve as she went, "Guess it's your turn to give it a shot if you want to. I'm out."

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"Oh yeah, that's a smart idea," Steve said sarcastically. "I'm not in the mood to get bulldozed by a twelve-year-old after she just ripped through you two." Steve said. "I'm giving her time to cool off."

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Bucky said, "She can be really sensitive about things that she thinks are embarrassing. She won't have friends over to stay the night because she's worried they will laugh at her for having a night light."

Becca nodded her head, "And I've heard her straight up lie to her friends at school about things so she seems cooler to them. She says Bucky's a musician who just got signed with this big record company and is working on his first album."

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"That's not good," Steve said with a frown. "Why's she have to lie? Bucky's amazing just the way he is. If she's embarrassed about a nightlight or Bucky, how will she handle people knowing we're gay or that she has normal, human fears like everyone else?"

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Becca and Bucky both laughed and gave Steve soft smiles like they were going to let him in on a secret. "Lilly has always been this way," Bucky said. "She doesn't lie about big things, just most little things. Whatever she can say that might make the conversation more interesting, she will say it. But she doesn't do it around us because we know what's real."

Becca added, "I don't think she does it to be deceptive, I think she just likes making a better story."

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Steve blushed when they both laughed at what he said. He crossed his arms and huffed lightly. "God, she's like the opposite of what she has to be to give herself an easier time," he groaned. "That aside, how do we help her with her nightmares?"

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"I don't know." Bucky shrugged and dried his hands. "I was thinking we could try to see if we could find a child psychiatrist for her to talk to about them. Maybe they can work some stuff out with her or give her coping mechanisms when she gets a nightmare."

---

"I think that would be the best bet. Even if she won't go, we could at least attend and try and figure out ways to help her," Steve said. "All three of us could go." He wanted everyone on board to help solve this issue.

---

Becca held up her hands and shook her head, "Count me out. It's up to you two," she said. "I'm not going."

"Alright, then just you and me, Steve," Bucky said, "If Lil won't go then we will and see what we can to help her."
"Why not?" Steve asked Becca, sounding disappointed. "It'll help Lilly. And what if you end up having a kid who needs a bit of extra help? Won't it be helpful to have gone to a child psychologist already?"

---

"I don't want to go," Becca said again. "I hate going to the doctors, even for someone else." She nodded in finality and crossed her arms. "I'll help some other way, okay?" She grabbed a soda from the fridge and popped off the top.

---

"Alright," Steve sighed. He then turned to Bucky and ran a hand over his back. "Do you want me to start looking into doctors in the area? Or do you want to be the one scoping them out?"

---

Bucky shrugged and leaned against Steve, "I don't know. Guess we can ask around. Veronica and Laura might know someone."

Just then, Lilly opened her door slowly and came out into the kitchen with Raphael. She draped the cat on her shoulder and scuffed her foot on the ground. "I'm sorry," she mumbled.

---

Steve looked over a Lilly and pet a hand over her hair. "It's okay, Kiddo," he said softly. "You just got to be more careful about what you say. You may end up hurting the people that love you the most." He nudged her lightly. "Give Bucky a hug. I think he needs it."

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Lilly trudged over to Bucky and thunked her head on his chest as she flung her arms around his middle. She mumbled something that Bucky couldn't hear and he hugged her back tightly and watched Raph jump off of her shoulder and onto the table.

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Steve laid his arm over Bucky's shoulder and kissed his temple. "I love you both. And Becca, too." He picked up Raphael and gave him a kiss on the head for good measure.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry if anyone was worried too much. I just wanted to make sure you knew that nothing horrible happened to Becca or anyone. She is safe and fine and just had a prank and a scare. We just wanted to do a scene that helped to bring Steve and Becca together a bit more.
Chapter Summary

This chapter seems them at the beginning of May about to go on their honeymoon trip to Seneca Lake.

Bucky was frantically rummaging around the house grabbing things to pack away for their trip to Seneca Lake. They were going for a full week and had a cabin reserved right on the water and he was trying to make sure he had absolutely everything ready so they could get up early and leave first thing.

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Steve came in through the door with a big old smile on his face because he got a huge truck perfect for lugging baby crib material back in. "Hey, Gorgeous," Steve said, putting a hand on Bucky's arm. "Anything I can do to help? You're running around like a chicken without his head."

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"You can help pull out my dad's fishing gear from the top of the laundry storage. There should be a few poles and a tackle box," Bucky said and folded up some extra blankets into a bag. He knew the nights by the lake could get pretty cold in early spring.

---

Steve nodded and did just that. "I can't believe it's already here, Buck. I bought extra film for our camera to make sure we wouldn't miss a memory." Steve planned on filling an entire album with this.

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"That's a good idea, Baby. Take pictures while we are still young and cute and look good in swim trunks," Bucky said. "That reminds me, I couldn't find where you keep your swim stuff. It wasn't with mine in the closet. Also, make sure you pack shoes you can hike in."

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"I don't have swim stuff," Steve said shyly. He barely knew how to swim and only learned just enough to pass the PE test to be an officer. "I figured if we went swimming I would just use my boxers or buy something up there."

---

Bucky laughed and grinned at Steve. "Come here and take off your pants. Let's see if one of mine fits you." He pulled his trunks out of his bag and held out the pair that had a large design of the American flag on it. They might be a little snug on Steve.
Steve tried the trunks on and made a face. "I feel like my balls are trapped," he said. "I think I'm going to have to buy something up there. I'll have to find some other way to get into your pants," he joked.

---

Bucky couldn't help but laugh and burst out singing, "Born on the Fourth of July!" as Steve pulled at the patriotic fabric around his balls. "I'm afraid if you got wet in those, they would never be able to come off of you. I'd have to cut you out. We can buy you some on our way."

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"Oh, quit that," Steve huffed with a blush. "I can't tell you how much flag stuff I had to deal with on my birthdays. Ma couldn't afford to buy both birthday and Fourth of July decorations, so my birthdays were always patriotic."

---

"Sorry, Stevie, I'll quit." Bucky smirked and yanked the trunks off of him in one harsh fast motion. "Alright, get your pants back on. We still need to gather some more stuff. Did you get the truck?" Bucky tossed the trunks back into his bag of clothes and zipped it back up. Other than his toothbrush and some other things he would throw in in the morning, his bag was ready to go.

---

Steve was quick to get dressed again. "Yeah, it's huge, Buck! We could fit all the lumber we need in there. I bet it's got enough room to comfortably fuck in. But we have to lay down towels or something I don't want to leave any stains or marks."

---

"Goddamn, Steve, I love you," Bucky said and leaned over to pop a kiss to his lips. "And we are definitely fucking in that truck. Late at night, under the stars, truck bed bouncing up and down with us. I love it." He had also packed a giant woven blanket that would be perfect for laying on for an outdoor fuck. He had already decided it was the official sex blanket of the trip and they hadn't even used it yet.

---

Steve chuckled when Bucky agreed and he slid a hand up his shirt to touch his back affectionately. "This is going to be the best week ever, Buck. We are going to have to find nice souvenirs to bring back, too."

---

"I'm taking my dad's old carving knives so maybe I can work on whittling something for the girls," Bucky said. "There really aren't many shops or anything around the lake. Just a small grocery store and a tackle shop."

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"You're real handy with wood, aren't you? No wonder you make such a good gay man," Steve joked. He kissed Bucky's cheek and started to check inventory for what they needed to go out. "Are there going to be many others around?"
"This early in May, there probably won't be too many people yet. Just the locals," Bucky said, "They really start coming in late May. We will probably see some old men fishing with their grand kids or having cookouts and that's about it. And the cabins are too far away from each other to really interact at all."

"That's great." Steve would like to meet some people and chat during the day but he wanted to really have quality time with Bucky at night. He kissed him slowly and played with his hair. "We will be the fishing old men one day."

"First, we will be the dads teaching their kids, then the uncles teaching their nieces and nephews, then the old men teaching their grandkids," Bucky said and tossed his bag towards the door so he could grab it easily in the morning.

Steve got a happy look on his face. "Oh, man. We probably will only ever be able to have one kid, but that kid has got to have a bunch of babies so we have plenty of grandkids. Becca and Lilly need to reproduce like Irish Catholics, too."

Bucky sighed. "I hope we get our kid before we are too old. And I hope that by some luck we can have more than one." He shook his head and smiled, "Anyway... we will hope that Becca and Lilly have kids. I'm thinking Becca will have some. Lilly might not. I'm also thinking that Becca would be the type to be a single mother because she wants to raise them alone. And I mean, either one of them could be a lesbian, who knows."

Steve nodded in agreement. He wanted to be a young enough dad to play sports with their kid - or kids. "You think Becca would get pregnant and leave her partner or do you think she's going to drive some poor guy away cause no one is perfect enough for her?"

"I'm thinking Becca would want a kid, ask a friend to help her out with the sperm thing, and then do the rest on her own. Or you know, those sperm banks that keep popping up around." Bucky shuddered, "Alright, we're done talking about this. They aren't having kids until they are forty at the earliest and they aren't dating until thirty-five."

"Hell no. They're having kids as soon as possible," Steve joked. "I want babies around. Like, ten of them." He wanted to be a dad and an uncle and a granddad so much. He drew Bucky in for a slow kiss and then added, "My coworker has a nice son around her age."

Bucky playfully shoved Steve away from him, "Steven Grant, do you want me to cancel this trip?
You keep talking like this and I'll go to Seneca alone and leave you here for a week." He crossed his arms and pouted. Some hair fell in his face and ruined the gruff illusion when he had to blow it out of the way.

---

"You could never leave me here while you go to Seneca," Steve said. He reached out to stroke his fingers over Bucky's jaw. "Alright, I'm done. I'm going to get dinner started. I think I've got everything we need packed."

---

"Punk," Bucky breathed and trailed after Steve to the kitchen. Lilly was lying in the middle of the living room with Raphael on her stomach. She was singing to The Who and staring up at the ceiling. Becca was kneeling by the coffee table trying her best to put together a puzzle of the Golden Gate Bridge.

---

Steve smiled as he saw the two of them minding themselves. He gave them both a kiss on the head as he passed by. "You guys excited for a fun week with my mom? She's excited to spend time with you."

---

Becca pointed at a stack of neatly folded clothes on the end of the couch. "Miss Sarah said she would teach me how to patch up the rips in my clothes. Also, she's teaching me how to make some desserts too."

Lilly sat up and Raph jumped off of her in surprise. "She told me that she's going to take us out on a day in Manhattan and go to the Central Park Zoo."

---

"That sounds real great, you guys," Steve said happily to them both. He began to pull out things to cook. "You make her really happy, you know that? I know she loves me, but she always wanted daughters. Something tells me she's got other surprises for you this week, too."

---

"Lilly and I are easy to like." Becca shrugged and smiled.

Bucky said, "Just make sure you get to school on time, and you go to bed on time, and you are good for her. I don't want the first thing she says when we come back to be, 'Thank God you're home.'"

---

Steve seasoned the chicken before throwing it on the pan. "They will be fine. My mom knows how to lay down the law. I didn't become a perfect child out of nowhere."

---

"I was born perfect," Lilly squeaked from her spot on the carpet, earning her a pillow thrown at her from Becca.

"Lilly," Bucky started, "as someone who used to help mom give you baths and change your diapers
when you were a baby and I was in middle school, I can tell you for certain that you were not born perfect. You were a wiggly, angry baby who shit on me while I was washing the little tufts of baby hair on your tiny head."

---

Steve barked out a laugh. He could imagine a teenaged Bucky struggling to help his parents take care of an unruly baby Lilly. "I bet Lilly made the messiest poops too. She probably didn't have the decency to give you guys somewhat of an easy job to clean up."

---

"Okay, okay, stop it!" Lilly grumbled and rolled away from the two men. "You guys suck." She pouted and changed the record to the first Tears for Fears album, which she had recently decided she liked a lot.

Bucky helped Steve cook and just did whatever was asked of him and pretty soon they were all gathered around the table sharing family dinner before they were apart for a week. Bucky tried not to think about being away from the girls that long. The only times he had been away from them for more than a day was the two times he had been in the hospital.

---

Steve looked so happy to be here. He gave Bucky an excited, little smile and chattered happily during dinner. When it was time to tuck the girls in, Steve knew Bucky would be a bit emotional because this was the last time he would tuck them in for a week. "Take your time, Beautiful," Steve said gently. "I'll be in our room."

---

Bucky nodded and watched Steve go before ushering Lilly into her room. Becca went with him and they both sat on the side of Lilly's bed and talked for a bit before Lilly's eyes started to get droopy and sleepy. When Bucky went with Becca to her room, he asked her, "You going to be okay with me gone for a week? You'll be in charge of the apartment and taking care of Lilly and Raphael. Miss Sarah will be here, of course, but you're the top Barnes for a week."

---

Becca laid down and snuggled under her blankets. "Why wouldn't I be okay?" she asked quietly, though there was something in her face that showed that she didn't like having Bucky gone for so long. At least at the hospital, he was only a half hour walk away. Seneca was a far drive.

---

"Well, Becs," Bucky sighed and tucked his legs underneath him on the bed. "I know you've done a lot to take care of me and Lilly in the past four years. You've done a fuck ton more than you should have had to and that's my fault." He paused and pet her hair gently. "But our little monster will be all yours for a week and the only phone near us is the one in Fred's tackle shop so we may not get a message immediately if you call." Bucky bit his lip and looked at his sister. He was pretty antsy about leaving them. "Maybe we should just not go. Just wait for the summer and then all of us can go."

---

Becca leaned into Bucky a bit. "No, don't cancel your trip," she said. "You and Steve have been
looking forward to this for months." She sighed. "Just drive safe, okay? And... wear safety vests when you're fishing. And don't do anything stupid."

---

"I'll try not to do anything stupid." Bucky giggled and gave Becca a hug. "I love you so fucking much, Rebecca Barnes. You're my strong, careful, protective baby sister and I've loved every day getting to see you grow up. Mom and Dad have got to be ridiculously proud of how much you've done to help me since they've been gone."

---

Becca started to hug Bucky but when he got all sappy and brought up their parents, she squirmed so he would let her go. "Alright, alright," she mumbled. "That's enough, I get it."

---

Bucky released Becca and gave her arm a squeeze before getting up. "Alright, sleep well. Steve and I will be gone before you wake up and Sarah will be here soon after that. We gave her Steve's key for the week so she can see herself in and out in case you are still asleep." He went to the door and said that he loved her one more time before heading back to Steve.

---

Steve sat up when he saw Bucky enter the room. "Hey, Handsome," Steve greeted gently. "How're they doing? Are you sure you're ready to go away?" As much as Steve wanted to go, he would never guilt Bucky into doing something he wasn't ready for.

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"Yeah," Bucky smiled pathetically and crawled into bed with Steve. "I just might be a wreck on the second night we are there and end up going to Fred's in the middle of the night to make a phone call. I know where the old bastard keeps a spare key to the shop."

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Steve kissed Bucky's jaw before nuzzling at his scruff. "You know I'll never get grumpy at you for trying to call your sisters. But what makes you think Fred keeps the key in the same place he did years ago?"

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"He's kept it in the same rusted watering can on the stoop since he opened the place in '59. Most the old locals know about it and my dad certainly knew about it," Bucky said and tossed his shirt on the end of the bed. "It'll be there, don't worry."

---

"If you say so," Steve chuckled. He pet his hand over Bucky's chest. "I'm so excited to finally see this place tomorrow. It's kind of like a dream come true. You're always happy when you're talking about it."

---

"It's perfect, Steve," Bucky said and put his forehead on Steve's. "I'm so glad I get to go back and
especially with you. It's so much quieter out there than in the city and it's so beautiful and I haven't
gone swimming in a lake in way too long."

---

Steve looked into Bucky's eyes with a happy smile. "Well, now we get to spend a whole week
together doing all the stuff we can't in a big city." He kissed him gently. "Let's get some rest. We
have a big day tomorrow."
Bucky was woken up by Steve lightly brushing his hand through his hair and kissing his face. "Morning," Bucky hummed and kissed Steve on the lips. "Ready to go when you are, Baby. Just need to brush my teeth and grab some things then we can leave."

---

Steve nodded and stole one last kiss before getting out of bed. He'd already woken up a half hour ago to wash up and put their things in the car. He left a card on the table for both Lilly and Becca saying how he would miss them through the week, figuring they would have had enough mushy feelings in person from Bucky the night before.

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Sarah had arrived earlier than expected - not wanting the girls to be alone - and she saw Bucky and Steve off. Steve drove and Bucky held the map and told Steve where to go since Bucky couldn't drive anyway. The truck had a cassette deck and Bucky had brought a small selection for the two of them. He also brought his guitar because Steve had requested it.

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Steve found the drive pretty relaxing. He rolled the windows down once they got out of the city and glanced over at Bucky with a soft happy little look. "So what's the first thing you want to do when we get there?" Steve asked.

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"I say we drop our stuff off at our cabin then go over to Fred's and the market and get supplies. I wonder if Fred and his wife will recognize me or not," Bucky said and held his hand out for Steve's. "How's that sound to you?"

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"That sounds perfect," Steve said. He reached over and laced their fingers together. "So what are you going to introduce me as?" He wanted to be on the same page on their story if they weren't going to tell the truth.

---

"Well," Bucky cleared his throat. He was hoping to push this off until they were unpacking at the cabin at least. "I don't know yet. My first thought was to just tell it like it is and be strong against opposition. But then I was thinking about how we will be so far from home and any emergency rooms so if anything did happen, we wouldn't be able to get the girls and we might not be able to get the help we need anyway. Of course, that's worst-case scenario. A milder case would be, we aren't allowed in the shops and we are stuck in the cabin for a week with no fishing supplies and not much to do."

---

Steve was admittedly a bit afraid to risk another trip to the hospital. As much as he wanted to be out with Bucky, it wasn't a risk he was willing to take. "We can say we are friends. And I've never been fishing before, so you're taking me there."
Bucky nodded slowly. "Is that okay with you? Because I mean... I'll do what you want to do." He was just worried that the locals around the lake wouldn't be receptive to them even if they remembered Bucky from when he was a kid. Sometimes that even made reactions worse.

"I'd rather hide what we are than see you hurt again," Steve said. "Maybe some other time in the future, we can say who I really am to you. But I'm going there to enjoy my time with you, not look over my shoulder."

Bucky chewed his lip and then leaned across the middle seat to kiss Steve's cheek quickly. "I love you and I don't want you to forget that even though we won't be able to be open around others on this trip, okay? We are going to have an amazing time in spite of that. And I'm sure Fred and Mindy will like you a lot."

Steve nodded and focused on driving again. "Oh yeah?" he asked with a little smile. "And why would you think that is? Would it be my charming personality? My good sense of humor? My modesty?"

"Maybe a little of all those things." Bucky laughed. "And you're good with people and having good conversations and stuff. And you're sweet and adorable. And they will probably like that you're a cop - Fred's kids are all firemen or EMTs so you'll be in the same category."

Steve blushed at the compliments. "Oh, they are? Are they handsome?" he teased. He gave Bucky's hand a squeeze to show that he was joking. "They sound nice. I wonder if I'll get funny stories out of them from when you were a kid."

"You gonna trade me in for someone who isn't a dirty hippie who works at a record shop and eats cereal for dinner?" Bucky asked then added, "They might have some stories of little Bucky. Mindy used to make me cookies to take on the drive home so I'm sort of hoping she will do that again."

"Yeah, I'm thinking that dirty firemen are my type now," Steve joked casually. "Mindy’s cookies might be great, but they can’t be better than my mom's. She makes the best chocolate chip cookies I ever had."

"You know, Steve, Babe," Bucky pinched his arm lightly. "You say that about a lot of things but then you never bring me the food to try... I need to experience this food of your mom's that's literally the best you've ever had."
"Well, you like my cooking, right? I learned it from her. Now imagine my cooking but a thousand times better and that's my mom's. You can ask the girls when we get back," Steve said.

"I do like your cooking, that's true," Bucky said. It took them about another hour to get up to the lake but pretty soon they were pulling up to their cabin. The second Steve put the car in park, Bucky leaped out of the truck, ran to the edge of the lake, and stuck his hand in it to feel the water. It was pretty cold but he was still going to swim in it.

"Wow, this is really gorgeous," Steve said as he admired the view. "We get a whole week of this?" He started to unload their things. "What's the inside like, Buck? It looks so much bigger than our apartment."

"It's about double our apartment, Steve," Bucky said and trotted back over to help Steve pull their bags from the truck. "This place is amazing. I can't believe I'm back here, finally. Dad would have loved being here with the two of us."

When they walked inside, Steve's jaw dropped at how beautiful it all was. "Holy crap," he said. "All this space for just the two of us? This is amazing!" He dropped their bags and picked Bucky up to spin him around once. "You have to show me around."

Bucky squeaked when he was lifted off the ground and he clung to Steve. "Okay, okay. Calm yourself, Stevie." He pointed a finger towards the short hallway, "The bedroom is the door on the left and the game room is on the right. Kitchen is through the game room and the spare bathroom is tucked over there as well."

"I don't want to calm myself. We're on our honeymoon!" Steve said excitedly. He pulled him in for a kiss and started to explore the place like a kid on Christmas. "There's a game room? Oh my god, that's so cool!"

"Yeah, it's got a pool table that flips over into a ping pong table and some old timey board games." Bucky lead Steve to the game room and showed him the pool table before pulling him back out into the hall and towards the bedroom. "And we will sleep in here," he said and opened the door.

"Why do they add all the cool stuff inside? I thought we had to stay outside," Steve said but as soon as Bucky showed him to the bedroom, Steve tackled him to the bed and started kissing him like crazy.

"Steve!" Bucky giggled and flopped on the bed underneath his husband. He kissed him back and wrapped his legs and arms around him. "You like it here, Baby? Are you excited we get to be here alone for a whole week?" Bucky licked into Steve's mouth and kissed him for a moment longer then bit his lip gently and pulled back.

"I love it. I love this place. I love you." Steve smiled down at him and moaned softly at the sight of Bucky beneath him. "I'm so glad you wanted to take me here. We are going to have so many good memories to look back on. Starting with this one." He rolled their hips together.

Bucky's breath caught in his throat and he looked into Steve's eyes with heavy desire. "We need to get unpacked and go to the tackle shop." He nearly groaned out as Steve slowly grinded against him. "Steve... Baby... my sweet perfect husband."

"We can make it quick," Steve said. "We haven't had sex in a few days, it'll be real easy to make you come." He was like a goddamn teenager. "So I'll get us off and then we'll go to the tackle shop."

"I feel like I should be a little offended," Bucky said and then gasped as Steve's fingers trailed down his sides. "But I can't seem to find it in me." He paused and breathed deeply, unable to help how we rutted up into Steve as well. "How are we doing this? Hand jobs, blow jobs? The lube is still in my bag and I don't want to stop to go get it."

"Just a quick hand job," Steve said. He unzipped the front of both of their pants and shoved their clothes down so he could take both of their cocks in his hand. "We'll use lube some other time."

"Okay, now I'm on board," Bucky confessed as his dick hardened quickly and he was grasped in Steve's strong hand with Steve's own cock pressed against his. Bucky took Steve's other hand and gently pulled it to his lips. He took two of Steve's fingers into his mouth and started to suck them sloppily.

Steve let out a little groan as he watched Bucky sucking on his fingers. He started to thrust into his hand, hardening with each movement as his dick rubbed against Bucky's. "You're so goddamn sexy, it's criminal."

Bucky pulled Steve's fingers from his mouth with a wet pop. "You're a cop. Do something about it," he challenged and then directed Steve's wet fingers under his shirt and to Bucky's taught nipples. He looked at Steve with heavy lids and made low keening noises every few seconds to excite Steve a little more.
Steve leaned down and bit a mark onto Bucky's neck where he could hide it if he wanted. "I plan to." He pinched Bucky's nipples lightly before rolling them between his fingers. He stroked their dicks faster, gasping Bucky's name lightly. "Brought handcuffs."

Bucky's whole body jolted up and he gripped Steve's neck lightly with his hands. "Oh. My. God. Are you going to use them on me? Please, Steve, you can't mention it and then not really mean it." He rubbed his thumb up Steve's cheek and over his lip lightly. "Oh my god, please tell me we're going to use them."

Steve didn't want to use the handcuffs on a regular basis because they were city property but he figured he could make an exception for their honeymoon. "Tonight," he promised, laughing a little at how excited Bucky got over it. He rolled his hips against Bucky's and let out a soft groan. "You'll love it."

"Yes, I fucking will," Bucky said and pulled Steve's face down for a kiss. "Oh, god, Steve, I love you." He was getting closer to orgasm as Steve worked his hand over them. Bucky was betting he was going to come first especially now that Steve had him excited for handcuffed sex later that night.

Steve kissed him back vehemently and fucked his hand until he felt his orgasm crashing down on him. Steve shoved Bucky's shirt up so he wouldn't stain it as he came all over his hand and Bucky's stomach.

Bucky followed after Steve quickly and shot up over his fingers. He moaned low and long as he came and then grabbed for Steve's hand to suck their combined come from his fingers one by one. After he had cleaned his husband off, he sat up to kiss him again and lick his neck lovingly.

Steve wrapped his arms strongly around Bucky after and hugged him tight. "Fuck, I love you so much. We were put on this earth for each other."

"Mhmm," Bucky hummed in agreement and kissed Steve's neck. "It's like my ring says, I'm with you till the end of the line. And you're my giant goof of an officer and the best husband a guy could ask for forever."

Steve looked so goddamned happy to be with Bucky here, all alone where they could truly enjoy each other. "So are we going to go to the tackle shop now, Romeo?" Steve asked with a grin.
"Yes," Bucky said and reluctantly rolled out from under Steve to get up. "We need some supplies and some groceries." He zipped himself back up in his pants and ruffled a hand through his hair before slipping on a light jacket and waiting for Steve.

---

Steve stood up and stole another kiss before heading outside with Bucky. "Do we walk or do we have to drive there?" Steve asked. He gasped when he saw a deer at the edge of the trees and pointed it out to Bucky.

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Bucky chuckled lightly at Steve and said, "It's a lot different than being in the city. More animals, more nature." He headed towards the truck, tossing the keys to Steve as he went, "It's not that bad of a walk but let's drive since I don't know what all we might buy and I don't want to have to carry a lot back."

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"I've never seen a deer in real life before," Steve said. He got into the car and then turned it on. "Have you ever seen a bear here? I saw one at the zoo once. They're huge," he rambled.

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"I haven't seen a bear here, no. I don't think they are around this area - mostly just in the Catskills. This is a little far north for them." Bucky helped lead Steve to the small tackle shop and the grocery. They were fairly little buildings, more like oversized shacks and they had paper signs out front that said 'OPEN' in bright red letters.

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"Well, this is quaint," Steve said pleasantly. "Shame that there's no bears, though." He held the door open for Bucky to the shop and followed shortly. "What about otters?"

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"You wanted to see bears?" Bucky asked, confused.

Before he could say anything else, Fred Watkins popped his head around the corner of the register and said, "By god, it's little Bucky Barnes all grown up!" He banged on the wall that divided the tackle shop from the grocery and yelled, "Mindy! Get over here, Jumpy Jamie is back!"

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Steve was startled by Fred, but he looked at Bucky with a dumb smirk. "Jumpy Jamie?" He wanted the story behind that. Steve gave the couple a little wave. "I brought him back in one piece," he joked.

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Bucky elbowed Steve in the ribs when he mocked him for the nickname. Mindy gave Bucky a big shaky hug and Fred shook his hand. "Fearless Fred!" Bucky smiled and gestured to Steve, "This is Steve. Hasn't gone fishing a day in his life. Poor city boy doesn't leave Brooklyn but to head to Manhattan." It was easy to morph into the way of speaking up here and Bucky felt a little giddy and free and like he was a kid again.
Steve gave them both a pleasant smile. "Bucky wouldn't stop telling me how great this place was, so I figured I had to check it out. This is the furthest I've been from home, I think. I saw a deer for the first time in my life today. That was nice."

"Bucky will teach you how to fish real nice." Fred nodded. "His daddy taught him right so you're in good hands, Son." Fred paused and looked behind the two of them briefly, "Where is Old George anyway? We haven't seen the two of you for just about five years."

Bucky gave a quick look to Steve and then cleared his throat, "My dad died five years ago in June."

Fred's expression became immediately apologetic and Mindy got teary-eyed. "Oh, I'm so sorry," he said. "Is your mom alright?"

Steve frowned and said, "She died with him." He didn't want Bucky to have to be the one to break that news too. "Bucky's been taking care of his sisters all on his own ever since."

Bucky nodded and smiled weakly at Mindy and Fred. "I'm sorry I haven't been back since then. It was just pretty hard to think of coming here without my dad. You know as well as I do how much Old George loved it here."

Mindy held up a finger and trotted back over to the grocery side and brought back her lost and found box. She pulled a book out and offered it to Bucky. "This was your father's. I've been keeping it around waiting for him to come back. There's a bookmark halfway through - I don't think he finished it."

Steve looked at the book and then patted Bucky's shoulder. "He'll take good care of it. I'm actually pretty impressed that you held onto it for that long." This couple was pretty incredible. "Do you guys want some time to catch up? I can wait outside," Steve offered.

"No, no, heavens, I'm sure you came for something in particular," Mindy said, "We will let you get back to it. Bucky, Honey, if you forget where something is, just ask." She retired to the grocery side again and Fred went back to reading the paper.

Bucky dragged Steve around the tackle shop for a bit and then the grocery, getting anything they might need. They would probably be back sometime but he still wanted to be prepared. Bucky was pretty quiet on the short drive back over to the cabin as he flipped through the book and saw his dad's distinct handwritten notes in the margins.

Steve let Bucky be for a bit, not wanting to disturb him in his reminiscing, but halfway through the drive home, he kept glancing over at Bucky as he flipped through the book. "What's it say in there?" Steve asked. "What's the book about, anyway?"
"Uh, it's a World War II novel. About a U.S. naval lieutenant in France," Bucky said and closed the book and held it close to him. "Looks like it was a gift from one of my dad's war buddies." Bucky had never talked to Steve about his father's time in the military. He was a naval officer himself in the Vietnam War until he was honorably discharged after a bad accident that damaged his spine pretty severely.

"What? You never told me your dad was a military man. My dad was one too," Steve said. "Tell me more about him. You've told me that he liked reading and was pretty quiet. But I want to know as much as you want to tell."

They arrived back at the cabin and Bucky started unloading what they had bought as he talked about his dad. "Well, he was in the navy. I have his uniform in the back of our closet - don't know if you've seen it. He was a commander. Almost made it to captain but he was shot in the back three times in Vietnam and they discharged him. He was almost paralyzed but managed to recover with a lot of physical therapy. I was ten, Becca was just born before he went back to the front and got hurt." Bucky paused and made eye contact with Steve. When Steve had got shot on the job, Bucky couldn't help but worry he might be paralyzed. Bucky figured his dad got lucky but Steve might not. He was grateful everyday that Steve made it out of that whole thing okay.

"I saw the uniform but I thought it might have been your grandpa's or something since you hadn't mentioned your dad being in the military," Steve had a guilty look on his face when Bucky locked eyes with him as he mentioned his dad nearly being paralyzed. He knew what Bucky was thinking and he felt bad for having Bucky so worried. "Did your parents tell you what their wedding was like? Where did they go for their honeymoon?"

"I saw pictures of their wedding. It was pretty small. Not as small as ours, of course," Bucky said and stocked the fridge and cabinets with their food. "They didn't take a honeymoon. Mom was pregnant with me at the time and my dad was shipping out for his second tour so they didn't get much time together until my dad took leave to come home when I was about to be born."

Steve washed down the countertops and stole a quick kiss from Bucky. "Man, he must have been the proudest dad in the world when you were born," he said. "Do you have any pictures of when they first took you home from the hospital? I bet you were adorable as all hell."

"We might have something. We can look when we get home. But mostly I think it's just elementary school Bucky." Bucky shrugged and leaned against the wall and watched Steve. "For the record, you call me 'Jamie' once on this trip, and you're sleeping outside."

Steve walked over and placed his hands on Bucky's hips. "I'm still waiting to hear the explanation
for what 'Jumpy Jamie' means." He slid his hands up his sides. "You don't look like a 'Jamie'."

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Bucky sighed in exasperation. "I was eight, my dad was taking a nap and Fred decided to take me hunting. Turns out, I hate guns. The first shot from Fred had me jumping out of my skin and running back to the cabin," Bucky said and crossed his arms. "I've been 'Jumpy Jamie' since then. And no one but Fred can call me that and not get a punch to the gut so don't test me."

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"That's adorable," Steve said, giving him a loving smile. "Did you hide under your dad's bed?" he teased. Steve kissed up Bucky's neck affectionately. "I wonder if our son or daughter will be afraid of guns. I never went hunting before, but I know how to use a pistol."

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Bucky flicked Steve in the head at his teasing. "Our kids won't have to worry about it because they won't touch a gun unless they decide to become an officer like you or go into the military." He pulled Steve's hips closer to his and put his hands in Steve's back pockets. They were all unpacked now so all there was to do was decide what to do first on their first day.

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"They can't do either of those. They need a nice, safe job," Steve said. He drew him into a slow kiss and smiled. "Can we go fishing today? Or maybe just take the boat into the lake so we can look in the water? And maybe at the sky? I'd love to do that."

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"We can do whatever you want to do, Love," Bucky said and kissed Steve. "This is our week. If you want to go out in the boat and look at the nature we can do that." He let go of Steve and ushered him towards the bedroom. "First, I have a present for you."

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"A present?" Steve asked. "But you've already picked out all the stuff for our honeymoon. You've already given me so much." He ran a hand over his back and nibbled at his ear. "So what is it?"

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"Okay, it's not much it's just a little thing so don't get yourself too excited," Bucky said and maneuvered Steve's hands gingerly over his eyes so he wouldn't look yet. Bucky sifted through his bag and grabbed the new sketch book and pack of assorted art pencils that he had bought for Steve. "You can open now," he said and held them out for Steve. "Thought you might want these in case you wanted to draw some of the scenery or something."

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When Bucky allowed him to open his eyes, Steve smiled brightly and hugged him tight. "This is perfect, Baby. I'm going to fill this up all week. I think I'm going to take it out on the boat with us." He flipped through the book and touched the papers to feel the grain of it.
"I know it's not much but..." Bucky said and nuzzled into Steve's neck. "You want to take the camera with us too?" He started pulling his clothes from his bag and searched around for something to wear in the boat. He settled on a pair of ratty jean shorts and an old tight tank top.

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"It's everything to me, Buck," Steve said as he played with Bucky's hair. "You're so perfect." He stole a kiss and said, "I'll bring the sketchbook and you can bring the camera." He watched him change clothes with interest. "What's the biggest fish you ever caught in the lake?"

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"Once caught a fish that was ten inches long and weighed about twelve pounds," Bucky said. "I was never as good as my dad and he always got the really big ones. I also don't quite know the names of the different species of fish." He grabbed the camera and waited at the door to the bedroom. "Are you changing or wearing that?"

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Steve looked down at himself and said, "I think this is fine to wear." He wasn't dressed fancy but he had good clothes on. "Come on, let's head out already," Steve said excitedly before hurrying out of the cabin.

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"Goddammit, Steve, wait!" Bucky called after him. "We need to get the boat from the shed!" He hustled to catch up with Steve and directed him to the back of the cabin where there was a short shed that housed things like outdoor furniture and the boat during the winter. Bucky started dragging the boat out of the shed and towards the lake.

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Steve was a smart guy but he was fucking clueless with anything that didn't exist in the city. He helped Bucky carry the boat over and hopped in once it was in the water but it started to shake dangerously. "Shit! What'd I do?" He put his hands on the sides to steady it.

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"Steve, it’s called water displacement." Bucky laughed at him and carefully got into the boat and took the oars. He wasn't very good with the motorized skiff so he chose to grab the one that was manual. "Just sit and don't move too much," Bucky said and started rowing them out past the shallows and into the deeper part of the lake.

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Steve spent hours on the boat with Bucky just drawing and lounging out across the length of it with his head in his lap. He drew a few pictures of the trees and of Bucky and once the sun started to set, he finally decided that he was ready to go in. "Thank you again for taking me here, Buck."

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Bucky yawned and then gave Steve a pleased kiss. "You're welcome, Baby. Thanks for being willing to come here on our honeymoon." He rowed them back into land, hopped out of the boat quickly, and started pulling it onto the grass with Steve still in it. It exerted a lot of his energy and he couldn't help but fall back on his ass once Steve was safety on shore again.
Steve laughed when Bucky plopped on the ground. He got out of the boat and carried Bucky bridal style to the cabin. "So what do you want for dinner tonight, my beautiful husband?"

Bucky wrapped his arms around Steve's neck as he was carried in and deposited on the table in the kitchen. "We can have whatever. I'm okay with eggs and toast. Or cereal does sound really good right now. But I know that makes your face scrunch up in this exasperated sigh like, 'Why did I decide to marry this man?'"

Steve made that exact face as Bucky described it in reaction to Bucky asking for cereal. "You're lucky I love you," Steve sighed in a defeated tone. He pressed his lips to Bucky's before going to grab a bowl, milk, and cereal for his husband.

"You better," Bucky quipped and made himself a bowl. He was so pleased that he was finally here with Steve and he shamelessly watched Steve's every movement and stared too much at his ass just because he could and no one was around to tell him to snap out of it or get a room.

Once their bowls were poured, Steve sat down next to Bucky and began to eat. "So do you want me to be the one fucking you when you have the handcuffs on? Or do you want me to ride you?"

Bucky choked on his cereal and stared at Steve. "Well..." he started. "I guess it depends on whether you are going to let us use them more than once? Or maybe, well, honestly, I really want you to take me hard and fast while my hands are cuffed behind me. Ass up, face down, or stuck on my side." He bit his lip and adjusted his cock in his jean shorts, already getting a little aroused. "And then if you let us use them again then you can cuff my arms up above me on the headboard and ride me."

Steve loved being able to still surprise Bucky. "Sorry, Babe, we're only going to use it once." But when Bucky looked a bit disappointed, Steve nudged him. "I'm just kidding, Handsome. We'll get to both."

"That's not very nice, you know." Bucky pouted. "Maybe I won't let you fuck me after all. You'll just have to sit and watch me naked and writhing on the bed, arms behind me, body ready for you but you can't have it. How's that sound to you? Sounds pretty fun to me." Bucky grinned at Steve and gave him a cheeky wink.

"You wouldn't last like that without asking me to fuck you," Steve said. "I waited a lot longer than you did to have sex, so that makes me the patient one," he teased. Steve finished his cereal and threw an arm around Bucky's shoulders. "Take that."
Bucky considered for half a second just making it a challenge and taking him on, but he knew Steve was right. He was also incredibly frustrated that Steve brought up the fact that he waited to be in love to have sex. It felt like Steve always shoved that in his face when he was trying to get his way or maybe trying to put Bucky down. He gave him a nasty face. "You know what, Steve... just...fine," Bucky grumbled and crossed his arms. "You better fuck me really well tonight."

Steve face fell when Bucky gave him that look. "What? Buck, Baby, I didn't mean to get you mad," he said. "Was what I said that was upsetting?" He hadn't meant for his words to come off so distasteful to Bucky.

"You just always bring up the fact that you didn't have sex with anyone before me and sometimes I feel like you resent me for not doing the same." Bucky sighed and spun his spoon around his bowl absently. "I didn't know I was going to meet you or that there was anyone even out there I was supposed to be with forever."

"Baby, I don't resent you for that," Steve said, reaching for his hand. "I'm happy that I saved myself for you, but I don't resent that you had sex with other people. I had no idea that joking about it would upset you." He brought Bucky's hand to his lips so he could kiss the back of it. "I'm sorry I made you mad."

"I don't know..." Bucky sighed. "It's fine. I'm sorry, Steve. I shouldn't have gotten mad. It's just between the fuck-ups and bringing home guys all the time and being sexually reckless and, I guess, somewhat resenting myself for all of it... I just assumed you did since you've said something about it just about a hundred times."

"I agree that it wasn't a smart thing to do what you did, but I'm not upset or resentful," Steve said gently. "And now I get to know that I'm the only fuck-up you're ever going to take home from now on." Steve kissed him gently. "Also, you had experience with more people but still chose me."

"You're not a fuck-up I take home, you dweeb." Bucky rested his forehead to Steve's. "You're the only good decision I ever made. And I'm really sorry I got mad. I've just been thinking about that a lot and I projected my own frustration at myself towards you." He held Steve's face in his hands and chuckled. "See? I don't need a therapist; I just got to get really mad at myself and then get introspective. I got this."

"You've made other good decisions, too, you know. I just happen to be one of them." Steve played with Bucky's hair and kissed him slowly. He gently brushed his fingertips over his jaw before saying, "Now how about you get naked in the bedroom while I do dishes."
"Yes, Sir," Bucky said and sauntered off to the bedroom happily. First, he grabbed the official sex blanket of the trip and folded it neatly before laying it out on the foot of the bed. Then Bucky stripped down and tossed his clothes into the wooden hamper in the closet. He tried looking through Steve's stuff to find the cuffs but he came up short and just decided to wait for Steve to get them. He did grab the lube and set it on the bedside table. He was tempted to finger himself open while he waited so he would be ready for Steve's cock immediately, but he knew Steve didn't like when he did that so he refrained.

Steve only took a few minutes to clean up and he came into the bedroom soon after. "Hey there, Beautiful," he said pleasantly. "I bet you tried looking for the handcuffs." Steve had an obnoxious smirk on his face and he pulled them from his back pocket, where he had them the whole time.

"You can't prove anything, Officer," Bucky mocked back and leaned casually against the pillows with his legs spread wide. He pulled his hair back in a ponytail and hovered his hand over his dick, waiting to see if Steve would stop him from touching himself or let him get hard watching Steve undress.

Steve's hand moved to touch Bucky's dick but he decided to let him have his fun as he strolled. Steve gave Bucky a bit of a show, slowly pulling his shirt over his head and playing with his nipples a little bit before pushing his pants down.

It didn't take very long of watching Steve and jerking himself before Bucky's cock was straining out towards his husband and dribbling pre-come lightly. Bucky moaned and licked his lips as he watched, wanting to touch him but also loving the view. "My god, Steve, stop being so gorgeous. It's not fair."

Once Steve was naked, he got on his knees in front of Bucky so he could lap the pre-come off the tip of his dick. "Speak for yourself, Sexy," Steve hummed. He slowly took Bucky's cock in his mouth and swallowed him down once before coming up and giving Bucky's side a little swat. "Hands behind your back, Baby."

Bucky's eyes flashed and he scooted forward quickly and readily put his hands behind him for Steve to cuff him up. His breathing became more erratic and shallow with his excitement and he had to squeeze his eyes shut for a moment to calm down as he waited for his husband to restrain him.

"Christ, you're so easy to work up," Steve said as he cuffed Bucky's hands. Once Bucky was restrained, he moved him so his ass was up in the air. "You have the right to remain silent," Steve snickered as he smoothed his hands over his back and ass.
"Oh my god," Bucky gasped out once he was in position with his ass up and his hands cuffed securely behind him. "I'm going to ignore the cheesiness of that cop line and forgive you for being so unoriginal." He looked behind him at Steve and raised an eyebrow, "but I don't think you want me to remain silent, do you, Baby? You want to hear me screaming your name and moaning for your cock, right?"

"You're right. I don't want you to keep quiet," Steve said. He grabbed Bucky's ass and spread it open so he could dive his head down and lick his hole. He pushed his tongue inside Bucky's ass and let out a low moan before popping off of him again. "This week is going to be so good."

"Alright, you don't talk, I talk," Bucky breathed out quickly. "You eat me out, I'll talk." He was a little impatient already having had to wait all day since Steve told him about the handcuffs. Now that they were finally on him, he just wanted Steve to fuck him deep and rough and take control and he wanted it now.

Steve rolled his eyes but he obeyed. He spent a few minutes eating Bucky out and getting him nice and ready. He slicked up two fingers and pushed them inside his hole, taking his time opening him up. "The more time I take now, the harder I'll fuck you," Steve promised. "Do you want me to pull on your hair too, Baby?"

"Yes, fuck, yes please," Bucky whimpered and pushed back towards Steve. "Pull the cuffs, pull my hair, slap my ass, bite me - anything you feel like doing. I'm yours, Baby. Take as much control of me as you feel comfortable doing, okay?" He wanted Steve to exert some dominance over him but he also didn't want Steve going further than he felt okay with doing. He knew that Steve was fairly sensitive to feeling like he was abusing Bucky when they had rough sex and Bucky didn't want to push Steve at all - especially not on their honeymoon.

Steve pulled back and sucked a hickey onto the curve of Bucky's ass. He gave it a wet kiss before smacking the spot once. Steve was too sensitive to go too rough with his husband but he could also push his boundaries a little for Bucky's sake. "Tell me how much you want my cock, Buck," he said in a low voice as he slicked his dick up with lube.

Bucky tucked his face into the side of the pillow and caught a glimpse of Steve prepping his dick out of the corner of his eye. "Jesus, Baby, sometimes I want you so bad I can't breathe. I get so needy for you and my ass aches to be stretched and ruined by you. I never get tired of having your cock deep inside me and I get excited every time I see you hard for me, just like it's the first time all over again. Our first time was perfect and every time since has been perfect and I need so you bad right now, I might scream."
It was never a challenge to get hard for Bucky but hearing him talk about how bad he wanted him did the trick even better. "Fuck yeah." Steve slid a hand down Bucky's spine. "Gonna give you the best night ever." He pushed his dick in balls deep with one quick sharp thrust. Steve gasped and wanted to grind slowly against Bucky's ass but he knew his husband wanted to be fucked hard. He grabbed his waist and pulled back before slamming his hips forward over and over again, going from zero to a hundred in seconds and making the bed creak.

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"Fuck, Steve!" Bucky yelled and had to rely on Steve's grip on his middle to keep him balanced since his hands were pulled behind him and his legs were already shaking. "Shit, son of bitch, oh my god," he rambled into the pillow and squeezed his eyes shut. Steve hadn't railed Bucky this hard much before and Bucky was having a difficult time focusing on anything but the shocks of sensations going through his body as his prostrate was hit multiple times a second.

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Steve didn't slow down because, despite the outburst, Bucky didn't look to be in pain nor did he ask him to stop. However, he did give his side a small smack to grab his attention. "Want me to slow down, Beautiful?" Steve was already breathless from how hard he was working Bucky's ass.

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Bucky couldn't speak except groaning and panting and he tried to give Steve a look that conveyed how much he loved this but that Steve could slow down if he needed to. Steve was pressing the chain of the handcuffs into Bucky's back and the sweat from Bucky's skin was making the metal slip around. He was more than likely going to have marks on his skin.

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Steve could feel the sweat droplets roll down his back but he showed no signs of slowing down. He grabbed Bucky's ponytail and pulled his head back so he could kiss him messily. "You feel amazing," he breathed out before pressing Bucky's cheek down against the mattress. "Gonna make you come so hard."

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Bucky's heart jumped and his cock twitched when Steve pulled his hair. "I love you so fucking much," he managed to gasp into the mattress. Bucky could feel himself getting close but he really, really didn't want to come yet. Just knowing that he was going to come without his dick being touched was already getting him too worked up. "Love you, love you, Steve, Baby."

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Steve kept a tight grip on Bucky's ponytail and kept it taught in his hand, but he didn't pull so much that it would lift Bucky's head off the mattress. "Come for me, Baby. I'm not taking these cuffs off until you come twice tonight," Steve purred in his ear before biting it.

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"Kiss me," Bucky demanded desperately and tried turning his head. "Kiss me, Steve." Some of his hair had fallen from the ponytail and was sticking to Bucky's face as he stared up at Steve and thought about how he must have done at least something right to get to have the most beautiful husband in the world and the most loving and most generous and the absolute perfect man for him. "Ah, fuck!" He came quickly and suddenly and his ass clenched down around Steve's cock while
hot spurts of come layered onto the blanket underneath them.

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Steve leaned down to kiss him again, causing himself to bury his cock deeper in Bucky's ass. He moaned Bucky's name against his lips when he felt the man's muscles spasm around him. Steve gave a few, slow rolls of his hips and came soon after him. He pulled out and laid breathlessly next to Bucky, exhausted and looking happily fucked out.

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Bucky collapsed down on the bed, the handcuffs still securely on. He was mashed on his stomach with his face down in the pillow again and he was far too shaky and sensitive all over to move. After a minute or so, he tried adjusting and didn't get very far without the use of his arms. "Steve, you want to help me roll onto my side?"

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Steve immediately moved Bucky onto his side and kissed him gently. "That was amazing, Bucky. I don't think I've ever gone that hard on you before, are you alright?"

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"My legs are already sore but the rest of me is more than okay," Bucky assured him. He felt a little funny being cuffed while having a casual naked conversation with Steve but Steve did promise Bucky would come twice before the cuffs were taken off. "I really loved that, Baby. Thank you for using your handcuffs on me. Did you like it or not so much?"

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Steve played with Bucky's hair and brushed the loose strands out of his face. "I didn't not like it," he said shyly. "I guess, I just like making you happy. And all I'm ever going to need out of sex is you being willing to do it with me. I think I'm just boring and vanilla," he said.

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Bucky gave Steve a sympathetic smile. "Yes, Babe, you are pretty vanilla. It's just how you are. But you're never boring and I love every time we have sex no matter what we do." He wiggled forward to give Steve a kiss and crowd onto Steve's pillow. "You always excite me no matter what and you know that's true otherwise I'd never had a boner. Boners can't lie."

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"Boners can lie. You can get a boner from a gust of wind, you dope," Steve said fondly. He kissed Bucky gently and then reached his hand down to lazily play with Bucky's balls. "But I know you're not bored with me. Although, I do get a little jealous seeing the way you look at posters of Harrison Ford. You melt like a blushing schoolgirl being asked to the dance."

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"That's exaggeration and you know it," Bucky said with his chin turned up. He feigned frustration and pulled his leg up so Steve could fondle his balls better. "I will give you that, of the two of us, I am probably the easier one to get aroused. And I'm probably just the easier one in general - sexually, I mean. But, hey, you should be grateful, right? It's better than me being the type of husband who never puts out."
Steve nuzzled Bucky's jaw affectionately and smiled. "I'd still love every second with you even if we never had sex again. I mean, if you think about it there's going to be some point where neither if he will be able to get it up anymore."

Bucky whined, "Oh, I don't want to think about that. I want to have old man sex with you until the day we die. Hell, I mean I'm twenty-five now so I'm halfway there, right?" He tried reaching to wrap his arms around Steve, temporarily forgetting the handcuffs.

Steve snickered when Bucky couldn't move his arms. He stroked his fingers along the length of Bucky's dick. "We will have plenty of old man sex - way past when we are fifty. We'll get it up until we're at least seventy."

"Promise me?" Bucky asked and pushed out his bottom lip slightly. Steve's fingers were exploring over his cock and balls and Bucky loved the lithe touches. His ass was still wet with lube and come and he was tempted to have Steve fist him as they waited for the two of them to get erections again for round two.

"Promise," Steve swore. He kissed his lips a few times and teased Bucky's nipple with his other hand. "I love you so much," he said softly. "I'll still find you sexy even when you have a wrinkly ass."

"Speaking of my ass," Bucky cleared his throat and grinned, "I was sort of hoping I could talk you into fisting me before we fuck again? I'm assuming we are going to fuck again tonight and we're just waiting for Small Steve and Baby Bucky to get with the program..."

Steve blushed at the request but he couldn't say no to Bucky. "Whatever you want, Love," he said adoringly. He kissed him slowly before moving behind him. "You want to be on your side for this?"

"No, let me be on my back, I'll see how that goes. I want to see you. The hands might hurt so I may have to change plans but I want to try." Bucky rolled himself over on his back with his hands and arms underneath. He brought his knees up close to him and showed his ass off for Steve. "Also, for the record, 'Small Steve' was just a terrible nickname for your penis. But it doesn't reflect your actual size in any way... you are well off in that area. Thought I'd let you know. Don't want you getting self-conscious."

Steve laughed as Bucky tried to amend what he had called Steve's dick. "I figured as much. Though asking me to put my whole fist into your ass after calling it 'Small Steve' isn't great for the ego," he
joked. Steve eased two fingers inside of Bucky's ass slowly and started to thrust them easily in and out.

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"I apologize." Bucky nodded. "If I helps, that's the first time I've ever given a nickname to a dick and I was just going for alliteration. And besides, you know I love you inside me, tongue, fist, cock, I love it all."

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Bucky was still so loose from sex so Steve was able to push in a third finger in no time. "Why not ‘Super-huge Steve’," he joked. "And ‘Baby Bucky’ won't work. What if we get a kid that looks like you? Then we can't call him ‘Baby Bucky’ without thinking about your dick."

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"Ew, Steve," Bucky lightly kicked at Steve's arm. "But fine, Super Steve... Supreme Steve, Seismic Steve, Strapping Steve, Substantial Steve, Swell Steve." Bucky chuckled.

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Steve snorted and leaned down to kiss Bucky’s stomach. "You're such a dope." He carefully eased his pinky in and thrust it in and out slowly. "How's that?" he asked. "Not too much at once?"

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"No, I'm good." Bucky smiled, "Super Steve got me loose enough to take it okay." He groaned low when Steve started pushing his four fingers in and out slowly but with purpose. "This is the perfect first night away, Baby."

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"Maybe we can try letting you fist me sometime this week. We have the whole house to ourselves so we don't have to worry about rushing or getting too loud," he said. "I'd like to see what you like so much about it."

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"Oh my god, yes, Steve. If you want to try, I will be so gentle with you and I'll stop at any point if you need me to," Bucky said enthusiastically and pulled up off the bed slightly, trying to see Steve better. He was getting closer to having Steve's thumb inside and Bucky wanted to see as much of it as he could. "We also need to use those cameras one night, too."

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Steve kissed Bucky's thigh as he slowly tucked his thumb in and eased his whole hand inside of Bucky's ass. "I don’t know how you do it. You're so fucking tight around my hand."

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"It feels so goddamn good," Bucky said through gritted teeth and forced his body to relax and take Steve's hand. His cock was starting to wake up again and he didn't want to come with Steve's hand inside him. He wanted to come with Steve riding him if Steve wanted to as well. "How are you feeling, Baby?"
"I’m feeling so good, Buck. I love getting to be intimate with you. I like you giving it all up to me. I'd do the same for you." Steve thrust his hand slowly in and out of Bucky's ass. "Looks like someone's getting hard again."

"Uh-huh," Bucky sighed and stared down at Steve. "Wanted to know if you wanted to ride me tonight with the handcuffs on me still or wait for a different night to do that one? We can do whatever you want to do."

"I'll ride you into next week," Steve said. "You just let me know when you want in me. Think you can finger me with the cuffs on or should I take care of myself?" he asked. Steve thrust his hand quicker into Bucky's ass.

"God, fuck," Bucky gasped as Steve went deeper and harsher with his hand. "I want to see you open yourself up for me. You sitting there with your fingers covered in lube stuck as far as you can reach inside you and I can't do anything about it until you sit on my cock." He moaned low and flung his head back. "First, will you handcuff me to the bedpost? That'll make it easier for us."

Steve fucked Bucky with his fist a few more times before pulling it out. Bucky's ass looked so perfect on his fist as he withdrew it and he kissed his temple. "Anything you want." Steve started to look around for the key so he could free Bucky's hands. "Shit," he swore. "Where'd I put it?"

"What?" Bucky asked in a worried clipped tone. "You can't find the key? You brought it, right?" He struggled to sit up and managed to get himself leaning back against the pillows at a pretty uncomfortable angle.

"I know I brought it. Just... give me a second..." Steve scrambled for a minute or two before finally finding it in another pair of jeans. "Thank Christ," he breathed out. Steve unlocked the cuffs and then put the key on the bedside table. "How're your wrists feeling?"

Bucky’s wrists were pretty tender by now but he really didn't want to stop wearing the handcuffs. "They’re okay. My hearts beating pretty fast because I was worried I’d be stuck here naked and restrained as you went to get bolt cutters from Fred."

Steve smiled apologetically. "Sorry, Baby. Didn't mean to scare you." He clipped the cuffs around the headboard so Bucky's hands were now secured again. "That would have been awkward. I would have had to explain why Jumpy Jamie got himself in handcuffs," he teased.
Bucky shoved Steve with his foot and said, "That's it! You called me 'Jumpy Jamie'. After we have sex, you're sleeping outside!" He tried his best to sound serious but he mostly just sounded like a goof - especially with his hands pulled back on the headboard and how his dick was pointing at Steve eagerly.

"That's fine, we'll end up having sex outside next anyway." Steve laughed. He stole a kiss and grabbed the lube so he could slick up his fingers. He turned so his ass was pointed towards Bucky so the man could watch him as he began to finger himself.

As Steve started opening himself up, Bucky clenched his own ass down around nothing. He was really loose from Steve's fist and he wished that somehow he could have Steve inside him while having Steve ride him. Of course, the logical answer would be a plug or a dildo but that had been far since established to not be an option. "Steve, Baby, I love seeing you like this. How does it feel? Can you feel my eyes all over you right now?"

"Yeah," Steve breathed out. "I can always feel it when you look at me. I love knowing how I can keep your attention." Steve let out a little whine as he pushed a third finger into his ass. "You want me to face you when I ride you, Baby? Or no?"

"I always like seeing your face but whichever way is more comfortable with you is fine with me," Bucky said and rubbed his leg against Steve's. "I won't be able to help you or touch you at all with the cuffs on so it's all you, Babe."

Steve was ready to take Bucky. He pulled his fingers out and turned around so he could draw him into a slow kiss. "I want to see your face as I ride you senseless," Steve said and teased Bucky's nipples a little bit to drive him crazy. "You ready?"

Bucky squirmed underneath Steve's touch and nodded helplessly. "Yes, please, Steve, take my cock, please." His nipples were hard and Steve's gentle teasing was proving too much for him to handle. He was overstimulated in the best ways but if Steve didn't get on him soon he might just pass out.

Steve kissed him slowly and held Bucky's dick steady as he lowered his ass down on it. He let out a moan and arched his back once Bucky's cock was entirely buried in his ass. "So good," he breathed out.

Bucky groaned loudly and pulled against the handcuffs, whining when he couldn't get to Steve. "You feel so hot. So tight and warm and perfect around my cock. Jesus, I love this. I love you."
started to slowly fuck up into Steve and he whined audibly again at the feeling. "Don't touch yourself. If I can't touch you, I want to tell you when you can."

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Steve's hand had been halfway to his dick when Bucky told him not to touch himself. He pouted but moved to hold Bucky's shoulders instead. He braced himself like that and started to rock his hips in earnest, gasping at how good Bucky felt.

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Steve fucked himself on Bucky's dick and Bucky just stared at every part of his husband with his mouth hanging open lazily. Steve's grip on his shoulders got stronger and it hurt just enough to feel really good but not too bad he needed him to stop. "Let me suck your fingers, please."

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Steve wasn't even aware of how hard he was gripping Bucky's shoulders. He let go of one and offered Bucky his fingers. "I love how your dick fills me up, Bucky. I want to wake up sore tomorrow."

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Bucky had two fingers in his mouth and really couldn't answer except to nod and sloppily lick. They got into a good rhythm of Steve slamming down as Bucky rammed up and it felt so fucking good and drew a string of moans and curses from Steve. After a bit, Bucky let go of Steve's hand and said, "Touch your nipples with those wet fingers."

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Steve teased one of his nipples that was already taught from arousal. "I'm so close, Buck. I want to come so bad."

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"You want to touch yourself, now?" Bucky asked gently and breathlessly as Steve's bounces on his dick got out of sync with his own. Steve really was close and Bucky would let him touch himself if he needed to, he just wanted him to ask.

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"Please," Steve gasped out, giving Bucky a desperate look. "I need it, Bucky. And it'll feel really good for you having my ass squeeze around your dick when I come. It'll be good for you, too."

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Bucky nodded, "Give me a kiss, then you can touch your cock." His hands were starting to hurt in the cuffs and he was ready to have them off. As much as he loved wearing them, he had to begrudgingly admit to himself that he couldn't do it for as long as he had thought he could.

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Steve gave him a searing kiss. Then, he started to jerk himself off quickly as he rode Bucky's cock. His lips parted and he leaned his head back as he came in thick, hot spurts over their chests.
Once Steve came, Bucky picked up his pace again and slammed into him repeatedly until he was coming as well with his hips up off the mattress, holding Steve up for a second before he collapsed back on the bed in a sweaty heap.

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Steve cried out Bucky's name with every thrust. He was hypersensitive from coming already but it felt so goddamn good. When he felt Bucky's come drip down his thighs, he collapsed on top of him and then grabbed the key so he could free Bucky's hand. "Not bad for our first night here."

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The second his hands were free, Bucky flung them around Steve and flipped the two of them over so Steve was under him now. He kissed him with a feverish but lazy passion for a long moment then ran a hand through his messy sweaty hair to pull out the ponytail. "Not bad, Steve? Not bad? This was a goddamn glorious night."

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Steve laughed and let Bucky maneuver him as he pleased. He dragged his nails over Bucky's back and let out a happy sigh. "It was perfect," Steve conceded. "A night I'll always remember and love."

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"You better." Bucky nipped at Steve's lower lip happily. "Let's shower and then go to sleep, okay? I'm beat and I want to snuggle with you now that my arms are free and can hold you all night."

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Steve nodded and took a moment to get out of bed. But when he did, he picked up his husband and carried him to the bathroom. "So what's on the agenda for tomorrow, Beautiful?"

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"I say we go fishing in the deep part of the lake then we can have sex outside then we can swim in the shallow part by the peer and then we can shower and I'll build a fire and we can grill some fish for dinner." As he was set back on his feet by the shower, Bucky nodded in confirmation, deciding this was a great plan for their second day. The shower here was at least twice as big as their shower back home and Bucky was already making plans for roomy shower sex one day of the trip.

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"I like the sound of that," Steve said. It took him a little bit to figure out how the shower taps worked, but he got it going at the temperature that Bucky liked. "What if we don't catch any fish? Won't they get too smart after realizing how so many of their fish friends got taken away?"

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"No, Steve," Bucky chuckled and ducked his head under the water. "Fish are pretty dumb and I'm a pretty good fisherman. We will get something, don't worry." He grabbed the bar of soap he brought from home and ripped open the plastic packaging with his teeth before lathering up his hands and rubbing them down Steve's chest.
"I don’t know about that. Animals can be smart. Fish would have gone extinct if they were that
dumb.” Steve was amazing as a cop but he was clearly almost dumb as a stump when it came to the outdoors. And since he was so used to being correct in the city, he was confident he was right about this.

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"What? That makes no sense,” Bucky started with a confused shake of his head, "Never mind, whatever you say, Love." Bucky poured shampoo into his hands and turned away from Steve to start washing his hair. "You know, that’s only the second time I’ve ever been in handcuffs."

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Steve looked surprised at Bucky’s confession. He massaged Bucky’s shoulders while the man washed his hair. "What was the first time?" he asked curiously.

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"Got arrested when I was nineteen,” Bucky said simply and flipped his hair forward to rinse out all the bubbles. After all the shampoo was gone he grabbed just a bit of conditioner and rubbed it into the ends of his long hair and then a bit in his beard for good measure.

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"Wait, so you’ve never used handcuffs in bed before?” Steve asked in a confused tone. He started to wash his own hair while he waited for a response.

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"Nope,” Bucky answered and moved so Steve could be under the water. "That was the first time. There’s plenty of stuff I haven't done yet. Sexually, I mean.” He watched Steve clean up and stared at his ass appreciatively as he did. "I've been restrained in other ways but never handcuffs."

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Steve grinned dumbly. "That's so cool. I got to do something for the first time with you.” He kissed his cheek. "Thank you for trusting me, Baby.” He gave Bucky’s ass a squeeze. "So what did you get arrested for?" Steve asked.

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"Of course, I trust you,” Bucky assured and kissed Steve with a grin and then took a breath in preparation for the story. "So, as most of my stories go, I was drunk as fuck and was in my buddy’s car with four other people who I didn't know. Well, my buddy was the only sober one so he was taking us home when he got pulled over for speeding. When we were stopped, I got out of the car because I needed to pee but when the officer told me to stop, I mooned him."

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Steve laughed but then quickly covered his mouth and tried to give Bucky a scolding look but he didn’t have it in him. "Christ, you were such a terror," he said fondly. "I can't tell you how many times I've been mooned on duty."
"Either way, both times I've been in handcuffs has been because I showed my ass." Bucky laughed and got out of the shower to start drying off. "And I wasn't a terror, I just really had to pee. They didn't even let me finish peeing once I got to the station. I had to sit in the cell by myself for like three hours until they decided not to go through the paperwork of charging me with public indecency."

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"Still a terror," Steve accused. "And at least now you've got a sexy police officer who can spring you out of jail for public indecency so we could go back home to be indecent in private." He kissed along Bucky's neck.

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"I just realized you get mooned on the job and at home an awful lot," Bucky said. "At least my ass is one you actually wanted to see." He went back towards the bedroom and grabbed his clothes to sleep in and pulled them on. He also brought a giant old sweater to wear at night in case he got too cold.

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"Your ass is easily in the top three," Steve teased. "Just kidding, it's the best ass I've ever laid eyes on." Steve chose to go to bed wearing nothing since he didn't think it would get that cold. However, halfway through the night, Steve ended up stealing most of the blankets and burying himself into Bucky's side.
Bucky woke early in the morning, freezing cold and with no more blankets on him. Steve wasn't generally a cover hog but tonight he had them all. Bucky carefully pulled the blankets up so he could get under them and he scooted close to Steve. He slipped his oversized sweater over Steve’s head and back so Steve was pressed up against his warm chest.

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Steve woke up a few hours later sharing Bucky's sweater. He couldn't help but smile a little. He kissed Bucky's chest a few times before sneaking lower to suck at one of his nipples. "Good morning, Love," Steve said in a tired voice.

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Bucky slowly woke up and slid a hand over Steve's bare ass. "Morning, Mr. Rogers-Barnes." Then he noticed his own sleepy morning wood pressed against Steve's leg contentedly. Maybe he could get Steve to give him some lazy head if he asked. But Bucky was also really hungry and might just let his dick deal with it so he could have some food.

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Bucky didn't have to even ask him. Steve was already lazily fondling Bucky's balls. "I like the sound of that name," Steve said. "We need to get monogrammed towels and stuff. Be like the fancy people who actually have money."

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"Monogrammed towels?" Bucky snorted. "That's not fancy, that's cheesy. What, will we get ‘Mr.’ and ‘Mr.’ pillowcases as well? ‘His’ and ‘his’ wine glasses and mugs?" He teased and pulled at the waist band of his pajama pants, ready to help Steve's hand inside whenever he wanted.

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"And matching sweaters," Steve added. He was shamelessly cheesy and didn't care that it was a bit over the top. He eased his hand down into Bucky’s pants and started to stroke his dick in an easy slow rhythm as he kissed his way back up to Bucky’s lips.

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Bucky looked up at the ceiling and said under his breath to himself, "You love him, Bucky. You picked this one. Now you got to live with him forever - towels, sweaters, and all. Be strong, Barnes."

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Steve laughed and nipped Bucky's shoulder. "Quit that," he said. "One of these days you'll look back and be thankful that I made sure we were the adorable couple." He teased the head of Bucky's dick with his thumb.

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"Last time you tried to make us a better couple, I was put into a collared shirt and had to have my hair brushed," Bucky whined. "My hair, Steve. But fine... if you want to get us grossly cute couples
things then I'll deal with it. But only if you promise to have a pair of your underwear monogrammed with 'Property of Bucky Rogers-Barnes' on the ass."

"Hell, I'll get a dozen pairs of underwear monogrammed like that," Steve said happily. He scooted lower again and took the tip of Bucky's dick in his mouth and licked along his shaft just once as a tease. "What else do you want me to wear for you?"

Bucky gasped and giggled a little at the light tickle that went through his body. He gently touched the top of Steve's head and scratched his hair. "Oh, Steve, you really don't want to ask me what I want to see you wear."

"I'm up for suggestions. Except for women's clothes," Steve said. Steve lapped at the tip of Bucky's cock before swallowing him down his throat.

"I know, I know. You don't share my interest in lace panties," Bucky said and pinched Steve. "I wouldn't make you do that. But I would love to see you in my leather jacket sometime. Nothing else but my jacket and maybe a pair of biker boots. And you should really start wearing my clothes around the house more even though they are way too tight on you. Actually, no, that helps. And I want to see you cooking wearing just an apron. And maybe something that makes you look like some important professor or some shit. Also, If you'll let me fuck you while you have your uniform on I would love that."

Steve pulled off Bucky's dick with a surprised sound. "In my uniform?" He had a scandalized look on his face. "I'm supposed to serve and protect in that." He went back to stroking Bucky's dick but didn't take his eyes off him. "I'll get a fake uniform and wear that instead. I won't get a cheap one so it'll at least look real. But not my real uniform."

"That's why I said if you would let me - if. It took you long enough to be okay using your cuffs on me," Bucky said. "Maybe there are some old retired uniforms at the precinct you can have, huh? If not, we can get you a fake one around Halloween or something."

"We can figure something out. But you got to call me 'Officer Sexy' the whole time," Steve joked. He took one of Bucky's balls into his mouth and ran his tongue over it.

"How about Officer Dick Cocker?" Bucky laughed at his own joke but then shut up once Steve had his mouth on his balls. "I'll call you anything you want if you'll wear it for me." Bucky yanked on Steve's hair lightly. "Come up here and kiss me. I'll settle for your hand to finish me off. And I want to know what you want to see me wearing, if there is anything you would like."
Steve moved back up and kissed Bucky deeply as he gave Bucky a hand job. It wasn't exactly sexy or anything, but it was comfortable and intimate. "I want to see you wearing my shirts. Just my shirt and nothing else."

"That it?" Bucky asked and kissed Steve again. "Man, you ask me and I give you a list, I ask you and you say maybe some shirts." Bucky laughed.

"What? It's really sexy when you wear my shirts. Especially when your ass pokes out when you bend over to get something." Steve smiled fondly. "I like seeing you waking up in my shirt and stretching so your tummy shows. It's one of the most beautiful sights in the world."

Bucky gasped lightly at the compliment combined with the hand job. "Would you ever want me to put on the fake police uniform? Be a long-haired foul-mouthed kinky cop? Sounds pretty hot to me if it interests you at all?"

Steve didn't notice that he stroked Bucky a bit faster when he mentioned Bucky wearing a uniform. He hadn’t really considered that. "Um..." He blushed. "Yeah, I think I’d like that a lot."

Bucky's eyes gleamed and he smiled wide, "Fuck yeah. I can't wait. We need a uniform as soon as we can get one then." He was close to his orgasm and he reached a hand down to clasp over Steve's to stroke with him until he was coming between their fingers in slow but pleased bursts.

When Bucky came, Steve brought Bucky's hand to his mouth to lick it clean before sucking his own fingers, keeping eye contact with Bucky the whole time. "Love you, Handsome."

"And I love you. My god, I love you," Bucky answered and waited for Steve to finish cleaning off their hands before he jumped him and started kissing him to taste himself on Steve's lips. He broke off from him a bit later and trailed a hand down Steve's side. "Do you need me to return the favor or is Super Steve not awake this morning?"

Steve shook his head. "You can return the favor later. Maybe while I'm trying to hook a fish, you can hook an even bigger one," Steve said, nodding down between his legs. He still had a dumb grin from Bucky jumping him and kissing him. "What do you want for breakfast?"

"Punk." Bucky shook his head with a grin but rolled out of bed and followed Steve to the kitchen. He looked around in the cabinets and the fridge. Eggs and bacon sounded great but he kind of
wanted to mess with Steve. "If I say I want cereal again are you going to have Father Frank divorce us?"

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"No, I'll have him divorce us if you ask for it for dinner tonight," Steve joked. He swatted Bucky's ass and asked, "Do you really want cereal? I'll get it for you."

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"No, I'd love eggs and bacon," Bucky said and held his ass in protection from Steve. "Just thought it'd be funny to see what you said. And you don't have to worry because it's fish for dinner tonight and, for once, I'm making the food since you can't cook on a fire pit grill."

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"If you say so," Steve said. He started to cook up breakfast and after a bit of silence he asked, "So... I was thinking about maybe using the money from the precinct settlement to help other people like us."

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Bucky quirked his eyebrow and leaned against the counter by Steve as he cooked breakfast. Steve was looking down into the skillet and Bucky pocketed his hands in his pajamas and said, "Okay. Um, what do you mean, exactly?"

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"I don't know, just... setting up some sort of foundation or program to help people. I feel bad getting so much money when we let someone go who didn't deserve it and could hurt others," Steve elaborated.

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"Are you saying you want to set up some sort of gay community foundation?" Bucky asked and rubbed a hand down Steve's back. "How long have you been thinking of this? Do you regret not going to court with Rumlow?"

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"Yeah. Maybe a shelter somewhere people can go to. I could probably set up something with Father Frank at the church." Steve shrugged his shoulders. "And, yes, I have been really regretting it. But I also know that it was the best decision for our family's sake."

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"Oh, Baby," Bucky's face fell and he sighed. If it weren't for him and the girls, Steve probably would have been able to fight Rumlow and get him convicted. Bucky put his hands on Steve's face and directed his attention to him so he could give him a quick kiss. "You think Father Frank will help you with that? A shelter at the church?"

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"I think he would. We could build an annex onto the church and let people know it's gay-friendly. And we could pay for someone to mind it or, since it's a church, people can volunteer. And we could pay for the food and such too," Steve said.
"Okay, so sort of like a homeless shelter for gay people who need some protection for a bit? Is that what you're thinking?" Bucky asked. "The church does have that extra plot next to it that could be built on."

Steve nodded. "Exactly that. Not everyone is fortunate enough to have an understanding family. And Becca and Lilly could volunteer too sometimes and it'll look great on resumes for them, wouldn't it?"

Bucky nodded and smiled. His nose tingled up with the tickle that warned he was going to cry. He hugged Steve and nuzzled against his neck as his eyes got watery. "Baby, this is so important to you. I can tell you've been planning this a while, haven't you? You have such a good heart."

Steve didn't realize that he would make Bucky emotional. And Steve couldn't help but get choked up because, yeah, it was really important to him and he felt selfish for thinking of using this money for something like this when it could give their family a more comfortable life. Having Bucky's approval meant the world to him. "So you're not upset?"

"Why, why would I be upset about this?" Bucky asked and searched Steve's face. He had to wipe a quiet tear from his cheek and tried not to think about all the times he would have gone to a place like Steve's shelter when he was harassed in high school. Instead of skipping class to go smoke weed or snort coke with the burnouts and occasional jock on the football field, he probably would have just headed to the shelter.

"Because we were going to use that money to save up for a house. I mean... we still probably will have enough left over to save after we paid off the annex building but it'll set us back a bit," Steve said.

"Hey, hey," Bucky said and took Steve's hands in his. "We don't need a house. We don't. We have a perfectly good apartment that we can afford really easily between the two of us and we can stay there for as long as we need too. We don't need anything more than a place to sleep and be safe and so do other gay people. And that's what your shelter will do for so many people who don't have what we already get to have. I could never be upset about that."

"But what if we want a kid-" Steve started to remind him, but when Bucky kept showing his approval, Steve smiled. "Thank you so much. It's going to be really great, Buck. We can help so many people."

"Yes, of course, it's going to help people. And I'm here for you every step of the way, alright?"
Bucky said and ran a thumb over Steve's lips. "And we can just wait and have a kid later. We don't even have any guarantee that we will be able to get one, but we actually can do this. And this is just one more thing I get to love about you. And I'm so proud of you."

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Steve smiled and hugged Bucky tightly. He kissed Bucky's thumb and sighed happily. "I love you so much. We can take on anything together, Baby. It'll be something you're proud of, I promise." He finished up cooking breakfast and he couldn't stop smiling now.

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"Already proud of it," Bucky said and sat at the table and waited for breakfast. After they were finished they started getting their things ready to go fishing. Bucky made sure they had the tackle box and the rods waiting at the door before he went to get changed. He put on a pair of his swim trunks and a long-sleeved old grey Henley. "Ready to go fishing?"

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Steve was excited like a goddamned puppy as he got dressed and headed out to the fishing boat. "Oh, I'm so ready. I'm going to catch a huge fish and it'll feed us for days." He helped Bucky carry the tackle box to the boat and hopped in.

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"Alright, Babe, we will see." Bucky loved how Steve was acting like such a goof. He talked a big game about fishing but Bucky knew Steve wasn't going to get as much as him. Bucky rowed them out to the deep part of the lake and handed Steve a fishing pole, already set with bait on the end. "Do you know how to cast?"

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"Of course I know how to cast. You just - do, uh. You do this and-" Steve struggled to cast it and accidentally flung the entire pole out into the lake. Luckily, it floated and Steve gave Bucky an apologetic, guilty smile.

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"Goddamn it, Steve." Bucky sighed and rowed over to retrieve the pole. "And here I was worried you were going to hook yourself." Bucky gave the pole back to Steve and talked him through how to properly cast the line. "Just be careful."

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Steve watched Bucky as he explained how to cast. It took him a few tries but, finally, he was able to get the hook a few yards out into the water. After about twenty minutes of not getting any bites, Steve asked, "Are you sure I did it right?" Bucky looked so serene sitting in the boat, staring off into the water. Steve couldn't help but wonder if Bucky's father was like that too. Maybe the two of them just sat quietly while they fished. Or maybe Bucky used to be different but age had made him more like his dad.

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"Be patient," Bucky said quietly and peacefully and reeled his line back in to cast it off again. He sighed contentedly and watched the water ripple from where the hook sank in. "My dad used to hold
his fishing pole with one hand and a book in the other. He would read while he gave the fish a second to decide if they wanted to bite then he'd nod, set the book down on his leg, and cast again. And that's how it would go for a few hours sometimes.

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"Hours?" Steve frowned. He wasn't used to waiting this long to catch dinner. However, a half-hour later Steve felt a tug on his rod. "Oh my god, I think I got one! Do I reel it in now, Buck?"

---

Bucky was just putting his third fish into the bucket of water behind him on the boat when Steve shouted. "Yes, reel it in!" He nodded enthusiastically and waited for Steve's fish to pop out of the water. Once it was dangling over the boat, Bucky grabbed it close to the top to hold its head steady while he took the hook of it and then plopped it into the bucket with the other three. "Good job, Baby!"

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Steve hadn't really noticed the fish that Bucky had captured since he was so excited that something happened. But then when he took a good look at the fish he caught, swimming in tight circles in the bucket with the others and bleeding from his mouth, a guilty look crossed his face. "Is this really fair to the fish?"

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"I mean... they are in water and we're going to eat them," Bucky said. "It's not like we are hunters who just stuff a bear and put it in our house as a monument to our skill." Bucky could fish for food. He could not, however, fish for sport or go hunting just to kill something big.

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"Can you be the one to kill them?" Steve asked pathetically. Bucky may have singlehandedly made Steve seriously consider being a vegetarian by taking him fishing today.

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"Sure," Bucky said. Just then, they heard a holler from behind them and Bucky turned around to see another fishing boat coming towards them. One of the people in the boat was waving wildly and for a second Bucky thought they needed help.

The boat rowed up next to them and two old locals greeted them with a big laugh and, "Lord save me, I'll never call Fred a liar again. It really is little Bucky Barnes."

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Steve had jumped when he heard the holler. Thank god he didn't get so bored that he asked Bucky for a quick blowjob while he waited for a fish to bite. He gave a polite wave as the two rowed over. "Bucky decided he missed the fresh air and that I needed to learn how to fish," he said. "I'm Steve, his friend."

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"I'm Gary, and this is Lloyd," The man said and gestured to his buddy. "We knew Bucky back when he was still losing baby teeth, huh? Thought you weren't ever coming back, Son. And we're both
sorry to hear about your father. Fred told us. Old George was a great man."

It took Bucky a second before he properly remembered the two of them but, eventually, he did. "Nice to be up here again. Steve is right - I did miss the fresh air."

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"It's nice to meet you two," Steve said pleasantly. "This place really is amazing." he chattered to them. "Never left the city in my whole life. I've never seen so much wildlife and so much open space," Steve said. "Do you guys visit here too? Or do you live here?"

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Gary spoke again, "My wife and I live next to Fred and Mindy and Lloyd and his wife rent one of the cabins damn near half the year." He looked over at Bucky and grinned, "What do you say the two of you come over tomorrow evening for our cookout? All of us are just going to eat and sit around the fire a while if you'd like to join."

Bucky hesitated and looked to Steve. He really didn't know if that was such a good idea. He would go if Steve seemed interested but he wasn't sure. "How about we think on it and I'll talk to Fred in the morning if we decide to come."

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Steve was a bit of a people pleaser and was all set to say 'yes' just so they didn't seem rude but Bucky said they would think about it, so he shut up. He wanted to hear what people had to say about young Bucky, but it would also be a bit shitty to pretend they were straight for a whole night of their honeymoon. "Yeah, we may end up going hiking all day tomorrow and be really worn by the evening."

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"Just make sure you don't let Jumpy Jamie take you hunting." Gary and Lloyd both laughed as Gary started to row on again saying, "Alright, you think on it and we might see you tomorrow. Have a good day."

Bucky sighed in exasperation once they were out of earshot. "I really wish Fred hadn't told everyone that story."

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"I think it's a cute story," Steve said. "I'd love to get all the stories from them about you as a kid." He smiled. "But I'd rather spend as much alone time with you as possible, unless you'd like to catch up with them. Do you want to go to the cookout or is it better not to?"

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"Can't you just see us at that cookout with three straight married couples," Bucky began, "Who will probably ask us about what we do for a living, how long we have been friends, if I'm dating any nice women, how the two of us met. And they will probably talk about my parents or ask too many questions about them. Or I'll accidentally let something slip about us or hold your hand or look at you too long." Bucky rambled through his little speech and was getting pretty worked up as he went.

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Steve gave Bucky an apologetic look and reached out to hold his hand once he was sure the other guys were too far away to see. "I'm sorry, Baby," Steve said. "We can say we'll be too tired. Or that I'm feeling sick." It sucked not being able to be open about their relationship.

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"I mean, I'll do what you want to do," Bucky said and squeezed Steve's hand. "It would be nice to talk with them all but I just think there is some risk."

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Steve nodded and said, "Well, then let's do what I want to do. And I want to spend an evening making my husband happy. And I think I'll make you happier if it's just the two of us tomorrow night." He let go of Bucky's hand and picked up his fishing rod again. "Come on. Let's think about the good things."

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"Okay, good things, good things..." Bucky mumbled, thinking hard. "Hey, I brought s'mores stuff for us. Have you ever had s'mores before? I was thinking we could have some tonight over the fire."

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Steve smiled and then cast his line out again. "I've had s'mores before but never cooked over a fire. Just microwaved."

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"Oh, it's definitely not the same. It's so much better done the right way," Bucky said and watched Steve cast his line. He was doing a lot better at it now than earlier and Bucky wondered if his dad felt this same little sense of pride in him when he learned as Bucky did now with Steve.

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"How cool would it have been if we'd known each other growing up?" Steve said. "It would have been really fun coming up here with you and your dad... sneaking off to the boat house to make out and all that."

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Bucky smiled warmly and leaned forward to listen to Steve. "That's adorable. We would share a twin bed and we'd wake up tangled in each other. My dad would say he was happy that we were such good friends but he'd secretly probably know anyway."

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"You'd take me into the woods to show me cool bugs and animals. Maybe we would have gotten a little lost and worried your dad cause we got home after dinner, but we'd be too cute for him to be mad at us for long." Steve grinned. "Bet you would have had me jerking myself off a lot earlier than when I actually started. I was sixteen when I first tried cause I was so afraid my ma would know. She catches everything."

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"I would've had your dick in my mouth by fourteen, no question," Bucky answered with a nod.
"But, now I need to know. Since you don't watch porn, I assume you didn't have any dirty magazines either. And, I don't know, did you know you were gay when you were that young? So how did you jerk off?"

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Steve blushed deeply. "Oh god, this is embarrassing." He covered his face with one hand. "So... I, uh... So, in the church, masturbating is a sin and all that. So..." Man, Steve hadn't ever blushed this hard. "Just understand I was sixteen and raised very, very Catholic so, I... I just imagined that God said he wanted me to feel good and that's what I thought about."

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Bucky was speechless. He blinked a few times with his mouth open in a small 'o'. He closed his mouth and cleared his throat before cocking his head to the side to say, "You... you beat it to God?"

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"Yes," Steve said shyly but matter-of-factly. "Yes, I did." He looked out into the water, desperate for a fish to take the damn bait. "It wasn't until I made out with a guy that I started thinking about men when I... you know."

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"Uh..." Bucky looked off into the water too, a little stunned. "Well, alright then. And when was it that you first kissed a guy? You never told me about your first kiss. Did you know before that that you were gay or was it just speculation at that point?"

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"My first kiss was with a guy named Ted. He was nice. Liked art, so we talked a lot. Before then, I thought I was just bad at talking to girls. I didn't have good self-esteem as a kid cause I was skinny, sick, and poor."

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"How did it happen with Ted?" Bucky asked and set his fishing rod down in the boat so he could just listen to Steve. "How old were the two of you?" It was nice having this talk with Steve. Steve knew a lot about Bucky's sexual and romantic history but Bucky didn't know much about Steve's since it was pretty limited but he was surprised he hadn't known it all already.

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"We stayed after school to draw some landscapes. I was washing the charcoal off my hands at the sink when he came up to me and kissed my cheek." Steve smiled fondly. "I liked him well enough. He was sweet to me. But he had a bad drug addiction. It was hard and maybe I could have worked it out with him, but..." Steve shrugged his shoulders. "He got sick from sharing needles, I think. Went to the hospital once and didn't make it out."

---

Bucky's face fell as Steve talked. That could have easily been Steve and Bucky if they had known each other before. It could have been Bucky with a worse addiction than what he had with cocaine. It could have been Bucky that Steve would have wanted to try making it work with only to have Bucky die in the hospital. He didn't quite know how to feel or what to say.
Steve smiled sadly out at the water. "He was a real nice guy. He never told me so, but I think he was living on his own cause his parents knew he was gay. I think that's why he had the addiction, so I never got that mad at him." He reached for Bucky’s hand and gave it a squeeze. "He would bring me flowers every Friday. He'd sneak them in my backpack somehow."

"He really liked you," Bucky said and clutched onto Steve's hand with both of his. "You... you wouldn't have wanted to be with me if I still had a problem with coke when we met, would you? I didn't have a reasonable excuse. I got into it because I wanted into some jock's pants. If it was still a part of my life, the second you found out you probably would have arrested me and that would have been that."

"Buck," Steve said softly. "An addiction doesn't change who you are deep down. And deep down, I'm in love with the person that you are. Yeah, maybe I would've arrested you cause it's my job. But if I had the chance to get to know you, I would have fallen in love with you still."

"Are you going to leave me if I fall into it again? Or if I can't get over my drinking?" Bucky asked worriedly and his heart started to race. He hated to admit it to himself but he thought about that a lot. He worried that something would happen and he would snap and start with something illegal again at the drop of a hat. He thought about it so much he worried he was going to become his own self-fulfilled prophecy.

Steve set his pole down so he could pay sole attention to Bucky. He took his left hand and turned it over. "You see this ring?" he asked softly. "I swore before my mom and your sisters and our friends and my God that I would cherish and support you for the rest of our lives. That I will be faithful and patient for you." He kissed the ring. "I will always be by your side. Even if you get arrested. Even if you get sent to prison for life. I'll visit you as often as they'll allow me."

"I won't," Bucky choked. "I won't let myself. I can't do that to you. I'd rather die than fuck up so badly and ruin your life." He was leaning close enough to breathe against Steve's neck now. "I don't plan on it. I just get so scared sometimes and I don't trust myself not to ruin everything. I'm so sorry, Steve." Bucky collapsed in his arms and apologized like he had already done exactly what he was scared he would do.

Steve wrapped his arms strongly around Bucky's shoulders and rubbed his back soothingly. "Oh, Love." He sighed. "You have nothing to be sorry for. You're the best husband I could have asked for and you've given me so many good memories and love. Whenever we hit a rough spot, whenever things aren't the way we want them... I get to look back to the good times you've given me. And I'll have plenty more good memories in the future."
Bucky latched onto Steve and held on for a few long minutes, just breathing into his shoulder slowly. He let go eventually and pulled back. "This lake brings out the worse in me," he said. "This is where I told my dad about the cocaine in the first place. It's like Seneca can read my guilt and fears and it demands that I get them out in the open."

"It doesn't bring out the worst in you," Steve said gently. "It's like your own confessional. I go to church to reflect. You come here. It's a good thing, Baby. It means it's not eating away at you." He pressed their lips together delicately. "And now you don't have to worry about whether or not I would leave you."

"I'm still going to worry, because it's who I am," Bucky said. "But, I guess you're right, Seneca is sort of like my church. A very far away church." He sighed and looked back at the bucket of four lonely fish swimming around each other. It would be enough for the two of them to have dinner. "You want to head back in or stay out here a little longer?"

Steve looked out on the water and then nodded. "Yeah. I think I'd like to get a bit of drawing done while you do what you have to do to the fish. You got to let me say a prayer for them first, though." Steve still felt bad killing them just to eat.

"Okay, Steve, that's fine," Bucky said and started rowing back to their cabin. "We aren't going to eat them for hours, though, they will just be swimming around for the rest of the day until it's dinner time. I was thinking about swimming as well or something once we put the boat up. What do you think?"

"That sounds good," Steve said. "I guess I can't go skinny dipping now that others are out and about on the lake. Your loss," he teased, giving him a playful wink.

Bucky tilted his head with a smile, "Well, if we don't stray away from the shallow part by our cabin then it's won't be a problem. No one will come that close to someone else's property uninvited, right? Besides even if they do, we can hide under the dock until they go away."

Steve grinned. "Then I guess you won't lose out." He ran his fingers along the inside of Bucky's thigh and got up to get out of the boat once they got to shore. He helped Bucky out before picking up the bucket of fish.

"Just set it down over by the shed," Bucky said as he pulled the boat in just a bit more on land. He was already wearing swim trunks so he just pulled off his shirt and tossed it on to one of the chairs around the fire pit and waited for Steve.
Steve did as he was told but as soon as he did, a few hawks started circling over. Steve grimaced and then put the bucket inside the shed instead. He went back to Bucky's side and kissed his cheek. "Water's kind of cold, isn't it?"

"It's a bit cold, yes. But it'll be fine after you get used to it." Bucky gave Steve a kiss and then ran off the edge of the short pier and jumped into the water. He popped up a second later and shouted, "Fuck!" and shivered from the cold. He struggled in the water to remove his trunks but once he got them off he tossed them up on the pier in a wet heap and then winked at Steve.

Steve let Bucky go in first and scowled when he saw how cold Bucky looked. He was hesitant to go in but he quickly stripped and jumped in to get it over with. When he came up, his teeth were chattering. "Oh my god, oh my god, it's so cold."

Bucky quickly swam over to Steve and held him close to combine their warmth. He laughed and brushed Steve's wet hair back on his head. "We just have to get used to it. It'll be okay in a bit." Bucky felt how hard his nipples were from the cold and it hurt just a bit. "Jesus, it's cold."

"I can feel my balls making a run for the inside of my body," Steve said. "I bet they're the size of raisins right now." He gripped tightly onto Bucky and then tried to swim a little deeper into the water.

Bucky laughed and swam out further with Steve. Steve was clutching on to him really tightly and, at first, he thought it was because of the cold but then he kept trying to wrap his legs around Bucky every time Bucky would try to detach so he could go under the water again. He decided to test something out and he managed to wiggle out from Steve's grasp and down into the water quickly. When he popped back up, he watched for Steve's reaction and watched how he was swimming. He looked like a child with the way he was paddling and looked just a little scared.

Steve swam closer in to the shore where he could touch the bottom. He stopped and stood on his toes in the muddy banks and smiled as he watched Bucky explore the water like a goddamn kid. "You look about ten times happier out here than in the city," Steve said. "We need to come here more often."

"It's just so nice out here," Bucky said and floated out a little ways. "It's quiet and it's calm and there are no bright lights or sirens and not many people." He ducked under the water and swam back to Steve. "What do you say we retire here when we are old men?"
"I can't move out of the city if my mom's still alive. I have to stay close to her and she's going to live forever. She has to." Steve kissed Bucky's cheek and tried swimming a bit further out. "I could come here on weekends."

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"We can build your immortal mother a house of her own right next to ours. And another house for Becca and Lilly to visit in." Bucky floated on the surface and let himself slowly move with the water. He lost sight of Steve when he was on his back and just stared up at the sky and the clouds.

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"She would never want to come here," Steve chuckled. "She always told me that she wasn't to move out of the city ever. Claimed that if she ever said she wanted to, she has to be getting dementia or something."

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"You're killing me, Steve," Bucky said. "You won't move here when we are old because your mom but she's never going to die and won't move here either." He splashed a bit in the water and murmured to himself, "I'm going to die in the city... I'm going to be old and hear a loud noise, have a heart attack, and die in the city."

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Steve was a bit nervous but he swam over to Bucky and reached out for his hand. "You won't die from a heart attack. You're going to die at a ripe, old age in your sleep when the ceiling comes down cause it hasn't been repaired in twenty years."

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"Why won't the ceiling be repaired in twenty years?" Bucky asked curiously. "That seems like a pretty weird way to die, Steve. We could've just had someone come fix the ceiling, you know." Bucky tucked an arm under the water to get Steve's legs out from under him and pulled him up and cradled him. It was really the only way he could carry Steve because, out of water, Steve was too heavy for him.

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Steve laid his head on Bucky's shoulder. "Because the building zoning laws are ridiculous and we were too busy having old man sex to file the permits to get a contractor in."

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Bucky snorted and kissed the top of Steve's head. He tasted like lake water. "So, in this scenario, are we having sex when the roof collapses and we die? Because, honestly, I wouldn't mind going out while having sex with you."

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"Well, we would have fallen asleep right after having sex. So it'd be your last memory at least," Steve said. He played with Bucky's wet hair and smiled. "It kind of sounds morbid, but you have to die first. You've already lived through too much loss."
"What, excuse me?" Bucky shook his head, "And why is that? I don't want you having to deal with that pain when I'm gone," he said and held Steve a little closer. "What sounds morbid is that I sometimes think it was really nice that my parents got to die together because then neither had to live without the other."

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"Well, I don't want you to be alone again. I mean, I'd rather go together. But if one of us has to go, I don't want you to have to be without me," Steve said seriously. "I don't think it's morbid at all that you thought it was nice that your parents got to go together."

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"But, Steve, I've been alone before. I can do it again. I'll be fine. And I know you'll be covered by God or whatever so I won't have to worry about you in the afterlife," Bucky said and pressed his cheek to Steve's forehead. "I know I say sometimes that I won't live past fifty or whatever but you know I don't really mean that, right?"

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Steve pouted. "So you're saying you'd be fine if I died? That you wouldn't miss me?" He guilted but then he pecked his cheek. "I'm messing with you, Baby. And I know you're joking. Even if you meant it, I'd keep you living out of pure stubbornness."

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"Ah, fuck you, Rogers," Bucky said with surprised eyes and dunked Steve under the water quickly and then pulled him back up. "You know I'd miss you more than anything. Don't joke about that." He let Steve go and nudged him and got all serious, "You know I'm not going to try to kill myself again, right? You know that?"

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Steve sputtered when he got pulled back up from under the water but he immediately got sad when Bucky brought up the suicide attempt. "I know," he said. "And I know it's not my fault, but I really wish I'd known you back then. It kills me to know that you were that upset and lost."

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Bucky clenched his teeth together and gave a pained smile. "Yeah, I sort of feel like I had to go through it, though, to get to this place. I had to do that and have the mistakes and fuck-ups and years of sleeping around and stuff so I could be here with you. So I could be better for you."

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Steve wrapped Bucky up in a tight hug and held him against his chest. "Well, what counts is you're here now. And I'm going to make you happy forever." He pressed their foreheads together and looked into Bucky's eyes. "And I'll make your sisters happy, too."

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"I know you will." Bucky put his head against Steve's wet cold shoulder and hummed happily. "I love you," he said and gave Steve a long kiss once more before diving off yelling, "Okay, enough of this, let's swim!"
"I can't swim that far out," Steve said, totally chicken. He didn't know if there was an alligator in the water or something. He couldn't see to the ground when the lake got deeper.

"What do you mean?" Bucky shouted from his spot several meters out. He had wondered earlier if Steve was that good at swimming because he seemed to be staying only where he could touch and also holding on to Bucky a lot. Also, when he did float around, he mostly paddled like a kid would.

"What if a fish bites me?" Steve asked. Trust the officer that got shot to be afraid of a little fish. "I can't see the bottom. What if it's really deep?" He swam out a bit but wasn't nearly as far as Bucky went out.

"A fish is not going to bite you, Baby," Bucky said and held out his arms for Steve. It was a little deeper here and Bucky had to kick his legs to keep afloat but he knew Steve was going to be fine. "Come here, Love. I won't let anything get you."

"I'm not being a baby, I'm being perfectly cautious." Steve made a face but he swam out anyway and latched on to Bucky like a little monkey. "This is how people contract those weird bacteria that makes them lose a toe."

"Steve, I wasn't calling you a baby, I was calling you 'Baby'. It's a pet name. We use it sometimes." Bucky grinned cheekily at Steve but held his arms under Steve's ass protectively. "And if you are so worried about weird bacteria then why are you in the lake at all? Besides, you could get weird bacteria just from walking around the streets of New York anyway."

"You're in the lake, so I'm in the lake," Steve said. He kissed his cheek and then rubbed a hand down Bucky's back. "You don't get bacteria from New York City. You get viruses," he corrected.

"Uh, bacteria are everywhere. They don't stop at the city border," Bucky sassed. He held Steve close and swam just a little further out. "Alright, I'm going to put you down now. You'll be fine. You aren't going to get hurt, you can swim and I'm right here."

Steve made a pathetic sound but when the world didn't stop after Bucky let him down, he huffed. "Alright, you win. Nothing's going to get." Steve let out a surprised shout when a fish brushed up against his leg.

Bucky was attacked with Steve's flailing limbs and he had to hold them down so he wouldn't slap
him accidentally. "It's a fish. It's fine. Just a little fish coming to say hello." He pulled Steve up so he was riding on his back and he started to swim closer inland so Steve would feel more comfortable.

"How is it you carry a loaded gun and chase murderers all day but you can't deal with some fish?"

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"Because I've grown up around killers and drug dealers all my life. I didn't grow up around fish. And I don't have my gun with me. It's not good to put it in water." Steve let go of Bucky after he calmed down.

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Once they made it back in, Bucky decided it was time to get out of the water and he climbed up the ladder onto the pier to grab his trunks that were still sitting there. "Your gun is in the cabin, right? You can go get it and shoot the damn fish who dared touch your leg."

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"I don't shoot things for no reason," Steve said. "Not unless they're hurting someone or about to hurt someone." He climbed back up with Bucky and grabbed his shirt to dry himself off. "I think I'm going to be more vegetarian now."

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"More vegetarian?" Bucky asked curiously, "You mean we aren't eating meat anymore?" He snagged his shirt from the chair and dried his hair off a bit before heading back into the cabin so they could shower the lake water off of themselves.

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"No, I just mean I'm going to make more vegetarian dishes but that doesn't mean we don't have to cut out meat entirely," Steve said. He got dressed and swatted Bucky's ass. "Just don't ever take me to a meat farm or slaughter house or else I'll never eat meat again."

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"God, no, I would never do that," Bucky said. "I mean, I considered being vegetarian before. Especially now that the corporate meat industry is getting way out of hand. So, if you want to do that, we can. I'm sure the girls won't mind, they hardly eat meat as it is."

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"I'll think about it," Steve answered. "I don't think I want to quit cold turkey but maybe we can try and cut it out a bit. I bet it'll be healthier to have more fruits and veggies. And I've always wanted to try tofu," he said.

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"Did you say 'cold turkey' on purpose?" Bucky grinned. "You dweeb." All this food talk was making Bucky hungry. He could really go for a snack. "What do you want to do now? We can have a quick lunch or just a snack and then fuck? Or we can go back to Fred's and call the girls and your mom."

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Steve thought for a second. "I think we should have a little lunch, fuck, then we go check on the girls. Then we have to pretend we're going to do something so people don't ask us about joining them for dinner tonight too."

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"Sounds like a plan to me," Bucky said and headed for the kitchen. "Are we fucking outside? Or maybe on the pool table in the game room?" he asked and pulled some stuff from the fridge to make sandwiches. "Because, honestly, both sound great right now."

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"When we fuck outside, I want to fuck under the stars," Steve said. "So pool table would work for me. What can I make for you, Love? A sandwich? Some grilled chicken?"

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"Well, I was thinking sandwiches," Bucky said and held up the bread. "I'll clear off the table and get us some drinks while you make them if you like." He cleaned the table of some of their stuff that they had tossed there that morning and went to look in the closet in the hall for more kitchen towels so he could wash off the table. What he found instead were several unopened bottles of alcohol sitting on the top shelf next to the parts for the vacuum. "Oh my god," he breathed and gently touched one.

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Steve toasted the bread so it would be warm and crispy for when they ate. He heard a gasp and he went over to see what was happening. "What's going on?" he asked. "Everything okay over here, Baby?" Steve stroked his back once and caught sight of the booze.

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Bucky gingerly took a beer from the shelf and behind it was some wine. He rolled it over in his hand and looked at the label. "This is some classic shit and it isn't even opened." he said and looked up into Steve's face. He couldn't quite read what Steve was thinking and Bucky knew he should probably just put the bottle back. After all, it wasn't his, someone probably left all this here accidentally, and he was supposed to be trying not to drink.

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Steve frowned for a moment but then he kissed Bucky's temple affectionately. "What's the expiration date?" he asked. "Let's have one together if it's still good." Having one or two wouldn't hurt. He didn't want Bucky to feel like he wasn't to be trusted whatsoever around alcohol.

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"Can I really?" Bucky asked, surprised and excited. "It's still good, yeah," he said and handed that bottle to Steve before grabbing one for himself. He went to the kitchen looking for a bottle opener to pop it open before Steve changed his mind. He took a sip and whined at how good the taste was. "That's some good beer. This is stuff I'd never just buy cause it's way too expensive. This is amazing."

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"If it's as good as you say it is, we can't let it go to waste, I guess." Steve put his bottle on the table
and continued to make their sandwiches. "It's not that I don't think you should drink at all, Buck. It's
a matter of control and not using it as a crutch. This is our honeymoon. You're allowed to have some
to celebrate."

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Bucky drank through about half the bottle before pulling it away from his lips to respond. "I know,
and I haven't been using it as a crutch lately, you know? I've been fine. Haven't gone to the bars even
on the nights when I really, really wanted to. Or the times when someone invited me out with them
and I knew I needed to just come home to you. I'm doing it."

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"I know, Baby. And I'm so proud of you," Steve said. "I know it's not easy and you've been so
much better." Steve set their sandwiches down and put his hands on Bucky's hips. "And that's why
it's perfectly fine that we enjoy some beer together. Cause you know how to say 'no' to when you
think you need it but don't."

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Bucky nodded and leaned against Steve. "Am I allowed to get drunk sometimes?" he asked
cautiously. "When it's just you and me? The girls aren't around. Not at a bar, but at home -
somewhere where I won't start anything or do anything rash. Because I like getting drunk. And
sometimes it wasn't as a way to cope, sometimes it was just a way to let loose, you know?" He knew
the answer would probably be 'no' but he wanted to ask.

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Steve made a little face. "Bucky…” it wasn’t fun to say “no”. “On rare occasions,” he tried to be
lenient. “Cause you don’t need booze to get loose,” Steve reminded. “But I won’t say that I’d get
upset if you get responsibly drunk.”

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"May I ask what your definition of 'responsibly drunk' would be?" Bucky asked and took one of
Steve's hands, trying to touch him and love on him and win him over. It was in a kitchen similar to
this in a cabin on this same lake where, years earlier, Bucky's dad had hugged him and promised him
he would help him with his drug issue. Now he was back and with his husband and trying to
convince him to let him give in to alcohol all over again. Bucky sighed and thought to himself, 'The
fuck is wrong with you, Barnes?'

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Steve knew what Bucky was doing. He gave him a quiet look that scolded him. "Babe, if there's an
inkling that I wouldn't approve of how you're drinking, then that's your hint that it's not drinking
responsibly." He kissed his forehead. "Why do you need it so bad, Buck?"

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Bucky looked down and chewed his lip. "I don't know." He sighed and looked back up at Steve. "I
honestly don't know. I've tried for months to figure out what it is that keeps me coming back. I have
about a million reasons but none seem like that one key thing that just unlocks all the others, you
know?"
Steve squeezed Bucky's hand gently. "Is there anything I can do that makes you feel as good at being drunk? I'll do anything," Steve said. He wanted so desperately for Bucky to recover and not feel like it was such an uphill battle.

"It's not even that it feels good. Because sometimes it doesn't," Bucky said and moved to sit down at the table, still holding Steve's hand. "It's all psychological, don't you think? Like it's some placebo effect that makes me think that everything is all okay. For my mom, she drank because she had an abusive father and the memories of him hurt too bad. It was clear. It made sense. She said it helped. For me... I don't really have a reason other than it's familiar."

Steve pet his fingers through Bucky's hair. "Why don't you try exploring other options?" he asked. "Like... if you had a stressful day, you can just drag me to the bedroom and have me blow you. Or you can take up knitting. Or cleaning."

"Okay, first of all, you complain that I don't clean right so that wouldn't work," Bucky started, "Also, if I had you blow me then I'd start associating blow jobs with being stressed out and then I'd get anxiety whenever I had my dick in your mouth. And also, knitting? No."

"Drawing? Playing music? Why don't you write some of your own music, that would be a great outlet," Steve tried. He took a bite from his sandwich and sighed. "Maybe you could talk to my mom. My dad was an alcoholic. She may be able to help."

"I don't think that's such a great idea," Bucky said nervously. "I know she already doesn't like that about me and if she knew I just couldn't get over it..." He searched Steve's face carefully. "I don't want her thinking that I'm not ever going to be good enough for you. I mean, hell, we had one fucked up Christmas this year because of my drinking."

"I tell my mom everything," Steve said. "Everything," he repeated. "If she doesn't find it out from you, it'll eventually come from me. Cause I'm not ashamed of your faults and I love everything about you. And, in my opinion, Christmas was a collective fuck-up."

"Christmas was my fault, Steve, I know it was," Bucky said and took a few more bites of his sandwich. "You just say that so I won't feel so bad." He stopped and readjusted in his chair awkwardly. "Did you tell your mom everything I've told you? I mean, like everything?"

"Unless you tell me not to tell anyone, I've probably told her. I don't go running to her, but everything comes out in its own time. Sometimes it's when I'm asking her for advice. Sometimes it's when I'm asking her to say a prayer for us." Steve shrugged his shoulders. "She knows how much you mean to me. She just wants what'll make us happy."
Bucky closed his mouth tight and thought. That meant Steve's mom probably knew about his time in the hospital, his cocaine problem as a high schooler, his endless list of sexual partners, his bar fights and how he acted that night he came home drunk. Bucky was beyond mortified. His heart rate picked up and he blinked a couple times rapidly. Steve was right, though, he never asked him not to tell those things to anyone. For Bucky, it was more an understood. He was never one to tell his parents everything about himself and Bucky had made the mistake of assuming that was the same way for Steve.

Steve could see the change in Bucky's demeanor and his shoulders dropped a bit. A concerned look crossed his face and suddenly he was worried that he'd done something that broke his trust. "I'm... I'm sorry, Buck. I didn't know - I didn't think that I couldn't talk to my mom about it. You're not mad at me, are you?"

Bucky was quiet for a minute before he slowly reached a hand out to grip Steve's arm. "I'm not mad," he said simply but he wasn't looking at Steve. "I'm very overwhelmed." He nodded and grabbed his beer before getting up from the table. "I just need a minute, okay? I'm going to go sit outside."

"She still loves you," Steve said, feeling like it had to be said. "And she's proud of you for cleaning up." He slumped a little in his chair and stopped talking so Bucky could go sit outside in peace.

Bucky walked to the end of the pier and sat down so his legs dangled off the edge and his toes barely grazed the water. He set his beer down and produced a pack of cigarettes from his pocket along with a lighter. He wasn't mad at Steve. He couldn't be mad at him for talking with his own mother. He just felt really weird that there was someone other than himself and Steve who knew everything about him. He already worried about what she thought of him but now he wouldn't be able to look her in the eye.

Steve gave Bucky some time to himself but after almost an hour passed, he walked out to sit down next to him and place a hand on his back. "I told my mom well before we got married," Steve said. "Before Christmas. And she still treated you the same as ever. Christmas was... jarring for her. We never really had anything like that happen in our house. But you don't have to be ashamed with her. You're as much of a son to her as I am. Addiction and drinking won't stop me from being her son. It won't stop you, either."

Bucky leaned away from Steve so he wouldn't get too much smoke around him. "I just, I guess, I didn't know my whole life was going to become an open book for both you and your mother at once," Bucky said and put the cigarette out on the wood of the pier before pocketing the butt to throw away later. "I mean, my own sisters don't know about a lot of the things I've told you and they are my blood."
"Telling my mom is different from your sisters. They're kids. Me and my ma are adults," Steve said. He laid his head on Bucky's shoulder. "I hope that maybe one day when they're grown up, you can tell them. Because I think it's the best feeling in the world when you can trust to bare your darkest secrets to someone. Because you know they have all the tools that could really cut you down. But they won't ever do that."

Bucky was tired, he was so tired. He wasn't going to be able to just let this go and get over it. He was going to be worried and nervous around Steve's mom maybe forever. "You can't tell her about this whole conversation," Bucky said sternly.

Steve looked away for a moment because he didn't like hiding things from his mom, but he would do it for Bucky. "Alright," he said. He chewed on the inside of his cheek nervously before saying, "There's one thing that I haven't found the courage to tell her. One day I will, but I know it'll upset her."

"What is it?" Bucky asked and slipped his hand with Steve's. He really hoped this one wasn't about him. He really hoped the one thing Steve couldn't tell his mom wasn't something abhorrently awful that Bucky had done. But he also didn't want it to be something about Steve that he was ashamed of either. He would felt so bad if Steve felt that much guilt about something about himself.

"I never really told you how sick I got when I was little. I was sick almost all the time, but there were a few times the doctors tried to convince my mom to start looking at grave plots," Steve said. "It took a huge toll on her to pay all the hospital bills and medicines." His lips drew into a thin line. "Sometimes I didn't take the medicine cause I thought it'd be better if I'd just die from pneumonia already. Pretended that I'd just forgotten about it instead that I chose not to take it." He didn't consider it to be suicidal tendencies so much as offering himself to God's will. "I was happy when I survived. But it didn't stop me from 'forgetting' my medicine the next time I was sick."

Bucky listened intently and his grip on Steve's hand got tighter as he talked. "What?" It was barely an audible spoken word and Bucky himself didn't know if he had actually said anything. His eyes were locked to Steve's and he knew he must have on such a scared and concerned face, maybe even slightly horrified. "You wanted to die because you thought it could help your mom."

Steve looked so guilty. The expression on Bucky's face made his stomach sink. "Sometimes I forget that I did that cause it hurts to know that I did that. And... and I know it's not the same as what you did, but I'm still sorry I did it." He squeezed Bucky's hand tightly. "She was stretched thinner than you were. Sure, you had two kids instead of one. But she had thousands of dollars in medical bills on top of all the usual expenses. She barely slept and she would cry whenever she had to go to work instead of stay home to take care of me."
Bucky crawled into Steve's lap and held his face in his hands and just breathed deeply as he looked at him. "I am really, really happy that you didn't die of pneumonia or something else," he said and punctuated his words with gentle presses of his fingertips. "And I know you aren't proud of what you did, and I know how hard it is to tell me about that but thank you so much for telling me."

"I haven't faced the same challenges as you. And I don't deal with stress the same ways as you. But I still make mistakes and do things I'm not proud of," Steve said. "And I want you to know that I'll tell you every secret I have because I trust you. And because I feel better knowing that someone knows what I did and still loves me anyway." Steve kissed Bucky's cheek.

"I love you more every day that goes by," Bucky promised and kissed Steve full on the lips. "I love you with everything I learn about you. I love you in a way I've never felt for anyone before and didn’t know was even possible. I love you in ways that words haven’t been invented to describe yet." Bucky was crying now and Steve’s arms were wrapped securely around him.

Steve got emotional after watching Bucky start to cry after saying all of those beautiful things to him. He felt a few tears slip down his face and he kissed his husband deeply. "Thank you," he said softly. "For understanding me. For understanding everything." He closed his eyes for a moment before tilting his head back to look at the sky. "Our lunch is probably cold now."

"I don't care about that," Bucky said and gripped his hands tight in Steve's shirt. "All I want is to go to bed and make slow passionate love to you and hold you and kiss you and show you I'm serious about what you mean to me and how much I really love you and can't live without you."

Steve looked at Bucky with bright, shining eyes and smiled at him. Bucky made him feel so fucking loved every day of his life, but he still managed to find ways to make Steve feel extra special. "That sounds perfect," Steve said quietly. He kissed Bucky slowly before getting onto his feet and offering Bucky a hand up.

Once they were back in the cabin, Bucky took Steve's hand and brought him to sit down on the bed. He wanted this to be slow and memorable. He crowded around Steve and wordlessly slipped Steve's shirt up off of him before doing the same to himself. Then he pushed Steve back onto the bed carefully and climbed on top of him so he could suck deep red marks onto his chest.

Steve's breath caught in his throat. He loved any sort of intimacy he could have with Bucky, but passionate love making was certainly his favorite. He closed his eyes and arched his back to press up into Bucky. "I couldn't have asked for a better husband, Buck," Steve said softly as he touched over his back affectionately.
Bucky silently worked his way down Steve's body. When he hit pants, he got up off of him to rid the both of them of the rest of their clothes before grabbing the lube from the nightstand. "You're the most perfect man in the world, my love."

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Steve smiled down at him and stroked the curve of his jaw. "I can't be when you already are," he said fondly. "At the very least, we're tied for first place."

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Bucky giggled low in his throat and kissed Steve delicately. "I'll settle for that." He squeezed some lube out onto his fingers and reached down to tease Steve's hole before slowly pushing one finger inside. "I'll make love to you nice and slow, Baby. I'll take the rest of the day if you want."

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Steve moaned softly and shivered as Bucky pushed a finger inside. "I want you to take it nice and slow. So we're both aching to come at the end of it and it'll be beautiful." He tangled his fingers in Bucky's hair as he kissed him.

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Bucky eased his finger in and out of Steve and made out with him in that careful loving way that feverish rough sex couldn't give them. After a minute or so of one finger, he let another slip into Steve and he scissored them around just feeling Steve's strong but delicate fingers in his hair.

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Steve breathed deeply as Bucky opened him up. His eyes were still dark with arousal but he didn't look like he was about to ravage Bucky like they would do sometimes. "I guess this is one benefit when we get a house to ourselves," he said. "Clothing optional. Every day."

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"Don't tell me that, I'll never wear pants." Bucky chuckled and licked a wet line up Steve's stomach. He moved down his body more and more and kissed and licked at Steve's thighs. "If I go slow, can I put my tongue inside you? I won't eat you out like usual so it's not rushed, I promise."

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Steve let out a desperate sound when Bucky licked him. "Only if you kiss me senseless after you do that," Steve said with an affectionate smile. "And I hope you wouldn't wear pants if we lived together on our own."

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Bucky’s fingers continued to move in and out of Steve as he brought his face down close to his hole. He licked around his fingers for a few seconds before sticking his tongue inside along with them. He expertly used both fingers and tongue to work Steve more open for his cock and he pressed as far into him as he could reach.

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Steve pet his fingers through Bucky's hair and let out soft, needy sounds. "Fuck yes," he breathed
out. "I don’t know what I love more. Your mouth working me open or your mouth sweet talking me."

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Bucky hummed happily and reached up with his free hand to grip Steve’s hip. He loved both. He loved sweet talking Steve and opening him up. And he loved kissing him. Frankly, Bucky's mouth got to have a lot of fun in their relationship and he loved every second of it. After a few more minutes, he just couldn't handle it anymore and he really wanted his dick inside Steve. He pulled out everything at once and moved to line up his cock with Steve's waiting ass. "Can I?"

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"Yes, please," Steve said breathlessly. He had a faint blush right down to his chest and he had a thin layer of sweat on his skin from how much he wanted this. "I want to feel you moving inside of me, Buck."

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Bucky nodded and pushed in as calmly and slowly as he possibly could. His mouth fell open at the feeling and a rush went over his body at how amazing it felt to just take his time and really feel Steve's body relaxing around him. Once he was in, Bucky gripped the back of Steve's legs to pull them up onto his shoulders and he leaned down to kiss Steve, effectively folding him in half.

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Steve let out a low moan and then pulled Bucky down so he could kiss him deeply. "I love you. I'm so happy I'm yours, Bucky Barnes," he said breathlessly. His eyes were locked on his husband. "You are the best thing to ever happen to me."

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"Rogers-Barnes," Bucky corrected and eased his cock all the way out of Steve as he kissed him and then pushed it back in again with a choked groan. "All mine," he whispered. "You're all mine forever. And I'll cherish you more every day." He set a calm and peaceful sort of rock to his hips and talked to Steve some more. "I'll protect you with everything I am. I'll support you through anything you encounter. I'll make love to you until I die. I'll help raise our baby with you and I'll tell them all the wonderful things I've learned about you."

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Steve felt tears prickle at his eyes because Bucky was so perfect and he felt so blessed to have such an amazing man in his life. "We are going to raise such an amazing kid, Buck. And we are going to do everything we ever wanted to do. I'll make sure you'll never want for anything ever again."

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"The only thing I want is you by my side," Bucky answered and pushed himself closer against Steve. He felt like he just couldn't get near enough to him. He wanted to be skin on skin but still connected to his ass. He was trying to think of the best way to position Steve so they had as much contact as possible. "I want your wisdom and help whenever I need it. And I want your body whenever you'll give it. And I want your laughter and company always." He watched Steve’s face for a few minutes as he slowly fucked him. After a while, he looked into Steve’s eyes and asked, "How are you feeling?"
Steve looked overwhelmed with pleasure and he couldn't take his eyes off Bucky even if he tried. "I feel on top of the world, Bucky," he said. He reached down to caress Bucky's ass before pushing his fingers between his cheeks to tease his hole lightly. "I'm getting close."

Bucky's eyes rolled back in his head and he shuddered out a sigh as Steve touched his hole ever so slightly. "Baby, you can come whenever you want to come. I want to watch your handsome face when you get the release you deserve with me deep inside you. I can never get enough of getting to bring you pleasure like this."

Steve loved how expressive Bucky could get when he was enjoying something. He continued to tease him until he could feel his orgasm really start to build up. When he came, his toes curled and his lips parted in a small 'o' as his dick shot thick streams of come.

Bucky watched excitedly as Steve came and smiled wide and dopey before giving Steve a quick kiss and then a lick to his neck. "That felt good for you, Love?" he asked and tightened his grip on Steve's legs. He quickened his thrusts just a little bit after Steve came and felt the warm tingle through his body that signaled his own orgasm was coming up.

"That felt amazing, Baby, thank you," Steve said. When Bucky started to speed up, he gave him an affectionate smile before touching his hip. "Slower," he commanded gently, wanting Bucky to really feel every bit of what they had together.

"Mhmm, okay," Bucky agreed and slowed down again. He leaned his head against Steve's leg and closed his eyes. His head was swimming with thoughts of Steve and the feeling of his warm perfect hole around his dick. Every part of Bucky's body was in overdrive and he felt like the only thing holding him together was the promise of getting to come inside Steve and, once he did that, he would simply fall apart next to his husband.

Steve smiled as he watched Bucky move, all relaxed and happy. He placed a hand to the back of Bucky's neck and massaged him gently. "You look so beautiful. After you come, I want to draw you," he said. "Capture the moment forever."

"You can do that, Baby," Bucky smiled, eyes still closed. He might fall asleep while Steve did it but he probably wouldn't mind. It took another minute or so before Bucky was sucking a mark on the skin of Steve's leg and coming up inside him in excited hot streams. "I love you," Bucky whispered as quietly as possible and pulled out to slump unceremoniously on the bed.
Steve breathed out a content sigh as he felt Bucky fill his ass with his come. He didn't even feel the usual emptiness after Bucky pulled out. He rolled over to grab his pencils and sketch pad so he could draw Bucky as he laid there. "Sing to me a little," he asked gently.

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Bucky hummed a laugh and smiled over at Steve. "What do you want to hear, Love?" he asked and scratched absentely at his stomach. His dick was covered in lube and some come and he adjusted it to lie on his leg now that it wasn't sticking straight up wanting Steve. That was definitely going in the top ten Steve and Bucky fucks and Bucky hoped that Steve agreed.

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"Sing me something soft and romantic," Steve requested. He kissed him once and started to sketch out the basic shape of Bucky's body. He couldn't help but eye Bucky's dick every now and again, like he was already considering round two.

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Bucky thought for a moment and decided he would start with something from The Rolling Stones. He mixed a few songs together and eventually managed to go into "Something" by The Beatles just changing the lyrics slightly. He started getting pretty tired after about seven minutes of singing quietly with his eyes closed. He was part way through another song when he took a deep breath and didn't manage to get to the next line of the song before he was out like a light.

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Steve listened to him, falling in love even more as Bucky sang to him even as he was falling asleep. While Bucky dozed off, Steve drew a few different pieces of him before taking the camera and snapping a few pictures as well. He set it down after a few minutes and laid down next to his husband so he could kiss him and then doze off next to him.

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When Bucky woke up, it was well into the evening. He still hadn't gone to Fred's to call the girls and he wasn't even sure if Steve was going to want to cook the fish they caught or just let them go back in the water. He looked around the room. Steve wasn't there and Bucky got an odd worried pang that shot through him for no particular reason and he yelped, "Steve?"

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There was no way in hell Steve was skinning the fish so when he woke up, he decided to try and pluck a few notes on Bucky's guitar. He was awful at it. As soon as he heard the worried shout for him, Steve abandoned the guitar on the couch and rushed into the bedroom. "You okay?"

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"Hey," Bucky sighed in relief and held out his arms for him, "I don't know, I just got scared when you weren't here." His legs were tangled up in blankets and his heart was working on calming down again. To him, it seemed like he was becoming increasingly more dependent on Steve after sex. He was, of course, far more vulnerable with Steve than he was with anyone before him and Bucky wondered if he was finally experiencing what actual love-filled love making was supposed to do to someone. It was meant to break down any last remaining walls and mold two people together and when one was gone too soon after sex then nothing felt quite right.
Steve looked apologetic as he crawled into bed and pulled Bucky into a strong hug so he would feel protected. "I'm sorry, Love. You looked so peaceful I didn't want to disturb you." Steve stroked his fingers through Bucky's hair. "The shop is open for another hour. I was going to wake you soon anyway so you can call home."

"It's okay." Bucky curled into Steve's body and breathed easier. "I don't know why I got like that. I was just waking up and couldn't get my brain to reason that you were still around even if you weren't right there by me. It felt like those mornings when you were at the hospital and I'd wake up without you." He tenderly stroked a hand down Steve's side and shook his head, "Anyway, yes, let's go call the girls."

"I think it's sweet," Steve said. "I don't want you to be stressed, but it's endearing how much you worry for me. And everyone else you love." Steve kissed him slowly before pulling away so he could dress himself in one of Bucky's sweaters.

"I think it's sweet when you wear my clothes," Bucky said and got up to get dressed as well. The sweater Steve chose was one that was bigger on Bucky so it actually fit Steve really nicely. Bucky pulled on a pair of his pants, foregoing underwear for the time-being and then tossed aside some of his shirts to find another long sweater he could wear.

"I like the way you look at me when I wear your clothes," Steve said with a little grin. He kissed Bucky's cheek and took his hand as he walked out to the car. "I tried playing your guitar. I'm not very good at it."

"Oh yeah?" Bucky asked curiously, "You don't know any chords, what did you even do? Just strum a couple times?" He giggled and hopped into the car.

"I tried pressing a few of the wires down and it hurt my fingers," Steve said, knowing absolutely nothing about music.

"Baby, they are strings, not wires," Bucky corrected. There was a mesh pocket on the side of the door and Bucky saw a photograph sticking out of it. He pulled it out and saw a family of four smiled back at him. "This must be your coworker's family." Bucky showed it to Steve. "Reminds me that we need a new family picture."

Steve glanced at the photo and smiled. "What's wrong with the one we have?" He asked as he pulled out from their cabin. "We have Raphael included in the picture."
"Raphael isn't the problem in the picture, it's a winter one and we are all in sweaters. It's spring now and we should take a new one, right? Your mom will help us out again, yeah? I'll let you get me into my 'Sunday best' or whatever and I'll even wear a tie if you promise me sexual favors in return."

Steve brightened up immediately. "You mean we get to take seasonal family photos?" He'd assumed that it was just a once in a while thing when they got a major addition to the family like a pet or a kid. "This is perfect. We can all wear ugly patterned Hawaiian shirts," Steve said.

Bucky grimaced and gave Steve the side eye. "I refuse," he said simply. "What is your fascination in putting us all in matching ugly outfits? You wanted us to wear those terrible Christmas sweaters last time but Becca and I won out for the navy ones. And we will win again this time." He nudged Steve. "Come on, you love me in collared shirts – a nice clean button-up and a tie? You can have Becca do my hair however you want. We will be the clean, presentable gay couple you want us to be."

"I'd rather be the matching family than the well-dressed gays," Steve said. "I love matching stuff. And one of these days, I'll be able to outvote you over this. Becca will see my way eventually. Maybe if I let her pick out who gets what pattern."

"Sure, try convincing Becca - arguably the most stubborn of the Barnes'," Bucky chided. "Your best tactic will be bribery of some sort." They pulled up at the tackle shop and Bucky got out of the car. "Do you think they have been alright for your mom since we left?"

"I'll have my way one of these days. I can be stubborn too," Steve reminded. He locked the car as they headed towards the shop. "I'm sure they're all having a blast doing whatever it is they do when we are gone. And if they misbehave, my mom won't have it."

Bucky nodded and walked into the shop to greet Fred. He gestured at the phone on the wall next to a little chair and Fred waved him on. Bucky dialed home and waited. Lilly picked up with a hearty, "Rogers-Barnes Residence, who are you looking for?"

He laughed at the question and wondered how long she had been answering the phone that way. "Hey, my little monster, it's me. Steve and I wanted to call to check in on you."

Lilly made an excited noise to hear her brother. "We miss you," she said right away. "We're having lots of fun with Miss Sarah. But she doesn't tuck me in the way I like it like you do," Lilly explained. "We went to the zoo today," she explained. "How's Seneca?"
Bucky smiled over at Steve and kept talking to Lilly, "It's wonderful here. We are having a really good time. I really missed this place and I think Steve is enjoying being out of the city for a while. Do you want to say hello to Steve?"

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"Did Steve end up swimming? He seemed pretty chicken about it." Lilly asked and chuckled at the thought of grown-ass-police-officer Steve being afraid to swim in a lake.

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Bucky handed the phone off to Steve saying, "Lilly wants to know if you were a chicken about swimming in the lake or not. Also, your mom took them to the zoo. Tell her I'd like to talk to Becca when you are done. But you can talk to your mom first if you want to."

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"I wasn't a chicken! I swam really deep into the lake," Steve huffed and took the phone. "Just so you know, Lil, I swam like I was born to be in the lake. But did you have a good practice yesterday? I'm sorry we can't make your game tomorrow."

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Lilly laughed and said, "I'm sure that's what happened. And yeah practice was okay. Some of my teammates were being stupid assholes and not playing very well. I swear to god, if they cost us the game tomorrow, I'm going to start knocking heads together."

Bucky sat on the chair by the phone and waited for Steve to be done talking. Fred was behind the counter reading some sports magazine and not paying them any attention. A few people across the aisle had noticed them and were discussing something privately. Bucky sort of figured they were trying to place how they recognized him.

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"Watch your language, Kiddo. Everyone can't be as motivated to win as you are." Steve chatted with her for a bit and then spoke to his mom before finally turning the phone over to Bucky. "Becca's on the phone for you," he said. "You caught her in the middle of reading, she might be grumpy."

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"Well, what's new?" Bucky asked and took the phone from Steve. "Hey, Beecs, how have you been holding up? Has Lilly given you much trouble? She said you guys got to go to the zoo. Did you have fun?"

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"Lilly's the same as usual. The zoo was all right. Saw animals," Becca said, trying to play things cool. "Miss Sarah showed me how to sterilize a wound. It was interesting. And kind of gross."

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"What? Why do you need to learn that?" Bucky moved the phone over and said to Steve, "Your mom taught Becca how to sterilize a wound. "He directed his attention back to his sister. "You thinking of becoming a nurse or a doctor or something?"
"Well, I figured it'd be an important thing to know. We can't let Lilly have an infected cut from lacrosse if you or Steve's mom isn't around to fix it," she said in a matter-of-fact tone. "It's not that hard."

"Alright, that's a good point." Bucky nodded. "But you're sure you are doing okay? Not too overwhelmed? Don't miss us too much?" he asked and tried not to get too upset about missing the girls. "We will be home at the end of the week. You'll have to tell us how Lilly's game went tomorrow."

"Please," Becca said in a cool voice. "The world isn't going to fall apart cause you're not here for a few days. Go do gross couple things with Steve and have a good time. Call us tomorrow so she can tell you about the game."

"Alright, we will call you. I love you, Becs. Steve loves you too. If you need us, call this number and Fred will get a message to us." Bucky hung up and looked to Steve. "I think she's doing okay. Maybe missing us a little bit. Told us to call tomorrow after Lilly's game."

Steve nodded his head. "Glad to hear that everything is going fine over there. My mom is on cloud nine having kids to look after. I guess we definitely have a babysitter for our kids once we have them," he said quietly.

"Yeah, that's good to know." Bucky smiled and waved goodbye to Fred as they went. "Do you need anything from the grocery before we head back home? Are we eating the fish or are we going vegetarian instead? Because we may need more supplies then."

"We caught the fish, so we may as well eat them. It's a part of your memories from when you used to come here, so we have to do it at least once. But after that we are going vegetarian pretty much," Steve decided.

"Are you sure you want to eat them, Baby? Because you seemed pretty upset," Bucky asked again. He wanted to grill the fish over the campfire just like his dad had done but he also didn't want Steve getting self-conscious and grossed out about it if he did.

"Just don't let me watch you do it. And wash everything up really quick after," Steve said. "I can handle it. I want to experience this with you."
Bucky promised Steve that he would and they headed back to the cabin. The sun was starting to set so when they got back, Bucky went out behind the cabin to skin the fish. It didn't take very long with only four fairly small fish and he also managed to cut the meat off and into smaller pieces so it wouldn't look like an animal to Steve while he was cooking it over the fire.

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Steve considered cooking some vegetables but he decided he would let Bucky take total control over tonight's dinner. So instead he dressed down to flannel pajamas and a button down that he left open with his bare chest hanging out. When Bucky called him for dinner, Steve came over and hugged him tightly. "Look at you, providing for me."

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Bucky pulled Steve down by the collar of his shirt to give him a long open mouthed kiss. "I can manage sometimes," he said with a smile and handed Steve a plate of fish and some warm rice and beans that he had to heat up in the microwave first. They sat together around the fire and ate as the sun went down in the sky. "After we eat, we are making real s'mores since you've never had them."

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Steve hummed and smiled. "That sounds perfect.” He liked the atmosphere of this place and eating around the fire. "I think when we have our kid, we should take them here together. But you should get to take them one on one just like your dad did with you."

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Bucky ate and happily stared at Steve's bare chest as Steve stared out at the lake. He definitely wore an open shirt on purpose and Bucky was definitely going to grab the sex blanket once it got darker and they were definitely fucking under the stars tonight. Bucky snapped back to attention, "Why won't you be with us?" he asked curiously with a bite of fish hanging from his teeth.

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"Well, I'd go sometimes," Steve said. "But I think that we both can have our own things with him or her that are special between just the two. You and your dad had something really special here. I think you should get to share that with them."

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Bucky nodded, "Okay, what's yours going to be then?" He shoveled some more fish onto his plate and drank some of the beer that Steve had agreed to let him have with dinner. It really was good beer. Steve didn't seem to like it as much as Bucky but that was okay.

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"I think maybe either art or baseball. I really want to be a coach for their team. Baseball would be the best but it doesn't matter to me what sport they do so long as it's something," Steve said. "Wouldn't that be nice?"

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Bucky gave Steve a big grin. "Baseball?" he asked, "Why didn't I know you were into baseball? I think that's a great plan and I'm sure our kid will love playing sports and making art with his daddy."
"I didn't play until I joined the force. We play against the firefighters every summer," Steve said. He chewed on his food and then smiled. "It's going to be so amazing to be called ‘dad’. I can't wait, Buck."
everyone so I'm sure she will be ecstatic."

"Don't tell her, but I could probably score us enough free tickets to go once, maybe twice a month in the summer. You've only seen the bad side of dating a cop. But the summer time brings loads of benefits," Steve said. He stuck the marshmallow in the fire and let it get toasty.

"I've seen the good side too," Bucky defended. "I've seen you stop some kids from bullying one of their classmates. And I've seen you use your skills to track down the asshole who hurt me and kick his ass. And let's not forget how we met."

Steve smiled happily. "Yeah, I guess you're right. And then there's the handcuffs," he said. "You really enjoyed using those." He pulled the marshmallow up and blew it to cool it down.

"Yes, I did. And we need some fake ones of those in case you won't let me use your real ones after we get home." Bucky offered a graham cracker with chocolate to Steve and then made his own s'mores. "This is much better than 'a microwave in the city type' of s'mores."

Steve took the cracker and chocolate to make the s'mores sandwich. He took a bite and then let out a little groan. "You're right. This is infinitely better," he agreed. Steve shoved the rest into his mouth all at once.

Bucky laughed at Steve and started handing him more marshmallows to make another one. "You're so goddamn cute," he said with a matter-of-fact sort of reverie. After Steve swallowed his bite, Bucky stuck a block of chocolate in between his teeth and leaned over to Steve with it as an offering for him to take the other half.

Steve licked his lips then leaned over to take the chocolate from Bucky. Steve kissed Bucky lightly after he took it. "I love you," he said happily. "I love that you still show me new things."

"I love you too," Bucky said. "I love that you let me show you new things." He got up slowly and crowded into Steve's space. He leaned over his lap on the chair and got his face very close to Steve's without kissing him yet. Bucky rested a hand on Steve's thigh close to his dick and another hand on his chest. "If you're done with the s'mores, I've got something else I want you to eat." He knew it was a bit cheesy but Steve was going to appreciate it.

Steve got an excited look on his face when Bucky got so close. He knew that his shirt being open would make him irresistible. "I've got some s'mores left I want to eat," Steve said in an aloof tone.
He smirked as he casually ate another one while Bucky waited. But once he was done, he groped Bucky's ass and gave him a slow kiss.

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Bucky frowned and waited. When Steve was all over him finally, he said, "You finished, now?" in a worn out tone. "Cause I can wait," he sassed and straightened up. "Eat more sweets. I need to grab the sex blanket and the lube anyway." He slipped out of Steve's grasp and trotted off back into the house. He decided to strip his clothes while he was inside and he wrapped himself up in the giant blanket so Steve would get a little surprise when he made him drop it open.

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Steve perked up when he saw Bucky coming back covered in the blanket. "Sex blanket? Is that what you put down on the bed yesterday?" Steve couldn't help but laugh at the fact that Bucky got a blanket designated for fucking on. "Is this when we get to fuck under the stars?"

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"Yes, it is, if you'd rather have me than the s'mores," Bucky said. A dim light from the cabin was glowing out over the grass and that combined with the fire and the bright moon made it fairly easy for the two of them to see. Bucky laid down all curled up in the blanket close to the fire and stared off into the sky. "Whenever you are ready."

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Steve moved over Bucky and started to pull the blanket open and he gasped excitedly when he saw that he was naked underneath. "Oh, man. You are sexy as all hell," he breathed. "I love it when you surprise me."

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"Thought I'd just get one extra step out of the way." Bucky smiled and used his legs to pull Steve down on top of him. "How do you want to do it, Baby? The lube is on my chair. You choose what we do."

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Steve kissed along Bucky's neck and hummed excitedly, "Let's do it with you on your hands and knees. We're in the wild now, right? So let's be a little wild," he said and teased one of Bucky’s nipples.

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Bucky was all too ready to push Steve off of him and flip so he was on his knees for Steve, his ass close to him. "I love that idea. Be as wild as you can," he said and firmly gripped his hands into the blanket. "Don't even take that long to stretch me out. Just start with two fingers and once you can get three in then I'll be good to go and you can just take me."

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Steve grabbed the lube from the chair and quickly slicked up a few fingers. It amazed him how much Bucky could take all at once. He carefully eased two into Bucky's ass, which was so goddamn tight. "I'm not even going to take my clothes off," he said. "Gonna fuck you with just my fly open."
Bucky whined and whimpered a little bit, "And I don't get to see that?" He loved the thought of Steve being so desperate to fuck him that he just couldn't bother with being naked. He loved to think about Steve wanting to be inside Bucky immediately so he rushes through prepping his hole and just goes for it once it's good enough. He wanted to see that. But Bucky also wanted to be on his hands and knees really badly - outside, in the middle of the night.

"You'll see it some other time," Steve said. He laid his chest over Bucky's back and nibbled at his ear. "Tonight I'm going to fuck you nice and rough like I know you love." He curled his fingers inside Bucky's ass before pushing a third one in. "How's that, Buck? You ready for my cock?"

Bucky couldn't help the high-pitched keening whine that escaped his lips. "Yes, please, Steve, ruin me. Make me feel it for days. Mark me up. Bite me. Do whatever you want to me. I know you love me and I trust you. Let yourself be loose and wild because I know you'll hold me when we are done."

 Barely after Bucky finished talking, Steve pushed his cock balls deep into Bucky's ass. He let out a loud moan at how tight he was. "Fucking god, your ass feels amazing." He gripped Bucky's hips and moved at a punishing pace, balls slapping against him with every thrust.

Bucky cried out and grabbed the end of the blanket so he could bite down on it so he didn't attract attention from the nearest cabin. The last thing they needed was someone coming to investigate some strange yelling sounds. Bucky's body shook under Steve and it felt like it was getting one of the best workouts he had ever had. He kept groaning low in his throat on a never-ending chain and hoped that it was doing things to Steve.

Steve loved how affected Bucky was by this. It was fucking hot to see him grab the blanket and do everything he could to not make too much noise. Steve bit down on Bucky's shoulder as he kept fucking him at a relentless pace, showing no sign of slowing down. "That's right, Baby. Take my dick. Gonna make you too sore to walk tomorrow. And I'll fuck you again just as you're about to walk right."

Bucky whimpered again and turned to look up at Steve to show how much he was looking forward to that. He tossed his head so his hair was out of his face and he tried watching Steve's muscles and expression as he railed Bucky's ass over and over again. The scent of the nighttime air and the sound of the crackling fire made a comforting cocoon around Bucky as he got to have a brutal and hot fuck from his favorite person in all the world.

Steve reached under them so he could stroke Bucky's cock. He was so lost in how great the friction felt on his dick. He probably wasn't going to last too long like this, but, god, it felt good. He panted
against the back of Bucky's neck, doing his damned best to give Bucky the fuck of his life.

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Bucky spit out the blanket and cranked his neck so he could kiss Steve. "Bite my neck?" he asked cautiously in case Steve didn't want to. He liked experiencing tolerable pain like being stretched by a dick before he was entirely ready and being slapped or bitten or choked a little bit. He would never ask Steve to choke him because he knew that would upset him but Bucky would at least ask for things like bites or slaps.

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Steve kissed him back and was left breathless after. And biting Bucky's neck was a request that he could honor - it wasn't so rough of an act that Steve would be uncomfortable. He sank his teeth into the curve of Bucky's neck where it met his shoulder and bit down hard enough to bruise. "Mine," he growled as an added bonus when he came back up.

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With the blanket out of his mouth, Bucky was free to gasp and then let out one of the loudest groans he ever had when they had fucked. He didn't realize how close he was but when Steve claimed him with a simple 'Mine', Bucky came with a fury of spasms and goose bumps down his arms and legs.

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God, Bucky sounded so fucking amazing. Steve wished he had some sort of tape recorder so he could have audio of the noises Bucky was making. "Fuck," he swore. He paused to bask in the feeling of Bucky's ass clamping down on his cock but then picked up in a fast fury until he spilled himself deep inside Bucky's ass.

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The second Steve was done Bucky collapsed on the ground, bringing Steve down on top of him. He panted heavily and closed his eyes. Steve's weight on top of him felt really nice and he didn't want him to pull out and get up yet. He just wanted to be protectively beneath him for a few minutes.

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Steve didn't pull out and instead laid out on top of Bucky. He kissed his cheek and jaw while playing with his hair. "That was so good, Buck." He smiled adoringly at him. "You're perfect. This is the most perfect week of my life."

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Bucky curled his arm back to touch Steve's face. He was so tired and fucked out and his ass and legs were pretty damn sore. All he could manage was an appreciative sound of agreement as Steve talked. If he wasn't careful, he was going to fall asleep outside on the sex blanket with Steve's dick still inside him.

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Steve continued to murmur sweet nothings into Bucky's ear until he heard a rustle in the bushes nearby. He went on high alert and was ready to spring into action until a pair of raccoons emerged and started looking around for any scraps people may have left.
"Jesus Christ!" Bucky's eyes were wide and worried, "Goddamn raccoons, I thought you were somebody coming over to see what was going on." Bucky breathed in deeply and looked to Steve for a moment. "Want to head back inside for bed?"

"What about you get some clothes on and we load the blanket into the truck and we can sleep in the back? That way we can see the stars but not be stuck on the ground," Steve offered.

"Okay," Bucky agreed sleepily and headed inside to pull on some warm pajamas and grab a few more blankets and some pillows. When he came back, Steve had the truck moved over closer to the door of the cabin and the campfire and the back was empty and ready for them to set up a nice bed.

Steve smiled and snuggled up to Bucky the second they set up the bed as cozy as they possibly could. "Perfect," he sighed happily. "I love you so much, Bucky Barnes. I'm looking forward to an amazing day with you tomorrow."

"Rogers-Barnes," Bucky corrected again and blinked tiredly, nuzzling against Steve. "What are we doing tomorrow, Babe?" he asked and closed his eyes. "I kind of want to just stay here at the cabin and do nothing. You can draw and I can whittle or something. And we can have sex on the pool table or in the shower or you can blow me while I play guitar. So many options."

"I like the idea of sitting on the porch and drawing while you whittle. We can talk and fantasize about all the great sex we will have at the end of the night and then we can bring those fantasies to life," Steve said. "Sounds good?"

"Sounds perfect to me," Bucky said and felt himself drifting off. Before he fell asleep, Bucky gripped onto Steve's shirt and said, "You can draw what you think our kid is going to look like." It was silly, of course, since they didn't know what sort of kid they might get but Bucky was dog tired and not really thinking. He just wanted a baby to hold and maybe if he had a picture of one that was supposed to be theirs then he could be satisfied for a while longer until they eventually did get a child.
Steve woke up bright and early the next morning and carried Bucky back into the house to lay on the couch while he cooked breakfast. He didn't bother to wear a shirt - partially because he didn’t feel like it and partially because he wanted Bucky to stare at him - and in no time, chocolate chip pancakes were on the table.

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Bucky stumbled into the kitchen following the smell of pancakes. "Are these chocolate chip pancakes?" he asked with a gleam in his eye. "I love chocolate chip pancakes." He sat down and gratefully took the plate that was offered to him. "God bless you, Steven Rogers-Barnes for always cooking for me."

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"I know you do. I don't like to make a habit of unhealthy things for breakfast, but the girls aren't here so I get to spoil you," Steve said. He kissed the top of Bucky's head before sitting down. "I love cooking for you. If only you loved matching sweaters for family pictures half as much as I love cooking."

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"We aren't wearing ugly ass Hawaiian shirts for our family picture, Steve," Bucky said with a mouth full of pancake. He ate, admittedly, too many pancakes and by the time he decided he was done, he was full and wanted nothing more than to lay down again. But they had plans for the day so Bucky helped clean up from breakfast and waited for what Steve wanted to do first.

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"How about I give you a quick massage before we find some whittling wood for you? It's a gorgeous day out and I can't wait to sit outside with you and watch the day go by," Steve said. "I don't think I've seen such a clear sky in my life."

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"Oh, a massage?" Bucky asked and sat up straighter. "I'm okay with that. We can put some blankets on the coffee table in the living room and I'll lay on that."

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Steve laughed. "Sounds good to me, Baby. You relax and I can get the table ready." He found a few plush blankets and a pillow for Bucky to lay his head on, then set it up nice and neat for him.

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Bucky never used to like having massages but Steve had given them to him a few times before and he really liked whatever it was that Steve did to him. It also happened to usually end in a boner for him so that was a pretty good benefit of the whole thing.

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Steve worked his hands slowly over Bucky's back and made sure to give each and every inch of him
plenty of attention. "I love giving you massages. Pampering you is one of my favorite pastimes."

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"That's pretty convenient because one of my favorite pastimes is getting pampered by you," Bucky said and smiled back at Steve. "What do you say you come up here in front of me and let me blow you while you massage me, huh?"

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Steve blushed at the offer but he sure as hell wasn’t going to turn that down. "Hell yeah," he said. He hurried in front of Bucky and opened the front of his pants excitedly before going back to massaging his shoulders.

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Bucky stroked Steve's dick with his hand and smiled up at him. "Pretty good way to start the day, huh?" he asked and then took him in his mouth. Steve stopped massaging for a moment and Bucky hummed around his cock happily knowing that Steve was already enjoying himself. It didn't take long for him to get hard and Bucky felt himself following suit quickly.

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Steve tilted his head back and let out a soft groan when Bucky started to suck him off. It felt so nice to be lazily blown in the morning as they were being totally affectionate with one another. He worked his hands down Bucky’s spine and cracked a few sore joints back into place. "Keep going, Baby."

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This felt amazing. Bucky was pretty sore from the outdoor fuck the night before and having Steve take care of him was the perfect solution. Everything was quiet and calm and sensual.

After a bit, Bucky was startled by a shuffling noise outside the cabin. He jumped a little but then chose to ignore it, assuming it was another raccoon trying to scrounge together some leftovers.

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Steve hadn't heard anything since he was so wrapped up in how great Bucky's mouth felt. When he was about to come, he warned Bucky before he released his load down his throat. When he was done, he pulled back and kneeled in front of him to kiss him slowly. "You alright, Baby? I saw you jump."

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"Yeah, I just heard a weird noise outside the window that sort of startled me." Bucky crumpled his face up in confusion. "It was probably an animal looking for food or something." He kissed Steve again and then rolled to get off the table.

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Steve gave Bucky's ass a small smack and then wrapped his arm around him from behind. He kissed over his shoulder and started to jerk him off quickly. "Not done with you yet," he growled and kept Bucky in place.
"Okay." Bucky smiled and leaned back against Steve. He closed his eyes and reached a hand up to
stroke through Steve's hair. "Thanks for the massage, Steve." There was another noise then and
Bucky's eyes flew open just in time to see something dart out of view of the window. "The fuck was
that?"

Steve went into high alert when Bucky saw something. He pulled up his pants and rushed out the
door after grabbing his gun that he had in the drawer. He took a look around to see if he could find
anyone there.

Bucky threw on one of Steve's shirts that was long enough to cover him and he ran outside after
Steve. It scared him that Steve grabbed his gun and he didn't want Steve going out alone in case
something happened. He followed Steve around to the window. There were imprints of shoes that
lead up to it from the door and back again.

Steve saw the footprints and swore. "Get back inside, Bucky," Steve said. "I'll be back soon." He
didn't plan on shooting anyone, but he didn't know what sort of protection he would need. "Go relax
in the bedroom."

"What? No," Bucky said with a stitch in his brow. "I'm not waiting here." He knew Steve would tell
him 'no' and make him stay anyway - and he would if he had to but he really didn't want to. Except
that Steve was the cop and Bucky knew when to shut up and let him do his job.

"Yes, you are," Steve said firmly. He gave him a stern look before heading out to follow the
footprints out towards the trail. It was easier to follow the trail since whoever it was didn't try to be
sneaky. He saw a flash of clothing disappear behind the brush. "Hey!" he shouted in a deep voice
and went after it.

Bucky got dressed and waited slumped up on the couch for Steve to come back. He sat quietly with
a buzz of worry through his body and smoked a cigarette to keep himself from drinking while Steve
wasn't there. It took about ten minutes before Steve was walking back in through the door and
kicking off his shoes on the carpet. "Hey," Bucky got up quickly and came over to him. "What's
going on?"

Steve came back and put the gun back into the drawer. He sighed heavily and reached down to hold
Bucky's hand. "It was Mindy," Steve said. "She, uh... she saw us while you were on the table. She
was coming to invite us to dinner."
"What?" Bucky asked quietly. "She saw me blowing you?" His head immediately started to swim with worst-case scenarios and what-ifs. Like what if she told Fred and they were asked to leave. Or what if some of the men decided they didn't want them around anymore and came to take care of it themselves. Bucky had a headache. "What did she say?"

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"She... she was a bit shocked. Kind of had to talk her down a bit because she felt bad for intruding," Steve said. "She still wants us to come over for dinner," he explained. "And says she's happy for you. I'm pretty sure she means it."

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"Hah!" Bucky laughed humorlessly, "Like hell we're going to dinner. Even if I was on the fence before, I'm definitely not going now." He flopped down on the couch and covered his face in his hands. "Fuck... maybe we should just head home."

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"Baby," Steve said gently. "Please. We aren't going to go home early. I won't make you go to dinner, but I'm going to let this cut this amazing vacation short. I'll go down and talk to Mindy again if you don't want to go down there."

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"Don't go talk to her. We should just stay here alone and not talk to anyone else until we leave and then not come back, ever." Bucky went to light another cigarette but decided against it and put it down. He could handle this without it, hopefully. "Jesus, she's probably going to tell her husband and everyone else and they'll all discuss us like bored housewives."

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"Buck, she was happy for us," Steve insisted. "I'm not exactly happy that she found out. But this is your special spot - your childhood vacation spot - and the future spot for you and our child. We're not going to run away because it's the more convenient option."

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"It's the safer option," Bucky said flatly. "It protects the both of us from physical or emotional pain of which we have had far too much in our lives just for being gay." He wasn't sure if he was so worried about this just because it was Mindy and Fred who watched him grow up and were sort of like another set of grandparents to him.

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Steve let out a frustrated huff. "Fine," he said tensely. "I'm not going to make you do anything. I'll get you a ride home if you want. But I'm going to talk to Mindy today and I'm staying here the whole week."

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"I'm not leaving you. If you're staying, I'm staying. This is supposed to be our honeymoon. A quiet calm stress-free vacation," Bucky went on and desperately reached for Steve to come to him. "We can go talk to her if you want to. Don't know what good it'll do but I don't want to let you go by yourself just in case, okay?"
Steve pulled Bucky into a tight hug. "I know it's supposed to be stress-free. Which is why I'm taking you down there to show you that you don't have anything to be stressed about." He kissed Bucky's forehead lightly. "I love you."

"I love you too," Bucky said and held on to Steve for a minute longer before reluctantly following him to the truck and hopping inside with a pout. "What if this isn't okay, though? What if Fred starts saying shit? Mindy might be polite about it but Fred's a man's man sort of guy. You know?"

Steve squeezed Bucky's hand protectively and gave him a stubborn look. "I'll make him stop. Because he's as good as family to you and if he's going to give you shit because of who you love, I'll tell him exactly what kind of person he is."

Bucky nodded and took a deep breath once they got to the shops. Mindy and Fred were both sitting behind the counter of the tackle shop talking and they got quiet when Steve and Bucky walked in. Mindy smiled a shy weak sort of apologetic grimace at Bucky and Fred folded his arms and said, "Jumpy Jamie!" in his booming voice like usual. He looked to Steve then and nodded, "And Surprise Steve." He looked pleased with himself for the nickname and Bucky's stomach flipped knowing immediately that Mindy had told him everything.

Steve put an arm defensively around Bucky and held him against his side. It was rare that Steve got this overprotective but he couldn't help but feel like he needed to give Bucky an extra confidence boost with this. "We came here to make sure we didn't have anything to worry about with our stay for the rest of our honeymoon."

Fred raised an eyebrow and said, "Honeymoon? Son, I think you're confused."

Bucky felt tiny. He relied on Steve to hold him close and safe and he tried not looking at either Fred or Mindy who had been a part of his life for so long and may not be for much longer depending on how this went. "We got married in a church by a priest," Bucky stated and barely looked up from the ground. "It may not be legally binding but it's spiritual, I guess."

Steve stood unmovable and proud at Bucky's side. He could get embarrassed and flustered pretty easily but to hell if he was going to let Bucky feel this small. "No, I am not confused," Steve said evenly. "We married just after the new year in a church, just like Bucky said," Steve explained. "I made the same oath to Bucky as you gave to your wife. There's no difference between my marriage and yours."

"There's a bit of a difference," Fred said and gestured vaguely with his hand. "The law won't let you do some of the same things we get to do. I'm sure you realize that, though. The world isn't much too
"You're confused," Steve said. "Because there is no difference between my marriage and yours," he insisted. "The laws do not dictate right or wrong. Nor do the laws change what my marriage is." He took a breath. "If the laws suddenly said men and women could no longer be married, would that make you any less devoted to your wife?"

Bucky squeezed Steve's hip tightly in hopes that he would get the nudge and calm down a little bit. Fred held up his hands and said, "Alright, Sonny, alright. Don't pop that vein you've got sticking out of your head." He chuckled and extended his hand to shake Steve's in a truce and asked sternly, "Are you good to our little Bucky? Treat him like he deserves?"

Steve looked mildly annoyed. He didn't like being doubted about his marriage and then treated like he was overreacting for getting a little worked up. He only shook his hand for Bucky's sake and because Fred didn't seem like he was going to say anything blatantly homophobic. "Yes," he answered, still yet to fully calm down.

Fred nodded and sat back in his chair. "You may be his lover but I knew him when he was a young one." He looked to Bucky. "Jamie, you're like one of my own sons - just a little younger than the pack, a little smaller." He turned back to Steve. "Since his father ain't around to say it, I feel obliged to let you know that if you hurt him you'll have to answer to me. Mindy told me you're a cop, but I was a lieutenant in the army - I think I could take you."

"A lieutenant? I'd be more scared if you were a captain at least," Steve sassed him, but there was a playful hint to his voice as he began to warm up again. "You don't have to worry about me hurting him, Sir. His sisters give him all the hell he needs for one household."

"We can't all be Commander like Old George was," Fred said. "Tell you the truth, I did think it was strange that Bucky put you on the phone with his sisters when you called home last night. I didn't really make any assumptions based off that, but I was curious. Homosexual lovers wasn't my first thought, I gotta say."

Mindy blushed and swatted at her husband. "Guess we both have a tendency for eavesdropping. At least Fred doesn't barge in while you two are having private time."

Steve blushed when Mindy brought up what she saw. At least she probably didn't see his dick since it was all the way in Bucky's mouth. "Well, for the rest of our vacation, you kind of have to assume that we are having private time," he said shyly. "It's nice having so much space to ourselves out here."
Bucky cleared his throat and nudged Steve. It was time to go. This had been strange enough and he was ready to go back to the cabin and hide under some blankets and forget this whole thing happened. "We should probably go. We just wanted to come talk before this got out of hand."

"We will see you later for our cookout with the others, right?" Mindy asked hopefully.

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Steve caught the hint from Bucky and then gave Mindy an apologetic smile. "You're nice people," he said. "But I don't know the others and how they'd take to us. We came up here to relax and if we have to hide who we are to be treated like normal people at a cookout, it's probably best for us to keep to our cabin."

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"Nonsense," Mindy said with a dismissive wave of her hand. "The wives won't care a bit and Gary doesn't pay attention to anything when there is food involved and Lloyd talks about a particular war buddy too much for him not to have probably been a little attracted to him." Mindy had a dizzying logic but she went on a bit more before Bucky caved and agreed to show up just for a bit which seemed to satisfy her well enough.

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Steve wasn't going to be the one to say 'yes', but he was grateful that Bucky said something because he also didn't want to say 'no' again. He gave them both a wave and said that they'd see them later but he looked a little worn as they left. "You think they really wouldn't mind?"

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"I honestly have no idea," Bucky said as he got back into the truck. "And I'm too tired now to think about it at all. I just want to go lay down. My head has been hurting for a while now." He curled up into a pathetic ball against the door. The very short drive to the cabin felt too long and the bumps on the gravel drive made his head hurt more. As well as that whole thing had gone, Bucky was still emotionally drained from worry and doubt.

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Steve felt awful for Bucky and he wished that he could wave some sort of magic wand to make him feel better. He reached out and gave his shoulder a little squeeze. "I'll get you some medicine and you can lay down with me as long as you want." When they got back to the cabin and he had Bucky tucked neatly into the blankets, he thought for a moment before letting Bucky in on a secret. "I have a surprise for you on Friday."

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Bucky had a cool wet rag on his forehead and his eyes were closed as he huddled next to Steve. "What's my surprise?" he asked softly and slipped his hand in with Steve's. He reached with his other hand to turn off the lamp next to his side of the bed because the light was bothering his eyes.

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"If I told you, then it's going to ruin the surprise," Steve said sweetly. "But I figured I'd give you a little teaser about it so you have something to get you through the day." He massaged Bucky's temples to help ease his headache.
"Thank you, Baby," Bucky mumbled and took deep breaths. "Guess I'll just have to wait then." He turned over onto his side so he was the little spoon. "What do you say, after we deal with this cookout tonight, we come home, get just a little drunk and use those handcuffs once more before you've got to go back to work with them.

Steve pulled Bucky in close and kissed him a few times. His body practically swallowed Bucky's. "I think that sounds like a real good time. You want to have me fuck you like last time? Or do something else?"

"I don't know yet," Bucky said, "All I know is we are going to do it standing up if we can find a good spot in this cabin. And who is wearing the cuffs this time? Me again or do you want a try? As an officer you probably haven't been in cuffs before, have you?"

Steve hadn't even considered that he could be the one wearing the cuffs. "Any trouble I got in was never arrest-worthy if I got caught," Steve said. "If it'll make you happy, I could wear them… You know you still haven't tried putting your fist in me yet."

"Only wear them if you want to, Steve, not if I want you to," Bucky corrected and reached a hand back to touch him. "Do you want me to try fisting you tonight? And if you don't like it we will stop and you can fuck me instead? How's that sound?"

"I don't mind wearing them, Babe, it doesn't matter to me what we do." Steve kissed Bucky's hand lightly. "I want to make tonight about what you want to do. So whatever it is you want, I'll give it a try. And if I don't like it, I'll fuck you until we're both worn."

"You've made every night about what I want, though. What exactly do you want? Anything we haven't tried that you want to do?" Bucky asked. His headache was easing quickly with the medicine and he was calming down in Steve's arms with his warm body and the blankets all around him.

"Baby, all I ever want to ask for is nice, vanilla sex where I get to cuddle and kiss you. You've already given me such great lovemaking. It'd be nice to have another one of those," Steve said softly.

"Do you want to do that, then?" Bucky asked. "We can have another 'great lovemaking' instead of trying new things or using the handcuffs again. It's up to you, Baby. We have options. And if it's with you, I'm up for anything." Admittedly, Bucky was still a bit horny from not getting off this morning. Massages with Steve always got him worked up and when they were interrupted, Bucky didn't get to come.
"Can we?" Steve's voice got all quiet and yearning. He didn't care who did whom - Steve just genuinely loved being close and as intimate as ever with the love of his life. "We can do the handcuffs tomorrow." Steve rubbed a hand over Bucky's chest lightly. "You feel it too, don't you? That feeling that kind of takes over everything when we make love?"

"Yeah, I do," Bucky promised and rolled to face Steve so he could kiss him. "Feels sort of like the cosmos, don't you think? Or the best high of your life. As if the world was waiting for us to fit together just like that, in just that way." He couldn't read Steve's face and he sighed and said, "I know. I'm such a dirty gay hippie."

Steve drew Bucky into a slow kiss and smiled dumbly at him. "It's exactly like that," he said. "You're still a hippie, though." Steve played with Bucky's hair lightly. "It so... it's so amazing to me when I get to have all of you. To have a connection with you that no one else in the world gets to share. It makes me feel like the luckiest man on earth."

"It's amazing to me that I ever got to find you," Bucky said and nuzzled Steve's neck. "I didn't ever know what that feeling was or if it even existed and I thought I'd never be able to get it. My relationships before you weren't this force of nature and soul like ours is. Everything before you was a sorry excuse to try to glimpse that feeling for just a second. And nothing and nobody ever made me feel the things I feel with you."

Steve's heart pounded like he was a teenager confessing his love for the first time. He wasn't nervous but he was certainly excited to hear Bucky say all those wonderful things to him. "I'm happy you feel so strongly," Steve said. "I love you." He kissed his forehead lightly. "Do you want me to shut up so you can finally nap?"

"I would like to nap, yes, but if you wanted to do something else we can. It's been a bit of a bummer day so far," Bucky said and wrapped his arms tighter around Steve. "You decide what to do and I'll just close my eyes for a little bit until you've got it."

Steve kissed him again. "I'm going to stay with you the whole time," Steve said. "And when I decide it's time for you to wake up, I'm going to slowly undress you and suck your cock while you're sleeping. How's that for a wake-up call?"

Bucky smiled and whispered, "Yeah, I'd like that." He let out a content sigh and brought Steve's hand up to card through his hair gently as he drifted off to sleep. He dreamed of being caught out in the middle of the lake with a Steve who couldn't swim and Bucky got to be the big hero this time and bring him safely back to shore.
Steve let Bucky doze for a couple of hours. He occupied himself by daydreaming about their future kid and working together on the shelter at the church. When it drew closer to cookout time, Steve shimmied under the blankets and started to kiss Bucky's cock through his pants.

Somewhere in the back of Bucky's mind, he could register that Steve was touching him. His uneventful dreams morphed until he was stranded naked on the road hitchhiking with Steve pulling up in his cruiser to come get him. The next thing he knew, he was spread out on the hood of the car with Steve's fingers searching around inside his ass and his cock hard and pointing up at the sun.

Steve pulled down Bucky's pants once he got him hard. He licked up his shaft and moaned lowly at the taste. "Mmm, so good," Steve purred. He took the tip into his mouth and swirled his tongue over it.

The second Steve's tongue touched his cock, Bucky was wide awake with a hand to Steve's head and a groan in the back of his throat. "You weren't kidding when you said you'd wake me up like this," he said and hitched his hips up towards Steve's mouth.

Steve popped off of him for a moment, "Of course I wasn't kidding," he said before diving back down and slowly bobbing his head up and down Bucky's dick. He hummed low and brought a hand up to stroke Bucky's balls.

"Did I ever tell you how much better you've gotten at this?" Bucky asked. "You went from that cock-shy virgin Catholic to being able to deep throat me no problem in such a short time. I never thought I'd tell someone how proud I was of their blowjobs skills but I kind of want to get you a most improved trophy."

Steve had to pull off of Bucky's dick again because he was laughing too hard. "Quit making me laugh when I'm blowing you. Save your 'most improved trophy' for after you've shot your load."

"Alright, alright, I'll be quiet. Get back on there," Bucky said and hushed up. He started humming and then singing quietly "Kiss on My List" from Hall & Oates. It had been stuck in his head for a few days and it was always an appropriate song when he was with Steve. Bucky liked singing it to him and dancing around a little until Steve shut him up by giving him lots of kissing.

Hearing Bucky humming made Steve feel a lot better. They'd gotten off to a rough start this morning but it seemed like Bucky was back on his feet again. He hollowed his cheeks out as he worked his lips over every inch of Bucky's cock. Steve couldn't help but start to jerk himself off a little.
Bucky looked down at Steve's hand on his cock and touched Steve's shoulder lightly. "Want me to that? You liked 69 before, we can do it again," he reasoned and pulled the fabric of his shirt to try pulling him up.

Steve looked up at Bucky with hooded eyes and he didn't need to be told twice. He moved up and gave Bucky a slow kiss before shifting so his dick was in front of Bucky's face as he sucked Bucky off and reached a hand down to tease his husband's ass.

Bucky smiled and kissed Steve's thighs slowly and sleepily a few times before grabbing his cock and taking it into his mouth. His first thought was that he was grateful there weren't windows in this room because there would be no chance of anyone accidentally peeking in on them this time.

Steve moaned and his body let out a little shudder. He kept teasing Bucky's hole with his index finger but wouldn't push in without lube. He spread his legs a bit more and laved his tongue along the underside of Bucky's dick.

Bucky worked his mouth over Steve's length and massaged his sides as he went. His nose kept bumping into Steve's balls every time he got his dick deeper in his throat. This really was a good view for Bucky - Steve's cock and balls right up by him and Steve's ass just waiting patiently to be touched.

This was probably Steve's favorite thing to do with Bucky that wasn't just sex. He was so glad Bucky showed him this position. He popped off of Bucky's dick with a wet gasp and took his dick sideways into his mouth so Bucky's cock would bump against the inside of his cheek.

Bucky felt a warm tingle go through his body and he let go of Steve's cock to say, "I'm really close, Baby," before going right back to it. He came not long after with Steve all the way down his throat. He hummed around Steve's cock happily when he felt his hot come spurting out into Steve's mouth.

Steve moaned and licked Bucky's cock clean after he came. He kissed along the inside of his thighs and sucked a dark mark there as Bucky kept giving him some of the best head he's ever gotten. After a few moments, he started panting and groaning to Bucky that he was close before he came down Bucky's throat.

Bucky swallowed Steve's come and pet his hands across the back of Steve's thighs. He gingerly rolled Steve off of him and readjusted so his head was back up by Steve so he could give him a kiss. "Can that be my wake up call every morning?"
"I don't think so." Steve laughed, but then smirked and said, "Sometimes your wake-up call has to be me fingering you or me fucking myself on your dick." Whatever made Bucky happy, he would do it. Absolutely.

"I like all of those options, Mr. Rogers-Barnes." Bucky nodded and reluctantly got off the bed to put on clothes that he could wear to the cookout. He settled on an old concert t-shirt for The Rolling Stones and Steve's burgundy cardigan that was a little long on him.

Steve smiled adoringly at the sight of Bucky in his sweater. He got up and dressed to be the presentable gay - nice jeans, good shoes, and a button-down. Probably not the best for the wilderness, but, oh, well. "How long we got before the cookout?"

"Something like forty-five minutes," Bucky said as he checked the clock. Steve certainly upstaged him with his outfit but Bucky didn't say anything because he knew Steve liked to wear button downs and no matter how much Bucky would tell him it was too fancy for a cookout by the lake, he wasn't going to change. "What do you want to do before then?"

"How about... how about we pick out some wood you can use for whittling. You still haven't had a chance to do that," Steve said. "I want to see the stuff you can make."

"The stuff I can make is just going to be strange blobs meant to look like animals," Bucky answered. "It won't be impressive, I need to practice on it." They headed out to gather some wood and Bucky managed to find some large fallen tree branches that he could saw down to smaller pieces that he could work with.

"I'm sure you're better than you let on," Steve said. "We can also scope out anything we would want to take home to add to our baby's crib or to make little decorations out of," he suggested.

"Yeah, we still need to get wood for that," Bucky said and dragged another branch over to his pile by the cabin. "I was thinking I'd ask Clint if I could use the cellar at his place to construct the actual crib since he's got a little tool shop down there already. His mother used to live with him and she made glass mosaics down there."

"That's a perfect idea, Buck," Steve said sweetly. "Is his mom alright? She didn't pass away, did she? Just moved out?" Clint was pretty young, so if his mom passed, it would've been a real shame.
"No, she got remarried and moved to Long Island and left the whole place to Clint," Bucky said, "It's a pretty good-sized place for just one guy. I mean, it's right on the street underneath a bakery but I think Clint likes it that way."

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Steve let out a relieved breath. "Thank god," he said. "I guess that makes him fortunate she moved out. Though, I would hate to live so far from my mom." He shrugged. "What if we end up finding a baby before we're ready?"

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"You mean before the crib is finished?" Bucky asked and wiped his hands off on his pants. They needed to get going to the cookout and Bucky had bits of dirt and bark on him all over the place. "I mean, what's the likelihood that we get a baby for at least another five to ten years, huh? I can make the crib in a few months in my free time."

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"No, I mean like... before we get a house. Or before the girls are grown up and moved out," Steve elaborated. "What if I find some kid while I'm on the job or something? And there isn’t a soul in the world who they could call family."

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"I guess we will take what is given to us," Bucky said and grabbed for Steve's hand. "I think that if by some miracle we can help a child who needs a safe home then it doesn't matter if we have a house or the girls are adults, we need to help, don't you think? I mean, we don't know what opportunities we are going to get and I hate thinking of sending a kid into the system. Because that's not the best place for them. Trust me, I almost had to give up the girls to the foster system."

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Steve squeezed Bucky's hand and nodded. "I was thinking that too," he said. "But I didn't want to just assume since you've been stretched so thin with just taking care of the girls." Steve kissed Bucky's temple. "I'm glad you were able to keep them together and with their family."

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Bucky pulled Steve close to him and grabbed his other hand. "I want to raise a baby with you," he said firmly and smiled up at his husband. "I know I've had the girls for a while but regardless of when we get to have a baby, I want that baby, and even if it means I have three kids, that's what we will do. Okay?"

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Steve smiled and leaned his head on top of Bucky's. "Alright," he said happily. "That sounds good to me." Steve helped Bucky pick out a few more broken branches that were pretty thick and the wood wasn't too dried out. He also found a rock that had a copper shine to it, so he pocketed it on the way back. "We should start heading over."

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"Yep, let's get this over with." Bucky sighed and made sure his shoes were laced up. "It's only about a ten-minute walk over there so we can just go on foot instead of taking the truck. If that works for
"That's fine with me, Baby." Steve held the sides of Bucky's face and kissed him slowly to try and cheer him up. He then took his hand and let Bucky lead the way to the cookout. "Ten bucks says they ask who fucks who."

"I'm not taking that bet because you know they will," Bucky said. He was happy to have his hand in Steve's as they walked and it just felt really nice being out in nature with him like this. "Ten bucks says they ask us if we ever tried to be with a woman before."

"I bet you double or nothing that when we say 'no', they'll ask us if we're really sure that we're gay when we never were with a woman," Steve countered. "We need to have a gay question bingo."

"Ooh! Gay bingo! That sounds pretty fun actually," Bucky said, "If you get five stupid questions in a row you win the gay money pot." He paused for a second and said, "Also, you'll be the target of that question since I have actually been with a woman once. So, good luck."

"I'll just tell them that your ass is so good that there's no way any woman can compare," Steve countered. "Maybe I should give really uncomfortable answers to all the gay questions they ask."

"Uncomfortable how?" Bucky asked in concern. "Because, you know, I could just leave you there to deal with them alone and come back to the cabin if things get awkward. And I don't think you would appreciate that very much. Although, Mindy might just have you tell her sex stories all night. For some reason, she strikes me as someone who will be curious how it's done."

Steve squeezed Bucky's hand. "Don't leave me alone with them all. It's our honeymoon, we have to be attached at the hip."

"I won't leave you, Baby," Bucky promised. After a bit, they approached a clearing in the trees that revealed two cabins close next to each other and a group of people around the campfire in between, looking out at the lake. Bucky instinctively dropped Steve's hand as they approached.

Steve sighed when Bucky dropped his hand, but he let it be. Mindy saw them first and waved enthusiastically. "So good to see you boys again." She hustled over and gave each of them a tight hug, happy they ended up coming. "I was starting to worry that you two had a change of heart."
Bucky hugged Mindy and looked at the others watching them. "Well, we did promise to come for a bit and I may not be so honest but Steve's a man of his word." He gestured vaguely at his husband and already felt very awkward.

Mindy pulled the two of them over to the campfire and introduced them to Gary and Lloyd's wives and then she moved on to the last new face of the group. It was one of her sons who Bucky remembered playing with years ago when they were all really young and not yet in the army and being civil servants and things. "Oh my god, Jesse," Bucky said quietly and then stuck out a hand for him to shake.

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Steve patted Bucky's shoulder. "Is there anything I can do to help?" he asked. "I'm a pretty good cook. I'm usually the one who makes everything at the house."

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"No, dear, just sit and chat. Fred and I have this sorted," Mindy said. "Looks like Bucky recognizes our little Jesse so maybe you have him introduce the two of you.

"Right, Sorry," Bucky said hurriedly and gestured to the man. "Steve, this is Jesse - Fred and Mindy's youngest. He's an EMT."

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Steve smiled and shook Jesse's hand. "Hey, there," he said warmly. "It's nice to meet you." He took a breath and said, "I'm Bucky's husband." If he didn't know already then he would know soon since he doubted Mindy wouldn't chat to her sons. "I'm a Brooklyn police officer- we work pretty closely with EMTs. We couldn't do our job without you guys."

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Jesse's eyebrows shot up in curiosity but he didn't say anything except, "Good to meet you. What's it like being a big city cop down in Brooklyn, huh?"

Bucky grabbed a chair and unfolded it for Steve to sit down and pulled another one up for himself. Steve was next to Jesse and Bucky was between Steve and Lloyd's wife Sheila. So far, everyone was paying attention to Steve and Jesse's conversation but Bucky could just see their questions burning behind their eyes.

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"It's pretty hectic. Wish people weren't as awful to each other as they often are. I've gotten shot. Knifed a few times before I met Bucky. Besides that, it's pretty boring," Steve joked. "What about you? I'm sure you've had to help people with some pretty interesting injuries here in axes and shotgun-land."

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"You've been stabbed?" Bucky asked incredulously and squinted at Steve. He hadn't heard about that before. Mindy and Sheila both gave Bucky an excited look like maybe they were going to see their first gay man fight. Bucky shook his head quickly and mumbled, "Never mind, that's a conversation for later."

Jesse chuckled at Bucky but answered Steve, "Yeah, some pretty gnarly stuff happens," he said and
pointed at Bucky. "Before I was an EMT the worst thing I ever saw was when Bucky broke his leg on a hike and my older brother had to carry him back for miles with it sticking at an odd angle kind of like bent the opposite way it should be bent."

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Steve grimaced at the image of the leg. "Oh, Baby," he said softly to Bucky. "See? I didn’t know you’ve broken your leg." He looked back over at Jesse. "So did you and Bucky hang out a lot as kids?"

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Jesse sat back in his chair, "Yeah, Bucky and my brothers and I would play a lot as kids. Sometimes Old George would be reading out by the lake so Bucky would come over to our place when he got bored."

Bucky noticed that of everyone Jesse seemed the most normal and unaffected by his and Steve’s relationship. Mindy, Sheila, and Fred were highly invested in the conversation and kept looking from Bucky to Steve curiously and Lloyd, Gary, and Gary's wife all seemed to be too occupied with their own thoughts to care.

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"What was he like? I hear he was a bit of a firecracker when he was younger. I only met him after he mellowed out." Steve didn't pry too much into Bucky's past and what he used to be like since he didn't want to risk bringing up unpleasant memories.

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"Who? Bucky?" Jesse laughed and readjusted in his chair. He took a sip from his beer and said, "I wouldn't call him a firecracker but he was definitely pretty reckless. And he was always swearing and taking beer from my dad’s fridge when he wasn't looking. He was bold and there weren’t ever consequences for Bucky."

Mindy piped up then and added, "You know, we really should have known Bucky was a homosexual what with the way he looked at Freddie Jr. and how he trailed him around."

Bucky flushed deep red and sank into his chair. He distinctly remembered one time pretending to need help in the water when Junior was the only one around so he would give him mouth to mouth.

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Steve looked over at Bucky with an affectionate smile and couldn't help but smirk a little at Mindy's revelation. "Well, have you seen your son? Anyone would be head over heels for any of them," Steve said with a playful wink to her.

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Bucky looked from Steve to Jesse nervously then over to Fred. If anyone was going to say anything, now was the time to start yelling. There was a gentle ripple of laughter through the Watkins family and Bucky sighed quietly in relief. Fred got up to start grilling and Bucky stood as well, "I'll help you," he said and went to the grill with him. Bucky watched Mindy take his place next to Steve and hoped to God that she wasn't going to start asking Steve sex questions.
Steve and Jesse chattered for a while until the food came out. He was social with Mindy as well but once his plate was made, he sat next to Bucky. "This isn't that bad," he said. "Everyone is really nice so far."

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"I'm waiting for the other shoe to drop," Bucky said quietly into his food and gave Steve a sideways glance. "Lloyd and Gary haven't said shit to either one of us since we got here. I'm betting the second someone starts asking about us, one of them is going to have a problem."

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"Why wait for the shoe to drop when you can lay it to rest?" Steve said. He looked over to Lloyd and Gary and waved for their attention. "I haven't spoken to you guys all night," he said in an assertive but friendly way. "I haven't offended you, have I?"

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Bucky choked and glared at Steve. Jesus, he was asking for trouble tonight. If Bucky didn't know better, he might say Steve was fishing for someone to start something so he could defend them.

Gary blinked slowly and shook his head, "I'm sorry, my boy. I don't mean anything by it, I guess I'm just trying to figure this whole thing out." He nodded. "Before you got here, Fred and Mindy told us what happened and what you two talked about earlier with them."

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Steve caught the glare and whispered to Bucky, "I'm not walking on eggshells for the rest of the evening." He looked over to Gary and explained, "There's not much to figure out. A lot of people overthink this whole thing. Really, what it all comes down to is I love my husband just as much as you love your wife." He then teasingly added, "Possibly more. So now that we've addressed the elephant in the room, we can go back to having some great food and enjoying this fine weather."

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Everyone was silent for a long moment and Bucky looked down at the ground like a chastised child. Jesse was the first to speak up and he said, "Steve, could you hand me another beer?" and pointed over to the cooler beside Steve.

Bucky was about to say something - he didn't quite know what yet - when Sheila leaned forward in her chair a bit and asked, "Alright, dears, so how did you meet?"

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Steve picked up a beer and tossed it over to Jesse. That man was a godsend right now since he was the one being the least weird about the whole thing. "I was on duty when I saw this young girl lost on the streets. Took her for ice cream and back to the precinct until her older brother picked her up." He smiled as he nudged Bucky gently. "When I saw how much this guy gave up of himself to take care of his sisters, I wanted to get to know him. I invited him out for dinner and drinks and it kind of went from there."

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Mindy smiled and gave her husband a gentle loving look. "Well, Honey, if it counts for anything, Fred and I think Bucky is a good choice for anyone and you seem a good catch yourself."
Bucky scratched at his arm nervously and turned to Steve and quietly and uncharacteristically shyly asked, "Steve, can I have a beer please?"

Lloyd spoke up now, slightly miffed, "I can look past this whole thing for Bucky's sake. He was always a good kid. But, really? He's got to ask permission to have a beer? Did you cut off his balls, too?" He sounded angry - like he thought everything about Bucky being gay was somehow Steve's fault.

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Steve felt bad that Bucky felt embarrassed and asked for a beer, but he got angry when Lloyd had to be a bit of a dick. He didn't want to cause a scene and make Bucky more upset, so he reached for a beer and passed it over. "I'm a recovering alcoholic," Steve lied evenly. "If you noticed, I haven't had any beer since I've been here and the day I went out for dinner and drinks with Bucky is the day I went sober. He's asking for my sake - he doesn't want to drink if there's a chance I might fall off the wagon. But today is a good day for me."

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Bucky clenched his jaw tight and scrunched up his face in anger for a moment. He hated when Steve lied for him. Steve never lied. And the only times he had was to save Bucky or his sisters some amount of pain. Bucky put a hand on Steve's thigh and put the beer back. He wasn't sure if he should correct Steve and explain that he was the actual alcoholic or if he should leave it because it might be embarrassing for him if Bucky exposed his lie. Bucky thought for a second then cleared his throat and said, "Actually, Lloyd, that would be me. Steve's just saying that so you all don't think even worse of me then you do now. I followed in my mother's footsteps and drank just like she taught me but I took it too far and... yeah, I'm an alcoholic. And Steve helps me be reasonable with my drinking."

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Mindy and the other wives looked touched at how they looked out for each other. Fred and Gary looked sorry for Bucky but Lloyd still seemed to blame Steve for turning Bucky gay. "Alcoholism is just liberal nonsense," he said. "If you got a job and you got a roof over your head that you support, then you're not an alcoholic." Steve bit back a comment. "Just grab a beer and tell your boyfriend to quit being such a girl about it."

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"Lloyd!" Sheila snapped and smacked her husband in the arm. "Can't you see this is a problem for Bucky?" She got quieter but not quiet enough that they couldn't hear her say, "You remember how Old George felt about his wife's drinking."

Bucky was intensely uncomfortable. He hated that everyone was looking at him and he hated that they had to bring up his mom in whispers. He remembered the late night hushed arguments about her problems and he hated reliving it and knowing he had done the same thing. "Alright, Lloyd." Bucky shrugged and grabbed a beer. He popped it open and drank for a long moment keeping eye contact with the man. He had no idea what must be going through Steve's head but he hoped he wasn't going to hear it later for all of this.

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Steve couldn't really get angry at him for drinking one beer, especially when Lloyd was being a jerk. "Bucky's an amazing person. He single-handedly raised two kids for the past four years. He's selfless and I don't give a damn if he drinks like his mom used to. She helped raise three amazing people and
Bucky can do just the same. I just want him to know his limits."

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Bucky slipped his hand with Steve's confidently but his body shook just slightly. Sheila stood and pulled her husband with her. "I think Lloyd and I are going to head back to the cabin for the night. He has had too much beer and I think his wits have left him."

Lloyd grumbled and complained as his wife shuffled him off but he still left without causing a scene. They all watched the two of them leave and then Jesse said, "Steve, why don't you help me get the deserts my mom made?" and gestured towards the house.

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"I'll be right back, Handsome," Steve said quietly to Bucky before following Jesse inside. "Sorry," Steve apologized to him as they walked. "I just can't stand it when people make Bucky feel small."

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Jesse patted Steve's back and said, "No, I understand entirely. Asked you to come help me grab desserts so I could apologize on behalf of those guys." They went to the kitchen of the cabin and Jesse pulled desserts from the counters and handed them to Steve. "They are very old men who are set in their very old ways. Tell you the truth, I knew Bucky was gay way back when. Even thought I could be for a bit but it turns out I'm just a pretty sensitive straight guy." He held up his hands in defense, "Not saying all gay men are sensitive, but, you know, it's just more unusual for straight men to show it."

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"I appreciate the thought, but you don't have to apologize for someone else's behavior," Steve said. He picked up a tray and smiled warmly at him. "And I'm glad you're a sensitive straight guy. The world needs more sensitivity, and I don't need some other guy sweeping my husband off his feet." He nudged him playfully. "You got a girlfriend, Jesse?"

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Jesse smiled and headed back out to the fire. "Had one, she dumped me about a week ago, actually. So I'm on the hunt if you know about nice women in this area."

Bucky had managed to finish his beer and go through a second and part of a third while Steve was gone and he was currently in conversation with Mindy and Sheila about his sisters.

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"I'm sorry, Pal," Steve said with a frown. "I don't think I know the area as well as you do, but if I find a nice, single woman, I'll send her your way." When they got back out, Steve saw the three empty bottles next to Bucky and frowned. He set the desserts down and excused himself from Jesse so he could sit next to Bucky. "How's it going over here?"

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Bucky slipped his hand with Steve's automatically and said, "We're talking about the girls. Catching them up on some things." He paused and glanced over to Jesse who was talking with his father now and then turned to Steve again and said quieter but with just the slightest edge, "What'd you and Jesse talk about?"
"We didn't talk about much. He apologized about Lloyd. I promised I'd try and hook him up with a nice woman cause his girlfriend dumped him last week, poor guy." Steve gave Bucky's hand a small squeeze.

"Single Jesse, huh?" Bucky breathed quietly and drank some more.

Jesse came back over to them then and sat next to Steve. "So, Steve, being a cop can't be your only interest. What do you do for fun? Have any hobbies?"

"It's okay, Buck," Steve said softly when he saw his husband take a drink. He turned back to Jesse and answered, "I love to draw. And cooking makes me happy, too. And I'm also an honorary cheerleader at Lilly's lacrosse games." Steve beamed. "What about you?"

"Oh, wow, you draw?" Jesse said, "I sculpt with clay when I can. I'm not very good but I give it a shot. Do you have some drawing here with you? I'd like to see some."

Bucky rolled his eyes and crossed his leg up on his lap before drinking some more. Part of him was screaming at himself to put the beer down but he really couldn't. All he could do was sit and listen to Jesse talk to Steve and get just a little jealous.

Steve shyly pulled a small sketchpad from his pocket and offered it to Jesse. "I wish I could sculpt. It's a lot harder and the supplies can really get so expensive. I think I'd go insane spending thirty bucks on something that didn't come out the way I wanted," he laughed.

Jesse flipped through the sketchpad, "Steve, these are really good." He looked at one of Steve's mom and one of Raphael sitting by the window and then landed on one of Bucky asleep on the couch. "Wow, this one is really good."

Bucky peeked over to see what he was looking at and saw a drawing of himself. He didn't know when Steve had done that one. "I make a pretty damn good model, don't I?"

Steve blushed at Jesse's compliment. "Thank you. I bet your sculptures are really good, too. Buck likes to whittle. Did you guys ever make stuff together?" Steve leaned over to give Bucky a kiss on the cheek and whispered to him that he was the best model in the world.

As Jesse was answering Steve, Mindy and Fred stole Bucky's attention again and he had to turn away from his husband to talk. Mindy nodded and said, "So, Bucky, Fred and I have some questions about you and Steve's relationship."
Steve tried to pay attention to Jesse but he overheard Mindy’s comment and felt like he should come to Bucky’s aid. He excused himself from Jesse and turned to join the other conversation. "Are we sure we want to hear those questions?" he asked.

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Mindy thought for a second, "Guess you won't know until you hear them." She chuckled. "We've just never known a homosexual couple before and since we watched little Bucky grow up it's just all so interesting, don't you think?"

Bucky handed his beer off to Steve in case he wanted to drink some and said, "Well, like Steve's been saying it's all the same as your relationship except we've both got dicks."

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Steve only took the beer because if he drank some then it was less that Bucky would drink. "Yeah, Bucky's right. I mean, I guess it's strange for you to see two guys together. But it's been happening forever and it's legal here. So we're hoping it won't be strange to people for too long."

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Jesse scooted his chair closer to the conversation and said, "Mom, how about we don't ask them about this, yeah? It's a little weird to pry and you'd feel weird if they asked about your relationship just because it was different from theirs."

Fred sat back in his chair and said, "Well, you know, Son, in some cultures, homosexuality is seen as a gift from the gods. Certain tribes in South America would consider Steve and Bucky to be blessed and holy."

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"Well, we're in America and, rather than blessed, most people think we're going to hell." Steve played with Bucky's hair idly. "But, go ahead with your questions, I guess."

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Jesse nudged Steve and said quietly, "You don't have to humor them. You can tell them ‘no’."

"Now, Jesse," Fred said, "I think you're a little jealous that Steve and Bucky have our attention tonight." He laughed and swayed a little. He was noticeably drunk now. "And for the record, I don't think hell exists. If the god that my mama told me to believe in is real, then I don't think he made such an awful place. Don't you?"

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"Well, I don't think hell is the whole fire and brimstone that some priests make it out to be. But I do believe he made hell to protect the good souls in heaven. You know, kind of like how prisons keep the bad people off the streets so the good people don't get hurt," Steve responded.

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Bucky tensed up and shrunk in on himself. He wasn't ever comfortable discussing religion and especially since he was always terrified that those people were actually right and he would be in that fire and brimstone hell forever. He had to remind himself a lot that Steve's God had the two of them ready to be married in heaven once they are dead and he just had to do his best to try to believe it.
Jesse touched Steve's shoulder again - a move that didn't go unnoticed by Bucky. "I think that's probably pretty accurate," he said. "I know if hell was like they say then I'd be going there as well, so I like your way better."

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Steve had a pretty good time from there after just talking with them all, but Bucky kept looking more and more miserable and annoyed as time went. He didn't really know why, but he didn't want to stay here if Bucky wasn't enjoying himself. "Hey, you want to go back soon?" Steve asked Bucky quietly once Jesse left to use the bathroom.

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Bucky, who hadn't really let up drinking since he started, nodded at Steve slowly. "I'm getting tired," he said with a bit of a slur to his words. He gripped onto Steve's arms possessively when Jesse came back out to the fire. Jesse sat down and Bucky whispered to Steve loud enough so no one but the three of them could hear, "I want to go back to the cabin and I want you to fuck me so hard I can't walk tomorrow."

---

"Buck," Steve scolded lightly because he could tell by the look on Jesse's face that he'd heard and had been caught off guard. He gave Jesse an apologetic smile. "I guess that's my cue to leave. I'm sorry. He's just drunk. This happens. It's been really nice meeting you," he said.

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Bucky said a warm but messy goodbye to everyone and clung to Steve for stability. Jesse stood and followed them when they started walking away from the fire. "Hey, it was really nice to meet you too, Steve," Jesse said, "And it was wonderful seeing you again, Bucky." He then leaned into Steve so Bucky wouldn't hear him ask, "Do you want me to help you get back to your cabin? Bucky's not really on his feet and I can carry a flashlight for you if you need to carry him back."

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Steve was tempted to say 'yes' because Bucky was pretty sloppy, but he didn't want to make their problems into Jesse's problems. "It's okay," Steve said. "I appreciate it, though. Truly." He waved goodbye to everyone and wrapped an arm around Bucky to support him as he started to walk back. "How're you feeling, Buck? Can you walk a little?"

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"I can walk," Bucky said and nodded. "Motherfucking Lloyd with his big mouth." He muttered to himself as he held onto Steve's hip firmly. "I can make my own decisions. Fucking Lloyd. Jesus. Everyone else was fine, but that prick..."

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Steve sighed. "We're going to have plenty of people who give us shit for being gay. We can't let it get to us," he answered. "Life is too short to let people like him dig under our skin."

---

"Still some bullshit, though," Bucky said. "And Jesse with his stupid perfect blonde hair and an EMT's body." He looked down at his own body for a second and sighed. "And he's a sculpture or
some shit and he kept touching you all over the place."

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Steve frowned. "Wait, you’re mad at Jesse? He wasn't touching me all over the place. And he's straight," he answered. "Is that why you've been grumpy all night?"

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"Yeah, he was," Bucky argued. "He kept touching your arm and talked to you nonstop. And he took you aside alone into the house. And he's in public service and is an artist. He's just a less sexy you, Steve. Don't tell me you didn't notice."

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"Jesse is a nice, handsome man who has no interest in me, nor I in him," Steve said. "You don't have to get worked up every time some good-looking person talks to me or touches me. I'm married to you."

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"You say that like I do this a lot," Bucky said and stopped Steve so he could hop up on his back to be carried the rest of the way to the cabin. "It's just he would be such a good match for you. And, if you hadn't met me first, you might have met him instead, you know? You've got so much in common with him."

---

Steve started, "It's not that you do this a lot. It's that-" and there it was. Bucky was getting insecure. "Baby, I don't like him like that. The only one around here that thinks that he's a good match for me is you." Steve carried Bucky piggyback to the cabin and unlocked the door. "You know I take my vows seriously and I believe that you are my soul mate."

---

Bucky slid off of Steve's back once they got into the cabin and he flopped on the couch, a little dizzy. He wasn't thinking very clearly but he was thinking well enough to manage to say, "Yeah, well you got stuck with a soul mate who's a dead-beat college drop-out, guardian of two, alcoholic, dirty hippie who works for just over minimum at a record store owned by a deaf guy who is my only friend."

---

Steve went to the kitchen to get Bucky a glass of water. "And I couldn't be happier with who God chose to pair me with. You are the love of my life and you make me so happy," he said. Steve passed Bucky the glass. "I don't want to be with anyone else. Ever."

---

Bucky sniffled and took the water but didn't drink it yet. "Hey, how come I've never seen you drunk, Steve?" He took a small sip of the water and set it down on the coffee table. "Because, I've seen you drink, and get maybe a little bit tipsy, but never as drunk as me."
"My dad was an alcoholic," Steve said. "And I saw what that did to my mom. I don't want to be responsible for doing to you what my dad did to her." He sat down and put an arm around Bucky's shoulders. "And no offense, but you do the drinking for the both of us, Baby."

---

Bucky got quiet and seemed to be sobered up for just a moment, "Am I doing to you what your dad to your mom?" He honestly didn't think he was as bad lately. He had really cut back and only drank with the go-ahead from Steve. That was a huge improvement on how he was before. But he knew he still had a problem - the dependency was still there and he just couldn't shake it.

---

Steve didn't answer right away. It was an answer in itself but after some thought, he sighed. "Sometimes," he admitted. "I know you're doing so much better, Baby. You really, really are doing an amazing job." He squeezed Bucky close. "It's times like tonight. You asked me for one. And then I turn my back and one became three. And then you just kept going."

---

Bucky nodded and curled up against Steve. "I know." He sighed. "It was so weird because the second you were out of sight, something in my brain told me I had to get through them as fast as I could before you came back and stopped me. I don't know where that came from."

---

Steve kissed his temple. "It came from the alcoholism," Steve said. "You're not a bad person for it, Buck. My dad wasn't a bad person. And I see plenty of people struggling with it when I'm on the job." He rubbed his back. "I'm not angry at you, Baby. It's... it's upsetting to me, that's all."

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"Why can't I get it to stop?" Bucky whined quietly and nuzzled against Steve's neck. "Even now, all I want to do is go get the rest of that wine in the cabinet. It's like all the time, one thing goes wrong or someone says something to me that I don't like and I want a drink. Sometimes having a cigarette helps but I know I shouldn't get too attached to those either.

---

"I don't have all the answers, Bucky. But they have help groups for people with addictions. Maybe it can help going to those and meeting people going through the same stuff you are," Steve said.

---

Bucky closed his eyes and pulled his legs up into Steve's lap so he was in a ball in his arms. "I don't want to go to a support group. Can't we just figure it out at home? They've got to have a self-help book at the library that I can read instead."

---

"I mean, you can try the self-help book if you think you can do it. But there's no shame in going to a support group. I'd go with you if that would make you happy," Steve offered.
"I'll think about it," Bucky said and kissed Steve's neck. "Can we leave it for now? Move on to something else?" He kissed his neck again. "I don't care what we do. I'm sorry I haven't made this night very good for you. I fucked it up again."

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"You didn't fuck anything up, Baby," Steve reassured. "Is it alright if we just go to bed now? I'm kind of tired." He didn't want to say it to Bucky but he didn't like having sex with Bucky when he was this drunk.

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"Yeah, I'm really sleepy," Bucky said and wrapped his arms around Steve's neck. "We can just talk until we fall asleep. I'm too tired to take a shower but if I smell bad I will so you don't have to sleep next to me like that."

---

Steve picked him up and carried him into bed so he could tuck him in. He stripped Bucky of his clothes and kissed his face a few times. "Two more days until your surprise," he said. "That's got to be exciting."

---

"Is it a puppy?" Bucky asked absently and pulled the blankets up close to his face. "Steve, we can't have a puppy in the apartment we already have Raphael. But, puppies are so nice," Bucky rambled to himself quietly, his tired and drunk mind already deciding what his surprise was and already finding multiple reasons for this phantom puppy to not be a good idea.

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“No, it’s not a puppy. We already have one animal that the girls barely take care of,” Steve said, “I kind of miss Raphael. He’s good at keeping your lap warm and eats your leftovers when you don’t want to finish your food.”

---

Bucky sighed and rolled so Steve was little spoon for now and so Bucky could rest his head in the crook of Steve's open arm. "I miss the girls," he said and breathed deeply a few times before closing his eyes and quickly falling to sleep.
The next day was just as lazy as the rest of their vacation, which was perfect. But on Friday morning, Steve had his mom drive Becca and Lilly up and they all waited in the kitchen as Steve cooked breakfast. "Buck!" he called from the kitchen. "Get dressed. Breakfast is ready!"

---

Bucky tiredly got up out of bed and yelled back, "I don't want to." But he put his sweats and one of Steve's shirts on anyway. Bucky pulled his hair back in a ponytail and rubbed his face. "What are we doing today, Steve?" he asked and walked to the kitchen. He froze in place when he laid eyes on his sisters. "What's going on? Are you okay?" he asked with big eyes and ran to pull both Lilly and Becca into his arms at once.

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The girls hugged their brother in return and Lilly patted his back. "I knew you missed them," Steve said. "So I rented a nearby cabin for the next two days so they can come over and have a mini vacation too." Steve didn't want to cut down on their private time or else he would've let them sleep in this cabin.

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Bucky clung to his sisters and kissed the top of their heads. "Steve, I love you so much," he said and gestured for him to come over and join the hug puddle. "You two are going to have so much fun. We can take a hike or go out on the lake. I'm sure Fred and Mindy would love to meet you. And we can have a fire tonight and eat s'mores. How's that sound?" He nuzzled them once more and then stood up straight. "I'm just so surprised and so happy to have you here. What are we doing first? Let's go do something as a family."

---

"Can we go hiking?" Lilly asked.

Becca groaned. "Wouldn't it be nicer to lay in a boat and relax? I want to finish my book," she said.

Steve rubbed a hand up and down Bucky's back. "I'll let you decide which sister doesn't get what they want," he joked.

---

Bucky sighed but smiled over at Becca. "You're so much like Dad." He thought for a second. "Maybe we can split up. I can take Becca out on the boat and I can do some fishing while she reads and, Steve, you can take Lilly on a hike. I mean, only if that works for everyone. Although, it would be nice to stick together."

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"We can do both. Hike first and then relax in the lake after. I can even carry Becca in my arms so she can read on the hike. I don't mind," Steve smiled. "Or she could suck it up for a bit and walk."
Becca gave Steve a look and crossed her arms. "Fine. But you're not carrying me." What Becca had meant was Steve wasn't going to be the one to carry her. What ended up happening was the second they hit a hill that they needed to traverse, Becca had Bucky carry her piggyback all the way to the top.

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Steve laughed as Becca immediately turned to being carried. He abruptly lifted Lilly onto his back and darted up the hill. "Race you!" Steve shouted excitedly to Bucky as he rushed to the top of the hill.

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"Fucking hell!" Bucky yelped back and started pursuing Steve. "Slow down!" He tried his best but made it to the top two minutes after Steve. Panting, he set Becca down and said, "That - that wasn't a fair race. You got an early start and you had the smaller kid."

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Steve smiled as Lilly cheered him on. "Excuses," he said. "It's not my fault you decided to be a hippie instead of a big, strong officer."

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"Excuse you," Bucky said and stood up straight. "I am plenty strong. I lift boxes all day at work!" To prove it, he marched over to Steve and threw his arms around his middle and hoisted him up for a long moment before plopping him back down. "See? Pretty strong for a hippie."

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Steve let out a big laugh and kissed Bucky's temple once he was set down. "You're right. You are pretty damn strong," he said. "Lilly, can you see the lake from here? We're pretty high up."

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Lilly looked out through the trees and peered down at the lake. "How deep is the lake, anyway? I sort of want to swim but I also don't want to go in if it's too deep for me to touch."

Bucky slipped his hand with Steve's and leaned against him, still worn out. "It's not too bad close to the cabin. You're a better swimmer than Steve and he went out pretty far."

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"She can't be a better swimmer than I am," Steve corrected. He kissed Bucky's forehead and then found a walking stick that Lilly could use while they explored. "It's just that there's really scary fish in the lake. And crocodiles."

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"None of that is true," Bucky assured Lilly. "He just doesn't want to admit that he isn't a good swimmer. Don't worry, Baby, when I teach our kid how to swim I'll help you learn better, too." They walked on and Becca held Bucky's hand as they went so he wouldn't leave her behind. She was definitely not enjoying herself and Bucky kept promising her that they could chill out by the lake when they got back and he would make her something tasty as a snack.
"It totally is true. I don't think you want to swim in that lake. Something’s probably going to jump out and eat you." Steve shrugged casually but Lilly didn't seem convinced. "Let's head back," he said. Becca looked bored out of her mind and he felt bad.

"Sounds good to me," Bucky said as they turned to go back down the hill again. Once they got to the cabin, Becca was tired and grumpy and immediately grabbed her book and went out to the edge of the pier to read. Lilly went to put her swimsuit on and Bucky slumped on the couch with a bit of a headache. "Steve, can I have some medicine?"

"Of course," Steve said. Bucky's problem was always alcohol nowadays. He hadn’t really had issues with pills since he tried to overdose. But Steve understood why Bucky still wanted to ask. Steve got some headache medicine and brought them over. "You alright, Baby? You can lay down and I'll keep an eye on the girls for you."

Bucky took the medicine and sat up. "Lilly is just going to go for a swim but I should be out there to be the lifeguard just in case." He got up off the couch slowly. "I'll put on my swim trunks and just sit out on a chair by the pier and make sure she is fine."

"Are you sure, Handsome? I've got it under control," Steve promised. But there was no stopping Bucky. And it was probably a good thing too because if there was a problem, Bucky was definitely the better swimmer to go out and help Lilly. Steve joined Bucky outside and watched as Lilly dove right into the water the second they left the cabin.

Bucky pulled two chairs closer to the lake for him and Steve and he plopped down in one and waited for Steve to sit so he could take his hand. "Thanks for bringing them up here, Steve. This was a great surprise and they are having fun - despite what Becca might say."

Steve sat down and gave Bucky's hand a gentle squeeze. "I figured you'd start getting too antsy if you spent more than a few days away from them," he said. "And it does them some good to get some fresh air."

"I was getting pretty antsy, you're right," Bucky observed and leaned on Steve's arm. "What the hell am I going to do when they move out?" He watched Lilly swim and kept an eye on Becca at the end of the pier and sighed happily. "I love my family, Steve. The four of us together - this is perfect."

"You're going to be a huge mess when they move out and I'm going to have to keep you distracted all day." Steve brushed his fingers through Bucky's hair. "I can't believe this time last year, I was a
lonely bachelor."

"We will have met a year ago in a little less than four months," Bucky said and beamed up at Steve. "What are we doing to celebrate? I mean, the girls finish school in a few weeks and then it's Becca's birthday and then your birthday and then they go back to school and then it'll be a year since we met."

"I can't believe we're several months married and we haven't even known each other for a year yet," Steve laughed. "I'd be sweating if our kid married someone so quickly." Steve thought and suggested, "As celebration, let's camp and get fireworks."

"You're the one who pulled the soul mate card after having known me for roughly a month." Bucky chuckled and gripped the back of Steve's neck to pull him in for a kiss. "But I wouldn't have it any other way." He looked out to his sisters once more and said, "We could camp in the Catskills if you wanted to. Will it just be me and you or the girls as well?"

"Well, I wasn't wrong," Steve added with a sly smile. He trailed a hand up Bucky's thigh. "We could do that. We should do what we did here. Have a few days to ourselves then have my mom and the girls come up."

"I don't know if I'll be able to get that many days away from work again so soon after this trip," Bucky said. He had also been considering taking a few business classes on the side starting in the fall but he hadn't yet talked to Steve about it so he didn't know. "We may only get a long weekend - possibly less if Becca wants to keep her perfect attendance next year too."

Steve considered for a moment and then said, "Then we can bring them. We can just wait for some time they have a sleepover someplace else so we can fuck like animals." He smirked dumbly. "How's that sound?"

"Hell, if you wanted to, we could just have them go to your moms for the weekend and we could just stay home and fuck like animals for two whole days," Bucky suggested. Of course, that would completely cut out the camping but maybe they could do that sometime in the summer while the girls weren't in school.

"Whatever makes you happy, makes me happy," Steve said in an adoring tone. "Look at them," he sighed as he watched the girls go about their business. "They're so amazing."
Bucky squeezed Steve's hand and said, "I'm really happy that you love them like I do, Steve. Nobody else ever wanted them around. People mostly tolerated them until they went to sleep. But you love us as a packaged deal - a family. And I love you."

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"I can't imagine anyone not loving them," Steve said. "Even though they can be pains in the ass," he added with a little smirk.

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Bucky chuckled. "Yes, but they are our pains." Lilly stayed out in the water for a little bit longer before she declared that it was too cold for her now. Becca had long since gone back inside to read on the couch and Bucky had almost fallen asleep a few times. "Steve, you said you rented them a cabin for themselves?"

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Steve nodded. "Yeah, my mom is over there enjoying a nice coffee on the porch, probably. I figured we could have our privacy at night while still having our family close."

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"That's smart," Bucky agreed. "Do you want to go with the girls to the grocery and then make food at their cabin and then you and I can come back here after dinner and have our privacy." Bucky stood and stretched his body, making sure that Steve wouldn't be able to keep his eyes off of his ass.

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Steve let out a rumble of approval and gave Bucky's ass a small swat. "Making me work double," he complained. "Sure. I'll do it so long as your fist goes in my ass tonight," he said with a playful wink.

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Bucky groaned and leaned over to kiss Steve. "Jesus, yes, let's do that please," he said and then took Steve's hand so they could gather some stuff they might need before heading out with the girls to go see Fred and Mindy.

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After Lilly put on her dry clothes again, they all headed to the store and Mindy gasped when she saw the brood of Rogers-Barnes' come into the shop. "Fred, come look!" She said excitedly. The woman ran up to give Bucky a hug before hugging both Becca and Lilly tightly. "Look at you two!"

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Becca and Lilly accepted the hug but looked up at Bucky with a confused glance. "Girls, this is Mindy." Bucky offered. "She's known me since I was pretty little and she's seen loads of pictures of you two from when dad would show them to her. I think she's been excited to get to meet you."

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"If you know her so well does that mean we get free candy here?" Lilly asked quietly.

Mindy laughed at her bluntness and shook her head. "Bucky does. You've got to visit a few times before you earn that perk."
Lilly furrowed her brow, not expecting that as an answer. "Lilly, I'll just buy you some candy, okay? But Fred might give you one free bait worm if you ask nicely enough." Bucky pet her still damp hair and introduced the girls to Fred once he came up. "Steve surprised me by having his mother bring them up for these last days."

"Oh, dear, that was so sweet of you," Mindy said to Steve.

Fred crossed his arms with a smile at the sight of them. "Well, hello, there. My, don't you two have Old George's features."

Fred leaned down to shake each of the girls' hands and nodded once. Bucky stood behind them and said, "Yeah, I think Becca looks more like our mom than our dad. But Lilly definitely has his eyes." Bucky beamed at his sisters and willed himself not to get emotional. "We just came to say 'hello' and get some supplies for dinner."

Steve put a hand on Bucky's back and kissed his temple to give him his support. Fred pretended he didn't see that and nodded. "I'm glad you did. It's nice to see you all together," he said with a smile. "Come on, let me help you get your supplies."

Bucky and Lilly started going around the store with Fred and picking out various things for dinner. Becca held back and turned to Steve. "Hey," she started carefully, "Do they know about you and Bucky? You know, being together and stuff?"

Steve nodded to her. "Mindy accidentally found out and now pretty much everyone around knows," he said. "Most of them are nice or don't care. Only this guy named Lloyd was rude about it."

"What did this guy Lloyd do?" Becca asked and glanced over at Bucky to check that he wasn't hurt or limping and she just didn't notice. After both Steve and Bucky being hospitalized recently, she had decided to prepare for the worst reactions from people.

Steve squeezed her shoulder. "Just voiced his disapproval before his wife carted him off for not being nice," he said. "You don't have to worry around here, Becs. These people won't hurt us."

Becca held Steve's gaze for a moment and then nodded solemnly, "Alright, I just don't want either of you getting hurt again is all." She looked away again, pretending that she didn't actually care too much and said, "For one, we can't afford the medical bills."
"Yeah, I know. And who else will cook your meals if someone breaks my hands? And who would pay for your field trips if Bucky can't go to work?" Steve nudged her playfully. "We are staying out of the hospital for a long time. I promise."

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Becca tossed her hair back over her shoulder and declared proudly, "Well, you know, it's just a year and a month until I can get a job of my own. I'm going to apply at the bookshops and the animal shelter."

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"That's a great idea. Just do your best to try and not spend your whole paycheck at your job. And don't bring home a bunch of stray pets," Steve teased.

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"I won't spend my whole paycheck at my job," Becca assured but then quietly added, "I make no promises about animals." Bucky and Lilly went to pay for their supplies and Becca watched as Mindy slipped some free candy to Lilly while Bucky wasn't paying any attention.

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Steve smirked. "If you're going to sneak in an animal, make sure it's cute as all hell," he warned. He ruffled up her hair and helped Bucky carry the supplies out. Lilly wore a big grin cause she got what she wanted. "That went well."

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"I think they both really liked meeting the girls finally," Bucky said. "They only ever heard about them and saw pictures. They met my mother once when she came to pick us up because our car wouldn't start. But other than that it was only me and my dad all the time."

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Steve smiled and held Bucky's hand because they didn't have to fear anything up here. "I guess they'll be seeing them some more over the years. Becca would really enjoy reading-" he paused and asked Bucky, "Did you tell her about the book Fred found, yet?"

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"Oh shit, no," Bucky said. "I need to, though. I'll give it to her tomorrow morning." He smiled and squeezed Steve's hand. "She'll get better use of it than I will. And Dad would have liked it to be read by somebody and I don't think I'd find the time. I'll just make sure she knows to be careful with it."

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Becca - who had been eavesdropping - got that curious look on her face that demanded an answer. "What book did he find?" she asked. She had a feeling it was their dad's book but she didn't want to look too excited about it.

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Bucky looked to Steve and asked, "I don't know the way to their cabin but they can take me there if you don't mind getting the book from ours? I'll just give it to Becca tonight. We will get started on
dinner while you are gone."

"You got it. I'll be right back." Steve stole a kiss from Bucky and then ran off. He wrapped the book carefully in a pillowcase because he didn't want it to get scratched or dirty. When he got to the girls' cabin, they already were prepping the food and Sarah was busy making cake for later.

"Hey, Baby," Bucky said and wrapped his arms around Steve when he came in. "Thank you so much for grabbing this for me. I'll be back. I'm going to give this to Becs real fast before dinner. It should be done soon and your mom has been supervising Lilly."

Steve nodded and took over in the kitchen. His mom was happy for the brief break from the city and it was nice to be in such a lively house anyway. "How's chopping going, Lil? Got the vegetables ready?"

Lilly gave a salute to Steve and mumbled something about not wanting to break her concentration and Bucky pulled Becca aside. "Mindy and Fred found this old book of dad's," he said and unwrapped it to give it to Becca. "It was a gift from one of his war buddies and he's got writing all over the place in it. It looks like he didn't get to finish it because there is a bookmark about half way through and the writing stops."

Becca gasped when she saw the book and she took it gingerly from Bucky's hands. She was able to hold it together until she got to the bookmark and felt the weight of the fact that it never got finished. She started to tear up and then hid her face in Bucky's chest.

"Oh, hey, hey," Bucky said and held her close. "It's okay, Becca." He looked up across the room at Steve who had heard the gasp and turned to see how it was going. "I know. I thought about it too. But I think Dad would love for you to have it and finish it. Maybe you can write notes in the other half and then go tell him how it ends. I'm sure he'd like to know. And I'm sure he'd love to hear it from you."

"Alright," Becca said quietly and wiped at the tears on her face. "I'm going to go to my room for a bit," she mumbled.

"You want me to get you for dinner?" Bucky asked as she got up. She shook her head as she clutched the book and walked away. Bucky sighed and smiled weakly over at Steve. He went to help set the table and said, "Maybe I should've waited."
"She would've gotten emotional no matter what. Now she has more time to spend with the book," Steve said gently. He kissed Bucky's cheek and went about cooking dinner. They had a great family sit-down and after dinner was done and eaten, Steve started to wash up. "You want to have alone time with the girls?" Steve asked.

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"Well, Becca went straight back to her room to read and Lilly seems to have found a puzzle in the game room," Bucky said and cuddled up to Steve. "I think I'll just help you finish cleaning up and then the two of us can say 'goodnight' and head back to our cabin."

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Sarah came over and gave them both a hug. "You boys go enjoy yourselves. I'll take care of the cleaning." She shooed them off with a fond smile. "Be safe walking back," she reminded.

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Bucky tried to protest slightly but was ushered out the door. They walked back as the sun was setting and saw some wildlife headed back to their hideouts and nests for the night. "What are we doing tonight, Baby? After we try fisting you, of course."

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"I don't know. What can we do after that? Will I even be able to move?" Steve joked, nudging Bucky's side. "Maybe you can pamper me and give me a massage after. And then list all the reasons why you love me."

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"I can do that." Bucky smiled. "How about I give you massage then I can list my love for you while you do that slow gentle deep making love to me like I did for you the other night. I know that's your favorite. And I owe you for bringing the girls to me."

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Steve grinned. "I like that idea more," he said. "You know exactly how to make me happy, Buck." They got back to their cabin and Steve couldn't help but pin Bucky to the door once inside and kiss him senseless.

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Bucky was startled when he was pushed against the door but he quickly got on board and licked into Steve's mouth. He held his hands on Steve's ass and pulled him in close so he could rut up against him in a slow but purposeful rhythm. "God, you're so incredible, Steve, Baby."

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Sometimes Steve was simply overwhelmed with how much he loved and wanted his husband. He moaned low as Bucky grinded up against him and he started to slowly take off Bucky's shirt. He kissed down his neck and began to tease one of his nipples with his tongue.

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Bucky held on to Steve tighter and moved their hips together. "Where are we doing this? Couch,
bed, floor, where?” He was eager to get his mouth and hands all over Steve's naked body. He loved every inch of Steve and wanted to show his appreciation for his body every day.

"Bed," Steve decided after sucking a nice, dark mark on his chest. "I want to have as much room as possible." The floor seems uncomfortable and the couch was too cramped. "Come on," he said with an excited smile as he tugged Bucky down the hall.

Bucky eagerly followed after him and started undoing the button and zipper of his pants so he could kick them off as fast as he could. "You're the love of my life, you know that?” he said and slipped his hands over Steve's hips when they got to the room.

Steve laughed as he saw Bucky undressed already. He decided to sit on the edge of the bed with his legs open wide as he took off his own clothes. "I kind of guessed that by now,” he teased. "The whole marriage thing gave it away."

"Well, I just thought I'd remind you in case you forgot," Bucky said and helped throw Steve's clothes over to the other side of the room. He grabbed for the lube and ignored his hard cock reaching out for Steve. First, he needed to pleasure Steve and then when Steve was inside him, he could give his own dick some attention.

Steve laid back with his limbs sprawled out on the bed. He looked up at Bucky with a wide smile. "Could look at that handsome face all day. I could suck that dick of yours all day, too."

Bucky groaned low in his throat and poured some lube out on his fingers and started to warm it up. "Don't tell me that. I'll never want to go to work ever again," he said and leaned over Steve and started gently teasing a finger around his hole. "Steve, if you need me to stop at any point or decide you don't want to do this just tell me and we are done right then, okay?"

Steve wiggled impatiently as Bucky teased his hole. He reached up to stroke Bucky's arm and he smiled. "I know you'll stop if I ask, Baby. You're good to me like that." Steve dragged him down for a kiss. "Don't know if your fist will ever be as good as your cock."

"I really like being fisted but if you hate it, just say so. It isn't for everyone." Bucky kissed Steve again as he pushed his first finger inside and massaged it in and out. "Are you tighter than usual? You feel tighter," Bucky said worriedly. He was just so nervous doing this to Steve for the first time. He didn't want to hurt him and he didn't want Steve to look back on the experience and regret it all or push himself too far for Bucky's sake.
"What? Tighter?" Steve pouted. "I don't feel tighter," he said. "You sure your finger didn't get fatter?" he joked, smirking at him. "You have been eating a lot of my cooking lately." Steve tugged a strand of Bucky's hair lightly.

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"Oh my god, maybe," Bucky said and pulled out of Steve to look over his hands. They didn't look any bigger. He looked down at his stomach. He hadn't gained any weight around his middle. He was still fairly muscular even though he really couldn't compete with Steve. "I don't think I gained any weight."

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"Hey, put that back," Steve complained lightly when Bucky pulled his finger out. He reached down to touch himself to try and entice Bucky to put his hands on him again. "I didn't notice if you did. Was just messing with you, that's all."

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Bucky smirked at Steve and stuck two fingers back inside him. "You shouldn't mess with a man who is currently in command of your ass," he said and pumped his finger in and out quickly. He bent down to kiss Steve and suck a hickey on his neck. "I want you to tell me each time you want a new finger, okay?"

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"Please, you have command of my everything," Steve said with a charming smile. He pulled him in for a slow kiss and then hummed happily when he felt Bucky suck a mark onto his neck. After a little while, he gave Bucky the go-ahead for a third finger. He'd managed this before, so it wasn't too overwhelming.

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Bucky dutifully pumped three fingers in and out of Steve and made sure to move them around as much as possible. He kissed everywhere he could easily access on Steve and marveled in appreciation at his husband’s scent and his body and the movements he made underneath him.

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Steve moaned and arched his back off of the bed when Bucky opened him up. "How long did it take you to work up to a fist?" Steve asked. "What even made you want to take one in your ass?"

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"You really want to hear that story right now, Baby?" Bucky asked and licked down Steve's neck. It wasn't really the type of story to tell during sex - more a post-orgasm falling asleep story. It had several elements that Steve wasn't quite fond of to hear about like Bucky's past partners and dildos.

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"Sure, why not?" Steve asked. "Can't exactly have a romantic moment when you're trying to go wrist deep on my ass," he said bluntly. "I think I'm ready for another finger."

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Bucky kept up with the three fingers while he said, "Alright, well," he cleared his throat and stared at his fingers going in and out of Steve. "Had a, uh, I guess you could call him a boyfriend. He bought me a pretty big butt plug and I couldn't get it in. So he had to help me out every time he wanted me to use it." He finished his story by gently pushing his fourth finger in beside his others.

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Steve let out a groan. "No, never mind. I don't want to know," he complained childishly. He winced when Bucky added a fourth finger and he shifted uncomfortably on the bed. "Slower," he breathed out. "Why did you want a plug?"

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Bucky barely moved his fingers and just lightly bent them at the knuckles over and over again so Steve could feel something. He whispered, "We can stop if you want to. Don't forget that." Bucky took his other hand and rubbed circles on Steve's stomach. "At that point, I hadn't actually used a plug yet but he wanted me to so I gave it a shot. I only had a pretty small dildo back then."

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Steve didn't want to give in too quickly but, god, he didn't realize how much of a stretch he would feel with this. "Try it a little longer," Steve murmured. He put his hand on top of the one Bucky had on his stomach. "Did it feel good?"

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"It was alright. I still preferred a fist or a dildo to a plug but it wasn't bad," Bucky said and massaged inside of Steve, stroking his thumb over the outside of his hole. Steve was still really tight and Bucky knew there was no way he was going to get his thumb inside him tonight. He would just go until Steve asked him to stop and then he would let Steve take over.

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Steve breathed out through his nose and then let out a defeated sound when he had to give in because it really was too much. He pouted as he patted Bucky's arm. "I don't think it's happening tonight," Steve murmured. "I'm sorry, Buck."

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Bucky pulled out gently and kissed Steve's stomach up to his neck. "Don't apologize, Baby. You've got nothing to be sorry for. You gave it a try." He kissed Steve on the lips and reached for a tissue to wipe off his lube covered hand.

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Steve sat up and winced once. He felt a bit empty but also more sore than usual. He sighed and pressed his lips to Bucky's temple. "Thank you for trying," he murmured softly. "You still want to make love?"

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"Only if you do, Baby," Bucky answered and wrapped his arms securely around Steve. "But if you just want to go to sleep, I understand. I don't mind either way." He kissed along Steve's jaw and then pulled back to smile at him. Sometimes Bucky forgot just how lucky he was to have Steve and then it would all hit him at once again.
"We got this whole house to ourselves. We can sleep another night." Steve abruptly pulled Bucky down and rolled him over so their positions were swapped. He kissed him deeply and smiled. "I guess I'm going to have to reconsider my no-toys ban if I'm going to have you fist me one day."

"Steven Grant, don't tease me with that if you're going to take it away later," Bucky said but quickly grabbed the lube and shoved it into Steve's hand. He was impatient to get Steve's cock inside him. He wanted Steve holding him as he carefully rocked in and out of his hole and muttered loving phrases in his ear that made Bucky's soul unravel.

"I'm not teasing," Steve protested with his usual pout. "I'm not saying yes, but I'm saying I'll reconsider." He took the lube and coated his fingers with it before rubbing gently around Bucky's hole. He kissed him slowly and added, "It would make me happier to give you what you want than to have you keep from doing something you enjoy for my sake."

"We can discuss that later," Bucky breathed as Steve pushed in the first finger. "Right now, I want you so bad it hurts and I know you feel the same." He reached a hand down to his hole and guided another one of Steve's fingers to be ready to push in. "Come on, Baby, make love to me. Show me how perfect we are for each other. Tell me how much you love me."

Steve had three fingers inside of his husband in no time. He nibbled affectionately at his ear and smiled. "I'm going to make you feel so loved, Baby. I'll go nice and easy on you until we both are aching for it and we will come together."

"That's perfect. That's exactly what we need," Bucky said and massaged Steve's upper arms. "I don't want to go back to Brooklyn so soon, Baby. Can't we stay here like this for another week? Naked and in bed with hands all over each other?"

Steve pulled out his fingers and kissed down Bucky's neck before he eased his dick inside of him. He let out a low moan and started to slowly thrust. "We have to go back, but we can still be sweet on each other all the time. And we can come back here in the summer."

Bucky gasped sharply and looked down where Steve was connected to him. His sucked in his lower lip and then let it go. "I just want to be attached to you like this at all times. This is such a good feeling. Surrounded and filled up with you." Bucky sighed and closed his eyes. "I just love you so much. And this trip ended up being better than expected even though it was rocky at times." Bucky reached up to rake his fingers through Steve's hair. "And I'm sorry again for getting drunk at the cook-out and being inappropriate in front of Jesse and just causing a mess in general." Bucky rambled. Now wasn't really the time, but he still felt terrible about letting himself be controlled by alcohol so easily and he felt so safe when they were making love, like no matter what he said, Steve
would forgive him.

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''Shh, shh,'' Steve said softly. He held the sides of Bucky's face and looked him in the eyes lovingly as he continued to move inside of him. ''You have nothing to be sorry for, Beautiful. I love you.'' He kissed him slowly, reaching a hand between them to stroke Bucky's dick.

---

Bucky couldn't help the prickle of tears on the rims of his eyes. ''I'll get better,'' he promised and held Steve tight. ''I'll get better for you and for the girls and for our baby. I have to. I just need help.'' He kissed Steve on the lips and put their foreheads together. ''I'll get better for you.''

---

''I love you as you are,'' Steve insisted. Of course, he wanted Bucky to recover, but he didn't want the man to doubt for even a second how much his husband loved him. ''Give me another kiss,'' Steve breathed out.

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''Okay,'' Bucky agreed and gripped the back of Steve's neck so he could lick into his mouth. They spent several minutes languidly making out as Steve eased his dick in and out of Bucky and lazily jerked him off as he went. As much as Bucky loved the harsher rough sex that they did sometimes, he had to admit that he adored the intimacy of their slow sex as well.

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Steve panted softly and moaned Bucky's name against his lips. He could feel himself getting close to release, so he put a hand on Bucky's hip to find the angle that he knew he loved. ''Close your eyes, Handsome. And let me do all the work. It's going to be so good, Baby.''

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Bucky nodded and shut his eyes and let his body go loose and pliable for Steve. He kept quiet except for his increased excited breathing and the occasional little groan that would pass his lips. With his eyes closed and his body limp like this, Bucky could pretend he was floating and nothing bad could ever touch him again.

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Steve alternated between kissing and nipping lightly at Bucky's neck as he brought them close to orgasm. His breathing hitched as he felt himself nearly come a few times but finally, just as he saw Bucky's expression change, Steve felt himself shooting thick spurts of come into Bucky's ass.

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Bucky came with a little yelp of Steve's name and his ass clenched down around Steve's dick. ''Don't pull out,'' he said quickly and pulled Steve down on top of him. ''Just lay here with me for a bit. Okay, Baby?'' He pet his hands down Steve's back and whispered. ''You don't know how much it means to me that I actually found a guy who loved me enough to stay and be with me instead of getting up and leaving the second he was done coming.''

---
Steve wasn't going to complain about getting to keep his dick in Bucky's ass. He laid his chin on Bucky's chest and looked up at him with a loving smile. "You deserve everything I can give you and then some, Buck," Steve said softly. "Never in your life did you deserve to be treated like just another fuck. No matter how much of a mess you were."

---

"I love you," Bucky barely whispered and, for some reason, it felt like the first time. Maybe it was because they were on their honeymoon and he was so enraptured with Steve, but every time they had sex, Bucky got just a little bit more needy for Steve and just a little bit more dependent on his presence to hold him until he fell asleep.

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Steve reached up to pet his fingers through Bucky's hair. "I love you too, Bucky Barnes." Steve leaned up to kiss him lightly. "Let's fall sleep, Love. I feel perfect like this with you and want to go to sleep like this."

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"Rogers-Barnes," Bucky muttered lightly and closed his eyes. He grabbed for the blanket and tossed it over the two of them and quickly fell asleep with Steve's warm weight on top of him holding him together and keeping him safe.
Steve was reluctant to leave but all good things came to an end. They loaded up the wood and the rest of their things and drove back to Brooklyn. They had a night to recover and both Bucky and Steve left that next morning for work. At the end of his shift, Steve arrested some guy for being belligerently drunk in public and put him in a cell for processing when he saw two familiar faces. "What- Bucky?!!"

---

Bucky was leaning against the wall with his cheek pressed up against the cold bricks. Clint was lying on his back on the bench with his feet in Bucky's lap. The second they saw Steve, Clint sat up and Bucky jumped over to the bars of the cell and reached for him. "Steve, Baby, oh my god, we have been here for hours!"

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"What the hell are you guys doing in here? It wasn't-" Steve got a nervous look, obviously scared that Bucky or Clint had been caught with some sort of drugs or maybe Bucky had been abusing alcohol and got in a fight. "What's going on?"

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Bucky clutched to Steve's sleeve through the bars as Clint came over. Bucky sighed and said, "Some punk ass young cop that I don't know sees us at the shop, says we match the description of two burglars who've been going around all of Brooklyn lately. He arrested us. Somehow didn't smell the pot on Reggie so we got to leave the shop to him but we were brought in about four hours ago now."

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"You're kidding," Steve said in a low tone. He couldn't believe that some cop would make a mistake like that. Steve huffed and unlocked the door and motioned for the two to come out. Just then, the young cop came running over. "Hey, the hell are you doing with my guys?"

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Bucky was harshly shoved back into the cell by the other cop, making him stumble into Clint. "Listen, man!" Bucky grunted. "We aren't your guys! We've never stolen anything a day in our lives." He pointed a finger at Steve, "Ask him!"

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Steve shoved the other cop back, which made a few of the prisoners in the cells next to them look on with interest. "The hell's gotten into you, Rogers?" The younger cop snapped. Steve squared his jaw. "You've got the wrong men."

The man snorted. "Let a judge decide that."

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"Come on, man!" Clint said with a huff. He pointed to Bucky and added quietly, "You know who this is?"
Bucky rapidly signed to Clint to just let Steve handle it and the cop said, "See, Rogers? They've got their own encoded gestures like in baseball. Who knows what he just said."


A big burly man in the cell across from them piped up with, “Even I know what he just said!”

Steve went to the officer’s desk to find the file on the robbers and he rolled his eyes before coming back with it. "The culprits hit up a store last week. Bucky was at Seneca Lake, miles away from Brooklyn. Case closed."

"And just how the fuck do you know where this scum was last week, huh?" The guy snarked back and shot Bucky a short glare. Clint, at this point, had taken to standing still as possible with his arms crossed. He was highly offended and Bucky could tell.

Steve could handle a rookie mistake but he couldn't handle this level of arrogance. "Because for half the week I was balls deep in his ass and the other half he was balls deep in mine, Richard. Bucky's my husband and we were on our honeymoon. Everyone else in the precinct is well aware of that."

Clint dropped his arms to his sides in surprise and Bucky looked from Steve to Richard a few times before splitting a wide grin and holding in a laugh that threatened to bubble to the surface. Clint clapped his hand on Bucky's back and did the laughing for him as he looked on at Richard's shocked and confused expression, "Oh boy, he told you what's up, Dick."

It wasn't often that Steve talked about sex with Bucky to others, but he wasn't in the mood to deal with this guy right now. He opened up the door wider so Bucky and Clint could come out. "Now process the drunk I brought in so I can get these guys back where they belong."

Bucky flung his arms around Steve for a quick hug before slipping his hand in with his to walk out proudly back into the main hall, leaving Richard behind. Clint stretched out once they were away from the cells as if he had just gotten released from a maximum-security lock up. Bucky frowned at Steve and said, "That short little fucker tazed me. Look." He lifted his shirt to reveal the small purple bruises from where the prongs cut into his skin.

When Bucky showed the mark on his skin, Steve felt so much rage at the new officer. "What made him do that? Were you resisting arrest?" he asked with a frown. "Or being disobedient?"

"I didn't put up a fight or anything like that," Bucky said. "I may have been a little rude and
descriptive with my vocabulary but he was arresting us under no grounds expect we look like what two other guys in Brooklyn might look like. Which, if you haven't noticed, there are a lot of long-haired hippies in this neighborhood."

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"I'm going to have a long talk with him," Steve said. He didn't want to file an official report unless the other officer was being truly deviant. "I'm so sorry this happened to you two. Let me buy you dinner to make up for it."

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Clint shook his head and said, "Before any of this happened I had plans with my mom for dinner. You just take Bucky home and get balls deep in his ass again." Clint started cracking up again as he took his belongings back from holding and left the precinct.

Bucky smoothed Steve's uniform, "Are you allowed to leave now? I wouldn't mind you getting me dinner. And also promising that the girls never hear about this."

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Steve turned his attention to Bucky and smiled. "I was almost going to clock out anyway. And why can't the girls know? You getting mistaken for a con artist is a funny story."

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"No, not a funny story," Bucky said and followed Steve as he went to gather his things. "It's not funny to be arrested at work in front of a bunch of customers and then tazed and then left in a cell for four hours. It's painful." Bucky showed him the mark again. "That shit hurts, Steve," he whined and added, "I think you have cause to be angry just for the fact that some other man put me in handcuffs."

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Steve supposed it really wasn't funny when Bucky put it like that. He rubbed a hand along his back and sighed. "I'm sorry, Baby. I'll make sure Richard knows that his behavior won't be tolerated, even if he had been apprehending a criminal." He touched Bucky's wrist lightly. "Are you trying to get me to use my handcuffs again?"

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"I might be," Bucky smirked. "You've got to give me credit for trying at least." He adjusted Steve's collar and gave him a quick kiss since no one was looking. "Are you ready to go home, now? I really want to curl up on the couch with you and take a nap until the girls get home."

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"You mean you don't want me to take you out to dinner? I guess you really are an inexpensive date," Steve said with a fond smile. He looked even happier when Bucky kissed him. "Either way, curling up and snuggling with you sounds perfect."

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"I mean, I'm not opposed to you buying me dinner if you wanted to," Bucky said. "Thought you may have just said that as an offer for Clint. But dinner with you and then snuggling later sounds
good too. The girls can be left to their own devices for a while."

"We can get dinner to go. Less time cooking means more time snuggling. Where do you want to grab food?" Steve asked, slinging an arm around his shoulders.

"Oh, I don't know. I kind of want fettuccine, don't you?" Bucky asked as they headed to the door to leave the precinct. "We don't really go out on dinner dates much. Maybe we should eat at the place and then come home. Have some quiet time?"

"Sounds like a plan. I know a good Italian restaurant nearby," Steve said. He leaned over to kiss Bucky before they got out of the precinct then gave him a little distance after that.

Bucky followed after Steve and grumpily ran his hands through his greasy hair. He hadn't had time to wash it for about two days and he felt even grosser since being inside the jail cell for several hours. "Do I smell like a felon?"

"No, you just smell like the common criminal," Steve sassed back. "And a little bit like urine. I don't think the men I put in there care to use the toilet we've so graciously provided."

"Well, what's better than pissing on the walls of a jail cell?" Bucky said, "It's really pretty liberating." They got into the restaurant and ordered their food to take out instead of eating in and waited in the atrium for it to be ready. "What are we doing tonight, huh?"

"We do whatever you want, Handsome," Steve said. "You're the one who got tazed. I think you get to call the shots for the rest of today." Steve winked at him playfully.

"That sounds fair to me," Bucky said and scratched at his beard. "You know what? I'm going to shave my beard tonight. I think that's what made me look like a burglar. I mean, Clint already has that look, but me?" He gestured down at himself. "Wouldn't have happened when I didn't have a beard."

"But I love your beard," Steve whined. "It's nice to rub my face against." He spoke quietly enough so others couldn't overhear. "I can't stop you, but you really should keep it. It's quite nice."

"You sure?" Bucky asked and rubbed at it again. "Don't you get beard burn when I eat your ass?" He could've been a little quieter but no one was around and he just didn't give a fuck one way or the
other today. He had already been arrested and tazed. He could handle it if someone had something to say.

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"That's the best part," Steve said with a smirk. He paid for their dinners and took the bag of food. Steve held the door open for Bucky on their way out and asked, "Should I grow a beard?"

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"Will the force let you have a beard?" Bucky asked and took the food bag from Steve to quickly double check that everything was there. There was something about some restaurants in their neighborhood always forgetting to put part of the order in. Everything was good and he walked on towards their apartment with Steve.

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"They allow certain styles. Not all," Steve said. "I just haven't bothered because I like having a smooth face and I hate the itchy in-between beard." He shrugged. "But if you think it would look nice..."

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"Steve, literally everything looks nice on you. You could shave your head and still probably look really hot," Bucky said but quickly added, "But please don't! I love your hair. But I would like to see you with a beard. Maybe get my own beard burn."

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"I'll make you wear a wig," Bucky protested and kicked his shoes off once he got inside their apartment. "Speaking of, does balding run in your family? Because it doesn't in mine. Most Barnes men were still growing hair in the grave."

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"I don't know. My dad died young and my grandfather doesn't send pictures. I guess you're going to have to find out in a few years," Steve said. "You going to leave me if I lose all my hair, huh?"

---

"No, I wouldn't leave you," Bucky said and set their dinner out on the table. "I will buy you some nice hats. How's that?" he asked and pulled Steve's chair out for him. "We have about an hour before Becca's study session is over and the girls get back home. I say we eat and then lay down in the peace in and quiet until they get back."

---

Steve kissed Bucky's cheek and sat down in the chair so he could eat dinner "Sounds like a plan, Beautiful. That's just enough time to list about a thousandth of the reasons why I love you."
"I'm not opposed to that." Bucky grinned and then thought, "Hey, Steve, I had an idea for a fun night out just the two of us for sometime soon. But if you don't like it or don't think it's smart then we won't do it. I'll drop it and forget about it entirely."

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"Oh yeah? What's that? It better not be a dinner date with Phillip to ask if he's interested in a threesome," Steve teased. He took a deep drink from his soda but he was actually a little worried that’s what Bucky would ask.

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Bucky grinned, "Aw, that's the first time you've called him by his name." He squeezed Steve's hand and said, "I kind of wanted to go to clubbing with you. Just one night to go dance with you. We can go to the gay club on queer row down in Park Slope. I just think it'd be nice to have a night out where we don't have to be surrounded by people who expect us to be straight. And I promise I won't drink. That's not why I want to go."

---

Steve brushed his fingers through his hair and considered for a moment before nodding his head. "I can't guarantee I can do club type dancing. But I'll give it a try if you really won't drink that night."

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"I swear, Steve, water on tap is all I will have," Bucky said and punctuated his words with a tiny push on Steve's arm. "Don't you think it'll be fun? Getting to be out in more ways than one? Dancing with me, meeting other gay people. You love meeting gay people, right? You like Veronica and Laura."

---

Steve nodded his head. "No, I agree. I think it's a really great idea. I just... I'm probably going to have to get used to the atmosphere is all. But I'm sure I'll adjust quickly."

---

"I mean, we seriously don't have to go if you don't want to," Bucky said and sat back in his seat. "I just haven't gone clubbing while in a relationship and I think it'd make the experience different, you know? It was always a way to get the hottest guy to look at me and take me home. But with you there, I come with the hottest guy and already know he's going home with me."

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"I want to go," Steve said. "I want to have a fun night out with you and... Well, I guess I also want to go so I can let whoever runs the place know that they've got a cop on their side and that there's a shelter coming soon, you know?"

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Bucky smiled and leaned over to kiss his husband. "Mhmm," he hummed and nuzzled his cheek with his nose. "That'll be good for them to know. I mean Park Slope is only about thirty minutes from where the church is if you take the right train so they'll be able to get to the shelter easily once it's up."
Steve stroked a hand over Bucky's back and kissed him lazily a few times. "This is all possible cause of you," Steve said. "Thank you for supporting me, Baby."

"Of course, my handsome husband," Bucky said and got up from the table to sit in Steve's lap. "It's a perfect idea and you are so passionate about it and I love it and love you and I think it'll do a lot of good." He crowded Steve and started to kiss at his neck and jaw.

Steve laughed and slid a hand into Bucky's shirt. "Keep that up and I won't be able to finish my dinner. You're too much of a distraction," he said adoringly

Bucky turned slightly and spun a fork full of Steve's pasta before bringing it to his lips so Steve could eat. "But I want to be here. This is my favorite place to sit. You'll just have to let me help you finish."

Steve leaned forward and took a bite off the fork. "You won't hear me complaining. I love you in my lap, pampering me." He scratched his nails gently over Bucky's back.

"We're kind of disgustingly cute, aren't we?" Bucky asked and gave Steve some more pasta. "It's a good thing the girls aren't here because we would be hearing lots of grumping. Lilly used to scream every time our parents would kiss each other. She got over it, but it was quite a screech."

Steve let out a laugh. "I hope our kid appreciates what an amazing relationship we have together," he said. "I would want them to have someone who treats them the way you treat me."

Bucky set the fork down and kissed Steve. He hoped their kid ended up with the best traits of both of them and finds someone just as perfect as they are going to be. "You done eating? Because I kind of want to jump your bones."

"What happened to cuddling?" Steve laughed. "Not like I'm complaining." He stood up and picked Bucky up with him as he walked to their bedroom.

"We cuddle all night while we are asleep," Bucky reasoned. He pulled out some candles from the closet that he had found stuffed away in the laundry room and started to light them and put them on the dresser so they could have a soft glow around them. "Turn out the light."
Steve's face lit up when he saw Bucky candles. He bit his bottom lip excitedly as he turned out the lights and laid on the bed. "This is new."

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Once the candles were lit, Bucky went to Steve and trailed his hands down his legs. "You want to know a secret?" he asked and moved to straddle Steve on the bed as he massaged his sides and abs. "I'm not wearing underwear."

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Steve looked at Bucky with eyes dark from arousal. "My poor husband was stuck all day in a cell with no underwear on? It's a miracle no one else put their hands on you." He reached down to grab at Bucky's ass. "Did Clint fight off all the fellas?"

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"I think I caught some of them staring at my ass a few times," Bucky answered and slipped his hands into the waistband of Steve's pants. "Also, people could see the outline of my cock all day and I didn't notice until Clint said something when we were in close quarters. A couple more hours in there and you might have had to bargain with some crooks to get me back."

---

Steve let out a little grumble. "My wonderful husband being a tease for any man with taste? How terrible," he scolded lightly, not meaning a word of it. "You're lucky I love you." He slid Bucky's pants down slowly and licked his lips when there was nothing underneath. "Mine."

---

Bucky's heart skipped a beat and his chest felt tight. "I love when you do that," he said. Being claimed so simply by Steve was such a turn on for him and it always went straight to his dick. He started grinding his ass back and forth against Steve's crotch, feeling his hardened cock pushing up against him.

---

"Oh yeah?" Steve was in a bit of a possessive mood. He nibbled at Bucky's ear and moaned low when Bucky grinded against him. He dug his fingers into Bucky's ass a bit harder before giving it a little slap. "You like knowing your fine ass belongs to me?" He grabbed Bucky around his middle and pinned him to the bed. "Do you want me to remind you that your dick is mine too?"

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Bucky panted in excitement and his eyes were wide with arousal. Steve had his hands held up above his head and Bucky's pants were down over his ass in the back but still covering most of his cock in the front. A flash of an idea went through his mind, "Prove it," Bucky sneered at Steve.

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Steve could tell Bucky was really enjoying this. He looked his husband over once before letting go. "Keep your hands above your head," he ordered. Steve got up and went to the closet. He had to dig around a bit before he found Phillip and he brought him over. "Tell me why you haven't used this."
Bucky eyed Steve as he rummaged in the closet and his eyebrows shot up when he brought the dildo over. He kept his hands above his hand as asked but moved his hips around a little on the mattress. "You mean why I haven't used him since I've been with you?"

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"Yeah," Steve answered, gently touching his hands over Bucky's sides before teasing his nipple. "Tell me what stopped you from using him whenever you felt like it."

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Bucky gasped a little. "Well, because I love you and you told me not to. And I'll do anything you say. I didn't want to upset you, ever. Because you were clear as to why you didn't like the idea of me using it. It would have been a breach of respect and trust for me to use it anyway."

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Steve smiled over at Bucky and nodded his head. "Yes, and I love you so much for respecting that," Steve said. "But here's the thing..." he turned the dildo over in his hands a few times. "Kind of proves that your ass is mine. Cause I've controlled what's allowed to go inside it."

---

Bucky's breathing was shallow and frequent and needy. He hadn't moved his hands but he really wanted to get his pants off and for something to touch his dick - whether that was his hand or Steve's, he didn't care. He just wanted to be touched. His eyes were glued to the dildo and he patiently took in Steve's words. Steve did have a point. He did have control of his ass for several long months now and Bucky was always obedient about what he was asked to do or not do with himself sexually. "Steve..." Bucky choked out and his lip quivered in desperation.

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Steve set the dildo down on Bucky's stomach and slowly removed all of their clothes, taking his time. As much as he wanted to give Bucky what he wanted, he wanted to draw this out just a little to show he was in control. "Do you want to use this today, Baby? Do you think I should let you have this in your ass again?"

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Bucky's mouth felt dry and he couldn't help the whine coming from deep inside of him. He wanted to say 'yes', that he definitely thought Steve should let him have Phillip again. But he wanted to choose his words as carefully as possible so as not to upset the hot and sensual balance that Steve had set up so far. "I think that you make the decisions and whatever you think is best is what we will do."

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Steve cupped Bucky's face and drew him into a slow kiss after he spoke. "Oh, Sweetheart," Steve said gently. "If you want something, don't be a people pleaser. You should have told me outright what you wanted me to do." He put Phillip back in his container and set it on the nightstand. He got some lube while he was there and spread it on his fingers. "Every last inch of you is mine, Baby." He started to tease Bucky's hole. "But never forget that you'll always have whatever you want with me. All you got to do is tell me."
Bucky flitted his eyes across Steve's face and landed on his lips. He honestly didn't mind letting Steve be in control of his body like this. It was really sexy to him and it hit some sort of kink inside him. Also, the idea of not being able to have something he wanted unless he begs for it and is given permission was just too much for him and he was almost delirious with arousal. "What do I get tonight?"

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Steve eased a finger inside Bucky effortlessly and was quick to add a second. "You're going to get what I feel like giving you," he answered, purposely being vague. He leaned down to suck on one of Bucky's nipples while he worked his ass open. "And then you're going to put your pants on without any underwear - and without cleaning up. You're going to find a new toy at the adult shop you think I will like. And if I like it, we'll shower together before I make us all dinner. Then we will use it later. Got it?"

---

"Uh-huh," Bucky's heart was pounding in his chest harder than it ever had during sex with Steve. He could already feel sweat dripping down his back and his eyes were wide and locked onto Steve's. There was a faint yellow glow all around them from the candles and Bucky's vision seemed to blur ever so slightly around Steve's face. This was insanely exciting to him. Steve had never really acted this way before. It was intense and new and unlike Steve but also unprecedented and unpredictable in the way that Steve could be sometimes.

---

Bucky looked so fucking gorgeous and it made Steve's heart skip to see that he could still get his husband so worked up and excited. He wanted to give him everything under the sun because Bucky did so much for him. Steve wanted to go out of his own comfort zone to make Bucky happy. After he spread Bucky wide with three fingers, he slicked up his cock and pushed inside Bucky's ass smoothly. "Repeat back to me what I asked you to do, Love," Steve said softly before thrusting in deeper.

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"Okay-God! Fuck!" Bucky yelped and flung his hands out to grip Steve's arms. His breath shook as he said, "When you're done with me, I'm supposed to get dressed again, no underwear, leaking come from my ass, and go to the sex shop downtown to get us a new toy that you'll approve of."

---

"Good," Steve growled. He wrapped an arm around the small of Bucky's back to lift his hips up as he fucked him. "Now lay back and enjoy yourself, Baby. I want you to feel as perfect as you make me feel."

---

Bucky's face was red hot and his still gross hair was sticking to his skin. "How will I know what you'll approve of though, Steve? What if I bring us back the wrong thing?" He tentatively reached for his dick but then aborted the motion, having not been given any indication from Steve to touch himself yet. Hell, he was still supposed to have his arms over his head.

---

Steve, not wanting Bucky to touch himself yet, casually moved Bucky's hands back over his head
and held them there. "Then I'll send you back out until you find the right toy," Steve said. Chances were, even if Steve didn't like it, he wouldn't make Bucky take a second trip. He just liked what this conversation was doing to Bucky. Steve let out a soft, breathy moan because Bucky felt so fucking good around his cock.

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"Jesus fucking Christ," Bucky rolled his head back so he was staring at the ceiling. "What's gotten into you, Steve, Baby?" He moaned a long string of pleased little whines and clenched his ass around Steve's cock repeatedly.

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Steve gently brushed Bucky's hair from his face and kissed down his neck. "Just proving to you that you're mine. Just like you asked," he answered. He reached down to stroke Bucky's dick with every thrust he gave him.

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"I believe you," Bucky whispered as he closed his eyes and let his mouth hang open. He probably wasn't a very attractive sight but he just couldn't hold himself together at the moment. "I've always been yours - just waiting for you to come claim me."

---

Steve could feel himself getting close. His thrusts were a bit more erratic and he didn't have that utterly controlled composure anymore. "I know," he said softly. "But now I can have you for the rest of our lives." He kissed at his lips. "And I won't let you down." Steve lasted a few more thrusts before coming deep in his ass.

---

The sounds that Bucky heard himself make as he waited for his own orgasm were enough to send him over the edge. Each high keening noise pushed him a little further until he was shooting up in a harsh spout of come that hit Steve's stomach as he hovered over Bucky.

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Steve stroked Bucky through his orgasm before finally giving him permission to put his hands down. He kissed the tip of his nose affectionately and then he gave him a genuine, pleased look. "Is this alright, Buck?" he asked. "I'm not going too far, am I?"

---

Bucky gave an indignant clipped laugh. "Are you kidding?" He launched himself at Steve to lick into his mouth and moan into him. "Not too far, at all. With you, I don't think I have a 'too far'." He stared into Steve's eyes for a quiet, tranquil moment before slipped off of him and grabbing for his pants. "Want me to get going?"

---

"Just making sure," Steve said gently. "I love you too much to not double check." He relaxed and laid sprawled out on the bed. "Yeah, you go run your errand. I'll think about what dinner I'll make for the girls and I'll make some extra for us in case you feel like having second dinner."
"Okay, I'll be back, Love," Bucky said and grinned before slipping out of their room. He was a mess of sticky skin and a wet asshole but he also felt like he was on top of the world. When he was going down the stairs to head outside, he ran into the girls on their way home from school. "Hey, I just got to run an errand really fast and I'll be back. Make sure to knock first on our bedroom door if you want to talk to Steve."

When the girls got home, Steve dressed and headed to the kitchen to cook. He smiled pleasantly and waved before getting to cutting up vegetables. "How was school?"

"It was fine," Lilly groaned and flopped over on the couch. "I was told that I'm a distraction to my fellow classmates and my teacher wants Bucky to come in and have a talk about me."

Becca dropped her bag on the table and went to help Steve with dinner. "And I took my last chemistry test and then had a good study session with my friends for our history exam next week." She smiled up at Steve. "My day was better than Lilly's."

Steve gave Becca a friendly nudge when she came over to help. "Proud of you," he said and then glanced back at Lilly. "Well, what did you do that was a distraction? You know your brother can't afford to take days off from work," he said in a light but disapproving tone.

Lilly huffed and said in a mock teacher voice, "You talk too much during class and clicking pens does not create a productive learning environment and tossing paper airplanes to your friends behind my back is very rude, Lillian Barnes."

Becca turned to stare at Lilly on the couch, "Paper airplanes? Really? I spend the whole year busting my ass in school every single day and you make paper airplanes?"

Steve snorted at Becca. "Don't worry, Becca. You're the one who's going to be super smart and Lilly is going to be sweeping streets and cleaning toilets. Right, Lil?" Steve asked. "Are you going to be the best toilet cleaner there ever was?"

Lilly very quickly flipped Steve off in a way that she could get away with saying it was just a hand tick if he got upset. "First of all, being a janitor doesn’t mean that you aren’t smart. Second of all, I'm going to be famous," she said and put her hands on her hips. "Either going to become an actress or a singer or a model. Who knows?"

"If you don't do well in school how will you know someone's not conning you out of your money?" Steve asked her innocently. "You'll be the poorest singer around."
"Intuition," she replied.

Becca just laughed and started setting the table. "Just wait until Bucky hears that you want to be famous," she said with a strange reverence. "He will either shut that down in a heartbeat saying it's not a practical enough option for you or pay for your acting lessons so at least one of us can live out a dream cause he didn't get to. There is no middle option."

"Bucky would do anything to help you two with your dreams," Steve said. "But he's not dumb. You have to show him that you're willing to help yourself and that you know what you're doing." Steve set a few plates down on the table. "He loves you two so much. And so do I."

"I'm going to do it," Lilly said and came over to the table to eat. "I'm going to be famous."

"Where did Bucky go anyway?" Becca asked and poured water for the three of them. "He rushed out of here looking disgusting and saying he had to run an errand."

Steve tried to not look too pleased with himself at Becca's description of Bucky. "He had to get soap. We ran out and he needs to shower really bad. He tripped into a bunch of garbage on the way home from work."

Both girls gave Steve a look like they weren't anywhere near convinced that that was true. "Could have just used shampoo on his body if it was that urgent. At least then he wouldn't have smelled on his way to get soap," Becca said.

Lilly added, "Yeah and the bodega is only a block down so he should be back by now."

"He had other errands to run, too," Steve said lamely. "Just hush and eat your dinner. No more questions," he complained. He kissed the top of both of their heads and headed to the bedroom before he accidentally said too much.

It took another twenty minutes before Bucky was sneaking back into the apartment with a large black bag behind his back. Both the girls were in the living room working on one of Becca's puzzles with the TV droning on behind them. He managed to shuffle through the apartment to his and Steve's bedroom without them asking about the bag.

"Hey there, Beautiful," Steve said pleasantly. "Becca and Lilly were asking questions. I had to hide in here to stop them from getting suspicious." He was an awful liar and they both knew it.
Bucky set the bag down by the door and made sure that Steve couldn't see inside it from across the room before he went over to him and gave him a slow kiss. "What did you say to them to make them suspicious?" he asked curiously and stroked his thumb on the skin of Steve's neck.

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"Told them you had to get soap cause we were out. And that you looked wrecked cause you tripped into garbage on the way home," Steve said with an apologetic smile.

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Bucky shook his head and scoffed. "God, Steve, you are the worst at this shit," he said and then checked his watch. "It's almost time for the girls to be getting ready for bed. Am I allowed to shower before we get into anything more tonight?"

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Steve looked at the bag with interest. "Let me see what you bought for us first," he said with a snarky, little grin on his face. Bucky wasn’t getting off that easily.

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"You're only allowed to see two of the things I bought. The other one you'll have to just wait on," Bucky said and went towards the bag. "Close your eyes, Baby." He grabbed two things from the bag and then wrapped the other item back up before hiding it away in the closet. Bucky came back over to Steve with a bottle of strawberry flavored lube and the new toy. He was pretty excited about the prospect of getting to use a toy again - if Steve let him - but he also wanted to get something that he thought Steve wouldn't be able to resist trying. So he found a vibrator with a long cord that led to a small remote so Steve could control the intensity of the movements.

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Steve closed his eyes as directed. When he opened them, he looked over the lube and grinned. This would certainly make eating Bucky out him a lot more appealing... not like it wasn't already. He looked at the vibrator with light confusion. "What's the cord for?" he asked.

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"Hold on a minute," Bucky said and went to go get batteries from the kitchen. When he returned, he put them into the vibrator and had Steve close his hand around the part meant to go into the ass. Bucky took the remote and pressed it on and then kept turning to dial up so it vibrated harsher and then he dialed it back down and turned it off. "See?"

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Steve blushed deeply when he realized what they were meant to do with it. Oh. Well, that made a lot of sense. He shyly tucked the lube and the vibrator under the pillow just to give them a hiding place for now. "Let's shower together." Which meant he approved.

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Bucky's eyes flashed and he breathed in a deep quick breath. "That mean we're... we're going to use it?" His pupils were blown out in excitement and he started stripping off his clothes to go shower. He really was pretty gross right now what with his disgusting hair, being in a jail cell, and the dried come between his thighs.
Steve nodded with a little smile. "Yes, that means we are," he said. He turned on the taps for Bucky before undressing himself. "You're like a kid on Christmas with sex toys."

Bucky squinted. "Strange image." He hopped into the shower. The water felt amazing on his skin and he just stood letting it cascade over him as he groaned at the feeling. "You really wanted me to be a dirty hippie today, didn't you, Steve?" he called out over the roar of the water. "Making me run around Brooklyn with your come drying in my pants and my sweat sticking my shirt to my back."

Steve snickered and ran his hands down Bucky's back and helped wash him off. "You got to admit that it was fun," he said. "I know you love it when I get possessive like that."

"Ooh, yes I do," Bucky agreed and turned to kiss Steve. He handed Steve the bar of soap and then turned back around. He guided Steve's hands down his back to sit cupping under his ass cheeks. "But now you have to clean up your mess."

Steve lathered his hands with the soap and then started to clean between Bucky's thighs and in his ass. "So demanding," Steve sassed lightly. "It was pretty hot sending you out there all messy with my come."

"Yeah? Was it?" Bucky asked and glanced back at Steve. "Did you lay in bed after I left and think about me walking down the street with it leaking out of me? Did you think how I must have smelled to the people at the sex shop? Smelled like I was claimed by a big strong cock." Bucky leaned back into Steve's touch just slightly as he cleaned him up. "Or did you think about how desperate I must have looked - fucked out with my hair matted down and my clothes stuck to me, frantically searching around a sex shop for exactly what would please my husband?"

Steve couldn't help but grind against Bucky a little. Being reminded of all that was making him hot under the collar and he was half tempted to fuck his husband right then and there. "All of that," Steve groaned. He kissed Bucky's cheek and then got the shampoo to wash his hair.

Bucky hummed happily when he got a reaction out of Steve. "What do you say after we shower we lay on the couch and watch TV until the girls go to sleep and then I'll show you the third thing I bought at the shop, yeah?"

"I like the sound of that, Handsome," Steve said sweetly. He kissed Bucky's forehead and then washed his hair. "But only if you keep up that dirty talk later on."
"Don't I always?" Bucky asked and washed out his hair before turned off the shower and wrapping up in a towel. They threw on some pajamas and lazed about on the couch together while the girls showered and headed to bed. Once the lights were out and everything was quiet, Bucky pulled Steve back to their room and said, "You strip and get on the bed and I'll be right back." He grabbed the black bag from the closet and rushed to the bathroom and shut the door firmly behind him so Steve wouldn't see.

Steve loved it when Bucky tried to surprise him. He hurried off to the bed and plopped down, quickly stripping himself and tossing his clothes aside. He sprawled out and parted his legs so when Bucky came back, he would see Steve lazily jerking himself off.

Bucky hastily removed his pajamas and pulled the shirt and long pants from the black bag. He dressed as quickly as he could in the complicated outfit and then stared at himself in the mirror. Bucky looked on at a long-haired foul-mouthed officer in a tight-fitting tear-away mock policeman's uniform. He plopped the dorky hat on the top of his head and checked out his ass once more in the fabric painted onto his skin. "Officer Bucky Rogers-Barnes reporting for duty." He chuckled quietly to himself and then flung open the bathroom door.

Steve couldn't help but stare incredulously. First out of shock, then amusement, and then arousal. "Jesus Christ," he laughed as he stood up and walked over to Bucky. He crowded his space and cupped Bucky's ass tightly through the pants. "You come to arrest me, Officer?"

"That depends," Bucky said and reached down to hold Steve's balls. "You done something I should arrest you for?" He leaned forward and kissed his husband. "After all, I'm the one impersonating an officer. That's illegal, isn't it?" He started pushing Steve back towards the bed.

Steve plopped back down and grinned brightly up at Bucky from his spot on the bed. "Depends. Is it an arrestable offense to jerk off while you're in the bathroom? Cause I did that. I also checked out your ass like ten times today..."

"I think I'll let it slide just this once," Bucky said and crowded Steve by boxing him in with his arms and legs on the bed. "But you have to do something for me to get off." He put his hand on the back of Steve's head and gently pulled him closer to his crotch.

Steve smirked and slowly started to mouth at Bucky's cock through the cheap fabric of the pants. "I do, huh? But shouldn't you get that camera just in case? You know, pictures for evidence, Officer."
"Jesus, yes," Bucky agreed, slightly breaking character, and slipped away from Steve quickly to go grab the camera. He came back and promptly handed it to him. "You got to get some of me in this outfit. Then you'll suck my cock and decide who fucks who tonight. The officer fucking a criminal in lieu of jail time or the real officer teaching the impersonator a lesson."

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Steve sat back and took a few pictures of Bucky, some full body shots and others close-ups of the bulge in his pants. Steve loved the idea of choosing who did who but right now he was more interested in sucking his husband off. He undid the front of Bucky's pants and slid his clothes off. When he took Bucky's cock in his mouth, he took a picture of himself.

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"Give me that," Bucky whispered and took the camera. He snapped a few more of Steve with a dick in his mouth before tossing the camera on the bed for later. He just enjoyed himself for a while being sucked on by his husband. "What did you decide?" he asked and glanced over at the pillow where the new toy and the strawberry lube were hiding. He really hoped Steve didn't back down and change his mind about using the vibrator.

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Steve bobbed his head sensually along Bucky's length for a bit. He popped off his dick and licked his lips slowly. "I fucked you this afternoon. I think it'll be fair to give you a turn to fuck me tonight."

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"Good." Bucky grinned down at him. "I haven't been inside you in like four days or something." He touched the sides of Steve's face gently and leaned down to kiss him. "Are we still using the new vibrator? You can put it inside me and have control of the remote while I Fuck you."

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"Do you get ass withdrawal when you don't get to fuck me for a while?" Steve joked. He winked and then started to take Bucky's top off. "We can use the vibrator, Baby. I want to see how hot it makes you."

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"Well, it's just that I've noticed that you tend to be doing the fucking more than the getting fucked, and, yeah, sometimes I get really needy to be inside you," Bucky whined and pushed his body against Steve's once his shirt was off of him. He reached up under the pillow for the lube and the vibrator and dragged them out from their hiding place.

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"All you got to do is tell me, Baby," Steve said sweetly. He opened up the lube for Bucky and sniffed it to see if it smelled as sweet as it was advertised. "I'll bend over for you any day of the week."

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Bucky sniffed the lube then too and nodded in satisfaction. "Here," he said and poured some onto Steve's fingers before tearing the pants the rest of the way off of him and ditching the hat. "Open me up enough for the vibrator then I'll get you ready."
Steve wasted no time teasing Bucky's ass. He pushed a single finger inside and let out a little groan. "Fuck yeah," he purred. "You like that, Buck? Like my fingers inside of you?"

Bucky clenched his jaw and nodded. "You know I do, Baby." He let himself be eagerly fingered for a bit and then touched gently on Steve's shoulder to say, "And you're really okay with using it? I mean, I know you proved your point about owning my ass by controlling what goes in it for so long but you really didn't like the idea of anything else inside me that wasn't you," he rambled on and then took a quick breath. "I just want to make sure that this isn't going to upset you."

"I'm okay enough to give this a shot." Steve honestly didn't buy into the whole toy thing that much. But he did buy into how horny it made Bucky, which he loved to see. He supposed he could handle the toys in small doses so long as they used it together. "I want to see you desperate and aching for me. You'll still want my dick over those toys."

"Oh, Steve, Baby, I always want your dick over anything. You don't have to worry about that at all," Bucky said and tangled a hand into his hair. He waited patiently for Steve to be done fingering him and then cautiously picked up the toy and offered it up to his husband.

Steve took the toy and looked it over for a moment before kissing Bucky's cheek. He teased Bucky's hole with the tip of it for a little bit before pushing it slowly inside his husband. "Is that okay?"

Bucky nodded and grabbed Steve for another chaste kiss. He handed him the little dial remote and said, "And see? You've still got control since you've got the remote." He pushed Steve gently so he was on his back and he poured some strawberry lube onto his fingers so he could start opening him up. "You can turn it on whenever you want to."

"It's like you have a damned tail." Steve laughed. He spread his legs a bit and let out a soft sound as Bucky opened him up with his fingers. Curiously, he set the vibrator to the lowest setting.

Bucky was going to say, 'Don't make fun of my tail' but then Steve clicked on the vibrator and all he could do was shudder with the feeling and bite Steve's thigh once earning him a small shudder from Steve. Bucky then shimmied Steve's legs up so his ass was closer to Bucky's face. He squeezed some strawberry lube out onto the tip of his tongue and then surged forward to stick it inside Steve's ass.

"Fuck!" Steve gasped out, hips rising off the bed to try to get his ass closer to Bucky's mouth. "Feels so good, Buck," he moaned. Steve tugged at Bucky's hair and thrust a little.
Bucky hummed against Steve's hole and licked into him, tasting the mix of Steve and candied strawberries. After a few minutes of eating him out, Bucky detached from Steve and laid back on the bed. The vibrator was still going and his cock was sticking up happily for Steve. "Sit," he said in a low growl and pointed at his dick.

When Bucky pulled away, Steve whined softly with a pout. But that pout went away the second he knew he was getting Bucky's cock. He straddled Bucky's hips and as he eased his ass onto him. He turned up the vibrator.

"Ah, Fuck!" Bucky groaned. He knew giving Steve the remote was a good idea. He was going to use it at all the right times to get Bucky really going. "If I come first, which seems really likely, what do you want me to do to get you off? Give you head? Eat you out? You want to fuck me a bit until you come?" Bucky prattled off questions as he started fucking his hips up into Steve.

Steve moaned at how good Bucky felt in his ass. He licked his dry lips and rocked his hips desperately. "Want to have you eat my ass out," he moaned. "After it's all messy from your come."

"I'd love to," Bucky agreed and adjusted on the bed so he could pound Steve at a better angle. He glanced at the remote, hoping Steve would decide to turn it up but he didn't want to suggest it. He wanted everything to do with the vibrator to be Steve's decision and his idea. "I really missed having you ride me like this, Stevie. It's been a while."

"Has it really been that long since I rode you?" Steve played with Bucky's nipples as he rocked on top of him hard enough to make the bedsprings creak. "You should just take me one day. Take what you want rather than wait for me to quit being selfish. You don’t ever ask for what you want. Just like how you want me to make the vibrator go harder right now. I can see it in your face." Steve winked.

Bucky whined high in his throat and gripped harder onto Steve's hips. "You blow my fucking mind, Baby." He breathed and blinked slowly. "I just always wanted to make sure you were getting what you needed. I like when you are calling the shots, but if you want me to take over sometimes, I can do that for you." He paused and touched a hand on top of Steve's on the remote, silently asking him to turn it up a notch. "I'll come home from work one night, find you in our bed waiting. I'll flip you over, shove your pants down just enough so I can get to your ass. Then I'll finger you open enough to take me and I'll slip my cock out, not bothering with my clothes cause there just isn't enough time. Then I'll fuck you so you're hot and sweaty and moaning for release."

Steve was quick to turn up the remote for his husband. He moaned low and clenched his muscles around Bucky's cock as he described how he would fuck him. "Please," Steve groaned. He liked
being in charge but Bucky deserved to call the shots sometimes too.

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Bucky gasped through clenched teeth when the vibrator went up and it only spurred him on to fuck Steve harder. "Gonna start out fucking you hard from behind and then alternate between that and slow agonizing thrusts until you damn near demand that I pick one and stop teasing your orgasm. And I'll not let you take your dick out to touch. You'll have to come only from my being inside you. And if I can't get you to come before I do, then you can make me give you head to finish what I started." Bucky came somewhere during his explanation of what he would do to Steve and he thrust a few more times before collapsing down on the mattress and letting Steve settle on top of him.

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Steve loved how every thrust Bucky gave was harder than the last. Steve was desperate to come, especially after he felt Bucky empty himself inside him. But he liked being able to cuddle with him for a little bit after Bucky's orgasm. His husband could get a little needy after sex, which he loved. He kissed along his jaw with a smile. "How are you so perfect?"

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Bucky panted a bit and reached over to flick the vibrator off and then pull it out of him. "Ask me in a few minutes," he said hurriedly and scooped his arms behind Steve to deposit him on his back so Bucky could keep his promise and eat him out. His come was already leaking out of Steve's hole and Bucky quickly licked at it before sticking two fingers and his tongue inside to chase his come back up into Steve's ass.

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Steve tilted his head back on the pillows and let out a deep groan. His thighs shook as Bucky's tongue soothed his sore asshole. He jerked himself off slowly, getting hot from the mental image of Bucky pushing his come back into his hole with his tongue. "You are perfect. Fuck, so good to me." Steve came a few minutes later with a harsh shudder, arching his back off the mattress as he shot up onto his chest.

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Bucky heard Steve's gasp at his orgasm and just kept tonguing him for a minute or two. He licked a line up from Steve's ass past his shaft to kiss and lick where his come had landed. Once he was all cleaned up, Bucky cuddled on top of Steve and nestled into his arms and neck.

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"Mmm, thank you, Baby." Steve murmured happily. He was out like a goddamned light after that. He was even snoring a little, which only happened when Steve was either utterly exhausted or completely relaxed.
Bucky woke with his legs tangled with Steve's and Steve's arms wrapped tightly around him. He glanced down at their bodies and saw the dried come and lube on Steve's inner thighs and chuckled. "Stevie, Baby, you have work today," he whispered in his ear. "Wake up, you need a shower."

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Steve groaned miserably as Bucky tried to wake him. He didn't want to move but then he realized he never told Bucky about Lilly. "Shit," he swore, bolting upright. "You have to go to a parent-teacher meeting with Lilly."

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"What?" Bucky asked and sat up too. "Why, what'd she do?" he asked hurriedly and checked the clock. The girls would need to be up in a half hour to make it to school. Luckily, they only had three weeks left until summer and then they all would get a break from the early mornings and early nights. "Why didn't she tell me?"

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"Nothing big, she's just talking and making paper airplanes," Steve said. "She told me. I guess she figured I would tell you but I was kind of too busy fucking around with you to be much use."

---

"Jesus, again with the airplanes?" Bucky asked with an annoyed groan. "I knew it was a bad idea to buy her that origami book for her birthday last year. All she learned was the airplanes and never once tried a swan or whatever." He huffed and got off the bed. "Fine, I'll figure out what time I need to be there. Let's hope it's before my shift tonight."

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Steve kissed Bucky's forehead. "Just be thankful it's not for cutting class or hurting another kid," Steve said sweetly. "I'll go with you. That way if you have to cut out early, it won't look like she doesn't have a stable home life."

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Bucky moved to kiss Steve quickly, "Thank you, you'll be done with work around two today, right? I don't imagine the meeting will be until after school is out around three." He started pulling on pajamas so he could start on breakfast while Steve showered. "And Lilly hasn't been hurting kids, too, has she?"

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Steve nodded his head. "I'll even come in uniform," he promised, figuring it would earn them bonus points. "And no, she hasn't been hurting anyone. Not that I know of, at least."

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"Okay, good." Bucky smiled. "She used to have a habit of cutting kids’ hair during class with safety scissors when she was in elementary school so I was worried she found her way to a more menacing
use for her skills." He headed for the door, "You shower. I'll start breakfast and wake the girls."

"Makes sense. She wants to be a model, so she had to butcher everyone else's haircuts to cut down the competition," Steve joked. He got up and went to get showered.

Becca and Lilly were already in the kitchen when Bucky came out. "Steve's not making breakfast?"

"I should be insulted," Bucky said and kissed the tops of their heads. "You had me making breakfast for four years and Steve comes in and suddenly I'm not good enough for you?" He pulled the eggs from the fridge and started making omelets. "Steve needs to shower before work and, Lilly, how come I have a parent-teacher meeting I didn't know about until just now?"

"Well, I wasn't sure if Steve was sick or something. Usually, he trips over himself to cook for everyone," Becca mumbled absently.

Lilly sunk in her chair a little and crossed her arms. "I told Steve," she said. "Not my fault he forgot to tell you."

"Lilly, Steve isn't the one responsible for going to meetings with your teacher. I am," Bucky said and plopped an omelet in front of Becca before starting on Lilly's. "What time is the meeting? Because I have to be at work at five tonight. Becca, that means letting Steve know if you're going to be out with your study group later than usual."

"Three. Or four. I don't know. I was kind of hoping they would forget," Lilly said with a wave of her hand. She dug into her breakfast and tried to pretend she didn't hear any complaint her brother had.

"Jesus Christ," Bucky breathed and rubbed his face. "Alright, I'll just call your teacher later to see when she wants me there."

Bucky made himself and Steve some breakfast and watched as Steve came trotting into the kitchen all ready for the day. He pulled him in for a kiss and couldn't help the goofy grin he got just from seeing his husband.

Steve laughed as he was pulled into Bucky abruptly and he returned the kiss happily. He ran his hand over Bucky's chest and then grabbed some food for himself. "So what time is the meeting? Three?" Steve asked.

"Yeah, sort of. I have to call and double check," Bucky said and slipped into the seat next to Steve to eat his breakfast. Bucky nudged his leg and smirked. "You fell asleep so fast last night I didn't get to
ask you if you enjoyed yourself,” he said quietly.

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Steve smirked. "I think me knocking out right after is all the answer you need."

Becca caught on to what they must have been talking about and she rolled her eyes. "Gross."

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Bucky glanced over to her and laughed, "You don't know, I could be talking about watching a movie with Steve." He wasn't, of course, and he, admittedly, had sort of forgotten the girls were there for a second.

"Okay, what movie?" Becca asked with arms folded.

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"A movie for people who aren't nosy teenage girls who don't know how to mind their own business," Steve teased playfully. He finished his breakfast and cleaned up the dishes. "I have to run to work. I can drive you guys to school on the way."

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Becca rolled her eyes but got up to follow Steve out anyway. Lilly tugged on her sleeve and asked quietly, "I'm so confused. What movie did they watch?" Becca promised she'd explain later, which earned her a stern plea from Steve to *not* explain it to Lilly.

Bucky waited in the apartment and practiced guitar and read a book to pass the time. At one point, he felt the urge to drink come over him really severely out of nowhere so he went down to the street to smoke to try to get the feeling to go away. He knew he should probably talk to Steve about how this kept happening and try to find a self-help book soon.

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Steve dropped the girls off at school and then headed to work. Turns out, the meeting was at three and Steve met up with Bucky and Lilly before heading into the teacher's otherwise empty classroom.

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Bucky had a light hold on Lilly's shoulder as the three of them trudged into the classroom. She was already pouting and had her arms crossed securely over her chest. Lilly flopped into a chair in front of her teacher's desk and Bucky and Steve took the two next to her. "Good to see you," Bucky said and forced a smile at the teacher. "How's your day been?"

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"Well, it could have been better," the teacher said. "Even though she knew we were having this meeting, Lilly still decided to be a distraction. I caught three airplanes in one class alone." She crossed her arms. "What do you plan to do about that?"

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Bucky opened his mouth to talk then closed it again and looked over at Lilly who was staring out the window. "May I ask what she's making the airplanes out of? Is it her homework or just extra papers she has in her notebook?" It might be a silly question to ask but it would probably help him figure
out something to do. If it was just notebook paper he might suggest she not be allowed to have notebooks in class other than one page for note-taking at a time.

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"Paper. Any kind of paper she can get her hands on," the teacher answered. "She's faked your signature a few times. She is barely passing. I could fail her for the grade if I felt inclined to, but she's not a bad person and I really don't want to have to deal with another year of this."

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"We talked about the signature forgery," Bucky said with a nod, "Didn't we, Steve? I didn't know about it until that Ellis Island trip. And Steve has been helping her with homework when he can. He was home a lot for a while and he was pretty diligent about getting her to sit down and try to focus with him."

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"Oh, I'm sure she does what she's supposed to when she's put under a microscope. But I have thirty other kids in my class," she said. "Have you considered hiring a private tutor or sending her to a remedial school for kids who have trouble focusing?"

---

Bucky bit his lower lip to prevent himself from saying something nasty to the teacher. Lilly didn't need a remedial school. She couldn't transfer into a different place and leave her friends and her teams. He wouldn't do that to her. But he didn't really know what to do either. Bucky looked to Steve for help. Over the past few months, in particular, Bucky had started looking to Steve for his input as a sort of consulting parent and he trusted what he might have to say. They were going to eventually, hopefully, raise a child together so he may as well include him in as much with the girls as he could.

---

The teacher was being a bit blunt but she wasn't wrong to suggest that Lilly wasn't exactly a traditional learner. "She's staying in this school," Steve said firmly. "But we will go over other options at home about how we can keep her occupied in class without being a bother to you or her peers."

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The teacher nodded and gave Steve a cursory smile. "I'm sorry, who are you, again? I was only expecting Mr. Barnes and Lilly today." She gestured towards Bucky and he felt so old being referred to as 'Mr. Barnes' by a teacher.

---

Steve hesitated to answer honestly because he didn't want to risk how Lilly was treated. "I'm a relative. My house is under renovation, so I'm living with them for a little while," he said.

---

At that, Lilly scoffed and looked down at a spot on the wall. Bucky sighed and gently touched Steve's arm for a split second. "Steve is home with Lilly a lot of the time when I have late shifts and he has early shifts so we thought it would be a good idea for the both of us to attend today."
The teacher looked convinced by the story they told. "Very well. That's all we need for today, but do know that Lilly will be in after-school detention for the rest of the week."

"The whole damn week?" Lilly asked with her mouth hanging open. "The lacrosse team was going to get some early spring practice in before we left for the summer and only meet up twice a month. I can't miss that."

"You should have thought about that before you chose to be rude in class, Lillian Barnes," the teacher said evenly to her. "Now hop to it. Enjoy what's left of your day."

Bucky thanked the teacher and promised he would talk with Lilly more about this later. He shuffled Lilly out the door with Steve in tow. Once outside the school, Bucky doubled over and breathed out an angry sigh with his hands stabilizing himself on his thighs. His head was hurting. He was frustrated with the teacher for being rude to his little sister and he was frustrated with Lilly for not being more focused in class and he was frustrated with himself for not being able to do shit about any of it. The urge to drink was back with a vengeance and something in his core was trying to plot how he could sneak off to a bar after work for a bit before coming home.

Steve could tell that Bucky was having a rough time right now, so he patted his back. "Baby, let's take a walk." On the way to the record shop, Steve had them stop at an art supply place. "Lilly, what do you think about some putty or maybe braiding yarn into bracelets to keep yourself occupied in class?"

Bucky was mostly quiet as he trailed Lilly and Steve around the art store. He would occasionally touch something that looked soft and would mumble an agreement when he was asked a question. Mostly, he wanted to curl up in bed for the evening and not deal with anyone or talk at all.

Lilly had fun looking at the different colors of yarn that she could make bracelets out of and Steve pointed out little pamphlets on how to do it. She also spent a good amount of time squishing balls of putty as she decided which she preferred.

Steve let Lilly go off on her own for a bit to decide on what she would get. He would send a letter to the teacher explaining that she would be quiet during class even if she wasn't paying attention and he'd go over her work with her at home. "Buck, you want to lay down at home and I'll cover your shift at the store?"

Bucky looked up to Steve and met his concerned gaze. He reached out and gripped his arm. "You know what I want? I want a bottle of nice bourbon and a giant blanket... and a dog." He sighed and watched Lilly weave in and out of the aisles. "I'll just tough it up at work tonight. I don't have to do
any restocking today or any inventory so I can make Reggie give up his chair at the register and just sit all night."

---

Steve sighed but nodded his head. On their way to the checkout, he found a brown plush dog on the shelf and picked it up. "There you go. And we can name him 'Bourbon'," Steve decided. "I'll break out the blanket from the trip to sleep in tonight." He wasn't going to call it 'the sex blanket' in front of Lilly.

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Bucky giggled and took the dog from Steve. "I love him, Steve," he said and held him close to his chest. "Will you and Bourbon wait up for me tonight?" He leaned into Steve so Lilly couldn't hear. "If you stay up, we can get some more use of the blanket. After work all evening, I'll be due some time with my husband to relax."

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Steve blushed and used the excuse of paying the cashier to take a moment to calm himself down. "Of course, I'll wait up for you. And your new dog will keep me company. We got to have him sleep in his own bed, though. Once you're back."

---

They headed back out to the street and Bucky said, "Yeah, I don't really like the idea of a plush dog watching us do it. He can sit on the dresser facing the wall or in the closet." When they got to the record shop, Lilly immediately went to go talk with Reggie. They were a strange set of friends and Bucky usually had to explain to Lilly that half of what Reggie said was bullshit that he dreamed up on a drug trip and not fact.

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Steve hung around the record shop with them for a little bit, but he did have to take Lilly home and start going over her homework. It was a bit tedious, but they got it done and Steve was able to get them ready and off to bed as well.

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As he thought, Bucky's shift was a drag. It wasn't horribly busy but Reggie was as high as usual and as unhelpful as usual and no one else was working. When Bucky did get back home, he flung his coat haphazardly onto the kitchen table and opening the fridge for something to eat.

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Steve emerged from the bedroom moments later and came up behind Bucky to kiss his shoulder. "Hey, Gorgeous. Are you feeling any better?" he asked.

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"Hey," Bucky answered warmly and leaned back against Steve. "I'm better now that I'm home." He turned in Steve's grasp and held a piece of carrot up to Steve's mouth in case he wanted one too. "How were the girls for you tonight? Did Lilly get her shit together?"
Steve nibbled on the end of the carrot. "She did all of her homework. Tried to get out of it a million times, but I kept her at the table until she was done. Even Becca was getting annoyed at how long she was taking," Steve chuckled.

---

"Well, I guess that's something," Bucky said and took Steve's hands to rest them on his ass. "Were you lonely waiting for me?" he asked and started backing them towards their room. Once the door was shut behind them, Bucky grinned and said, "I want to get fucked, Steve. Do you want to fuck me? Take control of me? Show me how much you love me?"

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Steve hummed contentedly, reached down, and grabbed Bucky's bulge through his pants and leaned down to whisper into his ear. "Always." With his hand still grabbing him, Steve steered Bucky towards the bed.

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"What do you want me to do?" Bucky asked and sat down on the bed. "Want me to just lay back and let you direct me? Because I'll be a pillow princess if you want me to." He leaned forward and hugged Steve around the middle and breathed in his scent. He loved how Steve smelled. He had gotten used to the smell and it was hard to distinguish from his own but sometimes he could catch a whiff of it and it made him want to melt.

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"Pillow princess? What's that?" Steve snorted. He smoothed a hand down Bucky's chest and eased him back onto the bed. "Quit smelling me, you weirdo," he teased. Steve loved it, though.

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"Pillow princess means I'm not going to do shit. Just going to lay back and enjoy myself," Bucky said and tucked his hands behind his head. "But I'll do whatever you want me to do. Or we can just not have sex and we can go to sleep and be boring and old and wake up tomorrow and be that old married couple who reads the newspaper before going to work."

---

Steve smiled. "Be a pillow princess," he decided. "But... close your eyes." He waited for Bucky to do so before he went to his hiding spot in the room and pulled out one of the beers that Bucky came across at the cabin. He stole a few when Bucky wasn't looking and was hiding his stash for a rainy day. "Okay, open them," he said, holding it out for Bucky. "I'll fuck you nice and slow so you can drink this while we have sex."

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Bucky's eyes flashed excitedly and he snatched the beer from Steve's hand. "Oh my fucking god," he said and popped the top to take a sip. He whined at the taste and pulled Steve down onto the bed again. "A plush dog, a beer, and the sex blanket. It's everything I wanted earlier!" he said happily and pet his hand over Steve's crotch. "You're so good to me."

---

Steve watched Bucky closely and sighed contentedly knowing that this man was all his. "I'm sorry
today was stressful for you, Baby," he said as he methodically started kissing anywhere he could on Bucky.

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Bucky held the beer close to him but only took sips occasionally so he could watch Steve work his body slowly and lovingly like he liked doing. "I just really wanted to fight that teacher. Suggesting that Lilly be put in a remedial school. Fuck that." He took another swig of his beer and watched Steve coat his fingers in lube.

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Once he got lube on his fingers Steve slowly pushed two inside at once. "Quit thinking about her and start thinking about how nice it's going to feel when I got my dick up in your ass."

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Bucky licked his lips and grinned at Steve. "I'm always thinking about that. You know how insatiable I can be for you. How badly I need you all the time." As Steve fingered him, Bucky moaned with his mouth open so Steve could really hear it.

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"Someday I should just tie you down and fuck you all morning. Then I'll go to work and come back to fuck you until we're exhausted." Steve added a third finger and curled them inside of Bucky's ass.

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Bucky gasped and hitched his body up at Steve's words. "Are you going to leave me tied down while you go to work? Leave me with my ass full of your come and wet and waiting for you to get back home?" He loved the idea. Maybe he could convince Steve to put a plug or something inside of him before he left. But that might take some coaxing.

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"Yep," Steve said brightly. "I'll leave a glass of water with a straw so you don't get thirsty, but that's all you're getting while I'm out." He pulled his fingers out and replaced them with his cock. Steve let out a pleased groan and leaned down to kiss him slowly.

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"What am I supposed to do while I'm here by myself?" Bucky choked out his question as Steve started to fuck him. "With my hands and legs tied up, I won't be able to touch myself or read a book or anything." He kissed Steve and hummed against his lips happily before pulling away so he could grab his beer again. Steve did give him permission to drink it while they fucked.

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"I'll throw a record on. That should occupy you," Steve teased. "And you can think about all the ways we are going to screw each other's brains out." He kissed him deeply and then pulled back so Bucky could drink his beer. He rolled his hips slowly in and out of him, enjoying the slow friction.

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"Records run out, Steve. They can only put so much on there." Bucky gave a half-hearted pout and
took a final sip of his beer before putting it on the nightstand for later. He carded his hands up into Steve's hair and sat up as best he could with Steve's dick still inside of him. "I know I said I wasn't going to do anything, but do you want to flip so I can ride you?"

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Steve sucked a mark onto Bucky's neck and rolled them both back without pulling out of Bucky's ass so he was now sitting on his dick. "Now I'll be the princess," he joked.

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Bucky giggled and kissed Steve heartily. He braced himself and started bouncing up and down on Steve's cock and rolling his hips forward as he did. "I've got the dick in my ass. I think that makes me the princess still," Bucky said to himself and chuckled. "Or you are my pillow prince and I'm your loyal servant who will do anything to drive my prince crazy and please him every day."

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Steve stared up at Bucky with dark, aroused eyes before reaching for Bucky's dick and stroking it. "How about I'm your loving, loyal husband who loves seeing you bounce on my cock?"

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"Mmm, yes we are that," Bucky grinned and gripped at Steve's upper arms. "You're not one for pretend, are you, Steve?" he asked and caressed his face with lithe fingers as he fucked himself harder and got closer and closer to orgasm.

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"Don't need to pretend when I got the best thing ever right in front of me." Steve arched his back and started to roll his hips up into Bucky. He came first, gripping Bucky's hips and pulling him hard against him as he shot his come up into him.

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Bucky grinned happily when Steve came and he gently pulled off of him and headed for Steve's face. "Here, loyal husband, you want to help finish me off?" he asked and grazed his fingers on Steve's lips so he would get the idea.

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Steve kissed Bucky's fingertip and moved to pin him to the bed again as he kissed down his chest. Steve let out a little moan as he moved down Bucky's body. Finally, he took his husband's cock into his mouth and began to suck.

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"Thank you, Baby," Bucky said and was careful not to hitch up into Steve's mouth too soon. It didn't take very long for Bucky to come deep down Steve's throat with a muffled groan. He pulled Steve up to hold him close and kiss the side of his face repeatedly.

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Steve snuggled close to Bucky and nuzzled him. "I love you so goddamn much, Bucky Barnes," he sighed happily. "We're compatible in every way." He wiped the corner of his mouth and laid his
head on his chest. He was going to sleep securely in his husband’s arms tonight.
A few weeks past and the girls were finally done with school and in a pleasant easy summer mood. Lilly had a birthday party to go to for one of her friends out in Long Island and Bucky was invited along to mingle with the parents of Lilly's teammates - who he really hadn't spoken to much before. A bright Friday afternoon found Steve, Bucky, and Lilly out at a party with Lilly immediately jumping to her friends and Bucky feeling entirely uncomfortable off to the side.

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Steve was the well-dressed one, as usual, and he was a bit more at ease with everyone since he often brought orange slices and extra water bottles to the games. He also socialized more with the parents during games and practices. "Whoa, Bucky, look at how big this house is. Could you imagine having all this space?"

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Bucky nodded absently and watched Lilly telling a story to her friends with wild hand gestures and big eyes. A few of the parents came over to them then and shook Steve's hand with a smile and said something about not having seen him for a while. Steve knew their names and their kids' names and Bucky was caught in the fray as the older brother who honestly had no idea who any of these people were. It pissed him off ever so slightly that he wasn't on top of all this stuff like Steve was and Steve wasn't even Lilly's brother or parent.

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Steve was a natural at this, like he was born to deal with parent-teacher meetings and team gatherings. He asked a few parents how their kids were and how their other activities were going, but he went back to focusing on Bucky when he saw that he looked out of his element. "You alright there?"

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"Yeah, I'm good," Bucky said and shrugged, "I can just feel these parents judging me for barely having spoken to them at any games and never coming to practices, but here you are as the best fucking unofficial guardian around and I don't know shit about any of these people."

---

Steve was taken aback at the response. "Buck, They know you work day in and day out for your sisters," Steve said, frowning. "They don't bite, you know. Just go up and start a conversation. I can go with you."

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"Jesus, alright," Bucky sighed and gestured towards a group of parents who were much older than he and Steve were. Most of them were in their late thirties to mid-forties and Bucky felt like the odd man out in more ways than one. "Lead the way, Steve."

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Steve led Bucky to them and touched one of the parents gently on her arm. "Janice," he greeted pleasantly. "This is Bucky - Lilly's brother. He was just talking to me about not being able to bring
plants in for Lilly's science project because of our cat. You have one, don't you? Does yours attack the plants, too?"

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Janice directed her attention to Bucky and shook his hand. "Well, Dylan has been keeping his plants in a special plot in our garden. And our cat is indoors so she doesn't ever go out to bother them."

"We live in an apartment without a balcony or anything," Bucky said awkwardly and glanced over at Lilly one more time to check that she was doing okay. "Do you have any suggestions for that?"

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Janice considered for a moment before saying, "Maybe you can start spraying him whenever he goes near the window sill. After a couple times being squirted with water, he may not want to go around there anymore. Then you can put the plants there."

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Bucky shook his head slightly. "I don't really want to do that. Seems a bit mean to the little guy, doesn't it? I mean cats fucking hate water. I don't want him hating us for squirting him." He laughed to himself and said, "I've got two little girls in my care, I already have enough anger directed at me on a daily basis to add any more on top of that shit."

---

Janice's eyes widened when Bucky cursed like it was a normal part of conversation. "You've got two little girls in your care and a mouth like that? No wonder Lilly's can get rude sometimes." She crossed her arms. "Look, I know you mean well, but the cat can live with a few sprits of water sprayed at him and your sisters will do well to not have such colorful language. I'm sure you're smart and have more appropriate words in your vocabulary, Bucky."

---

Bucky clenched his jaw tight and passed Steve a look and saw no support in his eyes. "Lilly can be rude because it's in her nature. I don't think hearing some 'colorful language' is what caused that. And, yes, I am smart. I'm smart enough to know that they are going to hear those words all over the place, especially in a city like New York and I think both my sisters would agree it's not fair that they don't get to hear or use those words just because they are a little younger."

---

Steve had a hard time backing Bucky up because he didn't agree with the swearing either. Janice glanced at Steve and kept going, "It's normal to not let kids see or hear things because of how old they are. I get you're trying to treat them like your sisters and not daughters, but..." she shrugged. "All kids need a parent, and one that comes with rules, and you're what they've got."

Steve knew that this was a one-way trip to pissing Bucky off, so he patted her shoulder. "How about we talk about something else?"

---

That wasn't going to be the end of it for Bucky. As earnestly as Steve might try to redirect them, Bucky wasn't done and he didn't think Janice was either. "I'm what they've got?" Bucky asked incredulously and poked his chest. "You know why I'm all they've got? Because both of our actual
parents were killed in a goddamn car crash and my sisters ended up stuck with me. I know they deserve better but no one else is around to do what I have to do and I'm not giving up my family."

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"Bucky," Steve said softly, trying to get him to calm down.

Janice was annoyed that she was getting treated like the bad guy here. "I know you're not giving them up. Which is why you have to start being a parent instead of a brother. Kids need structure."

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"They have structure," Bucky pressured. "Things are much better at home now then they have been for a while. I've been doing so much better than I used to and they are a lot happier." He didn't realize how much he was trying to defend himself both to Janice and also to himself. Bucky would be the first to say that he wasn't cut out for this. He would be the first to admit he fucked up all the time. But he was going to prove to himself and Janice somehow that he was doing his best. "Things are better, aren't they, Steve?"

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"Yes, they're a lot better," Steve agreed right away. He turned back to the woman. "Janice, I know you mean well, but we all have our different parenting styles. Our kids are on the same team, which means Bucky must've done something right with bringing Lilly up. Let's lay this to rest, okay? Both of you."

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"Our kids?" Janice asked curiously. Steve had initially introduced himself as a cousin to everyone who he met at games way back when Steve and Bucky had first started dating. It may have seemed a bit strange for Lilly's cousin to keep coming to matches and practices and be living with them, but so far no one had thought anything of it. Right now, she was mostly coming from a place of annoyance that this cousin would suggest that he knew anything about parenting teens.

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"You know what I meant," Steve said, waving it off. "Your kid and my cousin are on the same team." He already had one blow-up with Bucky earlier that day, he wasn't going to have an outing session in a house full of suburban parents on top of that.

---

Janice looked around quietly and caught her husband's attention for a split second. "I would just appreciate it if you and Lilly both don't curse around my son or the other kids," she said to Bucky and turned to go talk with her husband - Bucky presumed, about him.

Bucky sighed and let his shoulders slump. He looked sideways at Steve and asked, "Do you think Lilly would mind leaving early? I'd much rather not be here right now."

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Steve glanced over and saw Lilly in the middle of wrestling with one of the boys to try and see who was the toughest. "She's enjoying herself, Bucky. You can go home if you want, but I'll stick around and catch a train back with her."
Bucky didn't like that idea either. He had already solidified himself with Janice as a bad parental figure and he guessed she was going to spread around to the other parents what had happened. If he left now without Steve and Lilly it would just make his case worse. "I'll stay." Bucky decided and looked over at the coolers of drinks and wondered if there was one filled with beer for the adults or not. Probably not, at kids party like this. Bucky chastised himself for even thinking it. He knew that if there was beer he would probably already be through a six pack and a half by himself.

Steve stayed at Bucky's side so he wouldn't feel so out of place. "You have to let it go, Buck. She means well and she doesn't understand. The worse they've gone through is not getting as big of a Christmas bonus from their jobs as they expected," he said.

"I can't let it go so easy, Steve," Bucky said. "She thinks she can do better for my kids than I am. She doesn't know me or my girls at all." He paused and glared at Steve. "And you didn't do shit to defend me either. You know you're my husband and not actually my cousin, right? You're supposed to support me in front of uptight Long Island rich bitches."

"I'm not saying that she should've told you how to parent your sisters, Buck, but it's perfectly reasonable to not want you cursing around kids - be it your sisters or her kids," Steve said. "I'm not going to agree with something I don't agree with just cause I'm married to you," he said the last part quieter so others couldn't hear.

"What do you mean?" Bucky asked and glared at Steve. "They are just words. Lilly and Becca have heard them a million times from me and my parents and sometimes you, I'll have you remember. And all those other kids are going to hear those words eventually - might as well normalize them to it. Also, it's not fair to kids to prevent them from doing or saying certain things based only on the time they've been alive."

"I don't want our kid to grow up hearing those words like it's normal," Steve said bluntly. "I don't want our kid doing things someone their age shouldn't be doing. You think they should be allowed to have sex or say 'fuck' when they're seven just because they should do whatever at whatever age?"
"That's not what I said," Bucky corrected. "I never said anything about sex, Steve. You're putting those words in my mouth. My parents let us talk how we wanted and they taught us things that other parents wouldn't even mention to their kids until they were in high school and they showed us that we weren't limited by our age and our understanding."

"You said you wouldn't stop your kids from doing or saying things because of their age. Sex is a thing," Steve shot back. "It doesn't matter what your parents did because you're not in a relationship with your parents. You're in a relationship with me and I don't want our kids having a free-for-all," he said

"You don't think my parents raised us right?" Bucky asked with a snarl and quietly blazing eyes. "You think cause we weren't brought up how you were that my parents fucked up? They were amazing. Some of the most loving and understanding parents I've ever met and they didn't treat us like fragile little dolls who had to earn the right to know about the world."

Steve rounded on Bucky and glared. "Now you're putting words in my mouth," he growled. "All I'm saying is that's not how I want any kid of mine to be raised. And if you don't like it, then that's too damn bad because I'm not budging on it."

Bucky stared up at Steve. He refused to look away from him for even a second. His teeth were clenched tightly and his whole body was shaking with fists balled at his sides and sweat dripping down his spine. He stood there for a long minute looking up at Steve and hating in this moment that he was slightly taller than him. After he felt like he just couldn't do it anymore, Bucky looked away down at the ground and spit out, "You catch the train with Lilly when she's done here. I'm going back to Brooklyn."

Steve glared right down at him, taking petty pleasure in knowing that Bucky would be pissed that he was shorter than Steve was. He let Bucky storm off and when Lilly finally realized he was gone, Steve said that he had to leave early to fix something at the record store. When he got home he went right to their bedroom, hoping Bucky was either asleep or calmed down.

Bucky didn't go home. He thought about it. But there wasn't much need for him to go back to the apartment immediately since Sarah was with Becca and they didn't expect anyone back home for a while longer. Instead, Bucky wandered the streets of Brooklyn for about an hour repeatedly telling himself he couldn't go to the bar. That would just make absolutely everything worse. And as much as he kind of wanted to piss Steve off more, he knew he couldn't do that to him. So Bucky went to Clint's place. Clint had agreed to let them store their wood for the baby's crib in the workshop in the cellar. Bucky showed up unannounced, explained his fight with Steve, and then Clint watched from his spot on the stairs as Bucky got started on the crib.
A few hours later, Steve and Lilly headed home. When Steve didn't find Bucky in their room, he went to ask his mom if Bucky came home at all and he damned near panicked. His first thought was that Bucky must have gone to the bar but before he went knocking on doors, he decided to head to Clint’s to see if he happened to be there. He stopped to pick up flowers on his way and Clint let him in when he got there. Once he was down in the cellar, Steve’s heart broke a little when he saw what Bucky was doing. "Babe..."

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Bucky was in his loose tattered jeans that he had worn to the party and he had taken off his overshirt to work on the crib in his white tank top that was wet in some areas from his sweat. His hair was pulled back tight on the back of his head and he glanced up at Steve staring down at him from the middle of the stairs. "Steve..."

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Steve walked down to him and placed a hand on his shoulder before offering him the flowers. "I'm sorry I yelled at you," he said gently. "Can I help you with that?" He used his own sleeve to wipe the sweat off Bucky's forehead.

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Bucky took the flowers and set them on the counter behind him. "No, I've got it," he sighed and moved some pieces of wood around absently. "How'd you know I was here?" Not that he didn't want Steve to be there, but he also didn't call the house to tell them where he had gone. Bucky was surprised Steve wasn't more angry at him for not giving someone a heads-up that he wasn't going home.

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"Because you would only be one of two places if you're not home after an argument with me. Here, or at a bar. I'm happy you came here." Steve sighed and put his hands in his pockets. "But I wish you had told me where you were going so I didn't worry so much when you weren't around when I got home. I know what I said upset you. But these are the sort of things we need to talk about before we get our kid."

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Bucky nodded and began sanding again. He could hear Clint moving around upstairs and he kind of wished that he would come down so they wouldn't talk about this again. Bucky figured it was just going to lead to another fight. "I was thinking of getting a nice dark brown glaze for this once it's done. Something that looks polished but still compliments the wood we chose."

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"Buck," Steve huffed softly. "I know you don't want to hear it, but I don't want to raise our kid the same way that you were. I don't want them to grow up too soon," Steve said. He crossed his arms and didn't answer Bucky's question for a short while. But then he finally added in a mumble, "A dark glaze would look nice."

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"Steve, you can't control how fast a kid grows up," Bucky said. He put his sander down and leaned back against the counter. "Sure, my mom might have made a better choice in not letting me drink when I was fourteen. And letting me go to college parties probably wasn't the best either but they
trusted me. It wasn't their fault I wasn't a good kid. They couldn't control that I felt peer pressure so bad that I wanted to lose my virginity so I did it with an eighteen-year-old. They couldn't control that I fell so hard for a jock in high school that I started doing coke. They couldn't control that they were killed and I had to grow the fuck up fast and be a guardian. Things happen. We aren't going to be able to protect our kids from everything and we sure as hell won't be able to make their decisions for them or keep them from growing up too fast."

---

"You can control how a kid grows up. That's the whole part of being a parent. Sure, there's some bits you can't change about them no matter how much you try. But that won't stop me from controlling what I can to make their lives stable," Steve said. "I love you. You know I do. I love who you are, too. But I think the way my mom raised me is the best way you can raise a kid."

---

Bucky bounced his leg nervously and looked down at the ground. He knew Steve didn't mean it like this but Bucky felt like he was attacking his parents for not being responsible with their kids. He looked up from the ground and there were tears filling his eyelids. "So I was right," he said quietly but without anger, only hurt, "You do think my parents fucked up with us."

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Steve frowned when Bucky started to cry. "I'm not saying that they fucked up," he said. "I'm saying I think we can do better." He spoke hesitantly because he didn't want Bucky to feel like he was shitting on his parents' memory.

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"Steve, you think you can do better," Bucky whispered and let a silent tear slip down his face. "You've seen how I've raised my sisters. You know how I parent and you know I'll never be as good at it as you will be."

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"Why would you think you'll never be as good at it as I would? You're the one with parenting experience, not me," Steve said with a frown. It hurt him so damn much to see Bucky so emotional and upset.

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Bucky paused and looked back down at the woodpiles and the sketch of the crib that Steve had made a week previously for reference as to how they wanted it to look. His lip quivered and he choked on his words when he asked, "Are you having second thoughts about having a baby with me?"

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Steve immediately pulled him into a tight hug and tucked him in close. "I would never have second thoughts about raising a kid with you. That's all I've wanted since the first time we talked about it."

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Bucky sniffled, buried his face in Steve's chest, and held his arms close against Steve's back. He could still hear Clint moving around upstairs but now he hoped he wouldn't come down because he
didn't really want Clint to see him crying right now. Bucky pulled back and looked up at his husband. "I don't want to raise our kids like your mother raised you. And I don't want to do it like my parents did either. I want it to be a blend of the best of them all but mostly just us."

---

Steve made a small face because he didn't want to upset Bucky further but he also didn't want to admit that he wanted his parenting style to be exactly like his mom because he loved how he was raised. He sighed and kissed his forehead. "The crib is looking good so far..."

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"So far it's just cut pieces and sanded wood," Bucky sighed and picked up Steve's drawing. "But it'll be as close to this as I can get it. Hopefully soon." He set the drawing down and pulled Steve in for a long deep kiss. "I'm sorry I made a mess at the party."

---

Steve returned the kiss slowly and pet his fingers through Bucky's hair. "It's alright," he said. "Maybe next time we will find someone who will have nicer things to say."

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Bucky checked the clock and brushed some wood shavings off of his pants. "Let's go home. I need a shower and I'm tired. And Clint is going out with some girl tonight anyway so I should get out of his place."

---

Steve sighed and took Bucky by the hand. He kissed it and then looked at the flowers. "Think we should let him have those since he probably forgot to leave time to get something nice for her?" he asked. "I'll get you more on the way back."

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Bucky laughed and pulled his shirt back on. "Might be a good idea. He probably did forget." He snatched the flowers and led Steve back up the stairs to Clint's kitchen where he was sitting looking nice and put together reading a book and drinking a beer.

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Steve signed at Clint to wish him luck and headed out the door just as Clint's date went to knock on it, causing her to hit her knuckles on his chest. It was Natasha. Steve stared down at her in surprise. "Nat? The hell are you doing here?"

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Natasha cleared her throat, "Hey, Steve, Bucky. Where are you hiding Clint?"

Just then, Clint popped into the doorway by Steve and ushered Natasha in. He looked between Steve and Bucky's confused faces and said, "Oh, uh, after you two had your wedding, we got to talking and… we've sort of been talking for a few months now."

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Steve's jaw dropped. "You didn't tell me? But we tell each other everything," he complained. But it
wasn't true. Steve told Natasha everything but not the other way around. He looked over at Clint and then back at Natasha. "Are you going to get married, too?"

---

"Okay, Steve!" Bucky said quickly and gripped his shoulder. "Let's go home, yeah?" Clint gave Bucky a hug and told him that he hoped his evening had gotten better. And Bucky shook Natasha's hand before starting to drag his husband away before he could start planning the reception for Clint and Natasha's wedding.

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"What? We got married after a few months. And they're not getting any younger," Steve answered with a casual shrug. He walked out of the house with Bucky and gave him an apologetic smile. "Sorry. I'm just happy for them."

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"It's okay, Baby," Bucky said with a chuckle and nudged Steve. "Let's be happy for them at home. From what Clint told me about the before unnamed woman he was seeing, he's head over heels for her but she might be holding back a little bit. Clint jumps in hard when he falls in love. He probably already wants to marry her but is too scared to bring it up."

---

"Sounds like someone I know," Steve said. "I knew practically a week after meeting you that I wanted to marry you." Steve smiled lovingly at him. They walked on in silence for a bit until they got close to their building and Steve said, "You're going to be such a good dad, Buck. And you do a great job with your sisters."

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"I just want to know that we will be okay," Bucky answered and opened the door to their apartment building. "I want to know that we will be able to work together and compromise and our kids will be fine."

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"We're working together now, aren't we?" Steve asked softly. "I respect you as an authority figure to your sisters just like I will for our kid." Sarah already put the girls to bed by this point, so she gave them a wave from her spot on the couch.

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Bucky nodded and slipped his shoes off quietly. He thanked Sarah for coming to be with Becca and for staying while Steve was out looking for him. "I'm going to go hop in the shower," Bucky said and left Steve to say goodbye to his mother before coming to their room. He was glad Steve came to talk to with him but he was still feeling a little lousy about the whole thing and he figured he would for a while.
On the day they planned on going out for a night on the town, Steve stopped to pick up some clothes he normally wouldn't wear. He found a tank top that was just a tad too small and wore it with slacks and suspenders, making him look a little over-the-top. "Will this work, Buck?" he asked as he looked at himself in the mirror.

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Bucky glanced up at Steve and had to do a double-take. He blushed and swallowed the lump in his throat. "My god," he said simply. He was still standing naked by the closet trying to find what he should wear and he willed his dick to not get distracted by the taut pull of the tank top over Steve's chest and the way that the suspenders hiked up his pants just enough so he could kind of see Steve's balls pressing into the fabric.

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"Is it too gay?" Steve asked. "I want to fit in. I've never done this before and I don't want to seem like a narc. Or that I'm trying too hard, you know? I kind of feel like I'm not gay enough cause I haven't been to one of these things before."

---

Bucky laughed and tugged his best jeans from his side of the closet and tossed them on the bed. "You'll be fine. And you look really fucking good. It's not like you're going undercover or something. This isn't Cruising and you're not Pacino. Although, you are both named 'Steve'." Eventually, he settled on wearing a dark black A-shirt that he had cut long ago so it would land just about an inch or so above his bellybutton. He then threw on his leather jacket over top for good measure and he was ready to go.

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Steve stared at the exposed skin of Bucky's belly and he reached out to touch it. "God, there are going to be men all over you." Steve wasn't used to seeing people hit on Bucky since they really only went out just the two of them to mostly straight spaces. He was a little worried about it actually. "I should put a jacket over this so we don't get harassed on our way there, right?" he asked and gestured to his own outfit.

---

"If you want to throw on a jacket you can," Bucky said and searched around for his good boots that he liked to dance in. "I don't think we will have trouble. I usually don't. It's just a quick train down there and then everyone for a five-block radius of the club is queer."

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Steve put on a jacket anyway because he was a little self-conscious. He said goodbye to the girls and headed out with Bucky. "Are the people nice there?" Steve asked. "Or is it mostly just a place to pick up other gay guys?"

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"Most of the guys are nice," Bucky said. "It's like any other club or bar. There are always certain
assholes. I haven't been there in so long it'll be nice seeing some of the regulars I haven't seen in about a year. Lord knows Monty will be there and you will love him. He's really short and tiny and always pretty energetic ever since he quit heroin."

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Steve nodded. "It'll be nice getting to hold your hand in public and not have to feel worried," Steve said. "I've actually been looking forward to this all week," he admitted.

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"Have you?" Bucky split a grin and met Steve's eye. "I was sort of concerned you were just doing this because I wanted to do it." They made their way to the train and sat down in a fairly empty car with only a few elderly women and a family of five.

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"Well, I got to admit that I'm not sure if I'll want to go back or not. But it's something I have to try and see whether or not I like it. I hope I will," Steve chattered. He gave one of the kids a wave when he saw that the youngest was staring at him curiously.

---

Bucky smiled and sat contentedly for the rest of the ride to Park Slope. He directed Steve through the streets to Disco Dandy's and held open the door for him. The music was blaring loudly and there were already tons of guys even though it was pretty early in the night for the usual rush.

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Steve was a bit shocked at the noise but any club would be like this. He took his jacket off and slung an arm around Bucky's waist. "Shall I buy you a drink, Handsome? Maybe it'll help me get lucky tonight."

---

Bucky smiled and kissed Steve. He was a bit surprised at the offer considering he promised Steve that he didn't want to come here just to drink. Bucky would just listen to Steve when he said it was time to stop. "Sure, Baby, I don't mind what it is. Something mixed." He watched Steve walk away and noticed a few other guys doing the same.

There was a loud squeal and then Bucky was being jumped on from behind. He fumbled for a second then held the body up. "Bucky Barnes is back, Baby!" Monty shouted from his perch on Bucky's back. "Where the fuck have you been for so long?"

---

Steve wanted Bucky to be sober but one drink wasn't going to be a big deal. Steve ordered one for himself also so Bucky wouldn't be drinking alone. When he came back with the drinks in hand, he had a bewildered look when a man jumped on Bucky's back. "Hey, who are you? What're you doing?" he asked, not upset but certainly taken aback that someone was on his husband.

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Bucky had the biggest smile on his face as he held up Monty. "Steve, this is Monty!" he said excitedly and Monty held out his hand to Steve. Bucky gently slid the man from his back and he sort
of forgot just how short he was. Another guy came up then and pat Bucky on the back and said something about welcoming home the prodigal son before walking off again.

---

"Oh, uh, alright. Hell of an entrance you made there," Steve teased lightly. "Bucky had nothing but nice things to say about you." He handed Bucky his drink. "I'm Steve, Bucky's husband." He knew Bucky wouldn’t flirt or cheat but the possessive side of him wanted people to know that Bucky was off the table.

---

Monty's face lit up curiously, "Ooh, husband? That's interesting. Did you go to like a different country to be married or something?"

Before Steve could answer, a big guy who Bucky recognized as Monty's old boyfriend Evan, came over and picked Monty up, excused the both of them, and went to go dance with him. “They must have gotten back together,” Bucky murmured.

A few other people came up to Bucky every so often and welcomed him back. Most of them he didn't remember the names of but he knew their faces. Across the dance floor, Bucky noticed a man standing still with arms crossed, staring at him intently. It was an ex-boyfriend of his named Jared. Bucky averted his eyes quickly and dragged Steve out to dance.

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Steve followed and kissed Bucky's cheek and couldn't help but smile because he could do that here. Steve was a bit awkward on the dance floor since he really only knew ballroom dancing but he tried his best. "Everyone here seems nice," he said as he put his hands on Bucky's hips.

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"It feels pretty good coming back and seeing all the guys again. Monty is basically everyone's best friend. I missed him." Bucky slipped his hands into Steve's back pockets and pulled him close against him before kissing Steve long and slow and deep. "You enjoying yourself?"

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Steve whined and couldn't help but grind up against Bucky just a little bit. "I like things so far. You know, we could hang out with some of the guys here if you wanted. They're not banned from the house or anything. Except that guy. He's kind of giving you a glare. You owe him money?" Steve joked, nodding at Bucky's ex.

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Bucky laughed shyly and said under his breath, "No, I used to date him. That's Jared. We went out for a few months about a year and a half ago." He looked around then and assessed the crowd of guys around him. He had slept with roughly a third of the men in the club and dated probably four of them. But Jared seemed to be the only one paying him any mind now that he was back. He was also the only one who didn't seem to care that he clearly came with Steve.

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"You dated other men before me? Now I feel like second place," Steve joked and kissed the tip of Bucky's nose. "Do you think we should talk to him? Clear the air? It seems like he's got something to
"No!" Bucky said quickly. "Unless he comes up to us, let's leave it." He turned Steve so he couldn't see Jared anymore. He leaned into him to show him that none of these other guys mattered because he was going home with Steve at the end of the night.

Monty and Evan made their way over to dance with them and Monty bounced a little and said, "Evan, honey, this here is Steve. He's Bucky's man. Isn't he nice? Much better specimen than some of the trash Bucky used to go with." Evan was a severely tall fellow and wasn't very talkative - more reserved and action-oriented. He was basically the opposite of Monty and he was perfect for him.

Steve nosed at Bucky's neck and kissed him lovingly before turning to give the two other men a friendly wave. "So I've heard," Steve said. "But I'm sure Bucky had good taste before me and must have found some good guys around here." He nuded Bucky lightly. "So how long have you two been together?"

"Well," Monty started and crowded Steve, still clutching onto Evan's hand. "We dated a few years back and then split because I'm stupid and thought I wasn't good enough for Evan. Then I crawled my way back to him and turns out he hadn't seen anyone else since me cause he was waiting and hoping I'd change my mind."

Steve got a bit flustered when Monty crowded him but he couldn't help but smile at the story and how fast of a talker Monty was. "That's so romantic," he said. He looked back at Bucky and said, "That's not fair. They've got a cuter story than we do."

"No way," Bucky sneered, "You tell them our story, I have to pee." He gave Steve one more kiss for good measure and then shimmied his way through the crowd towards the bathroom. He didn't realize that Jared was watching him as he went and he didn't notice Jared slip in right behind him either.

Steve happily started to recount the story about how they met. Monty gushed about how adorable it was and tried to convince Evan that it was cuter than it actually was. Steve appreciated the thought, though. He was about to talk some more with them but he saw Jared following Bucky and he knew that was probably bad news.

The second the door shut behind them, Jared rounded on Bucky and pushed him firmly against the wall. "You miss me, Bucky?" he asked and kept his leg pinned to Bucky's crotch so he couldn't go anywhere. He held one of Bucky's arms back on the wall and used his other hand to crawl across the exposed skin of Bucky's stomach and gently graze over his abs. "You haven't been around for so long." Bucky squirmed and tried to get away but Jared was stronger than him and he kept talking. "Come on, Baby, leave that dumb blonde who can't dance and come back to my place. We had fun together. I can tell you miss it. You miss me. I've got some poppers you can sniff and help get that
tight ass open for my thick cock. I know you have trouble with it and it’s definitely been a while.” Before Bucky could say anything back or wriggle out from Jared’s grasp, his lips were slotted between Jared's and Jared's hand was holding his neck a little too tightly.

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Steve stepped into the bathroom to make sure everything was okay but his stomach dropped when he saw what was going on. "Hey!" he shouted, rushing over. "Get your hands off him!" Steve grabbed Jared by the shoulder and tore him off Bucky to throw him aside.

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Bucky gasped for air once Jared's grip on his neck was gone. He furiously wiped at his lips to get the taste and saliva off of him. "Steve!" Bucky choked, "I didn't- It wasn't me. He kissed me. I didn't even know he was in here." He spoke quickly and desperately so Steve wouldn't think for even a second that Bucky had slipped off to the bathroom to meet Jared. "Fuck him up, Steve!" he yelled and rubbed at his sore neck and arm.

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Steve was furious but in the back of his head, he could hear Becca's disapproval if he knocked him around. But this bastard wasn't allowed to get away with this. "You're under arrest," Steve said, taking his officer’s tone. He slammed Jared against the wall and pulled out his handcuffs from his back pocket to cuff him. "For sexual assault."

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"Jesus, Steve!" Bucky's eyes went wide and he gripped his husband's shoulder. "You brought those with you?" He probably always kept his handcuffs and badge on him at all times. "Steve, just," Bucky pulled at his arm. "Let him go. Punch him in the face or something and then let's go home."

---

Steve didn't want to admit that he brought it in case of a jealous ex. He didn't carry handcuffs twenty-four-seven but he was a little anxious about tonight. Steve turned on Bucky with fire in his eyes. "He had you by the neck," he hissed. "He was assaulting you!"

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"I know," Bucky said, "but I don't want to go to the station in Park Slope and have to explain all that happened. Just take him to Carl the bouncer and have him thrown out." He wouldn't be able to stop Steve if he decided that he was taking him in, but Bucky could try. He just felt so ashamed and embarrassed. Nothing that Jared did was anything he hadn't done to Bucky before. But they were dating back then and now they weren't and Bucky didn't say he could touch him.

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Steve glared, unhappy, but he backed down. He made sure Jared could see Steve flush the handcuff key down the toilet before he dragged him out to the bouncer. He returned back to the bathroom and put his hands on Bucky's face. "Are you okay, Baby?"

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Bucky was leaning against the sink counter and staring at the marks on his arm from Jared's rough clasp. "Mhmm," he mumbled and threw his arms around Steve. "I'm so sorry. I swear I didn't know
he was coming in here. I would have had you come with me. I didn't start it. He just jumped me and told me to come back to him."

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Steve gently rubbed a hand up and down Bucky's back. "I know, Baby," he said. "I know you'd never cheat on me. Not in the slightest." He kissed his cheek. "It scared me seeing you like that. Christ, you dated that bastard? Did he do that to you when you were together?"

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Bucky looked away and swallowed the lump in his throat. "Kind of," he admitted and glanced up at Steve nervously. "Usually it was when I was drunk and he wanted to have sex. He was always really rough." He shook his head and added, "He told me to leave you and that he could tell I missed him."

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"Buck," Steve said, giving him a squeeze. "I'm so sorry you had to go through that. And I'm sorry he did that again to you." He looked him in the eyes. "Sweetheart, you don't deserve that. You never did. And you don't miss him, Bucky, I know you don't."

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"I don't miss him," Bucky confirmed and kissed Steve. "I have you. And I didn't miss him after I left him and before I met you. I would never get back with him." Bucky pushed himself off the counter and hugged Steve close one more time.

Monty came in then and said gently, "Bucky, Honey, he's gone. Carl took care of it. I slipped him some extra cash to rough him up a bit for you. Come back out and dance for a while. I'll buy you both a drink."

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Steve looked over at Monty. "That's really sweet of you, but I think we need water instead of booze right now," he said. "You can tell me all about what Jared's teeth look like when they're knocked out on the pavement."

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Monty laughed and grabbed both their hands to pull them back out of the bathroom. Evan was standing protectively by the door and he gave Bucky a once over when he saw him to make sure he was okay. Monty took the two of them upstairs to one of the sets of couches on the balcony while Evan went to get water bottles for them both. "Did he pull that same shit with you that he did when you dumped him?" Monty asked Bucky and gave Steve a reassuring pat on the shoulder.

"More or less," Bucky nodded. "That was worse than this time."

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Steve frowned when he heard how Jared treated Bucky. "I can't believe there are so many guys out there like that. I see it enough in my line of work. I hate seeing it happen to people I love even more." He crossed his arms. "He should be locked up."
Bucky leaned into Steve and pulled his arm up so Steve was wrapping his arms around Bucky's shoulders. "Let's just forget it," Bucky said and nuzzled Steve's neck. "Carl is the type of guy that if you get kicked out once then you aren't coming back so we won't be seeing Jared again."

Monty nodded and moved over for Evan to sit. "And me and Bucky have both slept with the owner of this place and he likes us best so if we tell him what happened then there's no way Jared’s back in." Bucky shot Monty a pleading look to not bring up any more men he had slept with around here.

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"Shit, then that means I got to sleep with him so I can get anything I want too," Steve said with a chuckle. He was trying to be light-hearted for Bucky’s sake. "This place seems really nice. I'm glad Bucky brought me here." He leaned his head on Bucky's shoulder. "I wish there were more places like this."

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Bucky absently slipped his fingers through Steve's hair and smiled down at him. "You want to tell Monty and Evan what we are doing with Father Frank and the shelter? It won’t be in Park Slope but it is something."

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"Oh, right. Bucky and I are founding a shelter," Steve said. "There's a priest at this gay-friendly church who says we can build a place in his lot to provide food and shelter to people like us when they need to get away from where they live."

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Monty raised his eyebrows. "Like a gay safe house?"

Bucky nodded. "Basically, yeah. The main reason this all came up was because Steve was injured just for being out at work and we want people to have somewhere to go when they aren't safe at home or their jobs or something."

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"And what if there's some kid who's kicked out by his parents? Our apartment is too small to house people but they can go to the shelter, at least," Steve said. Evan looked like he approved of the idea even though he didn't say anything out loud.

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"That's adorable." Monty nodded at Steve, "Bucky, he's so cute!" he whined with a smile. "I love that idea. And Evan and I can help out sometime if you like. That would have been the perfect place for us a couple months ago. We took a trip in Manhattan and had to cut it short because of some assholes at a bar."

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Steve's sobered up and gave the two of them a sad look. He hated the thought that anyone would be anything but kind to these two. "So, what happened at the bar?" he asked.

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"Just a couple big dudes didn't like how I was dressed and how I talked," Monty said and looked to Evan. "I mean, you all might be able to blend in with the straight people but I stick out. And they, uh, made some colorful threats."

Evan nodded and grabbed Monty's hand. He quietly said, "Had to break a few noses, didn't I?"

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"I'm so sorry," Steve said with a frown. "Listen, this isn't a 'get out of jail free' card but I'm a police officer. If you ever get into any trouble, you call me, okay?" Steve could at least make sure they weren't mistreated for being gay.

---

Monty smiled and giggled, "Oh, Sweetheart, the whole club knows you're a cop now. I don't think a soul in this place didn't hear what just happened, what with you handcuffing a regular and sending him out to deal with Carl on his own."

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Steve made a face. "Well, I did the right thing. That bastard had his hands all over Bucky - who wanted to be left alone. He's lucky I didn't clock him, myself." He turned to Bucky and said, "I would have done it if I didn't have to answer to Becca. Also, Father Frank would disapprove."

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"Listen, Honey," Monty said and leaned forward, "Not many people here like Jared. And I think you should've pummeled him but that's just me."

Bucky grinned at Monty and leaned into Steve. "Steve's right, though, my sister would have destroyed him if she found out." He thought about what Steve had told him of how Becca reacted when he beat up Donnie. That felt like years ago. Bucky turned to Steve again. "You thinking it's time to go home? I'd say we should dance some more but my balls kind of hurt. Jared really got his knee up there."

---

Steve wrapped an arm around Bucky and whispered in his ear, "I'll kiss them better for you. How's that?" He stood up and gave both Evan and Monty a hug. "It was nice to meet you two. Maybe we can do this another time, yeah?"

---

Bucky said goodbye and had to stand on tiptoes to hug Evan and he wondered how Monty even kissed him. Evan probably picked him up to do it. Once they were back on the train and no one was in their car, Bucky held Steve's face in his hands and kissed him slowly. "Thanks for saving me from him, Baby."

---

Steve returned the kiss and played with Bucky's hair affectionately. "You don't have to thank me. That's what I'm supposed to do. Your husband will always protect you."
"Still, though," Bucky said, "If you wouldn't have been looking out for me and didn't see him follow me in there then things could have gotten a lot worse." Bucky leaned against Steve and held his hand tight. "I'm sorry it happened and I'm sorry you had to deal with it and I'm sorry I couldn't stop him from kissing me."

---

"Baby, it's not your fault. You don't have to be sorry for anything." Steve brought Bucky's hand to his lips. "And you don't have to ever worry about me doubting that you'll remain loyal to me. I know you love me too much to do that."

---

"I do love you. So fucking much," Bucky said and hurriedly kissed Steve again. Once they got back home, they slipped into the apartment quietly and Bucky went straight to get some cold water for them both. "You think the girls are both still awake since we weren't here to tell them to sleep?" Bucky whispered and handed Steve a glass of water.

---

"Becca is probably asleep and Lilly is probably organizing her baseball cards because she thinks she can get away with it this late." Steve sipped at the water. "You want to make a bet whether I'm right or not?"

---

"Lilly organized those cards not long ago, though," Bucky said and glanced towards the hallway curiously. "Alright, what are we betting with? I'll take you on, Steve." He placed his water down on the counter and shucked off his leather jacket because he was a little too hot in it tonight.

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"She re-organizes them every week depending on if she wants them by team, last name, or position," Steve said. "So I bet you a back rub with a happy ending that I'm right."

---

"Oh, come on," Bucky scoffed and crossed his arms. "Make it a bit more fun than that. We do massages with 'happy endings' all the time." He moved towards Steve and pressed against him. "Come on, Baby."

---

"Well, maybe I want to have a massage and happy ending and don't want anything too fun," Steve chided. "What did you have in mind, huh? What fun stuff do you want?"

---

"Well," Bucky looked away with nervous eyes. "I was shoved around a bit tonight by an ex and don't feel so great about myself or the things I've done and I want you to mark me up and claim me and show that I'm yours and I'll never have to go be stuck with someone like Jared again." He looked up at Steve finally. "I mean, I know we will be together forever but you know how I can get and I'm just feeling sort of... I don't know."
Steve looked over at Bucky and considered for a moment to keep up the bet. But instead, he grabbed Bucky's ass and then picked him up. He carried him into the bedroom and closed the door with his foot before pinning him down to the bed and sucking a dark mark onto his neck. "Mine," he rumbled low, moving his hand down to grope between Bucky's legs.

---

Bucky breathed in sharply and held onto Steve very tightly. "I love you." His voice broke and he felt the prickly sensation in the tip of his nose that warned that he might start crying. "I love you," he repeated and slipped the suspenders off Steve's shoulders. "I need you."

---

Steve pulled Bucky's pants down quickly and took his shirt off right after. "You're all mine, Bucky Barnes," he purred in his ear. "I'm always going to take care of every need you'll ever have." Steve grabbed the lube from the nightstand and started to slick up his fingers. "Nod your head so I know you know that."

---

Bucky nodded eagerly and held his bottom lip in an attempt to stop himself from tearing up. He sniffled and moved his hands up to lay crossed above his head. He watched Steve warm up the lube on his fingers and he waited patiently for him to start opening him up.

---

Steve eased two fingers inside of Bucky at once. He knew his husband was getting emotional, so he kissed him deeply as he worked his fingers in and out of him. "I got you, Handsome. Gonna make you feel so good."

---

Bucky whimpered slightly in response and nodded again. He reached down to touch where Steve's fingers were sliding in and out of him and he used his other hand to ball into Steve's shirt and tug, indicating that he wanted it off. "Tell me you love me," he whispered and locked eyes with Steve.

---

Steve paused so he could remove his own shirt. "I love you so much, I can barely breathe sometimes. I love waking up every morning with you in my arms. I love making love every night." He worked his own pants off.

---

Once Steve's pants were off, Bucky was on him. He sat up quickly and gripped Steve's hips and swallowed down his cock. He hummed around it and worked his tongue over the slit repeatedly. Bucky made sure to spread his legs and lean back well enough so Steve could still get to his ass to finger him as best as he could in this position. Bucky guided Steve's hand back to his hole and pressed his fingers against it so he would get the idea.

---

"Fuck!" Steve swore, arching his back when Bucky went down on him. His face flushed and it only took a moment before he took the hint. He opened Bucky up with three fingers now. "Take all of my cock, Baby."
Bucky obediently took him deeper and bobbed his head with his tongue pressed against the vein on the underside. Steve couldn't really get into Bucky's ass very much and it was more of a shallow thrust of fingers but it was doing the job well enough. After a minute or so, Bucky pulled off, wiped his mouth, and looked up at Steve with big expectant eyes. He carefully laid back on the bed and pulled his knees up so he was showing off his wet hole. "Fuck me.”

There was no way Steve could hold back when Bucky presented himself like that. Steve covered Bucky entirely with his body and pushed in so he could fuck him, going balls deep before pulling out and doing it again.

Bucky grimaced slightly at the initial thrust, having not been patient enough to let Steve open him up all the way. It only burned for a second and the stretch felt really nice after that. He wrapped his arms and legs around his husband and starting quietly singing into his ear as he held on tight and felt Steve's cock pull in and out of him.

Steve rocked easily in and out of Bucky’s ass, feeling his heart swell with love for him as the man sang in his ear. "You feel so good, Buck. Let me hear your sweet voice some more.”

"Okay,” Bucky whispered and panted slightly. He thought for a moment for a good song that Steve probably knew. He settled on "Wild Horses" from The Rolling Stones because he was pretty sure that Steve liked that one. He changed it up a bit as he sang. It sounded a little different than the original but Bucky liked his version better because it was all about him and Steve.

Steve reached between them to stroke Bucky's dick with every thrust and he let out soft, desperate noises. He loved it when Bucky sang to him like this. They stayed like that for a few minutes, just making love and breathing each other in. "I'm so close, Baby. Gonna come deep in your tight ass cause you're mine. Mine alone.”

"Do it,” Bucky gasped and pulled Steve down for a quick, hot, sloppy kiss. "Show them all I'm yours and no one can touch me like that anymore.” Bucky wondered how crazy it was that he sort of wished Jared could see Steve fucking him right now. He fantasized about Steve cuffing Jared to something in the bathroom at the club and then taking Bucky right there. Thinking about all that probably wasn't a healthy way to deal with what happened, though, and Bucky knew it. He just felt so gross and dirty after what happened at the club.

Steve stared Bucky down, looking him in the eye and kissing him senseless as he finally came. Steve's thrusts became erratic until he stilled, feeling sated and happy that he was able to give Bucky something that made him feel safe and complete.
Bucky smiled a relieved quick wisp of a smile as if he was worried that he wouldn't be enough to make Steve come even though he had done it so many times before. "I love you," he said again and stroked his dick faster until he was shooting his own load unto his stomach. "Don't pull out, yet. Just lay on me."

Steve saw the relieved look on Bucky's face and drew him in for a kiss. "You are so beautiful. The sex is always going to be amazing, even when we are wrinkly and old. You always know how to make me happy, Bucky."

Bucky pulled Steve down on top of him, needing to feel his weight protectively over him. "Why do I get more and more needy for your touch after sex?" he asked and nuzzled his nose into Steve's skin. "Every time we finish, I need to hold you or be held and it's just getting more desperate as time goes on."

"It's because having sex connects us. We're soul mates, so we bare ourselves to each other when we make love," Steve answered. "It's a beautiful thing, Bucky. I adore it."

Bucky loved it too. And he did agree with Steve, but he felt it was probably also because of all the people who left him right after they had finished with him. Bucky's brain was getting overexcited that Steve wasn't like all those others. His brain and body recognized that Steve would stay and hold him and then Bucky's body demanded to be held.

"Even if I'm angry at you, even if you did something to really piss me off... I'd hold you and comfort you if you wanted to be held. Cause you deserve having someone who takes care of you. Got it, Buck?" Steve reassured.

"I got it." Bucky nodded. "You can pull out now. Think we should shower and then go to sleep. I'm pretty sure I will need to pick up some supplies tomorrow for Becca's birthday in a few days. My girl is going to be fifteen, Steve. Fifteen!"

Steve pulled out and used a tissue to clean them both up. "Soon she's going to be applying for jobs and looking at colleges," Steve said. "She may be turning fifteen but she's practically thirty already."

Bucky threw his hands to his face and whined, "Oh my god, Steve. What if she acts like me at fifteen? Fuck..." He worriedly looked to his husband, "She's not going to end up like me, right? She's so much brighter and more sensible than I was."
"Becca gets angry if you tie your shoelaces wrong. You think she's going to go chasing after dumb college boys?" Steve asked and kissed Bucky's forehead. "She's not you. And even if she is exactly like you, she's still a good person."

Bucky sighed and glared at nothing, "Is it my fault that no one taught me to tie my shoes until the fourth grade? It's hard to do right, Steve." He sat up slowly and scratched his chest. They both needed to shower and get the come and club smell off of them. And Bucky knew neither of them would feel like getting up any earlier than usual to do it in the morning.
On Becca's birthday, Steve took off early from work so he could decorate the apartment with the things Bucky had picked out a few days earlier. A little stack of presents awaited her on the kitchen table with a book-shaped cake right next to it. "You think this is too much?" Steve asked.

---

Bucky adjusted Steve's collar and then picked up Raphael before he could paw at the cake. "No, I think she will like it." He smiled and grabbed Steve's hand. "The girls and your mom should be back from the movie anytime now. Remember, Lilly is probably in a bit of shitty mood."

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"Why is Lilly in a shitty mood? She's going to get a cool party for her birthday when it comes," Steve said. "Or does this have to do with school or sports?" He made sure the pile of gifts was perfect for the third time.

---

"Well, she doesn't like other people's birthdays because she doesn't get a present. But she doesn't like Becca's birthday in particular because Becca has the same birth month as our mom and Lilly doesn't," Bucky said and plopped the cat on the couch just to watch him scamper back over and onto the table with the cake.

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Steve huffed when the cat tried to get at the cake again. He picked the little guy up and kissed the top of his head. "Did she always have an issue with Becca having been born in the same month as your mom?"

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"Yes, but it wasn't really that bad until they died," Bucky answered and picked up a strawberry from the bowl. "She wouldn't care if all of us shared a birth month with one of our parents and she wouldn't care if none of us did but since only one of us does then she thinks it's unfair. Which, of course, Becs didn't choose to be born in May."

---

"That's a bit shitty," Steve said. "Becca shouldn't have to feel bad over something she can't help." He got out a cat treat and fed it to Raphael so he wouldn't go after the cake so much then he set him down. "How long until the girls get here?"

---

"Anytime now, I would think." Bucky curled his arms around Steve and kissed his neck. "And you know Lilly, she isn't always very rational and isn't always the nicest about what she wants. But don't worry about Becca, she stopped giving a fuck what Lilly thought about her birthday years ago."

---

Steve smiled and nuzzled his husband affectionately. "Fair enough." He had his hand halfway down
to Bucky's ass when the girls came through the door. "Becca!" he said brightly. "Happy birthday!"

"Happy birthday, Becs!" Bucky called and picked up his sister in a hug until she protested and demanded to be put down. "How was the movie with Miss Sarah? Was it a good way to spend your birthday?"

Lilly had a grumpy face on and she tried not looking at the cake - that did not have her name on it - on the table. She also glanced at Becca's stack of presents and when she found that there was at least two less than Lilly's own birthday the year before, she quirked a satisfied grin.

Becca smoothed her clothes down and gave Bucky a mildly annoyed look for picking her up. "It was nice. Miss Sarah got us popcorn refills, too. I've eaten so much today, I barely have room for cake." She saw Steve's disappointed look and quickly added, "but I will have room soon!"

"Maybe after you open presents then you will be ready for cake, huh?" Bucky offered and pulled out a chair at the table for Becca to sit down so she could start unwrapping. The rest of them followed suit and sat down and Bucky slipped in next to Steve and held his hand to whisper, "Becca's first birthday with you here. Are you happy about that?"

Steve gave Bucky a pleased look. "I'm looking forward to many more birthdays together," he said. "It's so great to have a big family like this." Steve grinned like an idiot. "I can't wait to see what my first birthday with you is like."

"You don't have to wait very long, it's coming up soon, Baby." Bucky leaned his head on Steve's shoulders and watched Becca carefully ease the wrapping paper from her first gift. Bucky and Steve had gotten her several books and a fancy new notebook. Also, a nice pair of shoes she had been eyeing at the store the other day.

Becca was in pretty good spirits and gave both of them a hug once she was finished opening her gifts. "Lilly, look! These are the shoes I've wanted forever!" She was being a bit annoying on purpose because she was looking to get on her sister's nerves.

Lilly rolled her eyes, slumped back in her chair, and eyed the cake. "Can we have some cake now?" she asked with an irritable pout and crossed arms.

"Well, there is one more present coming with Clint and he should be on his way," Bucky said and ran his hand down Lilly's hair. Bucky had made a deal with Clint to do him a few favors in exchange for one of Clint's extra electronic keyboard pianos he had laying around at home.
Lilly huffed and pouted some more while Becca gave her an obnoxious smirk. It was rare she was this petty but Lilly had been pretty annoying all day and now was payback time. Clint showed up with a big box in his arms before world war three erupted in their home. "Someone take this from me," he grunted. "It was a bitch to carry up the stairs."

---

Bucky jumped up to help him bring it inside and he plopped it in the living room. "Alright, Becs, this is the last one. Then we can have cake. And Clint can have cake." Bucky nodded to him.

"Alright, good, because it wouldn't be fair to let me see the cake and not give it to me," Clint said and Lilly nodded her head in agreement.

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Becca quickly opened it up and she gasped loudly when she saw what was inside. She looked for a moment like she was going to jump up and down but she quickly cooled down and settled for a hug. "Thank you, Bucky!"

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"You're welcome, Becca," Bucky said. "Thank Steve and Clint too. Especially Clint since he dragged it all the way from his place." Becca nodded and gave each of them a hug in turn as Bucky started lighting the candles on her cake.

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Both other men got a hug and Steve couldn't stop grinning because it was such a rare thing to get love from Becca. After they sung happy birthday, Steve said a little prayer and served cake. "So did you do anything at school with your study buddies for your birthday?"

---

"Micah had a birthday just before summer started so we sort of celebrated both our birthdays at once since we weren't going to be in class for mine." Becca ate her cake happily and glanced over at Lilly who was halfway through her piece and staring at the cake like she wanted more already.

---

Steve put an arm around Bucky's shoulder and pulled him in for a quick kiss. "That's cool," he said to Becca. "Did you guys get each other books or something?" he asked as he started to cut another piece of cake for Lilly.

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"No, we didn't give each other anything." Becca shrugged. "We just said 'happy birthday', shared some snacks, and then studied for our last exams."

"You're so boring," Lilly said quietly and took another bite of cake.

---

"She's also going to get to go to college on scholarship cause she's boring," Steve defended Becca gently to Lilly. "How did studying for your exams go, Lil? Did you pass all your classes?"
"Yes," Lilly shot back and then stabbed at her cake before adding, "mostly."

Bucky sighed and looked to Steve, "She passed most of them but she has to have a math and science tutor starting in the fall for next year so she doesn't fall behind too much."

---

"Well, why not in the summer? You'll be less overwhelmed than if you had extra class time in the fall," Steve suggested. "I could find some tutor center with a cute boy or girl as your tutor and you can impress them."

---

"Impress them with what? Her inability to spell basic English words?" Becca asked and snorted a laugh at her sister.

"I passed my English exam!" Lilly corrected and shot Bucky a look to back her up. Bucky just closed his eyes tight and rubbed his face. Every damn year they had to fight on Becca's birthday.

Clint came to the rescue before it could escalate. "Becca, show me where you want your keyboard set up and I'll put it together for you."

---

Steve reached out to give the end of Becca's hair a light tug to get her to stop instigating so much. She was able to put it aside when she was allowed the distraction of setting her keyboard up.

"She can be such a bitch sometimes," Lilly complained. "And I'm allowed to use that word cause I'm a girl."

---

Bucky bit his lip and refused to look at either Steve or Sarah. Sarah was always uncomfortable when any of his family swore and Steve had made it abundantly clear not long ago how he felt about kids swearing. "How about we don't call our sister that?" Bucky asked Lilly and pet her hair. "She's our family and we wouldn't like it if she called us names."

---

Steve had to use a great deal of self-control to not give Bucky an 'I told you so' look at Lilly's swearing. "She calls me names all the time," Lilly answered back. "Calls me 'stupid' all the time. Says I'll never graduate junior high let alone high school. Why can't I get angry?"

---

"Angry is fine," Bucky said and rested his arm on the back of Lilly's chair. "But calling her a bitch isn't so nice. Remember a while back when she was yelling at me and said all sorts of mean shit and called me names? You know what day I'm talking about. And it really hurt but I didn't call her names back because that doesn't solve anything."

Lilly leaned into Bucky and said quietly, "That the day she wished you were gone instead of Mom and Dad?"

Bucky adjusted uncomfortably and cleared his throat, not looking up. "Yeah, that's the day."
Both Steve and Sarah's head snapped over at Bucky. Steve immediately reached out to hold Bucky's hand. "Are you kidding me? She said that?" Steve looked like he had half the mind to stomp in and scold Becca even though it had happened ages ago.

---

"Yeah." Bucky nodded and looked at the table. "We all thought it at one point or another, just that Becca was so angry that day that she decided she would finally say it. I don't remember what started the fight, but I'm pretty sure she was angry with me for a good reason."

---

Steve frowned. "That doesn't matter. It's wrong to say such a thing. It's wrong to wish your own brother was dead." His bottom lip trembled just a bit because he couldn't imagine what Bucky must've felt to hear something like that said to him especially from his own family.

---

Bucky sighed and got up to give Steve a tight hug. "Baby, you're more upset about this than you should be. More upset than I am. It's Becca. You know how she can be. And it was a while ago."

Clint and Becca appeared back into the kitchen then and Becca curiously asked, "What can I be like?"

---

Steve rounded on Becca and looked like he was ready to give her a piece of his mind but he bit his tongue and shook his head. "Nothing," he said tensely. "Is your keyboard all set up?"

---

Becca nodded with a confused look on her face. "Yeah, Clint got it all together." She glanced over at Bucky and Bucky simply gave her a look that said if she really wanted to know then he would explain it later.

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Clint looked the most confused out of all of them but gave them all a little wave goodbye. "Nat is coming over later so I got to clean my house. See you all later."

---

Bucky welcomed the change of topic and gave Clint a hug. "Thanks again for coming over with the present. And I hope you have a good time with Natasha." After Clint left, Bucky started cleaning up the table as Becca took the rest of her presents to her room and Lilly stole another piece of cake even though Bucky had just told her she couldn't have another.

---

Steve casually pulled the plate from Lilly's hand. "Your brother said 'no'." Lilly shot him a glare that had Sarah laughing a little as she said her goodbyes and saw herself out. After his mother was gone and Lilly was sulking in her room, Steve helped Bucky finish clean up and he kissed his cheek. "You did a good job for her birthday, Baby. She loves that keyboard."
"I know," Bucky sighed and started pulling Steve to their bedroom. "And this year was a lot less of a fight between the girls than last year. There was a frosting incident that ended in Becca's hair being gummed up with cake and frosting and Lilly's shirt being ruined by cranberry juice."

---

"You're joking," Steve said. "Sometimes I'm thankful I was an only child," he chuckled. He kissed Bucky's hair and took his own shirt off so he could change into something more comfortable.

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Bucky stripped down before pulling on a loose long-sleeved shirt of Steve's that was long enough on Bucky to cover most of his ass. "Yes, well, now that you know what it's like having little sisters, it doesn't surprise me you're a tiny bit grateful about that." Bucky gripped onto Steve's hand and pulled him to sit on the bed with him. "I wanted to talk to you about something."

---

Steve tugged at the string on a pair of sweats from the precinct and he gave Bucky a curious look when Bucky pulled him down to sit on the bed. He stroked his fingers gently over Bucky's hand and leaned over to kiss him. "What do you want to talk about?"

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"I was thinking," Bucky started and bounced his leg up and down anxiously. "I was considering maybe trying to go back to school." He said it slowly and with a cautious edge so if Steve thought it was a terrible idea then he wouldn't feel like he was crushing Bucky's dreams by telling him so.

---

Steve's face lit up. "Baby, that's a wonderful idea," he said brightly. He squeezed Bucky's hand lightly. "You know I'll support you any way I can. I'll pick up extra shifts at the precinct so you can work fewer hours and focus on class. I can get a night job a few days a week."

---

Bucky grinned and leaned into Steve. "I haven't decided for sure yet. I'm still going over my options. But Clint said I could switch to all morning shifts if my classes are night classes or all evening shifts if they are early. You won't have to do extra work. I don't want that."

---

"Well, just know that if you need time off, I'll pick up extra shifts for you." Steve smiled and kissed Bucky's forehead. "Look at you. Gonna be a smart college man," Steve praised.

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"Maybe a college man," Bucky corrected. "I still need to apply and try to see if I can get a student loan and decide if this is even actually what I want." He held Steve's face in his hands and kissed him. "But it's good to know you are okay with it if I decide to do it."

---

"Of course, I would be okay with it. I'd be a jerk if I held you back from following your dreams," Steve said. He kissed him back and smiled. "You looking to do music management still? Or
something else?"

---

"Just some sort of business degree, I think," Bucky said and yawned before tugging Steve down to lie beside him. He positioned himself on the bed and pushed Steve lightly so he would spoon him. "I'm really tired. Want to talk about it some other time and just go to sleep?"

---

Steve chuckled and wrapped his arms around Bucky. He pressed a kiss to his temple and let out a happy sigh. "Sure thing. I love you, Bucky," he said and moved his hand up and down Bucky's stomach as they fell asleep.
Half-way through the summer, on a hot June morning, Bucky was sitting on the couch fully dressed and cradling a soda waiting for his family to wake up. He hadn't slept the entire night before and had alternated between sitting in bed watching Steve sleep and laying on the couch staring at the wall. Today marked the five-year anniversary of his parents’ deaths. Steve had already convinced him that the four of them should go to the cemetery together to talk with their parents and pay their respects. Now Bucky was waiting around anxiously thinking over in his head all that had happened five years ago and all the ways he failed as a guardian since.

---

Steve was the first to wake up. When he found the bed empty, he made his way to the living room to find Bucky on the couch. Raphael hopped up and curled up in a little ball on Bucky's lap as Steve moved to sit down next to his husband. "Hey, Baby," he said softly. "Can I do something to make you feel any better?"

---

Bucky shook his head and grabbed Steve in a desperate hug. "I usually drink today." He sighed and took Steve's hand gently. "I'll probably just be like this all day - the girls too. Just hold me until they wake up and then I'll help you make breakfast... if they even feel like eating."

---

Steve held his husband tightly and tucked Bucky's head into his chest. "I'll hold all of you as long as you need me to," he promised. "I know it's a tough day, Baby." Steve paused before hesitantly asking, "I was thinking... maybe you guys can tell me stories about them. There's so much I don't know about them and it'll help keep their memory alive."

---

Bucky waited a long moment to respond. "We can try, yeah," he said simply and quietly and rubbed at his tired eyes. He had already cried a lot in the night and he was going to be doing more the rest of the day and, on top of it, he didn't sleep so his eyes were burning and puffy. "I can't believe it's been five years."

---

"I know. It's been a long time without them. But you have done so much, Baby. You've had to adapt and carry so much weight and you did such a good job," Steve praised. "Even with your faults."

---

Bucky pet a thumb over Steve's lips and arched his head up to kiss him. "I could have done better. And I know that. You know that, too, and so do the girls and my parents. I just miss them so much. Sometimes I can forget that they are really gone and just imagine that they are on a really long vacation or something and they will be coming home soon."

---

Steve squeezed Bucky tighter to his chest and let out a heavy sigh. "I'm so sorry you have to go through this, Baby," he said softly. Minutes later, Becca and Lilly came trudging out of their rooms
looking miserable.

"Hey, girls," Bucky said softly and got up to pull both his sisters into a tight hug. They stood there all clinging to each other for a long time, just breathing in each other's presence and finding comfort there. "Do you want anything to eat or no?" he asked tentatively and kissed the tops of their heads.

"Not really," Becca murmured. Lilly didn't look too hungry either.

Steve felt a bit awkward standing there in the middle of their sorrow. "Um..." he said, then he huffed out a little sigh. "Do you girls want any hot chocolate then? Or maybe a smoothie?"

Lilly shook her head and picked up Raphael before stretching out on the ground by the couch and staring up at the ceiling. Becca curled up into a tight ball on the couch and pulled a blanket over herself and watched Lilly pet the cat. Bucky's breath shuddered out his lungs and he could feel himself about to cry again. "I'm going to go have a smoke outside. I'll be right back."

Steve bit his bottom lip, feeling pretty damn useless because he couldn't make his family feel better. After Bucky left to have a smoke, Steve went over to Becca. "Do you want to talk at all?"

Becca silently slid her gaze up to meet Steve's and she blinked slowly before grabbing his hand and pulling him down onto the couch. Wordlessly, she adjusted so she was lying out across the couch, with her head in Steve's lap and her hand still desperately clutched onto his.

Steve let himself be used as a pillow. He used his free hand to gently stroke his fingers through her hair. "I love you very much, Becca. And you too, Lilly." Steve looked out to the door Bucky had left from. "I want to help all of you as best I can."

A few minutes later, Bucky came back. He was crying and his hair was tucked behind his ears. One cigarette had turned into three and he may have yelled a little too harshly at a kid on a bike who almost ran over his foot. "Hey," Bucky mumbled when he returned and went over to touch each one of his family on the face to be reassured that they were all there and all safe.

Steve made a motion for Bucky to come sit next to him. He kissed his cheek and laid his head on Bucky's shoulder. "Do you guys want some time alone? I know I'm the newcomer to all this."

"No, please don't leave us." Bucky shook his head emphatically and seized Steve's other hand that Becca hadn't taken. Lilly decided to join them all on the couch and she curled up in the crook of Bucky's arm and held the cat close to her chest. Both the girls managed to fall asleep and Bucky let
them stay like that for a while until he decided it was a good time to get dressed and ready to go down to the cemetery.

---

Steve kept awake and acted as a pillow for Becca and Bucky. When they finally got up to go to the cemetery, he dressed up and brought his notebook with him. "Can we stop at a church on the way back? I want to light a candle for them. It'll be quick and you guys don't have to come in."

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Becca and Bucky exchanged looks and then nodded solemnly. "Yeah, Steve, that's really nice of you," Bucky said and took his husband's hand. "We probably won't go in, but we appreciate what it means that you want to do that for them."

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Steve led the way down to the cemetery and didn't talk much. When they got to their graves, Steve put an arm strongly around Bucky and held him to his side. "I'm so proud you came here."

---

Bucky nodded and leaned into Steve as his sisters sank down in front of their parents’ graves. They had brought flowers and Becca had brought the book her father left at Mindy's shop in Seneca. Lilly brought a framed family picture and set it up by the graves while they talked with them.

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Steve picked up a rock and tore out a paper from his notebook that had a prayer on it and a promise that he would look after their kids. He set the paper under the rock on their graves. "What's your favorite memory of them?" Steve asked them.

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Lilly was the first to offer hers. "They took me out to the park and taught me how to ride a bike. But when they put the helmet on me, Dad accidentally pinched my neck in the clasp. I cried a lot and then that night they let me have two bowls of ice cream and I got to sleep in their bed."

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Steve smiled fondly and brushed his fingers through her hair a few times. "Did you get a lot of stuff you wanted just cause you cried?" he asked. "Or did it only work that once?"

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"Sometimes it worked. It worked on Dad a lot more than it worked on Mom." Lilly smiled and brushed some dirt off the headstones.

Becca held Lilly's hand and said, "The first academic competition I ever won was a spelling bee. They were both there and Dad had spent weeks helping me learn so many words that they might throw at me. He was almost thrown out at one point because one of the teachers thought he was mouthing the answers to me but he was just trying to spell along. He actually had a few incorrect but I never told him that."
"Your dad seems like he was a real smart guy," Steve said. "I bet he helped you all out with practically everything. Did he help you with your science projects too?"

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"Yeah he did," Becca said and looked up at Steve. "Except, sometimes he got confused on certain terminology. History was always more his speed than science was. Although, he did always like chemistry."

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"I never understood chemistry. I never got past any science that wasn't necessary for my job. Physics is really hard too," Steve said with a shrug. "What about you, Buck? What's your favorite memory of them?"

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Bucky had been crying and holding tightly to Steve. He cleared his throat and glanced up at his husband for a moment, "Uh... the day Lilly was born. My grandma came and got Becca and me and took us to the hospital to see Lilly. I remember Becca's face when she got to hold her for the first time. My mom was so tired and she fell asleep while we were all there and Dad had me stay with her while he and Becca went for food. The two of us got to eat on hospital trays and we thought it was pretty cool."

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Steve looked fondly over at Bucky. "Figures that your favorite memory centers around your sisters," he said. Steve dried the tears from Bucky's face. "They'd be proud of the brother you've become, Bucky. I know I would be." He gently rubbed his back. "I could only imagine how excited you were to hold Lilly, too."

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Bucky smiled sadly at Steve and kissed his cheek. "Lilly was squirmy," he said and Becca nodded. "Tried to jump right out of my arms just about every time I held her. Mom wrapped her up in her blanket as securely and tightly as she could without hurting her and it still didn't help much."

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"Looks like Lilly was never able to sit still," Steve said, reaching down to squeeze Lilly's shoulder lightly. "Except now she's too big for us to try to keep her still." Lilly shrugged, totally not sorry for being so active.

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"Steve," Bucky said timidly and held both Steve's hands in his. "Do you mind if I have a second to talk to the girls? After that, we can go home if they are ready." He was ready to leave this place. He would rather be back home looking at their family photo album and being curled up on the couch with his sisters.

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Steve nodded and gave them all one more hug before stepping back to give them their space. "Take as much time as you need." Steve wandered a little ways away so they wouldn't feel like he was hovering.
Bucky sat down in between his sisters and pulled them close to him. "Doesn't feel like five years, does it?" he asked and wiped the tears from his sisters' cheeks. "I miss them so much and I know you do, too. But they can hear us here. And they love us so much. And I love you both so much and I promise I'll do better. I'll keep getting better and eventually make you proud of me, too." He was talking both to his sisters and his parents and himself. Neither of the girls said anything - just buried their faces in Bucky's side and cried. After a few minutes, Bucky waved Steve back over.

Steve's heart broke watching how upset they were but he stayed back until he was beckoned back over. He kissed the top of each of their heads and sighed. "It'll be okay, you guys. I'm sure they're glad we took the time to see them today."

"I'm ready to go if the girls are," Bucky said quietly and stood up. "Need to talk to you about something really quick, Steve, while they say goodbye." He slipped his hand with Steve's and pulled him aside a little ways away from the girls.

Steve did the sign of the cross in front of the graves and then walked back with Bucky and gave him a curious and worried look. "What's up, Baby?"

Bucky chewed his lip but kept his eyes on Steve's. "I wanted to do something today but I wanted to hear what you had to say about it first. And if you don't think it's a good idea then I won't." He rolled his jacket off of his shoulder and rubbed the skin on the inside of his upper arm. "I was thinking of going to get my parents' wedding date tattooed right here."

Steve was admittedly taken aback since they hadn't ever spoken about tattoos before. But he shrugged his shoulders and pressed a kiss to Bucky's temple. "If you want to do that, then I think it's a great idea."

"I... I don't want to do it if you'd rather me not to or you think it's a bad idea. That's why I talked to you first," Bucky said quickly. "So tell me honestly if it's okay or not okay?"

"I think it's a wonderful idea, Bucky," Steve said. "It's a nice thing to remember them by. And if you want a tattoo, you should get a tattoo. It's not like it's going on your face. Do you want me to help you design it?"

Bucky nodded and pulled Steve in for a kiss since there was no one around. "Yeah, that'd be really great. And you're sure it's okay with you?" He wanted to be really sure. He didn't want Steve to look at it for the rest of their lives and be annoyed at seeing it on Bucky's skin.
"Baby, it's your body and it makes you happy. Even if I didn't like it, it's you're decision to make." Steve paused then added, "And for the record... I think tattoos are sexy."

Bucky smiled and nosed at Steve's neck. "Okay, I'll do it then," he said as he pulled Steve back over to his sisters. "Are you both ready to go back home?" He didn't want to take them away if they weren't ready but Bucky was getting uncomfortable being in the cemetery again. He really didn't like coming here. He'd only done it a handful of times.

The girls agreed to go home and they all gave last goodbyes together. Steve hugged Bucky tightly and then walked them all out of the cemetery. He stopped quickly at the church to light a candle and say a prayer and he came out looking a bit more at ease. "You want to stop for dinner or do you want me to cook something at home?"

"Don't want food," Becca mumbled and held onto Lilly's hand. Lilly nodded in agreement and they all just went home. Becca immediately sequestered herself in her room and Lilly took up residence on the couch with a bottle of water and their family photo album. Bucky headed to his and Steve's room quietly.

Steve didn't try to push them to eat even though he didn't think it was good for them to go without. He followed Bucky into the bedroom and laid down with him so Bucky was the little spoon. "I'm here for you, Baby. It's okay to cry if you need to."

"Think I'm all cried out," Bucky said and pushed back against his husband. "I got a head start last night around two in the morning with the crying so…" He chuckled and turned his head to look at Steve. "Today's just really, really tough."

Steve nodded and kissed Bucky's cheek. "I understand, Buck. It was really hard for the first few years too when my dad died. But I was too young to really know him so it didn't hurt as much."

"I'm sure it was still incredibly painful," Bucky said and kissed Steve. "Losing a parent is really hard." He ran his hand through his long hair. The ends were getting really ratty and dry and it was long enough that it hit his shoulders, which wasn't where he usually kept it. He slowly got up off the bed, headed to their bathroom, and grabbed his scissors from his drawer.

"You want me to help you cut it?" Steve offered as he moved to sit up. "I was pretty young so I didn't really understand what happened to my dad at first. It was kind of a hollow feeling for a while until I finally could accept it."
Bucky started cutting the dead ends off his hair but then stopped when Steve walked over to him. He handed the scissors off to Steve so he could do it for him. "Sometimes I really miss that hollow numb feeling right after it happens where you can't really wrap your mind around it. It wasn't real for a few months. You know?"

Steve grabbed an old t-shirt and laid it over Bucky's shoulders to catch the cut strands of hair. "Yeah, I understand," he said softly. "That's one thing that makes me sad about having a kid... cause one day we won't be there for them anymore."

Bucky glanced at Steve in the mirror. "Don't think about that," he cautioned and reached a hand back to rub Steve's leg. "When we do die, it'll be when we are really old and our kids are all grown up and have grown kids of their own too."

Steve frowned at the thought of leaving their grandkids too. "I'm sorry," he apologized. "How about we talk about something nicer. Like that cops versus firefighters game that's happening next month..."

"Mhmm." Bucky smiled and bit his lip, letting Steve take his mind off of things. "Are they going to give you a tight skimpy uniform like I requested?" he asked and rubbed Steve's leg a little more. "And, your birthday is coming up. Your first birthday with me. And I'm going to do my best to make it perfect for you."

"No. No tight skimpy uniform, but most of us will be shirtless by the end of it. It's a macho thing. We all try and claim we're the buffer team," Steve said. Really it was going to be an afternoon of eye candy for Bucky. "And don’t you worry, I’m excited to get to have my first birthday with you. I know it will be perfect. You planning stuff already?"

Bucky groaned and blinked slowly thinking about two teams of hot sweaty muscular public servants taking off their shirts with his husband right in the middle of them all outshining the rest. But he came back to it when Steve changed topics again to his birthday. "I'm sort of planning. Having a bit of a hard time figuring out exactly what to do."

Steve finished up cutting Bucky's hair nice and evenly. He rolled up the t-shirt and figured he'd take care of the hair clippings in the morning. "So many good things you can do with me, huh? You know I'd be happy with anything."

"Yeah, I know," Bucky said and turned to kiss Steve. "But I just want it to be the best birthday
you’ve ever had.” He brushed some hair off his neck and said, "Do you want to help me design the tattoo now?"

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Steve nodded and grabbed his sketchbook. He was glad he could help his husband with something like this. A memorial tattoo was a beautiful idea and Steve wanted to be a part of it. "So what kind of stuff do you want in the tattoo?"

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"I want it pretty simple. Just the date with maybe a nice little design around it?" Bucky said and twisted his finger around his hair. "But, I’m not an artist. What do you think would look nice?"

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Steve drew a few designs with different styles of text to see which one Bucky liked most. Then he started to draw little designs separately such as hearts, angel wings, line patterns, and other things in case Bucky wanted those bits of flare added to the tattoo as well.

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Bucky watched Steve as he got pretty into it. He drew some simple ones and then some slightly more complex ones. Bucky settled on one that had the date neatly scrawled with a fancy curling line pattern and flowers directly underneath it. "This one. I want to do this one."

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"Alright," Steve said, leaning over to kiss him. "We can make an appointment and I'll go with you," he decided. "Do you want the girls to know about it before or after?"

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"Well," Bucky said and looked away from Steve. "I already have something scheduled for about an hour from now and I was just going to cancel if you didn't want me to do it." He looked back to Steve and frowned before cautiously saying, "And I kind of wanted to go alone. Also, I don't think the girls should be left alone today and I think it would be best if you were here while I go out."

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"Jesus," Steve snorted and he couldn't help but laugh a little. He wasn't upset that Bucky had something planned already but he did look a little sad that he couldn't go with him. "Okay," he said. "I hope it goes well, Baby."

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"Thanks." Bucky kissed Steve slowly and ran his fingers through his hair. "And thank you for helping design it."

Bucky left a little later to go get the tattoo made. Everything went smoothly and it turned out really perfect and it didn't hurt nearly as much as he expected it too. Once he got back to the apartment, he stood outside for a second and admired the tattoo. What he ended up doing was the design that Steve had made with his parents' wedding date and then below it, he had the artist do a similar design for his and Steve's wedding date. Bucky smiled down at his arm and then covered the tattoo back up and headed inside.
Steve kept up while Bucky went out and made sure the girls were taken care of in case they needed anything. When Bucky came back, Steve walked up to him and put his hands on his hips while he gave him a gentle kiss. "Hey there, handsome. How did it go?"

Bucky kissed Steve back and wordlessly revealed the tattoo to him and held his arm out so Steve could see it better. It was red all around it and it burned pretty bad but Bucky loved it. He was really glad he did it. Not that he would ever forget his parents’ or his and Steve’s wedding anniversary, but this just felt really good to do for himself, Steve, and for his mom and dad.

Steve saw Bucky's parents' date first and smiled but then he saw their own wedding date and gasped. He surged forward and gave him a searing kiss. "Buck, that's beautiful," he said softly. "I love it."

Bucky giggled and held Steve close. "You like it?" he asked and grinned happily. "That's kind of why I didn't want you coming with me. I didn't want you to know I was doing ours, too." He rested his head underneath Steve's chin and kissed his neck. "I really love it. Thanks for being on board."

Steve gently scratched his nails up and down Bucky's back. "It was a nice surprise," he said softly. "If you need help taking care of it, let me know." He kissed his forehead. "You want to lay down now, Baby? I'd like to just hold you for a bit."

"Yeah, let's go lay down," Bucky said and smiled softly. This was the first anniversary of his parents' death where he found himself capable of smiling. This was the first time he didn't feel completely lost and irresponsible. This was the first time he went with his sisters to their graves instead of staying in his room all day while they fended for themselves. "I'm ready for today to be done. Mom and Dad are probably ready for us to get back to normal and stop being so upset."

Steve nodded and took Bucky by the hand to go lay down. He tucked them both in and snuggled close, happy to see that Bucky had smiled at least once. "Then let's put today behind us," he said and tucked Bucky against his chest as he closed his eyes to sleep.
"Jesus Christ, it's Steve's birthday," Bucky mumbled under his breath and looked through the fridge for something to make a good breakfast with. Bucky had done his best to prepare for the day but he kept getting himself so worked up about making it perfect that he ended up not being able to plan it at all. He decided to just start with breakfast and see where the day went from there.

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Steve woke up minutes after Bucky had left when he realized his favorite source of warmth was gone. He shuffled into the kitchen and ruined Bucky's plans to bring him breakfast in bed. "Good morning, Gorgeous," Steve said as he hugged him from behind.

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"Hey, Baby." Bucky turned in Steve's grasp and kissed him. "Happy twenty-fourth birthday." He nuzzled under his chin and then went back to making breakfast for Steve. "How about you sit down and I'll finish this for you. And then, if you want to, we can have your first round of birthday sex before the girls wake up and before your mom comes over."

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Steve smiled happily, looking very interested in getting in as much sex as possible throughout the day. "Sounds perfect. What're you making me? Think maybe we can eat it while we get undressed?"

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"Well," Bucky looked down at the skillet. "It's omelets. So I suppose we could eat naked in bed and then have sex when we are finished," he offered and stole another glance at Steve. He was so beautiful and perfect in every way. Sometimes Bucky couldn't believe that he had Steve all to himself.

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"We can manage that," Steve said confidently. He took a seat in the chair and couldn't help himself. He spread his legs and waited for Bucky to notice that he had his hand in his pants already stroke his cock to wake it up.
Bucky sprinkled some bacon and various chopped vegetables into the omelet and said, "You know, before you came around and taught me how to actually make omelets. I used to just pile up the insides on a plate and drape the flat egg on top." Bucky chuckled at himself and turned to look at Steve. He sucked in a sharp breath when he noticed Steve lazily pumping himself in his pants while glaring at Bucky's body. "Dammit, Steve," Bucky whispered and watched Steve's crotch and the gentle movement under the fabric.

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Steve had a big smirk on his face as Bucky chattered all husband-like and domestic. When Bucky finally realized what was going on, Steve looked positively shameless. "You love it," he said happily. "You're great at-" Steve gasped sharply through his teeth, "making omelets now."

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Bucky groaned softly and clenched his jaw. He forced himself to turn back around and finish cooking breakfast. But he caught himself looking back at Steve a few times too many just to make sure he was still touching himself. "What, uh, what else do you want to eat with this?"

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"Sausages," Steve said, all too pleased with himself and his terrible pun and insinuation. "And I'm not just saying it as a joke." He got up and held Bucky's hips so he could grind lazily against his ass whenever he stood still.

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Bucky closed his eyes slowly and pressed back against Steve. "There's already bacon in the omelets. You want more meat?" he asked, knowing full well he was setting Steve up for another sexual comment if he chose to take it.

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"Yep," Steve growled, nipping at Bucky's ear as he slid his hand down the front of Bucky’s pants. "And then I'm having this meat." He was totally taking the bait on that joke and if Bucky thought he was just going to let it pass, he was sadly mistaken.

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The comment was a bad attempt at sexy humor but Bucky still appreciated what Steve was getting at. Bucky's body shuttered and he reached back to feel Steve's solid build holding him up. "Grab the sausage for me - and I mean the ones in the fridge." He loved when Steve got a little extra randy and mischievous with foreplay.

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Steve groped Bucky's dick anyway one last time before getting to the fridge and pulling out the package of sausages. He kissed Bucky's cheek gently and then put his hand on his ass. He couldn't keep his hands off him, apparently.

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"Tell me what you want me to do to you, Birthday Boy." Bucky put the omelets on the plates and started cooking the sausage. "It's your day. Anything you want." His tentative plan for today was to have sex after breakfast, then spend time with the girls and Sarah, then later take the girls and Steve
to see some fireworks - it was the Fourth of July after all - and then fuck Steve again and go to sleep. But he wasn’t sure if that was a good enough day and he wasn’t sure if Steve would even like that plan.

"Well," Steve hummed, "I was thinking maybe we could use the flavored lube and I can eat you out. Then I can fuck you on all fours and then later tonight, you can make slow, sweet love to me."

Bucky gasped quietly and nodded. "Mhmm, yes, let's do that." He finished making breakfast and grabbed both plates. "Come on, go get naked in our room so we can eat. You've got me too worked up for much pomp and circumstance but I am hungry."

Steve laughed and walked into their bedroom. He undressed with lightning speed and took his plate. He laid it on his stomach so he could eat it lazily and watch Bucky get undressed as well. It was rare that Steve was ever sloppy or ate in bed. But he was desperate to get his tongue on Bucky so eating his food a little quickly didn’t bother him. And he wasn’t even being that messy.

Bucky stared at Steve's dick while he ate his breakfast. When he was almost done, he eased his hand over top of it to gently thumb at the head with one hand while he finished off his egg with his other. "You feel any different now that you are twenty-four?"

Steve made a little noise when Bucky teased his dick. "Don't feel much different. But I feel happier that I get to spend my birthdays with you now." He smiled and set his plate aside once he was done. "Come here."

Bucky clattered his plate down on top of Steve's and rolled to lay sprawled out across his husband. "Happy birthday, Baby. I should thank your mom later for making you so perfect. Also, I should ask for some stories of Baby Steve."

Steve kissed Bucky slowly and then started to grope at Bucky's ass. "Go ahead and ask. I was an adorable baby," he said. Steve reached for the flavored lube and popped it open. "She can't embarrass me."

"Where do you want me?" Bucky asked and licked a line up Steve's neck. He looked over at his tattoo again and gently prodded at it. He had had it for a little less than a month now and he loved seeing it. It felt so good to have it there. And it was a perfect decision to put his and Steve's wedding date there as well.
Steve groaned low and arched his back to grind up against his husband. "I wanna do sixty-nine," he said. "Except I eat your ass instead of swallow your dick." He nudged Bucky lightly to make him move. "I see you admiring your own tattoo, by the way."

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"I just really like it." Bucky smiled and moved obediently into position for Steve. "Do you still like it, Babe? I think it's terrific. Maybe you can get one too, yeah? Would you ever do that?"

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Steve spread Bucky's ass apart and started to tease his hole with his lubricated fingers. "I love it," he said then paused because he never really thought about getting a tattoo before and it wasn't something he would rush into doing. "What do you think I should get?"

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"You could get the same thing with our wedding date if you wanted to." Bucky smiled and made sure to give Steve room to get to his ass. "Or something like that. I mean, you don't strike me as the type to get tattooed but how great would it be if we had matching ones, huh?"

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Steve pushed a finger inside. "I'll think about it," he said honestly. Steve wasn't going to promise something to Bucky he wasn't sure he would actually do. He leaned forward to lick a stripe up from Bucky's balls to around his finger. "Let's focus on my birthday right now."

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"I'm only focused on you today, Baby," Bucky said and took Steve's dick gently in his hand and guided it towards his mouth. He started slow and just licked around the head for a long time before sucking it into his mouth and really getting into it.

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Steve moaned low in his throat when Bucky took his dick into his mouth. He took his time working Bucky's ass open with his fingers. After getting two fingers inside of him, he spread his fingers apart and pushed his tongue into the space between them.

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Bucky hummed around Steve's cock and took it all down so he was nosing at Steve's balls. He pulled off after another minute or so and said, "I don't want to keep going and risk you coming before you can fuck me like you planned."

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Steve angled his hips up a bit, pressing himself just a bit deeper into Bucky's mouth before sitting back. "No faith in me to have a little stamina, huh?" Steve flipped them over suddenly so Bucky was underneath him with his chest against the mattress, eliciting an adorable surprised little yelp out of Bucky. He swatted his ass sharply. "Ass in the air."

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"Yes, Sir," Bucky said, quickly got on all fours, and stuck his ass up for Steve eagerly. "I'm ready
for you, Baby." He reached back and held his ass-cheeks apart. "Did it taste good using the strawberry lube?"

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Steve groaned softly at Bucky's willingness. It was hot to watch him hold himself open like that too. "Tasted almost as good as you do." Steve held his dick steady as he pushed inside of Bucky. "I can't believe I used to be so embarrassed to talk about sex with you." Steve made a pleased noise as he slid balls deep into Bucky's ass.

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Bucky moaned and mashed his face down into the mattress to stifle himself. Then popped back up after a second and braced himself on the bed so Steve could fuck him. "Do you realize that in a little over a month, we will have been together for a year? A year, and we have come this far."

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Steve thrust his hips back and forth easily. He closed his eyes and tilted his head back as he started to really get into the feeling of Bucky's ass squeezing his cock. "Imagine what we will accomplish in five years if this is what we do in one."

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Bucky smiled and breathed deeply. "We will set up the shelter, see Becca off to college, maybe get a baby." He looked back at Steve and bit his lip. "I love you, Steve. I have for almost a year and I will for the rest of our lives."

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Steve reached down so he could start stroking Bucky's cock as he snapped his hips a little rougher against Bucky's ass. "I'd do anything for you, Buck," he panted out breathlessly. "Going to make sure every year is better than the last."

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Bucky nodded and moved to rest his head on his pillow again. He came a little earlier than he usually would have and he panted hot breaths against his hand as Steve kept fucking into him in a hard but intimate way.

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Steve stroke Bucky through his orgasm and once Bucky was milked dry, he pressed his hand on the middle of Bucky's back strongly but carefully to make him lay back down. He gripped his hips firmly and started rocking faster into him, making Bucky move an inch or so higher with every thrust before reeling him back in. He buried himself deep inside his husband as he came a few minutes later.

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Once Steve was done, Bucky hastily rolled out from under him and said, "Here, come here," under his breath and pulled Steve up to hold him close to his chest. He kissed Steve's face like he wouldn't get to do it again and held his hand over his heart.
Steve's heart skipped a beat and when Bucky was done kissing him. He looked him in the eyes with an utterly smitten expression. "What did I do to deserve you?" He breathed out. "You are so good to me." He put his hand over Bucky's. "You make me so happy."

"You're so perfect, Steve," Bucky said and put their foreheads together. "You've helped me so much and I don't know what I would do without you. And I can't wait for every birthday after this one. And our baby's birthday - whenever that will be. Whenever we can have a baby."

Steve loved how much Bucky wanted to have a baby. It was cruel that they probably wouldn't be able to adopt for years to come. "Our baby is going to be so perfect. It's going to get so much love. You're going to be great for them." He kissed Bucky sweetly. "How's the crib coming along?"

"It's going really well," Bucky said. "Getting some pieces carved out. Clint sits down there on the stairs and talks to me as I work. Lately, it's been all talk about Natasha. He's pretty into her. Has she said anything to you about him lately?"

"Natasha doesn't talk to me much about personal stuff that makes her feel vulnerable," Steve said. "Which means she's really into him. She's a lot more reserved so she doesn't talk about that stuff unless she has to."

"Yeah, Clint is definitely not a reserved sort of guy so I hear about how great Natasha is all the time." Bucky squeezed Steve and kissed his head. "Think it's time to get dressed and get the girls up. Your mom will be here pretty soon."

Steve whined when Bucky mentioned having to get dressed. He hugged him close and sighed dramatically before getting up to put on clothes anyway. "My mom's got this candle she burns every year. It's massive and counts all the way to a hundred years old."

"What does that even mean?" Bucky asked curiously "Like a giant ass birthday candle?" He pulled a pair of jeans and a t-shirt on and ruffled his hair before tugging it back on his head. He scratched at his short beard and yawned. Man, he could go back to sleep and snuggle Steve all day.

"Yeah. It's numbered one to a hundred and she burns a new number on each birthday for every new age I turn. So we're going to burn to twenty-four," he said. "We can get one for our baby," Steve decided. "It's kind of nice to have."

"What if you live past one hundred?" Bucky asked and ran his fingers down Steve's sides. "You'll
run out of candle to burn.” Bucky hated to think about it, but he knew it was pretty likely that he would die before Steve. The amount of damage his body took with cocaine and alcohol problems and also smoking, he was looking at probably seventy years old at the latest.

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"Then I'll get another candle and start over," Steve said. He got dressed in one of his police t-shirts and a pair of jeans. "Maybe I'll get one for you and I'll burn the candle down to how old you are now."

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"Maybe we can burn it and have candlelit sex like we did that one night a while back?" Bucky said and kissed Steve. "You liked that. Just the warm glow all around us. It might take a while to burn a hundred year candle down a quarter of the way."

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Steve made a sound of approval. "Yeah, I really liked that night. It was really romantic." He got a dreamy tone in his voice because he loved that romantic crap. He kissed the tip of Bucky's nose. "Ready to go?"

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"Yes," Bucky nodded and opened the door. "Which one do you want to wake up?" he asked and gestured at the two still shut doors to his sisters' rooms. "Make sure to say that your mom is coming and food will be made shortly. That should help to get them both up."

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"You get Becca. I can handle Lilly," Steve said. She was usually more vocally grumpy but he could get her mood turned around better than Becca. He knocked on the younger one's door and walked in. "Hey, Lil. Guess who's coming over."

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Bucky heard Lilly complain and say, “I don't care” before hearing it was Steve's mom then she changed her mind and started shuffling out of bed.

Bucky went to Becca's bed and said, "Miss Sarah is coming over for Steve's birthday. I'm sure she will love seeing you. And Steve could use a birthday hug." Becca did a fair share of cursing Bucky under her breath but she eventually did roll out of bed and found Steve. She flopped on him in a hug and mumbled a short and sleepy ‘happy birthday’ before letting go and slipping onto the couch.

---

Steve loved how much the girls liked his mom. And lord knows his mom adored them too, even with their cursing. He smiled dumbly and hugged Becca in turn. "Love you guys," he said sweetly. Just as he was about to hug Bucky again, there was a knock at the door.

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"Here, I'll start making some food for the girls," Bucky said and ushered them towards the table. He wanted Steve to be able to relax and talk with his mom instead of worrying about making the girls breakfast like he usually did.
Sarah came in and went over to her son, kissed both cheeks, and hugged him tightly. "Happy birthday, my baby boy," she said to him. She set his present on the table and snuck Becca and Lilly each a candy bar.

"Hello, Mrs. Rogers," Bucky said and smiled at her. "Would you like anything to eat? I'm just going to make omelets for the girls. Steve and I ate earlier." He glanced over at Lilly who had a chocolate bar sticking out of her mouth and he hoped she thanked Sarah for bringing that for her.

"It's alright. I ate breakfast before coming here." Sarah walked back over to Steve and gently fixed his hair. She always babied him more than usual on his birthday. "What do you boys have planned?"

"Well, I was thinking we could go out to dinner later all of us, then go watch fireworks, and then come back home and... go to sleep." Bucky laughed at himself quietly for not being very smooth in covering up the fact that he and Steve were going to have sex after they got back home.

Steve blushed deeply when Bucky wasn't subtle in the slightest. And he got even redder when his mom gave him a look and said quietly, "You two better use protection." He didn't have the heart to tell her that they never did. The girls giggled at how red he was, too.

Bucky cleared his throat and produced two plates of omelets for his sisters. "Eat and stop laughing," he said with a tick of a smile and messed up their hair. "Of course, if Steve doesn't want to go watch fireworks we don't have to."

Lilly glared up at Bucky and said, "But, we watch fireworks every year."

"I like the fireworks," Steve said. He kissed Bucky's cheek and grabbed a few crackers to snack on. "I love getting hot dogs and ice pops on the street and sitting back to watch the sky light up."

"Me too!" Lilly said happily and started vacuuming down her omelet. "Dad used to put me on his shoulders while we watched because there were too many people around. I love the Fourth of July."

"Well, now there's another reason to love it," Bucky said and leaned into Steve. "We can get ice pops and hot dogs and also a birthday cake somewhere, okay?"

Steve leaned his head on Bucky's shoulder and smiled happily. "Sounds like a plan." He laced his fingers together with Bucky's and felt his heart swell happily. "I love you," he said to him. When it was time to go out, Steve was all excited. It was his first birthday with his new family, with Bucky.
Okay, Steve, where do you want to get dinner before it starts getting dark enough for fireworks? Bucky asked and looked back at Sarah and Becca who were bringing up the rear of their group. Becca liked fireworks well enough but sometimes the noise of it made her anxious so she was going to be sticking close to Sarah or Bucky all night.

"I want to go to the diner," Steve said. "The one that has the milkshakes that are way too big." He had a bit of a bounce in his step. "Is that alright with everyone else?"

"Yes, that's good." Bucky smiled and squeezed Steve's upper arm just once discreetly and then let go. "But, Lilly, you just had some chocolate and if you want some of Steve's birthday cake then you can't have a milkshake, too. You have to pick."

Lilly whined. "Why can't I have both? It's Steve's birthday and America’s birthday, so I think it's enough of a special occasion to have extra desserts," she bartered.

"Do you want to actually manage to sleep tonight, Lil?" Bucky countered and pinched her lightly. "Steve and I won't be able to watch TV with you until you fall asleep. And Becca will be out the second we get home."

"Well, how about you guys wait a whole half hour to have sex to make sure I'm asleep before you be all gross and married," Lilly said bluntly, making a face at her brother.

"No thanks!" Bucky beamed back at her. "Still, that's too much sugar for you. You'll be up all night and then you'll crash in the morning and be an upset mess for two days." He looked to Steve to back him up on this. He had seen Lilly when she was sleep deprived. It wasn't good for anyone around.

Steve nodded. "Your brother is right. Too much sugar is a one-way trip to unhappiness - and rotten teeth. You don't want to be a toothless old lady, do you?" Steve asked.

Lilly huffed and ignored the both of them. Once they got to the diner, the five of them sat together at a booth. Bucky and Steve squished together in a corner so they could hold hands between them without anyone noticing. Lilly and Becca both flanked Sarah and Lilly tried convincing her to convince her brother to let her have both a milkshake and some cake.

"How about you get one bite - just one bite - of my cake so you can at least taste it?" Steve bargained. He was about to talk to Bucky when he saw a little three-year-old wandering around and
his officer’s training kicked in. He calmly got up from their table and crouched down next to her. "Hey, Kiddo, you lost?" She nodded her head. Steve alerted one of the waitresses that he was going to keep an eye on her while they looked for the mother. He sat the kid on his mom's lap and took his seat again. "Looks like we have another guest."

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Bucky watched the little kid looking anxious as all hell sitting with them. "Hey," he said softly and reached a hand out to her. "It'll be okay. Someone will find your parents, alright?" He reached into his pocket and pulled out a pen and then handed her a napkin so she could draw on it if she wanted to.

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The kid didn't talk much during the meal, though she did sit up and pull Lilly's plate over to start eating fries from it when Lilly was distracted checking her pockets to make sure she brought money for a few firecrackers. Steve burst out laughing once Lilly realized her food was hijacked. The mom came over in a frenzy just as cake arrived and thanked them over and over again for taking care of her daughter. "That mom sounded like you when I first met you," Steve teased Bucky after they left.

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Bucky chuckled and gave Steve a warm look. "Oh, leave me alone, Officer. You fell in love with me that day, don't tell me otherwise." He looked off at the young mother holding her child close to her chest and he smiled. He knew was it was like to be scared out of his mind looking for Lilly all those times she ran off. It was good to see them reunited.

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"I won't deny it. How could I resist those charming eyes and that smile you have?" Steve wished he could go back in time and relive their first date together. It had been so perfect. Sarah smiled at the two of them because she knew how happy Bucky made her son.

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They all finished up eating and then headed out into the city to find a good spot to sit to watch fireworks. Lilly was bursting with energy, having managed to have most of her milkshake and about half a piece of cake. Bucky had to hold her hand to keep her right next to him and not bounds ahead of them.

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Steve was so excited to be out in the streets amongst everyone. Once it started getting dark, Steve bought a sparkler for each of them and for a few kids that were about to use their own money for them. He used his lighter to light them all and he smiled over at Bucky. "Enjoying yourself?"

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"Always, when I'm with you," Bucky said and took a sparkler from Steve. He had a thought as to whether he could light a cigarette using a sparkler but he decided that was probably an accident waiting to happen so he didn't bother testing it. He leaned into Steve and said quietly, "And tonight once we are back home, I'm going to give you a little present I made and then I'll make love to you so nice and slow you'll forget your own name. How's that?"
Steve was thankful it was dark out because it helped hide his blush. "I like the sound of that." They stayed out pretty late. Lilly was dead on her feet by the end of the day so Steve ended up carrying her back as they walked his mom home before heading back to their apartment.

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When they were home, Bucky took Lilly from Steve and tucked her into bed. Becca grumped her way to her room saying something about not disturbing her until noon the next day. "You want the present I made you, now?" Bucky asked once they got to their room. He slipped his hands up Steve's shirt. "It's small and not that great but I hope you'll like it."

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Steve put his hands on Bucky's hips and kissed the tip of his nose. "I'm sure whatever you got me is perfect, Baby. I want to see it." He slid his hands down to Bucky's ass and gave a light squeeze.

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"Okay, come here," Bucky said and pushed Steve back. He plopped Steve on the bed and made sure he closed his eyes. Bucky hadn't been entirely sure what to get for Steve. He had enough art supplies at the moment and there wasn't anything that he really needed. So, instead, he did some carving. First, he made a small deer out of some excess wood that he had from the crib. And then he took a few small planks and carved a little wooden plaque that had Steve's favorite Bible verse on it. He had had to look through Steve's Bibles and double check with his mother and Father Frank but he did find it. "Okay, here," Bucky said and handed him the small deer and held the plaque to his chest, hiding the words.

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Steve had complete and utter faith in his husband to pick out the best birthday gifts. And he wasn't led astray. Steve opened his eyes and recognized the color and grain of the wood from their baby's crib and he beamed at it. "Bucky, this is beautiful!"

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Bucky nodded to the deer, "Made that because you got all excited about the deer we saw up at the lake." He fiddled his fingers on the edge of the wood plank still held tightly to his chest.

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"In my defense, deer are pretty and I hadn't seen one in real life before." Steve looked it over, turning it around in his hands and getting a better view from all sides. Then he noticed Bucky was holding something else. "What's that?"

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"This, I thought we could hang at the shelter once it's up," Bucky said, flipped it over, and thrust it into Steve's hands nervously.

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Steve read the verse on the plaque and he started to tear up. Bucky was so goddamned thoughtful, making these by hand and finding Steve's favorite verse to a religion Bucky didn't even believe in. And it was going to the shelter Steve was going to build, too. He put both gifts gently aside and he hugged Bucky with crushing strength. "I'm so fucking lucky I have you."
"Lungs, Babe," Bucky choked out. "Need to breathe." He chuckled once Steve let up and he pushed him back onto the mattress to lay on top of him and kiss him. "Do you like your presents? Was it a good birthday? I mean, it's not over. We still have something left to do tonight."

"Bucky, today was amazing," Steve said in a soft, happy voice. "I loved everything we did. I loved spending it with my new family. It feels so good being together." He slowly started to take Bucky's shirt off. "Now, make love to me."

"Patience, Baby." Bucky bit his lip and put Steve's hands on his lower back. He licked across Steve's neck and grabbed at his shirt too. "I got to get it up first." He grinned and tossed Steve's shirt away from the bed and slipped his hands down the back of his pants to massage at his ass. "Do you want candles tonight, too? Because I still have them and it'll only take me a second."

Steve was so, so ready for Bucky to take him. Everything felt right. "Yes, please," he said. "I love the soft lighting. And it makes the room warm in a way that you can't get without them."

"Okay." Bucky kissed Steve once more and stripped himself of the rest of his clothes so Steve could watch him move around the room naked while he set up the candles. He had seven lit before came back to bed and starting kissing so slowly and carefully down Steve’s body, leaving marks wherever he could.

Steve licked his lips and he watched Bucky hungrily as he took his time to really set the mood for the both of them. And he was beyond happy when Bucky came back to touch him again. He held him against his body and moaned softly as he was kissed. "Yes. Keep going," Steve murmured, dragging his nails softly over Bucky's back.

Bucky mouthed from Steve nipples down past his hips and onto his inner things. He didn't want to touch Steve's cock. He didn't want it touched until his own cock was buried inside Steve's ass. Bucky sucked a deep red hickey on a soft bit of skin right where Steve’s thigh folded into his crotch. "Talk to me?" Bucky whispered quickly then pushed Steve's legs up so he could start licking his way to Steve's ass.

Steve's breath came in quick, short intakes as Bucky teased him and kissed lower and lower on his body. "Buck-" he moaned softly, arching his back. "I need you so bad," he moaned. "I love it when you take your time with me and make me feel special. No one else can make me feel like this."

"More," Bucky demanded softly and pulled Steve’s cheeks apart to lick once sharply at his hole. He
had already grabbed the lube and put it on the edge of the bed. He coated two of his fingers generously as he licked some more at Steve. Finally, he stuck both fingers in together and let Steve have a few seconds before he pulled them back out carefully.

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Steve spread his legs a bit more and let out a moan as Bucky started fingerling him. "You make me feel happy like I've never been before," he said. "And when we're apart I ache to see you again." He laid his head back on the pillow as he dragged his nails lightly through Bucky’s hair. "You're everything to me."

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Bucky fingered Steve gently and slowly and rested his head on his thigh. "We will never have to be apart for very long for the rest of our lives, okay? It's you and me, Baby. You're mine and you're perfect and you are everything I will ever need." He stuck a third finger in. "And I was so lost before you and I'm so grateful you found me."

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Steve looked down at Bucky with eyes blown dark with arousal. He licked his lips and moaned Bucky's name again when he pushed another finger in. "You're so good to me, Buck. And you're so good to your sisters. And you do such a great job keeping us all together."

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"I love you," Bucky whispered against Steve's skin and glanced up at him. "Happy birthday." He pulled his fingers out and moved to line up with Steve's ass. He held him open and gently eased his dick all the way inside so he had Steve bent in half and Bucky could reach to kiss him lazily but, at the same time, desperately.

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Steve closed his eyes and tilted his head closer as Bucky entered him. "Love you so fucking much," he gasped out. He gripped Bucky's shoulders and moved with him. "Keep going."

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Bucky nodded and eased out of Steve and back in again. Steve wanted slow lovemaking so that's what he would get. Bucky took one of Steve's hands from its grip on his shoulder and brought it to his lips to gently kiss it over and over again before lacing their fingers together and pushing their hands into the pillow above Steve's head.

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Steve opened his eyes and looked up at Bucky's face as they moved together. "You always know what to give me," he breathed out. "Tell me how much you love me."

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"I love your wonderful expressive eyes and how I can usually tell what you are thinking." Bucky reached down with his free hand and added his pointer finger in Steve’s ass in alongside his dick. "And I love your laugh and how sometimes it's just a short little snort but sometimes it's big and loud. And I love how passionate you are about the things that matter to you. And I love that you don't give up easy or let yourself be pushed around. And I love that natural kind disposition you've got about
you and how being a cop has given you with skills to help others like you helped that little girl and her mother today. I love absolutely every bit of you."

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Steve's heart just expanded with love for Bucky. It felt amazing to have someone be so in love with him and care so much about the little details that made Steve who he was. He cupped the side of Bucky's face and looked him in the eyes, panting softly as he felt himself get closer to orgasm. "Keep going. Baby, keep going," he gasped.

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Bucky nodded and breathed deeply in time with his slow thrusts into Steve. He really paid attention to the feeling of Steve's ass around him and how the head of his cock slipped easily out but caught just slightly at the entrance of his hole. "Come for me, Steve," Bucky said quietly and watched Steve's face carefully.

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Steve moaned low and arched his back as Bucky kept thrusting into him. "Fuck, yes," he gasped out. He loved the feeling of Bucky's cock stretching his rim over and over again. He came hard, spilling come all over his abs. He gripped Bucky's shoulders tightly as he moaned his name.

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Bucky grinned wide as he saw streams of come fall onto Steve's stomach. He lifted Steve's ass up off the mattress and held him up. "Can I fuck you harder until I come or no?" Bucky asked, still giving soft, slow, methodical thrusts to carry Steve through his orgasm.

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Steve looked happy and fucked out but he wanted Bucky to get what he wanted too. And lord knows he liked taking it however Bucky would give it to him. "Fuck me hard, Baby," he said sternly.

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"Okay," Bucky gasped excitedly and immediately started pounding into Steve so he could hear the harsh slap of balls on ass. It didn't take very much time before Bucky was biting down on his lower lip and pushing as far inside Steve as possible to come in hot spurts inside his husband's ass. "God, you're so beautiful," Bucky said and hugged Steve to him without pulling out.

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Steve writhed and dug his fingernails into Bucky's shoulders and cried out Bucky's name as he fucked him nice and hard. When Bucky finally came, Steve was a panting, sweating mess. "Fuck," he swore. He drew Bucky in for a searing kiss. "I love you. God, that was so good."

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"Good birthday sex?" Bucky asked through gasps of breath. He rolled them so he was flopped on the bed and Steve was lying right on top of him. Bucky let his arms fall in a heap next to him but he tangled his legs with Steve's and kissed wherever he could reach on his husband.

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"Amazing birthday sex," Steve declared happily. He kissed along Bucky's neck with a big smile. "Thank you for a perfect day, Buck. It really meant a lot to me." He paused and added, "It was really special."

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"Good," Bucky smiled and kissed Steve. "Now roll to your side. Birthday boy gets to be little spoon tonight and I'm very tired." He draped himself around Steve and held him tight against him. His arm was on Steve's chest and his leg was tucked securely across Steve's hips. It didn't take very long for the both of them to fall asleep warm and comfortably wrapped up in each other.
A few days after his birthday, Steve had been on a drugs bust and it was pretty typical - a bunch of junkies all holed up in one home wasting their life away as they spent more time high than sober. Steve and his team burst into the house and the people scattered like roaches from light. They were able to catch a few but there were so many, some got away.

Afterwards, he did a sweep of the place to look for any drugs or weapons that he could collect. His heart stopped as he checked the back only to find a baby in a stroller by the dumpster. The mother probably got away and didn't want to be weighed down with something that couldn't get by on its own.

The poor thing started to cry, so Steve took him gently into his arms and rocked him. Steve took the baby with him to the precinct and called Bucky to let him know he'd be late. After a bit of digging, he figured out who the mom was and found a relative who might be able to take him. An hour later, he knocked on her door.

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The woman opened the door and found a tall, blonde, and thoroughly stressed-out looking police officer standing with her nephew in hand. "What did they do this time?" she asked bluntly and ushered Steve into her apartment. "My sister and that lousy husband of hers are always into something. You want some water, Officer? Or is this a different sort of house call? 'Your sister died in police custody from an overdose' sort of house call."

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Steve was a bit shocked when the sister already expected some sort of trouble. He hugged the baby closer and stepped inside, taking a look around. She wasn't living completely middle-class, but she seemed to have her act together by the look of her house. "We did a drugs bust and she split before we could apprehend her," Steve explained. "She left him behind," he added in a sad tone as if he couldn't imagine abandoning your own child. "You're his only relative and I was hoping you could be his guardian. Her husband is in custody and she will be, too, once we find her."

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The woman scoffed and gave Steve a look like he was joking. "Excuse me? I can't take care of him. My sister has only let me see him once and that was when he was born. It's not like I've been 'Aunt Alison' these four months or anything." Alison touched her nephew’s head carefully, he was asleep in Steve's arms. "Besides, I am in graduate school and I teach several undergrad classes. I am never home and wouldn't be able to afford a nanny for him while I'm not around."

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"Please," Steve said with a hint of desperation in his voice. "He needs his family." He looked down at the adorable baby in his arms. "I know you didn't ask for him and I know you have your life, but sometimes we have to give up what we want so we can give those we love what they need." He took a breath and said, "My husband dropped out of school when his parents died so he could take care of his sisters. He kept his family together because the foster system isn't a good place. And now he's going to go back to school soon."
"Your husband, Officer?" Alison asked curiously like she was interested in what sort of gossip fodder she may get to share with her friends later. A gay Brooklyn cop claiming he had a husband would be an interesting conversation starter. She gave Steve and the baby a once over.

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"Yes, my husband, ma'am," Steve said firmly. He wasn’t prepared to argue his right to marriage with a woman he didn’t know. He was working on convincing her to take this baby.

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"Look, Officer, regardless of what your partner may have done, I can't necessarily take the same route. I'm almost finished with grad school and I can't drop out now to take care of the child my sister should be taking care of. And I can't simply pick up where I left off later down the road."

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Steve was heartbroken that she was turning away this little infant who needed help. He was such a perfect, little boy. He wasn't making any sort of a fuss at all. Steve snuggled the baby protectively. "If you're not going to take him, then let me," he said. "You're his guardian by default right now. And if you're not willing to take him, your choices are to put him in foster care or assign a new guardian. So let me raise him."

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Alison looked at Steve for a long moment with contemplative eyes. "Why do you want him?" It wasn't like Steve knew the family or had any particular investment in them or this child. "I mean, you don't know any of us at all. You just arrested his father and are looking for his mother. Why would you rather have him instead of let him go into the foster system?"

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"Why wouldn't I want him?" Steve asked. "Look at him. He's perfect." The baby made a little noise and Steve was quick to rock him gently again in his arms. "My husband and I want kids, but no agency will let a gay couple adopt. And as a police officer, I’ve seen what the foster system does to kids. Even at its best, the kids still come out feeling like no one ever wanted them. I don't want that happening to him."

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"You want to adopt my nephew?" Alison asked carefully and leaned against her kitchen counter. "Really? You, a cop, wants to adopt the son of two drug pushers? And what would your partner have to say about that?" It was clear that Alison wasn’t convinced by Steve entirely but she also wasn't in any way going to be the one to take care of the baby.

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"I don't care if his parents had been murderers. That's not his fault," Steve said strongly. "And my husband will love him. He's already building a crib by hand even though we knew there's no guarantee we would ever be given children. And when this baby is old enough, my husband will take him fishing where his dad used to take him. We will love this baby and care for him."

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Alison nodded and crossed her arms. "His name is Rocky. It's terrible. You can have him if you
promise to take better care of him than my sister could and you change his name the second you get a chance. Give him a good name, not the name of someone whose parents were doped out of their minds when he was born."

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Steve's heart stopped when she agreed. He nodded his head enthusiastically and fought back the happy tears that threatened to fall. "I promise," he said, already an emotional wreck. He kissed the top of the baby's head and said, "I'll need you to sign a few papers giving over parental rights. But I swear we are going to give him such a good life."

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"Yeah, anything you need." Alison smiled cautiously and pet her nephew's head once. "I assume his parents have no right over him given the severity of the crime and jail time they could be facing, right? I'm just saying, you'll want to make sure this is a full adoption from me to you so neither of them tries to come back years later and claim him. They cannot be trusted to raise a child."

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The baby cooed softly when his head was pet and Steve's heart melted. "They're looking at twenty to life. And all parental rights are forfeited when a baby is found in such a dangerous environment," he said. "I'll make sure they can't come to get him even though he'll be a legal adult by the time they're out." Steve hugged her and thanked her one more time before heading back to the cruiser and loading his new son into the baby seat he borrowed from the precinct's lost and found. He called in for the end of his shift and went straight home. He cradled the baby to his chest as he opened the door and called out, "Buck? Are you home?"

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"Becca's room!" Bucky hollered back. Becca and Lilly had both decided to go to the park for a while and Bucky had decided he could handle it if they went on their own for just a little bit. Also, Clint's place wasn't too far and he had them go let him know that they were around, just in case. Right now, however, Bucky was searching for one of his jackets that he was pretty sure Becca had snatched when she did laundry the last time.

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Raphael meowed curiously at the bundle in Steve's arms and circled Steve's legs as he walked into the bedroom. "Hey, can you hold this for me?" Steve asked as he passed the baby over to Bucky.

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"What-?" Bucky's eyes were wide but he hastily dumped the clothes he was holding and gingerly took the baby from Steve. "Whose baby is this? What's going on?" he asked and looked down at the sleepy little boy in his arms. His first thought was that someone on the police force needed a babysitter for the evening and Steve was the first in line to offer to help.

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Steve kissed Bucky's cheek and wrapped an arm strongly around Bucky's waist. He leaned his head on his shoulder and looked down at their boy. "He's ours," Steve said, still barely able to believe it. "He's our son now, Buck," Steve told him. "His parents are going away for a long time and his only relative says she will sign the parental rights to us."
"Uh... huh?" Bucky looked from his husband to the baby and back again. "E-excuse me? What are you saying to me right now, Steve?" He couldn't help the confused, flustered stitch in his brow or the set face that warned Steve that if this was some sort of weird joke that he didn't think it was funny and he didn't appreciate it in the slightest.

"I'm saying...." Steve turned to look at Bucky seriously. "This is our son. This is Christopher Leland Rogers-Barnes and we get to raise him. We get to be dads now, Bucky." A happy smile came across his face. "Isn't this wonderful?"

Bucky tightened his hold on the baby and locked eyes with Steve desperately. "Someone's giving him to us? We get to have him? This is our son?" he rambled for a second and felt the sting of tears in the corners of his eyes. "What happened on that raid today, Steve?"

Steve nodded his head excitedly. "Yeah, Baby," he said. "We get to keep him." He sighed. "We arrested his dad. Drug possession, illegal weapons, trafficking. His mom fled and left him behind. Aunt wouldn't take him. She wouldn't do for him what you did for your sisters."

Bucky sat down on Becca's bed and cradled the baby softly back and forth. "Christopher Leland, we are going to love you so much," he whispered through his tears and watched as a few fell and made wet marks on the blanket that he was wrapped in. Bucky looked up to Steve quickly. "Oh my god! We need baby clothes and diapers and something for him to eat, and a crib. My crib! I'm not finished with it. Where will he sleep? Steve?!

Steve smiled adoringly at their son and kissed the top of Bucky's head. "I can go out and get some supplies while you get to have some quality time with our boy," he said. "We can pull out a drawer from our dresser for tonight and put in a pillow and blanket. That's how my ma had me sleep at first."

"That's not safe!" Bucky's eyes went wide as he stood back up and passed the baby off to Steve. "I'm going to go to Clint's and finish the crib and then he and I will bring it here and then I'll go to the store and get what we need for the baby then I'll be back." He rushed through his list and rummaged in his pockets to check for some money. "Steve, we have a baby!"

"My ma wouldn't have done it if it wasn't-" Steve started to say, but Bucky was already running around to get baby things ready and it really was adorable. Steve didn't have it in him to stop him. "Alright," he said, cuddling their son. "I know, Buck. I know, we have a baby. And you are already such an amazing dad, you know that?" He tossed Bucky his wallet for him.
Bucky caught the wallet and flicked through the cash. He figured he had enough there to get what they would immediately need. He stopped for just a moment and stared at their son for a long, quiet moment. "He's really ours," he said in disbelief and caught Steve in a sudden kiss. "I'll call you from Clint's house." Bucky kissed the baby's head gingerly and whispered, "I love you so much, Christopher. I always will."

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Steve smiled adoringly at Bucky. The baby cooed up at Bucky when the man spoke to him and Steve wondered if Christopher ever got any attention in the few months he'd been alive. While Bucky was out, Steve spent the time talking to his son and telling him about what life was like here even though he knew the baby didn't understand a word of it.

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By the time Bucky had finished he crib and made sure it was sturdy and safe, it was well into the evening. He had gone to the store before going to Clint's just in case he went too long and all the shops would be closed. He had to promise Clint that he would bring him a tub of ice cream the next day at work just so Clint would help him cart a baby crib to his apartment in the late hours of the night.

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Steve had made a sling out of sheets and was wearing Christopher on his chest while the baby napped. The second Bucky got back, he rushed over to him and kissed his cheek. "Hey, Beautiful," he said. "He's been an absolute angel, Bucky. But do you have diapers? He needs to be changed."

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"Yeah, of course," Bucky said and produced a bag of diapers from inside the crib. Clint helped Bucky haul the crib the rest of the way into the apartment and he said a quick 'hello' to Steve and the baby before explaining how tired he was and that he needed to head out. As Bucky waited for Steve to return from changing the baby, and he laid out each outfit on the table that he had bought. Mostly they had dinosaurs on them but his favorite was a little American flag onesie that was on sale since the Fourth of July had just passed.

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Steve came back, walked up behind Bucky, and chuckled. "Buck, these are adorable." Christopher stared wide-eyed at the two of them because he wasn't used to being awake and talked to so much. He licked his lips and wiggled a bit in Steve's arms. "Which one do you want him to wear his first night home? These T-Rex ones or the flag?"

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"You choose, Baby," Bucky said and took Christopher from Steve carefully just because he needed to hold him again so he knew this wasn't all just a bizarre whirlwind of a dream. "What did the girls say when they came home? I'm sorry I missed that. But I have a finished crib!"

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Steve smiled as he passed Christopher over. He loved holding their little boy but Bucky barely got to spend any time with him so far. "I didn't tell them yet," Steve said. "Figured I'd wait until you got home. I hid him in the bedroom with me when they came in and I let him nap during dinner."
"They don't know?" Bucky asked and looked into the hall at the two closed doors to his sisters' rooms. "Think we should wake them up and tell them? I mean, if Christopher starts crying in the middle of the night then they will wake up and know anyway."

Steve shook his head in response. He felt bad for hiding it but he wanted Bucky to be with him when they told them the news. "I guess we should wake them. I'm sure they won't be too grumpy when they know why."

"Okay!" Bucky jumped up excitedly and said, "You go to our room and put him in that T-Rex onesie and I'll get both girls out on the couch - possibly with a midnight snack so they don't try to kill me."

Steve nodded and took Christopher into the room to change into his new clothes. He blew raspberries on his belly to try to make him laugh but the baby was more confused as to what Steve was doing to him. Becca and Lilly grumpily made their way to the couch and when Steve brought the baby out, Lilly asked, "The hell is that?"

"It's called 'a baby', Lil," Bucky said. He took Christopher from Steve and went to kneel in front of the couch with him in hand. "He's your new nephew. His name is Christopher." Bucky beamed up at his sisters and took in their sleepily bewildered expressions.

Becca stared, not even the slightest bit convinced. "Who let you adopt a baby when you're not legally married and you already have two dependents? Is this a joke?" Lilly wasn't interested in the logistics. She just leaned forward quickly so she could look at the baby and play with his feet.

"Well," Bucky said and held Christopher out to Lilly a bit. "You both are my dependents, not Steve's. And he is an officer of the law in good standing so the baby will probably only be Steve's. At least, that's what I'm assuming the court will allow. Steve adopts him and I help raise him."

Christopher made quiet noises at Lilly and reached out for her. "Can I hold him?" Lilly asked. The baby was pretty damn cute even though he looked a bit underfed. Becca crossed her arms and looked him over.

Bucky had Lilly sit back in the couch and showed her how to hold the baby properly. He sighed and glanced over at Steve. Bucky sort of figured Becca didn't think this was such a great idea given Bucky's track record with being their guardian. Not that she necessarily didn't want them to have a child, but Bucky figured she thought it was a good idea for them to at least wait until she and Lilly
were out of the house.

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Lilly smiled as Christopher cooed and wrapped his little hand around the finger she wiggled in front of him. Steve looked to Becca and said softly, "Becca, you can trust us to take care of him. You've got a beautiful nephew now who's going to love you so much." Steve sat down and put an arm around Lilly. "He's a good baby. And he needs a family."

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Bucky hugged Steve and looked at Lilly holding tightly onto the new baby. "He's got Dad's middle name," Bucky said in hopes of getting Becca to soften just a bit. "I don't know what he is called right now but we are naming him 'Christopher Leland'."

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"He had a crappy name before this," Steve said. "His aunt hated the name, too." Christopher let out an unhappy screech at Lilly when she tried to pull her hand away. "He's getting louder the longer he's here," Steve said. "That's a good sign. When babies are neglected, they tend to not cry or make any noises because they learn that no one is going to come for them."

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"That is good he's warming up then." Bucky smiled and held Christopher's hand. "And he's ours," he whispered and looked up at Steve again. "And I hope that you both will grow to love him and like being his aunts." Bucky reached out to squeeze Becca's hand. "It'll be fun being an aunt, won't it?"

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Becca shrugged her shoulders in response and then headed back to her room. "I'm going back to bed."

Steve sighed and focused on the baby instead. "How about you play more with him tomorrow?" Steve suggested to Lilly. "It's getting late and Bucky hasn't had a chance to hold him much."

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"I'm not done," Lilly protested and hugged him tighter. "Becca and Bucky got to have little siblings and I didn't." Bucky let her hold him for a while longer until Lilly's eyes were fluttering shut with sleep. He gently took the baby back and ushered Lilly to her room.

---

Steve loved how much Lilly wanted to hold their son. He didn't put up much of a fight because he wanted to encourage both girls to give Christopher attention. "You can hold him plenty more tomorrow," he promised as Bucky sent her to her room. When his husband returned, Steve stood up and kissed him gently. "I love you so much. I wouldn't have all this - I wouldn't have a son - without you."

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"We have a baby," Bucky breathed and leaned into Steve with Christopher cuddled between their chests. "A baby, Steve," he repeated and pulled Steve to him in a kiss. He started for their bedroom,
where Clint and Bucky had pushed the crib off into the corner.

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Steve nodded his head. "Look at how much he loves you already, Buck," he said gently. Christopher had his thumb in his mouth as he rested his head against Bucky. "He knows you're going to give him everything he needs. We got to give him as much attention as we can to make up for lost time." He kissed Bucky's forehead. "How're you feeling?"

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"I feel perfect." Bucky said quietly and let a rogue tear fall down his face. "I never would have thought that this would happen this fast. Our estimate was something like five to ten years and here we are with a baby whose next relative wants us to have him."

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"His hair is pretty blonde. He might have hair like yours and eyes like mine," Bucky said and grinned at Steve. "Also, we did say that we would take whatever child came our way that needed us. And he needs us. And we want him."

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Steve nodded and brushed his finger over the tip of the baby's nose. "It's kind of scary having responsibility for such a vulnerable life," he said. "But we can do it together."

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"You'll get used to it," Bucky said with a quiet smile and smoothed a wrinkle in Christopher's onesie. Bucky had had two little sisters who both showed up when he was old enough to help take care of them and hold them and feed and change them. Steve hadn't ever had a sibling or a baby in his care. It really was a transition getting used to taking care of an infant but Bucky had every confidence in Steve. If Bucky could do it when he was a kid, Steve could do it now.

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Christopher closed his eyes and made a tired sound as he started to fall asleep. Steve loved all the little noises their son made. He held Bucky gently in his arms so he wouldn't squish the baby. "You look good holding him," Steve said. "You want to put him to bed and sing him his first lullaby?"

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"Yeah," Bucky said and moved to lay the baby in the crib. "Wish he could sleep in our bed with us but that's really not safe for a baby this small." Bucky made sure all the corners of the tiny mattress were tucked in so Christopher wouldn't accidentally tangle himself in the night. "Oh, hey!" Bucky thought and jumped up to grab the little plush dog that Steve had bought him months before. "He can have Bourbon." He placed the dog securely in the farthest corner from the baby and pat its head.
"I'm sure he will sneak into our room plenty once he's old enough to run around. We might wake up to him in our bed a lot," Steve said. Christopher gave out a big yawn and snuggled into the mattress. "Maybe we can get some more toys for him tomorrow. I still have to call my mom to let her know. She's probably suspecting something is up because I haven't called her at all today."

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"Steve, she's going to think you're hurt again," Bucky chastised. "You always check in with her." He ran his fingers along the smooth grain of the crib and smiled. He usually wasn't so proud of things he made, but this one he had to give himself credit for. "Hey, so what is his legal name right now?"

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Steve leaned his head on Bucky's shoulder. "Rocky," he said with quiet disgust and looked at his son who was nowhere near a ‘Rocky’. "It's like a dog's name."

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"Rocky?" Bucky repeated with an indignant laugh. "As in Balboa? Boy, his biological parents must have really loved that movie. I wonder if their next kid was going to be Apollo. Don't worry, though, Little Bean," Bucky whispered down at the baby. "You're ‘Christopher’ now."

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Steve smiled and kissed Bucky's cheek. "I doubt they used his name much anyway. The poor kid probably was only fed enough to keep him from crying. With the way he looks at us when we are talking to him, it's like he's never been held and cared for before."

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"It shouldn't take us very long to get him to a healthy weight for his age," Bucky reassured Steve. "Becca was horribly underweight for about eight months but then she just sort of sprung back to normal. The good thing, too, is that he is so young and tiny that he won't remember those first few months without being cared for."

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"Babies always got to know something. They say that the first year of their life can determine their personality for the rest of their life," Steve said. "And he could have developmental problems cause his parents were using drugs during the mom's pregnancy. What if he has fetal drug addiction? How do we fix that?"

---

"We will just do what we can to help him if and when any issues show themselves," Bucky said calmly and took Steve's hand. "And I don't believe that about the first years. No way does the first year determine personality." There was a small hiccup from the baby and Bucky noticed he was sound asleep. He wondered how long it would be until he woke up and needed food. He and Steve probably had a solid two or three hours of sleep ahead of them before he needed them again.

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Steve nodded. "No matter what, I'm going to love him so much," he said. "And he's going to get all the help he needs," he continued. Steve looked down at their sleeping son before looking back at
Bucky. "Should we go sleep while we can before he wakes up?"

---

"Yes, please," Bucky said and pulled Steve to the bed. He stripped off the jeans and t-shirt that he went to Clint's in and just curled up in bed in a pair of boxer briefs. They laid cuddled up to each other for a long minute. Bucky felt himself drifting off, the excitement of the past several hours was finally catching up with him. "I love you, Steve. We have a baby, now," Bucky mumbled into Steve's chest and then fell asleep.

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Steve wrapped his arms strongly around Bucky and kissed his face over and over again. He pet his fingers through his hair until he fell asleep. A few hours later they would be woken by Christopher crying from hunger.

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"I got him," Bucky said tiredly and squirmed out of Steve's grasp. He picked up Christopher from his crib and bounced him lightly back and forth to help calm him down so he could get him some food. Bucky looked up into the doorway and there was Becca looking mad as all hell with her braided hair falling out of the knot in the back.

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Steve was ready to get Christopher but Bucky was already on it. Instead, he went to deal with Becca. "You were a baby once, too," he said as he walked up to her. "If you want, I can get you a good pair of earplugs or something."

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Becca ignored Steve and stomped back to her room. This would probably be a frequent occurrence until they all got used to having an infant in the house. Although, Lilly was such a heavy sleeper she may never be bothered by his crying. Bucky took the baby out to the kitchen to get him a bottle and then he came back and stretched out in bed to feed him.

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Christopher hungrily grabbed at the bottle Bucky held over for him. Steve sighed and sat back next to Bucky. "You're a natural at this."

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"Here," Bucky said and transferred the baby to Steve and handed him the bottle. "I'm just used to it from having siblings. Whenever my dad was at work I would help my mom with the girls. Especially if she was having a bad headache and needed to lay in her room."

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Steve cradled the baby in one arm and had his attention focused entirely on their son as he held the bottle up for him. "God, Bucky, he's so amazing," he breathed out. "He's a perfect little thing, isn't he?" Christopher looked up between Steve and Bucky as he sucked on his bottle.
Bucky snuggled up next to Steve and gave Christopher one of his fingers to clutch on to. "When do you think all the official stuff will go through so he is your adoptive son? It's probably different when the parents are going to prison and not dead like mine."

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"I don't know. But one of the guys at the precinct adopted so I can ask him for advice," Steve said and leaned his head on Bucky's shoulder. "Tell me more about when you helped raise your sisters."

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"What do you want to know?" Bucky asked and yawned quietly, making Christopher stare up at him curiously. He was almost done with his bottle and would need to go back to sleep soon. A part of Bucky was immensely worried that there was going to be some complication with the adoption and Christopher was going to be taken from them before he even had settled into his home.

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"Tell me more about what they did as babies. I never had siblings so I don't know what it's like," Steve said. Once the bottle was done, he set it aside. Christopher started to fuss over it being taken away and Steve looked at Bucky for help.

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Bucky hadn't even thought to pick up a pacifier at the store. "One second," he said and hurriedly twisted the cap off the bottle and gave it to him to suck on. "I'll get some pacifiers from the store tomorrow. Shit, Steve, we both work tomorrow. Someone needs to be here with him."

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"I can call off," Steve suggested. "I'll go to my mom's to introduce him and we can rely on her to watch him in a pinch. We have to start looking around for babysitters we can trust, though. I'll go through all of New York before I ask Becca to look after him. She'll murder us." Christopher sucked happily on the bottle top in the meantime.

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"I'll talk to Clint about seeing if we can hire a new guy so I can be there less," Bucky added. "And Becca might do it for the rest of the summer if we pay her well enough. Guess we can always ask. Or I think Veronica has a teenage niece who is saving up for college so we may be able to ask her."

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"Do we know how responsible her niece is? I don't want to leave Christopher with someone I don't know inside and out," Steve said. The baby's eyelids were already starting to droop. "Aren't I supposed to make him burp? Is it safe to let him fall asleep right after eating?"

---

"He's alright," Bucky reassured him and took Christopher from him gently and laid him down so they were chest to chest. "We can just hold him like this for a bit so if he does have any reflux then he can help it out of his system. But then he will sleep again. That's all he is going to do for a while. Sleep, eat, poop, cry."
Steve got up so he could grab his pencil and sketchbook. He started to draw Bucky and his son. "I'm so glad I have you. I'd be going nuts over everything cause I've never done this before," he said. He reached out to pet a hand over the baby's little back. "Lilly's taken to him."

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"I sort of thought she would. She didn't get to have a little sibling like Becca and I did. I hope Becca warms up to him soon, though," Bucky said and felt Christopher shiver. All things considered, he was a pretty quiet baby. He was pretty tiny too, for a five-month-old. But it wasn't anything that Bucky and Steve couldn't fix. They would get him healthy as soon as they could.

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Steve laid down next to Bucky and kissed both Bucky's and Christopher's temple. The baby made a little noise as if he was slightly annoyed that he was distracted from going to sleep. "He's too cute to ignore. Becca's got to turn around soon," he said. "I can see Lilly being a bit reckless with the baby by accident, though."

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"Yeah, we will have to watch her with him," Bucky agreed. "She probably doesn't know her own strength around an infant." He sighed and checked to see that Christopher's eyes were shut and he had slowed down sucking on the cap of the bottle. "Alright, I think he's ready to lay down to sleep again." Bucky got up and carefully deposited the baby back into the crib and slowly took the cap out of his mouth. He could tell Christopher must be really tired because he didn't even open his eyes or whine in protest.
When morning came, Steve checked to make sure the baby was still asleep. Then he made French toast for breakfast and woke up the girls as gently as he could. Although, Becca was pretty pissed about being pulled from sleep once again.

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Bucky woke up to an empty bed and a dim light shining through the bottom of his door. He rolled to face Steve's side of the mattress and sighed disappointedly when Steve wasn't there because he really felt like having some morning cuddles. He sat up and saw Christopher wide-awake in his crib, staring up at the ceiling, and wiggling around. "Hey, Little Bean," Bucky said and scooped him up to take him to the kitchen to see Steve.

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Christopher immediately cuddled against Bucky's chest when he was picked up. Becca and Lilly were already eating when Bucky came in but Steve was waiting for Bucky to start. "Hey there," Steve said, lovingly. He kissed his son and then his husband. "Want me to hold him so you can eat?"

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"You go ahead and eat first, Baby," Bucky said and yawned. "I'm still waking up and he should eat first anyway." He held Christopher to his chest with one hand and got a bottle put together with the other. "Hey, Steve, guess what," Bucky said as he sat back down and adjusted the baby so he could feed him.

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Steve started to cut up his food to eat. He looked up from his breakfast and asked, "What? We have a son?" He smirked playfully because Bucky couldn't stop saying it yesterday and Steve loved his excitement.

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Bucky looked down and mumbled to Christopher, "Your father stole what I was going to say. That's rude." But he flashed a small smile up at Steve anyway. Also, it felt really good being able to call Steve Christopher's dad. That's all that Steve and Bucky had been thinking of for so long - getting to be dads together.

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Steve let out a laugh and leaned over to kiss Bucky's head. Becca rolled her eyes at them and said to Lilly, "I bet you ten bucks they don't last a month before they ask one of us to babysit him."

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"Lilly, don't take that bet," Bucky said and pointedly didn't look at Becca. "We will probably need some help until we figure out some sort of arrangement of our work schedules. I'll need to cut back hours or something. God knows I won't be able to do school now."
Steve's head jerked over when Bucky said that he wouldn't go back to school. "Bucky, but you wanted to go back," he said. "Don't give up that dream so fast, we can make it work somehow."

"Steve, there's no way," Bucky answered and nodded down at the baby. "We can't both be working and have me attending classes and expect to be able to take care of him the way we need to. It's not a big deal. I was a little scared about going back anyway. This is more important."

"What if I retire early?" Steve asked. "It won't be as good of a payout...but we would have enough for a few years. And by the time you graduate, I can start looking for a new job or go back to being a cop," he said.

"No," Bucky shook his head. "You're not doing that. You love your job. And I know you, you wouldn't be able to have a regular part-time retail job or something like mine. You'd go crazy." Christopher made a grumpy noise and Bucky noticed he'd made short work of his bottle and he was mad that it was all gone.

Steve got up to make more baby formula. "I love my job. But I love you more and I want you to be able to chase your dream."

"I gave up on it a long time ago," Bucky reminded him. "I wasn't even sure what I was going to do once I got my degree. It's not like I have a plan or a new dream. Nothing's being taken away from me. It's just how it is."

When Christopher saw the extra bottle, he wiggled in Bucky's arms and reached for it. "Still," Steve said. "It's something you wanted to do."

Becca rolled her eyes and said, "It's too late to go back to school. People say it's ten times as hard if you've taken a break."

Bucky sighed, getting slightly exasperated that Steve wouldn't let it go. "It was hard enough deciding that Becca and Lilly were independent enough now for me to be able to go back. But now that there is a completely dependent baby in the mix, I can't do it. I'm not going back."

Steve got a bit upset over how quickly Bucky changed his mind about school. He frowned as he passed the bottle over for Bucky to keep feeding Christopher. "You can do it. You're just giving up," Steve said grumpily. "And you should be more supportive of your brother," he scolded Becca.

Both Becca and Bucky gave Steve the same sour Barnes expression but for different reasons. But
they both thought better of adding to the conversation. Instead, they focused themselves on something else. Bucky was too tired to argue and Becca just didn't care enough.

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Steve huffed and crossed his arms. "Whatever," he said in an annoyed tone. He felt like it was a bad idea for Bucky to give up so quickly and he knew that his husband wouldn't want to hear Steve continue to lecture. He cleaned up their breakfasts and took Christopher so Bucky could have his food.

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Bucky ate in silence and occasionally looked up at Steve. After a few minutes, the girls left the table to go to get dressed for a day at the park together. Bucky put his fork down on the table and sat back. "Steve," he began, "why are you mad that I don't think I should go to school?"

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Steve held Christopher in one arm as he wiped down the countertops with the other. "You gave it up to raise someone once. You shouldn't have to again. I don't think you should be so quick to drop out."

---

Bucky took Christopher back from Steve cause he didn't like that he was trying to focus on two things at once. "I hardly even started to think about it. It's not a big deal. What was I even going to do once I got a degree, huh? Start at a low-level position at some Manhattan corporation and be miserable in my job every day?"

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"I don't know, Bucky. Whatever you wanted to do to start. Be a guy selling records for the band you manage. Or producing music. Stuff you love," Steve said, frowning at him.

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"What I love is my family. And my family just got bigger and my family needs me." Bucky clutched onto Christopher as if someone was trying to take him away. "I'm not going back to school. I can't. I never expected to go back anyway so this doesn't change anything."

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The baby gurgled absently up at Bucky and reached for his shirt collar curiously to play with it. "I still think it's a bad idea," Steve said. "But I guess I have no choice but to accept it."

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Steve was done wiping the counters now and Bucky gave the baby to him. "I'm going down to the curb to smoke. I'll be back in a minute," he said in defeat and slipped on his shoes. He just needed a couple minutes to shake it off. Sometimes Steve could get unduly worked up over what Bucky thought were little things. He had a bit of a headache and he hoped it went away before he needed to head to work.

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Steve sighed and took Christopher back. He waited for Bucky to come back and just walked Christopher around the living room. He kissed the top of the baby's head and bounced him lightly in his arms. It was a bad move because as soon as Bucky walked back in, Christopher threw up all over Steve's shirt.

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"Come here," Bucky said and laid the baby on a few towels on the counter for a second to wipe his mouth off. "I'll go the store before I get home tonight and buy a few pacifiers and some burping cloths and some other things I forgot." Christopher started to cry and Bucky rubbed at his temples trying to get his headache to calm down.

---

Steve took his shirt off and picked up the baby to try and get him to stop crying. "Shh, shh, it's okay," Steve ushered softly. "Your dad's here." He looked over at Bucky and asked, "Are you sure? I'm going out today."

---

Bucky gently pressed the baby against Steve's bare chest. "Skin to skin contact is important for babies - especially if they are upset," he said and pet his hand over the soft fuzzy hair on Christopher's head. "If you decide to go get supplies then just call me at work to tell me. We need a stroller and a carrier for sure. Some baby towels and that bright pink children's soap that is good on soft young skin."

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Steve made a mental note to pick all that up as he hugged the baby close to him with Bucky's prompting. "Oh," he said. "That's a lot," he said. "I'll get it all, I promise."

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Bucky reluctantly got dressed and headed to work. It was pretty slow all day so Bucky had a chance to tell Clint all that had happened the night before and that morning. Much to Bucky's annoyance, Clint basically agreed with Steve and said that Bucky should try to figure out how he could make school still work. But Bucky had made up his mind. For once, Reggie was Bucky's saving grace because the second he showed up, Bucky was able to go back home.

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When Steve had brought Christopher over to his mom's she nearly had a heart attack and she wouldn't stop crying. She took her grandson and her son out shopping for plenty of baby stuff and broke out Steve's old things for the baby to have as well. Both were at the apartment letting Christopher wiggle around on a little play mat when Bucky came home. Sarah came up to Bucky and wrapped him in a tight hug. "Congratulations!"

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"Hi, Mrs. Rogers," Bucky said and hugged her back. "I see you met Christopher. And I see you all went shopping." He sat down next to the playmat and watched the baby wiggle happily on his stomach. "And hello, Little Bean. Did your Daddy and Grandma buy you new things?"
Christopher squealed loudly at Bucky, recognizing him as the primary food-giver. Steve smiled adoringly at the baby and then back over to his husband. "He loves his dad, doesn't he?" he said. "So are you going to be ‘Dad’ or ‘Pa’? Or something else? We forgot to discuss it."

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Bucky gave the baby one of his fingers to squeeze with his tiny fist and he looked up at Steve and Sarah. "Well, I suppose I could be ‘Pops’. My dad called his father ‘Pops’. Might be nice to use it too." He looked to Sarah and nodded. "And what do you want to be called as the grandmother?"

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Steve kissed Bucky's cheek and then nodded. "‘Pops’ is good," he agreed. "And Ma and I already decided ‘Nana’ works for her," Steve said. "How was work?"

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Bucky nodded and smiled. ‘Nana’ it was. His mother always wanted to be ‘Gran’ or ‘Granny’. His dad wanted to be ‘Papaw’. Bucky looked down at the baby. It had only just really occurred to him that Christopher was only going to get one grandparent. Bucky's parents didn't get to be grandparents, let alone see their own children to adulthood. Bucky sighed and tried to give a half-hearted smile to Christopher. He glanced up at Steve and said, "Yeah, work was fine."

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Steve saw the sad look in Bucky's eyes. He didn't know what caused it, but he was quick to rub his back encouragingly. Christopher reached up at Bucky and let out a big noise to get his attention so he could be picked up.

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Bucky picked up his son and moved so he was leaning back into Steve's chest. "Sorry, I was just thinking about my parents," Bucky said and stared up at Steve. "Wish they were here, you know?" He sighed again and looked over at Sarah. "Guess that just means you'll have to be here as often as possible to fill the gap for Christopher."

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Steve played with Bucky's hair gently as he took care of their son. Christopher looked happy to be held and he stopped wiggling so much. "Of course," Sarah said. "I've been waiting for quite some time for Steve to give me grandchildren."

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"Well, now you have this precious boy," Bucky beamed and patted Christopher's back gently. "Do you want to hold him, Mrs. Rogers, while I go get a snack for myself?" He stood and handed the baby off and asked Steve if he wanted anything to eat.

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Sarah cradled Christopher and rocked him lightly in her arms. "He's such a beautiful baby," she sighed happily. "I missed being able to do this with Steve. This sweet boy is going to grow up too fast."
"I think we will have to invest in a good camera so we can take more pictures of him every day," Bucky said and brought some strawberries over to Steve. "We may have missed the first few months of his life but we aren't missing the rest of it. Are we, Steve?"

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Steve thanked Bucky for the strawberries and tried to hide them as he ate because he didn't want Christopher seeing and trying to get at them. "Not going to miss a second of it," Steve decided. "He's a good kid. I'm so thankful I was the one on that drugs bust."

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Christopher gurgled and tried reaching up towards the ceiling fan. Steve had brought Bourbon the plush dog into the living room and Bucky snatched it up off the floor and shook it in front of the baby's face. "When did he eat last, Steve?"

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Christopher reached for the dog but as soon as he got it in his hands, he let it drop and started smiling up at Bucky. It was absolutely adorable. "An hour before you got here. Ma fed him while I cleaned."

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Bucky picked the dog back up and plopped him on Christopher's tummy. "He should be alright for a bit then." He slipped a hand with Steve's and said, "Mrs. Rogers, do you want to see the crib I made for him? It's in our room."

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Christopher pulled the dog up and started to stick the ear into his mouth. "Steve already showed me. You did a fantastic job making that for him," she said, getting up to hug him again. "And I know it's not the same, but you're allowed to call me 'Mom'. Or at least 'Sarah'."

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"Alright, sorry... Sarah." Bucky nodded and hugged her back. Sarah headed out, leaving the two of them with the baby. Becca and Lilly were still out as well. "Steve, Baby, are you still frustrated with me for this morning?"

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Steve took his shirt off once his mom left and held Christopher to his chest since Bucky said skin to skin contact was very important. He didn't mind the baby drool that dripped down on him. "A bit," he said honestly, though there was no heat to his voice.

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"Can I do something to make it better?" Bucky asked and pressed himself to Steve to kiss his neck. He wrapped his arm around Steve, right underneath Christopher's curled up legs to help hold him up. "I don't want you to be mad about my decision."

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Steve rested his cheek on top of Christopher's head gently. "You could change your mind," Steve mumbled in hopes of making Bucky reconsider. "Wouldn't it be worth it to be your own boss? You
could take Christopher to your office and spend plenty of time with him there."

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Bucky sighed and kissed Steve's jaw. He decided not to answer. It would just make things worse. He really didn't think he should go back to school. Bucky cuddled up to Steve in silence for a few minutes. After a while, he ran his fingers through Steve's hair and said, "Kiss me, please."

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Steve didn't respond either because he was too caught up with the baby. But when Bucky asked, he turned his head to capture Bucky's lips in a gentle kiss. "Tell me about your day," he said softly, trying to put the disagreement past them.

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"Uneventful," Bucky said and flopped back on the couch. There weren't many customers. It was mostly Clint and I talking and eating pretzels." Christopher was asleep on Steve's chest and Bucky smoothed the soft baby hair on his head. "Want to put him down for a nap and we can have a little quiet time before he needs us again?"

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Steve stood up slowly and headed to their room. He kissed Christopher a few times before laying him in bed and tucking him in. Steve hovered over the crib for a few moments before turning back to Bucky. "Did you want to cuddle?" he asked.

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"Yes, please," Bucky said and took off his pants and shirt before slipping into bed and waiting for Steve. Once Steve laid down, Bucky nuzzled into him, kissed his chest, and rubbed his hand over Steve's abs slowly and deliberately.

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Steve wrapped an arm around Bucky's shoulders and stroked his fingers through his hair. "I love you," he murmured to him. "I feel so blessed to be able to raise a baby with you."

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"I love you, too," Bucky said and licked one of Steve's nipples. His hand trailed down a little farther down Steve's torso. "You want to let me get you off?" He asked, a bit shy, and made circles with his thumb on Steve's skin. "Christopher is asleep and we have some time before the girls get back home."

---

Steve licked his lips and he could feel himself getting aroused against his better judgment when Bucky licked one of his nipples but he gave Bucky an apologetic look. "I'm not really in the mood," he said hesitantly. "I'm sorry, Buck. I'm a bit tired."

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"Okay," Bucky said quietly and pulled his hand away. He rolled in bed so he was laying on his back. Maybe it was because of their minor argument about school that Steve didn't feel like being
sexual with him. Steve didn't usually deny Bucky's advances. It had only happened a handful of times and Bucky could never quite figure out what prompted it.

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Steve felt an awkward silence pass between them. He sighed and turned to give him a kiss. "It’s nothing you did wrong," he reassured. "I'm just not feeling it right now." Steve stroked his fingers through Bucky's hair. "The permits just went through to construct the shelter, by the way. Father Frank has a few volunteers building it."

---

Bucky rolled again so he was facing Steve but he didn't touch him. "Do they have an estimate on how long it will take to get it constructed?" he asked and tucked a hand under his cheek on the pillow. "I can talk to Monty and Evan and see if they can start helping with organizing things like donation drives to get the supplies we will need."

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Steve leaned forward to press his lips to the tip of Bucky's nose gently, then to his forehead. "That would be great," he said. "The building is meant to be finished three weeks from once the construction starts. Getting toilets and showers up will take longer but until then, we can have those pop-up showers and portable toilets."

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"Have you decided what to call the shelter, yet?" Bucky asked. Steve had been tossing around some ideas for a while but so far hadn't informed Bucky if he had made a final decision or not. Bucky was no help in naming it either. He couldn't think of anything he thought was good enough to offer to Steve as an option.

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Steve shrugged, still unsure. There was one idea he hadn't run past Bucky, though. "What about the ‘George Barnes Memorial Home’?" Steve asked. "Or maybe we could name it after both your parents?"

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"What?" Bucky lifted his head up off the pillow and propped himself up on his elbow. "Steve..." he tried again, not really able to figure out what to say. "You would name your shelter for my father?"

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"Why wouldn't I? He's my father-in-law. He helped get you back on your feet during your addiction just like we can help the people who come in get back on their feet," Steve said. "But if you don't like the name, that's okay."

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"Goddammit, Steve," Bucky gasped and tackled him to give him a heavy, wet kiss. "I love it. Old George would love it too. He'd get all flustered and embarrassed and try to talk you out of naming it for him but the second it was open he would go around telling everyone he knew just how proud of you he was."
Steve let out a little laugh as Bucky tackled him but he returned the kiss passionately. He wrapped his arms around him and held Bucky to his chest. "It would've been so nice to meet your parents when they were alive," he said. "I wish Christopher got to meet them, too."

"I really wish you both could meet them too," Bucky said with a pathetic little smile. "You're sure you want to name the shelter for my dad? It's your shelter. You don't have to do that just for me. Okay?" He kissed Steve again and clung to him tightly. "I love you so much."

"This isn't just my shelter, Baby. It's not supposed to be owned or operated just by me. It's got to have a little piece of everyone to be a home." Steve kissed Bucky gently again. "So I think naming it after your dad would be perfect."

"Okay," Bucky said and moved to straddle Steve so he could comfortably and lazily make out with him to his heart's content. "You surprise me all the time, Love. You know that? Sometimes I can't predict what you are going to do."

Steve smiled against Bucky's lips and nibbled affectionately on his lower lip. "I'm supposed to do that, Baby. That's part of being a good husband." He ran a hand up and down Bucky's back. "I wouldn't have been able to do this without your support."

"Guess you were right about something good coming of the whole thing with Rumlow," Bucky conceded and held Steve's face in his hands. He remembered that was one of the first things that Steve had said - that maybe there was a reason for it. He was right. The money they got from that was going towards this shelter.

Steve smirked because he couldn't help himself. "I told you so," he said brightly. "We can help dozens - maybe even hundreds of people. And after a few months, we will go back to having most of the settlement money to take care of our son and other expenses."

"Don't be cocky," Bucky teased and bit Steve's shoulder softly. All the making out had gone straight to his dick and he moved off of him so Steve wouldn't feel him getting hard. Steve had made it clear he didn't want to do anything then. Bucky would just wait for it to pass or sneak off to the bathroom when Steve was distracted later.

"I'm allowed to be a little cocky. Especially when I find that having faith hasn't led me astray," Steve said. He didn't expect Bucky to believe in God but he still enjoyed it when his own beliefs proved true. "One thing I'm not sure about is if we should have it openly gay or keep it as more word of
"I think that is something you should discuss with Father Frank," Bucky said and held Steve's hand. "He would probably have better ideas and guidance about that. My only concern would be that if it's not strictly known to be a haven for gay people then we could get people seeking shelter who treat the gay ones poorly for who they are and that's the opposite intent."

"I'm not sure if we will be attacked often or if people will leave the shelter alone even if they knew it was for gay people," Steve said. "But keeping it hidden risks people who need it maybe not knowing about it."

"Those are all valid things to consider," Bucky said and tucked his head under Steve's chin. "How about the next time you see Father Frank you both discuss the options and you can pray on it and things and see what you want to do."

Steve smiled a bit because usually prayer wasn't used for a decision like this but he appreciated Bucky's suggestion anyway. "Sounds great, Baby. Thank you," he said softly. He drew Bucky in for a slow kiss before he heard the girls return home.

Bucky threw on a pair of pajamas because he didn't want to put his work clothes back on. He looked into the crib to make sure Christopher was still asleep and then he trudged into the kitchen where Lilly had her leg propped up on the table and Becca was putting an ice pack on her ankle. "Lilly twisted her ankle," Becca said when Bucky came over to ask what was wrong.

"How did it happen?" Steve asked as he went to get some ibuprofen for the pain. Lilly was always getting herself into some sort of trouble so he hoped it wasn’t anything like that.

Lilly wiped the tears from her face and said, "I was running in the park and got my foot caught in a hole that a dog dug. And it twisted and it hurts so bad."

Bucky pet Lilly's hair and gave her a gentle hug. "It'll be better soon. And at least it happened now before you go back to school and have soccer and lacrosse practice again."

Steve was such a sucker whenever either of the girls cried. He was just as bad with Christopher. He kissed the top of her head and went back to the freezer for an ice pop even though she wasn't supposed to have it until after dinner. "If the swelling doesn't go down then we can take you to the doctor tomorrow."
Lilly took the plastic off the popsicle and found that it was only her second favorite flavor. But she ate it anyway.

"I can go grab your ankle brace if you still have it?" Bucky asked Lilly and glanced over to Becca like she might have a better knowledge as to where it might be hidden in the mess of Lilly's room.

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Becca sighed and walked off to Lilly's room to dig through the mess and bring back the brace. Just as Bucky started to put it on, Christopher woke up and started crying for someone to get him. Steve rushed to get the crying baby and soothe him.

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"Hey, Little Bean," Bucky said when Steve came back with the baby. "Your Aunt Lilly hurt her ankle. Are you crying because you feel bad for her or are you crying because you need food?" Bucky joked and gave Christopher a big smile.

Lilly whined from her seat at the table saying, "Can I hold him, Steve? Please."

---

Steve kissed the baby's head and tickled his belly to get him to calm down. It seemed like he was just looking for attention since he was quick to quiet down. Steve had Lilly sit up properly before he gently passed the baby over to her. "Be sure to support his head."

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"I got it," Lilly waved Steve off and held the baby close. "When does he start talking?" she asked and looked to Bucky.

Bucky smiled and leaned against Steve. "A while still, Lilly. He will mostly make indistinguishable noises for a bit before he starts being able to say any words."

---

Christopher cooed up at Lilly and grabbed at her ponytail. "I bet he will be able to say your name before Becca's," Steve said. "It's kind of hard for kids to make the 'k' sound. Kind of makes me curious to see what he's going to call Becca at first."

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"Well," Bucky said and looked over at Becca who was standing off to the side watching Lilly carefully to make sure she wasn't holding the baby wrong. "Lilly did 's' sounds instead of 'k' sounds so for a while Becca was 'Bessa' and I was 'Bussy'."

---

"That's pretty darn adorable," Steve said. He looked over at their son, who currently was trying to shove Lilly's hair into his mouth and whining whenever he couldn't get it in there. "At least we know 'Pops' and 'Dada' will be easy to say."

---

"Those should be, yeah." Bucky smiled and grabbed Steve's face gently to kiss him. "I'm going to go make room in our dresser for Christopher's clothes and things. I'll be back." He glanced down at
Lilly and the baby once more and gave them both a kiss on their foreheads and headed to his and Steve's room.

---

Steve looked over at Becca, who was still eyeing Lilly cautiously. Once Bucky left, Steve sat down next to her. "What can I do to make you feel better?" Steve asked her. He wasn't going to bend over backwards for her but he wanted to make some sort of peace.

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Becca looked over at Steve quickly then back to the baby. She didn't really want Lilly to be involved in this conversation so she said quietly, "I just have some concerns about Bucky and I don't know if this was such a good idea."

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Steve turned away from Lilly a bit so she wouldn't overhear. "What concerns?" Steve asked. "He's been sober for a long time. He's been responsible and hasn't gone out on benders or gotten into trouble by his own fault. I know he used to be pretty bad before, but I really think he's turned himself around."

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"Steve," Becca started and sighed. "There's no way that he isn't going to just snap one day. Maybe he is home alone with the three of us and he has a headache and the baby starts crying and he can't handle it and he has a breakdown. Which, his breakdowns usually end in him drinking or something. Also, you both have jobs and can't be here all the time. And I know that Bucky's brain is just waiting for something to really set him off so it can make him give in to his alcoholism again."

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"I have faith in your brother," Steve said. "I believe so wholeheartedly that he's going to do right by you and Lilly and Christopher." Raphael hopped up on Lilly's lap as well to lay himself over the baby, allowing him to grab at his ears. "And even if you don't trust him, trust me. If Bucky somehow becomes utterly inept at parenting - which won't happen - I'll retire. I wanted to be a stay-at-home dad anyway."

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Becca watched Christopher rub Raphael's head and make happy little noises at the cat. "I just know what he's done before and I don't want another kid coming into the mix just to get hurt by Bucky's issues and the things he can't control."

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"People make mistakes," Steve said. "Your brother was in a lot worse of a situation before than he is now and he won't have to face that alone again." He sighed and asked, "Do you know where Christopher came from?"

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"You found him the other day on the job," Becca said absently and took a drink of water. She hadn't cared much to sit around and hear the whole story or anything so she hadn't asked when they brought him home.
"Both of his parents were drug addicts. His dad was trafficking drugs and weapons and his mom abandoned him to escape when we arrived. She also has a few armed robberies under her belt." Steve crossed his arms. "He's underfed, neglected, and I'm sure they were using while she was pregnant with him. No matter how much Bucky may mess up, Christopher is in better hands."

Becca watched Christopher yawn and curl into a ball in Lilly's arms. She looked to Steve and said quietly, "I'm sorry. This is safer than growing up with that. Bucky would never leave us like that. Even at his worst. He always made his way back home." She gave Steve a short quick hug and then pulled away so he couldn't hug her back.

Steve was surprised by the hug but he wasn't complaining. He tried not to laugh at how quickly she pulled away because he knew that would annoy her too. "I know Bucky hurt you. And I'm not asking you to forgive him right this second. All I'm asking is that you understand that he loves all of you. And his mistakes don't change that fact."

"I know that," Becca said. "It was just hard that for so long I was the one taking care of him. Now that I don't so much anymore, I'm just constantly paranoid that something will happen and I'll have to go back to that. You understand where I'm coming from?"

"I understand where you're coming from," Steve repeated back to her. "And I'm promising you that I'm going to be here to clean up all the messes so you don't have to. He's your brother, but he's also my husband. I married him for better or for worse, just like he did with me."

Becca nodded, crossed her arms, and looked down. "Yeah, but what about if you decide you don't want to be here anymore? What if you leave him? He will be even worse than before and it'll be all on me then."

Steve's mouth hung open in surprise. "Becca," he said, a little offended and hurt but he did his best to remind himself that she maybe didn't understand how seriously he took his vow. "I promised to you and Lilly and Bucky and my mother and God that I would love him until the day I die. That's a promise I only make once in a lifetime because it's a promise I am going to keep."

Becca was young but she wasn't naive. She understood that people could say a lot of things and make a lot of promises and then just as easily break them. "It's not because you've done anything to show me you don't want to stay. But... it's just hard thinking someone wants to stick around with all of us for that long."
"Why is it so hard to think that?" Steve asked. "I love you all so damn much, Becca. You have no idea, do you?" He got up so he could bring his keepsake box from his room over to her. "See this? It's the ticket stub from the first time I brought you to the museum. And here's the receipt from the first time I took you and Lilly out to ice cream... and here's the picture the four of us took at the carnival..." he passed it over to her. Steve saved literally every possible thing he could. He had so much in his keepsake box that he was close to needing a second one. "Meeting Bucky is the best thing that happened to me. I need you to believe that."

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Becca stared at the picture for a long time. Steve looked happier than anyone else in the world, with a giant grin on his face and his eyes lit up. Bucky was smiling softer and looking over at Steve with an expression like he couldn't believe this giant dweeb man was his. And Lilly had a big soft pretzel in hand and was smiling at the camera with her hair in her face. Becca was the only one who looked like she wasn't actually enjoying herself. She was vaguely smiling but her eyes looked dead. A strange wash of anger at herself came over her and she wanted to yell at the Becca in the picture to just smile like she meant it. She was lucky that Bucky was able to take her and Lilly into his custody so they didn't have to go into the system or be separated. And she was lucky Steve came around to help Bucky and support him in getting to where he was now. And all she could do was sit around and wait for the other shoe to drop.

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Steve knew that Becca rarely let herself truly have fun or let her guard down. He'd tried so hard this past year to change that but she was still scarred by what she had to do in the past. "I hope one day you'll be able to trust us," he said. "I want you to be happy, Becca. I love each and every one of you unconditionally." He hesitated before mumbling, "I sometimes get the feeling that you think you won't be happy or able to stop worrying until both you are grown up and out of the house."

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Becca barely nodded in response, her own way of agreeing without having to vocalize it. She held up the picture and said, "Do you have another copy of this that I could have?" She wasn't sure why she wanted it but she did. Maybe if she saw it around then it would remind her that she was allowed to let herself relax and be happy with the family she did have. Regardless of whether she thought Steve would leave them or that getting a baby may not have been ideal at the time, they were in the family now and Becca should let herself enjoy her family while she had them.

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Steve shook his head. "I don't. But you can keep that one." He already closed the box so Becca couldn't slip it back in easily. "I have lots of pictures in here anyway." He patted her shoulder twice before going to put the box back under his bed. He returned and gave her another quick hug. "Do you want to try holding your nephew?" Steve asked.

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"Guess so," Becca said and looked over at Lilly who was still clinging to him tightly. He was asleep and slowly suckling a pacifier. "If Lilly will give him up for a little bit," she said loud enough so her sister could hear.

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Lilly pouted and considered arguing to keep him but she had to use the bathroom anyway. She
carefully let Becca take the baby before hobbling off. "He really is a sweet boy," Steve said.

"He's a whole lot quieter than Lilly was as a baby," Becca said and played with Christopher's tiny fingers. "She screamed from the time she was born until she was three. I swear."

Bucky came out into the kitchen then and said, "Okay, Steve, the first two drawers of the dresser are all his clothes and things. He really doesn't have much. I should take him to the store on my next day off and get him some more things."

Steve was so happy that Becca was finally holding Christopher. He looked over at Bucky and gestured at them for him to look. "Maybe we should make a list of what we have and what we need so you have an easier time finding things."

Bucky nodded and agreed that a list would be a good idea. "Hey, Becs," he said and squatted down by her and the baby. "He's pretty great, isn't he? Quieter than Lilly was."

Becca smiled and said, "I was just saying that to Steve."

Christopher opened his eyes when he heard Bucky's voice and he looked over at him. He smiled and buried the side of his face into Becca to try and ground himself as he wiggled excitedly. "He's such a sweetheart, too. I think he kind of likes you best, Buck," Steve said.

Bucky came over to the baby and held his hand and gave him some happy smiles. "That's just because he knows I'm a pro at babies. Also, I made his crib. All he knows right now is who is the one who gives him things he wants."

Christopher started to coo and gurgle some more up at Bucky. "I'm a bit jealous," Steve said. "I'm almost always shirtless when I hold him now to get him to bond more with me." Becca held the baby a little tighter so he wouldn't fall.

Bucky went over to Steve and snuggled up to him and gave him a kiss. "Don't worry, Baby. He loves you. Also, kids allegiances change so much at this age. Becca would only want my mom to hold her for about a week and then Dad would be home alone with her for a day and she would cling to him and not let Mom touch her. It's just how babies do things."

Steve wrapped an arm around Bucky and nodded. "I guess," he said dramatically. Steve was clearly hoping for his son to be happy to see him twenty-four-seven, but he wouldn't sulk too much over it. "I'll get that list made for you," he said before going to get his pen and paper.
The whole process took a month and that was with paying extra and cashing in a few favors for an expedited procedure... but Steve was able to officially adopt Christopher and, as an added bonus, name Bucky as a secondary legal guardian as well. The name change had gone through a few days before, but this was the news he and Bucky had been dying to get. He came home one day from work with the envelope in hand. "Hey, Buck! You want to have a family dinner tonight? As in, go out to eat?"

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"Of course, Steve," Bucky said absentmindedly as he was trying to get Christopher to stop wiggling around so he could finish changing his diaper. "The girls will probably like that a lot. We haven't gone out for a while. Where were you thinking?"

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Steve walked over and played with the baby's hands to distract him. "I was thinking maybe the diner, but I'm okay with anything. We've got something to celebrate today and I wanted to go out, you know?"

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Bucky quickly finished with the diaper while Steve had Christopher occupied. He sat back and rolled the baby onto his tummy so he could wiggle around on the ground for a bit. "What are we celebrating?" Bucky asked and gave Steve a quick kiss.

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Steve passed the envelope over to Bucky once Christopher was settled. Raphael ran over to Christopher and started batting at one of the rattles because he liked the noise. "Open it, Buck," he said excitedly.

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Bucky yawned as his opened the envelope. It had been a long day with his sisters and the baby. He read the letter and slowly his eyes widened as he realized what it meant. "Oh my god," he breathed out and looked over at Christopher. "Oh my god!" he yelped and stared at Steve. "He's ours now?" Bucky picked up the baby and held him between himself and Steve. "Steve, are we legally dads now? Oh my fucking god."

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Steve pulled Bucky into a tight hug and made sure not to squish the baby between them. He kissed his face over and over and then smiled. "I know, Sweetheart, I know. Nobody can take him away from us now." He drew Bucky in for a slow, meaningful kiss. "And now... now you're his guardian, too. It's not just me." He looked down at their son. "You hear that, big guy? You're with us now."

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"Our precious little boy," Bucky said and kissed Steve again and then kissed Christopher. "Steve, if you want to cry you can," Bucky said and swiped at his own tears forming in his eyes. "Christopher, if you want to cry you can. But do it quietly, please. Pops has a headache from your earlier
screaming."

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"I cried the whole way home," Steve admitted shyly. Christopher reached up and tugged on Bucky's shirt and mindlessly babbled at him. Steve kissed Bucky again and smiled. "He was ours from day one. But it feels so much better knowing no one can take him."

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"I feel a lot more confident in his safety." Bucky nodded. "Did his biological aunt have anything she needed us to know? Is she hoping to visit him sometimes or is this a strictly closed adoption?" Bucky knew his biological parents were not allowed to come visit or claim him later but he didn't know about the aunt.

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"She didn't want to have anything to do with him," Steve said sadly. "Wouldn't hold him or even consider caring for him when I brought him over. She even suggested making it a closed adoption because she didn't want his parents near him."

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"Okay." Bucky nodded. "That does make it simpler for us." He stood with Christopher and took him over to the kitchen to get him a new bottle. "He's already getting bigger and heavier," Bucky said and waited for Steve to come over so he could hold him. "He looks a lot healthier now, I think."

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Steve took Christopher and kissed his cheeks. "It's amazing how different he is from the first day. He's got little baby rolls now. And he's a heck of a chatterbox," Steve said. Christopher was still talking nonsense at the both of them.

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Bucky smiled and watched his boys. "Earlier, he stuck his hand in my mouth while we were playing on his mat," he said and grabbed one of Christopher's smaller plush animals and handed it to him. "Steve, I love him," Bucky repeated for what felt like the thousandth time. And he would say it a billion times more.

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"Maybe he was trying to get you to shut up," Steve teased. Christopher immediately threw the toy on the ground and squealed with delight when Bucky went to pick it up. Dropping things was his new favorite game as of late. "Also, there was never any question in my mind as to whether you loved him. I see the way you look at him when he's sleeping or eating or playing around or doing just about anything. You're such a good dad."

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"I can be a better dad," Bucky said. "I promise. I'll make all of you really proud of me. I'd do anything for you and for him and my sisters. And I know I haven't been so good in the past but I'm not going back to that."
"I know, Sweetheart," Steve said. "I have all the faith in the world in you." He leaned in to kiss his husband slowly. "I trust you so much. And I'm already proud of you." Christopher started reaching for Bucky, fussing and whining.

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Bucky slipped his shirt off and held the baby to his chest so he would calm down. Christopher settled quickly and repeatedly hit his palm on Bucky's collarbone lightly. "I guess I need to get to the point where I'm proud of myself, you know? And get Becca to be proud of me."

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Steve pet his fingers through Bucky's hair before kissing Christopher's head. "I had a heart to heart with Becca a little while ago. I think she's starting to trust you more than she used to."

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Bucky sighed and gave a small little smile. "Thanks for talking with her," he said and pulled Christopher's hand from his hair. "He has hardly napped all day, Steve. It's been such a long day here. Parents are supposed to sleep while their babies are asleep but he woke up every time I finally drifted off."

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"Then how about you take a quick nap before we go out to dinner? I'll watch after our perfect, little boy." Steve took Christopher back and pecked Bucky's lips. "Go get your beauty sleep."

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"Okay," Bucky chuckled. "Need to stay handsome for my husband, don't I?" He yawned again and gave Steve another quick kiss. "If Christopher calms down and wants to actually nap, feel free to come cuddle me," he added and then trudged to their room.

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Steve played with the baby and sung him nursery rhymes until Christopher was ready for some down time. He tucked him in to sleep with one of his stuffed animals and then joined Bucky in bed.

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Bucky was asleep but when Steve curled around him, he woke easily and rolled to face him. "Is Christopher asleep finally?" he asked and lazily draped an arm around Steve's middle. "Don't know how long that will last but let's enjoy it while it does."

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Steve nodded and kissed along Bucky's neck affectionately. "I'm okay with that plan," he said. "You want to get off? Or are you tired?" Steve asked. They didn't have much time to be intimate nowadays.

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"Mhmm." Bucky nodded. "If you want to. It's been close to two weeks. Sleepy hand jobs or you can fuck me while I drift off. I do like that a lot." He yawned again and looked over at the crib to make sure the baby really was asleep.
Steve rolled over to grab the lube from the nightstand and started to coat his fingers. "I kind of want to be inside my husband right now," he said and pulled Bucky's pants down to start to finger him right away.

Bucky gasped and let his eyes roll back in his head. Steve hadn't had his dick inside him for around a month now. The last few times they did anything it had been Bucky inside Steve or the time that it was Bucky giving Steve a blowjob that was cut short when Christopher woke up and started crying. "God, Steve, I love your fingers."

"You'd love anything at this point," Steve teased lightly. "It's been so long since I've done this for you." He rolled his hips against Bucky's thigh to rut against him as he opened him up with two fingers. He scissored them inside Bucky before adding a third.

Bucky nodded and bit his lip. He reached back to feel Steve's fingers in his hole. "Okay, dick, please," he breathed and batted at Steve's hand. "I'm ready, forget the fingers. Lose your pants, Babe." He was desperate. He would admit it. But he was also tired and wanted to feel as much of their time together before he fell asleep and Steve would have to finish inside him on his own.

Steve quickly stripped his pants off and covered them both with the blankets so Christopher wouldn't see anything if he woke and so Bucky would be warm and cozy. He slowly pushed inside of him and moaned against Bucky's neck at how incredible he felt. "God damn, how could I go a month without this?"

"I don't fucking know," Bucky whispered and held one of Steve's arms against his chest. "I love you so much. If I fall asleep, I'm sorry, and also, just keep going. I'll want to wake up with your come leaking out of my ass."

Steve smoothly moved in and out of Bucky's hole, angling his hips upwards at the end of each thrust to go in as deep as he could. "Gonna fill you up with so much come, Handsome. Got to remind you that you're mine."

"I'm all yours," Bucky said and moved Steve's hand down to grip his cock. He really didn't feel like doing any work this time. Steve was wide awake and didn't seem upset in the slightest to have Bucky limp and needy for him.

Steve rocked his hips easily into Bucky, going deep but not rough so Bucky wouldn't be kept awake any longer than he wanted to be. He sucked dark marks onto Bucky's neck and licked down to his
collarbone. "You want me to drag this out, Baby?"

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"Either way is fine with me," Bucky said and carded a hand through his hair. "I'll enjoy whatever you want to do. Just call me more nice names. Tell me good things. Hold me close like this." He whined a little, shut his eyes, and hummed deep in his throat happily.

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"Alright," Steve said. He held Bucky's hip with one hand as he fucked him a little rougher. "You feel so fucking good, Baby. Can't wait to do this more cause lord knows it's been too long since I last made you mine. Going to make you feel good every damn day of your life."

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Bucky went quiet and braced himself as he was fucked. He growled a bit when he finally came and shot out over the sheets. It didn't take much since he hadn't gotten off in so long. He panted and relaxed so Steve could keep going and Bucky's eyes blinked closed occasionally. "Been way too long."

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Steve didn't slow down when Bucky came. If anything, he went faster as he felt Bucky's muscles clench down on him. Minutes later, he was filling Bucky's ass with his own come. He sighed happily and collapsed on top of Bucky, keeping his dick inside of his ass.

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Bucky giggled with a deranged sort of satisfaction having finally had sex again after so long. He reached back and touched Steve. Steve was sprawled out on top of him with his cock holding his come inside Bucky's ass. "Let's fall asleep like this. Christopher is asleep and the girls can fend for themselves for dinner. We have cereal."

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"But what about going out for dinner?" Steve asked with a little pout. "I want to celebrate officially becoming Christopher's dads," he said. Steve kissed up Bucky's neck and stroked his hands down his sides.

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"Oh, right, I forgot," Bucky said sleepily and nuzzled into his pillow. "Give me an hour to sleep some more then we will go, yeah? What do you say? Christopher can wear that new outfit we got him a few days ago."

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"Sounds perfect," Steve said. He lazily stroked Bucky's limp cock a few times before letting him relax. Steve napped peacefully on top of Bucky before Christopher started squealing at them for attention a while later.

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Bucky was startled awake and he rolled Steve off of him. He quickly shimmied out of bed and
slipped his pants on to grab the baby. Bucky brought him back over to the bed and laid him on his chest and stroked his back gently. "Christopher says it's time to go to dinner, Steve."

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The baby giggled happily when he was picked up and balled up his fists to hit excitedly against Bucky's chest. "Oh yeah? Are we going to let him tell us what to do all the time now?" Steve joked, playing with his son’s foot.

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"Basically," Bucky said and transferred the baby to Steve. "Children control their parents until they are about three. It's true. We are screwed for a while." He chuckled and got up to get dressed for dinner. While Steve got dressed, Bucky changed Christopher into his new little outfit that made him look like a small professor with little corduroy pants and a fake tweed jacket.

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"Oh my god, he looks so cute," Steve gushed, smiling happily. "He's such a little gentleman." Steve kissed the top of Christopher's head and then took Christopher from Bucky and kissed his cheek. "I love him so much, Bucky. We get to have the next twenty years raising him."

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Christopher promptly smacked his hands on Steve's face when he was picked up and he let out a roar of a giggle after he did. "Little Bean, why are you hitting Daddy?" Bucky asked and got his face close enough for Christopher to do the same to him. "I think he likes being here with us, Steve. I was worried it would take him a while but he's taken to us really well."

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Steve scrunched up his face when he was hit, but the loud giggle that ensued after was too fucking cute to get mad at. He kissed the baby’s cheek then blew a raspberry, making him squeal and squirm away from the ticklish feeling. "He really has," Steve agreed. "It hurts me to think how he was neglected before. He's such a good boy. And he loves to smile and laugh and be a goofball."

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"None of that matters now," Bucky said and held his husband and his son in a big hug. "We have him now and we won't let him be treated like that again and he is safe and loved and wanted." He sighed and looked down at the baby. "We still need to have a discussion about what we are going to tell him when he is older and asks where he came from and why he has two daddies."

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Steve nodded his head. There was no way in hell that Christopher would ever feel anything less than absolutely loved. "Shouldn't we tell him the truth from the beginning?" he asked. "I'm not afraid to tell him that we found him and decided to keep him."

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"I mean that's ideal," Bucky said quietly. "Let's discuss it some other time. Let's go have dinner now." He adjusted Christopher's shirt and gave him a pacifier. "I'll get the girls if you get his diaper bag and a bottle or two made up."
"You got it," Steve agreed. He got the diaper bag ready and hurried over to make the bottles for their son.

"Hey, where are we going?" Lilly asked as she saw Bucky and Steve getting stuff ready.

"Going to dinner," Bucky said and knocked on Becca's door. He opened it once he got the go ahead and said, "Becs, we are going out for dinner tonight. Steve said he wants to go to the diner but I bet the three of us could convince him to go someplace else."

Becca perked up because they didn't go out for dinner often, especially after they had the baby. "Can we go to the Italian place instead?" she asked. Lilly seemed all for Italian as well.

Steve showed up with Christopher in his arms and the baby bag on his shoulder. "We ready to go?"

"Steve, Baby, I think you're a little outnumbered," Bucky said and took the bag from him so he didn't have to carry two things. "The three of us want to go to the Italian place a few streets south of here - the one Becca likes a lot."

Steve only looked slightly disappointed that they weren't going to the diner. But he didn't care enough to argue. "Alright," he said. "Italian place it is. So long as we're all together, I'm happy."

"Sounds good to me." Bucky grabbed his keys and locked up the apartment. "Steve, next time we can go to the diner. But today is a special celebration so that deserves some special dining options."

"I guess," Steve said dramatically as he adjusted the baby in his arms.

"What are we celebrating?" Lilly asked loudly. "We're not getting another baby, are we? We don't have much space left and I called dibs on getting a puppy next."

Bucky tackled Lilly in a hug and tickled her sides before letting her go. "No puppies right now. And no more babies for the time being. We are celebrating that Steve got the official documentation for Christopher's adoption. He is now legally Steve's adoptive son and I'm a legal secondary guardian."

Becca looked pleasantly surprised that the paperwork went through. She didn't think that it would be so quick and easy to have it done. "Wow, really?" she asked.

Lilly grinned excitedly. "So that means he's officially our nephew?"
"Yeah!" Bucky smiled at his sisters and looked over at the baby who was clinging to Steve's shirt and making excited, indecipherable noises. "His name is now officially ‘Christopher Leland’ and he is our legal son and your nephew. And he is so happy to be here. Look at him." Bucky poked Christopher's little arm and received a gurgle of a laugh in return.

Steve thought it was so cute when Christopher seemed to understand when good things were going on around him. "He is so smart," Steve praised. "Might even become smarter than you, Becca. Watch out for him," he teased. He tickled his baby's feet before leading them out of the apartment building.

Becca just pulled a face and refrained from saying whatever it was that she was planning on saying. Bucky had the baby bag slung over his shoulder and Becca close by him. As they walked down the street, he and Becca took the lead and were a few feet ahead of Lilly and Steve. Lilly grabbed Steve's elbow softly and said, "Hey, I want to be Christopher's godmother."

Steve was taken by surprise and he felt a flutter of joy at Lilly's admission. He shifted Christopher into one arm so he could hug her with his other. "I think you would make a wonderful godmother. But I have to talk it over with Bucky first. Have you spoken to him about it?"

"No," Lilly said and watched the baby as he stared at the buildings around him. "I thought of it this morning. Becca said it wouldn't count because I'm not Catholic. But I just think she's mad cause she didn't think of it first. You know?"

"Well, she could've been mad. But she's also right. You have to be Catholic to be his godparent since I'm technically still Catholic," Steve said. "You don't need to be super religious. You just have to pass a few steps to be confirmed."

Lilly sighed and looked ahead at Bucky and Becca. "But I saw on a TV show once that this kid had godparents that weren't Catholic." She huffed again and shoved her hands in her pockets in defeat. "Fine, never mind."

"That's a TV show, silly," Steve said. "Don't feel so defeated so quickly. It's not that hard to join the church. And you're not obligated to practice after the ceremony is done," Steve reassured.

"I don't know if Bucky would want me doing that," Lilly said and lumbered on. "I don't know. I'll think about it." She ended the conversation there and skipped to catch up with her siblings as they were opening the door to the restaurant.
Steve frowned but decided to leave it as a conversation for another time. He walked inside and asked for a table for four with a baby seat. The hostess thought Christopher was adorable and complimented how cute he was as they were seated.

"Thanks," Bucky said as he made sure Christopher was securely in his seat and it wasn't going to topple over or anything. He still kept his foot securely behind the back legs of the chair just to be safe.

The waitress handed out menus and directed her attention to Bucky instead of Steve as she said, "Your son is adorable. How old is he?"

Steve felt happy that the waitress thought that Christopher looked enough like Bucky to assume that he was his biological father even though his hair was much lighter. "Actually," Steve said with a light tone, "He's both of ours." Steve gave her a little smile. "We're having dinner to celebrate the adoption papers going through. He's five months old now."

"Uh... oh... okay," the waitress stuttered out and gave a surprised little smile and nodded and said, "Well, congratulations to both of you then." She looked to Lilly and Becca and seemed like she was going to ask if they were their kids too since they looked too old to be the children of such young dads but she decided against it. "What can I get started for you all today? Any drinks or appetizers?"

Steve saw the look over at the girls and he answered for her, "They're his sisters." Steve asked for a coke and some garlic bread as an appetizer. He let the girls and Bucky put their order in. "Do you have children?" he asked the waitress.

She wrote down the order and ripped the paper from the top of her pad. "I watch my baby cousin sometimes if that counts. But I get to leave her with her parents when she acts out." She chuckled and excused herself to go get their order in and brings their drinks.

Bucky nudged Steve's leg under the table and smiled. "That went okay."

Steve looked over at Bucky and smiled. "Yeah. No fuss. No dirty looks. I can handle when someone isn't expecting us to be open. I know it's not typical."

"Let's just embrace the good responses because those are going to be pretty rare," Bucky said and gave Christopher a toy to play with because he was getting a little annoyed with being stuck in the chair. Once they all had their food laid out on the table, Bucky held a bottle for Christopher while Steve ate.
Steve was about to take a turn feeding Christopher but Lilly quickly volunteered to do it. "So it seems like he looks more like you than me. Think it's going to stay that way? Baby's physiologies change a lot."

Lilly traded seats with Bucky so she could feed Christopher and Bucky sat down by Becca and said, "I think it's just the eyes. His eyes do look like mine. But some kids eyes change color so he may look completely different once his new hair comes in and if his eyes change."

Lilly praised Christopher as he drank from the bottle. Steve loved how good she was with him. "No offense, but I kind of hope he looks like me," Steve said with a laugh. "You have younger relatives that look like you. I don't have anyone but my ma for a family resemblance."

"I'm not offended at all. I hope he looks like you, too," Bucky said and smiled at his husband. He heard an upset cough from Christopher and looked to find that he had spit up a little on his shirt and he was looking down at it like it was personally offending him.

Steve laughed at his son and wiped him off with a napkin. "Such a messy baby," he said fondly. "You'll get the hang of it," he reassured his son. When their dessert came, Steve swapped with Lilly to mind the baby. "This is so great, Buck. We can do this whenever we want."

Bucky nodded and ate some of his food while Steve helped Christopher eat properly. "Does your mom know that the adoption was finalized?" Bucky asked.

"I called her from the precinct when I got the papers," Steve said. "She would have come, but one of her friends was called in to the hospital and she's visiting her." He grabbed Christopher's hand and kissed the back of it.

"Oh, god, is everything okay?" Bucky asked hurriedly. He knew Sarah wasn't really that old all things considered, but she was retired and her friends may be around the age where they start having more medical issues. And Bucky, for one, knew how much it hurt to see someone you cared about in danger.

"Everything will be fine," Steve said. "She needed a liver transplant for a while and she finally got a donor... so it's actually a good thing she got called to the hospital."

"Okay." Bucky nodded and relaxed again. "Good, I'm glad everything's fine. I guess we will just see
your mom sometime soon, then. She wanted to help show us some exercises for when babies start learning to walk. Oh! Also, we need to start doing sign language while we talk to him. That's a great way for kids to communicate what they need until they learn to talk. And it'll be a good skill for him to have later.

"Sign language? That's a great idea. It would be perfect to have him be able to talk with Clint," Steve said. "You think it'll hinder him from talking normally? Like he won't use regular words because he can sign it?"

"No, no, he'll be fine," Bucky waved it off and took another bite of his food. "If he sees that we talk out loud while signing, then that's what he will get used to and when he can talk he'll try doing that too."

"Yeah, I suppose you're right," Steve said. "He's a smart boy. He'll pick it up in no time." He looked back over to Christopher and signed 'hungry'. "Are you hungry, sweetheart? Or is your belly full?"

Christopher just watched his daddy's hands move through the word. He looked up at Steve and giggled, reaching for him with small eager grabby hands. "He doesn't like staying in one spot for very long," Bucky observed.

Steve's heart melted and he smiled happily when Christopher grabbed for him and he snuggled the baby against his chest. "I love that he's such an active little guy," he said. "He and Lilly will go running around all day playing games."

"You think he will be athletic?" Bucky asked and started cleaning up the table as best as he could. He always stacked the plates and made a mountain of trash on top and did his best to wipe down the table. He wanted to make cleanup for the workers be as easy as possible. He understood how annoying it could be to clean up after messy customers. "I wish I knew more of his biological family history."

"I'm sure he will be athletic," Steve said. "Are you going to be a baseball player, Bean? Or maybe a soccer guy?" He kissed Christopher's cheek and then thanked Bucky for tidying up the table. "Also, I could give you a rap sheet about a mile long for his family history," Steve joked.

"That's not the type of history I'm looking for," Bucky huffed in exasperation. "I mean things like traits and talents passed down through generations. Medical history and certain genetic markers to look for. That sort of stuff. I mean, what if he has a predisposition to something that we don't know about and we don't catch it in time and he gets really sick?"
Steve took the check and paid it off, giving their waitress a handsome tip. "I can get their medical records if there are any," he said.

"I just don't want anything to happen to him because we didn't know what to look for," Bucky said and took Christopher so Steve could carry the bag and their leftover boxes. "I figure they would have given you any family history they had when the adoption was finalized. They probably don't have any."

"It's only given if the parents volunteered the forms. So I have to subpoena for the records...if there are any. Or with luck, his aunt will give me some information based on what she knows," Steve explained. Christopher blew spit bubbles for a little bit before babbling gibberish at Bucky.

Bucky used his sleeve to wipe his son's mouth and he stopped Steve so he could grab a pacifier from the bag. He popped it into Christopher's mouth and the baby contentedly sucked on it and stared up at Bucky. "Okay, how long do you think it will take to get them?"

"Quicker than the adoption papers...a week, maybe two at most." Steve shifted the bags into one hand and headed back home. "The one thing I worry about is addiction running through his family." The baby reached up and pressed his hands to Bucky's mouth for a second to get his attention. Christopher loved all the attention and affectionate things his dads did for him - he thrived on it, actually.

Bucky nodded and kissed Christopher's face several times. "I know. I'm worried about that too. Or about what damage might have already been done from whatever exposure he had while his mother was pregnant with him." Lilly and Becca were a little farther ahead of them so Bucky felt comfortable saying, "But, he will have us. You, who has been helping me with my current addictions, and me, who has conquered some past addictions." He sighed. The truth of the matter was that if Bucky ever had a kid biologically, the kid would probably get some of those things from him anyway. He had kind of been prepared for that potential a long time ago.

Steve nodded and managed a little smile. "Yeah... I know we will be able to help him through any hardship he encounters," Steve said. "And he's got two awesome aunts to support him, too."

"And his Nana," Bucky added and held Christopher close to rummage in his pockets for the apartment key. For the rest of the night, they all mostly lounged around the apartment until it was time to go to sleep. Lilly had asked to hold the baby and she fell asleep on the couch with him snoozing on her stomach.
Steve grabbed his sketchbook and sat in the armchair so he could draw Lilly and Christopher sleeping snuggled up together. He loved it. "She wants to be his godmother, you know," Steve said to Bucky.

"Lilly does?" Bucky asked and gave a confused look to Steve. "She's not Catholic."

Becca nodded and whispered, "That's what I told her, too. Doesn't count if you aren't Catholic and just cause she saw it on TV that's not how it actually works."

"She could join the church," Steve suggested. "She doesn't have to actually believe in it but it's just a few tests to learn the prayers and a few Psalms. She makes communion and confirmation and then she can be his godmother. After that, she doesn't have to attend church a day in her life if she doesn't want to."

Bucky scoffed and looked at Becca who had the same thoughts going through her head as he did. "And you, Steve, are comfortable with Lilly bullshitting her way through Catholic orientation knowing full well she doesn't care about anything she's actually saying just so she can be the godmother of our kid?"

Steve just shrugged his shoulders. "Well, she's actually going to have to learn about Catholicism to pass the tests," he said. "Which is more than she's doing now in regards to religion. And it'll bring her closer with Christopher if she's his godmother." Steve didn't see an issue if she did all the work and decided she still wasn't going to pursue Catholicism.

"She's not doing that," Bucky said absently and picked at a loose string on his shirt. "She can't learn the things she needs to for school so I don't think she'd be able to do the same for this. And we aren't religious and never have been and I don't think Lilly has the desire to explore religion either. And isn't this new church with Father Frank a Presbyterian church or something? But, you're still Catholic?"

Steve looked a bit hurt that Bucky was so quick to shut it down. "But she wants to be his godmother. If she's willing to put the work in for it, why should we stop her? She doesn't have school for a few months anyway."

"I'm not saying I'd stop her," Bucky corrected. "I'm just saying that the likelihood of her actually doing all that is really slim. She probably only wants to be his godmother because of those things she saw on TV. Or maybe she's just trying to solidify herself in the line-up if anything were to happen to us and Christopher needed a new guardian."
"Well, I know she probably will give up halfway when she realizes she has to put in actual work. But she also told me that you probably wouldn't let her do it. Her words, not mine," Steve said.

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Bucky gave Steve a look, "Why did she say that?" he asked quietly but sternly. His family had never been religious and they weren't usually treated well by those who were. His mother was chastised by the church-going moms for not taking them to church and for drinking around her children and being too lenient with their rules. His father was criticized for not being a leader and the head of the house and letting his wife lead instead. And Bucky was picked on by the kids of the church-going parents for any number of things.

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"I don't know. She's the one who said it," Steve mumbled. "Listen, I don't care if you guys are religious or not. All I'm saying is that if Lilly genuinely wants to be Christopher's godmother, then we should support her." He crossed his arms. "I know she's not very responsible. But maybe this will help her mature a little."

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Bucky huffed and glanced at Becca who was quietly listening but also silently judging. "It's her decision," Bucky said and looked back to Steve. "But don't be surprised if she doesn't go through with it or if she comes home and complains about the problems of the institution of organized religion in modern society. You know she likes doing that and I know you don't like hearing it."

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Steve nodded and looked over at the two of them. His religion meant a lot to him and having Lilly consider being a part of it even just for Christopher's sake meant a lot to him too. She didn't have to believe in any of it to learn about it. "I want Christopher to at least be baptized and make his communion and confirmation."

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"I know," Bucky said and nodded. "We talked about that a while ago before we had him. You remember I said I was fine with that?" He felt like this whole thing was getting a little too close to an argument for his liking and he really wanted to just shut it down before it got out of hand and just head to bed.

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"Just wanted to make sure," Steve said. He was getting a little defensive, unnecessarily so, but he couldn't help it. He got into a mood sometimes. "I'll keep an eye on them if you want to go to bed. I'll take care of it when he wakes up and send Lilly off to her room."

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Bucky checked the clock and sighed. "No, it's pretty late. We should all be in bed right now. You and I need to sleep while we can until he wakes us up." Becca slipped off to her room and Bucky gently pet Lilly's hair and nudged her arm to get her awake. Christopher was still asleep lying on his stomach on top of her.
Lilly groaned and complained about being woken up. Steve carefully lifted Christopher and rocked him in his arms. He went and laid him down in his crib then got undressed so he could lay down in his own bed. When Bucky joined him, he reached out for his hand. "I'm sorry for giving you an attitude."

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Bucky dragged the covers up over them and rubbed his leg against Steve's. "It's okay. You really care about this and that's fine. And I know you want Christopher to have those similar experiences that you did with growing up in the church. And I'm even okay with you taking him to church with you. I just also want him to know that the bad things people say about us or him or what they claim that God thinks, aren't true and he doesn't have to believe them. I don't want him learning to hate himself for things that they said are wrong about him or us."

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"I'm taking him to Father Frank's services, only. He doesn't allow anyone to spread hate under his watch. And he openly speaks out to advocate for couples like us," Steve said. "He really is a good man. I know you would like him if you ever hung out with him in a non-church setting..." Steve sighed and nuzzled Bucky lightly. "I hope Christopher doesn't get bullied because of us."

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"I hope he doesn't either," Bucky agreed. "But we will teach him how to handle it if he does. And besides, his daddy is a cop and his Aunt Lilly likes to throw punches, and his Aunt Becca could kill a man with a solid glare."

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"And he's got a pop that's tough as all hell and can find ways to make them regret making fun of his son," Steve said. He drew Bucky in for a slow kiss. "I love you, Handsome. I think it's time to get some sleep."
After giving him a bath, Bucky put Christopher in a little outfit he had just bought that looked like a baby baseball uniform. Today was the first baseball game of the firefighters versus the policemen and Bucky bought Christopher the uniform specifically for the occasion. Bucky himself was wearing a pair of his shorter, tighter shorts and a plain green t-shirt that was a little short so it rose up to reveal skin when he moved. Once the baby was dressed, Bucky picked him up and tickled his tummy. Christopher squealed and opened his mouth to reveal two front teeth just starting to pop through. "Oh my god," Bucky breathed. "Oh my god. Steve! Steve! Come here!"

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Steve had just finished changing into his team uniform when Bucky suddenly started making a fuss. He came rushing over, worried at first but then he saw Bucky point at Christopher and he gasped when he saw the little teeth poking through his gums. "Oh my god! Look at you, big guy! You're getting your teeth in! Look at how big you're getting! We are going to need to get you teething toys."

Christopher kicked his feet out excitedly.

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"Teeth!" Bucky laughed happily. "Teeth, Steve! Look at them. He's got the most precious little teeth in the world." He stared in awe at their son and wrapped his arm around Steve before he realized that he had his uniform on. Bucky pulled back and looked his husband over. The uniform looked gorgeous on him. He could see every muscle in Steve's arms and legs and his ass was cupped perfectly in the spandex material. Bucky swallowed and said, "After the teeth, that's the most amazing thing I've seen today."

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Steve was still grinning like an idiot when Bucky complimented how he looked in the uniform. "Oh yeah? You going to do something with this later, Buck?" he asked and pressed himself against Bucky's side.

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Bucky covered Christopher's ears and said quietly, "I already talked to your mom. She's taking the girls and Christopher tonight. When you and I get home, you're going to rail me in that uniform while you are dirty and sweaty and nasty from the game. If you win the game, think of it as victory sex and give it your all. If you lose, think of it as the consolation prize and take your frustration and turn it into power. How's that sound, Baby?"

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Christopher made an unhappy, impatient noise and batted at his pops' hands. Steve blushed at what Bucky said but by no means was he objecting. "Fuck yeah," he swore since the baby's ears were covered. "Gonna make you come so hard tonight. You'll be all worked up from seeing a bunch of handsome men sweat in tight uniforms."

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"I know," Bucky groaned and released Christopher's ears and played with his fingers. "I'm both very excited for this and also really dreading it. It'll be my own sweet torture." He chuckled and grabbed Christopher's bag. The girls were already with Sarah and weren't coming to the game so it was just
Bucky and the baby going to see Steve play.

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Steve smiled. "Today is perfect for me. I get to spend all night alone with my amazing husband, but this is the first time I get my own cheering section at the game. I'm going to really have to do my best with you two cheering on the sidelines for me." He kissed the tip of his son's nose. "I love you, Little Bean."

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"Well, I'm putting out whether you win or not so you don't have to worry about that," Bucky said and grabbed a little hat for Christopher so the sun wouldn't burn his face. "Although, this will be the first night without Christopher and I don't know how well the two of us are going to handle that."

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Steve's face fell a bit as he looked to his son. "Oh, man. I didn't even think of that." Christopher knew his grandma pretty well now so he wouldn't be with a stranger, but he worried how his little boy would handle being away. "You think he will be worried that we abandoned him?"

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"No, I think he will be okay," Bucky reassured Steve. "He doesn't cry when we leave the room so I don't think he will start to get upset until it's been a while. And he won't be alone so he will know that he isn't being left again. He's a smart boy, aren't you, Bean?"

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Christopher cooed up at his pop and reached up to tug his hair with a happy giggle. "I'm still going to worry. I'm going to need you to really distract me, Handsome," Steve said with a smile.

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"I've got it covered," Bucky said and tugged his hair out of the baby's tight fist and handed him a crinkle ball to squeeze instead. "And besides, we can tell your mom that if he starts to seem like he isn't doing okay without us then she can call us and we will come get him immediately."

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Christopher put the ball in his mouth and drooled all over it. "Sounds like a plan, Buck," Steve said happily. He felt more at ease knowing he could bring his son home the second any one of them got upset. "So are we ready to go?"

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The second they got to the baseball fields, Steve hustled over to his precinct and started doing warm-ups with them. The firemen were on the other side doing the same. Bucky scanned the small set of bleachers and saw Clint sitting by himself. Bucky held Christopher close and made his way up to him. "What are you doing here?" Clint pointed across to the police team at Natasha who was swinging around a bat and popping bubble gum.

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Steve practically pranced around on the field and would look over at Bucky in the stands to make
sure he still had his attention, like a goddamn puppy making sure he still had his human's approval. Clint chuckled and played with one of Christopher's hands. "He's getting big," Clint said. "Are those teeth coming in?"

"Yeah!" Bucky said and pointed at the two little teeth poking through. "I found them this morning. We will need to get some teething toys for him soon." Bucky watched Steve warm-up and could have sworn that his husband was purposefully facing away from him so he would see his ass every time he bent over in a stretch.

"He's going to get so grumpy. I hear babies cry a lot cause it hurts them when their teeth come in. Also, it'll hurt you when he starts biting when you piss him off," Clint snickered.

Christopher squealed excitedly when Steve ran up to the fence to say hello. "Water break time. You guys enjoying yourselves?" Steve asked.

Bucky hopped off the bleachers and went to the fence so Christopher could reach out to Steve. He giggled and mashed his hands on his daddy's face. "We are having a good time. Christopher doesn't really know what's going on but there is a lot to look at so he is occupied exploring. He's not the only one who doesn't know where to look, either." Bucky's eyes had been jumping from the policemen's side to the firefighter's side since they got here.

Steve smiled happily and kissed Christopher's hand through the fence. "Oh, you know exactly where to look," Steve teased. He got called by one of his teammates and waved at Bucky as he ran off. Christopher started to whimper and cry in Bucky's arms because his daddy went away.

"Hey, hey, Bean," Bucky said and bounced the baby a little in his arms. "It's okay. Daddy is going to play some baseball. But I've got you and Clint is here too." He got a couple concerned looks tossed his way while Christopher was calming down. Eventually, he settled and just started hiccupping from his outburst. Bucky worried that if Christopher was this upset because Steve walked away from him, then maybe they shouldn't have him stay at his Nana's that night.

Christopher made miserable noises until he finally calmed down and became interested in trying to get Bucky's shirt into his mouth. The game started soon after and it was clear both sides were trying to get away with as much as possible, doing dirty moves that weren't exactly bad sportsmanship but also not exactly nice either. "Christ, they really are competitive," Clint said to Bucky.

"Yeah, did you see Natasha straight up punch that guy in the throat earlier?" Bucky asked in disbelief and stared attentively at the game. Steve had been doing really well. He made a couple home runs and he was getting progressively sweater as the game went on. So was everyone else. The pitcher on the firemen's side had long since removed his shirt and a couple guys on the benches held there shirts up past their stomachs to get some airflow around them.
"Yeah, that's why I love her," Clint said with a warm tone and a love-struck gaze as he looked over at her. "Don't tell her I said that."

Steve took off his shirt towards the end of the game and he gave Bucky a playful wink. When he got his next hit, he rushed down the baseline and slid into second base. He got a few cuts from it and was now dirty as all hell, but he knew Bucky would love it. They ended up winning the game and they naturally celebrated by dumping ice water all over each other.

Bucky whimpered and bounced his leg up and down impatiently as he watched water soaked police officers tackling each other or grumpily peeling their shirts off and tossing them to the ground in a wet heap. Clint had been holding Christopher and Bucky took him back so he could go over to congratulate Steve.

Steve was all wet and scraped up but a little less dirty after the water. He felt amazing after winning the game and having his husband and son there to watch. His precinct had his back, so Steve felt confident enough to hold the back of Bucky's head and draw him in for a slow kiss. He took Christopher from Bucky and kissed his cheek. "Hey there, Bean!" he said excitedly. "You see that Daddy's team won?" He bounced him gently in his arms and smiled over at Bucky.

A few guys from the firemen's side gave them surprised looks and a couple looked like they were going to come speak their mind but Natasha decided to snag a few officers and go over to say 'good game' to the firemen as a distraction. "You looked amazing," Bucky said as his eyes ventured lower and lower on Steve, taking him in. Steve was always sexy to him but add in the fact that Steve was now a father and that just made him even more irresistible. There was something primal about the way Bucky reacted to seeing Steve be so paternal and loving.

Steve cuddled his son. He was a big old teddy bear when he was excited and had Christopher in his arms. "You always look amazing," Steve said. "You want to hang around a little longer? I bet I can grab a baseball for Christopher and see if he can throw it at all."

"He's barely six months old," Bucky laughed. "He's just going to try to put it in his mouth."

An officer came over to them and slung a dry towel over Steve's shoulders. "Good game, Rogers," he said and then noticed the baby. "Who is this?" he asked excitedly and shook Christopher's tiny hand.

Steve glanced over at his coworker. "This is my son," he said proudly. "His name is Christopher." The baby squeezed his fingers around the officer's hand.
"Hi, there!" The officer said and grinned at Christopher. He turned his attention to Bucky. "You must be Bernie. I'm sorry, I'm newer at the precinct and haven't met you yet."

"Close," Bucky said with a strained smile. "It's Bucky."

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Steve covered his mouth to stifle his laugh. He knew the officer was being friendly but it was still funny that he mistook Bucky's name. "Buck, this is Lionel. As you can see, he's new. Fresh out of the academy just in time for the game."

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Bucky shook Lionel's hand and then took Christopher from Steve. He was going to ask Lionel how he liked working at the precinct but he was called away. Bucky said, "Steve, I'm going to take him to your mom's place and then I'll meet you at home. I know you said you all usually go for drinks afterwards so if you want to go get a few drinks and then come home, that'll give me time to do some cleaning up." He emphasized 'cleaning up' so Steve would know he meant that he was going to get himself and their bed ready for dirty sweaty baseball sex. Then he added as a mumbled afterthought, "I don't look like a 'Bernie', do I?"

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"No, you don't look like a 'Bernie', Baby," Steve said and pouted a little when Bucky took their son. "Daddy will miss you, Little Bean. Be good for your nana, okay?" He snuggled him one last time and then headed out with the guys. He took an hour or so but he went home early so he could meet up with Bucky. He was admittedly just a little buzzed from a few drinks by the time he got home. "Sweetheart! I'm home!" He called out as he shut the door behind him. "How was dropping Christopher off?"

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Bucky shouted from the bedroom, "He cried a bit but he's fine. I promise." Bucky was laying in bed wearing one of Steve's shirts and the tightest pair of underwear he could find at the store that he could still manage to fit into. His dick sort of seemed like it wanted to rip the dark navy fabric at the seams and be released. Bucky had also taken a ball cap and threaded his ponytail through the back. When Steve came into the bedroom, Bucky was sitting so Steve could see his cock straining in the briefs. Bucky blew a big bubble of the gum he was chewing and he popped it with a smirk.

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Steve came into the bedroom expecting a good sight but he didn't expect something this good. "Fuck," he swore, immediately sobering up just by looking at his husband. "Jesus, Bucky, you look so goddamn good." Steve got onto the bed and practically nosedived between Bucky's legs. He sucked on the bulge through Bucky's underwear and reached his hands up to sneak under his shirt.

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Bucky giggled to himself and jerked his hips up slightly. "That kind of tickles, Steve," he said and grinned at his husband whose hair was matted down with sweat.

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"I'm starting to suck at your dick and you tell me it tickles?" Steve asked in an incredulous tone. "Just give me some credit here."
Bucky nodded and stared at the baseball uniform on Steve and moaned a little. "You look sexy as all hell wearing that." He looked down at his own little put-together outfit. "What would you do if I played baseball wearing this, huh?"

Steve hooked his fingers on the waistband of Bucky's underwear and mouthed at his cock some more. "I'd fuck you on third base on your hands and knees if you did."

"Oh, god," Bucky gasped. "That's really hot. What if next time you play the firemen, I come in as an alternate wearing just these tight ass briefs and the ball cap? All the eyes of all the guys on me waiting to watch me hit the ball out of the park and run all the way to home."

"I would let all the other guys stare all they want. Cause I know you wouldn't do anything with them and I'd get to have you show off what they all can't have and that only I can," Steve purred and ran his hands up Bucky's thighs. "God, you're like a dream."

"What would you do then?" Bucky asked quietly and took the hat from his head to let his hair down. He slid his hands down Steve's chest and around to his back and held a tight grasp on his ass. He licked at his neck too and tasted the tang of sweat there and he was starting to get just a little impatient to have Steve take him.

"I'd carry you home and fuck you into next week," Steve said. He got the lube and started to tease Bucky's hole with his fingers. "Kind of like what I'm about to do with you," he said. "You want me to be rough, Baby?"

"Yeah," Bucky clipped and nodded desperately. "I don't want to be able to walk tomorrow." He quickly spit the gum out and tossed it into the trash. He lifted his shirt up just slightly so Steve was getting just a tease of his abs. "Remember, keep your uniform on."

Steve pushed a finger slowly inside Bucky's ass and bit the inside of his thigh. "I'll make you have to call out sick," he chuckled. "Keep you in bed all day and fuck you over and over until we get the kids back home."

"I'll call Clint right now if you want me to," Bucky said and threw his head back. "Although, he is probably at home having Natasha ruin him too." He shrugged. "That's okay. Reggie can run the store with the new kid tomorrow."
"Leave Clint alone for tonight," Steve chuckled and pushed in a second finger as he sucked a mark on the inside of Bucky's thigh, right next to where he bit him. "We can call in the morning."

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"Okay," Bucky grunted and lifted his leg to bring it to rest on Steve's shoulder. "Also, you have no idea how hard it is to think of catcher and pitcher baseball sex jokes while you are fingerling me. You’d think it would be easy. It's like you force my mind to go blank with just your touch."

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"That means I'm doing my job right," Steve offered as he pushed his pants down just enough to expose his dick and start to slick it up with lube. "You want to be on your stomach or back, Love?"

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"I want to be face down, ass in the air for a while. Then I want to be flipped so I'm on my back and I can see you in that uniform while you come," Bucky smirked. "How does that sound? And you can be as rough as you want to be, Baby. I know you don't like too much but you can pull my hair or slap my ass and stuff."

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Steve nodded. Without any hesitation, he easily flipped Bucky over and he yanked his hips up to put his ass in the air. Steve gripped him tightly before pushing into his ass in one smooth movement that didn't end until he was balls deep. "Gonna give me some good victory sex, Baby?"

---

"Yes," Bucky breathed and looked back. "I'll give you everything you want. Just tell me what you need. I'm yours." He reached back and felt Steve's still clothed legs and a shudder ran through him. "Ruin me, Steve."

---

Steve started fucking into Bucky at a punishing pace, unrelenting and rough. His balls smacked loudly against Bucky's ass and he panted heavily as he laid his chest over his back. "Want to hear you moan my name."

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Bucky bit down on his own arm and squeezed his fist into the sheets of the bed. He screamed a bit in his throat - the desperation to get fucked finally coming to a head - muffling it with his arm before taking a deep desperate breath and saying, "Jesus, Steve, Baby! That's so good. You're so good to me. Steve! Harder." He bit his arm again and gripped the headboard with his other hand.

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Steve panicked at first when he heard the little scream but when Bucky asked for more, he was quick to give it to him. He started spanking Bucky with every thrust, barely able to keep up. "Say my name again."

---

"Steve!" Bucky shouted and arched his back. "Steve, Steve, Steve, Baby, fuck me!" He found one
of Steve's hands and carded it into his hair. "I love your cock. I love being fucked open by you. You give me everything I need, Steve."

---

Steve leaned his head forward to bite the side of Bucky's neck hard enough to mark him. He loved making Bucky desperate and needy. He sounded so fucking sexy like that. When he felt himself get close to orgasm, Steve flipped Bucky over like he weighed nothing and locked eyes with him as he kept pounding him into the mattress.

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Bucky's eyes were wild and blown out in arousal. His chest was so tight and his heart was beating so fast. He wrapped his legs around Steve's middle so he could get deeper inside him. "Steve, Steve, I'm almost there," he gasped and rushed his hand up and down his dick. When his orgasm hit, he squeezed his eyes shut and yelped with the force of it before going limp under Steve.

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Steve fucked his husband through his orgasm and he came shortly after. With a few final, harsh thrusts, Steve spilled inside of Bucky. Exhausted, he laid back down on Bucky with his dick still inside his ass and his sweaty, dirty uniform scratching against Bucky's bare skin. He panted heavily against his neck while he stroked his sides. "You okay?"

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"Mmm, shh," Bucky whined and held Steve close. "I want to ask for something but I don't want you to be mad at me," he said quietly and squeezed his ass around Steve's cock intermittently. "Are you satiated and tired enough for me to ask?"

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Steve let out soft, pleasurable noises when Bucky's ass squeezed around his cock. "You're worrying me," Steve mumbled tiredly as Bucky prepared him for the question. "Get it over with and ask already."

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Bucky nodded and kissed Steve once. "I bought a butt plug and I was wondering if you'd let me wear it tonight while I sleep. That way your come stays inside me and when we wake up, you can fuck me again and I'll be ready for you." He sighed and bit his lip, waiting. "You can say 'no'."

---

Steve wasn't entirely for the idea. But he was trying to be more open-minded about all this. Admittedly, Steve was having a bit of a hard time. "Why would you buy one when you know I don't like you using them?" he complained. "How big is it?" Maybe if it were small enough he would let it go since he wouldn't get jealous of being replaced.

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"Not that big," Bucky said. "And it's not like I used it. I haven't touched it since I got it. I wasn't even going to the shop for myself. I was with Clint. He was getting things for..." Bucky cleared his throat. "He needed something and he said he felt weird being the only one buying something. But, seriously, I didn't use it. And I don't have to ever use it if you don't want that."
Steve let out a little huff and pulled out. He made a motion with his hand to show Bucky that he could go and get the plug, but Steve kept his eyes away so he wouldn't watch if Bucky did choose to get the plug. "Was he really getting something that embarrassing?"

"Oh yeah." Bucky nodded but didn't move off the bed yet. He could tell Steve really didn't want this but he just didn't want to tell Bucky that he wasn't allowed. So instead, Bucky took Steve's fingers and pulled himself up on the mattress so he could stick them back inside his ass. "Natasha is into some hardcore things. I have a lot of respect for her. She's getting Clint to try so much he's never done before."

Steve let Bucky move him as he pleased. When Bucky spoke about Natasha getting Clint to explore, he cringed and huffed out, "Ugh, Natasha..." as if he was ready to scold her the next time he saw her. "Am I weird for not being into any of this stuff?" He looked down at his fingers that were inside Bucky and asked, "Didn't you want the plug?"

"I did want it but you don't," Bucky said and pet Steve's head. "So I'll just not. And I don't think you're weird. I think you are very happy with what you know and like. And you are still that little vanilla virgin Catholic. But I knew that. I had to learn that quick and I think I've been good so far at being careful with you about this stuff. You're not weird or abnormal or anything."

Steve wrapped his free arm tightly around Bucky's waist. "I'm sorry I'm not into the same stuff you are, Baby," he sighed. He wished he were. "You are doing a good job at understanding." Steve kissed along Bucky's jaw and then suggested, "Listen... if you want to use the plug or Phillip or whatever else you've got when I'm not around, do it. I just don't want to know about it."

Bucky smiled and gave Steve a long pleased kiss. "Thank you, Baby," he said and nuzzled into Steve's neck. "But, no, I'm not doing that. That's not what you really want and it'll be killing you all the time wondering whether I'm doing it or not. I know you, Steve. You'll drive yourself crazy."

Steve smiled guiltily because he knew he would constantly doubt himself and wonder if Bucky was unsatisfied with him. "Yeah, I guess you're right," he sighed and cleared his throat to change the subject. "So did you have a good time at the game?"

"Yes, I did," Bucky snuggled closer to Steve and held his face in his hands. "You were so sexy out there. And you played so well. And Christopher had a great time. There was a lot going on and he was just trying to take everything in. He did get frustrated a few times when he lost you in the mass of people. Also, he really liked Clint. Clint let him put his hands in his mouth."
Steve smiled happily at the praise and snuggled Bucky lovingly. "I like playing baseball. I really hope Christopher wants to do it so I can be his coach. Wouldn't that be great?" He pet his fingers through Bucky's hair gently. "We got to get him to call him 'Uncle Clint,'" Steve said.

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Bucky smiled at the thought and then frowned. It just hit him that the girls and his son weren't here. He didn't know what they were doing or if they were all okay. "You want to call your mom? See how everyone is doing?"

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"You want get on the phone with my mom too?" Steve asked and nosed at Bucky's neck. "I was thinking the same thing.

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"Yes, I need to talk to my kids and make sure everything is fine," Bucky said and rolled his eyes, "I know. I'm such a dad. But now I actually am a dad so my paternal tendencies are validated." He huffed and slipped out of bed. "Come on, let's go call your mom."

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"You're such a sap," Steve teased and stood up so he could make the call. Sarah answered, expecting the new parents to check in. "Hello, boys," she said. "Christopher is already sleeping. Lilly tired him out after the game."

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"Did he eat for you?" Bucky asked and held Steve's hand. "Sometimes he doesn't like eating if we aren't there. Lilly tried once when I was taking a nap and he just wasn't having it. Also, were the girls good for you? Didn't make things too hard on you today?"

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"No, he did not eat," Sarah admitted. "But I imagine he will give in when he's hungry enough," she added. "Steve was a stubborn baby sometimes, but all babies give in at some point, usually well before you have to worry." Steve was worried anyway. "The girls behaved themselves. We went out to dinner together."

---

Bucky looked to Steve whose face said that he wanted to go over there so his son could eat. "He will be okay, Steve," Bucky reassured. "But it's up to you if you want to go get them. I'm fine either way." He offered the phone to Steve so he could talk to his mom if he liked.

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Steve talked with his mom for a little while and as much as he wanted to get their son, he told himself that they all needed to get used to spending the night separated from each other. After a little while, he sighed and hung up. "I miss them already..."

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"I know. It's rough," Bucky said and hugged Steve to him. "Take it from me, it doesn't get easier.
Everyone just gets older." He sighed and banged his head onto Steve's shoulder. "I can't believe Christopher has little teeth already."

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Steve chuckled and shook his head a little. "I'm dying to hear him talk. I want to hear what's going on in that adorable head of his. Won't that be great, Buck? After that, he's got to stop growing, though."

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"I wish that's how it worked," Bucky said. "I'd make it so you and I don't get any older and the girls don't grow up and leave me and Christopher stays a happy little baby." He sighed. "But, I can't make that happen. And I think I'd miss being able to see Christopher go through the same milestones that the girls did."

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Steve pouted. "We already have teenagers. I'd be happy with a toddler forever. That's why I married you," he joked and kissed Bucky's lips gently. "What was the best milestone you got to watch?"

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"Watch yourself, Steve," Bucky warned half-heartedly as he thought. "Becca's first 'A plus' was a big deal. We went out for pizza as a family. Lilly's first day of preschool. She cried when Mom left her there but then she enjoyed herself so much during the day that she got mad when she had to come home." Bucky smiled and listed off a few more. "Lilly's first soccer game, the day we got a family dog, the first time they rode bikes by themselves. There's so many important things."

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Steve imagined being able to put Christopher's good grades on the fridge and sending him off to school every day. It would be so great. "I never knew you had a family dog," Steve said. "When we get a bigger place, we're definitely getting a dog." As if Raphael sensed what they were talking about, he hopped onto the bed and meowed at them.

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Bucky pet the cat and scratched behind his ears. "Do you think we will ever get to have any more kids? I know it wasn't certain we were ever even going to get Christopher but do you think a few years down the line, something like this could happen again and we could get another child?"

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Steve laughed a little. "We just got one and you're already looking for a second?" Steve wanted lots of kids, but, now that he had Christopher, he would feel guilty splitting his attention between several babies. "I mean, it's possible," he said. "I could always come across some other kid with parents going to prison."

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"I mean, we don't always have to get a kid because of that." Bucky laughed and squeezed Steve's arm. "I'm just saying, I want Christopher to be able to have little siblings like I did. I want him to get to be a big brother and hold his little sister and know that she's going to need him and love him."
Steve felt his heart melt as he imagined Christopher growing up into the perfect big brother. "Oh," he sighed happily. "That would be amazing..." he shrugged. "We could always hope Clint and Nat have an accident and want us to keep the baby," he joked.

"God, if they do, there's no way Clint is letting that baby out of his sight," Bucky said. "He will be like the cool dad who is really laid back but still trails after his kids everywhere they go." Bucky chuckled. "No, but there are tons of ways that another child could find their way into our lives."

"He'd be a good dad. Natasha wouldn't know what to do at first. Probably would hate it until she figured out how to be a mom and then she'd be great." Steve smiled. "Who knows? Maybe they'll let gay couples adopt at some point. Especially since we already have a kid."

"That's what I'm going to hold out hope for." Bucky sighed. "Or maybe there is an accident like what happened with my parents and there isn't anyone to take the child and we can do that."

Steve nodded. "Whatever it is, I want to give more kids a good home. And for Christopher to have more siblings," he said. "I'd love to see you with a kid in each arm and one hanging on each leg."

"That's four," Bucky's eyes went wide. "And assuming Christopher is old enough not to be held by the time he gets a sibling, that's a total of five. How many kids are we having, Steve?" Bucky honestly wouldn't mind if Steve said that they wouldn't stop until they reached a dozen. He loved having Christopher and being a dad and he loved seeing Steve so happy to be a dad too.

"As many as we can handle," Steve said. "I love kids, Bucky. I love being a dad so much. Think of all the things we can do with them... playing board games and teaching them how to write. Or helping them with dancing or sports."

Bucky smiled and kissed Steve slowly. "I love you, Baby. And I'll have as many kids as you want to have. We will eventually need a bigger place but we will deal with that later." He kissed down Steve's neck and then licked back up. "I kind of want to go again," he whispered and let his hand gently rest under Steve's balls. "You want to go again?"

"You're the best," Steve said happily. "I knew I married the right man." He purred when Bucky licked his neck and teased his balls. Steve's dick started to harden at the attention. "Yeah. You want it rough again?"
Bucky bit his lip and nodded. "Yes, but I also want to do whatever you want to do. And if you want to be fucked this time, or do sixty-nine or shower sex or whatever… You pick." He licked into Steve's mouth while Steve thought and he waited for his answer.

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"I think I want to pin your hands above your head and fuck you nice and slow," Steve said and kissed him, dragging his hands over Bucky's chest. "And then we will sixty-nine. And then we will finger each other in the shower."

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"Jesus, okay, Steve," Bucky gasped and pushed his crotch against Steve's leg. "I don't know if I'll be able to last through all of that but I'll do what I can. Do you want the bed ties to keep my arms up over my head?"

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"I think that'll be fun," Steve said. "Then I'll get to use my hands for other things." Steve kissed him a few times and then got up to get the silk ties. "We will take our time and I'll keep you up all night," he said.

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Bucky nodded wordlessly and moved his hands up above his head, waiting for the ties. "Steve? If you want to use your mouth on me for a few minutes before you fuck me, that would be really nice. I like seeing your head down by my ass."

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Steve hummed as he took his time tying Bucky's hands up. "You would like that, huh?" He smirked and slowly kissed down his husband's body. "You want me to lick your hole good and open?"

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Bucky groaned. "Do whatever you want with me. Just do something fast cause I'm going to start whining if you take any more time." He wrapped his legs around Steve and pouted. "Please, Baby, come on. Give me your tongue, please. I want you."

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Steve dove down and spread Bucky's cheeks apart with his hands. He licked around the rim, tasting his come before pushing it inside, thrusting it in and out of Bucky's hole, which was pretty loose from their earlier round.

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"Thank you," Bucky's voice squeaked a bit and his hands tried to reach down to hold Steve's head. He looked at the restraints and whined. He really did love this. "Steve, fingers," Bucky whispered and moved his legs up closer to his body so Steve could get at him better.

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Bucky was so fucking adorable sometimes. Steve was quick to oblige and he put two fingers into him while he continued to lick him open. Once he knew Bucky was ready, he shifted higher on the
bed and slid his dick easily into Bucky's ass. "So goddamn good for me, Buck."

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"I love you," Bucky whispered and tried once again to reach out for him. "Okay, you need to come closer to me so I can kiss you, please." He waited for Steve and then once he got his lips on him, he kissed him so desperately.

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Steve moved up to kiss him slowly and gently as his hips rocked steadily in and out of Bucky's ass. "Wrap your legs tighter around me, Sweetheart. Want to feel how eager you are."

---

Bucky accommodated Steve and squeezed his thighs around him. He sighed contentedly and closed his eyes. He liked the slower fucks that Steve liked to give him. It gave him a chance to think about it as they went. It gave him time to really let it sink in that he gets to be with someone like Steve.

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"Perfect," Steve breathed out. He moved his hips slowly and dragged his nails along the outside of Bucky's thigh as he went. "There's some benefit to having the house to ourselves," he purred. "Get to keep you all to myself."

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"And we can be loud and walk around naked," Bucky added. "Remember that first time we took a whole night and your mom had the girls? I had to teach you that waterproof lube was different from regular lube."

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Steve laughed. "Don't remind me how innocent I was," he complained. "I don’t know how you had the patience for me. I guess I'm worth it," he teased.

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"You are worth it," Bucky agreed. "And just think of all the things you’ve done in the past year with me. We’ve had sex about a thousand times, right? We even had outdoor sex by the lake. That's pretty big."

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"A thousand? Christ, we might have," Steve groaned. "That's so much sex." He reached between them to stroke Bucky's cock in his hand. This time last year, Steve hadn't even had sex once. "Where's someplace new you want to fuck?"

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"I don't know," Bucky said quickly and flung his head back. "I can't think when you touch my dick like that, Baby. Where do you want to have sex?" His eyes fluttered open and he focused in on Steve who was staring at him intensely with hooded eyes.
Steve took advantage of the moment and sucked a mark onto Bucky's throat. "The beach," Steve said. "We can go to Coney Island one night. Have nice, sweet sex under the docks," Steve purred. He could feel himself getting close to orgasm and his hips stuttered forward.

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"Oh god, yes, let's do that." Bucky smiled and squeezed his ass around Steve. "I love that idea." Steve kept his pace and his hand on Bucky's cock and Bucky's body didn't give much warning before he was exploding his come out through Steve's fingers.

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Steve stroked Bucky's dick and milked out every last drop of come from him. When Bucky was dry, Steve gripped his hips with both hands and fucked Bucky nice and deep until he came a second time in his ass. He pulled out, but only to finger Bucky idly as he looked down at him with an adoring smile. "How long until round three?"

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Bucky was breathless and he kept tugging on the restraints. "Sleep now, sex in the morning," he whined and glared at the ties. "I'll wake you up with my tongue in your ass this time, how's that? But right now I want to be held and I need this damn ties off so I can touch my husband."

---

Steve laughed a little and used his free hand to untie Bucky's hands. After Bucky started to snuggle him, Steve pulled his fingers out of his ass and nuzzled at Bucky's neck. "Mmm, I love you," he mumbled. "Thank you for an amazing night."

---

"I love you too," Bucky whispered and licked Steve's neck once playfully before curling up closer against his chest and sighing. "You're so perfect." He smiled to himself and quickly drifted off. He dreamed of Christopher being in school and Steve's shelter being completed and ready to open and getting a dog and teaching his son to swim and play games and ride a bike.
The next morning was full of lazy morning sex in the shower. They stayed in bed a little longer than they should have but soon enough they got dressed and went to pick up the girls and their son. Steve kind of hogged Christopher because he missed their little boy and he was having a grand time making funny noises at him.

Once they got back home, Lilly marched straight to her room and slammed the door. Becca sighed and rubbed her face and Christopher looked alarmed at the noise. "Did something happen at Sarah's?" Bucky asked Becca and stared at Lilly's shut door.

Becca nodded and said, "She got her first period. It was a pretty big ordeal. Lilly said something about being a 'goddamn fucking early bloomer.' Then she yelled about it not being fair and she cried herself to sleep."

Steve quickly kissed the baby's cheek when he saw the surprised look just in case Christopher felt like he was about to cry. He then looked a bit awkwardly up at Becca when she brought up Lilly getting her period. He had bought pads and tampons before so it wasn't like he thought it was taboo, but Steve had no clue how to try and comfort Lilly over it. "Is it really that early for her to be getting her period? She's almost a teenager."

"She's twelve," Becca said and crossed her arms. "She's the average age. But she had another good year if she was lucky."

"Yeah, but, Becca, you were a bit later than average," Bucky added. "Lilly is right on time but just doesn't want to be." He sighed. "I can't decide if I should go talk to her or let her have alone time."

"My mom said it was normal for girls to get theirs at this age, though. It's when they're eleven or younger that it's a bit too early..." Steve thought for a moment and then asked, "Did my mom talk things over with her? Or did you, Becca?"

"Yeah we did what we could," Becca said and rummaged in the fridge for a snack. "But Lilly really didn't want to talk about it. She was pretty angry about the whole thing and you know how she gets when she is mad."

Bucky sighed, "Here, Steve, let's take Christopher to her. She likes holding him so maybe that will help some."

"Are you sure it's a smart idea? You don't think she's going to be mean cause she's upset?" Steve pouted a little but ultimately decided that Christopher was the best bet at cheering her up. He knocked on her door and walked in. "Hey, Lil? I need you to watch Christopher for a bit. Can you
Lilly wiped her eyes and wordlessly held out her arms to take the baby. She held him close and rocked him a little bit before looking up at Steve and Bucky and saying, "He wouldn't eat last night. All three of us tried but got nowhere with him."

Steve gave a worried frown. "So he still hasn't eaten since yesterday?" Christopher made content, little noises and buried his face against Lilly's chest.

"Not since Bucky dropped him off," Lilly said and pet Christopher's head. "He was hungry and he cried to get food but then once he had the bottle in front of him he refused to drink any of it."

Bucky sighed, "We need to figure out how to break that habit. Lilly, do you want to come sit in the kitchen and hold him so we can get a bottle for him?"

"Poor little guy," Steve said gently, petting the back of Christopher's head. Lilly didn't want to get up but she stood up anyway and carried Christopher over to the kitchen. He started to bounce excitedly in her arms, knowing that this is where they ate.

Bucky prepared a bottle for him and he started whining and grabbing for it the second he realized what his Pops was doing. "I'm coming, Bean, hold on." Bucky chuckled and handed Steve the bottle so he could take Christopher and feed him. Bucky sat down at the table by Lilly and said, "Becca told us what happened. How are you feeling?"

The baby was so predictable sometimes. Steve took him into one arm and held the bottle with the other. Christopher hungrily sucked down the food. Lilly gave Bucky a moody glare when her brother asked about her 'situation'. She clearly wasn't in the mood to talk about - probably not ever. "Did you make me hold the baby just to drag me out here?"

Bucky shrugged. "Pretty much, yeah." He nodded and took Lilly's hand gently and she let him hold it even if she was mad about it. "I don't know what you're going through right now but I'm here for cuddles if you want. Or we can make brownies or something. Are you in any pain?"

"I'm not dying, Bucky. It's just a period," she said grumpily. "Do me a favor and quit talking about it." Lilly didn't like Bucky making such a big deal over it.

Steve kissed Christopher's head. " Aren't you lucky, baby boy? You don't have to get a period."

Lilly glared. "Steve!"
Bucky sighed and rubbed his face. "Don't get her going, Steve." He sat back in his chair. "I just wanted to make sure you were okay because you stormed right to your room and didn't even say anything and I heard you had a rough night last night."

"She's been a brat to me in the past, I'm allowed to be a brat sometimes," Steve defended in a pleasant tone back to Bucky.

"I storm into my room all the time," Lilly countered to Bucky.

"Oh, god, I have four children," Bucky whined and looked at the ceiling. "Alright, Lil, if you don't need anything then just go be upset and come get me if you change your mind. And, Steve, work with me here," he said with a little desperate laugh.

Steve smirked and blew a little raspberry on Christopher's cheek. "I'll behave now," he said. Lilly stood up and went back to her room without much more of a fuss. "Do we know yet if she uses pads or tampons? Can kids her age even use tampons?"

"I don't know," Bucky said and shrugged. "I assume that comes later. Becca always just asks for some cash to go get her own when she needs them so I'm betting she can talk to Lilly about it." He looked at Christopher and sighed. "Clint and I were talking yesterday about how we are going to need to get some teething toys for Christopher. And he's going to be a lot more grumpy for a while as they come in."

"I don't want them to feel uncomfortable about their periods around us. I don't mind going out and getting stuff for them," Steve said. He cradled Christopher and snuggled him to his chest. "And there's no way our beautiful boy could be grumpy. But I agree. We need teething toys for him."

"Can I hold him for a bit?" Bucky asked and looked sadly at his son. He hadn't yet got to hold him since they got him back from Steve's mom's place. "Then I'll help you make some dinner if you like. I don't work tomorrow so I will take Christopher to get some teething toys and I'll see if I can't find something nice for the girls too so they don't feel left out."

Steve passed Christopher over when Bucky asked for him. The baby reached up immediately to pull Bucky's hair. He had a habit of doing that. "You going to get Lilly a teething toy too?" he joked.

"I thought you said you were going to behave," Bucky replied tiredly and glanced at Steve. "I might buy Christopher some sort of rope toy, too. Try to get him to quit yanking on my hair. He's strong
and it hurts."

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Christopher smiled at his pops, waiting for him to smile back. "I hear that babies have a pulling phase until they get to their biting phase. In a few months, you'll miss the days that he tugged your hair."

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"No, I'll be pleased," Bucky said and sat back and rested the baby on his chest. "That means he will start hurting both of us and it won't be just me anymore. You'll get to suffer right alongside me, Babe." Bucky smirked and looked down at Christopher. "Be sure to bite your dad more than me. I've already lost a good chunk of hair from you."

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When Bucky started talking to the baby, Christopher smiled excitedly and wiggled happily in his arms. Steve loved how happy Christopher got when he was given attention. "Ouch... wishing harm on your own husband. You wound me."

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"No, I'm wishing for fairness," Bucky said. "Here, come here and I'll tug your short little hairs and then you'll understand." While he talked, Christopher's hand wormed it's way back up to Bucky's head and he took a fist full of dark brown hair and tried pulling it towards his mouth.

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"I'll pass." Steve grimaced when he saw Christopher go for Bucky's hair again. "Oh, Sweetheart, leave your pop alone," he said gently. As soon as Steve tried to get him to let go, he made a loud, unhappy noise and tugged harder.

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"Ow," Bucky groaned and managed to get the clump of hair from Christopher's tiny fist. He quickly pulled his hair back into a bun on his head. The baby's eyes went wide and he tried to get at the bun but when it proved impossible, he pouted and started to cry, letting out angry loud sobs.

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Steve hurried off to go get a rattle for him in an attempt to calm him down. "Hey, Bean, this is a lot more fun than Pop's hair." Christ, this baby had a set of lungs on him. "He's really in a mood today, isn't he?"

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Bucky nodded and held the baby out to Steve. "Take him. I need to get some medicine. I have a headache." He waited until Christopher was in Steve's arms and then he quickly went to their bathroom and downed a few pills. When he came back, Steve was on the ground with the baby trying to get him to stop crying and focus on his plush dog.

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Steve tried to console Christopher by giving him all his favorite toys, but he didn't want anything to do with them. "Come on, baby boy..." Steve said, giving Bucky an apologetic look for not being
able to calm him down. Finally, Steve tried putting his finger up to his lips and Christopher looked down at it before chewing on it, quieting down.

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Bucky sighed and flopped down on the couch. "I guess the grumpy teething has already started, huh? Do you want me to find a pacifier and maybe try to trade it for your finger?" He was tired. He and Steve didn't get a whole lot of sleep the night before and then they got all their kids back home and had to handle tiny crisis after tiny crisis.

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"I'll let him do this. I don't know if a pacifier is meant for teething," Steve said. He laid on the floor and pulled Christopher onto his chest, letting the baby keep gnawing on his finger. "You want to take a nap, Buck? I can keep an eye on things."

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"Mhmm," Bucky nodded once and stood up from the couch. "Wake me up in an hour so I can watch Christopher while you make dinner, okay?" He stretched his arms back and went to bed to nap. Sometimes he forgot just how much work a baby was. He hadn't had a baby around for so long. But he had Steve to help and he couldn't do this without him.

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Steve nodded and spent a little over an hour playing with the baby and giving him plenty of love. Christopher was in a better mood by the time Steve woke Bucky up from his nap. "Love, Buck, I got to make dinner."

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Bucky woke up slowly and rolled to face Steve. Christopher was reaching out to Bucky so he sat up in bed and took the baby from him. "Okay, Little Bean, you want to try to take a nap on Pops for a bit?" he asked and laid the baby securely on his chest and held his arms under his bottom. "Let's go lay on the couch so we can be with Daddy while he cooks."

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Christopher babbled at Bucky and wiggled happily on top of him. Steve kissed them both and went to the kitchen. Raphael jumped on top of Bucky's belly as well and curled up next to the baby as he said, "Papapapapapa."

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"Hey," Bucky said excitedly and looked at Christopher. "That was almost a word, wasn't it?" He gently held both the baby and the cat and went to the kitchen quickly. "Steve, listen to this." He set that cat down and rubbed the baby's back. "Do it again, Christopher? Show Daddy what you just did."

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Steve was in the middle of chopping up the chicken breast when the two came into the kitchen. Christopher shoved his little fist in his mouth and drooled all over it as he smiled up at Bucky. "What'd he do?" Steve asked.
"He made noises that sort of sounded like words," Bucky said with a pout and gingerly took Christopher's hand from his mouth. "Do it again, Bean. Papapapapa - like you did before." Bucky waited and got nothing. He shook his head as the baby just put his hand back into his mouth. "I swear. It was like a word."

Steve smiled fondly and walked over to kiss Bucky's cheek. "I don't think he's going to talk for a little while, Buck," he said. "He probably doesn't even know what he's babbling."

"But it sounded like a word," Bucky protested softly and watched with disappointment as Steve went back to making dinner. Christopher grinned again and showed his new little teeth off before trying to reach up for Bucky's hair that was still pulled tight into a bun. "No hair, Christopher, please," Bucky said and sat at the table.

Steve turned back and laughed a little at his boys. "Were the girls big hair pullers like him? I never saw a baby so obsessed with hair."

"Not really, no," Bucky said. "And the only one with long hair back then was my mother and she almost never had her hair down. It was always either in a tall ponytail or a braid. I remember the first time my hair was long enough to be braided. I was so proud and my dad took a picture of Mom and me together with our braided hair. I might still have that one somewhere."

Steve smiled. "I bet you were real adorable at that age," he said. "Maybe I should braid your hair for you now. Do it French style and all that. I always thought those looked nice," he said.

"Do you know how to braid hair?" Bucky asked quizzically. Becca usually braided his hair whenever he needed it that way - which wasn't often. Sometimes the three of them had the rare occasion where they had a braiding train going with Becca braiding Bucky's into a tight short German braid and Bucky braiding Lilly's long hair loosely off her shoulders.

"Of course. Becca taught me how months ago," Steve wanted to learn so he would be able to better help the girls. "We could let Christopher grow his hair long and braid it just like you did with your mom and sisters."

Bucky smiled proudly at Steve. "You're so cute," he said with a gleam in his eye and then looked down at the baby who was almost asleep on his chest. "I think letting Christopher's hair grow long would be adorable. A little toddler with long blonde hair, getting it in his face, and learning how to brush his own hair when he's a little older."
"He's going to have such beautiful hair, Buck. It's so bright already. Imagine when he's got a proper, full head of hair." Steve thought Christopher would be the most beautiful boy. "Lilly will have fun playing with it. I'm so happy she's so good with him."

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"She really is," Bucky agreed and watched Christopher's eyes blink open slowly, trying to fight the urge to sleep. Dinner was ready soon after that and Lilly grumpily made her way back out to the kitchen with Becca in tow. Lilly was clearly still upset and Bucky thought it was best to just leave her be for a while as he fed a very sleepy Christopher while Steve had his dinner.
Steve had been determined to get the shelter going before the end of the summer. He wanted it running and known about in the community before autumn when things started getting cold. Today happened to be the big day and Steve was hurrying to get his family ready for the opening event. "Becca! Did you get all the blankets and books sorted? Lilly, I need you to have the care packages all dressed with ribbon."

"We got it, Steve, calm the fuck down," Becca snapped back and kept folding blankets. The past few days had been a strain for her with dealing with Steve. She wanted to help but he was sort of driving her up a wall. And she also didn't think it was fair that half the time when they were at the shelter working, Bucky was off in the corner watching Christopher and didn't have to deal with Steve and all the tasks.

Bucky grabbed Steve quickly and gave him a short kiss, "Hey, everything will be wonderful. Try to stress a little less." Christopher agreed with a stream of loud nonsense and hitting Steve's arm.

Steve apologetically smiled at Becca to show that he hadn't meant any harm or agitation. He turned back to Bucky and sighed. "I've never done this before. I just want to make sure that we have everything these people are going to need." They finished up the final touches on what they were bringing with them and then Steve loaded all of the supplies into his cruiser and then came back up to the apartment to collect his family. "Hey, little boxer," Steve said to Christopher when the baby hit his arm again. "You ready to go out there and save the world?"

"You know, Steve," Bucky said and took his hand. "I think it'll be really important for people to see the two of us together with our son. It'll help prove that nothing about us is wrong and people like us can live happy lives, you know?" He paused and ran a hand through Steve's hair. "I'm really, really proud of you, Baby. For this whole thing and all that you do for me and our family."

"I think so too, Buck. They'll see that having a family is possible and that couples like us can make real good parents," Steve said. He was just bursting with joy and energy. "I couldn't have done this without you, Bucky." He drew him in for a kiss. "Let's go. We got to get this show on the road."

Bucky piled the girls and Christopher's car seat into the back of the cruiser and made sure the baby was securely fastened before he slid into the passenger's side by Steve. On their drive over, Bucky could tell just how nervous Steve was. His leg was bouncing up and down and his fingers wouldn't stop tapping on the wheel. "Babe, Steve, it'll be perfect, really."

Christopher loved going for car rides, so he wiggled happily in his seat while his dad drove. "I won't be able to relax until the event's over," he said with a nervous laugh. "Father Frank says there's already half a dozen people who are waiting to use the shelter."
"That's good!" Bucky said excitedly. "That's exactly what we want. And Clint and Natasha are coming to support you. And Evan and Monty will be around later after they pick up some more towels and soap because I forgot to. I'm sorry again about that."

"Clint and Nat are the best," Steve sighed happily. "And better late than never. I'm thankful for any help."

When they got there, Father Frank laughed a little when he saw Steve running around to set up like a chicken without a head. The priest went up to Bucky and asked, "Has he been like this all day?"

"He was worse this morning," Bucky nodded and shook the priest's hand. "He just really wants this to go off without a hitch. You know how he gets. And I just want to thank you again for helping Steve do all this. He really admires you and trusts you and I think it's really important that he sees someone else in his faith that believes that nothing is wrong with him for being who he is."

"For a man who can take command at the drop of a hat, he can sure get nervous over such little things." Frank shook Bucky's hand back and smiled at the baby in Bucky's arms. "Hello, Christopher. Thank you for coming today," he said sweetly to the baby. "Would you like me to hold him so you can set up?"

"I would say 'yes'," Bucky said. "But he is going through this phase right now that if someone he doesn't really know is holding him he starts to cry. His nana is on her way so I can just hold him until she gets here and then help Steve. How much time do we have before it's officially open?"

Frank smiled and patted Bucky's shoulder. "We open in an hour. I'm having volunteers cooking lunch for everyone in the kitchens right now," he said.

By the time that hour arrived, the rest of the guests arrived and there were a good amount of people Steve and Bucky wouldn't recognize. Some were there to take shelter and others were friends of those in need. "Bucky, there's so many people here," Steve said nervously.

"Hey," Bucky said quickly and got Steve's attention. "That's good. We want that. This is a great turnout for the opening day, Steve." He leaned into him and kissed his cheek. "Go talk to people. Introduce yourself so people don't think there is some weird cop hanging out in the corner like you're doing right now."

Steve nodded determinedly and went out to start to mingle with the new faces, trying to act confident and reassure everyone else. After a short while, Bucky was approached by a tall man with hair that was turning grey on the sides. "Is that your son?" he asked.
Bucky looked up. He had been focused on Christopher and hadn't seen the man come up close to him. "Oh, yeah, sorry. This is Christopher. I'm Bucky." Bucky adjusted the baby and held out his hand to shake. Christopher made an upset little growl sound and hid his face in Bucky's shoulder. "Sorry, he's pretty wary of strangers lately. How did you hear about the shelter?"

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The man looked excited to interact with the baby and was a little disappointed that Christopher refused to look at him. He shook Bucky's hand anyway. "I'm Tim," he said. "I was getting a drink at the club and overheard some guys talking about it... my wife kicked me out of my home a few months ago when she found out I used to date men and lean more towards that orientation than in her direction. Turned my whole family on me and it's been tough getting back on my feet."

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"I'm really sorry about that," Bucky said and patted the man's arm. He saw Steve out of the corner of his eye and he was looking over at him. Bucky dropped his hand from the man's shoulder sheepishly and pocketed it. "Well, that's one of the reasons we started this shelter. So you're welcome here and you'll be able to work on getting yourself settled again. Do you have kids too?"

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Tim gave a sad smile and nodded his head. "Two boys and a girl," he replied. "Haven't been allowed to see any of them." Tim rubbed at an eye because it killed him that he couldn't see his children over this. He put a hand on Bucky's shoulder. "I already owe you so much," he said. "I lost my job cause I was depressed. Knowing someone out there cares like this...it gives me hope again."

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Bucky saw Steve again looking on but he didn't want to shake the man's hand off of his shoulder and seem rude. "I've got two girls and a boy," he said instead. "The girls are my sisters. I have guardianship of them." Bucky looked over at the plaque on the wall that read 'George Barnes Memorial Shelter' with a few versus underneath it. "And Christopher is mine and Steve's. Steve is the one who started the whole shelter." Bucky nodded towards his husband. "He's the officer over there."

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Tim looked over to Steve, who was getting approached by a woman dressed in something similar to a police uniform but not quite. "He's cute," Tim said. "You're cute too," he added with a wink.

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"Mhmm," Bucky hummed awkwardly and gave a short nod. He couldn't really tell if he was being flirted with but he really hoped Steve didn't think he was returning the sentiment or anything. He glanced again over at Steve who was engrossed in conversation with this woman who was standing a little too close and was a little too touchy. "I'm sorry, Tim, if you would excuse me, I need to go check on something with my friends over there." Bucky slipped off towards Natasha and Clint and grabbed Natasha's arm. "Who's that over by Steve?"

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Natasha rolled her eyes with a groan. "Tish," she said. "New dispatcher and her voice is too damn
high to be telling us what to do. She's like a Chihuahua. Also, she completely refuses to believe that Steve's actually gay," she said with distaste in her voice.

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"Huh," Bucky mused and watched the woman interact with his husband. "She's kind of touchy, isn't she? And Steve... isn't really doing anything about it." He clenched his jaw and looked to Nat. "Is that the person Steve's been talking about for two weeks? I've just been hearing about some really nice new kid."

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"He only likes her cause she's the only person at the precinct who lets him go on and on about his son. Everyone else runs off. He gushes for way too long," Natasha said. "He doesn't realize she's got the hots for him."

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Bucky watched Tish again. She was touching Steve's lower arm and was awfully close to him. "Maybe I'll just go set things straight then," Bucky said and looked to Clint and Natasha for approval.

Clint chuckled and said, "Or not so straight, huh?" Bucky grinned and handed Christopher to Clint so he could slink up close to Steve.

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When Bucky came over, Steve smiled happily and turned so he could kiss his cheek. "Hey, Beautiful," Steve said. "This is Tish. She's new at the department and we were just talking about Christopher."

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Bucky held out his hand to the woman and grasped tightly to Steve with his other. "I'm Bucky. You've probably heard about me," Bucky said with a twinge of harshness in his voice. "Do you like the shelter? Steve named it after my father."

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Tish shook his hand. Because of his automatic distaste for her, Bucky had kind of been expecting her hands to be cold and clammy and generally unpleasant but her skin was warm and soft with a thin layer of lotion. Somehow, that was worse. "Oh, yes. Steve's friend," she answered with a tight nod.

Steve put an arm around Bucky. "Husband," he corrected with a happy little smile.

Tish looked around the place and nodded. "It's nice. It's a good thing to give shelter to people that need it."

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Bucky furrowed his brow and pursed his lips. He did not like the way Tish was looking at him - like he was a problem to be eliminated. And he also didn't like how she looked at Steve - which was much softer but also very hungry. "Gay people like myself and Steve need a lot of support and protection right now." He emphasized 'Steve' and gave her a pointed look.
Tish treated Bucky like he was hardly there, like he didn't stand a chance against her. "Well, I hand knitted pillow covers for the shelter," she said. "Steve's already thanked me for it. He brought me some cookies into work the other day," she said coolly.

"Yeah, Buck," Steve said excitedly. "The pillows look really nice now."

"Great," Bucky said flatly and then gave Steve a kiss. "I'm going to go feed our son." He left to get Christopher from Clint and sat at a table by himself. After a long while, Tim came over and sat down by Bucky. "Are you having a good evening so far, Tim?" he asked with a defeated sigh.

Tim saw the look on Bucky's face. "I am, yeah. You don't look like you are." He paused and leaned in closer. "Listen. Your husband doesn't seem to be giving you much attention. Maybe if you let me flirt with you, you can make him jealous. We don't have to do anything."

Bucky scoffed and gave Tim a look. "Thanks, I guess. But he's not the problem." Bucky sighed and looked at Tish who was laughing wildly at something Steve had said. "It's that tiny nuisance of a woman. She's got a thing for Steve apparently. Steve probably has no clue that she's even flirting with him. He can be dense about those things sometimes."

Tim looked over at Steve and Tish. "Isn't he a police officer? And he can't tell when some chick thinks she can fuck the gay out of him?" He snorted. "It's kind of endearing that he's so oblivious to that kind of thing."

"Well, I think Steve just has a hard time imaging anyone having a crush on him so he doesn’t know how to spot it. I'm pretty sure the only reason Steve noticed I was flirting with him was because I was severely obvious about it," Bucky said. "But, then again, so is Tish. I don't know. Steve's also an exceedingly polite person. So even if he knows what she is doing, he probably doesn't have the heart to tell her to stop."

"Not very fair of her to do that with you guys. I mean, I'm flirting but I'll back off if you ask me to," Tim said. "And I don't come on too strong." He smiled and nudged Bucky lightly. "I can distract your husband so that lady can't talk to him."

Bucky laughed and smiled at Tim. At least this guy was real enough to admit he was flirting. "That's okay. Thank you, though. You're here to seek refuge, not to keep short bottle-blonde women away from my husband." As Bucky was talking, Christopher reached up and tangled his hand in Bucky's hair. He gave it a sharp tug then. "Fuck! Ow!" Bucky yelped and Steve looked over at him from across the room. "Christopher, please release my hair," Bucky pleaded and tried balancing the boy on his knee and getting his hand out of his hair.
Steve's head snapped up when he heard the yelp. He ran over and carefully took Christopher's hand out of Bucky's hair. "No," he said firmly to the baby. It was cute at first but now Christopher was really starting to pull hard and it was hurting Bucky. "That's enough tugging from you." When Steve used that low tone with the baby, Christopher started to tear up and cry.

"Jesus, okay," Bucky breathed and stood up. "I'm going to take him outside for a bit so he doesn't cause a scene in here."

The second Bucky left, Tish hightailed it back over to Steve. "Bucky seems kind of annoyed at your baby, Steve. He was a little rude to him. Don't you think?"

Steve frowned when Bucky walked away and looked sad that he couldn't help out more. "What?" He looked down at Tish in confusion. "No. He's great with Christopher. Our son just needs to start learning what hurts his pop."

"Still," Tish said and cocked her head to the side slightly. "I wouldn't have cursed around a baby. Or in a church shelter. That's kind of uncalled for." Neither of them noticed Tim quietly observing from a few feet away - like he was taking notes to tell Bucky all about it later.

"He doesn't mean to swear and he's getting better at it," Steve said. "This whole shelter wouldn't exist without Bucky's help, so he's allowed to swear in it, I guess." He sighed and gave her a look. "Please, I love my husband. I'd really like it if you don't talk poorly of him."

Tish shrugged. "I mean no offense, honestly," she said with her words dripping like honey from her lips. "How about we get some food and forget about it?" She grinned at Steve and then noticed Bucky coming back inside with Christopher now calmed down. Tish nudged Steve over to the serving line where Becca and Lilly were both helping dish out plates.

Steve followed after Tish to get some food but as soon as he got the chance to, though, he took his food to sit with his family. "Do you have a headache, Buck? I can hold onto Christopher."

"Yeah, I do," Bucky sighed. "But, go ahead and eat, Baby. I'll pass him off to your mom when I get hungry. You have people to talk to." He thought, If Tish will even let him mingle with other people. "I could really go for a cigarette right now. Or three."

Steve chewed on his food thoughtfully and said, "You seem nervous, Bucky. Is there anything I can do?"  Becca and Lilly looked at each other because they'd seen how Tish shadowed Steve all night.
"Nah, man," Bucky said offhandedly and regretted it almost immediately. Steve knew something was up and Bucky always pulled out what Steve called his 'hippie speak' whenever he was trying to play things cool. "I mean, no, I'm fine... I'm fine." He sighed and looked down at Christopher who was happily sucking on his fingers and staring up at his Pops.

Steve knew something was wrong the second Bucky went to ‘hippie speak’. But he didn't push Bucky to talk more about it. Instead, Steve suggested, "We should probably say goodbye and head back after we eat. I'm kind of tired."

"Are you sure?" Bucky asked and replaced his son's hand with a pacifier. "We can stay longer. It’s fine. We already have about seven or eight people staying tonight in the bunks. Have you had a chance to meet them all? I saw Father Frank introducing himself earlier."

Steve nodded. He wanted to stay and help with things longer, but Bucky was more important to him. "I met them all. I'll come over tomorrow anyway," he said. "After today, I think we all need a good rest."

"Okay, let's go home after we eat then," Bucky agreed and pet Christopher's head. "Our Little Bean should probably sleep soon anyway. He's had a big day, too. Met a lot of new people. Monty and Evan bought him a new toy."

"Oh yeah? What did they get him?" Steve asked. Tish sat away from the group of them, but she was still eyeing Steve every so often regardless of Natasha and Clint’s best attempts to distract her.

Bucky took the toy from the bag. It was a crinkly elephant that made noises when he was squeezed. Christopher immediately dropped the pacifier from his mouth and started whining and reached for the animal. "Baby Boy, why are you so grumpy today, huh? That's just about the third time you've spit out your pacifier."

Steve thought it was a little adorable how much Christopher liked his new toy. "Evan and Monty know how to win a kid over." He picked up the pacified and dusted it off. "You think he's going to have issues being considerate? He seems a bit...one-track-minded. Or is this just a baby thing?"

"It's a baby thing," Bucky reassured him. "All babies are selfish and one-track-minded. He will grow out of it once he learns more and gets more self-aware and stuff like that." He handed the baby off to Steve so he could go get some food really quick. He noticed Tish watching him walk away.
Christopher calmed down once he had his new toy. "You were a determined, little boy as well," Sarah told Steve to reassure him.

Becca got up to follow Bucky. "What's up with that lady that keeps staring at us?" she asked.

Bucky lowered his voice and said, "She's the new dispatcher at the police station and she wants to get in Steve's pants." He went through the line with Becca right beside him. "She's been on Steve all day and Natasha said she's like this at the precinct too. I do not like her."

"Steve's told her he's married, right?" Becca asked, frowning. She couldn't see Steve cheating but she was surprised that he didn't shake her off by now with how proud he was to have the family he did. "What are we going to do about it?"

"I don't think we can do anything about it," Bucky said. "Steve has made it clear who I am to him and Natasha has told her about Steve's coming out event last fall and then about Rumlow and the aftermath. She's just a wickedly persistent woman. But I'm hoping she will give up once she realizes that she doesn't have any of the parts that interest Steve."

"That's really annoying," Becca said, frowning over at Bucky. "She's a home wrecker. Except Steve won't do anything." She sat down and eyed Tish moodily throughout the rest of their meal.

Bucky leaned into his sister and whispered, "I could probably blow Steve right here and she wouldn't let up." Becca made a face and Bucky apologized with a laugh. "It's okay, Steve said we are going home soon so we won't have to deal with her any longer." Although, it did make Bucky uncomfortable knowing that she was at work with Steve all the time.

Once Steve finished his food, he made his rounds around the place. He thanked the volunteers for their hard work, thanked their friends for coming, and wished all those staying at the shelter a comfortable visit, and gave Father Frank a huge hug. Tish ran over and gave Steve a hug too and a peck on the cheek before bouncing off. Steve frowned but didn't make a scene before heading back to his family.

"Fucking bitch," Bucky and Becca whispered at the same time. Bucky gave his sister a look and smiled weakly. At least one other member of his family saw what this woman was trying to do. He looked across the room and saw Clint and Natasha staring wide-eyed at Tish's boldness. And Bucky also noticed Tim who was waving him over. "Hold on, I'm going to go say goodbye to Tim. I'll meet you all at the car."
Steve came back to Bucky's sisters just as Bucky left to go say bye to Tim. Tim chuckled and shook his head when he saw Bucky come over. "She's a piece of work, isn't she?"

"Tim, did you ever see Alfred Hitchcock's movie Strangers on a Train?" Bucky asked and glanced back at Steve who was gathering Christopher's things to take home. "Maybe we can do something like that. You kill Tish and I'll kill someone for you." Bucky shook his head. "But, seriously, I'm not the only one who thought that kiss on the cheek was a little much, right?"

Tim laughed and then shook his head. "I'm not killing someone who works around a bunch of cops. No matter how awful she is. But, yes, that kiss was totally too much," Tim agreed. "Does this mean I get to give you a kiss on the cheek, though?"

"No, no it does not. Sorry." Bucky smiled and patted Tim on the shoulder. "I hope you get what you need here at the shelter and you can get back on your feet soon. I'll be around some days and so will Steve. It was nice to meet you."

Tim snapped his fingers. "Aw, damn. Worth a shot," he chuckled. "I look forward to seeing the both of you. Thank you again so much for what you do."

Tim went back to help clean up the dishes and Steve wrapped an arm around Bucky as soon as he came over. "Hey there."

"Hey," Bucky leaned into Steve and kissed his neck. "Let's go home, please. I'm tired and that headache hasn't really gone away. And I have to open the shop tomorrow morning. Reggie is still sick. And I want to fuck you really well before we go to bed."

Steve kissed the top of Bucky's head. He couldn't help but let out a little rumble of approval. "Yes, please," he said eagerly. "We got to put Christopher in his playpen, though. I don't like doing that when he's awake in our room."

"I know the drill, Steve," Bucky said and pinched his side. "But it's been almost a week and I'm anxious." He shuffled everyone out to the cruiser and got Christopher into his car seat again and plopped his new elephant toy on top of him so he had something to play with.

Once everyone was situated, Steve drove to drop his mom off before bringing everyone back to the apartment. Christopher wasn't entirely grumpy but he kept making noises as if he was asking for a longer car ride.
"I know, Bean, you're sleepy and you like the car," Bucky got Christopher from his car seat and held him on his hip so he could grab his diaper bag. "Let's go upstairs and you can sleep, okay?" He cuddled his son and yawned. "Big day for everyone."

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Christopher laid his head against Bucky's chest and whined as he was picked up. He didn't fuss much after and the second that Bucky laid him down, he was asleep. Becca and Lilly both went to their rooms to do whatever it was that they wanted and Steve walked up behind Bucky. "Today was amazing all thanks to you."

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Bucky leaned against Steve and reached a hand back to grab Steve's arm and bring it to his chest. "I think Christopher exhausted himself pretty thoroughly today," he said and watched their son breathe deeply. "He was pretty whiny too. I think he knew you were occupied so he was being a little jealous for attention." Bucky turned and hugged Steve around the middle. "I'm really proud of you, Steve. The shelter is perfect."

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Steve leaned forward and kissed Bucky's jaw. "It's nice seeing him develop a personality...even if it's a grumpy one." He cupped the sides of Bucky's face and kissed him slowly. "I am so happy to have you at my side. I can't wait to help more and more people."

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Bucky clung to Steve and breathed him in. "I feel like I didn't get to see you all day," he whispered into Steve's chest. He didn't say anything about Tish. If Steve didn't bring it up, Bucky wasn't going to. "Did you meet Tim? He was really nice. His wife kicked him out because she found out he wasn't totally straight. He has kids too."

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Steve stroked his hand down Bucky's back and kissed him a few times as Bucky cuddled up to him. "I met him, yeah. I almost cried when he told me his story. I couldn't imagine not being allowed to see my kids. I feel awful if I don't see Christopher for a few hours."

---

"I hope he gets settled soon," Bucky said and let his hands drift down Steve's body. "We also forgot to talk to Father Frank about a baptism for Christopher. I know you wanted to do that soon." He held Steve's lower back and nuzzled his neck gently.

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"I was thinking a little later in the fall. The leaves will be orange and it'll look gorgeous," Steve said. He smiled and kissed Bucky again. "So are you going to make me yours tonight or not?"

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"Yes," Bucky said and rubbed his hands over Steve's ass. "Was waiting for you to give me the good ahead." He started walking Steve backwards towards the bed. "Your ass is mine, Steve. You know that right?" Bucky damn near growled and laid Steve back on the mattress. "I'm going to finger you until you can't speak and just when you think you're going to come, I'm going to stop and let it pass
before I fuck you. If you want, Steve."

---

Steve loved to be possessive in bed but it was also really nice when Bucky was possessive right back - which was a rarity. And when he spoke dirty like that it drove him wild. "Fuck, yes. Please, Buck. I know I'm yours. Wouldn't ever doubt it."

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"Good," Bucky said and stuck two of his fingers on Steve's lips so he would get the hint and suck them. He hummed low in his throat and used his free hand to palm at Steve's cock in his pants. "I hardly got to touch you today. I feel like I spent more time trying to find where you ran off to than actually being with you."

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Steve obediently sucked on Bucky's fingers and moaned softly. Once he got them nice and wet, he started to undress Bucky. "Looks like I got to make up for lost time today by being all over you tonight. How's that, Husband?"

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"You better," Bucky smirked and lifted his arms so Steve could slip his shirt off of him. "Help me with your pants," he said hurriedly and started fumbling with Steve's uniform. "Too many goddamn buttons on this thing."

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Steve smirked as Bucky fussed with his uniform. "But you like how I look in it, so it's worth it," he said smartly. Once they were both naked, Steve pulled him down for a hot, slow kiss and rolled his hips up against Bucky.

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Bucky groaned and licked into Steve's mouth. He popped off of him and gasped for air. "God, Steve, sometimes I forget how you taste. It's like if I don't have my mouth on yours every hour or so, I lose it." He mouthed at Steve's jaw and rubbed his stubbly trimmed beard against Steve's neck. "Here, Baby, let me get to that perfect ass of yours."

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Steve grabbed Bucky's ass tightly and squeezed. He moaned low and grinded his hips up into his husband. Steve then smirked and started to gently push Bucky down lower, spreading his legs wide open so Bucky would have easy access to him.

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"Thank you," Bucky whispered and reached for the lube. He put two of his fingers back in Steve's mouth while he fumbled to get the snap lid open. "There we go," Bucky said and took his fingers back to coat them in lube. "How tight are you tonight, Steve? It's been a long while since I've been inside you."
"Pretty damn tight, I'd guess," Steve said, kissing Bucky's fingertips as he pulled them away. He looked up at him and guided Bucky's fingers to his ass. "It'll be like it's the first time," he joked.

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"Need me to go as slow as I did that day?" Bucky asked and teased one finger around Steve's hole. "I was just going to push you and get in so I could take you apart with my fingers, but I can go real slow like that first time. If you want."

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"No," Steve said. "I want you to make me yours. Take me apart and push me," he growled, looking into Bucky's eyes. He knew something upset Bucky today and while he didn't know what it was, he knew he could make him feel better with this.

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Bucky grinned and bit his lip, "Okay, Baby, I will." He pushed his finger all the way inside Steve and watched his face carefully. He loved how expressive he was when they were having sex. Bucky loved the way Steve's eyes barely shut and his mouth opened in a tiny gasp. He loved the crinkle in his forehead when he was trying to decide if he was ready for another finger. He loved when Steve licked his bottom lip just slightly as he watched Bucky watching him.

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Steve drank in all the attention that Bucky was willing to give him. It felt so good being able to be the sole thing that Bucky focused on. "You're staring," Steve observed fondly as he watched Bucky watching him. "You like what you see?" He gave Bucky's ass a small swat.

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Bucky smiled softly and then his face got dark and serious. "I love you, Steve," he said quickly and stopped moving his finger inside him. "You know I'll give you anything you ask for, right? You don't need anyone else." He rested his free hand over Steve's abs and then laughed at himself. "Sorry, it was just a long day. And I really missed touching you."

---

Steve was confused when Bucky went from needy and horny to completely serious. He whined when Bucky stopped finger-fucking him and he dragged him down for a kiss. "I know you would," he said. "Now quit being a sap and fuck your husband. Save it for cuddling."

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"Coming from you, that's funny, Steve," Bucky said as he pushed in a second finger quickly. "You're the biggest sap I've ever met." He vigorously pumped his fingers in and out of Steve so he could add a third as soon as possible. "You want to tell me what you need tonight?" he asked and hooked his fingers to push against Steve's prostate. "I want to make sure you're getting what you need before I get what I need."

---

Steve arched his back and dug his fingers into Bucky's skin as the man pumped his fingers in and out of him. "Fuck-" he swore. "I want your dick. I want you to make me come so hard I see stars. And then I want you to hold me after."
Bucky quickened his pace so his arm kind of hurt with the effort. "You want to come before I fuck you or while I'm inside? I'll let you decide. How's that?" He looked down at Steve's ass then back up to Steve's face and smiled. "You're so cute like this."

"Jesus, Buck, you're going to pull a muscle," Steve said, laughing just a little as Bucky fucked him so hard with his fingers that his whole body rocked with each thrust and he had to fist his hands in the sheets. "I want you to try and fit as many fingers as I can handle. Then I want to come with your dick in me."

Bucky answered by slowing way down and pouring more lube over Steve's hole. He carefully eased his pinky in alongside the other three fingers and gently moved them in and out and spread them apart just slightly as he went. "How does this feel?" he asked and watched the crinkle in Steve's forehead get deeper. "I can stop."

Steve's brows knitted together as Bucky pushed a fourth finger inside of him. He blushed all the way down to his chest and arched his back off the bed. "Makes me feel so full, Buck," he groaned. "Keep going..."

"Okay," Bucky whispered and kept opening Steve up. "You haven't taken my fist before so if you need me to stop, tell me." He wanted to be really careful with Steve. The last time they tried this, he only got about this far and then couldn't handle anymore. Bucky made sure to pour more lube over his hand and gingerly slip his thumb into the fold of his palm and push in.

Steve was painfully hard and leaking pre-come all over his belly. When he felt Bucky add his last finger in, Steve cried out Bucky's name softly but didn't ask him to stop. Overwhelmed, he threw an arm over his face to hide how much it was affecting him. "Oh, Buck... just a little more. Go easy."

Bucky nodded and breathed with Steve, gently moving Steve's arm off his face. "Let me see you," he requested and started spreading his hand slowly open. "You've got every finger, Baby. How does it feel? Are you okay?"

Steve looked so vulnerable when Bucky moved his arm away. His pupils were blown wide and he looked up at Bucky, utterly fixated on his husband. "It feels so..." he gasped out, then paused to moan. "I feel so full and tight and stretched." He spread his legs a bit more and writhed under Bucky when every movement of Bucky's hand felt earth-shattering to him. "Gonna make me come too soon."
"Tell me to stop and I will," Bucky said and quit moving his hand while he waited for Steve's answer. Steve looked wrecked. Part of Bucky felt weird for seeing him like that - the roles were usually reversed between them. But part of Bucky needed to see this some more and greedily soaked in the knowledge that only he could do this to Steve. No tiny blonde woman could ever elicit this raw of a reaction from Steve. "You're beautiful."

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"Don't stop." Steve made Bucky fist him slow and deep, making him moan helplessly and cry out some more. He had to have Bucky use his other hand to stifle him so he wouldn't wake the kids. When Steve felt on the edge of coming, he nudged Bucky. "Take it out," he gasped. "Want your cock." He looked like he was about to cry from pleasure.

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Bucky was eager to comply and he very carefully removed his hand and stuck his cock inside of Steve. "Baby, I'm going to fuck you hard and fast, okay?" he said and put his arm up close to Steve's mouth. "Bite my arm to keep yourself quiet. Make me have to explain to Clint tomorrow why I have bruises like human teeth."

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Steve was panting so fucking heavily when Bucky pulled his hand out and replaced it with his cock. "Please," he groaned, rocking his hips all ready to fuck himself on Bucky's dick. "I want you so bad."

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Pressing in as far as he could go, Bucky held himself steady with one hand on the mattress. He pulled out all the way very slowly and just let himself feel the drag. Then he slammed back in and stared down at Steve as he started at an intense, rough pace. The both of them had already been sweating but Bucky could feel it running down his back now.

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Steve thought he was ready but he clearly underestimated how fast Bucky was going to go. His teeth clamped down on Bucky's arm and he practically screamed Bucky's name in desperate pleasure as Bucky slammed into him. His hands gripped on Bucky's shoulders and he dragged his nails down his back.

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Bucky couldn't help the bubble of excited laughter that escaped his mouth. He had never gone this hard on Steve before. It probably wouldn't become a regular occurrence but he really needed it tonight. "You're so perfect. You're so gorgeous and a mess for me and I love it and I love you," Bucky rambled and pummeled into Steve over and over. "Show me your come. Let's see it. Don't try to hold off any longer."

---

Steve couldn't speak. All he could do was moan Bucky's name like it was the only sound he knew how to make. And when he came, his vision went white. Steve could've sworn he passed out for a second there but when his orgasm was over, the muscles in his body quivered, on a chemical high from what Bucky was doing to him.
Bucky laid his chest down on top of Steve and held him close and secure as he fucked him for another short minute and then finished off deep inside of him. He was so ready to orgasm as well that he bit Steve's shoulder when he came. Steve was a little too out of it to care but Bucky still apologized several times after he let his shoulder go.

Bucky may as well have fucked the brains out of Steve because he couldn't form a coherent thought after that. He laid there, boneless and panting beneath Bucky. His hair was an absolute, sweaty mess. After he caught his breath, Steve reached up to check over Bucky's arm, which had clear red teeth marks in two arching semi circles. "I think I'm going to have to take a sick day tomorrow. I'm so exhausted, Baby."

"Maybe you should," Bucky said and cradled Steve's head. Steve deserved a little break from work especially since he planned on checking on the shelter tomorrow once his shift was over. Bucky also wouldn't mind Steve not being sent to Tish's territory right after being so vulnerably fucked. "Are you okay, though?"

Steve leaned into Bucky's hand and gave him an adoring look. "I'm fine... just exhausted now. I don't how you're so perky cause I feel like I just ran a marathon." He gave Bucky a weak, little tug to make him come down for a kiss.

Bucky kissed him until neither of them could breathe anymore. They pulled away from each other and Bucky rolled off of Steve. "Honestly, Baby, I don't know why I've got this energy either." He flung an arm around Steve. "How about I spoon you until you fall asleep. And then I'm going to go down to the curb and have a smoke and then I'll come back to bed."

Steve nodded tiredly at Bucky. It didn't take long for Steve to fall asleep. He was out within minutes and was snoring a bit louder than he usually did when he was tired. When Bucky moved to go smoke, his snoring stopped for just a moment before picking back up.

Bucky spent longer outside than he planned. When he came back upstairs, Christopher was awake and sitting up in his crib just looking around. "Oh hey, Little Bean," he said and picked him up. "Here, Daddy's asleep and the sheets are dirty but you and I can just sit right next to Daddy on top of the blankets. How's that? But let's be quiet so we don't wake him up."

Christopher had woken up while Bucky was out and tried looking for his parents. Everything had been so quiet. When Bucky came in, he smiled and batted his hands lightly on Bucky's chest. "Papapapa," he murmured, looking up at his pops.
"Oh my god!" Bucky whispered happily. "You did it again. Steve, he did it again," Bucky looked over at his sleeping husband. "And you still haven't heard it. That's definitely a word. Christopher, you're saying 'Papa' I know you are."

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Christopher smiled happily and clapped his hands together when Bucky got excited. "Papapapapa!" he said loudly at Bucky.

The excitement next to him had Steve wake up. He slowly popped an eye open and made a tired noise. "What's going on?"

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"Steve, he's saying the word again. He's saying 'Papa'. Listen." Bucky quieted down and sat Christopher on Steve's chest. Instead of talking, Christopher flopped forward and snuggled his face on Steve's neck and made a happy gurgling noise.

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"Buck..." Steve whined because he was so tired and didn't really want to be woken up. He wasn't angry and it was adorable to have Christopher snuggling him like this but he was so beat. "He doesn't know how to talk yet."

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"I heard it," Bucky said. "You don't believe me." He hit the back of his head softly on the headboard and made an indignant noise. "I swear he said it." Bucky looked back down at their son who had adjusted to being curled up in a ball and was making high-pitched little whines. Bucky scooped him up and said, "Go back to bed, Steve, I'm going to give him a half of a bottle so he will get tired again."

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"I think you're making words from his nonsense. He will talk soon enough," Steve said then fell back to sleep.

Once Bucky picked up Christopher, the baby smiled happily up at him. "Papapapa," he said again at him.

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"God," Bucky breathed in quiet frustration. "Why can't you do that when your daddy can see you?" he asked Christopher with a wide smile and a light tone so the baby wouldn't think he was upset with him. "Let's get you a bottle and then go back to sleep. Maybe tomorrow you will talk to your Dad and he won't think I'm crazy."
Weeks had gone by. Christopher was getting increasingly grumpier about his teeth. He was in a lot of pain with them growing in and he screamed and cried a lot more than usual. The girls had started back up in school and Bucky could hardly keep anything straight anymore. To top it all off, Tish from the precinct was still hitting on Steve. Natasha would sometimes tell Clint things that happened between them and then Clint would automatically tell Bucky at work the next day.

Bucky hated to even admit it to himself but he occasionally worried that maybe Steve had feelings for Tish too. One of the pieces of evidence he had to support his theory was a package they received outside their door. It wasn’t mailed - it was dropped off. There wasn’t a name on it so Bucky opened it to find a brand new sweater with the tag still on but the price cut off. Tucked in the neck of the sweater was a highly suggestive letter from Tish to Steve.

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Steve came home after a long day at work with a box full of teething toys for Christopher. The baby was crying in his playpen even as Bucky tried to console him. "Buck, I got some of that numbing stuff for his gums," Steve said as he walked over to him. "You think we should give it a try?"

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"Hey," Bucky mumbled and focused only on Christopher. Without looking up, he held out his hand for the numbing stuff. He did his best to get it inside the baby's mouth and once he was through trying, he handed him a teething toy and Christopher calmed down quickly after gnawing on it for a bit. Bucky looked up at Steve and cleared his throat. "You got a present today. It wasn't labeled, so I opened it. It's a sweater... from Tish." Bucky refrained from saying that he happened to read the entire letter. Which was so eloquently written that it infuriated Bucky that he wasn't clever enough to write a love letter for his own goddamn husband that would have matched that one.

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Steve rubbed Bucky's back while he took care of Christopher. He let out a relieved sigh when their son calmed down. "Oh?" Steve perked up a bit. "That was nice of her. It's getting colder and I mentioned to her I was thinking about getting warmer clothes."

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The pleased little wash that came over Steve's face didn't go unnoticed by Bucky. "Mhmm," he hummed and looked back down at their son. "I could have gone and gotten something for you. I actually know what colors look nice on you - and pumpkin orange is not one of them. Your hair is too light for it."

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"I know you could've," Steve said. "She was only being thoughtful. Maybe I should make her
something as a thank you," he murmured to himself. "What do you think, Buck? She said she likes chocolate chip cookies."

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Bucky huffed and rolled his eyes up towards the ceiling. "Sure, Steve. Make her cookies. Write her a thank you note. Or just give her a high five at work and call it a day." Christopher tossed a toy up towards Bucky but it didn't get far. Bucky handed it back and held up his hand in case the baby felt like throwing it again.

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Steve frowned at the tone that Bucky took with him. "What's the problem?" he asked. "You've been acting grumpy all the time whenever I talk about work. I don't know what's happened that's made you upset."

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Bucky scoffed. "You know what it is. Don't act like you don't see it. Natasha's told Clint who has told me everything that happens at the precinct with Tish. Guess when it comes to her boyfriend, Natasha isn't so unwilling to share."

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"Bucky, Tish is just a nice person. She listens to me at work and she doesn't have family around here, so I listen to her. We're friends. That's it. I don't get why you don't trust me," Steve said firmly.

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"She sent you a fucking sweater!" Bucky sneered. "Out of the blue. It's not your birthday. It's not Christmas. She just sent you a goddamn present." Bucky got up quickly and showed the wrapping to Steve. "And it wasn't mailed here. It was hand-delivered. Meaning she knows where we live and she was here looking for you but you weren't in. She's going after you, Steve. Can't you see that?"

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Steve glared. "She isn't," he defended. "And even if she was, there's no way in hell that I would be interested in her. Even if I was attracted to her - which I'm not - I would never break my vow with you."

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"Not interested in you?" Bucky asked and picked up the letter to read parts from it. "'Sometimes I feel like God meant for me to work at this precinct in this city just so I could meet you.'" He paused and searched for another. "'Do you remember that day I said you should accent with orange because it would compliment the soft blue of your eyes? And then you marked an orange highlighter on your hand for fun? And you claim to not be funny.'" He scanned the other side. "'Hope the sweater keeps you warm so you don't have to come up to my desk all the time to keep asking to raise the thermostat. Or, better yet, don't wear the sweater to work because I'll miss you too much if you stop coming to say 'hello' throughout the day.'"

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"She believes in God. So what? People are brought to each other for plenty of reasons," Steve said. "We're good friends. I'd be upset if I suddenly stopped seeing Natasha at work. Tish just has a more
flowery way of saying it."

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"Her beliefs aren't the problem here," Bucky said. "I don't think Father Frank has a crush on you and he has said before that he thinks it was God's doing that you found his church. And that's not flowery writing. That's a goddamn love letter. I don't even say shit like that to you."

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"She knows I'm happily married. You know I would never cheat on you," Steve snapped, angry that Bucky was getting upset over a present someone gave him. "You want me to get rid of it? I shouldn't have to, but I'll do it if you're going to be ridiculous about it."

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"Fuck you, Steve!" Bucky shouted. "I'm not being ridiculous. And if we are talking sacrifices here, how about the shit I'm not allowed to do because you said 'no'. Huh? And I get upset over a woman - who is clearly in love with you - giving you a sweater and you think I'm being ridiculous? I didn't even ask you to get rid of it! Those were your words."

---

Christopher started to cry when he heard their voices rising at each other. Steve looked a cross between angry and hurt. "I don't know how many times I've told you not to curse in front of the baby!" he huffed angrily as he scooped Christopher up to cradle him in his arms. "The stuff I say I don't like you doing is entirely reasonable. No cursing in front of the baby. No getting wasted when things get hard. That's not the same as getting jealous over a sweater." He picked it up and headed for the door. "I'm taking this to a donation box. Figure out dinner for you and the girls."

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Steve took Christopher with him and slammed the door behind him. Bucky took deep angry breaths and pulled on his coat and shoes. Then he took a piece of paper and wrote a note to Becca that he was going out for a bit and not to expect him home until late. He snatched his wallet and his keys and headed out towards the subway.

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Steve walked to the subway and took a train to the church, where he donated the sweater to the shelter. He took Christopher to the zoo just before closing to see a few animals before going home and giving him his dinner. Steve didn't have an appetite. After he laid their baby boy to sleep, Steve stayed up nervously waiting to see Bucky home safe.

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A while later, Bucky trudged into the apartment and shucked off his jacket. All the lights were out and it seemed like everyone was probably asleep. He carried a bag in one hand and his near-empty cigarette pack and his keys in the other. He tiptoed into his and Steve's room and stopped when he saw Steve sitting up with the lamp on and arms crossed.

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Steve let out a breath of relief when Bucky came into the room. "Christ, you worried me," he said quietly so they wouldn't wake the baby. "It's one in the morning, Bucky. Where've you been?"
Bucky moved closer to the bed and tossed the bag down by Steve's legs. "That's your color. Not orange," he said tiredly and started stripping off his clothes while Steve took the dark marine blue knit sweater from the bag. "I'm going to shower. I smell like Evan and Monty's place." And by that, he meant smoke. The three of them had smoked a lot. Monty drank a lot too but Bucky managed to hold his own and didn't have anything.

Steve frowned, feeling bad that Bucky felt like he had to go get Steve a sweater now. He was tired and had work the next morning, but Steve stayed up while Bucky went to shower. He changed so that the only thing he was wearing was the sweater that Bucky got for him. "Can we talk?" he asked softly when Bucky came out.

Bucky took in the site of Steve sitting patiently on the bed with the sweater fitting him perfectly. He was right, that was Steve's color. "No," Bucky said simply. Dropping his towel, he walked over to the closet and pulled out a set of clothes to sleep in.

Steve's bottom lip quivered a bit. He couldn't remember the last time Bucky was this mad at him and he hated going to sleep upset at each other. "Please?" he tried.

"Why?" Bucky asked and pulled his pants on. He steeled himself to not be affected by how sad and vulnerable Steve looked. He didn't want to talk, though. Steve had called him jealous and ridiculous and didn't believe a word he said to him. And he thought he knew what he was talking about when he said sacrifices and assumed Bucky meant things like swearing and drinking. That's not even scratching the surface of what Bucky meant. No, Steve hadn't listened to Bucky earlier and Bucky didn't feel like listening to Steve now.

"Because I can't sleep knowing the last time we talked was an argument." What if something happened to them during the night? Steve wouldn't be able to live with himself. "I'm sorry that I upset you and made you angry, Bucky. You don't have to forgive me tonight, but could you at least tell me you love me before we go to sleep?"

Bucky put his hands in his sweatpants' pockets and came over to the bed. "I do love you. That's the whole reason we were in this mess today. If I didn't love you, there wouldn't have been an argument." He wiped the brimming tears from the corner of Steve's eyes and then situated himself on his side of the bed, under the covers and facing away from Steve.

Steve nodded his head. He couldn't help the single tear that slipped out. When Bucky laid down, Steve scooted forward and draped an arm around his waist. "I love you too, Bucky. I'm lucky to call you my husband. I'm really sorry."
Steve had to go to work early the next morning. He made lunch for Bucky and left a love note for him. At work, Steve decided to try and avoid Tish for Bucky's sake. Steve couldn't avoid her for long though. When he took a break for lunch with Natasha, so did Tish. She inserted herself in their conversation and sat right next to Steve, thigh to thigh. Natasha got up after she finished eating and went back to work on a big case she had. This was Tish's time to strike. "Officer Rogers," she said and shoved him lightly. "You have been ignoring me all day."

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Steve immediately got flustered. He was an awful liar. He considered for a moment making up an excuse but then he decided he may as well be honest. "Bucky was upset about the note you left with the sweater yesterday," he said apologetically. "I thought it was very sweet of you, but he doesn't feel the same. I was just trying to give some space, you know? I don't want Bucky to be upset. It's nothing against you, honest."

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"Oh..." Tish blinked, surprised. "What was the problem with it?" she asked as innocently as she could. "I just thought it was a nice sweater. My way of saying 'thank you' for how kind you've been since I've gotten here." She smiled like she was trying to apologize but pressed her leg into Steve more.

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"And I appreciate the sweater, truly. It was thoughtful and genuine," Steve said. "It's just... Bucky thinks that you're crossing some sort of line, you know? He doesn't get that the two of us are just friends. You know I'm a married man and you're too nice of a person to try and take someone who's married."

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Tish scoffed and looked slightly offended but there was a gleam of something darker in her eyes. "That's ridiculous. So you aren't allowed to be my friend anymore because Bucky told you that you can't? That's not healthy, Steve."

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"What? No, he never said that I couldn't. And usually, Bucky isn't like this..." Steve trailed off for a moment. "Listen, Tish, we can still talk. But maybe we can lay off the surprise gifts for now. Just until Bucky's more confident about what we are."

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She nodded and gave a weak smile. "Okay, that's fine. Whatever makes you happy, Steve. You can just wear the sweater around here so Bucky doesn't know. How's that?" She chuckled and patted Steve's thigh lightly. "And maybe I can do something for you to make it up to you for getting you in trouble with him."

---

Steve just told her that Bucky didn't like her so there was no way in hell he was admitting to donating the sweater. "I think wearing that around here is a uniform violation," he joked instead. "It's alright, Tish. You don't have to do anything unless it'll make you feel better if you do."
"I guess you're right," she said. "But, just don't cut me out, okay? You're just about the only person here who talks to me. It was weird getting the silent treatment today." Tish stood from the table and waited for Steve to walk her back to her desk.

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Steve nodded. "I promise I won't. I'm sorry I avoided you earlier," Steve said and stood up. He walked her back to her desk dutifully and gave her a smile. "I'll see you around, okay?" Steve gave her a little wave and went back to work.

***

A couple days passed and Bucky had calmed down a bit. Steve hadn't talked about Tish at all to him and neither of them brought up the fight again. Bucky had had a really long day at work and was sound asleep on the couch with Christopher napping on top of him when Steve finally got back home from his late evening to night shift.

---

Steve came home and melted at the sight in front of him. He loved it when Christopher napped on top of them. He walked over and kissed each of their foreheads. Steve was going to leave them be for a little while, so when the phone rang he hastily picked it up so they wouldn't be woken. "Rogers-Barnes residence."

---

Bucky blinked his eyes open slowly at the hushed tones Steve was using over the phone. At first, he thought it was sweet that he didn't want to wake up Bucky and the baby but then he realized that Steve wasn't talking to his mom but was on the phone with Tish. Bucky glanced at the clock. It was past midnight and that was the way too late for someone who is just a work friend to be calling Steve.

---

Steve gave Bucky a look like he was caught in something he shouldn't be doing. He gave an apologetic and guilty smile before trying to rush Tish off the phone. Once he hung up, he walked over back to Bucky. "Hey, I didn't mean to wake you."

---

Bucky didn't say anything. He just looked at Steve for a long disbelieving moment. He didn't need to ask what she was calling this late for. Bucky knew what that was. Bucky had gotten those calls before. The late night desperate, lonely phone call begging him to come over. 'Just slip out for a little bit, please. I need to see you.' Yeah, Bucky knew exactly what was going on. He cleared his throat and gave Steve an unconvincing smile. "Let's go sleep. I'm so tired."

---

Steve gingerly picked up Christopher so he could lay him down in his bed to sleep. "Her television wasn't working," Steve said quietly. "She asked me to come over and fix it, but I told her she should call a technician tomorrow. We had a talk about boundaries the other day," Steve explained as they went to the bedroom.
"Right," Bucky said, defeated. He slipped into bed and sighed. Bucky hated himself so much in that moment. He hated himself for not being enough for Steve. And he hated himself for not stopping all of this nonsense weeks ago. "Night, Steve."

"I mean it," Steve said urgently. "Nothing is happening between us. You have to trust me." Steve was ready to fight tooth and nail to prove it, but he knew that Bucky would only get upset with him. So he shut up and laid down without any further argument.

The next morning at the record shop was slow. Bucky and Clint were pretty much able to sit around and stare at the walls. They sat in bored silence for a long time until finally Bucky took a deep breath and said quietly, "Steve's cheating on me."

Clint turned his head when he saw Bucky's lips move. "What?" he asked. When Bucky repeated himself, he frowned. "Are you sure?" He had heard a hell of a lot about Tish between Bucky and Natasha but it was shocking to hear that Steve would cheat.

"Yeah," Bucky sighed and faced Clint. He signed as he talked, "Tish called the apartment really late last night. And Steve made up some bullshit about her needing something fixed or whatever. And she sent him a present about a week ago. A nice new sweater with a love letter tucked inside."

"Jesus," Clint said, giving Bucky an empathetic look. "I'm so sorry, man." He reached out to squeeze his shoulder. "What are you going to do about it? What's going to happen with Christopher and your sisters?"

"I don't know." Bucky nodded solemnly and choked back tears. "I guess the first thing is I need something solid to prove it. Because Steve just denies everything I've said and tries to convince me that they are just friends."

Clint knew that this must have been killing Bucky and he was so fucking mad at Steve for ruining the amazing relationship that they had. They hadn't even been married for a year yet. "I can have Nat listen in. We can try to catch them meeting up."

"Okay, I like that," Bucky agreed. He was desperate at this point. He just needed one thing to show Steve that he knew what was happening. "The worst part is that Steve keeps telling me to trust him. And I know that he probably just doesn't want to ruin things with me because we have the baby. Also, he would miss my cock. I know he would. What is Tish going to do? Buy a strap-on and fuck Steve? No way."
"We're gonna nail the bastard," Clint said. "Are you going to break up with him after we catch him? Or are you going to try and work it out?" He knew that being cheated on hurt like hell but he knew how Steve could make Bucky happy too. "Also, Tish is too straight for a strap-on."

"Honestly..." Bucky stared out the window. "I don't know. I don't want to lose him. He's my world. But how am I supposed to trust him ever again, huh? I'll have to break up with him, won't I? God, but we have the baby and I don't want Steve to take my son from me, too. And we just built the shelter." Bucky mashed his face into his hands. "Fuck, Clint, I don't know what to do."

Clint slung an arm around Bucky's shoulders. "I hope you two can work past this. But Steve's also an asshole for doing this to you and you deserve a partner who respects you."

Bucky sighed and leaned against Clint. "I always thought it would be my fuck-up that would end this. At least then I'd only have myself to blame." He glanced down under the cash register and found a sealed plastic bag. He snatched it and held it up. It had four joints all rolled and ready. "Reggie isn't very good at hiding these. You want to smoke, Clint?"

"I don't want to smoke. I can't have all three of us high," Clint said. "Why don't you take the day off, buddy? I'll call it a sick day and I won't tell Reggie you took his joints."

Bucky nodded and thanked Clint. "I'll talk to you later. Let me know what Natasha says when you talk to her about this, yeah?" He pulled on his coat and slipped the plastic bag into the inside pocket. He would call up Monty and see if he wanted to get stoned with him while Evan was at work.

Later that day, Bucky talked to Clint again. "Hey, Bud. Come by the shop beforehand if you can make it, but I need you to meet me by the north exit of Prospect Park at seven. Steve and Tish are going back to her place after their shift."

Bucky put Becca in charge and headed to the shop before seven. Clint was waiting in the back and he had on a dark jacket and a black cap and big combat boots. He looked like he was the world’s worst robber. "The fuck are you wearing, Clint?"

"I'm incognito. We can't have Steve recognizing that we are following him. He's a cop. He's supposed to notice these things," Clint said. He gave Bucky a hat and sunglasses to wear. "I brought a camera with me."
Bucky put on the hat to cover up his pretty distinguishable hair but he didn't take the sunglasses. "I'm not feeling good about this, Clint." Bucky sighed and picked up the camera. "What did Natasha tell you earlier?"

---

"She said Tish came by Steve's workstation to invite him over. They talked for a while and she couldn't hear what was said in between but he said ‘yes’," Clint explained.

---

"Fuck, alright let's go," Bucky said and handed the camera back to Clint. He didn't want to be the one to hold it. "Nat told you where Tish lives, right?" He didn't really feel like tracking them down on their way back from the precinct. He would rather just wait somewhere in hiding by her place.

---

"She looked in their records. Probably how Tish got your address as well," Clint said and motioned for Bucky to follow and they ended up staking out a spot across from a brownstone. "Damn, she's loaded..."

---

"I'm pretty sure she's actually been to our place before. I think with Steve," Bucky said. "Steve didn't seem surprised that she knew where we live." The whole time, Bucky was feeling gross. None of this was how he wanted to spend an evening. "If she's got so much money why does she even need to work at the precinct anyway?" Bucky asked and sat back on his heels.

---

"Who knows? Maybe she's one of those rich kids where the parents kicked her out to try working for a little before they go back to spending their inheritance," Clint offered.

Tish arrived home a few minutes before Steve got there. Steve came carrying a small bouquet of flowers. Tish had told him that her aunt passed away and she needed some company to help pack her things to send to her cousins.

---

Bucky watched Steve and his heart broke. "Flowers," he whispered and then turned to Clint. "You know, at least they aren't roses. Steve brings me red roses all the time. Tish gets pink carnations." It was supposed to make Bucky feel a little bit better but it didn't. They watched Tish welcome Steve inside and they could see into her window and towards the kitchen where she had been making them something to drink.

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When Steve knocked on the door, Tish called for him to come in, so he did. Bucky was able to see her take her shirt off as Steve walked in the door before heading out of sight. "That fucking bastard," Clint swore angrily. "I should beat him."

---

"Fucking Christ," Bucky buried his face in his hands. He felt like he was going to throw up. "Let's go, Clint. Take me back home." He pulled on Clint's jacket and tried to get him up. "I can't be here
any longer. Let's go." Clint pulled Bucky away even though he had half the mind to knock the door down and give Steve a piece of his mind.
Sometimes, things get worse before they get better.

When Steve saw Tish topless, his jaw dropped and he was furious. "What the hell is going on?" he spat out and backed up against the closed door.

"Come on, Steve." Tish smiled and moved closer to him, reaching for his hand. "You want this as much as I do." She gently slipped a hand on Steve's neck and gave him a chaste kiss. "Take me."

Steve firmly pulled away and looked at her angrily. "No!" he snapped. "I can't... I can't believe you! You lied about your aunt just to get me here? After I told you I wanted space?"

Tish scoffed and looked Steve hard in the eyes. "You mean to tell me that you haven't been staring at me for weeks? And flirting right back when I did?" She crossed her arms. "If you're afraid that Bucky will find out, don't worry. We will be discreet."

"No. I don't have any interest in you," Steve said flatly. "God, I can't believe Bucky was right about you!" He tossed the flowers aside and found a throw blanket to put over her so he wouldn't have to look at her. "Don't talk to me ever again outside of what's necessary for work, got it?"

"Well, fuck you, too, Steve!" she yelled and threw the blanket at him. "I care about you! I thought you cared about me. I came to your charity thing. I bought you gifts. I talk about your son with you!" She pulled her shirt back on and shoved Steve hard in the chest. "Fuck you!"

"I did care about you as a friend! But all you wanted was to take me from my husband. Who I told you all the time I was happily married to!" Steve was hurt and angry. He lost a friend today and now Bucky would be smug about being right, probably. She also hurt Bucky in the process.

"Get out of my house," Tish said firmly and started pushing Steve hard again. "You fucking cocksucker! I would have been good for you! I would have been what's right for you and you ruined all that!"
Steve was beyond hurt and angry, now. He didn't even want to argue with her about how awful she was being to him. He stormed out and stomped back home, pushing through the door. "Buck?" he called out, needing to vent and get this off his chest.

---

After Clint had brought Bucky back home, he had packed up one of Steve's bags with enough stuff for to last him for a few days. Then Bucky cradled Christopher and sat on their bed and waited for Steve to come back home. He was back a lot sooner than he had expected. When Steve walked into their room, he glanced at the bag. "Go stay at your mom's place for a couple days, Steve," Bucky said in a flat, tired tone.

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Steve was having an absolutely awful time now, but he was in for a whole world of worse. He paused and looked at his packed bag in confusion. "What...?" He frowned. "Why?" he asked with a pained crack in his voice. "What happened?"

---

Bucky swallowed the lump in his throat and locked eyes with Steve. "I saw you with her," he said sternly but quietly - no wrath in his voice, just defeat. "I need a few days to figure shit out and I think it's best if you go to your mom's while I do."

---

"Where? When?" Steve asked. "I didn't do anything with her, Bucky! That's what I've come here to tell you about." Steve's voice broke a little at the end of the sentence. "You got to hear me out."

---

Bucky held Christopher close to him. He was asleep and Bucky didn't feel like accidentally waking him. "Please... god, Steve, please stop making excuses and trying to hide this shit. Just go. We know what we saw. Please just get out of here."

---

Steve's eyes immediately filled with tears. "I don't know what you saw. But whatever you saw was wrong," he said thickly. "I would never run around on you. Ever." He wiped at his eyes. "Can I hold Christopher before I go, at least?"

---

Bucky clenched his jaw and looked down at his son. "He's asleep." He looked back up at Steve. "You can kiss him goodbye just don't wake him up." Bucky looked up at the ceiling and felt tears silently cascading down his face and neck. He didn’t even want to look at Steve right now.

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Steve walked over and bent down to kiss the top of his head. "Your dad loves you, Bean," he said softly to their son. "I'm going to show you you're wrong about what happened, Bucky." He grabbed his bag and walked out, crying freely but silently as he walked to the shelter instead of to his mom's.
Bucky watched Steve go. After a while, he laid Christopher down in his crib and pushed the whole thing up right next to his and Steve's bed so Bucky could fall asleep with Christopher right there beside him.

The next day, Bucky slept in late and woke up to Lilly prodding at his arm and Becca feeding Christopher. "Bucky, where's Steve?" Lilly asked when he woke up.

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Lilly had noticed that something was up when she woke up to no breakfast cooked or lunch made for any of them. When Bucky didn't answer at first, she poked him again. "Bucky," she said impatiently. "I asked where Steve is."

---

Bucky sat up and rubbed at his eyes. They were tired and swollen from all the crying he had done in the night. "He's at his mom's," Bucky said and reached for Becca to give him Christopher. "Do you two mind just having cereal before school? I really don't feel like making anything."

---

"Why?" Lilly asked. "Is Miss Sarah okay?" Lilly wasn't as perceptive as Becca was, who already knew that they must have had a pretty bad fight if Steve was away and Bucky had been crying all night.

---

"Yeah, Sarah is okay, don't worry." Bucky sighed and looked down at the baby who was staring up at him like he knew that everything wasn't okay. "Listen, Steve isn't going to be around for a few days, okay? It's just us again for a bit. I have work tomorrow so I'll just take Christopher with me."

---

"Yeah, but why did Steve go?" Lilly pushed.

Becca huffed and nudged her. "Just drop it, stupid," she said, making Lilly glare at her. Becca looked back at Bucky and asked, "You're not going to go to the bars while he's gone, are you?"

---

Bucky shook his head. "I can't do that to you." He stood and picked up one of Christopher's blankets and laid it on his back. "Come on, let's get ready for school. You two should be out of here in about twenty minutes."

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Becca sighed and stood up to go get ready. Lilly complained the whole way out, but she went to school on time at least. Once the girls were gone, Christopher began to cry for attention.

---

"I know, I know, Little Bean," Bucky said and brought him to sit on the couch with him. Bucky cried as Christopher did and he wondered what Steve was doing then. Was he with his mom? Was he thinking about Bucky? Did he just go back to Tish instead?
Lilly came back a little after school was let out and she dropped her backpack at the door and went to
find Bucky. "Hey, what gives?" she asked. "Steve wasn't at Sarah's. She didn't even know he was
supposed to go over."

---

Bucky looked up from his spot on the ground. Christopher had decided today was the day he was
going to start crawling around the place so Bucky had been supervising. "What?" he asked and then
leaned back. "Oh my god, I knew it. He went back to her place."

---

"Went back to whose place?" Lilly asked. "Wait... are you talking about that dispatcher lady you,
Becca, and Clint hate? Why would Steve go back there?" she asked, making a face.

---

Bucky waited for Christopher to make his way to him before scooping him up and going to the
kitchen with Lilly. "Let's drop it, okay? I need to go find Natasha or Clint. Can you watch
Christopher for just an hour?"

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"Why are you lying to me about Steve?" Lilly asked in an annoyed tone, more angry that she was
out of the loop than that Bucky wasn't telling the truth.

---

Bucky sighed and gave Lilly a hug. "I'll tell you about it later. Thanks for watching him." He left and
headed straight for Clint's place. Bucky knocked on the door and waited for Clint to open it. "Hey,
Buddy, I need a drink. I promised Becca I wouldn't go to the bar so I need to sink a couple beers
with you and then go home."

---

Clint opened the door and let Bucky in. "Yeah, sure. But no more than two," he said. "I can't let you
fall off the wagon when you've come so far already," he said. He pulled out a pair of beers for them.
"How's it going?"

---

"Fucking awful," Bucky said and flopped onto Clint's couch with his beer. "I told him to leave. I
packed him a bag and told him to go to his mom's for a few days. Lilly must have gone to Sarah's
because she comes home and tells me that Sarah has no idea what she was talking about. I bet you
anything Steve is at Tish's place right now. I fucking packed him a bag and sent him right back to
her. I basically told him to take a long weekend from our marriage and go fuck that home-wrecker."

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"What the fuck," Clint swore. "I can't believe that. All you got to do is say the word and I'll beat him
up. Also, I know a bit about plumbing. I can sneak into her cellar and flood her house," he offered.

---

"Thanks, Buddy," Bucky sighed and downed one of the beers in its entirety. "I don't think that's
necessary, though." He didn't say that if anyone was beating Steve up for this shit, he wanted it to be him. "I don't know what to do, Clint. I told him I needed a few days but what am I going to do when he calls and asks if I've had enough time to think? Do I break up with him or do I just work past this shit to keep our little family together?"

---

"I don't know, man. I don't think I would be able to deal with someone pulling that shit on me. Have you guys talked at all? Or has it been all arguing?" Clint paused and then added, "Have you spoken to her at all?"

---

"I haven't spoken to her, no," Bucky said and popped open the second beer. "And I didn't have the energy to speak to Steve. When I told him that we saw them together, he just tried to feed me more bullshit excuses and I just couldn't handle it." He worked through the second beer and slammed it on the table. "Let's get drunk, Clint. Come on. Just a little tipsy and then we will call it a day and I'll go home."

---

Clint finished his first drink when Bucky was done with the second. "I don't think that's a good idea," he said. "Remember you have to stay in moderation. No matter how much this sucks."

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"Clint," Bucky said sternly. "There are three things I need right now to help me not feel like total dog shit. Cocaine, sex, or booze. I am not letting myself go back to coke and I'm not having sex with anyone until this whole thing is settled and I've moved on. Please, let me drink."

---

Clint frowned and stared at him for a long time before standing up and grabbing him another beer. "You're staying here until you sober up," he said. "I'm not letting your sisters see you sloppy."

---

Bucky gestured with his hand vaguely in agreement and then took the beer. He couldn't stop himself from thinking about Steve. Was he as much of a wreck as Bucky was? Or was he cuddled up with Tish and getting over the whole thing pretty quickly? Bucky loved Steve. He loved him. And he was pretty sure even after this, he was still going to love him until he died and... and that didn't feel fair to him.

***

Steve tried to pretend everything was okay while he was at the shelter but he really didn't have it in him. He hid away from anyone who may have recognized him from the event and he didn't say anything to Father Frank. All he did the whole day was lay in the bed in the furthest corner and not move.

---

Tim had been around the shelter for a long time now. He was actively looking for a new job and an apartment but it was pretty tough. Today wasn't any better, he was told he was under-qualified for a job he thought he had a real chance at. So he decided he would just go to the bunks and take a nap.
Instead, he found a man in the back corner of the room curled up on one of the mattresses and staring at the wall. "Hey, man, are you okay?"

---

Steve didn't move when he was spoken to. At first, he considered not even responding. But he didn't want to be rude, so he sighed. "Not really," he answered honestly. "Am I in your spot? I can change beds if this one is yours." Steve only picked this one because it was the most out of the way.

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"Hey," Tim hovered over him. "Steve?" he asked and touched Steve's shoulder. "Hey, what are you doing here? You remember me from the opening day? I was talking with your husband a lot that night. You might not remember me."

---

Steve turned around a little when Tim touched his shoulder. He stared for a moment and then slowly sat up. "Tim? You're the guy with the kids." He rubbed at his face tiredly. "Of course, I remember you. How are things?"

---

Tim sat down next to Steve. "Forget about me. What are you doing here crying in a corner? Where's Bucky? Is he okay? Is your son okay?" He reached to grab the box of tissues from the nightstands that were in between every bunk and he handed the box to Steve.

---

Steve grabbed a tissue and wiped at his eyes. "He thinks I'm cheating on him," he said. "Kicked me out of the house for a few days... but I would never. I would never even consider it and he doesn't believe me. And he's so hurt, too."

---

Tim patted Steve's shoulder and then took his hand back, not wanting to linger. "That woman who was all over you on opening day?" he asked and crossed a leg underneath him on the bed. "He was upset about her that night, too. He didn't like the way she was flirting with you."

---

"Yeah... I thought she was my friend, but all she wanted was to get in my pants and try to fuck the gay away," Steve said. "I didn't believe Bucky when he told me that she was looking for more. And now he won't believe me when I tell him I didn't do anything." His bottom lip quivered. "I really believed she was my friend."

---

Tim handed him another tissue and thought for a second. "I believe you, Steve. You seem like a pretty trusting person and I can understand why you thought she was just your friend." He looked away and then back to Steve. "Look, man, you got to go to Bucky - as soon as you can. Don't let him take a few days. He will decide what he wants to do and if that means breaking things off with you then it'll be hard to change his mind once it's made up. Find a way to get him to let you back inside. Ask a friend to help you out. Do something. But don't stay here and worry about it. Go make him believe you." Tim laughed. "And you know I'm giving you the best advice I've got because I
stand to gain nothing by helping you, but potentially a lot by not helping. With you out of the way, I
would be free to swoop in and have Bucky. So, trust what I'm saying to you. Don't wait for him,
figure out how to get back to him."

---

Steve stared at Tim as he spoke and he didn't respond at first but eventually he nodded his head.
"You're right," he said. "I... god..." he wiped at his eyes again. "I need to get out of here and back to
the precinct. There's got to be footage of Tish tricking me into believing her aunt had died so I would
come over."

---

"Hey, if worse comes to worst," Tim said and held out a hand for Steve to shake. "I'll talk to Bucky
about it. I'll tell him what you've been telling me. I'll say it again, I don't even know why I'm helping
because Bucky's sort of perfect and I'm pretty mad you found him first. But I would hate to see your
relationship broken apart like this. You both deserve to be happy."

---

Steve grabbed Tim's hand and pulled him in for a tight hug. "You're the best, Tim. I'm blessed to
have met you." He leaned back and combed his fingers through his hair and tried to will himself to
look less emotionally wrecked before grabbing his bag and heading to the precinct to find Natasha.

---

Natasha was working later than she should have been. There was a big mess of a case and somehow
she got stuck with all of it. When Steve came up to her in one of the debriefing rooms, she huffed out
a sigh and looked away for a second. "What do you need, Steve? I'm really busy."

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"I need you to find some footage for me," Steve said. "Of my office, yesterday, around two o'clock.
Right after lunch," he said urgently. "I'd do it myself but I don't have the authority to access it on my
own."

---

"What the hell are you rambling about?" Natasha asked and looked up at him, annoyed that he was
interrupting her. "You look like shit. Why don't you get Tish to help you find your footage? Oh,
right, she doesn't have that clearance either. Why do you need it?"

---

Steve was confused for a moment and then he realized. "You're in on it..." he breathed out. "Holy
shit! You fucking helped convince Bucky that I was cheating on him? Are you kidding me!" His
voice raised almost to a shout, causing a few heads to turn. "I can't believe you. I need the footage to
prove to my husband that I didn't touch that woman."

---

"Don't talk to me like that, Steve," Natasha snapped. "He didn't need any convincing and he was the
one who came to us. He told us what he knew and I told what I knew and Bucky pieced it together
for himself. Then he and Clint saw you at her place - you with the flowers and her all shirtless."
"I will talk to you like this," Steve barked back. "Because you should've had my back. You should've known me well enough to know I'd never cheat on anyone." Steve started to cry all over again but he was pissed now. "I brought her flowers because she told me her aunt died. If you watch the footage at my desk you'd see I told her I wasn't going to go to her house until she lied about her dead aunt." he let out a bitter laugh. "Fuck. What does it even matter? I still can't believe you didn't trust me."

Natasha spit out a laugh herself. "She has been all over you for weeks. She bought you a sweater. Bucky read me the love note she wrote you, and now this. What were we supposed to think? And people don't usually just drop their clothes when someone comes into their homes like she did. Your husband has been a fucking mess and Clint's at your place taking care of him right now. You're my friend, but the evidence was stacked against you." She paused and looked at Steve. "Let's see those tapes, prove me wrong and then we will go to Bucky."

"That's all the crap she did, Natasha," Steve pressed back. "If someone kept throwing themselves at Bucky, I wouldn't blame him for what they were doing." He headed towards the security footage room and expected Natasha to follow. "You're a real shit friend, you know that? Cause even if the evidence were stacked against you, I would have your back. I wouldn't stage a stakeout with Clint to spy on you. Bucky wouldn't be a mess if you guys didn't run around behind my back and encourage his paranoia. You guys know how insecure he can get!"

"What about that late night phone call, huh?" she countered. "Bucky said you talked quietly and hung up looking guilty as all hell. And you didn't seem too interested in getting her to stop flirting with you or touching you." Natasha entered the codes she needed to access the security camera footage. "What time was it?"

"She was asking me to come over and fix her TV. I said 'no' and I hung up because I knew Bucky would be upset if I so much as talked to her about the weather," Steve said. "I didn't think she was flirting with me. I thought she was being nice and understood I was happily married." He hovered over her as she got to the footage tapes. "Around two."

Natasha forwarded the tapes to a little before two and stopped as she saw Tish slinking up to Steve's workspace and leaning against his desk. "Was this it?" she asked Steve and stared at the tape, intently watching Tish's mouth moving.

"Yes," Steve said quickly. "She asked me if I could have dinner at her place. I told her 'no'. You can see me say that," he defended. "I told her that she had to stop talking to me outside of work cause it was upsetting Bucky and that's when she claimed her aunt died and she needed help."
Natasha watched in silence until Tish bounced back off to her desk. Natasha paused the tape and swiveled her chair to face Steve. "Okay." She nodded. "You tell me one more time you never did anything with her and I'll help you with Bucky."

---

"I never did anything with her," Steve said. He looked so hurt and heartbroken that Bucky and his closest friends worked against him to try and prove something that wasn't true at all. "I would never cheat on Bucky."

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Clint had let Bucky have a few more beers at his place. But when Clint had gone to go use the restroom, Bucky pulled out Reggie's joints and smoked two of them before Clint got back. That was when Clint decided he needed to get Bucky back home and in bed.

When they got there, all the kids were asleep and there was a note from Becca explaining that Lilly had given Christopher a bath and he went to sleep easily but he hadn't eaten for them. Clint had Bucky sit down at his kitchen table and was pouring him a glass of water when Steve unlocked the door and came in with Natasha.

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Steve was eager to go home and prove to Bucky that this was all a huge misunderstanding so they could hopefully move past this. But he couldn't help but get a bit angry when he saw Bucky drunk and high in the kitchen and the rest of the family nowhere to be found. They didn't go to bed this early unless they didn't want to be up. "Bucky," Steve said. "I didn't do anything with Tish and I can prove it to you."

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Bucky stared up at Steve but didn't say anything. Clint came up behind him and said to Steve, "He's a bit drunk... and just a little bit high. I didn't realize he still had some of Reggie's smokes on him and he snuck it while I wasn't looking."

"Steve's home," Bucky observed and took one of Steve's hands. "God, I missed you. But you fucked me over. How could you do this to me?"

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"I'm still mad at you," Steve answered back at Clint quietly, not holding venom in his voice but certainly a promise to give him hell later. The second Bucky took his hand, Steve stepped closer to him and gave Bucky's hands a light squeeze. "I didn't do anything to you, Bucky. I have videotapes to prove it. Natasha saw them."

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Bucky blinked slowly, "I saw her undressing in front you. Unless you have a videotape of you not fucking her after she got naked for you, then I don't really care."

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"Why don't you care, huh? Are you that obsessed with blaming me for something I didn't do that you won't hear me out?" Steve was hurt. "Do our wedding vows mean nothing to you?" He looked at Natasha for help. "Tell him about the video, Nat."
Natasha stepped forward and put a hand on Steve's shoulder. "Take it easy on him, Steve. He looks like he's out of his mind right now. He probably hasn't been high in ages and it's messing with him badly." She paused and picked up the water, "Bucky, drink this water. Rehydrate yourself." She looked back to Steve. "We got to wait for him to sober up a little more before he will listen."

Steve was so disappointed that Bucky got drunk and high not even a day after Steve was kicked out. "You guys let him get like this. You look after him while I go check in on my son."

Christopher was lying on his back in the crib, fast asleep. The clothes he was wearing were clearly put on backwards and he didn't have Bourbon the plush dog in his crib like he did every night. He looked peaceful but also like he was having some upsetting dreams.

"Oh, Sweetheart..." Steve murmured softly. He went over to him and gently stroked a hand over the baby's hair. "Hey, Little Bean. Your dad is here. He loves you so, so much."

Christopher blinked awake at the gentle touches. Once he realized who was hovering over him, his eyes flew open and he reached out to his dad. He had a giant smile on his face and he wiggled and kicked his feet and shouted, "Dadadadada!"

Steve's face lit up when he saw his son smile and reach up for him. But when he spoke, his heart skipped a beat. "Oh my god!" He gasped. "Yes! Dada's here!" he said excitedly as he scooped him into his arms. "Such a smart boy!" In that moment, Steve forgot all about their fight and ran out to bring Christopher to Bucky. "Bucky! Listen!" He turned to Christopher. "Hey, Bean. You going to say 'Dada' again?"

Bucky watched their son and held one of his tiny hands. Christopher giggled wildly and shouted at Bucky, "Papapapa!"

"I told you!" Bucky yelped happily and stood to kiss Christopher's head. "Steve, didn't I say so? I said that he's been saying that for a few weeks now!" Bucky was coursing with excitement and was so pleased that Steve finally heard what he heard. He was still a little light in the head and all his brain was telling him to do was to take his husband and son into his arms and kiss the daylights out Steve. So he did. When Bucky broke off the kiss, he looked into Steve's eyes and whispered quietly. "He spoke, Steve. Our little boy spoke."

Steve didn't expect for Christopher to say 'Papa'. And while he wasn't saying his name, it was still incredible because this meant that Christopher understood who both of them were. He gasped again and looked over at Bucky in shock. "Buck-" he said. Christ, Bucky had been right all along - about this and about Tish. When Bucky pulled back from the kiss, Steve was crying and holding their son
up against his chest. "He did," Steve said in a soft voice. "He knows who his parents are."

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Bucky laughed for a second and then started to cry. Everything came rushing back to him at once - all this nonsense with Tish and the way that he chose to handle himself so poorly. He sat back down and glanced at Clint and Natasha who he had temporarily forgotten were there. He still believed Steve was cheating and he still didn't know what to do. Also, he had really fucked up and gotten drunk and high and irresponsible just because he didn't have Steve around to see it.

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Steve laid Christopher on the counter so he could fix his pajamas the right way before sitting next to Bucky and giving him their son. He wrapped an arm around him and kissed his temple. "I love you, Bucky," he said. "I never cheated on you."

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Bucky sighed and held Christopher against his chest. He thought for a long moment, "What about when you went to her house? You took her flowers and she took off her clothes." Bucky sounded so tired, defeated, ready to just get this whole thing behind them. He sort of felt like if Steve had cheated, Bucky was just so done of all this heartache that he would just look past it if Steve promised to never do it again.

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"I told her I wouldn't go. So she lied about her aunt dying so I would go. I brought her flowers as a condolence, but she only wanted to have sex with me. When I wouldn't, she shoved me a lot and called me homophobic names. You were right about her, Bucky, but you weren't right about me," Steve said firmly. "Ask Natasha."

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Natasha nodded once and said, "Steve had me watch security footage from the precinct. It's clear that he says he isn't coming over to her house and then she says that her aunt died and then Steve says he will come help her pack her aunt's things."

Bucky didn't know what to say. He felt relieved, of course, but also like an idiot for thinking Steve would do anything with that woman. But he also felt validated in his concern given the way Tish acted and how Steve kept denying that she was after him. "Nat, Clint, do you guys mind giving us a second?" Bucky asked, still not entirely sober and also, not wanting to have an audience for all this.

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When Bucky asked their friends to give them a moment, Steve's stomach sank because he was filled with worry that Bucky would still kick him out - that he still didn't believe him and he didn't want them around to see him break things off with Steve. He lowered his head when Clint and Nat left the room, waiting for Bucky to lay into him.

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"Steve..." Bucky said quietly and slipped a hand onto his thigh. "You got to know I really thought I knew what was happening. There were so many signs and you denied that she was even flirting with you. I would never just think you were cheating because I was being paranoid. Everything pointed to it being the case. I wasn't just pulling shit out the air just to have something to be angry about."
Christopher gurgled up at his papa curiously before laying his head on his shoulder. "I know you believed what you thought," Steve said. "But I wish you chose to believe me instead. Cause I've always believed in you," he answered. "I didn't know she was flirting with me. And even if I did, you should've known that I wouldn't do anything. How can I know that you're not going to kick me out every time I don't tell every person who flirts with me to buzz off? I didn't get upset when Tim kept flirting with you when we opened the shelter. I didn't even bring it up cause I trust you."

Bucky sighed and rubbed his face. "I trust you, too. I do. And at first, I thought maybe you were just naive to the fact that she was flirting because you weren't used to picking up on that with women. But then there were other things and the sweater and the letter and the phone call." He paused. "No, you know what. I was scared to death that I was losing you. I kept thinking that maybe you were interested in seeing what life with a woman was like and then you'd decide to leave me and have an easier life passing as a straight person. And I kept thinking that maybe I wasn't good enough for you and you'd gotten tired of me or you just got sick of my shit and wanted out." Bucky was bawling now and his tears were wetting the top of his shirt where Christopher was wiping them away.

Even though Steve knew Bucky couldn't help his insecurities and he could see why Bucky got upset and anxious about Steve leaving him, it still hurt. It was like Bucky didn't believe in the vow Steve made with him. But when Bucky started bawling, Steve had to put aside his anger so he could pull Bucky into a tight hug. "Let's talk more about this tomorrow, Buck," he murmured. Steve was still too upset to fully forgive Bucky. "What do you say to going to sleep together?"

"No," Bucky whined and cried into Steve's shoulder. "I want to talk now. I want this to be done with. I've spent too many nights thinking about this. I don't want another one. Please, Steve." He reached up and kissed Steve once and then laid his head back down on his shoulder. "Baby, I'm so sorry."

Steve didn't react to the kiss like he usually would, but he wasn't completely cold. "I don't know how to say what I feel without making you more upset," Steve said honestly. "But I know that you are sorry." There wasn't any disagreement on that. And he knew that Bucky believed him now, too.

"Just say it," Bucky said quietly and sat back a little. "Just say it." It would be just Bucky's luck to finally have this mess cleared up and to have Steve back home with him, just for Steve to say that he couldn't believe Bucky didn't trust him and he wanted them to break up because of that. At least Bucky was right, it would be his fuck up that ended this after all. He'd only have himself to blame.

Steve frowned and looked away for a moment before saying, "It really hurts me that you think I would take our vows as anything but a lifelong promise. I promised before God and my mom that I would spend my life with you and be faithful to you. I'm sorry I ever made you feel like you may not be enough. But I would never leave you. I love you too damn much to even think about life without
you. I hate being away from you. Even when you close at work and I’m just laying in bed waiting for you to come home to me."

---

Bucky nodded and clung to Steve desperately. "I know. I know, I'm so sorry." He muffled himself in Steve's chest. He had a headache raging through him and he could feel himself getting more cognizant. Christopher took the opportunity to tangle his hand in Bucky's hair. "I'm so sorry, Baby!" Bucky cried again and held Steve's face. "Please, please, I'm sorry. I know you would never. I got confused and scared and I'm sorry, Steve. I love you, Baby. Please. I love you so goddamn much I just got messed up and I fucked things up again and I'm so sorry." Bucky did what he could to curl himself and Christopher up in Steve's lap. He felt beyond pathetic.

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God, Steve felt like such a fucking asshole for making Bucky cry even harder. He knew his husband had some pretty heavy insecurities and even heavier baggage. When Bucky wailed some more and held the sides of his face as he apologized, Steve had to give in. "Buck," he said softly. He leaned in and kissed him gently. "Please don't cry. I'm hurt and upset but I don't want you to be, too. I want to make you happy again, okay? We can move past this." Christopher started to tear up and cry because he didn't know what was wrong.

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"I'm so fucking sorry," Bucky said again and squeezed his hand onto Steve's upper arm. "I'm sorry for being like this and for doubting you and for crying and everything. I'm so sorry."

There was a faint noise from the hall and Bucky looked up to see Natasha, Clint, and the girls all staring at them. Becca was holding Lilly's hand and Lilly was crying quietly, obviously confused and concerned.

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"I know, Bucky," Steve said. He squeezed Bucky's hand and gently stroked Christopher's back and kissed the top of his head to try and console their little boy. "I'm so sorry I didn't listen to you. That's on me." He kissed Bucky's forehead and then looked to see Lilly crying in the doorway. His heart broke all over again. He wiped at his eyes and stood up so he could take her other hand. "Hey," he said softly. Steve crouched down in front of her. "You don't got to cry, Lilly."

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"Are you leaving us?" she asked and held on to Steve's hand as tightly as she could. Bucky held Christopher and watched from the couch as Becca pulled Lilly in for a hug and then grabbed Steve as well.

Becca looked up at Steve and said quietly, "Lilly's just scared because Bucky hasn't cried this hard since Mom and Dad died."

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"No, I would never," Steve said. He hugged them both close. "Bucky and I had a bad misunderstanding and we both hurt each other in the process," he explained. "But now we understand each other and things are going to be okay. I'm going to hold your brother all night long and remind him how much I love him."
"Steve..." Bucky croaked from the couch and ushered his family over. He waited for them all to come to him and then he pulled everyone together on the couch and held his small, perfect family. Natasha and Clint quietly saw themselves out. Bucky kept crying and holding everyone and occasionally whispering his apologies to Steve for the thousandth time over and over again.

Steve kissed Bucky's cheek and lips every time he apologized. "It's okay. It's okay, Buck, we'll be fine." He pet his fingers through Bucky's hair. "How about we all camp out here? I have sleeping bags. We can watch a movie and fall asleep on the floor."

Bucky nodded and wiped at his eyes. "Can we set the girls up with a movie and you and I can go to our room just for a bit and then come watch?" He really wanted a few minutes of just him and Steve. Lilly would gladly hold Christopher for them. Bucky just wanted to lie in their bed together and look at each other and just be.

Steve nodded and kissed the top of Becca's and Lilly's heads and then headed into the bedroom. Lilly distracted Christopher so he wouldn't whine when his parents left. As soon as Bucky got on the bed, Steve wrapped his arms strongly around him. "I'm so sorry that I hurt you, Bucky."

Bucky whined high in his throat and covered his eyes. "I fucked up. I'm so sorry. It's all my fault." He moved his hands away and stared at Steve. "Baby, Steve, I'm so sorry." Bucky attached himself to his husband and started kissing him and hiccupping when he gasped for air. He knew he must look like a pitiful mess.

Steve could feel tears flowing freely down his face even though he was trying to hold it together. "No, you didn't fuck up. I should've listened to you about Tish." He held the sides of Bucky's face so he could look him in the eyes. "From now on I'm going to make sure you never have any reason to doubt me."

"I just shouldn't have doubted you in the first place," Bucky whispered and pet his hands through Steve's hair. "I love you. I love you so much. I missed you the second I sent you away and I'm so sorry I did and I should've listened to you when you came home that night. I love you, Steve. You have to know that."

Steve's bottom lip quivered. "I was afraid I'd never get to live with you and Christopher and the girls again," he said. "This family is so important to me, Bucky. I could never leave it. I'd rather die."

"You're here now. You're with us again. I'm never, ever letting you go." Bucky kissed Steve again
and trailed down his jaw and his neck to his collarbone. "You're mine, Steve. I'll never make this mistake again, Baby." Bucky nuzzled Steve and moved to hover over him on the bed, still kissing softly at Steve's neck.

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Steve nodded and gripped Bucky with almost bruising force because he needed Bucky to stay there with him. "I believe you," he said. "I know we won't have this happen again. We are going to be better next time."

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Bucky intertwined his legs with Steve's and laid down on top of him. He cradled Steve's head in his arms and stared down at him. Bucky's hair drifted gently around him as Steve breathed and Bucky couldn't pull his eyes away from Steve's. "Tell me you love me, please. I need to know I didn't ruin this. I need to know you'll forgive me."

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"I love you, Bucky Barnes. With all of my heart," Steve said. "There is nothing on this earth you could do that I wouldn't forgive because you're so important to me and I made a vow to stay by your side, for better or for worse." He kissed him slowly. "You are everything that's good in my life."

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"Rogers-Barnes," Bucky corrected and hummed softly as he trailed his hands down Steve's sides. "You're my world. This family is the reason I wake up every day." Bucky pulled his shirt off and put Steve's hand over his tattoo. "This right here," he said and ran Steve's fingers over their wedding date. "That's why I keep going. I love you."

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Steve nodded and let out a shaky breath and murmured, "We have to do something so Becca and Lilly don't feel like our relationship is unstable. I don't want Lilly to have nightmares again."

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"What do you want to do?" Bucky asked and cuddled back up to Steve. They had already done a lot of commitment type things. They lived together, they were married, they have a child, they started a shelter together. He wasn't sure what else there was.

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"We should do something for them - specifically for them. Cause everything we've done so far was for us, which isn't a bad thing, but we had all of this before our fight," Steve said. "We need to do something new."

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"Okay," Bucky said and sat up in bed. "I don't know what to do. Take a family vacation maybe? Send them to see their cousins in California? I'm not sure what they would like that we could afford."

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"I was thinking a vacation... but even bad families can pay for a vacation..." Steve sighed. "I was
thinking about maybe getting them their own rings, too. So they know that they're a part of our married family."

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"I... I guess so," Bucky shrugged. "I bet sometimes it feels like there are two families - me and the girls and then me, you, and Christopher. What if we tried to get you secondary guardianship of the girls? So they will know they aren't lesser than Christopher to you."

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"I would love to have that," Steve said. "Genuinely," he added. Steve would've suggested it sooner but Bucky had mentioned leaving it be in the past because, at the time, Becca hadn't been sold on the fact that Steve wouldn't leave.

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"We will have to talk to them about it and make sure they are okay with that," Bucky said and traced the lines of Steve's hand. "But I think that would be a good way to show that this is our family now - the five of us - and that's how it's going to be. No matter what."

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"The five of us," Steve agreed. "And growing." Because the two of them were going to have plenty of little toddlers to love and raise into amazing people. "Thank you for letting me into your family."

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Bucky pressed his forehead to Steve's and closed his eyes. "Thank you for staying." He pulled away and looked Steve up and down. "Let's go finish the movie with our kids and then once they all fall asleep, let's come back here and get undressed and just lay together and watch each other and touch each other. How's that?"

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"We got to be back for them in the morning, though," Steve said. "I don't want them to wake up without us." He drew him in for a slow kiss before getting up. As they came back to the living room, Becca and Lilly turned their heads to watch the two of them.

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Bucky hugged both his sisters and unzipped the biggest sleeping bag that Steve had for the two of them to share. He sat down on top of it and took Christopher from Lilly. He waited for Steve to sit beside him and then he leaned back against Steve's chest and pulled one of Steve's arms to hold underneath Christopher for support. "Steve and I love you both so much," Bucky said to the girls. "And we love each other. Everything is okay now, we promise. We are a family."

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"You're not saying that so we feel better, right? You're definitely not breaking up?" Lilly asked.

Steve shook his head. "We mean it, Lil. We'll show it to you later. Right now, we want to have a relaxing night as a family, alright? Just the five of us."
It didn't take long for the girls to fall asleep. Lilly was first and she kept mumbling in her sleep. Becca followed pretty quickly with her arm flung over her face. Bucky laid Christopher into his swing carriage in the living room and then took Steve's hands and started pulling him towards their room. The second the door was shut, Bucky began stripping off his clothes slowly - not in a slow and sensual way, but just calm and aware of Steve's eyes on him the whole time.

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When Bucky started stripping off his clothes, Steve walked over so he could kiss his cheek. He gently stroked a hand down his back as he looked over at Bucky's naked body. "How are you feeling, Love?"

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Bucky felt vulnerable and tiny. He felt like he was a bad husband and needed to make things up to Steve. He felt like a complete asshole for doubting Steve and letting his insecurities take over. Bucky gingerly held Steve's face in his hands and shook his head. "I... I don't know."

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All the hurt and anger that Steve felt earlier washed away when he saw how upset his husband was. All Steve wanted to do was make him smile. "Well, how about I make you feel better?" he asked. "We can stay up telling each other about the different things we love about us."

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"Okay," Bucky nodded and sniffled. He reached for Steve's shirt and started to pull it up and off his body then he paused. "I'm... I'm not trying to get you to have sex with me. I know you're probably not interested or ready to be intimate with me again and that's fine. I just want to see you and feel you and be open to each other again - nothing in the way." He wanted Steve to be at his most bare just like he was. He wanted them both to be here and vulnerable together and willing to talk and be themselves again.

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Steve leaned over to kiss him lightly. "You're right. I'm not ready for sex right now. But we can both be naked together." He stroked a hand over Bucky's side and then let the man undress him all the way. "I love you, Bucky. I'm so grateful that we are able to get back together after all this."

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"I love you too," Bucky said and pulled Steve towards the bed. "And I'm so sorry I messed up and let myself think for even a second that you would be unfaithful. And I'm sorry that I hurt you so bad. And I know it may take a while for us to be back to normal and I know that's my fault. I'll be here through all of it - no matter how long it takes for us to be us again. And I know you may not forgive me quickly and that's fine, I don't deserve to be forgiven quickly. I don't deserve you at all. But I love you and I need you. I need you with me forever, Steve."

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"Baby, it's not all your fault," Steve corrected. "And you do deserve me, because you deserve someone who loves you with all their heart." He kissed him gently. "I should've believed you when you said Tish wanted to be with me and not as friends. We could've avoided all this if I had done that."
Bucky took a deep breath and held Steve's hands. "I have an idea that I want to do… if you like it." He waited a second and turned Steve's hand over in his so he could touch his wedding ring. "How about we exchange our rings with each other. I'll wear yours and you wear mine. And when you've forgiven me completely and we've put this totally behind us and you are ready to be intimate again, you give mine back to me and I'll give you yours. Like a symbolic reminder that we can always heal from our conflicts and we are in this together."

Even though it was something he wished they didn't have to do, Steve loved the idea. "That sounds like a perfect idea." He pulled his own ring off and kissed it before offering it to Bucky. "I hope we don't have to do this again. But I'd like to do this in the future if we ever get mad at each other."

"Okay, Baby, this will be what we do then." Bucky gently took his ring off and pushed it down Steve's finger before putting Steve's ring on his own hand. "It'll be our way of knowing when we have things right with each other again. No guessing or assumptions." He held his hand in Steve's and looked at their rings again. "I love you, Steve."

"I love you too, Bucky," Steve said. He kissed Bucky's lips lightly and pulled back when he remembered something. "Oh, uh, Tim is still at the shelter. He recognized me when I went there to sleep and he was the one who urged me to find you instead of wait for you to decide what to do."

"He told me to go back for you," Steve said. "And that I should appreciate his advice because you're a catch and he would scoop you up if given the chance," Steve chuckled. "He's a good guy. It's a shame he still is there - not that I mind him being there."

"Steve," Bucky smiled, "I know that look. That's the 'Steven 'I want to do something to help' Rogers' look. What are you thinking? Helping him get a job or an apartment or something? I could talk to Clint about him being a filler at the shop."

Steve smiled guiltily because he had been thinking of some sort of way he could get Tim some form of employment. "Could you? That'd be great," he said. "I was thinking about finding some civil service exams he's qualified for but that would be perfect in the meantime."

Bucky grinned. "Yeah, I can do that. I was going to ask Clint to hire someone else on soon anyway
because I'm going to need time off Tuesday and Thursday evening for a few hours for a while starting pretty soon."

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Steve looked curious. "What are you doing Tuesday and Thursday evenings?" Steve asked. "You doing a class or something?" He reached out to play with his hair lightly.

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"Not a class, no," Bucky said and cleared his throat. "I'm going to start doing something for you - and for our family. I actually decided it about a month ago but I haven't had the guts to start. And I didn't want to tell you yet in case it doesn't work out. I don't want you to be disappointed. But given our recent weeks and the mistrust and hurt and misunderstanding exchanged between us, if you want me to tell you, I will. But if not, you just have to wait a few months and then hopefully I can make you proud."

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Steve stroked a finger along Bucky's jaw. "It's okay. You don't have to tell me what it is," he said. "If you want to surprise me, then I'll let you surprise me." Steve gave him a long, loving look. "And I'm already proud of you, Sweetheart. You're an amazing person and an even better dad."

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Bucky kissed Steve and wrapped his arms around his middle. He breathed lightly on Steve's chest and kissed it a few times as well. "Speaking of, we should probably go back out to our kids, huh? Christopher usually wakes up around this time. I'm also really happy you finally heard him talk. He always did it when you weren't around but I'm glad he did it today."

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"He's got such an adorable voice," Steve said. "He was a little traitor to me, though... said 'Dada' when we were alone and then 'Papa' when I brought him out to you." Steve got up and started to get dressed. "He'll be saying full sentences soon enough."

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"He just knows which one of us is which," Bucky said and pulled on his pajama pants. "He's so smart. He started crawling too. Just a little bit but he's definitely been moving around. We might want to make sure he can't open any doors or anything and hurt himself.

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"Baby-proofing the house already, huh?" Steve looked excited to be able to see their son grow up and do all these amazing, little things.

When they walked to the living room, Christopher was already awake. "Dadadada," he said excitedly as Steve walked over to pick him up.

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Bucky giggled and sat back down on the sleeping bag and waited for Steve. Lilly made a noise and some jerking movements and Bucky hovered over her cautiously. When she didn't stop after a couple seconds, Bucky shook her awake saying, "Hey, my little monster, it's okay. You were having
a nightmare." Bucky pulled her close to him and kissed the top of her head. Becca woke up as well from the noise and sat up, asking about what was going on.

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Steve blew a raspberry on Christopher's neck and the baby squealed with laughter. Since both girls were awake, he didn't bother to be quiet. "We were just entertaining your nephew," he said to Becca. "Do you want hot chocolate or anything since you're awake?"

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Lilly nodded her head tiredly for hot chocolate and Bucky got up to make her some. "So, since you are both up and we are all together... maybe Steve and I can ask you about something we wanted to do but we want you both to be okay with it before we try."

"Not another baby," Becca said sternly and looked to Christopher. "Wait for me to go to college at least then you can get another one."

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Steve chuckled a little. "We're a gay couple, Becca, we can't be picky when it comes to timing our next baby," he said. "But we'll at least not actively look for one until you're in college," Steve promised. "What we want to ask is a bit more important," Steve said.

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Bucky came back with hot chocolates for both girls and a bottle for Christopher. He snuggled close next to Steve and looked down at Steve's ring on his own finger. He was really glad Steve liked that plan but he was already waiting anxiously for when he could get his ring back. "Steve and I wanted to know if it would be okay with the two of you if we petitioned the court to give Steve secondary guardianship of the both of you."

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Becca looked surprised and Lilly turned to Becca to gauge her reaction so she would know how she should react. "But... why would you want to do that?" Becca asked.

Steve nuzzled Christopher affectionately. "Because I want us to be one family. Not two parts of one," he said. "And I want you guys to never have to worry about me going away."

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The girls were quiet, both thinking to themselves. Lilly looked from Bucky to Steve a few times and then over to Becca who was looking down at her hot chocolate. Bucky didn't like the long silence so he added, "We were just thinking that it would be good for all five of us to be all officially connected. Because right now it's like, Steve is only here for me and the baby and that's not true. He's here for you both, too. This would be our family."

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Becca considered for a long moment but then nodded. "Fine. But that doesn't make him the boss of us or anything. It's just paperwork," she said. Lilly looked more excited about it because it made her feel a lot happier that they were officially one family.
Bucky laughed and took the cups of hot chocolate from his sisters and put them down so he could pull them into a big hug. "He doesn't have to be the boss of you. But now he can help with things at school or team stuff or parent-teacher meetings. And we can write him on doctor’s forms as a guardian and emergency contact. And you'll have two people looking after you again and it'll be a lot easier just saying 'our kids' instead of 'my sisters' and 'our son'." Bucky was rambling and he knew it but he was just so happy that they were okay with this.

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When both girls agreed, Steve started to tear up and cry happy tears. Becca gave him a deadpan look. "Oh my god, Steve," she said, embarrassed at how big of a deal Steve was making out of this.

"I'm just happy I have you all back again," Steve said thickly and rubbed his eyes

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"Hey, come here," Bucky chuckled and kissed Steve. "We're getting you guardianship. The girls will officially be your family now too. I love you so much." Bucky kissed some of the tears away from Steve's cheeks and slowly pulled Steve into their family hug. Christopher was caught in the middle and must have been annoyed that he couldn't see anything because he started making loud babble and shoving his hands against Bucky.

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Steve laughed when their son voiced his distaste for the closeness. He pulled back. "What's the matter, Bean?" Christopher made another loud noise and went back to minding himself. "I'm excited to move forward," Steve said. "Knowing that we all will get to stick together."

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Lilly yawned and scooted forward to hug Steve. "I love you, Steve. You're going to make a good big brother for us," Bucky beamed at his sister and messed up her hair. He could tell everyone was pretty tired and today had certainly been an up and down sort of day. He was ready to fall asleep and get to wake up with Steve again. This whole thing had just been a tornado of bad decisions and misunderstandings and he was ready to put it away.
A few weeks later, when the leaves started to change color, Steve decided it was time to baptize their son. Rather than worry about squeezing people into their apartment, the shelter was going to have a little party to celebrate and Steve didn't mind a few strangers joining in on the festivities. As he tried to put a reluctant Christopher into a baby suit, Steve turned his head to call Lilly over.

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Lilly trotted over, wearing her best dress and looking a little frazzled. "Yeah? Do you need Bucky? I don't know where he is but I can find him. I think he might be out smoking." She looked down at Christopher who was getting bigger and stronger every day. He had been crawling for almost a solid month now and he was never happy with being held down like he was now.

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Steve finally wrestled Christopher into his clothes. The little boy had since learned the word 'no' and was adamantly chanting it right now. "I need you to hold your godson and make sure he doesn't pull this off while I get changed."

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Lilly sighed in exasperation and picked up Christopher and adjusted his shirt for him as he mumbled 'no' over and over again. Then it hit her. "Wait, what did you just say? I'm his godmother? I'm not allowed to be."

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"Officially, no. But Father Frank says you're allowed to do all the godmotherly duties for him so long as you know that the church can't officially recognize you as his godmother." Steve kissed the top of her head and ran off to change into his nice clothes.

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"What?" Lilly called after him in surprise. "Oh my god. Christopher, buddy, I'm your godmother!" Lilly said to the baby and held him up in front of her. "I'm your godmother. How cool is that shit?" She nodded and sat with Christopher and waited for Steve to come back.

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Christopher went from being grumpy to excited when he heard the happy tone in Lilly's voice regardless of not understanding her. Steve came back all dressed up and ready to go. "You're going to get to hold him as he gets baptized today. That's a pretty big deal," Steve said.

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Lilly gasped. "Really? I thought you and Bucky were holding him. Where are you guys going to be?" Now she was nervous. She wasn't aware that she was going to be this involved. There were going to be people watching her. What if Christopher started to cry while she was holding him?

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"We are going to be up there with you. When he gets baptized, we pass him to you. They pour a
little water over his head, then you pass him back," Steve explained. "There are some other babies going before him. Usually, it's a few families done at the same time."

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"Okay, I can handle that." Lilly nodded and looked to her godson. "I can handle that, right?" Christopher was unresponsive.

Bucky popped in then, dressed in a suit that Steve had bought for him especially for this occasion and with his hair French braided with a black bow holding it together - Becca insisted on the bow. "Hey, I think we are ready to go."

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Steve preened happily when he saw Bucky all dapper and done up. "I like how you did your hair," he complimented. Steve walked over and kissed his temple. "Let's get this show on the road." Steve put Christopher in the baby carrier, which he was quickly starting to hate. The baby loved moving around and only enjoyed cuddles briefly unless he was tired.

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Christopher immediately started fussing and Bucky handed him a teething toy to chew on while they were on their way. "You look really handsome, Steve," Bucky said and stopped Steve to give him a kiss. "And our little boy, our little bean is getting baptized today. How happy are you right now?" Bucky asked seriously. He wanted to make sure this was all going exactly as Steve hoped it would.

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"I'm so excited," Steve said. "I can't wait for him to be welcomed into the church. Not that he hasn't been watched over from the start... but still... he's going to have a whole community looking out for him now. My mom is over the moon."

---

Sarah met them at the shelter and she immediately took Christopher from his carrier and held him close. Despite being picked up, he was very happy to see his Nana. Bucky awkwardly stood next to Steve and held his hand tightly. Tim had recently moved out of the shelter and into an apartment with the money he had been making at the record shop, but he kept volunteering to help Father Frank and others run the shelter so he was there to see them all for the baptism. He greeted everyone and shook Christopher's tiny hand before headed back to the priest to help make sure everything was in order. "You ready, Bean?" Bucky asked as Sarah passed the baby back to him.

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The whole ceremony was very nice. The father had created a very understanding atmosphere in this church so neither Steve nor Bucky got weird or dirty looks for being with each other, raising a child. Christopher did end up splashing Lilly a little with the holy water and Steve joked that it was because he saw a little devil in her.

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After the ceremony was all over and every baby had been baptized, there was a luncheon at the shelter for everyone and Bucky held Christopher and fed him small cut up pieces of strawberries as Steve talked with another couple that was at the table with them. Bucky looked down at his hand. He still had Steve's ring. He did like having it there because it reminded him why they were doing this
and that he was Steve's and Steve was his. But every day he woke up and hoped that day would be the one that he would get his ring back and Steve would have forgiven him fully and put the whole thing behind them.

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"Papa," Christopher said, then pointed at his mouth before signing 'more' because he wanted more strawberries. "He's so smart," Steve said proudly. "Thank you for letting me share this with him. It's important to me that he grows up Catholic before he decides if he wants to stay or not."

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"Of course, Steve," Bucky said and held up a whole strawberry to Christopher so he could gnaw on it. "I know how important this is to you." He pet his hands through his husband's hair and felt Christopher's tiny teeth bite down on his finger as he tried to take the piece of fruit from him. "Ouchies, Christopher," Bucky said and kissed the top of his head. "Avoid biting."

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Christopher whined, more concerned with the fact that his food was taken away than that he bit Bucky's finger. When he realized he wasn't getting it back without making up, he kissed Bucky's finger and then opened his mouth for the strawberry again.

"You think maybe we can have some alone time tonight?" Steve asked discreetly and gently nudged Bucky.

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Bucky handed the strawberry to Christopher and then moved his hand out of the way. "Yeah, Baby, of course," Bucky smiled weakly and took Steve's hand. "Do we need to talk about something?" he asked nervously and rubbed his thumb over Steve's palm. He was worried he had done something to make Steve upset again. He still hadn't told him about what he had been doing every Tuesday and Thursday evening and maybe Steve was getting annoyed with not knowing. Now Bucky was anxious and his leg started bouncing up and down of its own accord and Christopher giggled with the feeling.

---

Steve didn't mean to upset and worry him. "We don't need to talk about anything, Love. It's just that we've been so busy with the kids and our jobs that we haven't had much 'us' time. I'd like to catch up with how we're doing, you know - just to put a little time aside for each other."

---

Bucky sighed and smiled, relieved. "Yeah, Christopher will probably be ready for a nap when we get home so we can take advantage of that." He passed Christopher off to Steve. "I'm going to get him some more strawberries really quick." Bucky went up to the serving line and went to talk to Tim. "Hey, Buddy, haven't seen you in a few days."

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Tim looked over at Bucky and smiled. "Been busy volunteering here. Some assholes keep spray-painting the walls outside and I'm keeping watch to try and catch them in the act. Don't mention it to Steve cause we don't want him to get upset over it."
"Fuck, really?" Bucky sighed. "Alright, well, if it gets worse we will tell Steve and have him get an officer posted here for a few nights. Can I ask what they are spray painting or do I not want to know?"

"You don't want to know," Tim said flatly. "Trust me." He then nudged him gently with a smile. "But, hey, don't worry about it. You've got a family to take care of. I'm going to take care of my family here. I'm the only one left from the first crew who comes back to help so I'm kind of the resident dad. I'm also the oldest who's been here."

"Okay, Resident Dad." Bucky smiled and got some more strawberries for Christopher. "Hey, I wanted to thank you again for coming on at the record shop on. You are a lot better of a worker than the potheads and it's been really important that I get to my meetings. I still haven't told Steve about going to AA. I want to wait until I reach a significant step in the program and then tell him. Clint and you are the only ones that know. Well, and probably Clint's girlfriend."

Tim smiled at him. "Thank you for giving me the job. It's really helped me get back on my feet. And I enjoy it. Reggie leaves his weed out all the time. Don't tell him I steal some of it now and then." He felt a bit lucky that Bucky was confiding in him. "So how are the meetings going for you? You feeling more confident about controlling your drinking?"

Bucky chuckled and said, "I've stolen some from Reggie, too. Don't worry about it," as he reached in his pocket to produce his one-month sober chip. "Got this the other day. I think I'm going to wait until have my three-month chip to tell Steve. That'll be almost one hundred days sober and I think that's a safe time to tell him."

"Hey, man, that's amazing," Tim said excitedly. "That's a huge milestone. I think Steve is really going to be happy for you. Your sisters will be, too." Tim nudged him again and smirked. "Maybe we should throw you a party after you reveal it to your husband."

"I don't know about all that," Bucky said shyly and turned his chip over in his hand. "Not sure if I need a party for this, you know? I just need to keep telling myself that I'm doing it for my family. It was really hard for me to even admit I was an alcoholic to begin with. This has only ever been about my husband and my kids." He looked back at Steve who was occupying Christopher who was getting antsy waiting for his fruit. "I should probably get back to them, actually. I'll see you at work, man."

"See you at work," Tim said. He congratulated Bucky one more time before he headed back.

"Papa!" Christopher said excitedly, bouncing in Steve's arms when Bucky came back.
"You're not gone for longer than a few minutes and he's already missing you. Come take your son so he doesn't give himself a heart attack working himself up like this," Steve said with a laugh.

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"Come here, Little Bean!" Bucky said excitedly and traded Steve the strawberries for their son. Bucky kissed Christopher several times on his cheeks and then sat down with him. "Christopher, can you ask Daddy for some fruit?" Bucky said and signed 'more' like they had taught him and then pointed to Steve who had the bowl.

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Christopher watched Bucky with big eyes, taking in the sign that Bucky was doing before turning to his dad and mimicking 'more' and 'hungry'. Steve praised him for being so smart and then gave him some more food.

Lilly came running over to them. "Hey, can I hold him? You two have been hogging him."

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"You're a pushy godmother," Bucky mumbled quietly and gave Christopher over. "Once he eats those strawberries, that's it. He needs to be done. So even if he asks for more, tell him ‘no’ and then give him some water instead, okay?"

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"You're depriving your son of healthy fruits and leaving me to deal with an unhappy baby?" Lilly complained. Christopher whined and made unhappy noises a first when he finished his berries but he didn't cause a huge fuss.

After a while more of mingling and conversing, Steve yawned and reached over to take Bucky's hand. "Alright. Are we all ready to head back home? I think Christopher had a big enough day today."

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"I'm ready to go home," Bucky said and started packing up Christopher's bag. "He needs to have a nap and Becca has a paper to finish for tomorrow." Bucky made his rounds, saying goodbye to Tim and Father Frank and a few other people they had gotten acquainted with and then returned to Steve. "Take us home, Steve."

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Steve loaded them all into the car and drove back home. Christopher babbled and sung to himself because he loved car rides and once they were home, he chanted 'no, no, no' until they were inside. "That kid isn't afraid to share what he thinks, huh?" Steve laughed.

---

"I think he gets that's from you, Steve," Bucky joked and set Christopher down so he could crawl for a bit. It didn't take long for him to wear himself out and Bucky watched as his crawlsl slowed down and turned into a flop on his tummy on the ground. "Sleepy Bean," Bucky said and gently peeled his son off the floor.

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Steve watched happily as Christopher made his way around. After they laid him down to sleep, Steve reached out to gently take Bucky's hand in his. "How about we get changed into something more comfortable, huh?"

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"Yeah," Bucky said and pulled at his tie. "I know I needed to wear a suit today but I am ready to be out of this thing." He went to the closet and pulled out some sweats and a long-sleeved shirt. He also undid the braid of his hair and glanced in the mirror to see that his hair was all wavy from being done up so long.

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Steve undressed and found a pair of sweats for himself and some for Bucky. "Here, wear my sweats instead. You look sexy in them," Steve suggested. When he passed the pants over, Bucky's ring was placed neatly on top of the folded clothes.

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"Hey!" Bucky shouted and held up the ring, tossing the pants behind him on the bed. He smiled wide and his eyes scanned over Steve's face. "Are you giving this back to me?" he asked cautiously and clutched on to the ring tightly.

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Steve gave Bucky a happy smile and offered his own hand so Bucky could give him his ring back. "I think I'm ready to move on," he said. "Put the past behind us and have a better tomorrow."

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Bucky nodded sharply and gave Steve's ring back. After they both had their respective rings on their fingers, Bucky breathed deeply a few times, with a wild look in his eye, and then jumped on Steve. He wrapped his legs around Steve's middle and kissed him feverishly, laughing happily every time he came up for air. "I love you. I love you! Thank you for forgiving me, Baby. I love you so much."

---

Steve didn't expect such a big reaction from Bucky and it made him regret not being able to let go sooner. He smiled and returned the kisses lovingly. Steve wrapped his arms strongly around his husband’s waist and held him close. "I love you, too, Buck. It's like it never even happened for me, okay?"

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Bucky nodded and kissed Steve's neck. "Never happened," he agreed and starting sucking a hickey right by Steve's Adam's apple. He had waited for this so patiently and repeatedly told himself that if Steve could forgive him, and he could forgive himself, then everything was going to be okay. And on top of that, he had been sober for a little over a month and was making such good progress. "I kind of feel like some things had to get bad for them to get a lot better, you know?"

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Steve moaned softly when Bucky sucked a hickey on his neck. "Mmm, yes..." he said in a distracted tone. "I'm so glad we are strong enough together to be able to get through this mess," he said. "And we are better for it."
Bucky slipped his legs off of Steve and plopped back on the ground. Steve was still shirtless and Bucky couldn't help but kiss his chest and hold his arms securely around his hips. He hadn't done anything physical with Steve since the night the shelter opened. After that, Bucky was either suspicious that Steve was cheating so he didn't want to have sex with him or Steve was recovering and hadn't yet felt comfortable being intimate with Bucky. Bucky hadn't pressured Steve at all and he wasn’t pressuring him now. He pulled off of Steve and looked at his ring back on his own finger. "I love you, Steve."

Steve gently eased Bucky back onto the bed and laid down on top of him. "I want to make love later," he said. "But first, I want to talk with you. Say how we feel and all that cause I feel like we've been a little distant and I know that's because you were giving me the space I needed."

"I want to talk with you, too," Bucky said and held on to Steve desperately. He kind of thought, in lieu of getting his ring back, and also Steve's trust, he might just go ahead and tell him about AA now. He wasn't sure yet. "And, Steve, honestly, if you want to wait some more before we make love, I understand. I don't want you to feel like just because you gave me my ring back that you have to be intimate again if you aren't totally ready. Just knowing that you're ready to put this behind us is enough for me right now."

Steve shrugged. "It's not that I don't want to or I'm not ready," he said. "I'm not entirely in the mood right now, but that can change. Besides, I want to make you feel good." He reached over to tease Bucky's nipple lightly and took a breath before changing the subject. "I'm looking at retirement packages," Steve admitted. "I'm not sure if we are financially ready yet... but the more I'm out there, the more I want to be with our son and the rest of my family."

"Yeah?" Bucky asked and took both of Steve's hands and held them over his chest. "What sort of stuff have you been learning? I know that's what you want. You want to be a stay-at-home dad. And I want you to do exactly what will make you happy. And I just can work more or get a second job if that'll make it faster for you to retire."

"I'm learning that it pays to wait until at least fifteen years in," Steve said with a defeated frown. "I'll be in my mid-thirties, almost. But Christopher would be almost ten," he said. "There's not many packages for people who did less than ten years and didn't quit for medical reasons."

Bucky sighed and rubbed his thumb over the back of Steve's hand. "Well, what would it look like if you did retire now? Also, I mean, ten years old is still a good time for a kid to have his Daddy at home with him. I think even if you have to wait that long, it'll still end up being really good for him. And we might have another kid by that time, too."
"If I retire now we wouldn't be able to get a house to fit more kids," Steve said. "And I know that's important to the both of us. And I guess I'd feel like I was favoring our younger kids if I was home from a young age for them and not for Christopher."

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"Okay." Bucky thought for a second. "I can talk to Clint about a raise, more hours, something. He was thinking of opening the store for longer each night soon anyway. I can apply somewhere for a second job, maybe an assistant position somewhere that pays well." He bit his lip. "I don't know. I want this for you, for us, for Christopher. But I don't know how to make it happen."

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"Bucky, I don't want you to shoulder the financial burden of my choices," Steve said. "Especially when you never got to finish the things you wanted to while I get everything." He huffed. "I just need to get shot in the knee or something. Not enough to really cripple me but enough to retire with a pension."

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"No," Bucky said firmly and squeezed Steve's arm. "No more getting shot, okay? We already dealt with that once, dammit. Don't joke about that." He nuzzled into Steve's neck and sighed.

Bucky wanted to tell Steve about AA because it was something he was doing for his family and he was proud of himself, but there was more to it than that. There was a young girl in his group who had a similar story to his - started drinking at a young age, used it as a coping mechanism for years, decided to get cleaned up because of her family. She was only nineteen and the day she realized she was pregnant was the last time she had a drink. Except that she couldn't keep the baby and was going to give it up for adoption once it was born. Bucky was going to tell Steve about her and discuss maybe adopting her child. But now he knew they couldn't do that. It was too soon and they just couldn't swing it.

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"Sorry," Steve apologized. "I shouldn't have joked like that." He had temporarily forgotten how worried Bucky had been when he was shot that he would end up paralyzed or even just crippled like Bucky's father was. He kissed Bucky gently and pet his wavy hair. "Tell me about your life," Steve said. "I want to hear about the things that made you happy or sad or, hell, tell me whatever. I want to hear your voice."

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Bucky smiled softly and leaned into Steve's touch. "Well, I guess I can go ahead and tell you something big. I was going to wait but then you gave me my ring back and you want to talk and I want to tell you. I don't think I can wait two more months like I planned. I'm too proud."

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Steve couldn't help the excited look that came across his face. "Is this the thing you're doing Tuesday's and Thursday's?" he asked and started guessing. "Are you doing night school? Learning sewing or something? Or maybe you're in a band. Are you in a band?" His eyes were wide and he bit his lip. He loved when Bucky played music. Bucky in a band would be one of the sexiest things he had ever seen.
"I'm not in a band, you punk." Bucky laughed and gently pushed Steve off of him. "I need to get something from my wallet." He grabbed his wallet from the dresser and pulled out the one-month sober chip and came back to bed. Bucky took Steve's hand and placed the chip on his palm. "I got that a few days ago at AA."

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It took Steve a moment to realize what it was but then he recognized it from a few coworkers who'd gone to meetings. "Oh my god, Bucky!" He looked up at him and beamed. "Oh, Baby. I'm so proud of you!" He wrapped him in a bear hug. "Tell me how it's been. Have you met anyone nice there? Is it good to have other people around who understand?"

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Bucky clutched onto Steve and laughed in relief. He kissed the side of Steve's face and then pulled back. "It's not been bad," he said and took the chip back. "I've had ups and downs and several times that I just wanted to quit and come home. But I'm doing it for you, and the girls, and our son, and anyone else who comes along to join our family. I just had to tell that to myself every time it got difficult. And they say the first month is the worst one anyway."

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Steve felt so thankful to have such a caring husband at his side. "You are an amazing person, you know that? I really admire the sacrifices you're making for our family," he said genuinely. "Have you told the girls yet? Becca may be skeptical but I think she'd be happy."

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"No, only you," Bucky said. "Well, Clint and Tim know because they had to know where I was going that I needed those times off of work. Also, I assume Clint told Natasha. But other than that, you're all I've told." He kissed Steve slowly and tangled his legs around Steve's waist. "I get a new chip every month. And I know that statistically speaking, I'll probably be one of the guys who messes up and drinks and goes back to the beginning but that doesn't mean it's the end. I won't give up on this. And I'll do everything in my power not to mess up my streak. But, even if I do mess up, I will just start over and keep starting over until it sticks."

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Steve hugged Bucky tightly and kissed him again slowly. "I believe in you. I know you have it in you to kick the habit for good, even if you mess up sometimes. You're only human, but you're the best kind of human there is."

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"Thank you," Bucky said and fiddled with the one-month chip. "I actually kind of believe in myself this time too, you know? I think I have the right intentions to do this and my family is the perfect motivator. I can do this, Steve."

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"Christopher has such an amazing Papa," Steve said and stroked his hand down Bucky's chest as he looked into his eyes. "I can't believe how quick he's growing up, Bucky. In the blink of an eye, he's going to be off to school."

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Chuckling lightly, Bucky opened his eyes wide and said, "Then let's not blink. Problem solved." Although, Steve was right. Their little bean would be grown up before they knew it. And if and when they could actually get another child was a mystery entirely. "I'll tell you, Baby, that kid's teeth hurt. At least he isn't pulling my hair as much. But when he accidentally bites, it's pretty strong."

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Steve snorted and messed up Bucky's hair playfully. He kissed up Bucky's neck and said, "Yeah, I caught him trying to bite Raphael's tail. He thinks biting is the new way of seeing what something is."

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"Jesus, what did the cat do with that?" Bucky asked. He knew Raph was more of a chill cat but he probably ran and hid when the baby started attacking his tail.

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"Well, I was about to intervene but Raphael whacked him with his paw and that stopped the whole thing from happening." Steve snickered. "You should have seen his face, Buck. The cat didn't use his claws or anything, but Christopher wasn't expecting that kind of retaliation."

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This was really nice, just being here, being together and normal with Steve again. Not that they were acting particularly weird before, but it was different now. "I missed you, Steve," Bucky said quietly.

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Steve drew Bucky in for a slow, gentle kiss. He couldn’t believe he let himself go so long without being with Bucky at all times and without touching his body and showing him love. He always did say that Bucky deserved so much love and he shouldn’t have held out on him this long. "I missed you too."

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"You make me beyond happier than I could have ever thought possible," Bucky said quietly. "You know that, right? Steve? You know I love you? You know I've never stopped loving you?" He didn't know why, but Bucky was desperate for validation. He still felt so small and pathetic, but he was getting better every moment.

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"I know, Bucky," Steve said. "I never doubted how much you loved me." He peppered kisses all over his face. "What can I do to make you feel happier right now?"

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Bucky traced his finger all along the inside of Steve's arm. "Just be here with me. Hold me. Help me trim my hair again. Snuggle me. Play with our son. Talk with our girls. And then later, make love to me with the same reverence you did the first time."
Steve smiled adoringly at him and trailed a few kisses down his neck. "I can do that," he said softly. "I love you, Sweetheart," he said with a smile. "You're the best husband a man could ask for."
A few days later, things were calming down more and more between them. Bucky wasn’t so angry with himself and Steve was back to being affection with his husband. Bucky still felt terrible about the whole thing but Steve continued to make it clear that, to him, it was forgotten – it never happened. Bucky swore to Steve over and over that he would never doubt him like that again and he would work on his insecurities and issues about himself that made him distrust Steve for even a second. Steve also made a point to spend some time thinking about how this all happened and working to understand Bucky’s perspective on the initial incidents that led to entire misunderstanding.

Today, Steve had gone home early to relieve his mother of baby duty because he finished his paperwork pretty quickly and it was fairly slow at the station anyway. He was eager to play with his son, who was just starting to be able to stand up and hobble around so long as someone held him steady the whole time. It was an easy way to tire him out for a nap, too, which was very nice. Steve was playing peekaboo on the floor with Christopher when Bucky finally got home.

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"Hey, Baby!" Bucky said when he got in the door. "I got something for Christopher today that I want you to give him." He held out the bag to Steve and took Christopher from his husband. Bucky had bought him a bunch of small containers of various colored baby-safe paints.

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"Why would you want me to give him something you bought?" Steve asked.

When Bucky picked him up, Christopher smiled and said a happy, “Hi, Papa, hi.”

Steve looked in the bag and gasped at what he saw. "Oh, Little Bean, you're going to love this." He picked out all the paints and held them out for the squirming baby to look at.

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Christopher reached for the paints curiously and tried getting at them. Bucky took him over to the table and put him in his high chair. "Here, Christopher, Papa will get some paper to put down on the table and Daddy will show you how to paint, okay?"

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"This was such a great idea, Bucky," Steve said. "Oh, man, we are going to have fun with this." He started to open the different colors and Christopher eyed them curiously and hit his hands on the table a few times. "Look at him, Buck. You've got him all worked up."

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"He sees bright colors and things he can potentially make a mess with. Of course, he's excited." Bucky brought a bunch of paper over and started laying it out on the table. "All the paint is baby-safe so if he does happen to ingest any of it, he will be totally fine."

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Steve held one of the paints over for Christopher to dip his hand in. When the baby tried to eat it,
Steve pulled his hand away. "No, no." He swiped the baby's hand on the paper. "See?"

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Christopher just stared at the mark for a second then looked back up at his dad curiously. "Do it again, Steve," Bucky said and handed him the green paint. "Maybe he needs some poured out for him. I've never painted with a baby before."

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Christopher got the gist of it after the third try. "Good boy!" Steve praised. "Oh, look at him go." Christopher was eagerly smacking paint-covered hands on to the table and swiping back and forth to make streaks. Steve leaned over the table and playfully wiped some paint on Bucky's cheek.

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Bucky closed his eyes and hung his head. "Thanks, Babe," he said sarcastically and licked some paint that had landed on his lip. It was horrid. "God, this shit tastes disgusting! They wouldn't even have to make this nontoxic. Kids would taste it and then immediately want nothing to do with it."

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Just as Bucky said that, Christopher must have had a taste of the paint because he started making annoyed sounds and licking his lips. Steve grabbed a cup and fed him some water to help get rid of it. To pacify him, he leaned in and let the baby paint on his face.

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"Christopher, make your daddy try that gross paint since I had to try it," Bucky said and helped his son paint on Steve's face. Instead of obliging him, Christopher turned to Bucky and started wiping red paint down his neck.

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Steve let out a roar of laughter and Christopher clapped his hands together for making his dad laugh. Lilly heard all the noise and finally emerged from her room to see what was going on. "Hey, what are you guys doing?"

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"Painting with your godson," Bucky mumbled and grabbed a towel to wipe the paint off of his neck. "I found baby-safe nontoxic paint." He dipped his finger in a bit of blue paint and then wiped it directly on Steve's lips. "There, lick that vile crap." Bucky turned to Lilly. "It's pretty fun. Christopher seems to be enjoying himself."

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"Leeee," Christopher said to Lilly, reaching for her, hands, arms, and face covered in paint. "Uh, hell no, you're a mess," she said, though she grabbed some paper and started painting some flowers. It was just about the only thing she could draw. Steve licked his lips and nearly gagged. "Christ!"
"Fucking told you." Bucky nodded and poured some more paint out for his son to mess with. "When the girls were younger, they really liked coloring so we had a bunch of coloring books. Becca had this really precise way of coloring. It would take her about a month to finish one page because everything had to be perfectly within the lines and carefully filled in. And Lilly would pick one color and run it across the whole page until she was satisfied."

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"I am a contemporary artist," Lilly said in a fake, snobby voice.

Steve wiped his mouth of the paint and watched as Christopher made a mess out of himself. "Does Becca still like doing art? She hasn't really spoken to me about it."

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"I don't think she really does anything like that anymore," Bucky said and shrugged. "She hasn't used coloring books in years and she spends all her free time reading anyway. I mean she might still like it. Want me to go ask her if she wants to paint with us?"

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"Yeah, see if she wants to join. Everyone else is out here anyway," Steve said. Christopher got a determined look on his face and deliberately started marking up his new piece of paper.

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Bucky went and got Becca who reluctantly came out to see what was going on. Apparently, she had been working on writing the next great young adult novel and didn't appreciate being disturbed. But she also wanted to do some finger painting.

Bucky felt pretty satisfied that he got not one but two grumpy sisters to join their painting party. He also felt like this was a good time to update the family on things. "So, Steve and I are going down to petition the court for his secondary guardianship on Monday."

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"Far out," Becca said flatly, sounding unenthused only because she was busy painting her own picture.

"Will the court fight you on it?" Lilly asked. Lilly had decided it would be fun to paint little hearts on Christopher's cheeks, so she did.

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Bucky shrugged and started painting aimless wavy lines in the corner. "They shouldn’t. They might ask for some testimonies from the two of you before making a decision, though. Just talk about what you like about having him in the family and if you trust him."

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Becca snorted. "Testimonies, huh? Can I tell them that I trust Steve to be a huge fucking doofus at all times?" she said smartly, making Lilly snicker as she continued to paint.

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"I guess so if being ‘a huge fucking doofus’ means you trust him to be your guardian," Bucky
replied and gave Steve a small smile. He really was a dork. But at least he was Bucky's dork. And they both really wanted this. It was would connect their family in the way it was lacking and that seemed like exactly what they needed.

"Yeah, we trust him," Becca admitted finally. "He is more responsible than most. Christopher likes him well enough. And I think we're stuck with him anyways." Even though the sentiment was a little tongue-in-cheek, it was genuine.

Steve smiled happily as he began to paint a little picture of their son on his own paper. "I always wanted a big family."

Bucky thought again of the young woman in his AA group. Should he just go ahead and tell Steve about her even though it wasn’t likely they could manage to adopt her baby? Or would it just make them both upset knowing that there was a child who needed them but they couldn’t help? He didn't want Steve to be heartbroken about this, too.

Steve proudly set his painting aside to dry. It was pretty good, considering Steve finger-painted it. He tried to get Christopher to say different colors, but the baby had no interest in learning right now. He just wanted to keep making a mess. "We got to do this more, Bucky. He's loving it."

"We've almost used it all," Bucky observed and held up one of the containers. "I guess I'll get more soon then. It wasn't too expensive. We can just stockpile so we always have some." Christopher was starting to fuss because there wasn't much paint to work with anymore and Bucky decided to get him some blueberries to distract him while he cleaned up.

"Are you my handsome little artist?" Steve said to Christopher. He kissed the top of his head and stood up so he could wash his hands. He grabbed a wet cloth so he could help Bucky clean up the mess they all made.

To help in the cleaning up, Christopher just decided to mash blueberries into his hands and mouth and mumble a bunch of nonsense. "I think he is going to need a nap soon." Bucky chuckled and watched their son yawn with blueberries all over his face. "Papa could use a nap as well before he needs to go to his meeting."

"Oh, Bean, I just cleaned up the last mess you made on your face..." Steve said pathetically. He didn't get too upset because their son was so fucking cute. "Why don't you go lay down, Buck? I'll take care of Christopher and make sure he gets his sleep."

"Alright, but don't let me sleep past my meeting," Bucky said with a yawn and then trotted off
towards their bedroom. Bucky’s nap was short and his meeting was long. When he got home, Steve was curled up in bed waiting for him and Christopher was asleep in his crib. "Hey, Love, how was your evening without me?"

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Steve hung out with the girls a bit and played with their son before laying down for rest. When Bucky got home, he smiled and pulled him down to the bed. "It was nice, but I missed you. How was the meeting?"

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"It was okay," Bucky sighed. "Some of the stuff we have been talking about lately has felt more like therapy and it's sort of made me uncomfortable. And then I want to drink because I don't know what else to do but I can't drink so then I just get more overwhelmed and I just want to come home and curl up by you."

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Steve pulled Bucky in close to his chest and kissed him a few times to make him feel more secure. "What sort of stuff makes it feel like therapy? I kind of assumed that AA meetings were always that way," Steve asked.

---

"Well, for a while it was just talking about ways to cope without alcohol and why we wanted to get better," Bucky said and traced circles on Steve's chest. "We talked a lot about our motivation for taking our lives back from our addiction. But now we have been talking a lot more about why we started drinking in the first place and what we thought was the reason things switched and we let it control us."

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Steve played with Bucky's hair gently while he spoke. "It sounds like they've got a good program going on over there," he said. "How did they respond to what you said?" He asked, trying to learn more about Bucky's experience there.

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Bucky shrugged. "Everyone's pretty quiet when they aren't the one talking. There really isn't much judgment from the people in the group. Everyone's there because they know they have a problem and no one really wants to blame each other for how they got to the point that they needed help."

---

"It must be nice to be somewhere where everyone understands," Steve said. "I do my best to make you feel like you aren't being judged. But I know it's not the same when you're explaining to a non-alcoholic."

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Bucky nuzzled closer to Steve and held his arms tight around his middle. "I know you do. And I know for a long time I wasn't willing to listen to you when you said I was an alcoholic and had a problem. And I'm really sorry, Baby. I should have been more receptive."
"It's something that hurt to come to terms with," Steve said. "I'm not offended or upset that it took some time and self-reflection to acknowledge it. And in the end, you made the right decision."

"I made this decision because I love my family. And I couldn't handle the thought of being the reason my family falls apart." Bucky took a deep breath. "And I know that it's not likely I'll live to be very old, given the damage I've done to my body at such a young age. But even thinking about continuing to drink and shortening my time with you and our kids even more, I just couldn't do that anymore."

"There are grandpas that drank and smoke every day of their adult lives and they're still kicking. You're going to live a long, happy life," Steve promised. "And I'm glad you are making all these steps so we can all be a family for as long as we can."

Bucky was quiet for a bit. Just being pensive and thinking about their future as a family. Steve hadn't really talked much more about his retirement plan but Bucky knew if he could stop and be a stay-at-home dad the next day, he would. And Bucky wanted him to be able to do that. "Have you given any more thought to what you're going to do about work?"

"I have... it's just... I don't know. I'm afraid of putting the financial burden on you," Steve said. "Becca will be out of here in two years probably. We have to start saving up for a house for our other kids," Steve mumbled.

"Two years?" Bucky was taken aback. "She will be seventeen. She's not leaving until twenty." He sighed and moved his hair out of his face. "What if I tried to find a different job? Like a corporate job. I could start as a salesman somewhere and work my way up."

"She's going to go to college and probably will graduate early if she has any say in it," Steve said. He hoped she would go somewhere local but he wasn't holding his breath on it. "Also, Bucky, Baby, you would hate working as a salesman. And what would Clint do without you?"

"I could do it, though. So you could stay home," Bucky said. "And Clint could just hire Tim on as full-time. He would understand and they work well together. And I'm sure there are lots of companies around New York looking for new salesmen." He smiled at his husband then thought about it for a few seconds. Steve was right. He would hate that. But he also hated the thought that Steve wouldn't get to do what he wanted to. "You think I would have to cut my hair?"

"I can't quit my job knowing that it'll force you into one you won't like," Steve said firmly. "You're
keeping your job and you're keeping your hair. Maybe I can think of ways I could make money at home. Maybe I can babysit other people's kids."

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Bucky absently twisted his fingers in his hair like he was worried a corporate stooge was going to come take it while he wasn't paying attention. "I guess that could work but don't you think it sort of defeats the purpose of staying home to be with Christopher? Because you'll have to be in charge of other children that aren't yours and our son might get jealous. He already gets jealous when we pay attention to something other than him."

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"Then I can figure something else out. Either way, Christopher will need to learn to share his parents cause he's going to have like, seventeen siblings." Steve smiled playfully.

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"Steve, Baby." Bucky chuckled. "You have no idea how grateful I am that I'm not the one who has to actually birth all these children for you." He rolled so he was facing away from Steve and being the little spoon tucked away against his husband.

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"If you were able to, I would beg and sweet-talk you into birthing each and every one and I'd make it worth your while," Steve said pleasantly as he kissed along his shoulder.

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Bucky looked over at his nightstand and noticed the drawing of Christopher laying asleep on his chest that Steve had drawn a few months before and he got an idea. "Steve! You should teach art classes!"

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Steve gasped and stared at his husband. Art classes. That could work. Steve loved being involved in art and he was learning with having teenagers and a baby in his life that he liked to teach and nurture creativity. "That's actually a really smart idea, Bucky," he said.

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"I have smart ideas sometimes," Bucky defended and reached for the drawing from the nightstand. "You could do drawing and painting with parents and their kids or something. Like art classes for housewives and their children. And you could sell some of your art, also."

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Steve blushed. "I don't think I could give my art away to make people want it." He knew he was decent but he didn't believe his pieces were buyable. "But I like the 'mommy and me' style art classes. I could probably use the rec room at the shelter once a week. I'm sure the people there wouldn't mind."

---

Bucky kissed the arm that was around his chest and said, "I'm sure tons of people will want to buy.
what you make. You are very talented, Baby." He rolled again to face Steve. "I think we just made some headway for our future, huh? Going to get you set up doing some things you like and you can be at home with our son." Bucky smiled and ran a thumb over Steve's lower lip. "You should make out with me a little bit for thinking of the art class idea. I'm kind of amazing. Or we could have sex." Bucky's eyebrows went up. "I kind of want you really bad right now."

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Steve smirked and slowly slid his hand up Bucky's shirt to play with one of his nipples. "I think we should save any more talk about art classes for tomorrow. I'd rather focus on making sweet love to my husband." He rolled his hips and grinded against Bucky's ass.

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"Yes, please," Bucky whined and pushed back. "I'm nice and warm and comfortable right now and adding your big hot slick cock inside of me will just make it all the better." He squeezed his hands around Steve's arms and let out a contented little sigh of a breath.

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"Jesus Christ." Steve laughed out, but he had to admit he was so turned on. He slid his hand back down to palm at the bulge in Bucky's pants. "Keep talking like that, Sweetheart," he requested. "I like hearing you say that stuff."

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"How about I tell you about how earlier today I caught myself staring in the mirror at my own ass and thinking how I couldn't wait for you to get your hands on me." Bucky moved his hips as Steve touched him. "And how I purposely have been buying pants that are one size too small for me so it'll be almost impossible for you not to stare. Although, I have been getting a lot of looks at my crotch from people. Also, some younger girls tried to flirt with me. Maybe I need to go back to regular sized pants."

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"You've been buying smaller pants? I thought that they were small on you because you were gaining weight." Steve laughed. He knew it wasn't the sexiest thing to say but at least Bucky didn't have to worry about Steve not wanting him because he gained a few pounds. He would always love Bucky no matter what his pant size. "Your ass did look very nice, though. I have noticed," he added and started to push Bucky's pants down.

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"Wow, god, rude. I buy tiny new pants to entice my husband, and he thinks I got fatter," Bucky said with a tick of feigned annoyance in his tone. "You see me naked constantly, you would know if I had gained weight. Besides, I don't hear you complaining about my big ass right now."

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Steve smiled and bit down lightly on Bucky's neck. "I could never complain about your ass unless it's complaining when I don't get to have it." He gave Bucky's ass a squeeze before taking off his underwear. "You want to lay like this while we have sex?"
"I'm fine like this so long as you hold me," Bucky said and grinded back against Steve. He reached an arm back to pull Steve in closer and turned his head to give him a kiss. "Come on, Baby, split me open. I want to feel your cock in my tight ass opening me up and waiting to give me your come."

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Steve groaned and hastily grabbed the lube to smear it on his fingers. He pushed two into Bucky right away, too damned horny to go nice and slow. "I love it when you say those things."

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"I know you do, Baby." Bucky smiled and let himself relax at the feeling of Steve's fingers inside him. "Looks like we are both a little impatient, aren't we?" he asked and pulled at his own cock, waiting for Steve. "Take over, Steve. I'm yours."

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Steve kissed Bucky's shoulder as he opened him up. He found the spot that made Bucky really moan and he massaged it slowly before adding a third finger. "You've always been mine," he said. "Even before we met."

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"I'm always yours," Bucky agreed and shut his eyes while he felt Steve working around inside of him. "Go ahead with your dick, Steve. I'm ready. I want to hear how you breathe while you're making love to me."

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Steve quickly shoved his own pants and boxers off so he could slick up his cock. He slid in easily and groaned softly at how amazing Bucky felt around his dick. "Fuck, we haven't done this nearly often enough," he breathed out before slowly rocking into him.

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Bucky chuckled lightly and reached back to rub his hand down Steve's thigh. "Do you mean this position or having sex? Because I think we have sex a whole fucking lot." He grabbed one of Steve's hands and twisted it into his hair so he would pet him softly as he fucked him.

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Steve took the hint and raked his fingers through Bucky's hair as his hips rocked steadily against Bucky's ass, grinding deeper into him. "Both," he gasped out against his skin. "It's bad, Buck. Sometimes all I can think of is bending you over the counter. It makes family dinner awkward."

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"I knew the tight pants were doing their job," Bucky said and went back to rubbing Steve's thigh. "Every time I squatted down to pick up one of Christopher's toys or something else that I may have dropped on purpose, I was making sure I was doing it so you could see me. But I agree, it has been a while since we have had a night to ourselves where counter sex would be appropriate."

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"I want to have sex somewhere public," Steve said with a deep blush. "I never did something risky
like that before. Under the boardwalk or on the beach..." he reached around to give Bucky's balls a light squeeze as he fucked him.

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"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph," Bucky gasped and pushed back more against his husband. Steve really wasn't that vanilla Catholic boy anymore. "Let's do it then. Let's fuck in public. God, you're so amazing, Baby. You do things to me. Let's take the kids and your mom to Coney Island and then when it gets late, we can sneak off for a bit and go under the pier while it's dark."

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"Don't say other people's name when I'm fucking you," Steve huffed out playfully. "Especially don’t mention my mom or the Virgin Mary." He held Bucky steady and just circled his hips slowly, balls deep in Bucky's ass and enjoying the tight heat around him.

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Bucky groaned at the feeling and took short careful breaths. "What do you say? Does that sound like a good plan to you? Or do you want to do it somewhere else? We could lock ourselves in a briefing room at the precinct or in the back office at the record shop. Or do you want to be somewhere that someone might accidentally stumble by and see?"

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"I want to do it in all those places," Steve said. "But I don't want to get caught," he murmured. "I want to have sex in as many places we can. Want to give you as many good memories as possible."

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"Where else?" Bucky asked and moved Steve's hand over his cock because he had gotten tired of jerking himself off and he liked how Steve did it. "How long have you been thinking about this? We haven't really ever talked about this before."

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Steve teased the head of Bucky's cock with his thumb before stroking it fluidly. "In Dale's apartment when he's not home. I swear, Buck, if I have to hear him complain about the cat one more time, I'm going to arrest him."

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Bucky choked on a laugh and turned his head to look at Steve. "Did I tell you what he said the other day when it was me and Christopher here alone? He knocked on our door and asked when I thought we would all move out because he doesn't want us here when Christopher starts walking because then I'll have three kids who run up the stairs."

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"Oh my god," Steve groaned. He gave Bucky's shoulder a little nip and went quiet so he could relish in the feeling of being so intimate with his husband. "We're definitely-" he paused and grunted softly as he gave a particularly deep thrust "-fucking in his house."
Bucky hissed as Steve picked up speed and went deeper inside him. He was quiet for a bit and felt himself clench up around Steve as his orgasm rippled through him. He came over Steve's fingers and quickly pulled his hand up to lick them clean.

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Steve moaned and thrust harder into Bucky as he felt his muscles spasm around him. Steve followed shortly after while kissing the back of his neck. "I love you."

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"I love you, too," Bucky said and rolled to snuggle against Steve's chest. They were able to stay like that for a few minutes before Christopher starting fussing in his crib. "He probably needs to be changed. He hasn't pooped like all day. I'll get him." Bucky yawned and rolled out of bed, pulling on his pajama pants again.

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Christopher whined and sounded miserable and pathetic until he got his pop to come give him attention. "He's getting heavy," Steve said. "You're going to throw your back out picking him up like that."

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"He's not that heavy," Bucky said and laid him on the ground to start changed his diaper. "You're still our Little Bean, aren't you?" he asked Christopher and grinned down at him. "You won't grow up and leave us, will you? No, you won't." He got their son into a clean diaper and brought him over to their bed and laid down with him on his chest.

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Christopher gurgled happily and laid his head down on Bucky's chest and drooled on him. "God, I don't know how I'm going to handle him becoming an adult. What do you think he's going to want to be?"

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"I'm not sure," Bucky said and pulled his hair up and out of the way so Christopher wouldn't be tempted to tug on it. "Maybe he will want to be an officer like his daddy. It won't be long until he starts really developing interests of his own. I mean he really enjoyed painting today so maybe he will be artistic."

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When Bucky pulled his hair back, Christopher whined and reached out anyway to try and get a handful. When he was unsuccessful he looked at Steve for help. "Oh, Little Bean. Not tonight." He kissed the baby's cheek and tickled him to distract him. "Or he could be a musician like his papa," Steve said.

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"Maybe that." Bucky smiled and leaned over to kiss Steve's temple. "Whatever he does, he is going to be amazing at it. I can just tell." He took one of Christopher's hands that was still reaching up for his hair. "And I'm not cutting your hair ever. So you will have long hair of your own that you can pull. You'll be the envy of all the other toddlers with your hair at your knees."
"You'll get all the petty revenge in the world when his younger siblings all tug his hair," Steve said. Christopher squeezed Bucky's finger lightly and he smiled as he told an engaging story to Bucky all in baby babble.

Bucky babbled back animatedly and leaned into Steve. "Do you think he will be okay with having siblings? I mean, he will be older by the time we will get to have another one. And I remember how I was at first. I told you the story about how I thought I was going to other parents so Becca could be with my parents."

"Well, we will be very clear to him that he won't be going anywhere," Steve said. "We can hype it up to him. Tell him that he's getting a lifelong best friend that he's going to get to hang out with all the time."

"Do you think that will work?" Bucky asked and watched Christopher slowly pull his hand to his mouth and start chewing on it. "Ouch, Bean, that hurts," Bucky said and tried taking his hand back with no success so he just left it. "I was just told that a new baby was going to be around that we all needed to work to protect and love and in turn, she would love and protect us. I was ridiculously clingy to Becca when she was small, I even demanded to push her stroller in grocery stores because I was worried that something would happen if I wasn't with her the whole time."

"I love how you are with the girls..." Steve looked over at Christopher. "But I don't want him to put that kind of pressure on himself - worrying about his siblings and feeling personally responsible for them. That's our job." He thought it was really endearing that Bucky did that for his sisters, but he also knew how much Bucky stressed over them too.

Bucky nodded and slipped his free hand with Steve's. "I've been thinking about something for a while now. And it makes me really angry at myself for even entertaining the thought. But I just get so worried and I've even had a couple nightmares about it. But what if... what if you and I, one day, died together unexpectedly just like my parents did?"

Steve gave Bucky a sad look, heartbroken that Bucky would have to think about it. "We will prepare him," Steve said. "We are going to do such a good job with him that if something happens, he will know how much we love him and how we are always looking over him." Steve kissed him softly but meaningfully. "And we will teach him how to make positive choices."

Bucky felt a couple tears slide down his face and he gave Steve a weak smile. "I don't want him to have to deal with what the girls and I did. I don't want him to have to be his siblings' guardian or find himself resorting to things like alcohol or drugs to cope like I did. I guess I just don't want him to be me. I worry so much that the girls or our kids will end up too much like me - that being raised by me
will have a bad impact on them."

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Steve frowned and cupped the side of his face. "If our son ends up anything like you, I'll be so proud of him," Steve said genuinely. "You are a good person who puts the people he loves above himself - who always does his best and doesn't let past failures stop him from being the best version of himself."

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Nodding again, Bucky let himself just cry and stare at Steve. "I love you," he said quietly and pressed his forehead to Steve's. "I'm trying so hard to be everything I can be for you and the girls and our son." He hoisted Christopher up a little and cradled him between them. "You all are the reason I keep going - the reason I want to be better every day."

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Christopher whined softly when he saw his pop crying but he didn't make a huge fuss yet. "I know, Bucky. And I'm so proud of you," Steve said. He brushed his thumb over his cheek to dry his tears. "You are so amazing, you know that? It's harder to break a habit than to get into it and you're doing such a good job. Go on, Christopher, tell your papa how proud you are of him."

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The baby agreed by putting his hands on Bucky's face and saying, "Papa!" excitedly before turning to Steve and doing the same with a quieter "Dada," like he was checking with Steve that he did what he was supposed to.

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Steve let out a big laugh before kissing Christopher's cheek. "Yes, good job, my smart Little Bean." He put a hand on the baby's back and looked proudly at Bucky. "I don't think he even remembers what his life was like at his old place. We did a good job, Buck."

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"I told you he wouldn't," Bucky said and nuzzled his face in Christopher's tummy. "None of that even matters now. Sometimes I forget we didn't have him from the very start. Do you remember how tiny he was? He was so fragile but now he's big and strong and growing without any problems so far."

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"I remember being so worried about whether or not he would have growing problems. But he's gotten so big and he acts like everything is okay, so I worried over nothing. Right, Bean?" Christopher really was such a healthy baby. They were blessed.

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Christopher yawned in response and tucked himself into the crook of Bucky's neck. "I think he's ready to go back to sleep. Are you still able to come to his check-up at the doctor's on Friday with me? He likes it better when we are both there. He doesn't get as scared."
Steve nodded his head. "Of course. I couldn't miss a doctor's appointment for our little man," he said. "I want him to be an independent kid... but I like being the person he can always rely on, you know?"

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"I just hope that this time he doesn't cry and bite the nurse like last time," Bucky said and tucked his head against Steve's shoulder and watched as Christopher stopped blinking his eyes open and fell asleep again.

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"I was so embarrassed. I don't want to be the parents who can't keep their kid respectful. And if we mess up then it's because we're gay parents, you know?" Steve huffed.

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Bucky yawned and shut his eyes. "I think it's just because our son is terrified of anyone that isn't someone he knows. Going to the doctor is stressful for him. He gets that from me." He held Christopher close and kissed Steve's neck before feeling himself drift off as well.

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“Sleep well, my handsome boys,” Steve said softly and kissed Bucky's cheek. He stroked his hair gently and slowly until his husband fell asleep. He got up after a while and took Christopher back to his crib before going to sleep next to Bucky, safe and happy.
Later that night.

Bucky was startled awake from a rough dream where his family was taken away from him. He noticed that Christopher was no longer in his arms and Steve wasn't in bed with him. His heart started pounding and he was so scared and disoriented as he shouted for Steve and fumbled around in the dark to find some sort of weapon. Steve always kept a couple things around their room just in case.

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Steve had just gotten up to go to the bathroom. Christopher woke up from the commotion and started to cry. Steve quickly toweled off his hands and rushed back into the room. "Bucky?" He was already going to the lockbox for his gun. "What's going on?"

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Bucky flailed around and found himself collapsing into Steve's arms and trying to haul himself back up to his feet. "Steve! Steve, they took you. They took you and the girls ran away and escaped with Christopher. Steve..." Bucky whimpered and clutched on to his husband.

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"Bucky," Steve whispered in a heartbroken tone as he held tightly to his husband and rocked him slightly back and forth. "It was just a bad dream, Love. Come and look. Our little boy is right here. He's right here." He motioned for Bucky to pick up the baby so he could calm him down.

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Bucky picked up Christopher quickly and kissed him a few times before curling himself into Steve again. "Steve, I can't... I can't do it anymore," he gasped through tears. "Ever since I've been getting sober, I've been having such bad nightmares so often. My headaches have been more powerful while they are around. I hate this."

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Steve kissed the top of Bucky's head and stroked his back gently. "You can do it, Bucky. I have faith in you. Maybe we can give you some medicine to help you sleep through the night," he offered.

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"Something's always taking you all away from me or destroying our home or keeping me from finding you," Bucky said and stared at Steve. "I don't want to do this anymore, Steve. Please, I want to go back to how it was."
"Baby, look at our son. That's who you're doing this for, remember? You are doing so well. You can fight through this, okay? I'll help you." Steve tried his best to gingerly ease Bucky back onto the bed. "Tell me about your nightmares more."

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"I don't want to," Bucky said and made sure Steve had his arms securely around him as he relaxed on to the bed. Christopher, now calmed down once again, gripped his hand into Steve's shirt and pulled it towards his mouth to chew on it. "It's just like when my parents died and I keep dreaming that my sisters were dying too and leaving me by myself."

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"Nobody gets to lay a hand on any of us so long as I'm around," Steve said confidently. He held Bucky tightly but was sure not to squish their little boy. "I know that we have so much to lose now that we have our perfect little family. But that doesn't mean that we are going to lose it."

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Bucky sniffled and took a deep breath. "I wouldn't have these nightmares if I were still drinking. But I know I can't do that again. But, god, Steve, I miss it. I want to drink so badly sometimes. I hate that it can still control me like this and I hate that I want to let it."

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"Think of all the good that has happened because you stopped drinking," Steve said. "And all the good that will happen. You will live a healthier life for this. You're going to pull through."

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"When I'm at AA, it all makes sense and I can do it and there are a bunch of other people doing the same thing as me," Bucky said. "But then I come home and I think that I'll be fine if I just have one or two drinks and not get completely drunk and everything will be okay. I don't know how to stop that."

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"I don't know how to stop it either, Love," Steve said sadly. "But we can figure it out together. You believe in us, right? Then we can find a way to solve this." Steve sounded so sure.

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Bucky nodded. "I believe in us," he agreed. "I just think it gets hard when I don't have my group around me? You know? We all are there for the same reason and some of us have gotten close. It's hard for all of us when one of us relapses and drinks. Then we all want to do it. But if we are all doing well then it's easier for everyone."

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"I understand," Steve said. "Do you have each other's contact information? I don't mind if they call the house late at night. Or if you have to get up in the middle of the night to call them," Steve suggested.
"I have Missy's telephone number but I haven't called her yet," Bucky said. "She lives with her aunt and I don't want to bother her relatives with phone calls. She's only nineteen. Her parents kicked her out. Her aunt is the only one who really wants her around."

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"How about you write her a letter?" Steve said. "It won't give you the answers now, but it'll distract you and make you think," he continued. "And tomorrow morning we can drop it off in her mailbox. Or we can just stick a stamp on it and let the mailman do it."

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Biting his lower lip, Bucky thought for a moment. "I guess I could try that. I mean, I will see her again on Thursday so I can give it to her then. That way we don't use stamps." Missy was very nice. She was little and quiet and reminded Bucky a lot of Becca on one of her good days. It also worried Bucky that she was pregnant and didn't have a support system or anyone ready to adopt her baby and she really didn't want to send it into the system.

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"That works," Steve said. "I like that idea." He kissed his temple and gently took Christopher from Bucky so he could grab stuff to write with. "You see how hard your papa works for you, Bean? He's going through all this trouble for you."

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"And for your daddy and your aunts and any future siblings," Bucky added and found a notebook. "I'm going to go write on the kitchen table. You two can sleep some more before you have to get up for work. I'll make breakfast. I don't think I can fall asleep again."

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Steve shook his head. "I can stay up with you. Besides, I like cuddling Christopher when he sleeps. Come back here once you're done writing, okay, Baby?" Steve said.

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Bucky promised he would, but halfway through writing his letter he fell asleep at the table using his arm as a pillow. He wrote in the letter about how he was struggling with nightmares still and how it was hard to keep on track. He also explained how he was trying to decide whether to talk to Steve about trying to adopt her baby or not. Bucky had talked to Missy about it before but he never promised anything. He just wanted her to know that he was still trying to see if he could work it out.

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Steve went in to check on Bucky and smiled lovingly when he saw him sleeping. He got a blanket and draped it over his shoulders. Steve hadn't meant to, but his eyes kind of caught the word 'baby' in his letter and before Steve knew it, he read the whole thing. He chewed his bottom lip and decided to wait until morning to talk.

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Bucky woke up to the girls coming into the kitchen to get breakfast before school. Steve was sitting on the couch feeding Christopher banana slices and bits of cereal. "Hey," Bucky mumbled and peeling himself off the table to go to Steve. "I fell asleep. I'm sorry." He noticed the blanket draped
around his shoulders. "Did you do this?"

"The blanket fairy did that," Steve teased. "Don't be sorry. I'm glad you got some sleep. Want me to make you your plate? I made extra for you," he offered.

"Do I get bananas and dry cereal, too?" Bucky asked and handed Christopher another chunk of banana. The baby took it and shoved it into his mouth before reaching to be picked up by his papa. Bucky took him and snuggled him close, making happy little noises as he did. He was so glad he had him there. His nightmare really did a number on him.

"If you're not in the mood for home cooked pancakes, then sure," Steve snorted. He smiled at the sight of his two boys and he gave each of them a kiss. Steve waited until the girls left for school before he awkwardly brought up, "I accidentally read your letter..."

Bucky had a mouth full of pancake and was holding Christopher in his lap and trying to make sure he didn't get his fingers in the syrup. "What?" he said through his food and then swallowed. "My letter to Missy?"

Christopher was having a hell of a time fighting his pop to get to the syrup. "Yeah," Steve said guiltily. "I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to, it kind of... happened. I'm sorry."

"Oh, um..." Bucky cleared his throat. "That's fine. It's okay, Steve. How - how did you accidentally read it, though?" He cut off a tiny bit of his pancake and barely dipped it in syrup before giving it to Christopher.

Steve looked so ashamed and apologetic. "I was putting on the blanket for you and my eyes happened to catch the word 'baby'," he explained. Which really was believable, knowing him. "And I was curious about what baby you were talking about and, by that point, I ended up reading it all."

Bucky nodded and looked down, "Uh-huh, so you know about her baby," he mumbled and gave Christopher some more of his pancake. He brushed his son's light blonde little hairs out of his eyes and gave him a kiss. "She doesn't have any options left. But I know we can't help her."

"We can help her," Steve said. "I didn't quit my job yet. I'm still making good money. And the babies won't need much room to themselves for the first few years. It'll be nice for Christopher to have a sibling his age."
"We can't do that." Bucky shook his head and gave Christopher his sippy cup of orange juice. "We won't have the time or the money and we can't ask the girls to let another new baby into the apartment. And we already decided you were going to quit and be a 'mommy-and-me' art teacher and spend time with our son." He sighed. "It's a nice thought. And I tried to figure out any plausible way to do it but we just can't."

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"The girls love Christopher," Steve said. "He hasn't been a handful. Buck, we want a big family and who knows when we are going to get the opportunity to have another kid?" Steve looked a little sad that Bucky wasn't on board. "I could still spend time with both of our babies."

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"Steve, Baby," Bucky said quietly. "I've been thinking about this for a month and a half. I thought at first that we could do it but I honestly don't think we can. Even if this is enough space now, in a few years it won't be and we will need to have money for a bigger place. And I can't do that with the job I have now."

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"You managed to raise two girls on your own. I make more than you so I could have enough to pay for Christopher and another. And there's the settlement money from Rumlow - in a few months, we can use that money for the kids again. We can save for a house," he pressed.

---

"Steve," Bucky whispered quietly. He didn't want to get his hopes up. He felt like Steve already had his hopes up and one of them had to be grounded about this. "Let's just do a few things before we consider this, okay? Maybe let's talk to your mom about it. She may have some advice. We can go look at some bigger places or maybe some houses in Long Island and see what sort of money we would have to be saving. And we should definitely talk to the girls."

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"But Becca is going to say no," Steve said with a pout. And he really didn't want to move to Long Island because it was far from the shelter and his mom. Steve was determined to find something close that still had enough space for them all. "We can make it work. You're such an amazing dad. I'd love to see Christopher have a little brother or sister to talk to."

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Bucky rubbed his forehead and gave Christopher to Steve. "I've got a headache. Can we talk about this some other time? I'm going to go take some medicine before I have to go to work. Maybe you can talk to your mom about this today, huh?"

---

Steve gently bounced Christopher in his arms and kissed the top of his head. "Alright. I'm sorry I upset you, Buck..." He brushed noses with their baby and smiled when Christopher babbled at him.

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"It's not you, Baby," Bucky said and hovered near Steve. "It's just everything. I'm just sort of getting worked up. There's a lot going on and I didn't sleep well last night, as you know." He went to get
some medicine and then came back and gave Steve a kiss so he would know that he wasn't mad at him. This was just a lot.
Steve did his best not to push the matter for a few days. But after four days of not bringing it up, Steve felt like he was going to burst from the suspense. When they were alone in their room, relaxing during a lazy afternoon, Steve looked over. "What if we invite Missy over for dinner?" he asked.

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Bucky looked up from the delicately scrawled first chapter of Becca's book - she needed him to tell her if anything was too cliché. He looked at Steve and thought for a second. "Just so you can meet her? Right? We aren't sure about the baby yet so let's not bring it up, okay?"

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Steve nodded. "I promise. I won't bring up the baby," he swore. He paused and asked, "How's Becca's book looking? She never lets me read her stuff."

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"I don't quite understand it," Bucky admitted. "Becca is far more clever than I am and a lot of it has me pretty confused already. It's a mystery novel. You should ask her if you can read it because you'll probably get it better than I can." He set the pages aside and looked to Steve and sighed. "I'll bring Missy around for dinner soon. Okay?"

---

"A mystery novel and she doesn't ask a cop for feedback?" Steve complained with a pout. "I got to ask her later..." he kissed Bucky's cheek and said, "Thank you for letting me meet Missy." He paused and asked, "Did you talk to the girls about more babies?"

---

"No," Bucky said and looked to Steve. "I haven't said anything yet because you said that Becca would just say ‘no’ to the whole thing. I haven't entertained the idea farther than what we did the other day."

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Steve frowned a little and had a sad look on his face. "You really don't want to have another kid?" Steve asked. "Not before another house?" He didn't want to force Bucky into another kid so soon but he thought now was still a fine time.

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"I just think we need to get a few things figured out before we make that decision," Bucky said and glanced over at Christopher who was messing with some toys on the ground. "I'm not ruling it out but I just want to think things through. I think it would be a good idea for us to go look at some places and see how much something a little bigger would cost."

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"Becca will be extra pissed if we move and get another baby," Steve said. "I'm willing to poke the bear, but not smack it over the head." Christopher saw that his pop was looking at him, so he
squealed happily.

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Christopher crawled over to the bed and hoisted himself up to stand by the side table, waiting for Bucky to pick him up. Bucky grabbed him and tickled his sides before flopping him on the mattress between him and Steve and listening to him giggle and roll over to get up again. "I don't know. She might be angrier if we get another baby and stay here where we hardly have enough room right now. And we have Dale on our heels about our kids already and adding a fourth at this apartment might just break that old bastard."

---

Steve kissed Christopher's cheek and smiled. He watched happily as the baby wiggled to get on his hands to crawl. "We still have to sneak into his apartment," Steve murmured deviously.

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Bucky huffed and ignored Steve, preferring instead to toss a baby blanket over Christopher's back and see him yank it off and throw it back. "Let's talk to the girls together first. We will ask them what they think about moving and then explain that it's because we are thinking of having another baby."

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Christopher playfully chomped on his dad's hand, making Steve jump a little. "Are you upset at me for pushing this? And that I'm not retiring from the police force yet?" Steve asked.

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"I'm not upset," Bucky said and looked to Steve. "I just didn't want us to get our hopes up about it and then it doesn't work out. You know? You looked into retirement packages and we learned that you might have to work another ten years for it to count for anything. Then we decided that you could do art classes instead. We had a plan. Now, if we had this other baby, you would have to keep working and wouldn't get to be a stay-at-home dad like you want. And we would have to find a bigger place soon and I know you don't want to go too far from your mom. But maybe if we can find someplace close enough that we could reasonably afford if we took out a loan or something."

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Steve looked at Christopher and sighed. "I believe we can make it work no matter what. And I can still spend time with you and the girls and our son even with my job and another kid. I have faith that we can manage," Steve answered.

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Bucky was quiet for a second then said, "Our old place where we last lived with our parents is back up for rent. It's more expensive, of course. But it's a brownstone in the next neighborhood over that would have enough room for all of us - three bedrooms and a master. The babies could share a nursery. It might even be closer to your mom than this place."

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Steve's head snapped over to Bucky. "Oh my god, Bucky. That would be perfect! Even if we don't have another kid, we should go there. We would have so much room and it'll be like going back home."
Bucky shut his lips tight together and looked down at Christopher. "I was sort of hesitant about mentioning it because I'm not honestly sure if the girls would want to go back. It might be too much, you know? For all of us - it might hurt too bad. But you and I can go look at it and then ask them."

Steve pulled Christopher onto his chest. He tickled his sides and then looked back at Bucky. "If it's too much, we don't have to. I don't want you guys to feel like you have to do it because we want a bigger family."

"But it could be good, too, you know?" Bucky said with a tentative smile. "The girls would have their old rooms back. And my old room can be the nursery. And it'll be sort of like we're raising our family where my parents get to be a part of it too. Like they will be able to be watching us better at our old place." Bucky paused and took Steve's hand. "Yeah, I think it could be really good."

"I would love to be able to live there. I'd get to see where you guys all got your start. And Christopher will be closer to his grandparents that way," Steve said. "How much more expensive is it?"

"It's... it's about six hundred more than what we pay here," Bucky said quietly and bit his lip. "It's a lot. But it's got enough room and the girls will have a bathroom between their rooms. And we would have a bathroom and then the nursery with the babies next to us. There’s a pretty good kitchen and one bathroom and a living room on the main floor. And there is even a half-sized basement."

That was a hell of a lot more than what they were paying now. Steve sighed and mentally tried to budget what they made versus what they could pay. "Do you think we could buy it instead of rent it?"

"I mean we would have to get a loan," Bucky said. "It wouldn't be impossible but I couldn't be the one asking for the loan, it would have to be you and I don't know if you want to do that. But if we could buy it, then we could just pay off the loan over time and we would have the place for a while even after the girls moved out then we would have room for any other kids."

"Why wouldn't I want to take out a loan to get a home for our family? I would love to have a place we can call ours - one that no one can complain about having pets or kids inside." Steve kissed Bucky's cheek. "We don't have to worry about a landlord or Dale or prying eyes."

Bucky smiled and held Steve's face in his hands and gave him a kiss. "So we will talk to the girls, go for a loan, put an offer on the place, and have our old home back." He laughed with a happy little
"Okay, let's do that."

"Sounds perfect," Steve said. "You hear that, Christopher? We might be getting a bigger place," he said excitedly to the baby. "You will have so much room to run around in!"

Christopher bounced around and hit his hands on his daddy's legs. He had no idea why they were excited but he wanted to be excited too. "Dada!" he yelled and crawled into Steve's lap and hugged him around the middle.

Bucky smiled and watched his son, "God, I love this kid."

"You're such a good boy, Christopher. Your dada loves you." Steve put a hand on his back and beamed proudly down at him when his son hugged him. "I hope he's always this affectionate."

"Me too," Bucky said and moved to get up off the bed. "I don't see why he wouldn't be. In my experience with the girls, their personalities didn't really change much from being toddlers to growing up."

"Some of my coworkers talk about how their kids get all mean and don't like to talk once they're in their teens," Steve said. "I'm afraid our Little Bean will become a moody teenager."

Bucky nodded and took Christopher into his arms. "He might do that for a while. That's pretty common. I was like that for a bit, except not to my parents - it was mostly at school. Becca is certainly in that state right now but she also is sort of a special case because most teenagers haven't lost their parents."

"Papa!" Christopher said loudly as he was picked up. He opened and closed his fist to wave at him. "Hi, Papa! Hi!"

Steve laid on his side and watched Bucky and their son. "Yeah. I think Becca's part alien. Or robot. She hardly ever messes up, it's unnatural."

"She's an impressive little devil, isn't she?" Bucky asked and kissed Christopher's head. "Do you want to help me give him a bath or do you want me to do it this time? He was pretty mad at you last time for getting soap in his eyes."

Steve nodded. Becca really was something. His mom adored her, too. "I'd like to help. I need to redeem myself so my little boy can trust I can give him a tear-free bath. Then later, we can talk about
the house some more."
Chapter Summary

A few days later.

It was raining when Bucky and Missy got back to the apartment. Bucky had tossed his coat on Missy to keep her as dry as possible and he got drenched to the bone. He was freezing his ass off by the time he got the door open and stumbled into the kitchen. "Steve, I'm back. I have Missy."

"Hey, Love, I'm just about to- oh my god, you're soaked!" Steve yelped. Christopher started crawling over to Bucky, babbling 'Papa' over and over as he made his way over. Steve hurried to give Bucky a towel before looking over at Missy. "Hi, I'm Steve. Thank you so much for joining us. Bucky's told me all about you."

Bucky took the towel and wrapped up before picking up Christopher and shivering. He kissed his boy and then set him down again, "Steve, you and Missy get acquainted. I'm going to put on sweats and three jackets." He trotted off to their room quickly, muttering something about the goddamn rain never holding off until he got home.

The baby whined and made absolutely pathetic sounds until Steve picked him up. "He thinks he never gets enough attention," he explained. "Do you like chicken? I made a few different things because Bucky didn't know what your favorite dinner was."

Missy looked around at the plates and pans of food. "You made all this because I was coming over?" she asked and stared down the multitude of delicious looking foods that she wanted to try. "Bucky did say you were a bit of a happy host."

Steve nodded gave a shy smile. "I really like cooking," he said. "And I love having company over. Newcomers tend to be less jaded to me being a bit over enthusiastic."

Missy smiled and took off Bucky's coat. "Where should I put this?" she asked and held it out to Steve. "Also, I just want you to know that I think it's great what you and Bucky are doing - raising your family and sticking together. It's not easy for you, I'm sure. Sometimes, I wish I were a lesbian. It seems more fun. But then I remember that it's not a walk in the park being gay and I have no idea what you all go through."
Steve took the coat and hung it up to dry. Christopher crawled over to Missy to see who this strange lady was. "Well, I nearly died getting shot and Bucky got beaten so badly he was hospitalized just because we are gay and we haven't even been married a year yet," Steve said. "It's not easy."

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Bucky came back then, cutting off the conversation. He was cocooned in Steve's sweatpants and two of Steve's sweaters. He picked up Christopher from the ground and held him. "Sorry about that. I was about to turn into ice. I know I don't look very impressive now in sweatpants but I am a lot warmer."

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Christopher took one look at Missy before burying his face shyly into Bucky's shoulder. "You look beautiful in anything," Steve assured him. "So Missy, what sort of stuff do you do for fun?"

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Missy grinned at the baby as he shied away. "That was pretty cute," she noted quietly and then turned to Steve. "I have been doing a lot of reading lately. Everything I used to do for fun or recreation had to do with some sort of substance abuse or partying. So, nowadays, I read. And I'm thinking about getting into costume design for the local civic theaters."

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"Becca reads all the time. I bet she could give you plenty of recommendations on things to read," Steve said. "Do you go to Broadway at all? Or see any shows? I've wanted to see *West Side Story* for a while now."

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"No, I've never been to Broadway," Missy said with a little chuckle. She nodded to Bucky and said, "You're right. I do like him."

Bucky nudged Steve. "I told you. He's impossible not to like."

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Steve smiled and blushed slightly. "He's got rose-tinted glasses for me, but that doesn't always make his descriptions of me wrong," he joked. He kissed Bucky's cheek and started to set the table. "What else did he tell you about me?"

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"He said you're an artist and a cop." She nodded. "But not really like most cops. And you are a great dad and very forgiving and understanding. He also said some stuff about you physically that I don't care to repeat." She smiled and Bucky looked away, ashamed but also not sorry.

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"Bucky!" Steve scolded, a little embarrassed. It certainly wasn't the first time he had to hear that Bucky was going on to people about his body. "Well, I hope Bucky knows how amazing of a dad he is as well. Christopher adores him," he said. Once their plates were full of food, Steve sat down and said grace before gesturing for them to eat.
Bucky cleared his throat. "For the record, it wasn't like I went into any graphic details. I only do that when I'm talking to Clint." He helped Christopher eat small bits of chicken and noodle pieces and watched him attempt to rip apart a piece of broccoli. "Steve, do you want to tell Missy about the new place we are trying to get?"

Steve snorted as he watched their son pulverize his vegetables because he couldn't seem to quite get a grasp on how he should eat it. "We are looking into buying Bucky's childhood home," Steve said proudly. "My Mom is helping me figure out how to get pre-approved for a mortgage."

Missy ate her chicken and listened to Steve. Bucky could tell she wanted to ask if that meant they wanted her baby. He hadn't directly said why he invited her over. He just said that Steve had wanted to meet her. But Bucky could tell she was hoping that was why she was here. "It's a bigger place than this one and we sort of need more room."

"Yeah," Steve said. "Our neighbor, Dale, has been giving us grief since we brought a cat and a baby home. Also, right now, he's fine with a crib in our room, but soon enough Christopher will need his own space."

Christopher chirped at his name and handed Bucky the stem of his broccoli. He did not enjoy the stems. Bucky took it and placed it on his napkin to throw it away later. "Yeah, and Steve and I want a big family. He was an only child and I've loved raising the kids that I have so far."

Steve was pointedly not bringing up Missy's baby because Bucky told him not to. "Raising Christopher is one of the best things I've ever been able to do. Marrying Bucky is another," he said. "And the girls are great, even if they can really get me angry sometimes."

"Yeah, but they have been better with you lately," Bucky said and rubbed Steve's arm. "He recently got secondary guardianship over them and I think they have been a little more welcoming with him now. At least Becca hasn't been as mean as usual."

Steve nodded and looked really proud. "I think it took them a while to be confident that I wouldn't leave when things got hard. But when I vowed to spend the rest of my life with Bucky, helping him raise our family, I really meant it."

They ate and talked for a while until Missy started to get tired. It was a good couple hours of them just learning more about each other and laughing and having being friends. Bucky was glad that Steve knew her now since he was the friend he was closest to from AA. "I'll take you home," Bucky
said and looked to Steve in case he had anything else he wanted to say to Missy before she left. Missy was looking on curiously as well, wanting to know if Steve would bring up her baby or not.

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There was an elephant in the room and the elephant was Missy's unborn baby. Steve desperately wanted to say something but he wasn't going to risk annoying Bucky. "It was nice meeting you," he said. "You're welcome here for dinner anytime."

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Missy thanked Steve for the food and company and then they were on their way out. Bucky took Missy home and got back to the apartment an hour later. He shucked off his jacket and tossed his shoes aside before flopping next to Steve on the couch. He was watching Christopher crawl around and pick up toys and then bring them to his daddy. "Okay, Steve, you showed a great amount of restraint. Go ahead and talk about the baby."

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Steve looked up at Bucky and smiled with relief. "Oh my god. I wanted to talk to her about it so bad. What do you think, Buck? Do you think we can swing it?"

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Bucky looked at Steve for a long moment and then down at Christopher who was trying to climb on to the coffee table. "I think there is a possibility that it could work. We still haven't even posed the question to the girls. I think that should be our next step while we wait to see if we can buy my parents' old place."

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Steve nodded and picked up Christopher so he could kiss his belly. "We can talk about the house tomorrow, maybe. If it's a flat 'no' then we can at least consider other houses first," Steve said.

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"Sure." Bucky nodded and squeezed Christopher's arm lightly. "If we do decide to do this, it'll be a quick process. Her baby is due in four months. That means, getting a new place, moving in, and prepping for a new baby all in four months."

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"We prepped for Christopher right after we got him," Steve said. "Four months is plenty of time in comparison," Steve added with a playful smile. "You hear that, Bean? You may be a big brother."

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Christopher just stared at Steve and reached for Bucky's wallet on the side table and brought it towards his mouth. "Hey, no." Bucky gently took it from him and handed him a toy instead. "I think he likes the idea. Although, I can't tell. But I think he does."

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Christopher's lower lip jutted out and he whimpered. "Oh, don't give your papa that," Steve scolded lightly. "I think he would make a great big brother. It may take him a little while to learn how to
"I think he is definitely going to have some sharing problems and some possession issues." Bucky nodded. "Once he decides something is his then that's it." He quickly pocketed his wallet so Christopher wouldn't try to go for it again. "Do you think he will be okay sharing us?"

"I think that's going to be his biggest issue," Steve said. "But maybe if we give him the same attention and remind him we love him, he will learn to understand."

"My parents kind of had that problem with me," Bucky confessed with a small smile. "I mean, I was already ten when a little sibling came around. Even though I loved Becca, I got pretty mad sometimes when she would start crying and my parents would put a hold on our conversation to go feed or change her."

"It's hard to imagine you being a selfish sibling at a time." Steve snorted. "But you were also a kid and were practically an only child for so long. Christopher already shares us with your sisters," Steve said.

"That's true." Bucky nodded. "Maybe he will be better than I was since he's used to the girls being around and he will have a sibling sooner than I did." Christopher crawled off of Steve's lap and burrowed himself in between his parents and whined loudly.

Steve looked down at their son and tickled his sides. "What's the matter, Bean? Are you getting sleepy, Sweetheart?" He smoothed his hand over Christopher's back as he laid his head down on Bucky's shoulder.

Christopher whined some more and squeezed his fingers on Bucky's arm. "What? You can't be hungry. You ate a lot. Do you need changed? Or are you just a grump right now?" The baby looked up at his papa and babbled something and rubbed his eyes. "Yeah, it's bedtime for you, Little Bean."

"God, even when he's grumpy, he's so damn cute," Steve said adoringly. He scooped their son into his arms and gave him a kiss before passing him over to Bucky. "I'll let you put him down. I think he's more in a Papa mood tonight."

"That's just because I've been gone all day," Bucky cooed at their son and took him towards their bedroom. "I'll be right back, Baby," Bucky called to Steve and hopped off, picking up some stray baby blankets and plush toys from the ground as he went. Christopher had sort of made a mess of the
apartment today with all his things.

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Steve loved the mess. He probably wouldn't once Christopher was old enough to know better, but babies couldn't help themselves. Once everything was back in order, Steve laid down and waited for Bucky to join him. It was only a few minutes until he was back. "Did Missy say anything on the walk home?"

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"She brought up her baby, too," Bucky said and curled up next to Steve. "She really wants us to have it. And I told her we were still talking it over." He yawned and pet a gentle hand over Steve's neck. "She also said it was nice to finally have a face to put to my stories."

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Steve looked really excited when he heard that Missy wanted her baby to go to them. He almost forgot to listen to the rest of what Bucky said. "You really talk me up a lot to your friends, huh? You're such a dork."

---

Bucky bit Steve's neck lightly and then kissed it. "You love me, you know it. But, yes, I talk about you to whoever I can - which isn't many people. I only tell them the good stuff. I leave out things like how you snore when you're sick." Bucky grinned and added, "Also, Missy sort of gave me away tonight. Clint does know far too much about our sex life. And by extension, I'm guessing so does Natasha."

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Steve blushed and swatted Bucky's ass lightly. "Why do you got to kiss and tell? Now Clint knows all the stuff I like." He didn't sound upset, only just that he was complaining. "No wonder Natasha looks at me like she knows something."

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"Natasha always knows something," Bucky defended. "Even if I didn't tell Clint shit, Natasha would still know. She's got a gift. It's pretty scary." He snuggled closer to Steve and massaged down his chest. "So, tomorrow we will talk to the girls, yes?"

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Steve kissed Bucky gently and nodded. "Yeah, tomorrow," he said. "Now let's get some sleep, Baby. It's been such a long day. Good, but long."
Bucky was off work the next day and he stayed home with Christopher while everyone else was away. When Steve got home, Bucky was sitting on the couch wearing his reading glasses and sewing a patch on to a pair of Christopher's pants. The baby was asleep next to him, curled on a pile of blankets with a band-aid on his knee. "Hey," Bucky mumbled but didn't look up when Steve got in.

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It was a long day at the station and all Steve could think about was going back home to his family. He smiled when he saw Bucky wearing his reading glasses, looking like a proper dad now, but a concerned look crossed his face when he saw the band-aid on his son. "Aw, what happened?" he asked as he carefully sat down next to his husband.

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"Oh, today was a big ordeal." Bucky sighed and looked up from his patch job. "He seems to be getting a little diaper rash so he was crying about that for a long time. Then I tried to console him and play with him, but he wasn't having it and he kept throwing grapes around the kitchen. Then I got a headache so I took some medicine and he got mad at me that I wouldn't let him play with the pill bottle. Then he was ignoring me and crawling around the living room looking for things to destroy. And that's when he cut his pants and his knee on the foot of the coffee table." Bucky huffed and stared down at his sleeping son. "He cried so much about that he wore himself out and he's been asleep since. It's been a long day."

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"Today was probably one of those days where you're thankful we only have one of these little guys running around, huh?" Steve leaned over and kissed Bucky's cheek. "Let me finish that for you, Sweetheart," he said as he put his hands over Bucky's. "You can take a break. How's that?"

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Bucky handed the pants over to Steve and curled his legs up under him. "Steve, sometimes it's really hard to handle him on my own. I love him but he can be a lot. And I think he kind of knows that I'm not as good at this as you are so he saves up all his craziness for when it's only me here."

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Before he got to mending the pants, Steve reached over to hug Bucky tightly. "Love, you are so amazing at taking care of him. I'm no better at it than you are," he said. "I think I'll manage him the rest of the night and I'll give you a massage before bed."

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"Okay." Bucky nodded and kissed Steve's cheek. "That sounds good. Thank you, Baby." He reached over and grabbed his cup of water. He didn't want to tell Steve how much he almost caved and went to get liquor today. It really had been a rough day. "I'm sorry, Steve. I didn't ask about your day. How was work?"
Steve finished sewing Christopher's pants up and started to pack the sewing kit away. "Rough," he said honestly. "Had to wrestle down a few guys who tried to run from a robbery. Dealt with a domestic. Had to tell a mom her kid was shot. He was in a gang, but she still lost her son."

"Oh, Baby," Bucky sighed and held Steve close. He felt awful. He shouldn't have even dared complain about his day when Steve's was so horrible. "I'm sorry. I don't know how much you go through on a daily basis with your job but I don't imagine it's easy. Especially having to tell a mother that her son is gone. Jesus, I shouldn't have complained about my day here with Christopher. I'm so sorry. I'll give you a massage instead, okay?"

Steve snuggled up to Bucky, readily taking the hug and focusing on how perfect it felt to be held by him. "Buck, it isn't a competition," he said softly. "We both had bad days. But at least we're home safe with each other." He closed his eyes. "I'm happy every day I make it back home to you."

"I know it's not a competition, but still," Bucky said and squeezed Steve a little. "I got to spend today with our kid and you had to tell a woman she lost hers. I think it's pretty clear that I have nothing to complain about it."

Christopher hiccupped then and rubbed his eyes. Rolling to crawl on top of Steve he said sleepily, "Dada," and pulled on Steve's uniform.

"Every minute you spend taking care of our son helps prevent him from ending up like hers." Steve, of course, didn't blame upbringing alone on why a kid joined a gang. Any number of factors could go into someone ending up there. And the woman today was definitely surprised to learn that her boy was in with the wrong types of people. Steve just knew it could be less likely that his kids would turn to that if they had a good home. He smiled down at his son and picked him up. "Yeah, Bean, Dada's home," he said gently before holding him to his chest. "Were you giving your pop a hard time today?" he chided.

Christopher snuggled his face into Steve's neck and made indiscernible noises. He then gestured at Bucky and said, "Papa?" like he was in disbelief that Steve would think he was being anything but the perfect angel baby for his pops.

It took a lot for Steve to hold back his laughter. "Yes, 'Papa'. You were a bad boy today, weren't you?" He had a disapproving tone, but he still spoke conversationally because Christopher wasn't going to understand entirely anyway. He was just starting to understand a little more about what was acceptable and what wasn't.

"The girls will be back soon," Bucky said and held Christopher's hand. "Then we can talk to them about the house and the baby. Do you think we should feed Christopher and put him down for a nap while we talk?"
Steve nodded and kissed his son. "I think putting him down for a nap would be best. Thank god they weren't around for his tantrum today or else the answer about another baby would have been a definite ‘no’.

Bucky stood and picked up Christopher from Steve's lap. "Yeah, I guess I'm glad I'm the only one who was here for his tantrum." He bounced the baby and went to the kitchen. "Do you want to feed him and I'll get a bath ready?"

Christopher was determined to be a pain for the rest of the night, apparently, because he let out an unhappy screech when Bucky started bouncing him. "Dada," Christopher whined, reaching out for Steve.

"Sounds like a plan. The little stinker wants to be with me anyway," Steve chuckled.

Bucky sighed and transferred the baby over to Steve. "Fine, Bean, it's not like I spent the day trying to make sure you didn't hurt yourself on tables or eat pills." He stumbled towards their bedroom to fill a bath still mumbling, "And who bandaged your knee and started sewing your pants back up? Papa did. That's who."

Christopher kissed his dad's cheek happily but Steve gave their son a slightly disapproving look. He kissed the top of the baby's head and said, "You hurt Papa's feelings, Bean." He sat him down in his high chair and started to feed him.

Bucky got the bath filled enough and had the water at a suitable temperature. Christopher liked bubbles so he poured in some bubble bath and swirled it around before added in a bright yellow duck that Christopher called "Ack!" because that was the best he could do with the word ‘duck’. He then picked out some pajamas for him that had astronauts on them. The baby had disliked wearing pajamas lately and preferred to be put to sleep in only a diaper but Bucky still tried.

Despite Steve's best efforts, Christopher somehow managed to get his face and hands all sticky with his dinner. He carried the baby into the bathroom and started to undress him. "There we go, Christopher. Are you going to behave for your pop now? Look, he even put bubbles in your bath."

Christopher whined a bit at the sight of the bath and tried to climb farther up Steve's chest to get away from it. "Jesus, kid," Bucky sighed and gently detached the baby from Steve. "Are you having growing pains or something? Is that why you've been so difficult today? Or is it just a bad day for you?" Bucky thought for a second. He didn't know exactly what sort of problems his son might have from his birth parents and he wasn't sure how early kids showed signs of mental health problems but he knew that early childhood depression or anxiety was definitely becoming more common or at
least easier to identify. Maybe Christopher was having some problems like that and that's why he hadn't been as happy lately.

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"Bean, you got to give your poor papa a break. He's working so hard to take care of you," Steve said and kissed Christopher a few times before watching Bucky gently ease him into the bath once he was naked. "What do you think has gotten into him lately?"

---

Bucky sighed and started carefully washing his son as he grumpily mashed the duck into the water. "I don't know. I just had a thought but I don't really want to think about it. I'm worried I could be right."

---

Steve grumbled and took the duck from Christopher. "Hey, if you're not going to be nice to Ack, you're not allowed to have him." He held the baby's hand instead and looked back to Bucky. "Right about what?" Steve asked. "Is he sick?"

---

Bucky bit his lip nervously and gave Steve a sideways glance. "Yeah, maybe. I'm thinking he might be having some childhood depression or anxiety or something. It happens sometimes in the developmental stages of life because a lot of things are changing all at once and kids are constantly learning. Also, we don't know how predisposed he is to mental health problems from his birth parents."

---

Steve's face fell. "But he's such a happy baby... and he has all of us. What would make him depressed or anxious?" He gave the duck back to Christopher, feeling bad now about taking it. "You want Ack back? Give your pop a kiss," Steve said to him.

---

Christopher took the duck and when Bucky leaned in again to start washing his hair, he gave him a wet kiss and then looked down again. "I know it doesn't really seem like he has a reason to be depressed but that's sort of the problem with depression sometimes. It can just crop up anytime it wants even if nothing really bad has happened yet. And growing up can be really stressful sometimes. Look, if he were my biological child, I'd be blaming myself for passing it down to him. We can't possibly know what his family medical history is or what problems he could have because of possible fetal drug exposure."

---

Steve rubbed a hand over Christopher's back once before drying his hands off. "His aunt says that neither of them went to the doctor - only to get a tooth pulled or to come down from an overdose - so there's nothing in their medical history. So, if they had anything, we don't know what it is," he said.

---

"That's what I'm saying," Bucky nodded and poured water back through Christopher's hair to wash the shampoo out. "It's really anyone's guess. But I think we should watch him and see if it's just that
he was having a grumpy day today or if this becomes a habit."

---

"Who would we go to to diagnose something like this if it really is the problem?" Steve asked. Christopher splashed the water and let out a big laugh at the mess he was making. He checked to see if his dads were laughing too.

---

Bucky wasn't really paying attention to his son at the moment. He was just staring at Steve with droopy sad eyes. He shook his head. "I'm not sure - a child psychologist, probably. But I don't even know if it's too soon to officially tell, you know? He is really young."

---

Steve leaned in and gave Bucky a gentle kiss. "Let's keep an eye on him. He's only a baby. And he's got two great parents who will support him no matter what. Let's not worry about things that may not happen."

---

Bucky nodded and picked up Christopher to wrap him in a towel. He heard the girls come home and gave the baby to Steve. "I put his pajamas on his crib but he probably will just fight you when you try to put them on. I'm going to go see what the girls want for dinner."

---

As Bucky predicted, Christopher fought the pajamas and when Steve put them on, he made unhappy sounds and said "No, Dada, no," a few times.

Steve held him and tried to console him. "Baby Bean, you're going to get cold." he paused and then took the clothes off and swaddled him in his snugly blanket instead, hoping that a diaper and a swaddle would be enough. Christopher wiggled a little and looked up at his dad in confusion. "There you go. You used to love this when you were smaller." He kissed his cheek and tucked him into his crib. "Go to sleep, Sweetheart. Dada loves you."

---

"Christ, he's loud today," Lilly said as she dropped her book bag on the floor.

"Oh, you've got no idea," Bucky answered and he stretched and yawned. "Alright, my little monster, what do you want for dinner?" He squashed Lilly in a hug and then moved on to Becca who reluctantly let him give her a hug as well.

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"Can we have mac and cheese?" Lilly asked. "With hot dogs cut up in it?"

"What are you, six?" Becca asked and crossed her arms. "Lilly, you need to eat real food. That is not real food."

"Mac and cheese is real food, you snob," Lilly shot back.
Bucky rubbed his hands over his eyes. "Hey, guys, really? Do you two have to be difficult today, too? I already got one kid fighting me tooth and nail all day."

---

Becca crossed her arms at Bucky and gave him an unimpressed look. "I'm just telling her the obvious. It's not my fault that your baby was a pain today."

---

"Oh, Jesus," Bucky groaned and started walking back towards his and Steve's room saying, "Steve, abort mission. I can't do it today. Not today." He popped in through the door and flopped on the bed. "New plan: you talk to the grumpiest teenage girls in Brooklyn and I'll go to sleep."

---

"Buck-" Steve started, but he stopped himself. "Alright. Christopher is settled in now. I'll take care of the girls. I love you," he said. Steve stooped down to cup the sides of Bucky's face as he kissed him slowly. "I'll be in soon."

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Bucky smiled at the kiss and pulled Steve down for another one. "If you can just get them some dinner started then I'll just cool off in here for a bit. Once you are ready to talk to them then come get me. I won't actually make you do that on your own."

---

Steve nodded and made a happy sound when Bucky kissed him again. He headed out and made grilled chicken with sides of macaroni and vegetables. "You know, you could have been nicer to your brother. He's had a rough day."

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"I had a rough day," Becca defended. "My social studies teacher put a cap on how many questions I could answer in class because I haven't been giving my classmates enough of a chance. I only get three answers, Steve. I know them all and I'm limited to three."

---

"Well, I'm glad you feel like your teacher stopping you from being a know-it-all makes you entitled to be rude to your family," Steve said disapprovingly. "Three questions is plenty. Be thankful you get to go to school at all. There's tons of people in this world who don't get to have an education at all."

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Becca scoffed and rolled her eyes over to Lilly who was meekly sitting at the table and looking on. She cleared her throat and said, "I got almost a seventy percent on my math homework today. That's at least eight percents more than last time."

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"Hey, that's great, Kiddo," Steve said, giving her a smile. "You were up late last night doing it. I saw the light on in your room." He gave Becca a small look to tell her not to compare their grades
because Lilly couldn't even begin to match Becca's straight A's.

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Lilly smiled and wiggled a bit, happily. "And I spelled all but two words right on my vocabulary quiz," she added, feeling like she was on a role and liking the praise from Steve. "And I might be taking over as goalie for a while until Caroline's ankle heels up."

---

Lilly could be adorable sometimes. He held his hand up for her to give him a high five. "Yeah, Lil, high five. That's so great!" Steve smiled brightly at her and gave her a solid high five. "You think you're going to get to be the goalie in the big game coming up?"

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"I probably will be!" Lilly said excitedly. "Are you going to come watch? Even though Caroline is probably a better goalie than me even with only one good ankle, I still think I can do it." She nodded decisively like she had made up her mind that she would win that game at all costs.

---

"Of course, I'm going to be there. I can't miss a game when you're going to be the star goalie," Steve said. He got up and gathered their empty plates. "Becca, are you going to be able to be a little more patient with me and Bucky tonight? We have something we need to ask you guys."

---

Becca stared at him for a second then broke her gaze and huffed out a sigh. "Can it be quick because I was going to do some writing in my book tonight." She crossed her arms and looked at Steve again in a sort of challenge. Her moody teenager phase was going strong.

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Steve looked at her challenging expression and shrugged casually. "You know what? Never mind," he said. "Bucky and I will make the decision without your input. Let's all hope you don't absolutely hate what we end up choosing without you."

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"Can I know?" Lilly asked hopefully and leaned forward in her chair. "I want to help make the decision. What are we deciding on? Is Bucky finally letting us paint the apartment? He always says it'll cost too much to pay in damages if we ever moved out. I just want a bright blue room. That's all I ask. I'm sick of staring at white walls."

---

"Sure, Lilly, you can know," Steve said. "Bucky and I are looking at buying a place. So if we do, you can paint the room whatever color you want," Steve explained, pretending to ignore Becca. "If you come into the room with me and Bucky, we can tell you about the house we're looking at."

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"Wait a damn minute," Becca said with a hand up to stop Steve. "That seems too important to leave me out. Steve, you're being unusually stern today. Let me in on it. I'll make cookies for Bucky while
we talk." She wouldn't say she was desperate to be in on it but she definitely didn't want to be the only one out of the loop.

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"Nope," Steve said. "You're going to be going to college soon anyway so you won't even spend that much time at the new house. Don't worry, we will make sure you have a room and a bed, always." Steve would let Becca in on it, of course, but he wasn't going to cave so quickly.

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"Goddammit, Steve," Becca spit. "I'll just go ask Bucky myself. Cut out the middleman. And I'll tell him his husband is being an ass!" Becca got up and started for Bucky and Steve's bedroom mumbling to herself much like Bucky did when he stormed away as well.

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Steve quickly rushed to the hallway and blocked Becca from going into the bedroom. "No, you are not," he said in a stern tone. "You lost your spot in this conversation tonight when you decided to be rude to your siblings and me. It's your right to act how you want, but this is the consequence for not being more courteous before. Now turn around and go write your book. We'll talk about the house with you another night."

---

Becca looked like she still had some fight left in her but Lilly's eyes pleaded with her to drop it so she didn't ruin this for her too. Becca sighed and walked backwards towards her room, keeping her eyes on Steve. "I don't like that you started acting like you can be my parent now," she said as she disappeared into her room.

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"Well, I don't like that you started acting like a snotty teenager!" Steve countered, mimicking her voice and tone as best as he could. He made a gesture for Lilly to follow him into their room.

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Lilly followed and whispered to Steve, "You've gotten braver with her."

Bucky was huddled up close to the head of the bed with Christopher asleep next to him. He looked up at Steve when he came in. "Hey, he woke up and wanted on our bed but the second I got him over here, he fell asleep again. He also did not want to buy swaddled anymore so I unleashed him. He's been laying like that for a while." Bucky gestured at the baby who had his hands sprawled out on either side of him and his legs bent at odd angles. He looked a bit like a starfish.

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Steve smiled and sat next to their son so he could gently stroke the soft hairs on the top of his head. "What a cute little bean," he whispered and then turned to Bucky. "Becca was still giving an attitude...nothing too bad, really, but I didn't want any drama. Lilly wants to know our plan, though."

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"We're getting a new house?" Lilly asked and sat down on the foot of the bed. "What kind of house is it? Where is it? Steve said I could paint my room blue. Can I paint my room blue, Bucky? Please?"
She rattled off and then took a breath and quieted down.

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"Lil, give him some time to answer." Steve chuckled. "It's a brownstone, not a house like on Long Island. You're either going to love it or hate it, I think. So we're going to tell you where it is when Becca is more amicable."

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Bucky looked between the two of them. He really wanted to tell her. "Can we lift the firewall on Becca for just five minutes? I really want to tell them now. And it's burning me up inside. Please, Steve. Kill her with kindness." He ventured a smile at his husband and touched his thigh lightly.

---

Steve was vehemently against telling Becca and he gave Bucky an unhappy look. He was trying to make a point with her that there were consequences for being rude and this was just breaking the discipline he was trying to apply. "You go get her then," he said begrudgingly.

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"Come on, Love." Bucky smiled and kissed Steve's cheek. "You can send her right back to her room once we are done. I won't argue. But I want to put the beef aside for just a bit because this is really important." He slipped off the bed and gently touched Christopher's head as he slept by Steve and he went to go get Becca.

---

Steve softened up only because he didn't want to ruin this for Bucky. When Bucky went into Becca's room, she smirked victoriously at her brother and laughed once sharply. "I knew he'd cave. He always does."

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"He didn't cave." Bucky shook his head. "I told him I need you to hear this because it's important for all of us to talk about together. After we are done, Steve's putting the shun back on you. Come on, Becs, let's go talk."

---

Becca looked mildly annoyed but she got up and followed Bucky back to his room. "Why does Steve have a stick up his ass? He's not our dad," she complained.

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"I don't know." Bucky sighed. "I don't even begin to know why you two can't just get along. Maybe he's mad you didn't ask him to read your book. Or he's sick of you being a cranky, snarky ass nowadays."

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"I'm not being a snarky ass," she said. Becca stopped arguing once they were in the room with the rest of the family. She leaned her shoulder against the wall and crossed her arms, trying to not look too curious.
"Alright." Bucky adjusted himself on the bed again. Christopher had woken up and had crawled over to sit in Lilly's lap and chew on the sleeve of her shirt. "So, Steve and I were looking at moving into a slightly bigger space. But we wanted to make sure you would be okay with the one we want to get."

Christopher happily busied himself with Lilly's shirt. Steve placed a hand on Bucky's back and let him speak. "Which house are you looking at?" Lilly asked curiously.

"Uh, well," Bucky looked to Steve for support and squeezed his hand. "We were thinking about seeing if we could buy our last place. The last one we lived with Mom and Dad in. We could afford it now, not like before when I could hardly afford this place."

The both of them didn't answer. A shocked silence lingered in the room. "Won't it be different?" Lilly asked tentatively. "Who else lived there after us?"

Bucky nodded slowly and let out a deep breath. Their reaction was more lukewarm than he thought it would be. "A young couple who were planning on having kids but couldn't afford the rent any longer. So it was them for about three years and it's been empty since they left."

Lilly paused for a moment and then turned to Becca. "You think mom and dad are haunting it? They might have cursed the family there so the house would be available to take just when we're able to snag it."

Bucky smacked a hand on his face and leaned forward. "No, Lil, they aren't haunting it. Mom and Dad would never haunt some poor unsuspecting couple. If anyone, they would haunt Dale for being a jackass to their kids."

"I don't know. I think there's something going on if the family that was living there so long suddenly can't anymore just as you guys are ready to drop a million dollars on a house," Lilly answered.

"It won't be a million dollars," Bucky said. "Let's get back on track. We need to know what you two think of going back there. Do you want to or do you not want to? I don't want it to make you upset or uncomfortable or sad or anything like that."

"It'd be weird... but it'd be nice. And I really want a blue room," Lilly said.
Becca paused and then said, "You guys want another baby, don't you? That's why you're moving into a house?"

---

Bucky looked over to Becca and then back to Steve, trying to apologize for bringing Becca in on this while she was acting like this. Steve was probably trying to avoid this very thing. "Answer the question first," Bucky said. "Do you want to live in our place? Have your old room? A bigger room."

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"Not if it becomes baby city there," Becca said. "Finish with us first before you have your perfect, little family. After all, you put us through, we at least deserve you giving us a stable home for us and not for your new babies."

---

Bucky was quiet for a second. There was a lot to unpack in what Becca was saying but he was far too tired and he could feel himself shutting down. After a while, he felt a lump form in his throat and his eyes started to fill up with tears. He nodded gently. "Alright, we won't move." He clenched his jaw and sniffled, looking down at his hands and trying not to let any tears fall off his eyelids and onto his cheek.

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"No!" Lilly cried out, having already set her mind on moving back to their old home. "Becca, why do you have to be such a bitch?" she snapped.

Steve didn't know whether to scold Lilly, scold Becca, or try to console Bucky. Christopher looked around in confusion at the sudden change of energy around him. Becca turned on her heels and marched out of the room. Lilly's eyes started to tear up as well because she kind of really wanted her old house back.

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"Jesus fucking Christ!" Bucky growled loudly and wiped angrily at his eyes and cheeks. "Goddammit." He hopped off the bed and took Lilly by the hand and started pulling her towards Becca's room. "Come on. We aren't done." He stormed into Becca's room. Both he and Lilly were mad and tearful and Becca was huddled in a ball on her bed. "Becca, I have a question for you."

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When Bucky swore angrily, Christopher began to whimper and start to cry, so Steve stayed to take care of their baby while Bucky took Lilly to Becca's room.

Becca turned her head to Bucky. "What?" she asked shortly.

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Bucky held Lilly's hand tightly and gestured between them with the other. "Do you love us?" he asked Becca pointedly. "I mean, do you actually still love us and care about us? Or did you stop that a long time ago?"
"What kind of question is that?" Becca asked, frowning at them. "I took care of you when you couldn't take care of yourself. I taught Lilly math. I kept this family together while you were busy getting high and screwing anything with a dick that walked."

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"I know," Bucky said with a heavy tone to his voice. "I know you did those things. And I know that you shouldn't have had to. But I've done shit for you too. I've kept all of us together. I left school. I didn't just put you in foster care and hope that you ended up with someone nice. I've kept us in a good apartment and made sure to budget for anything you might need or want. And in the past two years, I've stopped sleeping around, I've stopped drinking, I've married a reliable man, I started AA just to make sure I don't fall back into my addictions." He paused and looked to Lilly. "And Lilly thinks the world of you. She agrees with you when she doesn't know what to think and she trusts you and what you have to say. She believes in you and supports you with what you want to do but you never support her. You rag on her for being more athletic than academic. We support you, Becca. You don't support us and you don't care about what we care about or what we want."

---

Lilly squeezed Bucky's hand tightly and pressed into his side because she really was upset over this and she hated feeling so vulnerable. Their house hung on Becca's approval. "Well, it is ridiculous," Becca said bluntly. "Less than one percent of athletes make it to the pros and most actresses around here end up in seedy movies," she said. "Someone's always going to have to support her with those kinds of career goals. And you lucked out finding Steve cause if you hadn't, you'd still be a mess."

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"It's not ridiculous, goddammit!" Bucky yelled. "You're writing a novel right now. A novel! Which, I agreed to read when you asked if I would. That's support. And don't you think you have just as much of a chance to become a famous writer as Lilly does to be a pro athlete. She's really fucking good at sports and I want her to be able to pursue that dream if she wants. Just like I want you to pursue yours." He paused and huffed a few times. "And I want you to believe in us and want us to have our dreams and support us. That includes my dreams. And my dreams are much different than they used to be. Mine are simple now, more meaningful. I want to raise a family. And I want to do it with the love of my life and with my sisters there to be aunts and I want to do it someplace where our parents raised us. That's my dream, Becca."

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Becca glared at him, unmoved. She clearly wasn't in any sort of a mood to admit wrongdoing or apologize for being unsupportive and rude. Instead, she gave him her back and covered herself with the blankets again. "Then go do it," she said. "If that's what you wanted from the start then you shouldn't have asked for my opinion of it."

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Bucky looked to Lilly and shook his head. "I wanted your opinion because I didn't want either of you being too upset to go back to the last place we had Mom and Dad with us. I didn't want to hurt you any more than you've already been hurt by their loss. That's why I asked you."

---

Becca didn't answer and Lilly tugged lightly on Bucky's hand to try and make him come with her out
of the room. Having her older sister so blatantly not support her was a huge blow to her esteem and she couldn't stand to be in the room anymore.

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Bucky followed Lilly out, closing the door behind them. Lilly tugged him back towards his and Steve's room and sat them on the bed. She was crying again and Bucky wrapped his arms around her and held her close to him. "I'm so sorry, Lilly."

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Lilly buried her head in Bucky's chest and wept silent tears. She wished she could stop them, but they just kept coming. "Why does she have to be so mean?" Lilly sobbed out miserably. "I…I don't think my dreams are dumb."

---

"They aren't. They aren't dumb at all." Bucky gently rocked her back and forth and looked over to Steve for help. "I think that you should try to do whatever you want to do, Lil." He pet his hand through her hair and noticed that Christopher's face was a little red from crying as well.

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Steve kept a distance from Bucky and Lilly so they could have their moment. But when Bucky gave him that look, he came over and wrapped an arm around them while he held Christopher with his other. "You've got us who believe in you. And Christopher would, too, if he knew what you wanted," Steve said. "You want to spend the night in our room, Lil?"

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Lilly shook her head and clutched on to Steve to hug him too. "No, I'm okay. I just wish she gave a damn about me sometimes. I know I'm not always nice to her but I've never called her the things she calls me like stupid or mentally challenged or told her she couldn't do what she wanted or she wasn't smart enough for things. I'd never do that to her."

---

"I know. You're a good sister." Steve smoothed her hair back and kissed the top of her head. "Becca will come around one day. She will see how much we support each other and one day, she will realize that she can't do everything all on her own," Steve assured her.

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"Can she hurry up?" Lilly asked quietly.

Bucky chuckled and pinched her sister lightly. "Guess we will have to be patient." Lilly stayed with them a while longer and held Christopher until he fell asleep again. Then she went back to her own room, leaving her brother and Steve alone.

---

Once they were alone, Steve turned to Bucky and brushed his fingers through his hair. "Are you alright, Love?" Steve asked. Becca had thrown some pretty heavy shit at them and he wasn't sure how Bucky felt about it.
"No," Bucky sighed and tucked himself into Steve's arms. "But I just kind of want to ignore it for now. Today really hasn't been great. Can we just relax for a bit together? I can give you a massage still if you wanted."

Steve wasn't really in the mood for a massage but he figured it was something to help take Bucky's mind off of their shit day. He took off his shirt and rolled onto his stomach. He was quiet at first but then mumbled, "We should go for the house... but maybe it's too soon for another baby."

"Steve, please," Bucky muttered back and laid down in between Steve's legs and reached up to his shoulders. "Do we have to talk about it, now? We want that baby. We both do. We also want the house. I don't think this whole thing with Becca should stop either of those things from happening."

Steve's shoulders were so tense until Bucky started to massage them. "I know we do but I don't want to give her an excuse to pick on you whenever she's annoyed with you or the babies." He sighed and buried his face in the pillow. "I'm sorry, Buck. I'll stop talking about it."

"No, we can talk now if you want to. It's fine, I guess. I'm just upset with her," Bucky said. "She really hurt Lilly. And she's been treating us all like we owe her something. And she purposefully brings up things I used to do just so she has power and makes me feel small. I'm so tired of it. Even with the ways I fucked up, I still did a lot right."

"We can build Lilly back up, but she still needs Becca's blessing to really feel confident," Steve said. "I don't think she would have done what you did, Bucky. You gave up everything for them. She would have picked her dreams over keeping you all together. You'll always have that to be proud of about yourself," Steve said. "I wish we could get through to her. There's a difference between being hurt by what you used to do and holding it over your head forever."

Bucky thought for a second then leaned his body down against Steve's back so he could get closer to him. "You suggested a while ago to take the girls to see a therapist. You were talking about having them talk about losing their parents and how I was and Lilly's nightmares. But what if we did like a family counseling? Me and the girls together. We are going to try to find a child psychiatrist for Christopher anyway, might as well look for someone who could do that for us."

Steve nodded. "Whatever it takes, Bucky," he said. "I want everyone here to feel loved and supported." Steve let out a little groan when Bucky cracked his back, allowing him to relax a little more. "I'm not excusing her actions but I think Becca is being exceptionally catty because she wasn't supported the way she needed to be back when you weren't in a good place. And she may be jealous that our kids don't have to go through that."
Bucky just laid on top of Steve and rubbed his hands down his arms. "I know what you mean. I really messed them up. They just lost their parents and then their guardian goes off the deep end for a few years." He never had been good at coping with things. But now it just seemed like a broken record. Bucky couldn't handle shit and Becca couldn't forgive him. It never ended - no matter how much better Bucky was.

"You did your best, Bucky. And that's more than what most would do," Steve said. "But it's on Becca to accept that that's not the way things are now," he added. "You did well. You're clean and sober and you're giving them a stable home."

Bucky kissed down Steve's back and let his fingers touch lightly across his skin as he went. He slipped his hands into the elastic of Steve's pants and pull them down just a bit to kiss the top of his ass before crawling off of Steve and laying back on the bed. "Do you think Becca loves us? She wouldn't answer when I asked."

Steve made a soft sound of approval at the kisses. But the question made him frown. "I think she does. She just doesn't want to admit it. And she feels like she's the only one who's going to be anything, I think. So she's got a bit of a chip on her shoulder that she shouldn't have there."

"She thinks she's the only one who's going to be anything?" Bucky asked and rolled to face Steve. "What do you mean? She resents us for not having ambitions or something? I had ambitions. I had a plan for my life and my career before my parents died."

"That's what I think she thinks, at least. She puts down Lilly for not being smart. She acts like your accomplishment of keeping a family together was nothing she couldn't do." Steve huffed. "I could be wrong. I hope I'm wrong. But that's just how I see how she's acting."

"No, you're probably right," Bucky said. "And she probably puts pressure on herself to be the first one in our family to actually finish college. My parents didn't go to higher education and I didn't finish so maybe she thinks it's her responsibility."

"She doesn't have to put that pressure on herself. No one is a failure just cause they didn't go to college," Steve said. "And I think that's why she tries to discourage Lilly from sports."

"Becca likes being the best of us. She always has," Bucky said. "She used to take on my chores just so she could tell our parents that she did everything around the house all by herself. She wanted to be the favorite. Maybe it's a middle child thing."
"Could be. But she gets plenty of attention. And then she gets grumpy when we don't leave her alone," Steve said. "Maybe she will come around. She knows we love her and support her."

Bucky yawned and snuggled up against Steve. "I'm sorry we both had bad days. Maybe tomorrow will be better. I want to take a shower. Do you want to join me or are you headed to sleep? Christopher's out and I don't think he'll get up for a while."

"I don't really feel like moving," Steve said. "I'm going to have to pass on this one." Steve turned his head so he could kiss Bucky's arm. "I love you, Sweetheart. I know tomorrow will be a better day," Steve murmured confidently.
Bucky started hauling boxes up the stoop and into the house. Becca had eventually agreed to move into their old place and it only took them about a month to close on it. Lilly had been a whirlwind of energy while she packed up all her things to get ready for the move. She was the most excited of them all to go back. As much as Bucky was pleased to return home, he did start to feel the weight of having to leave their current apartment. That apartment was the first home he had with Steve. It was Christopher's first home with them. It was bittersweet having to go.

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Steve couldn't believe how emotional he got leaving the apartment but he had to convince himself that this was a new beginning. He stood outside their new home, marveling at it for a few moments before turning to Bucky. "Can you believe it, Bucky? All this is ours. No more apartment."

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"No more apartment," Bucky repeated and hugged Steve quickly while no one was watching. "No rent, no Dale," he watched as Lilly picked up the cat carrier that Raphael was asleep in. "Lil, don't let him out while we are still bringing things in. We don't want him to escape."

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Steve smiled and looked proudly over at Bucky. "This is going to be the start of something great. I can't believe we get to raise our son where your parents got to raise you." Christopher squealed excitedly and bounced in his carrier. Steve nudged Bucky before carrying a few boxes inside.

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Bucky snagged his son and brought him to his new nursery. It had the same color of paint that was there when Bucky lived in it. He found the notch in the wall over by the window where Bucky had accidentally banged a guitar when he had pretended to be a rock star. He opened the closet and found in the corner the hastily scribbled drawing on the wall that Becca had made one time when the two of them were playing astronauts and pretending they were in a spaceship.

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"Papa," Christopher murmured, looking around the place. He pointed at the room, unable to put his questions into words but he definitely wanted to know what was going on. After Steve finished bringing all the boxes inside, he closed the door. Lilly unleashed the cat, who started prowling the house to explore.

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Bucky stared at the wall and grinned. Becca had drawn it all on her own and was so proud. She even wrote out in scribbled handwriting, 'Buck and Becs Space Asstronots' with a little heart next to it. Bucky touched it carefully and shouted for Steve to come see.

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Steve ran over to see what Bucky was yelling at him about. When he saw the spelling, he let out a loud laugh and shook his head. "Oh my god, this is adorable! How did this manage to survive for so long? How old were you when you made this?"
"I don't know," Bucky said. "I'm guessing the last owners didn't use this room because nothing's changed. Even the dent by the window is still there. They probably just didn’t bother to paint."

"This is so amazing," Steve said. "We got to show this to Becca. Christ, I wish I could have known you back then – teenage Bucky taking care of his little sister. I bet you were adorable." Christopher wigged in his seat and reached up towards his dads.

Bucky smiled and touched the picture again. He and Becca were a lot nicer to each other back then. He turned back to his son and said, "Little Bean, this is your room now. Are you excited? You have your very own room. At least until you get a sibling."

Steve picked Christopher up from his carrier and kissed him on his cheek. "Your pop grew up here, just like you are going to do. This was his room when he was young." He set the baby down and let him explore. "Becca, come in here. Bucky found something!" he called out.

Bucky heard the old familiar sound of his sisters coming up the stairs. He was woken up by those creaking stairs every morning for years. He looked up at Steve. "I really missed this place."

Becca and Lilly popped their heads into the room. "What'd you find?" she asked. "Lilly found something too. In the downstairs bathroom, there is still a spoon taped to the back of the toilet from when we pulled that April Fool’s Day prank on mom and hid all the silver wear. That couple after us must have not touched anything in here. Or even hardly lived here."

Steve kissed Bucky’s temple and then moved to let Becca see the wall. "Bucky found this in the closet. I think we're going to get to come across a lot of stuff left behind."

"Oh shit!" Becca said excitedly. "It's our intergalactic gangster squad. We used to pretend to run stolen goods across embargo lines in space."

Bucky looked at Steve's confused face. "We had just learned what the embargo with Cuba was," he informed Steve with a little nod.

Steve grinned because this really was so damned cute. "God, you two were such dorks. Still are."

Lilly pouted and crossed her arms, feeling slightly left out since she wasn't allowed in the space team when she was a kid. "I found a spoon," she reiterated.

"I was not a dork," Bucky defended. "I just had a really big crush on Captain Kirk." He took the
spoon from Lilly. It was grimy and dusty and disgusting. “Just put this spoon back on the toilet.”

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"Well if you had a crush on Kirk, then that means I'm Kirk and you're Spock, and Spock is definitely the dork out of the two of them," Steve reasoned.

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Bucky picked up Christopher and followed Steve out of the room and down to the kitchen. "Come on, Steve. If anyone, I'm Kirk or Scotty. You're like Bones... maybe Spock."

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As soon as Christopher recognized they were in the kitchen he started to sign 'hungry' at Bucky. "I am not Spock. I'm too cool to be Spock. Becca is Spock."

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"I'll take it," Becca called from the hall.

Bucky rummaged around in a bag for some cereal bits to give Christopher. "Baby, do you want to stay here and work on unpacking and setting up Christopher's room or do you want to go to the grocery store? I'll do whatever you don't want to."

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Steve really wanted to set up Christopher's room but he figured it'd be better to let Bucky. "I'll do the grocery shopping," he said. "You can tell Christopher all the fun times you had in his new nursery as you get him settled in."

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"Okay." Bucky smiled and gave their son another handful of cereal. "Do you want one of the girls to go with you to help? Lilly probably wouldn't mind. Would you, Lil?" Bucky would set up his record player first and put something good in to play through the house while he worked on unpacking. Christopher's room wouldn't take too long but his and Steve's would and Bucky was planning on sifting through all his records and putting ones that he didn't listen to that often into the storage closet.

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Christopher ate the cereal hungrily and then signed for more the second he swallowed the last of it. Lilly shook her head. "I don't mind. But Steve's got to carry me like the whole way there."

Steve sighed but gave her a smile. "Of course, piggyback it is. So anything you want specifically, Buck? What do you want our first dinner here to be?"

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"I don't mind what it is. Lilly can pick," Bucky said and put the cereal away. "No more for now, Bean," he said to his son and pet his head. "My goal is to get the nursery set up and at least get our bed made up. That's all we really need tonight."

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"Papa," Christopher whined, bringing his circled fingers together in the sign for 'more' a few times in
hopes of convincing him otherwise.

"Sounds perfect," Steve said. "Lilly, how's yours and Becca's room? Do you need any help with them?"

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"I think we got it," Lilly said and wrote down a list of things that they needed to pick up at the store.

Bucky sifted through some boxes to find Steve and Lilly's jackets and hand them off to them as they were leaving for the store. "Christopher needs more orange juice and diapers and those Goldfish Crackers."

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"You got it. Love you," Steve said, kissing Bucky's cheek and then Christopher's before heading out. Once they were in the cool air, he looked up at Lilly. "Is it nice being back?"

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Lilly held tight to Steve and let the light breeze blow through her hair. "Yeah, I missed my room. And I hated having to move out in the first place. It'll be a little weird to get used to again, I think. Especially since Mom and Dad won't be in the house. And I don't know how Bucky is really going to take to living in their old room with you. But I'm glad we are back. And I can tell Becca is happy about it, too."

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"I'm a little worried how Bucky will feel in your parents' room, too," Steve admitted. "I'm glad Becca is happy. She drives me crazy sometimes, but I really do want to do right by her and make her happy."

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"Bucky will probably say he is fine but have a small crisis in the middle of the night and end up on the couch or something," Lilly predicted. "You know how he is." She hopped off of Steve when they got to the store and she grabbed a cart. "How do you think Christopher will do being in a room alone?"

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Steve made sure to pick up the things for Christopher first. "Hopefully Bucky won't be worked up over it for too long. This place should make him happy instead of stressed. And I'm a bit worried about Christopher being all alone at night. I've gotten so used to him being there with us."

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"At least Bucky's room is right across the hall so if he does start crying you'll hear it," Lilly said and trailed through the aisles with the cart, stopping occasionally to let Steve dump things into it. "Are you guys really getting another baby? Or is Becca just saying that?"

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It didn't take long for them to gather all of the things they needed. Steve basically just grabbed anything that caught his eye. "We are thinking about it. It's not final, but there's a possibility that we
are. How would you feel about that if we did?"

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"I don't mind. Babies are fun," Lilly said brightly. "I never got little siblings so I've liked having Christopher around. And I'm not just saying that because I'm his godmother. I love him a lot. I get that we are sort of a unique family and people at school say bad things about us but I like how we are. I mean, obviously, I wish my parents were around but I like who we are for what we have."

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Steve looked so pleased that Lilly adored and loved his son. It almost made up for the fact that others gave her trouble for their family life. "What do the other people say to you at school?" Steve asked.

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Lilly shrugged. "Just a bunch of mean stuff. Some guys in my class keep saying how my parents probably killed themselves on purpose cause they didn't want to be with us anymore. And most of Becca's class knows that Bucky is gay since that one kid whose dad is friends with Donnie Manix kept talking about him beating up Bucky. And just some other stuff."

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Steve frowned, looking mad. "Are you kidding me?" Steve couldn't believe how mean kids could be sometimes. "I want names. They won't know what hit them," Steve said. He didn't plan on roughing them up, but Steve was already thinking of ways to get the kids to stop.

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Lilly chuckled a bit. "You're a good guardian-brother-in-law thing, Steve. But it's okay. I have friends who back me up. It doesn't get to me as much as it used to. And I usually fight them if I'm given the chance. I sent Will Langman home with a broken nose and a black eye last week."

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"Good girl," Steve praised, nudging her. "People can suck sometimes. I have faith that we're all good and all hate comes from misunderstanding. But it's not fun to deal with." Steve picked out a candy bar for Lilly and went to the checkout counter. "Alright. Anything else we need?"

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Lilly stared at the candy. "No, I think that's it. We got everything on the list." She helped the bagger put things into paper bags as they went and carefully laid bread and eggs on the top so they wouldn't be smashed. They had a lot of bags and Lilly was wondering how she and Steve would manage them all.

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Steve hooked the bag loops around his arms and was like a coat rack for them all. "Looks like you're going to have to walk back, Lilly. Sorry." He happily carried the bags out after they were all paid for. "Have you talked to Becca at all? Has she been nicer to you?"

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Lilly shrugged and unwrapped the candy. "I've just been sort of avoiding her in general for a while
now. She's been worse than usual in the past few months. She's just being a stupid teenager. I'm really tired of it."

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"Well, one day you're going to be a stupid teenager just like she is," Steve said. "She loves you. And I know she doesn't come off like it sometimes, but she really does want the best for you."

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"Yeah, I guess," Lilly said, resigned about the whole thing. "I know Bucky always says how Becca is just like Dad. But Dad would be so upset if he could see how Becca has been treating us lately. Dad was a genius, too, but he never made me feel bad for not being smart."

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"I hope she comes around one day. I think she has a lot of pressure that you don't have just cause you're the youngest. And I know that losing them hurt you too, but you were younger than she was so she understood the levity of the situation more," Steve said. "All we can do is be patient, love her, and communicate."

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"I understood," Lilly said. "My parents died. I was eight years old. And then my brother almost died and then my grandmother died. I understood the situation perfectly. You don't think I didn't want to die, too? My family was leaving so quickly and we had nothing, the three of us."

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Steve gave Lilly a sympathetic, apologetic expression and sighed. "I'm sorry," he said gently. "I'm glad you stayed with us. And just so you know, you guys could never have nothing if you still have each other. Even if disaster hits and we lose the house and all our money, I'm a happy man if I have my family."

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"Okay," Lilly murmured and held the door to the house open for Steve. "We're back!" she called into the house. There was an old seventies disco record playing and Bucky and Becca were in the middle of the hall concentrating hard on putting together a new dresser to put in Christopher's room.

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"Dadadada!" Christopher said excitedly when he saw his dad come through the door.

Steve dropped the bags on the table so he could scoop up his son. "Hey there!" he greeted happily. "You guys realize you left a bag of screws here for that dresser, right?" He chuckled.

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"Goddammit!" Becca groused and threw a screwdriver down on the ground. "Those are the ones that go here, Bucky." She pointed at a part of the drawer that looked like it was unceremoniously shoved into the rest of the unit.

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"Looks like you two are having loads of fun," Steve observed. "How about you keep an eye on
Christopher, Becca, and I can help your brother out with the dresser?"

"Fine by me. I'm done with this stupid thing," Becca huffed and picked up Christopher to take him to the kitchen where Lilly was unpacking their bags.

"Hey, Baby, how was the store with Lilly?" Bucky asked. His hair was pulled back tight on his head but some strands had gotten loose. He had a bit of black stuff on his forehead and he honestly didn't even know where it came from.

Steve knelt down so he could arrange one of the drawers. "It was nice. We had a good talk on the way there and back," Steve said. "She's happy to be here. And thinks Becca is, too."

"Good." Bucky nodded, eyes focused on screwing in the correct pieces into the correct places. "Making a crib from scratch was easy. Putting together some piece-of-shit, mass-produced dresser is really fucking hard. This is ridiculous."

"It's easy if you follow the directions," Steve said in a singsong voice with the little paper unfolded in front of him as he assembled another drawer. "I can't believe we own our home, Buck. This one, of all the homes there are. It's like my life couldn't get any better."

Bucky watched Steve for a minute with a warm smile on his face. "I'm really glad we are here. We are one step closer to what we have been hoping for and dreaming about. And I'm really glad I still have you here with me through it all."

"It's worth everything that happened if that's what got us here," Steve said. He put the drawers in the dresser and wiggled them to make sure they were sturdy. "Perfect." He looked back up at Bucky. "Lilly says she wouldn't mind having another baby around."

Bucky leaned over and gave Steve a kiss on the neck. "Come on, let's push this into the nursery." He grabbed one end and waited for Steve to lift the other. "Did she say she was excited for another baby or just okay with it happening?"

Steve lifted the other end and helped Bucky carry it up the stairs and into the nursery. "She sounded happy," Steve said. "Said she loved Christopher and she likes having kids younger than her around since she's the youngest sibling."

Bucky grinned and positioned the dresser where he wanted it. "That's one sister down, one to go. Have you talked to your mom about it yet? She'll want to know that we are thinking about having
another." Steve had recently talked to his mom about the progress that Bucky had been making in AA and she wrote Bucky a long letter about how proud she was of him. He got the letter on the same day he got his three months sober chip. It meant a lot to him.

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"If I tell my mom now and we end up not doing it then we are never going to hear the end of it out of her," Steve said. "I'd rather wait until we are absolutely sure. It'll break her heart if we say we may get one and then end up not doing it."

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Bucky nodded. "That makes sense." He paused and looked around the room. "I know we have a lot of things to do in the house today but I was thinking we might all go down to the cemetery together. I think my parents should know that we are back home. And Christopher has only visited them once."

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Steve nodded. "I think that's a great idea." It was a bittersweet event, but Steve always loved it when Bucky suggested visiting the grave because he knew how much he had avoided it the years prior. "They'll be very proud of you. We wouldn't have been able to do this if you hadn't looked into it."

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Bucky reached for Steve's hand and held it close. "I know it may seem weird but just being here feels like I have them back just a little bit. This is the last place they called home. This is the last place they told us they loved us and had dinner with us and played games with us. This is where they were headed when they got in that crash."

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Steve kissed the back of Bucky's hand before giving it a squeeze. "I don't think it's weird at all. I think it's easier for them to see us here. It's easier to watch over us because this place was so important to them."

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"Yeah." Bucky smiled softly and leaned into Steve. "Thanks for getting this place for me - for all of us. I love you so much. And hopefully, my parents will get to know you a little better here. You know?" He sighed and nuzzled into Steve's neck for a moment. "Alright, let's go round up the kids."

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Steve kissed his cheek a few times and then nodded. He called for Becca and Lilly to get ready to go out and he snuggled his son once Becca passed him back. "Ready to visit your grandparents, little guy?"

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Christopher giggled happily and smacked his hands on Steve's face in a greeting. "Dada!"

Bucky touched his son's head lightly and went to rummage in his bags of clothes to find a jacket and hat for him to wear. "Steve, I think tonight when we get back. We should try to get all of Christopher's stuff unpacked and all his clothes into the dresser. Then we can worry about our stuff."
Steve made a funny sound when Christopher smacked his hands on his face. "Yes, Sweetheart, your dada loves you so much." He kissed the tip of his little nose. "Sounds like a plan to me. Today and tomorrow are my days off this week so I can spend tomorrow dealing with our things."

"Okay, great, because I have to open tomorrow," Bucky said. "But if you want to leave my stuff for me, I'll deal with it when I get home. Tim will be in tomorrow afternoon so I may be able to leave earlier if he can hold down the fort."

"Don't worry about it, Love. I'll take care of it and you bring home our bread and butter to feed the family," Steve said. He kissed Bucky's cheek and then led them all out.

Aways down the street, Becca came up by Bucky and shoved her hands in her pockets. "Are you going to tell Mom and Dad on me?" she asked with a frown.

Bucky glanced down at her, confused. "Tell on you for what?" he asked and looked to Steve to see if he knew what she was talking about. The only reason he wanted to go to the cemetery was to tell their parents that they bought their old place.

"For being a bad sister," she mumbled, looking a bit nervous. She had shit on Bucky so hard sometimes when she went to their graves. Becca assumed that Bucky would do the same now that he had the chance.

Bucky stopped walking and snagged Becca's sleeve. "Steve, you and Lilly go on ahead. We will catch up." He waited for them to be off a bit and then looked to Becca again. "Why would you think I'd go tattletale on you to Mom and Dad? I haven't done that since I was sixteen."

"Because I tattled on you," she said. "And I've been pretty shitty to you guys. I mean, I still don't think Lilly should focus more on sports than reading but I didn't have to be so mean about it."

Bucky sighed and pocketed his hands. "Look, Becs, I'm not going to see them to complain about you. I get that you've done that about me and that's fine. You needed someone to talk to about all the shit I pulled and I understand. And I'm really sorry. I don't think, however, it's unfair to ask you to apologize to your sister. You really, really hurt her feelings, and mine."

Becca shrugged her shoulders up and huffed a little. "It's just not fair," she said in a quiet, yet slightly stubborn tone. "I had to lose my parents and deal with you being a mess. Now you clean up and… Now that you're getting better, you're getting kids instead of spending time with us."
That was it. That was the problem right now. Bucky's face fell and he let out a sad sigh in return and pulled Becca in for a tight hug. He held her for a second and kissed the top of her head. "I'm so sorry, Becca. I didn't realize that's how you felt. I just figured you didn't want Christopher or any other babies around because you didn't think I would be able to take care of them and it would be your job. I didn't think of it like that."

Becca tolerated the hug for a few seconds before wiggling free. "At first, I worried he'd be dumped in my lap all the time. But now it's pretty clear you can handle him without my help," she said. "It's not like I don't want more babies around. I... I don't want you spending all your time being a dad instead of a brother."

Bucky nodded. "I know what you mean. I feel like I've been being a dad for five years and have hardly gotten to stop and be the brother again for a bit. You and I used to be really close. Do you remember that? I waited ten years to get a sibling and then I was so happy to finally have you with me. I clung to you and wouldn't let you out of my sight if I could help it. I remember feeling so bad that Mom called me 'Bucky Bear' but didn't have a nickname for you so we called you 'Baby Bear' for a few years when you were a toddler."

Becca rubbed at her eyes, refusing to tear up or cry before they got to the cemetery. "We used to build forts every night and watch Star Trek and pretend we were on the Enterprise," she said. "I used to be afraid that Lilly would replace me when she got old enough to play with you."

Bucky laughed shortly. "Oh my god. You thought you would be replaced? When you came along, I was scared at first because I thought it meant I would go to different parents so you could have mine. I didn't get that siblings were all stuck together. I know that things aren't how they used to be and they never will be again. But we are still together, right? Even after all the times I messed up, I got to keep you. I managed to keep us all together and now look where we are. We just came back home. Finally."

Becca looked over at the entrance to the cemetery and nodded. "Yeah...still together." She stopped Bucky so she could give him a hug. "You did good, Captain Kirk," she complimented with a little smile. She held his hand as they walked into the cemetery.

"Who are you, again? Bones? Spock? Either way. Thanks, Becca," Bucky said. "I love you. You do know that, right?" He squeezed her hand and led her towards the graves where Steve, Lilly, and Christopher were already kneeling and talking.

"Yeah, yeah, I know," Becca said with a wave of her hand.
Christopher sat on the grave and looked between his dad and the stone to try and understand why Steve was talking to a rock. He tried looking behind the stone to see if someone was there.

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Bucky chuckled and knelt down next to his son and pulled him into his lap. "You look lost, Little Bean," he said. "Is Daddy talking to Gran and Papaw? Here, let's be quiet. Maybe we can hear them, too." Bucky listened intently to the wind and looked up at the sky. Christopher did the same but quickly gave up.

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"I just finished telling them that we bought a new home together. I wanted to wait until you got here to say which house we ended up buying." He reached out to hold Christopher's little hand. "Why don't you tell them?"

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"No, me, please!" Lilly interjected. "Let me!"

Bucky shrugged and gestured for Lilly to go on. "I don't mind, Lil. Tell them all about it. Don't forget to tell them what color you're painting your new room."

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"Bucky and Steve bought our old house!" Lilly exclaimed. Steve let out a little laugh. "I'm painting my room blue," she added with a proud smile. It's going to be beautiful.

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Bucky smiled and glanced over at his family. "Steve and I needed a bigger place. Our family was quickly outgrowing the apartment we had. And I wanted to get the girls back home and to raise your grandson somewhere that's closer to you."

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"I don't think Christopher understands who we're talking to. But he will one day and I'm sure he will have plenty to say," Steve said. "We found some stuff left that the other family never touched. I guess it was kept the way you left it, in some ways."

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Christopher babbled a little to himself and played with Bucky's fingers. "Remember that April Fool’s Day that Lilly and Becca thought it would be fun to hide the silverware?" Bucky asked. "And, Mom, you got so stressed out thinking that someone had robbed us and you couldn't figure out why that was all they took and why they bothered with crappy utensils anyway." He grinned at his sisters. "Lilly found a spoon behind the toilet. I guess you missed some, Mom."

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Lilly nodded. "We're leaving it there. I don't think anyone would want to use a spoon that's been taped to a toilet bowl for four years anyway."

Steve smiled. "I'm really excited to live in your home. I never got to meet you guys in person, but we all feel closer to you by being there."
Everyone was quiet for a while longer, just sitting and thinking and feeling the breeze. Christopher was messing with the zipper on Bucky’s jacket and making quiet little noises as he went. A few more minutes passed and a couple other people came into the cemetery. Bucky didn't like being here when there were other people. It broke his illusion that his family was alone together again and he had to face where he really was and how his parents wouldn't be able to respond to him. "Is everyone ready to go?" Bucky asked softly and tucked some of Becca's hair behind her ear.

Becca leaned into Bucky. Lilly had been resting her back against Steve as she dozed off. "Yeah, I am. I'm starting to get hungry," Steve said. He picked up a little stone and placed one on each of their graves so they would know they were there.

Bucky gathered Christopher into his arms and got up slowly. "Bye, Mom, Dad. We love you so much." The girls said their goodbyes and walked hand-in-hand towards the gate. Bucky took Christopher's hand and had him wave at the graves before going to follow his sisters with Steve in tow.

As they headed back, Christopher looked around the place curiously and towards the exit, he pointed at a bird. "Ack," he said to Bucky, confusing the bird for a duck like his bathtub toy.

"No, Bean, that's a pigeon." Bucky chuckled. "Close enough, I guess, though." The walk to their new home from the cemetery was shorter than the one to their old apartment. Bucky felt really strange to not be headed to the apartment. He didn't know if he would get used to going back to what he still considered his parents’ place.

"Feels weird not going back to the apartment," Steve admitted, almost reading Bucky’s thoughts. "I bet you I'm going to walk there from the station one day just out of habit," he chuckled. "What are you guys in the mood for to have for dinner?"

"Nothing," Lilly grumbled. She was holding tight to Becca's hand and staring at the ground while she walked. She always got worked up when they went to the cemetery. Lilly was always hungry and high energy but when she went to visit her parents’ graves, she didn't want to think about food and all she wanted to do was sleep in a ball at the foot of her bed covered in a mountain of plush animals.

"Alright. But I'll make enough for you just in case you get hungry later." Steve didn't like to push when it came to Lilly’s mood about her parents. "What about beef stew, Buck? It's been a while since I made stew."
"I like your stew, yeah." Bucky nodded and nudged Steve since he couldn't hold his hand. "I'll work on unpacking Christopher's things while you cook and hopefully his room will be all done by the time he needs to go to sleep."

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"God, I hope so. I'm happy to have this place to ourselves but moving is a nightmare. I never realized how many boxes of albums you really had," Steve snorted. Once inside, he gave all four of them a kiss before heading into the kitchen.

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"My collection is a treasure and I'll thank you to treat it with respect," Bucky sassed back and helped Christopher out of his jacket and hat. He worked on putting all their son's clothes and toy and things into the new dresser and shoving whatever else he had into the closet. It didn't take too long and Christopher helped by crawling around and throwing toys wherever he pleased.

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Raphael ended up joining Bucky and chasing after Christopher to bat at his feet. He never used his claws, so they didn't mind the cat messing with their kid. After about a half hour, Steve called them all down for dinner.

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Lilly had helped set their table but she left out one spoon. Becca sat down and looked at her place, confused. "Looks like you're going to have to use the toilet spoon," Lilly said and neatly folded her napkin with a grin.

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Becca swiftly stole Steve's spoon, who then stole Bucky's spoon to replace his. "Bucky gets the toilet spoon," he joked. Christopher laughed at what was going on and threw his own spoon onto the floor.

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Bucky sighed and took Steve's spoon back to give to his son. "Now we both need spoons," Bucky said tiredly and prevented Christopher from tossing the second spoon to the ground. Bucky got spoons and then Steve said grace and Bucky took the first shift in helping feed Christopher. "So," he said to the girls, "how is the unpacking for you both?"

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Christopher managed to knock a chunk of a potato to the ground and he let out big belly laughs because throwing stuff on the floor was apparently the funniest thing in the world for babies. Steve couldn't get mad at him. "It's easy," Lilly said. "I just threw everything in a corner. Then I napped," she said proudly.

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"That sounds productive," Bucky answered sarcastically. "How about you, Becs? Did you just put everything back where it used to be? Maybe we can buy you a bookshelf for your room again so you don't have to stack them in your closet like at the apartment."
"I changed it around. It would be a bit weird to have it how it used to be, you know? Cause it's not the same," Becca explained. "I like it, though. And I'll never say 'no' to a bookshelf," she added.

Bucky smiled at her and nodded. "I'll see what I can do," he said. "And I know what you mean. It isn't the same. But it's nice to be home - to be where Mom and Dad were. I'm glad that you two can have your old rooms again and more space and we don't have neighbors like Dale."

"Thank god, we don't have to deal with Dale anymore," Lilly groaned in relief. "Christ, I can't believe we didn't trash his place before we left like we did to Tish."

Becca smacked Lilly's arm and hushed her. "Shut up, big mouth."

"Excuse me?" Bucky asked and flicked his attention to his sisters. He didn't like hearing that name. Clint had brought her up a few times since the whole ordeal but Steve and Bucky made a point not to mention her at all. "What did you do?"

Steve looked a little alarmed and Lilly shrugged her shoulders up guiltily. She looked over at Becca to see what she should do. "Depends. Are you going to get mad at us if we tell the truth?" Becca asked.

"Depends on what you did," Bucky said and crossed his arms. Not that he was going to really care what they did to the woman but it was still not a good habit for them to get into. Steve hadn't actually done anything with Tish but she did try to steal him from Bucky. So Bucky would probably chastise them a bit but not too much.

Steve was a bit nervous about what the girls did but he stayed quiet. "Well," Becca said. "We waited a few weeks so nobody would get suspicious and we snuck into her house while she was away for the night," Becca explained. "Then Lilly and I took a hacksaw to one of her pipes and flooded her basement. We took all her jewelry and dug it in a hole in her backyard so she thought it was burglars."

Bucky was stunned silent for a while. He just shook his head and stared at the table. He honestly didn't know what to say. He quietly took another bite of his stew and cleared his throat. There was so much going through his mind but the first thing he decided to say was, "Well, I guess there's no doubt that you two are Barnes's. Every Barnes is a criminal in one way or the other. Lilly, I think you hold the record for youngest con, though."
"You flooded her basement and stole-" Steve started but was cut off.

Becca held her hand up and interrupted. "It's not stealing if it never left her property," Becca insisted.

Steve couldn't help but stare for quite some time but ultimately he rubbed his face with a groan. "I can't even be mad at you guys for doing that."

---

"I can," Bucky said. "But I'm far too tired today to do anything about it." He pulled his hair back and sighed. "Just... don't do that shit," Bucky said half-heartedly and waved it off. He looked to Steve to have him add whatever he wanted to his sentiment.

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Lilly huffed at Becca. "I told you Bucky would get mad," she grumped.

Steve just shrugged his shoulders at Bucky. "Tish is awful and they didn't do any harm to her. I'd go easy on them," Steve said. "And this is coming from a police officer."

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"I could be a lot more upset," Bucky said tiredly. "I just don't want you two to start your rap sheets this early." He shook his head again and looked to Steve. He wasn't honestly too upset about what they did, just that they did it. He couldn't help but feel like this was his fault. He wasn't a good influence on them in these respects. "How did you know where she lived?"

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"We tricked Clint into telling us," Becca said with a hint of pride in her voice. Or maybe Clint kind of wanted Tish to get some grief and knew the girls would get off easy if they got caught. Either way, he wouldn't admit it to Bucky.

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"Dammit, Clint," Bucky said quietly. That man couldn't resist anything that his sisters wanted. "Okay, let's just blow past this whole thing, yeah?" He helped clean up Christopher's face when he got some banana all over him and hoped that everyone else would just drop this.

---

"Beh!" Christopher called to get Becca's attention before flinging his banana peel at her and cackling because he knew he wasn't supposed to do that but throwing things was funny to him.

"Hey!" she complained as her stew splashed on her. Thankfully, there was barely any left. "When is his throwing phase going to end?"

---

Bucky squeezed his eyes shut for a moment and then took Christopher into his arms. "Alright, Bean, bathtime then bedtime. You're not supposed to throw things at your aunts." He looked to Steve and asked, "Do you mind cleaning up in here while I get him off to bed?"

---

Christopher giggled and snuggled against Bucky's chest when he was picked up. "I'll take care of it,"
Steve promised. He cleaned up dinner and was quick to go back to the nursery to finish setting up Christopher's things. He was able to finish just after Bucky got him dressed for bed.

"Okay, he's ready for bed," Bucky said and brought him over to Steve. Bucky's hair was wet from when he got too close to Christopher and the boy had decided that splashing water on his papa's head was appropriate. "I think we should keep our door open tonight so if he gets confused about where we are and starts to cry then we will hear him faster."

"I'm going to miss having him in our room," Steve said, rubbing a hand over the baby's back. "I loved getting to turn over and watch him sleep. Or sometimes I would wake up to him staring at us, waiting for us to get up." He kissed the top of Christopher's head. "I got you a new toy for bedtime, Bean. It'll play music so you won't be so lonesome."

Bucky smiled softly as he watched Steve turn on the toy and place it on top of the dresser. It played quiet gentle melodies that would be perfect to get him to go to sleep. "If you really don't want him out of our room yet we can move the crib to the master. I don't mind. I was just thinking that he will need his own space eventually and we all need to get used to it. Especially if a new baby comes soon."

Steve watched as Christopher listened to the new toy. "How adorable will it be if he gets to share a room with his brother or sister? They can keep each other company so neither has to be lonely," Steve said. "Let's give him a chance to be alone in his room before we move his crib in with us."

"Okay." Bucky smiled and took Steve's hand. "I think he will be fine by himself. I know he's gotten used to us being around but I think he's smart enough to know that we would never leave him." Bucky led Steve back to the master bedroom. They had boxes of their things piled around and all they had managed to get done was to set up their bed. "It's been a long day. But it's been a good one."

Steve collapsed onto their bed with a tired groan. "I'm so relieved that it's over. I've been thinking about sleeping in here with you all day long," he said. "Come here and give me a kiss, Love," he said. "We're homeowners now."

Bucky chuckled and flopped on top of Steve. "We have our own home!" he said excitedly and leaned in to give Steve a kiss. "I love you so much. This was a good decision, I think." He rubbed his hands over Steve's chest and arms and just stared at him.

"I know it was a great decision," Steve said happily. "Now we don't have a landlord to answer to or crappy neighbors. We have more room for more kids. We have a basement. This is the kind of thing
"I've always dreamed about." He cupped the sides of Bucky's face and kissed him slowly. "How're you feeling?"

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"I'm feeling good." Bucky nodded. "A little worried that Christopher will wake up a bunch in the night, but, otherwise, I'm fine. I am really tired, though. I think we should just head to sleep. I have to be at work early tomorrow and Clint and Tim are both off until the second shift so it's me and Reggie."

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Steve pouted a little but kissed Bucky's cheek anyway. "Alright. I guess I'll have to wait for another day to make love with my husband in our new house," he said in a teasing tone. "Love you, Sweetheart." He wrapped his arms tightly around Bucky's shoulders and nuzzled him affectionately.

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Bucky snuggled into Steve and was quiet for a second. "We can make love if you want to," he said softly. "I'm awake enough for that. And it is our first night in the house. Everyone's asleep and we aren't as close to the girls so we don't have to worry that they might hear."

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"You just said you were tired, Love," Steve said. "I'd rather wait until we both were fully awake." He stroked a hand over Bucky's back and said, "I won't complain if we get naked and fall asleep like that, though." It wasn't so cold out that they needed pajamas.

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Bucky nodded and yawned. "Yeah, let's do that." He sat up and slowly started peeling his clothes off of himself tiredly. Once he was undressed, he laid back down and waited for Steve to snuggle back to him. "Do you think it's my fault that the girls thought it was an okay idea to break into a strangers house and flood her basement?"

---

Steve undressed and made a happy noise as he got to cuddle skin-to-skin with Bucky. It felt perfect. He closed his eyes and let out a content sigh. "It's not your fault. I wouldn't even blame them for what they did. That woman was an awful friend and an awful person. And they didn't hurt her or steal anything."

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"They still broke in. And destroyed a pipe. She didn't deserve that," Bucky said. "I just feel like this is step one in them becoming too much like me. I know I'm not always a great influence but, breaking and entering, Steve. That's a big deal. What if they decide to solve all their problems that way?"

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"We tell them it's not an acceptable way of handling things and we won't stand for them making a habit of this," Steve said. He played with Bucky's hair gently. "They're good kids. They're not going to get in trouble over stuff like this, Baby."
Bucky kissed Steve's neck and hummed in agreement. "Okay. I hope you're right," he whispered. He gently rolled them both over so he was spooning Steve. He tucked his arm over Steve's chest and pushed as close against him as he could. "I love you. Thank you for our new house. Sleep well, Baby."
Steve slept like a log that night and didn't wake up when Christopher started crying down the hallway. It wasn't until morning that he finally roused and looked around for his husband. He threw on a pair of pajama pants and wandered into the kitchen. Nothing. So he went to the baby's room and smiled fondly when he saw Bucky asleep on the floor with all of Christopher's extra blankets and stuffed animals as cushioning. "Dada," Christopher said then pointed at Bucky. "Papa." Steve picked up the baby and placed him down on the ground so he could crawl over to his pop. "Papa!" he said, patting his face.

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Bucky was startled from his sleep and his eyes worked to focus in on his son. "Christopher? How'd you get out of your crib?" he asked and then looked up to see Steve hovering over him. "Oh, hey, Baby. How long have I been in here? I was just going to wait until he fell asleep but then I fell asleep."

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Christopher laughed and kissed Bucky's cheek before climbing onto him to get him to play. "I don’t know. I woke up a few minutes ago and wondered where you went off to." Steve sat down next to him and played with his hair. "You looked really cute sleeping down there."

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Christopher was crawling all over Bucky's chest and arms and giggling as he went. Bucky yawned and looked up to Steve. "I'm surprised you didn't wake up when he cried. Becca stood at her door and angrily glared at me until I calmed him down."

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"Oh, man, I know that look," Steve said with a cringe as he imagined Becca's pissed look - the one that said she was fed up and she sure as hell wasn’t going to be the one fixing the problem. "Sorry that I didn't wake up. I guess I was super tired last night."

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"That’s alright." Bucky sighed and sat up. He held Christopher to him as he popped into the hall to check the clock. "I don't have to be up for about two more hours. And the girls need to be up in three. If we can get our boy back to sleep, would now be a permissible time for that new homeowner sex?"

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Steve smiled brightly and nodded his head excitedly. "I like the sound of that," he agreed. "Alright, Christopher, time to take a nap so your dads can have some private time," Steve said sweetly to their son, who just giggled in response and signed at Steve that he was thirsty.

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Bucky handed him his sippy cup of water and then eased him back into the crib. "Go back to sleep, Sweetheart," Bucky said and pet Christopher's hair. "I love you." He flicked the lights out again and took Steve's hand to lead him back to their room. "It's so strange not being in our bedroom at the old
apartment."

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"I miss it a little," Steve admitted. "It's where we lived together and started our lives as a couple." He sighed. "We have a lot of good memories there."

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"We have so many good memories there," Bucky agreed and looked around their room. It was filled with their unopened boxes and their bed. They hadn't brought their dresser in from the hall yet and they hadn't set up their side tables yet either. It was so bare. Also, it was Bucky's parents' old room. He remembered exactly what it had looked like when they lived in it and it kept throwing him off.

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Steve stroked his fingers over Bucky's jaw lightly when he saw Bucky look around the room. "We are going to have even more good memories here," Steve promised. "I'm so proud of you, Buck, you have no idea." He kissed him gently. "Are you feeling alright? I know it's got to feel a little weird being in this room."

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Bucky nodded in agreement. "This was their room. The last place they had a good nights sleep." He sighed and looked around at the boxes. This room was still theirs. It hadn't yet become his and Steve's and it probably wouldn't until they were all unpacked. Bucky whined and looked at Steve, "Oh my god, no. I'm never going to be able to have sex in this room - my parents' room - am I?"

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Steve buried his face in Bucky's shoulder with a pathetic groan. "I was afraid that would be the case," he said. He wouldn't rush his husband or pressure him to have sex there before he was ready, though. Steve kissed Bucky's forehead gently. "We got to make it our room first, don't we?"

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"Yeah," Bucky agreed and gave Steve's arm a squeeze. "Here, come on," he said and started shoving some boxes where the nightstands would be. He hoisted another box on top and then rummaging in another to find the framed drawing of Christopher asleep on Bucky's chest. "Just make it like how our room at the apartment was. We can drag the dresser in too."

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Steve chuckled and went to work. He hung up the drawing above where the nightstand would go and started unboxing whatever he could to get the place looking more like they lived in there. "How's that so far?"

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"Good." Bucky smiled and took out a lamp to place on top of the makeshift cardboard box nightstand. They dragged the dresser in and did a few other things and then sat back on the bed triumphantly. "That's pretty close. Of course, boxes aren't quite as good as our nightstands but I think it'll do for tonight."
Steve nodded and laid back on the bed and crossed his arms behind his head. "I'll get to setting it up properly later," Steve said. "I want to take the time to make sure I get it exactly right.

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Bucky sighed contentedly and snuggled up close to his husband. "This'll always be my parents' place, but pretty soon it'll be our place just as much. You know? I think the girls have already settled back in. After they have everything unpacked, I think it'll be easy to feel like home once again."

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Steve stroked a hand over Bucky's back and kissed him a few times. "It'll be the only home Christopher will remember. That's got to count for something. And he will love it here just like you guys did."

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"I think he's still pretty confused about what we are doing here. It may take him a few days to really get adjusted to being on his own at night and being in a new place," Bucky said. "Anyway, we had plans, I think?" He kissed Steve's neck and rubbed a light hand down Steve's arm.

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Steve made a small sound of approval and gently stroked his hand over Bucky's ass. "He's a smart boy. He'll catch on," he said confidently and slowly pushed Bucky's pants down so he could touch his now bare ass. "How do you want to do this the first time in our new home?"

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"I want it calm and slow and perfect and warm," Bucky said with a passionate little smile. "With me on the bed cradled in your arms and you inside me." He licked his lips slowly and tilted his head to the side. "How does that sound to you, Baby?"

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"I can do that," Steve said with a happy glow all around him. "It sounds perfect." He gently moved Bucky so he was pinned beneath him and he slowly ground his hips against Bucky's while he kissed down his neck.

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"What's your favorite thing about the new house?" Bucky asked and moved his hands up above his head. "I mean besides owning it and getting to all be here together and all that. I mean, what are you most excited about that we didn't have at the other place."

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Steve kissed down Bucky's chest and stopped at each nipple to tease it between his teeth. "I like the little garden we have here that I can plant vegetables in," he said. "And the large windows in the nursery so Christopher can see the outside better." Steve placed a kiss on Bucky's hip. "I especially love having all this extra space to fill up with our family."

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Bucky hummed in approval and squirmed a little underneath Steve. "Guess what Lilly asked when
you were helping Becca with her bed? She asked if this meant we could finally get a dog, too. I told her we would think about it but it's not likely."

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Steve chuckled. "We are getting another baby before we're getting a damn dog," he said. "She already has one animal she doesn't take care of." Steve pet a hand down Bucky's side as he shimmied further down his body. He wrapped his fingers around the base of Bucky's dick and leaned in to tease the head with his tongue.

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Bucky gasped and bit his lip. His hand went down to hold the back of Steve's head. "We are getting another baby. I want Missy's baby. I know Becca isn't going to be happy but I know I can be a good father and a good brother. I can do it."

---

Steve's eyes lit up and he looked up at Bucky with such a happy expression. If his mouth hadn't been full, he would've said something but, for now, he would focus on making love. He slowly bobbed his head along Bucky's length, taking his time swallowing Bucky's cock and getting him all needy for him.

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Bucky stopped talking and just watched Steve lick and suck on his cock. He had set the lube up on the pillow and he reached for it and passed it down to Steve as a subtle hint that he should get going. Bucky was getting impatient to have Steve make love to him.

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Steve took the lube without stopping what he was doing. He coated his fingers with it and pushed two inside of his husband at once. He swallowed Bucky's cock down all the way and looked up at him with dark eyes as he worked his fingers in and out of his ass.

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Bucky whined high in his throat and desperately pulled at Steve's arm. Steve opened him up for a few wonderful minutes but then Bucky was ready and wanted it. "Come on, Stevie, Baby," he whispered. "Go ahead, I'm ready. Want to feel your cock opening me up. And I need to kiss you."

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Steve pulled off Bucky's dick with a wet pop and crawled up so he was hovering over Bucky. "You want it bad, don't you?" He slicked up his own cock and lined up to Bucky's ass. "Gonna give you what you need, Love." Steve claimed Bucky's lips in a slow, hot kiss as his dick split him open.

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Bucky moaned into the kiss and then giggled in his throat. Sometimes he couldn't even fathom how much he loved his husband. It was overwhelming. Steve hadn't moved yet, just held himself inside Bucky and kissed him. They kissed so long that Bucky was left breathless and had to tuck his face into Steve's shoulder to take a breather.
Steve waited for Bucky to look comfortable and ready for him. Then he slowly dragged his dick out before easing it back inside. "I love how good you feel, Baby. Wish I could keep you in here and make love to you all day," he groaned softly.

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"We can plan a day like that soon if you want?" Bucky asked hopefully. "Your mother did tell me a few days ago that she thinks we have been keeping her grandson from her. And I know Becca wanted to learn how to hem the sleeves on her jacket so she would like to see your mom and get her guidance."

---

Steve let out a laugh at how on bored Bucky seemed for a bit. They could just be so connected sexually and still hold conversations like they were just having a snack. He absolutely fucking loved it and couldn't believe sometimes how perfectly they fit together. He kissed him deeply and gave Bucky's ass a small squeeze as he gave a bit rougher of a thrust. "Consider it done, Husband." He gripped his hip tighter and started rocking his own hips hard enough into Bucky to make the bed creak under their weight.

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Bucky let a stream of happy little groans escape his lips and he held on to Steve tightly. "You know what I like about - mmm fuck - making love like this? It's purposeful and intimate. And I like talking with you while we make love. It makes it feel so beautifully normal but special at the same time. Do you understand?"

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Steve wrapped a hand around Bucky's dick and started to stroke him with every thrust. "I understand," he said breathlessly. "I get to say 'I love you' a million different ways when we do this." He took Bucky's hand and guided it down to his hole so he could feel how Steve's dick stretched it.

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Bucky's heart beat faster and he actually blushed a little bit. "This time last year we had only been living together for about a month. And now all this time later you still make me feel so... I don't know. It's like sometimes you catch me off guard and my whole being is set on fire."

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"I love it when I make you blush," Steve said sweetly. He cupped the side of Bucky's neck as he nipped at his throat. "That means I'm doing my job as a husband," he said. "You do the same to me."

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"You're my favorite, you know?" Bucky said with a smirk. "I love being with you. And I'm beyond excited to grow old with you." He reached up and tugged a bit on Steve's hair. "I think I see a grey hair right in here already."

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"Don't joke like that," Steve gasped, swatting Bucky's hand away and trying to play it cool even though Steve was definitely going to comb through his hair in the mirror to make sure he didn't find
any greys. "Talk sweet to me."

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"What do you want to hear then?" Bucky chuckled and lifted his legs up to wrap around Steve so he could get deeper inside him. "Because I think it's nice to know that I'm pleased about you getting grey hairs but you don't seem too happy about that."

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"I'm not even thirty yet," Steve lamented. "Compliment me on how hot I am and how spry I am," he tried. He could feel himself getting closer to orgasm and his thrusts became faster and harsher as he tried to hit the angle he knew Bucky loved.

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Bucky shut his eyes and pushed against Steve's thrusts. "You are twenty-four, Love, of course, you are hot and spry and young and you've got two working hips. You're working them right now." He laughed to himself.

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Steve pouted a little but he quickly let it drop because he wanted to focus on how perfect it felt being inside of Bucky. He kissed along his neck and teased Bucky's nipples with his fingers. "I want to feel you come," Steve rumbled. He dragged his nails down Bucky's chest and then down to his hole. His finger pressed slowly against his hole so he spread Bucky a little wider as he fucked him.

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"God, yes," Bucky whimpered and shut his eyes tight. "That feels so good. Another, please, Baby." He pulled Steve closer to him so he could lick into his mouth. He hummed softly and let his hands trail down Steve's back to cup his ass.

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Steve obeyed. He loved it when Bucky got just overwhelmed enough to lose himself a little. A second finger carefully eased its way inside. "One of these days I'm going to have you on your hands and knees," he growled, rocking his hips steadily. "And I'm going to watch your hole as I play with it and see how much I can stretch it."

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"Oh, god!" Bucky yelped. Steve really did know how to get him worked up. His chest heaved up and down with each desperate deep breath he took. "I'm gonna come, Steve," he said quickly and leaned forward to clamp his teeth into Steve's shoulder as his orgasm exploded through him.

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Steve's eyes were dark and focused on every move Bucky made. He watched how his chest rose and fell heavily and how his body wound up right before his release. Steve groaned at the bite but he was more focused on the fucking fantastic tight heat around his cock. Steve pushed forward, grinding into him and taking his husband for a few more thrusts before emptying inside of him.
Bucky was still in the afterglow of his orgasm when Steve flopped on top of him and breathed against his neck. He wrapped his arms around Steve and clenched his ass around his dick a few times to get everything he could from it. "First time in the new house," he whispered.

---

Steve’s body trembled lightly from how good he felt and he laid down on top of Bucky with his softening dick still inside him. "Not bad for our first time, huh?" He chuckled. Steve reached up to play with Bucky's hair with his clean hand. "You're beautiful."

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"Stop it," Bucky complained lightly and rolled them so he was laying on top now. "You're much more attractive than me. I don't even know why you wanted me in the first place." He was partially joking. He knew how much Steve loved every bit of him, inside and out. And he had grown more accustomed to believing in Steve’s praises as time went on.

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Steve looked up at Bucky with eyes full of love. "You're the best dad, husband, and brother a guy could ever be," he said with a genuine reverence. "I love watching you with our son. Now I'm imagining you with a baby in each arm, singing to them both."

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"Well, if that's what you want to see, I need to get to work so we will have the money to afford another kid," Bucky said and kissed Steve a few times before getting up. "I'm going to go in a little early because we have a few crates that need unpacking. The girls will be up in about an hour for school."

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Steve pouted when Bucky got up and he rolled over to watch his husband as he got ready. "If you must," he said dramatically with a playful smile. "I'll make sure they're up in time and fed." Steve snuggled into the pillows and set his alarm to make sure he woke up from his nap in time. He was all too happy to have dreams of Bucky lying asleep in bed with two babies curled up on his chest, sleeping just as soundly.
A week or so later.

Bucky waited at the door for Missy. He always walked her back to her aunt’s house after every meeting. The baby would be coming in about two months and Missy was pretty big now and ready to get the baby out of her. "Hey, Missy, ready to get going?" he asked and helped her on with her coat.

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Missy thanked him as she zipped up her coat over her large baby bump. "Yeah, I'm ready to sleep for a year," she said. "I swear, anyone who tells you that carrying a baby is magical is lying to you. It's hell and a half. I sure hope it's cute so it'll at least be worth the trouble."

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Bucky chuckled and led her down the sidewalk. "My mother always told me that the bravest thing a person could do is carry a baby. Sometimes I thought she was exaggerating the pain but I know I couldn't handle it if I were in her shoes."

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"I sometimes wonder if I should have aborted it... but it doesn't feel right to me, killing it," she said and sighed. "Did you and Steve move into your new house yet?" she asked, looking like the question was going to lead to another.

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Bucky nodded. "Yeah, we did. It's amazing. We have almost everything all unpacked." He paused and took a breath. "For what it's worth, I think that a woman should always do what's best for them. But, that being said, I'm glad you choose not to abort this baby... because then Steve and I wouldn't have been able to have it." He glanced at her with a smile. "If you'll let us be the ones to raise it, that is."

---

Missy's head snapped over to him and she stared wide-eyed for a moment to make sure she heard him right. And then a big grin spread on her face and she punched his arm lightly. "I knew it! I knew you guys were scoping out the little sucker when you invited me for dinner! Of course!"

---

"Well, we weren't sure yet about it but Steve wanted to meet you," Bucky said. "At that point, I actually didn't think it was a good idea but I've changed my mind." He gave Missy a gentle hug. "And we will take such good care of this baby. You don't have to worry at all. And I'll have to talk to Steve about it, but I'm okay with an open adoption type thing where you can come visit the baby if you like."
Missy started crying a little because she was so relieved to know that she had a home for her baby. "I know you two will do such a good job. I see how you are with Christopher," she said and then thought for a second. "It doesn't have to be an open adoption. I don't need to see it after it's born. I'm not much of a mother."

Bucky nodded and wrapped an arm around her. "If that's what you want to do, then that is fine with me." He didn't want her to do anything she wasn't comfortable with. "Would you like to come over to our place for dinner? You can see the nursery. And I know Steve would love to talk to you about what we can do to help you with this and to make a plan for when you go into labor."

Missy nodded her head. "I'd really like that. I don't have many friends since the pregnancy and since my parents kicked me out, so nights out are nice." She paused and then asked hesitantly, "Would you still want the baby even if I kind of... fell off the wagon with sobriety?"

Bucky looked at her for a second worriedly. "Of course, Missy. We took Christopher from a dangerous situation. His biological parents were drug dealers and addicts and I don't doubt they were using while she was pregnant. I'd hate to see you lose all the progress you've made so far. I'll do whatever I can to help you with your sobriety. I know you don't have someone as a support system like I do with Steve. Have you been drinking again?"

She ducked her head and was quiet for a moment. "I haven't touched alcohol even though I've really, really wanted to. Sometimes I smoke weed to get through the pain from carrying this kid." Even though she knew smoking wasn't good for the baby. "I was out with a friend from high school and we did some lines of coke," she admitted. "I feel awful about it. But I needed to escape."

Bucky licked his lips nervously and looked down at the ground for a second. "I understand, Missy. I want alcohol so badly sometimes. And yes, I'll admit, sometimes I wish I could do coke again. I think the difference is that I have my family that I'm doing this for. You started to get sober because of the baby and now that it's getting closer to being born, you are getting closer to not having your reason, your motivation, anymore. I don't know how to help find a new one for you but I can be here for you when you feel like using again. You know you can call our house or the record shop or the precinct whenever you might need me or Steve, right?"

"But Steve is a cop. He's going to report me and my friend or whoever else I score coke from if I call him," Missy said. "That's his job." She didn't sound bitter because of it, but she wasn't going to call a narc when she was trying to get high. "You already have so much on your plate. All I got is a job and I'm still fucking that up."

"I want to help," Bucky repeated. "And so does Steve." He led her down the block towards their
new place and pointed at it so she knew they were almost there. "I know as well as you do how hard it is to stay clean. If you just try to rely on me a little for this, I can be there for you. You're not alone, okay?" He thought for a second. "You really are just doing this for the baby, aren't you? Once it's born, you'll go back to coke and alcohol?"

---

Missy sighed. "I am," she mumbled. "I'm not a bad person. But I'm not a very good one, either," she said. "I don't really want to stop drugs and booze," she admitted. "It's fun. And I know it'll fuck up my life, but I'm here for a good time. Not a long time. My aunt's nice enough to keep me around because I don't bring my drugs home. But I'm not exactly a pillar of society."

---

"Missy, I won't lie to you," Bucky said and stopped out in front of the door to the house. "If I didn't have my kids and Steve to care for, I'd still be doing all that stuff. I know what it's like. I loved coke. It was... it was fucking righteous. Even though I knew it was ruining me, I didn't care. I didn't care what I was doing to hurt myself. Don't tell Steve I said any of this. But I don't want to pretend that I think you're doing bad things. It's your life. And pretty soon after the baby is here, you won't have anyone but yourself who needs you sober, so I get it. Just, do me a favor. Until the baby is here, call me whenever you think you might use again. Do it for that little life that can't make that choice yet. After that, it's up to you. I'll always be here to help you if you decide later that you want to get sober. But right now, I'm not going to convince you otherwise."

---

Missy looked surprised when Bucky admitted that he felt that good doing drugs. The man was sober as anything now, so she thought that he wouldn't want to touch the stuff ever again. She sighed and rubbed her face. "Alright... alright..." She hugged Bucky briefly and managed to smile up at him. "Thanks for being such a good friend."

---

Bucky hugged her back and chuckled softly. "Of course, Missy. I'm not kidding. I'm here for you whenever, okay?" He unlocked the door and ushered her inside. "Come on, let's go talk to Steve about the baby. He'll be so happy to see you."

---

When they got inside, Steve was singing the alphabet with Christopher - who just babbled along with the tune - as he cooked dinner for everyone. When he saw that Bucky brought Missy over, he beamed. "Hey, you guys! You're just in time!"

---

Bucky went and gave Christopher a kiss and hugged Steve firmly. "Missy and I had a conversation about the baby just now," Bucky said and beamed up at Steve. "Told her that we will take it if she'll let us."

---

"Papa, hi!" Christopher said happily as he waved at Bucky.

Steve's face lit up and he turned to Missy. "Are you letting us? Can we really adopt your baby?" Missy blushed and nodded her head. Steve let out an excited sound and spun her in his arms before
rushing over to squeeze Bucky in a tight hug.

---

Bucky laughed and said, "Careful with the pregnant girl!" He held on to Steve and kissed his cheek and neck and lips then picked up Christopher, "You're going to get a little sibling!" Bucky said excitedly to him.

---

Steve gasped. "Yeah, Christopher, you're going to be a big brother! Isn't that exciting?" The baby just made loud noises to mimic his parents. Steve looked over to Missy with the happiest smile in the world. "You want to see the nursery? I always imagined Christopher sharing it with his baby sibling once they were able to sleep through the night."

---

Missy followed them to the nursery and Steve explained how they would rearrange everything to fit in another kid. "I'll have to make another crib," Bucky said with wide eyes. He hadn't thought of that yet. "I have a month and a half to make another crib."

---

Steve put a hand on Bucky's shoulder. "I can help you. I watched you make the other one. I can even take a trip up to Seneca to get more wood from there if you want," Steve offered. Missy put her hand over her belly as she watched the two. "You weren't done with the crib when we had Christopher either," Steve reminded.

---

"I know I wasn't," Bucky said. "And I was stressed and hurriedly finishing it the night we got him." Christopher reached up to stick his fingers on Bucky's mouth. Bucky removed the hand and kissed his son. "Missy, do you know if the baby is a boy or a girl?"

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"No, I don't know yet. I wanted to find a family who didn't care what it was," she admitted. "But if you guys want to know, I can schedule an appointment to find out." Steve looked at Bucky, not sure if he wanted it to be a surprise or not.

---

"I don't mind waiting to find out," Bucky said. "Steve, what do you think? Regardless, we should think of another boy's name just in case since we have our girl's name but not a second boy."

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Steve nodded his head. "Should we choose your dad's name? Or give him one of our names?" Steve asked. "I want it to be a surprise, too, but we got to get a boy's name ready just in case."

---

"We can talk about some options later tonight," Bucky said with a smile and turned to Missy. "We will let it be a surprise. We are just so excited that you're letting us be the ones to raise the baby. Steve and I will take such good care of it."
Steve smiled and gave Missy a careful hug. "Bucky's right. We will give him or her the best life we can give a kid," he promised. "And it makes us both so happy to know you're willing to trust us with that little life in you." He paused before asking, "Can I see if I can feel them kicking?"

"Yeah, of course," Missy smiled and took one of Steve's hands and put it on her tummy. "The baby isn't very active. I've only felt a few kicks, to be honest." Bucky put his hand alongside Steve's and waited for something to happen.

"They must be saving their energy, I guess," Steve mused. He stood there for a minute or so but when nothing happened, he gave her a smile and moved his hand. "Thank you for letting me try," he said. "Someone must be shy," he joked.

"The baby just doesn't know you're going to be its dad," Missy said. "That or it's sleeping. Do babies sleep when they are in the womb? I don't even know." She shrugged and held her stomach again. She was getting hungry and so was Christopher. He kept grumbling and signing to Bucky for food.

"I imagine that they got to. Especially this far along," Steve said. When he saw Christopher signing, Steve ushered them back to the kitchen so he could feed them all. Becca and Lilly came in and saw Missy. They looked at each other, knowing what this meant.

Bucky watched his family all sit down at the table together and he tried not to look over at Becca. He knew she was probably not going to approve at all. He really did think this was a good idea, though. He could be a good dad of two and a brother of two. He would work on being good for all of them just like Becca asked.

Missy gave the girls a shy smile. "Bucky's told me all about you two," she said. "He can't say enough nice things about you," she added.

Bucky was quiet and glanced over at Steve for help. He didn't want the girls to be upset or rude in front of Missy but he also wanted to explain to them that, yes, they were going to have her baby and make their family a little bigger.

Steve gave Becca a small look to try and silently tell her to behave. Lilly was more welcoming. "So are we getting another baby? Do I get to be the godmother again?" she asked.
"Yes, we are getting another baby," Bucky said with a small smile. "Missy has agreed to let us adopt her child. As for you being the godmother, we will have to discuss it. Maybe Becca wants to be the godmother this time."

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Lilly turned to Becca. "You always complained about them getting another. You don't get to be the godmother," she said.

Becca glared. "Maybe I should be. I'll do a better job than you," she countered, just to annoy Lilly.

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"How about we discuss it later?" Bucky said sternly. He really didn't want Missy to be uncomfortable while the girls were fighting or anything. "Steve, I think after dinner, we should talk to Missy about a game plan for when she goes into labor."

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Steve nodded. "Good idea. I think we need to set some sort of plan too," he said. He kissed Bucky's cheek and continued to eat.

After their dinner, Steve stood up and cleared off their plates. Missy shifted in her chair and reached for Bucky's hand. "Is there really a big process about going into labor?" she asked.

---

"Well," Bucky started and squeezed her hand gently. "It's a bit of a big deal. And it can last a while. What I think we should talk about is what to do once your water breaks. Like having the phone numbers to reach us, if you want either of us in the room with you or not, what you want us to have ready to bring for you to make it more comfortable. That sort of thing."

---

Missy looked a bit nervous now. She hadn't really thought this through yet. "No offense to Steve, but I would only want you to be there," she said to Bucky quietly. "I don't want a show out of me pooping out a baby," she said with a nervous laugh.

---

"I understand," Bucky nodded. "I wouldn't want a show out of that if I were in your shoes. And if you don't want me in the room either then I don't have to be. Steve and I can both wait outside. Do you want your aunt to be there with you?"

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"My aunt says she doesn't want to be there unless I want her there. And I don't want her there because I don't want her to feel bad about me giving the baby away. I don't want her to get attached and have to see it go," she said.

---

Bucky looked to Steve and then back to Missy. "Does your Aunt want you to keep it?" he asked and reached for Steve's hand so he knew he could give input or ask questions anytime he liked. This was about all three of them and the baby.
"She wishes I would but I think she's relieved she doesn't have to look out for both me and a baby," Missy said.

Steve nodded. "Do you think you would ever want kids of your own someday?"

"No," Missy said firmly. "I mean, maybe eventually, but I don't think I will change my mind. The way I like to live isn't a good environment for a child to be in, I don't think." She looked to Bucky. She wasn't going to share with Steve what she had shared with Bucky about going right back to coke and alcoholic once this kid was out of her.

"It's not for everyone, I guess. I'm so happy to have Christopher but even he can be a handful sometimes and he's a perfect son," Steve said, reaching over to gently pinch Christopher's cheek. The baby giggled in response.

"So," Bucky said, "I will be in labor and delivery with you and Steve will be just outside in case we need him. What do you need us to bring for you? Do you have anything in particular that will make you more comfortable in the hospital?"

"I don't think I'll be interested in much when I'm pushing out a nine-pound alien," she said. "I think what I really need is to be in and out. The second the baby is out, I want to be gone."

"We can do that," Bucky said sadly. "As soon as you can get out of the hospital, I'll take you home. Do you not even want to hold the baby before you give it to us?" It made him so sad that she wouldn't even want that. But granted, she didn't even want to be pregnant in the first place so it made sense.

Missy shook her head. "Don't look so sad. It's better that you two are the only parents the baby ever knows," she said. "I kind of want this pregnancy nightmare to be over as fast as it can be."

"Okay," Bucky said, squeezing Steve's hand and smiling warmly at Missy. "We will do whatever makes you most comfortable. And if it makes you feel any better, you are pretty tiny and I don't think you will be having a nine-pound alien baby. I'm thinking it'll be smaller for sure."

Missy let out a little laugh. "It feels like it weighs a thousand pounds already," she said. "I bet I'll never be able to fit into my jeans ever again," Missy lamented before pointing at the girls who were sitting on the counter eating on some brownies they had made. "Never get pregnant."
Lilly nodded with wide eyes and Becca hid behind her book. Bucky looked at the time. "It's getting late, I think I should be getting you back home. I don't want your aunt to worry. If you have anything else you want to ask, then go for it. And remember to call either of us if you need anything at all."

---

Missy nodded. "Thank you so much. I really do mean it," she said. She gave Steve a hug and headed out with Bucky.

Once Bucky was back and it was just the five of them, Steve looked to Becca. "You want to do a family day at the museum?" he asked.

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Becca moved her book down so she could see Steve. "Which museum?" she asked with squinted eyes. There were definitely certain ones she had already been to a million times and didn't care for anymore.

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"You can choose," Steve said. "It's been a while since we went out and all did something fun as a family that wasn't Lilly's games," he said. "What do you think, Buck?"

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Bucky was distracted trying to change Christopher's diaper but he looked up for a second and said, "Yes, we should definitely go to the museum. Whichver you choose. And we can go to that Mongolian grill that just opened up."

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"What's a Mongolian?" Lilly asked.

Becca groaned and murmured a quiet, "Oh my god," in response.

Steve had to hold back from laughing so he wouldn't make Lilly feel bad. Instead, he answered, "It's a place in Asia."

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"Is it?" Bucky asked and looked from Steve to Becca. "I thought it was like a type of cooking style. You know, 'Mongolian grill cooking.'" He picked up Christopher and set him on the couch next to Steve. "Anyway, we should go there."

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"Well, I guess it's the way the Mongolians cooked, too," Steve said. Becca did her best to not look completely done with her undereducated brother and sister. Steve reached out to play with Christopher's foot. "Hey there, Bean."

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"How's that sound, Becs?" Bucky asked and got up from the ground. "Museum and dinner? Maybe a movie? I know it doesn't really make up for everything, but it's a start, right?"
"It's a start. A small one, but I'll take it," Becca finally agree with a sigh. She shrugged and went back to her book, deciding that she had done enough interacting for the day.

Steve snorted and kissed Bucky's cheek. "She's a tough one to please," he said.

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Bucky sighed and cuddled up close to Steve to speak low and quietly to him. "I think I'm going to have to do a lot to make it up to her. That's okay, though. I won't stop trying."

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After a bit, Lilly went off to sleep and Christopher started whining and pulling on Steve's shirt like he wanted to go to bed as well. Steve picked him up and kissed his face a couple times. "Looks like someone's ready for bed. Let's get you settled in, Little Bean." He carried the baby to the nursery to change him into his pajamas and get him into his crib.

---

Bucky went to take a quick shower while Steve put Christopher down for bed. He didn't bother with clothes and instead just dried off and then laid in bed with a notepad and pen waiting for Steve. He wanted to get started thinking of names for if they had a baby boy.

---

Steve sang Christopher a few lullabies and stayed with him until he fell asleep. He smiled and tucked him in before going back to their room. "He is such a little angel," Steve sighed happily. "I feel so blessed to have him." He slid into bed and wrapped his arms around Bucky.

---

"He really is perfect." Bucky smiled back at Steve and gave him a kiss on the cheek. "And soon he will have to learn to be a big brother. And since there is a possibility that his sibling will be a baby boy, we have some naming to do." He tapped the notepad and said, "Go!"

---

Steve laughed. "Well, I got to put 'James' and 'George' on that list on principle," he said. "'Clinton' is another," Steve rambled. "Have you thought of any you may want to use?"

---

"I'll put 'George' down, but we have been over this, I don't want a 'James Jr.'," Bucky said. "And I think 'Clinton' is a great option. You'd really want to name our baby after Clint? I'm sure he would be ecstatic about it."

---

"But what if I want a 'James Jr.'?" Steve asked. "And I wouldn't mind naming our son after Clint. He's practically family to us and he does so much for all of us. And I think a part of him is still unsure if I've actually forgiven him for spying on me with the Tish thing. This would be proof that I'm over it."

---

"Oh, I can confirm for you that he definitely thinks you are still very angry at him for all of that,"
Bucky said and wrote down ‘Clinton’.

---

"I've forgiven him, but I do take a little pleasure in knowing that he's walking on eggshells around me," Steve teased. "Don't tell him yet. I like him being overly nice around me."

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"You're a little bit evil, Babe," Bucky said and chuckled. "If you want a junior, why can't it be ‘Steve Jr.’? Or how about naming him after your father? Or something other than ‘James’.

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Steve made a face when Bucky wrote down ‘Steven’ and ‘Joseph’. "I don’t know about those names, though. I wouldn't pick ‘Steve’ for my son. And I wasn't close with my dad."

---

"Okay, so no juniors at all. What about ‘Grant’? That's sort of like a junior without it being your first name. What do you think of that? I wouldn't mind a ‘Grant Rogers-Barnes’. ‘Hello, these are our sons Christopher and Grant’."

---

"I can handle ‘Grant’. That's my grandpa's name," Steve said. "My mom told me tons of stories about him." He smiled at the idea because he knew his mom would love the name. "Do we have a good enough list or do we need more names?"

---

"Well, so far it's ‘George’, ‘Clinton’, ‘Grant’," Bucky said. "I think that's a good first name selection. What about middle names? We already used my father's middle name with Christopher. Maybe one of your dad's names could be used as a middle name?"

---

"I don't really want to use my dad's name," Steve said firmly. "I didn't know him that well, and, it's not like I'm bitter about him, but my mom always seems conflicted when he's brought up," Steve explained. "So, uh... maybe it can be the middle name of the doctor that helps deliver him?"

---

"Maybe, but what if that doctor hates gays?" Bucky asked. "Maybe we can let Missy pick the middle name. Although, I don't know if she would even want to. She was pretty adamant about having nothing to do with the baby once it was out of her. Maybe we shouldn't do that then." He thought for a second and then hit Steve's shoulder lightly. "'Francis'? For Father Frank. He's done so much for us. And I think it goes well with any of the three first names."

---

Steve hadn't really considered that. But when Bucky suggested ‘Francis’, he beamed. "That's a great idea!" he said. Steve kissed Bucky's lips gently and smiled. "He will be so happy to hear that." Steve had such respect for Father Frank and truly appreciated all the care he had for his community.
Bucky smiled and set the notepad aside to snuggle against Steve. "I'm glad you like that option." He tugged at Steve's shirt grumpily and said, "Come on, Baby. Let's go to sleep. Off with your clothes. I want to be big spoon tonight and if you wanted to wake me up in the morning with a blowjob, I would not opposed."

---

Steve smirked and undressed for his husband. He snuggled up to him, pressing his ass back against Bucky's body. "You'd never be opposed to a morning blowjob," Steve said fondly.

---

"You got me there," Bucky agreed and wrapped his arm around Steve and held him close. "I love you. I'm so excited to have another baby with you. And I can't wait to have our family day at the museum. I hope little by little I can be what Becca needs me to be."
Steve slept through the night and woke up early so he could check on Christopher. After he changed his diaper, played with him a little, and laid him back down for a nap, Steve went back into their bedroom. He slipped under the covers and started to kiss at Bucky's thighs lightly. Finally, he licked a stripe up his cock.

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Bucky stirred a little but didn't wake up yet. It wasn't until Steve had the head of his dick inside his mouth that Bucky blinked awake. "Hey, you actually did it," he chuckled sleepily. "I love waking up to you. You know that right?"

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Steve pulled off briefly and smiled up at Bucky. "I know you love it. You get to come first thing in the morning." Steve slowly sunk his head down on his husband’s dick and reached a hand to palm at his balls.

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"It's the best way to start the morning," Bucky whispered and shut his eyes contentedly. "I don't know how I lived before you came along. Waking up alone and sad and needy for human contact. But now I have you and you are everything to me."

---

Steve let out a little moan as he worked his mouth over Bucky's dick. He looked up at Bucky to watch his expression as Steve took his time giving him a lazy morning blowjob. He hollowed out his cheeks as he started to tease Bucky's hole with his index finger.

---

Bucky opened his eyes lazily and stared down at Steve. "If you want to, I could go for sleepy morning sex. I kind of want to be inside you. I feel like it's been a while. Only if you want to. Because I'm fine with this if you prefer."

---

Steve snorted. "Please. Like I'd ever turn down letting you make love to me," he said. "I'm not sure how it would feel being woken up to that. But I'm open to trying."

---

"We can try that sometime if you want," Bucky said enthusiastically and pulled Steve up towards him to kiss him. "I'd love to see how far I get before you wake up." He carded his hands through Steve's hair and kissed his jaw. They had pretty much unpacked their room now and the nightstands were set up so it was much easier to grab the lube when they needed it.

---

Steve returned the kiss slowly and then began to nibble affectionately at Bucky's throat. "I have the overnight shift tonight," he sighed. "So don't try it tomorrow morning cause I'll be dead asleep."
You'd probably get all the way without me waking up," he joked.

---

"Okay, fair is fair. I'll make sure you are fairly well rested when I try it," Bucky said and let his hands wander down Steve's body. He stopped at his hips and lightly squeezed. "Where do you want to be? In my lap? On your back? On your hands and knees?"

---

Steve blushed a little and asked, "Can we maybe tie my hands to the bed?" He stroked his fingers through Bucky's hair. "It'd be nice to be able to lay back and watch you, but I'd also like something a little extra."

---

Bucky licked his lips and swallowed. "Fucking yes, of course," he said and hurriedly got up off the bed to get their sex box from the closet. It was significantly less full now. When they were packing to move, Bucky put himself in charge of the sex box. He decided to throw out the plug and Phillip. He hadn't said anything to Steve about it and he made sure he tossed them when Steve wasn't paying attention. Bucky didn't really want to hear the smug satisfaction from Steve at Bucky finally caving and getting rid of his dildo. Bucky had kept the vibrator with the attached remote since Steve had allowed them to use that together before. He was hoping that so long as the toy was smaller than Steve's cock, he could be allowed to occasionally indulge himself.

---

Steve laid himself out on the bed and lazily tugged at his own dick to entice Bucky to hurry up. Also, it felt nice to tease himself a little. "I love how much you've gotten me to open up," Steve said. "It's amazing all that we have accomplished together."

---

"I know," Bucky said with a smile and picked out the velvet ties one by one. "Remember when we first used these ties? I think it was Christmas morning, right?. We had just gotten engaged and we had some time to ourselves. Of course, then I ruined the rest of Christmas, but at least the morning was good." He gingerly slipped Steve's wrist through one loop and started tying it up.

---

"It was still one of the best Christmases I ever had because it was my first Christmas with you," Steve said with a happy smile. That Christmas had certainly been a bit of a ride. But the important part was that they were all a family. He got a little flustered as Bucky tied him up. "This Christmas will be even better. Us and our two babies and your sisters and my mom."

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"Oh my god," Bucky said quietly and gasped. "I didn't even think about this Christmas being Christopher and the baby's first Christmas ever. My god, we have to take so many pictures." He tied his other hand up and sat back to check out his work.

---

Steve beamed up at him. "They're going to be so cute, Bucky," Steve said. He gave the restraints an experimental tug before nodding his head. "It looks like you did a good job, Baby," he praised.
"Can't move my arms at all."

---

"You ready then?" Bucky asked with a happy grin. "You look amazing. Hold on." Bucky popped up from the bed and went to grab the Polaroid camera they had gotten recently. He snapped a picture of Steve and shook it and waited for the picture to appear. Once it did, he gasped and shoved it towards Steve. "Look how gorgeous you are."

---

Steve hid half his face in his arm shyly when Bucky took the picture and he looked so flustered when Bucky showed off the picture to him. "You're going to hide that picture well and good, right?" he asked, giving Bucky a little look. "I don't want anyone but you coming across it."

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"I'm framing it and putting it right next to the door," Bucky said with a confused shake of the head like he couldn't believe Steve would suggest any other option for the photo. "I'll let you take one of me to match. It'll be great."

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"Well, I don't want it to become show-and-tell time with Natasha cause lord knows she finds everything," Steve said. "I want two photos of you," he bargained, giving Bucky a challenging smile.

---

"What are the photos of me going to be?" Bucky asked and set the picture on the nightstand. He crowded in against Steve and rubbed his hands up and down Steve's thighs, making soft little hums as he did so.

---

"Real artsy," Steve said, wiggling a little in anticipation as Bucky touched him. "Kind of like something you see in the dirty magazines, but classy. It won't show anything off, but only just so."

---

"Ooh." Bucky smiled wide. "Racy and sexy and a little weird?" He cupped Steve's balls carefully and lifted them so he could tease at his hole with his pinky. "Are you going to buy me something fancy to wear that you like? Or do you want me totally naked?"

---

"Depends on what I decide," Steve said. He let out a little moan as Bucky cupped his balls. Steve looked at Bucky like he wanted to be fucked already. "I'm thinking about dressing you up like a firefighter. Got to find a way to like those guys somehow."

---

Bucky's eyes got wide. "A firefighter?" He grabbed the lube and quickly covered his pinky and fourth finger and pushed them into Steve together. "You think I'd make a sexy firefighter? I did look pretty good in that velcro police Halloween costume."
Steve closed his eyes and made a quiet sound of approval when Bucky's fingers entered him. "You did look great in that costume," he agreed. "That's what gave me the idea," he said. "Or maybe I can use those paints you got our son and turn your body into a canvas."

"The baby paints?" Bucky giggled. "Those are for Christopher. Not for sexy photo shoots. I'll just ask Monty where he finds body paint." Bucky worked in a third finger and waited, letting Steve adjust. "That reminds me. Monty told me about something we need to try."

"We can buy more. He won't know the difference," Steve said with a pout. His ass instinctively clenched down when Bucky added another finger inside of him. "What do we need to try?"

"Pineapple," Bucky said and stretched his three fingers out as far as he could. "I mean, we've tried pineapple before but Monty said that Evan ate a bunch of pineapple one day and then when he sucked him off later that night, his come tasted amazing and really sweet."

"Oh," Steve said dumbly once he realized where Bucky was going with that. Steve threw his head back and made a desperate sound as Bucky stretched his hole. "Fuck," he swore. "It's worth a shot."

"Worth a shot?" Bucky repeated and started lubing up his cock with his free hand. "Don't you want to know if it really works?" He removed his fingers from Steve and lined himself up. He pushed all the way in slowly and purposefully and leaned down to kiss Steve's cheek as he did.

Steve's hands automatically moved to hold Bucky but when he couldn't make them budge, he made a defeated sound. "I'll believe it when I taste it," he said breathlessly, wrapping his legs around Bucky instead.

Bucky nodded in agreement and held Steve's legs up for him. "Are you good?" he asked and slowly eased himself back out of his husband. Bucky hadn't been inside him for a while - probably a few weeks. Lately, it had been Steve being the top or hurried blowjobs while Christopher was napping. Sometimes Bucky felt like making a schedule to even it out.

"Just go slow," Steve said. He liked it when Bucky was on top even though Steve usually ended up taking control of things. However, he usually required a bit more time to adjust. "I swear you feel bigger every time."

Bucky started pushing in and out of Steve slowly and carefully. "It's just because you don't bottom as
much as top and your ass is always glued shut whenever I want to get in there. Although, I'm not complaining about how tight you are because, my good lord, it always feels amazing."

---

"My ass isn’t glued shut. You just don't take what's yours," Steve teased. After a few thrusts, Steve started to really get into it and started rocking his hips to match Bucky's rhythm. "More," he breathed out.

---

"I'll just take what's mine now, then, shall I?" Bucky asked cheekily and held Steve's hips down firmly against the mattress. He gave Steve a wild, hungry look and started to fuck into him hard and fast and needy.

---

Steve cried out when Bucky started to really fuck him. He arched his back off of the bed and tried to rock his hips but Bucky had them pinned down. "Fuck- oh, fuck-" he gasped out. "Don't stop, Buck. So good."

---

Bucky worked into Steve relentlessly and watched the changes of expressions in Steve's face. When Steve tried again to move his hands to touch Bucky, Bucky reached up and intertwined his fingers with Steve. "How are you feeling? What do you need?" he asked softly.

---

Steve gripped onto Bucky's hand like a lifeline and looked up at him with dark, aroused eyes. "Need you," he gasped out. "Make me come, Buck," he said urgently. "I'm so close..."

---

Bucky nodded and pounded into Steve harder than before. He was desperate for release too but he wanted to see Steve come first. He let go of one of Steve's hands and reached down between them to jerk Steve off in time with his thrusts.

---

"Oh- *fuck*, Bucky, yes!" Steve cried out, throwing his head back and getting really into it. He turned his head into his arm to stifle the sounds he was making as he felt his orgasm get closer and closer. At long last, he finally came hard all over Bucky's hand and his chest.

---

Bucky let out a happy stuttering moan at seeing Steve spill out on his fingers. He also felt his own movements becoming uneven as he offered his fingers to Steve to lick his come up. Bucky only got a few more hasty thrusts in before he was shooting his load far up inside his husband and flinging his head back with a heavy gasp.

---

Steve opened his eyes to watch Bucky finish. He sucked on his husband's fingers greedily and then let out a pleased noise when he felt Bucky come inside of him. He smiled, drunk on how splendid he
felt. "You're so perfect."

---

Bucky slipped his arms around Steve's middle and hugged him close. "God, I love you so much, Steven Grant," he said and looked up to Steve with an expression like he just couldn't believe who he was holding in his arms.

---

Steve's heart soared when Bucky looked at him like that. "You make me the happiest man in the world, you know that? I used to pray to meet someone who loved me like you do."

---

"Your god did right by you," Bucky said and kissed Steve on the lips before taking off the restraints. "This has been a whirlwind of a year, my handsome husband. A lot has happened. More good has happened to me in this year than in my entire life. And as much as I wish my parents could have been here to see them unfold, I'm glad we have this house where they might get to see some of the rest of it."

---

Steve rubbed his wrists before wrapping his arms tightly around Bucky in a big hug. "They're watching over us. And at least this house will get to see one Barnes couple grow old together," he said. "We can make sure of that for your parents' memory."

---

"Rogers-Barnes," Bucky said quietly and nestled into Steve. "And one day, hopefully, we can get married by law on top of married in the church. And maybe we can pass this house to one of our kids and their partner and we can go retire out somewhere like Seneca and spend our days in the calm of nature and having old man sex."

---

Steve laughed at the last bit of Bucky's plan. "Sounds like a perfect life to me," he said. "I think Christopher is going to have first dibs on the house... that's assuming that Becca and Lilly don't fight for it too."

---

"No, he will be fine. Lilly will live in someplace downtown over a bakery or a pizzeria. And Becca will move to Long Island as soon as she has kids because she will want them to have some peace and quiet and room to move around."

---

"I suppose you're right. It'll be weird not having them around. I've barely known them for over a year and yet I feel like they've been a part of my whole life, you know?" Steve sighed. "I love those two so much."

---

Bucky smiled and kissed Steve's face several times. "You have no idea how grateful I am that you
like them. It's hard to attach yourself to someone who has two dependents. No one else even looked at them twice. Just said 'good morning' and left before they could reply."

---

"Their loss," Steve said. He smiled at the kisses and started to play with Bucky's hair. "They can really get my blood boiling sometimes. But I love them anyway. I imagine even Christopher will make me mad at some point."

---

"That's what kids are best at," Bucky admitted. "They are really good at being selfish and annoying and loud and stubborn and adorable and strong and brave and getting under your skin in obnoxious ways and also in the way where you can't help but need to protect and love them at all times."

---

Steve laid his head on Bucky's shoulder. "I want to have a big family so bad, Buck. I want to be able to see all of our babies grow up into amazing people. Won't it be beautiful to see all the good things they'll learn from you?"

---

"Don't forget you're a parent here, too," Bucky said and smiled. "I'm going to be the laid back, jaded parent who has already done this twice before and just lets the kids do what they want. You're the strict one who will hold their hand when they cross the street even when they are teenagers."

---

Steve snorted. "You're going to be more high strung than that. You'll worry about them right alongside me." He pecked Bucky's lips affectionately before rolling off the bed to get dressed. "And speaking of kids, I have to get ours ready for the day."

---

Bucky whined but let Steve go. "How can I help?" he asked and slipped on his pajama pants quickly. He was too hot for a shirt so he just left it off. "When are you working today?" He picked up the photo of Steve all tied up on the bed and he carefully tucked it away in the nightstand underneath the book he was reading. "Here," he handed Steve the bed ties. "Will you put the box back?"

---

"You can wake our son and read him his morning book while I get breakfast ready," Steve suggested pleasantly. Steve took the ties and went to put them away but then looked confused when the box was emptier than normal. "Hey, did you move Phillip?" he asked. "Wow, there's actually a lot missing..."

---

Bucky's grimaced. He should have put the ties away. He sort of forgot he didn't want Steve to notice. He came up to Steve and peered into the box. "Huh... guess they got lost in the move," he said evenly and with a curious reverence as if this was new information to him too.
Steve gave Bucky a look like he wasn't having him for making stuff up. "You loved that thing, Bucky. There's no way it got lost," he said. Steve set the sex box back in their closet. "You tossed it. Why?"

---

Bucky shrugged and raised an eyebrow like it should be obvious why he dumped Phillip. He turned back to the dresser to get an undershirt, not saying anything to Steve. He was just sort of waiting for the smug click of the tongue and Steve to say, 'Wow, finally, Buck! I knew you'd see eventually that I was never going to let you use it.'

---

The smartass remark didn't come. Instead, Steve looked rather guilty. "Buck," he said quietly with a frown. "I didn't mean to make you throw out your stuff. I'm sorry I made you feel that way."

---

Bucky sighed and went to rest his hands on Steve's hips. "Baby, that's not what it was. I did it because I love you and I know it makes you uncomfortable and since we are in this together forever, it just didn't seem right keeping Phillip around. I didn't want you to feel bad every time you saw him and wonder if I was missing getting to use him or anything. This way, it's gone and it won't bug you anymore and I won't be tempted to ask if I can use him."

---

"I still feel bad," Steve mumbled. "I mean, not bad enough to go looking for him or to buy you a new one... but still, I hate the feeling of you not being able to keep something you bought and owned just because I'm a little jealous over some rubber toy."

---

"He was silicone, but I understand what you mean," Bucky murmured and grasped Steve's face in his hands to give him a quick kiss. "Baby." He smiled and rubbed his thumbs over Steve's cheeks. "I have you. I don't need it. I haven't used it since we met. I don't care that he's gone. Just say 'thank you' to me for throwing it out and let's move on. I need to wake up our son."

---

Steve huffed and leaned into Bucky as he gave him a kiss. "Alright... thank you for being such an amazing husband." He pecked the tip of his nose and dressed before heading out to make breakfast for everyone, still feeling icky about the whole thing.
A couple weeks passed and things were pretty normal for them. They had settled into the house completely and Bucky and Steve returned to their regular routine of work and taking care of the kids. Today was Bucky's day off and he and Christopher were playing together while they waited for Steve to come back home. Christopher had taken to banging on empty containers while Bucky played the guitar. He was pretty musically inclined and Bucky loved that. He was about to put Christopher down for a nap when he got a phone call that Steve was in the hospital.

---

They were supposed to wait for the firefighters but there was a kid stuck inside the burning building and Steve couldn't imagine waiting, unable to shake the thought of 'What if Christopher was in that kid's shoes?'. He went rushing in to find the kid and was able to scoop him up in his arms to carry him to safety. Steve got most of the way to the exit before passing out, shielding the kid with himself. Thank god the firefighters got there minutes before the building collapsed and they were able to get Steve and the child out in time. Steve was sent to the hospital immediately. His mom was the first to be called and, in turn, she called Bucky who came as fast as he could. "He still hasn't woken up," she said. "But the doctors say that he's stable."

---

Bucky, who was a flurry of fear and worry and sadness, held Christopher close to him and slipped his hands with Steve's. "Do you know what happened?" he asked Sarah. He looked down at Steve. He looked mostly okay. He had some scratches and burns but it was nothing that wouldn't heal up and be back to normal.

Christopher looked down at Steve and tried reaching for him saying, "Dada, hi," and making upset little noises.

---

"Your dad's sleeping," Sarah said, hushing the baby. "Shh, sleeping." She didn't want the baby to get anxious and upset. She looked back to Steve and said, "There was a small condo on fire. They saw it while they were on their way back to the precinct. One of the residents said that there was a kid still upstairs. Steve went in to get him. The kid's fine, he's already been released with some minor breathing issues and a few cuts and burns."

---

Bucky sighed and pulled up a chair next to his husband. He sat Christopher in his lap and held Steve's hand tightly. Steve was, thankfully, hardly injured on the outside but he seemed to just not be able to pull himself out of sleep. "Last time we were here, Steve, we said no more hospital visits for us for a year," Bucky said to Steve's unconscious form. "It has not been a year."
"He made it close to a year," Sarah mumbled. "But, I'd prefer no more hospital visits, ever."

After about a half hour more, Steve stirred and looked around. Once he realized what happened, he got a guilty look on his face and stared up at his husband worriedly. "I'm sorry, Buck," he croaked out quietly.

"Hey, Baby." Bucky smiled softly and started crying. He gave him a gentle kiss then held Christopher over him so he could give his daddy a kiss too. "Baby, it's okay. I'm here. I'm not mad. Sarah told me you were just helping. You were doing your job."

"Hey, Bean," Steve said, forcing himself to sound normal. He felt groggy and fatigued and it hurt to speak or breathe. He knew he wasn't burned that much, his skin didn't hurt too much. But, his lungs just killed with pain. "How long have you been waiting?"

"Not that long. About a forty-five minutes," Bucky said and raked his fingers through Steve's hair lightly. "Your mom called us and we came right away. The girls are at school, they don't know yet. How are you feeling, Baby? How bad do you hurt?"

Steve took a breath and coughed heartily for a few seconds. "Tired. Grateful to be alive." He slowly sat up and looked over at Christopher and waved. "With some luck, I can still make us dinner tonight."

"No, you are staying right here and then resting once we get home," Bucky said and kissed Steve again softly. "I need to go call the school and tell the girls where we are. Can you hold Christopher or should you not?"

"I'm fine, Buck, don't worry," Steve said stubbornly. He picked up their son and snuggled him close while Bucky went out to call the girls. While Bucky was out, the doctor came in and explained that Steve was clear to go home, but he was required by the precinct to return to the physician every other day for the next week and he had to stay home from work as well.

Bucky helped Steve get ready to go home and he was really careful with him as they walked. Steve insisted on carrying Christopher and Bucky was cautious of every step they took and making sure that Steve was fine and the baby was fine. They got home after about an hour.

Steve huffed and constantly insisted that he was “Fine, thanks,” and he didn't need Bucky babysitting him with their son. When they got home, Steve set Christopher on the floor so he could
wander. "Buck, I inhaled a little too much smoke, that's all. I'm fine."

---

"You don't seem fine. And I'm just trying to make sure you are okay," Bucky said and slipped his arms around Steve. "I'm just trying to make sure my husband is okay. Please just let me be concerned. Please."

---

Steve sighed and gave Bucky a little pout but ultimately nodded and gave him a kiss. "Fine, worry all you want, but I'm still making dinner and I'm still in tip-top shape."

---

"Okay, I will let you, but if you start to feel bad or anything, I need you to tell me. Will you promise me that at least?" Bucky asked and kissed Steve's face and neck a few times. "See? That's a compromise. Sounds good, right?"

---

Steve played with Bucky's hair and nodded. "I promise," Steve swore. He was about to go get the ingredients when he saw Christopher putting a shoe in his mouth. "No! Christopher. That's yucky, iew," he chided as he took the shoe away.

---

"He's done that three times today," Bucky said with a sigh. He picked up his son and placed him on the kitchen table. "You just want to taste everything, Bean. Don't you? Here, Love, I'll get you some strawberries, okay?"

---

"No, Papa, no!" Christopher scolded Bucky as he waggled his finger at him just like Steve would do to him when he was doing something he shouldn't.

Steve couldn't help but smile as he went to grab the chicken from the fridge, still breathing with difficulty, voice still raspy and harsh. "He told you."

---

"What, you don't want strawberries?" Bucky asked curiously. "Sweetheart, strawberries are delicious. Shoes are not." He handed him a couple strawberries and said, "Steve, I think our son might be lactose intolerant."

---

Christopher grabbed one and stuck it in his mouth but he chewed on it with a pout like it had personally offended him. "What makes you think that? You sure it's not because of something else he ate?"

---

"No, every time he has cheese his stomach hurts and he has diarrhea," Bucky said. "You've noticed it. I'm sure. You might not have known what caused it. though. But I'm almost entirely sure that it's cheese and milk and stuff."
"I always thought it was cause I wasn't giving him all the vitamins he needs or that he was drinking too much juice," Steve said. "I guess we can cut out the dairy and see how that goes."

Christopher reached out for Bucky to get his attention. "Papa." He started to sign 'cat'.

"What, Bean? You want Raphael?" Bucky asked and looked around for the cat. "I don't see him," he said. "Yeah, Baby, I think it's a good idea to cut out dairy and just see if that's what's doing it."

Christopher nodded his head and signed for the cat again. "Poor little guy," Steve said. "I looked forward to giving him ice cream when he got bigger." Steve turned his head as he coughed a few times. "Have we heard from Missy at all? She's due pretty soon."

"Yeah, she said that she was going to call me today but I haven't gotten anything yet," Bucky said. "Maybe I should go check on her tomorrow." He really was getting antsy. Missy would be having the baby anytime in the next three weeks. And she had skipped the last AA meeting.

Steve nodded. "Make sure she knows that whatever she needs, we are there for her. I'm sure you told her already, but there's no harm in a little reminder," he said. Steve rubbed his face before setting the food to the side so he could sit down.

"You okay?" Bucky asked tentatively and moved to rest a hand on Steve's back. "You don't look good, Baby. What can I do?" He rubbed Steve's back slowly and watched him breathe. It looked like every breath he took really hurt.

Steve rubbed at his own chest. "It feels tight," he said. "When I breathe, it just stops before I get a good breath in, you know?" He frowned and looked up to Bucky. "Give me a minute and I can go back to cooking."

"Can I please finish cooking?" Bucky asked softly. "Please, let me. You just sit here and work on breathing and I'll finish up dinner. You can tell me if I'm doing something wrong."

Steve frowned but didn't argue only because he promised that he would let Bucky help if he needed it. "I'm not sick," he insisted half-heartedly before motioning so Bucky would know he could go cook.

Bucky started working on dinner, occasionally looking back at Steve to make sure he was still okay.
"You may not be sick, Baby. But you were injured and I really want you to take it easy." Steve was not good at being sick or injured. He became extra combative and grumpy and hated being treated like he was weak.

---

Steve played with Christopher while Bucky made dinner. The baby gurgled and cooed at his dad. "I guess I'll find out when I go to the physician what's going on," he said with a sigh. "How's dinner coming?"

---

"I think it's fine," Bucky said and squinted at a label on a bottle of spices before tossing some in. "It won't taste as good as when you cook but I did do all the cooking for four years so it will be edible, to say the least."

---

The girls came home and tossed their backpacks next to the door. "Why does it smell so spicy?" Lilly complained and then when she turned into the kitchen she murmured, "Oh... Bucky's cooking."

---

"I see how it is," Bucky grumbled and glanced at Lilly. "How was school today?" He checked on Steve again and handed Christopher a piece of broccoli. "Becca, you had that history presentation today, right?"

---

Christopher munched on the broccoli and then waved at his aunts. "Leeee," he greeted Lilly. Becca plopped down and leaned back in her chair. "Yeah. I got an 'A' on it. I'm not surprised."

---

Bucky turned away from them and went back to cooking, sighing softly. "I'm proud of you, Becs. Lilly, how was school for you? I know you had a test about the Jurassic era today that you were trying to make sure I didn't know about."

---

Lilly pouted. "I pretended I was sick so I got to get out of it today," she said. "I'll get a 'B' or a 'C' in it tomorrow. Who knows?" Steve gave her a scolding look but didn't have the energy to say anything.

---

Bucky shook his head and started setting the table for dinner. He was too tired to explain to Lilly why she needed to quit doing that stuff. He had too much in his head at the moment. He was worried about Steve, he was worried about Missy, he was worried about the baby. "Okay," he whispered quietly, defeated. "We will discuss it later."

---

They ate dinner mostly in silence, unable to have much of a conversation because Bucky was preoccupied and Steve would cough every time he would go to tell a story. By the end of the night,
Steve was in a pretty sour mood and asked Bucky to put Christopher to bed for him.

---

Bucky made sure everyone was tucked away and ready for the morning. He sang a couple songs to Christopher to get him to go to bed. After he fell asleep, Bucky trudged back to the master bedroom and found Steve grumpily sitting on the edge of the bed and holding his chest. "Baby? Hey..." Bucky said quietly and came to stand in front of him.

---

Steve looked up when Bucky came in. "Hey," he mumbled. He moved to lay down on the bed and curled up. "I think I'm going to go to the doctor tomorrow." He took a short, slow breath. "I need to know what's going on to heal up quicker."

---

"Okay, want me to come with you? I don't work tomorrow until the close shift," Bucky said and laid down next to him. He traced his hands up and down Steve's arms and sighed. "Do you hurt a lot?"

---

"I'd rather you keep an eye on Christopher." Steve moved away just a little because he felt suffocated as he was coughing every time he tried to breathe. "It doesn't hurt too bad. I just can't take a full breath and it's killing me."

---

Bucky pulled his hand back from Steve and tucked it under his pillow. Steve didn't seem to be in a touchy mood right now. "I can ask your mom to watch Christopher while we go to the doctor if you want me there," he tried again. He wanted to go with Steve.

---

"I'd rather go alone," Steve admitted firmly. He knew he wasn't being very fair to Bucky right now, but he didn't want to have Bucky find out what was wrong at the same time as he did. Steve wanted to have time to process it on his own.

---

Bucky nodded slowly with pursed lips. "Okay." He forced a small smile and tried to not let it show how much it hurt that Steve didn't want him there. "Christopher and I will just wait here then. Maybe we will go get some more paints so you and him can make some more art together."

---

"Yeah, maybe," Steve said but he didn't seem too interested in doing much. He rolled away from Bucky and stared at nothing. "Night, Buck... love you." He didn't sleep well that night. He woke up throughout the night from accidentally breathing too deeply in his sleep and causing a coughing fit. Come morning, he felt even worse. He tried leaving the bed as quietly as possible and without waking Bucky so he could get dressed for the doctor.

---

It took Bucky a while to fall asleep. He was pretty upset. Steve was acting like he didn't even want to
look at Bucky or talk to him or be near him. And Bucky didn't know what to do about that. He understood that Steve was always really cranky when he was sick or hurt but Bucky was just trying to help and be there for his husband. The first couple hours of the night were just Bucky staring at the wall and letting his eyes well up with tears and then dry back up again over and over until he fell asleep.
Steve knew in the pit of his stomach that something was wrong. He didn’t know what it was but he had a bad feeling and he couldn't shake it. He left a note for Bucky saying that he'd gone out to the doctor. He wasn't out for very long. Apparently, they knew what was wrong with him yesterday but needed to confirm it. Steve returned less than two hours later in even worse of a mood.

---

Bucky had woken up not long after Steve left and saw the note. He crumpled it up and threw it in the trash on his way to wake up Christopher - he was just a little miffed at Steve still. The baby was still pretty sleepy and a little cranky so after Bucky gave him some breakfast, the two of them lounged on the couch together. They both fell asleep again while watching TV.

---

Steve got home and walked over to them and gently kissed the top of Christopher's head. He stroked a hand down Bucky's arm to wake him. "Bucky, Babe. I'm back home."

---

Bucky slowly blinked his eyes and moved over on the couch for Steve to sit. He cradled Christopher who also stirred from his nap and was sucking his thumb and looking at Steve with big sad eyes like he knew something was up. "Sorry, we fell asleep," Bucky said with a yawn. "How was the doctor's?"

---

Steve lightly tickled his son's side. He looked up at Bucky and his lips were drawn in a tight line. He waited a few seconds and then said quietly, "The doctor said I can only use my lungs to about forty-five percent capacity. That's why I can't take a deep breath."

---

Bucky slowly took Steve's hand and stared at him. "What does that mean then? How long will it take to go back to normal?" He had never been more grateful that Steve wasn't a smoker. That would have probably made it much worse.

---

Steve looked away from Bucky, seeming a bit angry even though he knew Bucky wasn't at fault for having such a question. "See, that's the thing. It won't go back to normal," he said firmly, almost barking it at Bucky.
"It won't?" Bucky whispered cautiously. "You mean you're not going to breathe right for... the rest of your life?" He squeezed Steve's hand and flicked his eyes from Steve to the ceiling a couple times, trying to work out what this actually implied.

---

Steve swallowed thickly and shook his head. "They say my lungs will heal a bit... but I inhaled too much smoke and chemicals and stuff from the fire for them to heal completely." His voice sounded hollow, empty, like he could hardly feel anything right now. "I called the precinct and they're already filing papers to get me out on disability."

---

Bucky was silent for a long minute. He wasn't sure what to say. "Steve..." he gasped and quickly pulled him in and wrapped his arms around him, Christopher sitting in his lap and whining when he was cut off. "Baby, I'm so sorry. Oh my god, Steve. What do we do now? What do you need me to do?"

---

Steve couldn't quite meet Bucky's eyes. He knew that he had upset him last night but he didn't have it in him right now to try and work through an apology yet. "I don't know." The corners of his eyes filled with tears and he coughed when he tried to take another breath. "Christ..." he swore. "All I can do is sit by and wait to see what retirement package they'll give me and pray it's enough to support us. Also, I have to keep going to the doctor to make sure my lungs don't get any worse."

---

Bucky held Steve's face in his hands and kissed him gently and quickly so he didn't leave Steve unable to take a breath for too long. "I'm so sorry. I love you. I'm sorry this is happening. I'm here, okay? Can I go with you next time you go to the doctor, please? I need to. And don't worry about what retirement package or disability you get. I will work more. I'll get a different job, something. It will be okay."

---

"Papa..." Christopher said, grabbing onto Bucky's shoulders so he could try pulling himself up to stand on Bucky's lap, but he was struggling.

"I don't know what else there is to do by being there, but if it makes you feel better, I guess you can come with me," Steve said. "I need to take a walk before dinner."

---

"Want us to go walk with you or do you want to be alone?" Bucky asked and gripped Christopher's legs so he could stand and reach out for Steve. "I don't blame you if you need some time."

---

"Alone," Steve said. Christopher signed for a kiss and Steve gently took his son so he could pepper a few kisses on the baby's face. "I know I wanted to retire to be a stay-at-home dad... but it feels awful that the choice was made for me instead of me deciding for sure."
Bucky's face fell and he nodded slowly. "I understand. And I am so sorry. Go take a walk and I'll be here waiting when you get back." He leaned over to kiss Steve again and give him another hug. "Be careful. I love you."

"Love you too," Steve murmured and gave Christopher one more hug before heading out. The baby fussed and cried a little when Steve left, upset but not understanding why. Steve was gone for a little longer than he meant to be, but when he came back, it was with a bouquet of flowers and a little bag tucked under his arm.

Bucky had spent the entire time Steve was gone just worrying about him and crying a bit and making sure Christopher didn't get into anything he shouldn't. He was being really cantankerous and Bucky was getting tired quickly. Bucky just couldn't help but think what this meant. Steve wouldn't be a cop anymore. He wouldn't get to go on morning runs or play baseball anymore. He couldn't run around with his kids or push himself too much. A lot of things might hurt him or tire him out more than usual. Stairs could pose a problem, running too many errands in a day, having vigorous sex, carrying heavy things. This was going to put a dent in Steve's functionality - his *life*.

Steve was having a hard time coping with what this meant for him too, but he had stopped at a phone booth to give Father Frank a call to ask for advice and the man told him to focus on his blessings until he found answers from prayer. So Steve did that. "Hello, Love," Steve said in a tone that was clear he was doing his best to be optimistic even when he felt like shit. "I got these for you," he said as he offered Bucky the flowers.

Bucky took the flowers and smiled. "You're so cute," he said and grabbed Steve's hand. "Did you know it's one of my favorite things about you that you bring me flowers sometimes? It isn't an everyday occurrence so when it does happen it's so special and shows that you're thinking about me."

Steve's smile was actually genuine when he got the compliment. "I'm glad that it makes you happy." Christopher started crawling over to him, so Steve passed the bag over to Bucky as well so he could wave at their son. "I got you this, too. I figured we have too many good things coming our way to wallow in the bad." Inside was a coffee mug that said 'Tired Father of Two'. He saw it in a shop and thought it was clever and wanted Bucky to have it.

Bucky removed the mug from the bag and let out a burst of laughter. "Oh, god, that's perfect. I need two of these. Another that says 'Tired Brother of Two Teenagers Who Won't Listen to Me Anymore'. It's not as snappy a saying but it applies. Thank you for this."

"I don't think they have that one in the gift shop. You can just write it on a plastic cup and keep it in the cupboard with that one," Steve joked. He bent down to pick up Christopher and grimaced at how winded it left him. He didn't say anything about it and instead cuddled with his son. "I'm sorry I
upset you last night."

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Bucky showed the mug to Christopher who just tried to take it from him. "It's okay. I know you were upset. I understand that. You just get really distant and cranky when you aren't at full capacity. I mean, you and I both remember how you were when you were shot. We fought about a goddamn sandwich."

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"I still stand by that I was right back then," Steve defended stubbornly though there was no heat in his voice. Steve could be a mule when it came to sticking to his guns.

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"Don't push me, Steve," Bucky said with just a small edge of sass. "That was damn near a year ago. And I have the power to withhold the things you like." He gave him a wet kiss. "Like that." He put Steve's free hand on his ass. "Or this." He smiled. "And lots of other stuff I know you can't live without."

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"Bucky, not in front of the baby," Steve gasped softly, as if Christopher had any idea of what it meant by Bucky putting his hand on his ass. Christopher let out a loud noise to get Bucky's attention. "Has Missy called yet?"

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Bucky let Christopher grip on to his finger with his tiny hand to satisfy him. "No, I haven't heard from her. She missed Thursday's meeting." He bit his lip. He should probably just go over to her aunt's house and talk to her.

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"We should check in on her," Steve said. "She seemed to be a bit... I don’t know... weird about what she wants after the baby's out of her. I don't want her to think that we won't be there to support her after we've settled the adoption. You think maybe that's why she's getting distant?"

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"That could be it," Bucky said. "I think most people just sort of abandon her eventually. She may think that we are just going to do that as well. I've told her that we are both here for her but that didn't seem to ever comfort her."

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"Do you have her aunt's number? Maybe we can arrange a surprise visit... make her food and bring over some comfy clothes she can fit into once she doesn't have to wear maternity clothes and all that, you know?" Steve hoped that Missy would use their support and find a new path for herself to become more independent.

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"We can do that. I have the number, yes," Bucky said and went to find it in the kitchen. "I know
lately she's just been feeling so bad about herself and wondering how it would have been if she got rid of the baby in the first place. And she keeps bringing up the father of the baby but then not telling me anything about him at all."

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"I don't usually agree with terminating a pregnancy unless there's some risk involved if the baby stays," Steve said. "But I wouldn't have blamed her if she had chosen that. I see how much stress it's putting on her. I hope one day she finds peace with her choice," Steve said. "Maybe when our kid's all grown up and wants to reach out to his or her birth mom, then she'll know that all the trouble was worth it."

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"I don't think she want them to contact her at all," Bucky said slowly. "She really, really doesn't even want to see this kid. She doesn't want pictures of them. She doesn't want updates. She doesn't even want to hold it once it's born. I'm thinking even if we show that we want to be there for her even after this, she might just cut us out to avoid the baby."

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Steve frowned, upset a little by that but he wouldn't push. It was hard for him to imagine not wanting to have her own child in her life in even a little way. "Her loss, I suppose. This baby is going to be amazing. I can just feel it," Steve said. "But I'll follow your lead. You know her better than I do."

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"I just don't want to upset her," Bucky said. "Or our kid. I mean, I know it'll be hard enough to explain to Christopher one day that his biological parents were drug abusers and dealers and he had to be taken away from that. And for this new baby, it'll be hard to explain that their mother did not want them and we don't even know who the father was. I just would hate for our kid to contact her and get aggression in return."

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"We, at least, can tell them that their biological mom loved them enough to give them life," Steve said. "Same with Christopher. These babies may not have had the best start, but they were loved enough to be nurtured in the womb and brought into this earth."

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"Yeah, that's at least something," Bucky agreed, although he didn’t think it was their place to make any sort of judgment calls about any woman's decision about giving birth or terminating pregnancies. He thought that should always be the mother’s decision and no one else should have a say. "And even though it wasn't the best start, they found their way to us. And, regardless of the mistakes we are bound to make, we love them and will love them forever and will actively do our best to give them the best lives that we can. And that's ultimately the only thing that's important here, right?" He looked to Christopher and smiled. "Right?"

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Christopher smiled all happily when Bucky looked at him and immediately burst into conversation, babbling at his pop. Steve smiled because their son was too fucking cute. "I'm going to go lay down in the living room for a bit. If you don't want to cook, we can order in."
"Go lay down, Baby." Bucky nodded. "I'll see if I can't put something together. I'm fine making food but it seems everyone is steadfastly against it. Maybe you should teach the girls how to cook so on days when you don't want to, they can do it and I won't have to hear the complaining about my food."

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"Good luck convincing the girls to cook for the family," Steve said with a little smirk. He went and laid down with Christopher to keep him company.

About a half hour later, the girls came home bickering about which Yankee was the best pitcher. Becca really could have cared less but she knew disagreeing with Lilly annoyed her so she was just going for it. Finally, Lilly called out to wherever Steve was, "Steve, when are you taking us to a baseball game so I can prove Becca wrong?"

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Bucky glared over at his sisters. "Quiet! Please." He had a headache that hadn't even considered going away for a long time. "Steve isn't feeling great right now. Can we talk about a baseball game some other time?" He wasn't sure that would even be a good idea for Steve anymore. And he also didn't know when Steve wanted to talk to the girls about what was going on with him.

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"What's wrong with him? You said the doctors cleared him to go home," Lilly said with a frown. "Is he going to be too sick to cook dinner tonight?"

Becca swatted Lilly's arm. "Not everything has to be about dinner," she scolded.

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"I'm doing dinner again today," Bucky said with an exhausted sigh. "But we can just have cereal if that will make you happier." He didn't want to say anything more about this without talking to Steve. He didn't know what exactly he wanted them to know and when.

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Becca and Lilly exchanged looks because it wasn't like Steve to miss out on cooking two days in a row. Even when he was shot, he found a way to make their food. "Is Steve going back to the hospital?" Lilly asked.

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"No, no, Sweetheart," Bucky reassured them and went to pull each of them into a quick hug. "He's just not as recovered as we thought he was. I'm sure he's going to talk to you both about it but he's laying down right now." He kissed the top of Lilly's head and squeezed Becca's arm.

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After Bucky talked to them, the girls went to their rooms to do their own things. Close to dinner time, Becca had poked her head into the living room to spy on Steve before she went back to Bucky. "He's just staring at the ceiling, breathing. Has he been doing that all day? Is there brain damage?"
"No, don't be mean," Bucky said tightly and made sure enough bowls were clean for cereal for dinner. "He's just thinking - concentrating. Steve's got a lot going through his head at the moment."

"Well, if a grown man is staring at the ceiling for hours, it's fair to ask if he has brain damage," Becca said as if it was the most obvious thing in the world.

Bucky put her in charge of setting all the cereals out on the counter while he went to the living room to check on Steve too. "Stevie… Love? We are about to have some dinner. Are you joining us or would you rather stay here?"

Steve slowly stood up with a soft grunt and got to his feet. "Yeah, I'll come with you guys," he mumbled and came to stand in front of Bucky.

Bucky invaded Steve's space for a moment to give him a quick reassuring peck on the cheek then he backed off again. He could tell Steve wanted a bit of space. "Are you going to talk to them about this tonight or later? They are pretty concerned for you. They both show it differently but they are. And they are your kids, too, now."

Steve looked like he was making a concentrated effort to take smaller breaths so he wouldn't cough. "I'll tell them after dinner," he mumbled. "I don't want to worry them."

"Okay, thank you, Steve," Bucky said softly and headed back to the kitchen with him. Lilly looked like she was about to die of hunger and Becca was telling her to just wait for Bucky and Steve.

"Thanks for waiting for me, girls," Steve said quietly, tiredly, as he sat down. He picked up his spoon and ate the cereal without complaint. He was pretty quiet the whole time before he finally decided to come out and tell them what was up. "So… my lungs don't work as well as they used to. So I can't be a cop anymore."

Becca scrunched up her face in confusion. "What do you mean?" she asked. Lilly sat across from Steve wide-eyed and watching him carefully.

"The doctor said that Steve's lungs are only working at like fifty percent capacity," Bucky clarified and rested his hand on Steve's thigh.

Steve nodded. "Forty-five, actually. I won't be able to run or chase down people anymore. Or deal
with high-stress situations or else I can damage them more," he said. "That's also why I'm coughing all the time."

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Becca nodded and looked down at her hands. "And it’s permanent?" she asked. As much as Becca griped and complained about Steve sometimes and fought with him on damn near everything, she did care about him. And she was used to having things go wrong or bad things happen to her family. She was genuinely concerned for Steve and also for Bucky having to go through yet another medical issue with his husband.

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"Yeah," Steve said in a bit of a defeated tone. "But hey, that means I get to stay home and take care of you and the babies," he said. "It'll be alright. There's going to be a bit of an adjustment period."

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Becca nodded and looked seriously over at Steve. "I am really sorry, Steve," she said firmly. It was probably the most genuine she had ever been with him. Becca was just born when her father was injured in the war and honorably discharged. She never knew him before his physical disability but Bucky did and so did her mother. Becca was well aware of how hard it was on them at times to see him in pain and not as capable as he was before.

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Steve was surprised by the tone Becca used. He knew Becca was capable of empathy and all that, but it'd been a while since she was so kind to him. "It's okay." It wasn't. Not for Steve, not right now. But he would live through it. "Now Lilly finally has a chance at kicking my butt in a race."

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"I let you win before." Lilly shrugged. "I've always been able to kick your ass." She tried a little smile, hoping to make Steve feel better with her banter.

Bucky cleared his throat, "Well, on a practical note, Steve will be getting some sort of retirement or disability package. We don't know what it will be like yet. But I will more than likely be working a lot more for a while. I'll be sure to keep you updated with what we find out."

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"I plan on getting a job soon anyway," Becca said. "So I'll be able to pay for my own stuff."

Steve smiled and shook his head. "Use your money to save for future goals like college or an apartment, not for stuff me and Bucky should be taking care of."

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"Steve's right, Bear," Bucky said, pulling out the rare nickname he only ever used when things were far too tough for him to handle. "You know that I want to help you with college as much as I can but I won't be able to pay the whole way so maybe you just put all your money to that and when it comes time, we can combine and see where we are at."
"Well, I'm still getting a job," Becca said with a casual shrug. Christopher flung a handful of cheerios at Bucky and giggled as he signed for his pop to play with him.

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Bucky gave his son a stern look and brushed some Cheerios off his shoulder. He signed while he said, "Christopher, no throw." It seemed like he always had a new favorite thing to annoy Bucky with every week. This week was food-throwing. It was biting at one point, hair pulling for a while - though, he still did that too.

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Christopher stubbornly signed 'play' at Bucky when he was scolded. He could be such a headstrong kid sometimes and Steve did his best not to laugh at the attitude he gave Bucky. "Papa," Christopher huffed, signing at him again.

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"Where has my sweet Little Bean gone?" Bucky asked dramatically. He took Christopher out of his chair and held him in his lap, letting him mess with bits of cereal on the table. He looked to Steve and then at the time. It was pretty early in the evening but Bucky was beat. And Steve was beyond tired and done. "I think I need to go to bed," Bucky yawned.

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"He's still sweet. He just doesn't know that playtime doesn't really have to be mess time." Steve did his best to remain energetic, but he was genuinely exhausted right now. He insisted on putting Christopher to bed since Bucky had done it the past few nights.

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"Okay, I'll be waiting for you," Bucky said and slumped off to bed. Becca still had some homework to do and she promised to make sure Lilly got ready for bed in time. In their room, Bucky took the picture of his parents and held it out at arm’s length. "Why him?" he whispered, talking sort of to his parents but maybe also to Steve’s god. "Why this too? On top of everything else…"

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Steve took a while getting their son to sleep but at long last, he went to their bedroom. He hugged Bucky from behind and rested the side of his face against his shoulder. Steve closed his eyes and simply breathed, his breath having a slight wheeze to it. "Hey, Baby...you okay?"

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Bucky leaned back into Steve and sighed. "Yes, and also no, but yes," he muttered and nuzzled Steve. "I'm just worried and upset and running through too much in my head and I know you are too and I need to calm down but I can't."

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"I'm alive," Steve said. "Let's count our blessings. We're together. We have your sisters and our son. And we have another blessing on the way. Any day now we can have Grant or Sarah welcomed to the earth."

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"Okay." Bucky nodded. "You're right. We have our kids and we have each other and you are still alive and here with me," he repeated and turned to hug Steve. "I love you so much. How do you feel?"

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Steve leaned into the hug but once it got too tight, he gave Bucky a gentle nudge to ease up. Steve moved to lie on the bed and rested a hand on his chest. "Who knew laying around all day would leave me so exhausted?"

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Bucky laid down with him and curled up against him so he could just watch Steve breathe and make sure he was fine. "Does it hurt at all? Or is it more just uncomfortable and tight?" he asked and rested a hand on Steve's thigh lightly. Steve had been correct earlier when he said this would be an adjustment period.

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"It hurts sometimes," Steve said. "When I try to take a breath that's too big. Now, it's like opening up a scab, except in my lungs," he said. "And, on top of that, it's uncomfortable and tight. I want to laugh but I got to take it easy or else I'll cough up a damn lung."

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"Anything I can do right now that might help?" Bucky asked softly and pulled Steve's hand up to his lips and gave it a kiss. "Did the doctor have any tips to make breathing a little easier?" He sighed. "Man, it's a good thing you don't smoke and I don't smoke around you at all."

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"Not really," Steve said with a frown. "They said they may put me on an inhaler. And painkillers. But I don't want to." He gave Bucky a look that told him that he wasn't in the mood to argue about it either. "I got to find my own limits."

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Bucky really wanted to say that he thought Steve should at least give it a try but he didn't want to have another night of Steve sleeping facing away from him and being grumpy. He decided just to bypass the conversation altogether. "I don't think Lilly quite gets what happened, but Becca understands."

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"I don't think I quite understand, either," Steve said. "I'm still hoping there's some way I can be a coach for Christopher's baseball or soccer team. Or that I can find some desk job on the force," Steve mumbled.

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"I'm sure you can still coach, Baby," Bucky said softly. "You just won't be able to run with the kids. Lots of coaches are big fat guys who can't run either." He meant it as a joke to help Steve feel a bit better but he wasn't sure it if would come across that way. "And why would you want a desk job at the precinct? You like being an officer. And now that you aren't, you can stay home with our kids like you wanted to."
"I don't want to get fat..." Steve wasn't obsessed with his looks, but after being made of muscle he didn't want to risk losing it early. "And I don't want a desk job, but I hate that being a cop was taken from me. Now, I'm not going to get to see my coworkers as often. And I just got a new partner there who's really great."

"You won't get fat, Steve," Bucky sighed with a little smile. "I'm just saying you can be a coach still. You'll be a big tough muscular coach." He moved his hand up to rest on Steve's stomach and felt it move as he did his best to breathe right. "Who is your new partner?"

"Now, you're just saying that to appease me," Steve said in a mildly grumpy tone. "It's this guy Sam. He used to be in the military but retired to become a cop. He's really nice and told the best stories."

"Sam, okay." Bucky nodded. "Tell me about him. What's he like? Is he friends with Natasha, too? Because we can have them both over more. Clint has been complaining that he hasn't seen Christopher enough and he wants Nat to fall in love with our baby and then want to have a kid together."

"Sam is hysterical. He doesn't take shit from anybody and half the time when he has to put people in their place, they have to think twice about his insult because he's so clever with them," Steve said. "Also, Natasha is never agreeing to a kid. She's told me."

"I'll tell Clint I tried," Bucky said somberly. "Is Sam single? Straight? Gay? Into recently divorced older men who have partial custody of their kids? Because Tim is severely lonely and I'm getting tired of him complaining about how none of the guys at the club are interested in long-term."

"He's straight as far as I can tell," Steve said. "Poor guy needs to have something going for him. He already gets enough shit for being black, he'd have it even worse if he was gay too," he added. "What about the shelter? There's got to be someone nice there for Tim."

"Does he know you're gay?" Bucky asked. "And subsequently about me and our kids? Because I'd like to meet him if you want me to." He shrugged and shook his head. "Yeah, Tim has been flirting with the idea of asking one guy out but he has a pretty complicated situation and he doesn't want to add stress."

"Sam knows that I'm gay and about our family," Steve confirmed. "I can invite him for dinner sometime, I'm sure he'd love it." Steve gently played with Bucky's hair. "What's the complication for the guy he wants to ask out?"
Bucky cleared his throat and looked away nervously. "He may not legally be allowed to stay in America. They might deport him back to his home country. Also, he's a bit of a heroin addict. Tim doesn't want to get attached and then have him taken away or have his addiction get worse or something."

"Oh... yeah, that's pretty complicated." Steve chewed the inside of his cheek and said, "Only he can help himself out with the heroin thing... but I know someone who works for the ACLU. We could potentially find a way for him to not get deported."

"I guess I can talk to him. I don't know his name but I can ask Tim," Bucky said. "Anyway, that's not important right this second. Are you tired? Want to head to sleep or do you need anything? Lilly has popsicles hidden in the back of the freezer if you want one."

Steve shook his head. "I need to sleep but I'm dreading it. My body automatically breathes too deep and I wake up coughing," he grumbled. "May as well get tonight over with, I guess."

"Okay, Baby." Bucky slipped his hand with Steve's. "Let's go to sleep. Wake me up if you need me. Okay? Tomorrow morning I was going to go to Clint's and start work on the second crib before I have to go to the record shop but I can stay instead if you want."

“No, Baby, it's okay,” Steve said and curled a little tighter into a ball. “I would rather you go ahead and start on the crib for our new baby. You don’t have much time to finish.”
A few days after getting the news about his lungs, Steve decided to take some time to visit his mom to fill her in on what had happened since the hospital. She didn't know that he was getting retired from the precinct and he figured she may as well know sooner rather than later.

Bucky was at home and was just trying to get the nursery all put together to accommodate two babies when he was interrupted. The phone at their house rang and when Bucky picked up, a concerned-sounding woman was on the other line. "Hello, is this James Barnes?"

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"Yes, this is James," Bucky said with an exhausted grunt since he had just shoved the newly constructed crib through the door of the nursery and he was exhausted. This crib took him less time than the other one but it hadn't been made with wood from Seneca. They didn't have time to go get any.

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"I'm calling from the Brooklyn General hospital and you're listed as the emergency contact for Melissa, uh, Missy Kurtz. She was brought in about a half hour ago," she said.

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"What? Oh my god. Is she in labor?" Bucky asked and pulled the cord of the phone as far as it could go so he could grab his coat and keys from the hook on the wall. "I'm on my way. I'm coming. Which room is she in?" He was frantic. Missy was supposed to call when her water broke. That was the game plan. Who knew how long she had already been in labor before the hospital called.

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"Um..." There was a short silence before the woman continued. "She was brought in for an overdose, Sir," she explained in the gentlest tone she could muster. "We are performing an
emergency C-section any minute now. But we can't give her any medication without risking the baby's life."

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"Oh my god," Bucky gasped softly. He stopped and blinked several times, letting his eyes water up. His heart seemed to stop and he couldn't move or speak for a few seconds. "Oh my god. Fuck. Okay, I'm coming. Tell her I'm on my way. It'll be alright. It won't take long for me to get there." He hung up and quickly locked the door behind him. He ran as fast as he could because he figured he could make it quicker on his own than by cab at this time of day.

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By the time Bucky had gotten to the operating room, he was only allowed to look in from the outside through a small glass window. Missy had a team of doctors and nurses crowded around her and there was a cot to the side of the room with a pristine blue blanket laid over it. One of the nurses saw him run up to the door and she quickly stopped him and put a hand on his shoulder. "Sir," she said gently. "Nobody can enter right now. I'm sorry."

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"She needs to know I'm here!" Bucky said quickly, desperately. "Please, she can't think she's alone. She needs me." He obeyed when he was told to stand over to the side and wait. He watched intently and worriedly and prayed to Steve's god that Missy and the baby were both going to be okay.

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The nurse gave him a sympathetic nod and then pushed the button for the intercom. "Nurse Johnson, can you please let Miss Kurtz know that Mr. Barnes is here?"

Her monitor had flat-lined already. But the doctors and nurses waited a few minutes anyway so Bucky would believe that she was around long enough to hear that he had shown up. When the doctor finally came out, he gave Bucky a grim look and shook his head.

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"What's that mean? What happened?" Bucky asked breathlessly and let tears stream down his face. He already knew. Missy was gone. She was gone. And he hadn't been here for her in time. He hadn't seen her for a few days. He didn't get to say goodbye.

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The doctor left the nurse to comfort him. "She had slim chances of survival when she got here. She had nearly twice the lethal amount of cocaine in her system. And by the looks of it, she was carrying her dead son in her for at least a week. He had all sorts of drugs in his blood work that wasn't in hers today."

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Bucky's face drained of color and he stared at the nurse, feeling like he could fall over at any second. "What?" he whispered, barely even speaking. "The baby is gone?" He started to cry in earnest now and he shrank into himself, hugging his chest and shaking his head as he slid down the side of the wall to the ground. His mouth hung open in a silent scream and he took too many quick shallow breaths. "They're both gone?"
The nurse assumed that Bucky must have been Missy's boyfriend and the biological father of the dead child. "I'm so sorry," she said in a quiet voice. "We have grief counselors available..." She trailed off and waited until Bucky was able to breathe. "You can go in and see Miss Kurtz and the baby if you would like. Is there someone I can call for you?"

Bucky scrawled out Sarah's house phone number for the nurse and then followed her to where they had Missy and the baby resting and waiting to be taken away. He took Missy's hand and held it tight. She was still warm but her face looked sunken in, tired, ashen. Her hair was sweaty and matted down around her head and there was a white dusting around her nose of cocaine. "Am I allowed to hold the baby?"

The nurse nodded. "Yes, but I have to warn you, the baby doesn't look very..." She grimaced as she pulled the blanket off the cot. The baby wasn't quite fully formed even though he was nearly carried to term. His skin was deathly pale with a blue-black tinge and his veins were easily visible through his skin.

When Bucky saw the baby, something cracked in him. Something small and imperceptible broke and his reality seemed to shift, his fragile sanity slipping away automatically. He smiled brightly as he picked up the baby so gently. "He's perfect. My perfect boy." He choked on the lump in his throat and rocked the baby back and forth. "Hello, Baby. Hey, my little man." He held him tight and watched him closely, hoping to see him take his first breath or crack open his eyelids and look up at his father.

It was heartbreaking watching Bucky talk to the baby like that. She knew that the baby would never respond and she knew that this was one of the hardest things a person could go through. "I'll leave you two alone and make that call for you," the nurse said softly and left the room as quickly as she could.

When Steve came to the hospital, he was under the impression that the baby was fine, he just maybe was a little sick and had to be on some sort of support for a little while. The lady sounded so calm over the phone. He came as quickly as he could, a teddy bear in one hand and a bouquet of flowers in the other. "Buck! I came as soon as-" his face fell when he sensed the depressive aura in the room and he saw the tears in Bucky's eyes. "Bucky?"

Missy had already been taken away and the nurse had Bucky sign papers having to do with her cause of death and confirming her identity and all that. He promised her when they were taking her away that he would give her a good funeral. Bucky glanced up at Steve and smiled tightly. "Hey, Steve," he said and nodded to the child in his arms. "It's a boy." he added absently and stared down at his stillborn son again. "Come look at him," Bucky said to his husband who was still standing across the room. Something was off about the way Bucky spoke about the baby, though. He had a distant, airy tone and didn't seem too rushed or concerned. It was eerie, to say the least.
Steve put the bear and flowers down on the table and hesitantly walked over to Bucky. The bundle in Bucky's arms was too still and Steve's heart knew what was going on before he got to see past the blankets. "Bucky?" Steve said again, sounding terrified, like he thought he was caught up in a dream and Bucky was going to morph into some monster and attack him. Steve approached slowly, hands shaking and when he saw their son lying dead in his husband's arms, his breath seized. "No... no!" he wailed, gripping at his chest as he desperately tried to breathe steadily.

Bucky looked up at Steve, concerned. “Hey, hey,” he said quickly, eyes wide. “Steve, it's okay. It's okay.” He nodded and smiled. “Here, you want to hold him?” he asked and held the baby out a bit towards Steve. They both were crying now but Bucky had a crazed look in his eyes like he was someone else who was somewhere else doing something else entirely. “Say ‘hello’,” Bucky encouraged him.

Steve was absolutely beside himself. He was hysterical and had to support himself against the wall for a few minutes, but finally, he gathered himself enough to take the baby from Bucky's arms. "How can you be smiling?" Steve asked through his sobs.

"What?" Bucky asked curiously and shook his head in confusion. "We have a new son, Steve,” Bucky said like it was obvious why he was smiling. His tears still came but he shook his head at Steve like he was being ridiculous. "It's good I finished that crib because he is a little earlier than I thought he was going to be. And a bit small, but he will be fine. Christopher was small too but we helped him get healthier."

Steve felt sick to his stomach. Bucky wasn’t there - not really. Bucky didn’t understand. Or he understood all too well and his brain short-circuited to protect him. "Buck... Sweetheart," he said in a broken but calm voice, trying to pull Bucky back to him and to reality. "There's no getting better for him." Steve took Bucky's hand and brought it to feel their son's chest where his heart should've been beating. "We can't take him home. We have to take him to Father Frank to be buried at the church."

The baby was pretty cold. He had been cold the whole time he had been in their arms. The nurse had said he had been dead for about a week but none of that made sense to Bucky at the moment. Nothing made sense. And the lack of heartbeat just seemed like a minor problem they could work out. Bucky shook his head. "No, I can fix this," he said, "He just needs the doctor. I'll go get the doctor." His whole body shook and he tried to get up out of his chair but his legs wouldn't let him.

Steve squeezed Bucky's hand tight when he tried to get up. "There's nothing that can be done, Buck. Our little boy is gone," Steve said quietly, voice cracking and lungs aching with the attempt to breathe through the tears and the pain. "Stay here with me. Please. I need you right now, Bucky."
"No," Bucky said quietly. "No," he repeated and looked at Steve. "You're wrong. They aren't gone," he whimpered, mashed his face into Steve’s chest, and let out a choked scream. He screamed for a minute or so and then just sobbed and whined helplessly into Steve’s jacket. He seemed to snap back to reality then and he looked up at Steve slowly. "They looked so helpless. She was just lying there opened up on the surgery table and she was gone. The doctor shook his head like that's supposed to mean he tried, but he could have tried harder!"

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Steve wrapped an arm as strong as he could around Bucky's shoulders and he held their son protectively with the other. "They're people, Bucky. Not gods... I wish we could bring them back. I wish our little boy was crying and wiggling and doing all the things a baby should do," he said. "But they don't feel any pain now, Love. Their struggle is over."

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"I want them here, though!" Bucky whined loudly and growled a little bit at the unfairness of it all. "I want to show him to his big brother and his aunts and his nana. And I want to see Missy get a better job and move out of her aunt's house and have her life again." He looked back at the baby and said desperately and softly. "Please, open your eyes. Open your eyes. Just for a little bit. Just let us have you for a little bit. Come on, Baby, please."

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Steve pet his fingers through Bucky's hair. "We would've given him such a good life," he said gently, forlornly. "We could've helped Missy get her own life back on track too."

The door opened and one of the nurses came back and looked surprised to see the two sitting so close. "We have to shut the room down and bring the bodies to the coroner."

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Bucky popped his head up and said, "Not yet. Don't take him from us." The nurse moved closer and rolled the small baby bed close to them so she could put the baby inside. "We need more time."

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"He's not yours to keep is he?" the nurse said sharply. "She wasn't your girlfriend."

She reached out for the baby and Steve instinctively turned away to shield him from her. "Give us more time, please," Steve insisted.

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Bucky eyed her nervously and put a protective arm between her and the baby. "He's our son. We need to say goodbye. You assholes hardly let me say goodbye to Missy. You took her away so fast."

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The nurse glared at Bucky and pulled back. "They died because of you two, you know," she said decidedly. "God didn't want one of his children going to two queers. And they had their lives taken for it." Steve's face drained of color as he saw red and his eyelids fluttered, trying to process what was just said to him.

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Bucky didn’t react quite the same way. His eyes darkened ferociously and he stood up slowly. "What the fuck did you just say?" he asked in a menacing whisper, his entire body tensed and his hands balled into fists. "What the fuck did you just say!" He shouted this time and kicked over the baby bed, sending it across the room. His soul was on fire and he had never felt so much anger in his life. He forgot Steve and the baby entirely and looked around the room. He didn't want to hurt the nurse but he wasn't going to spare anything else as he kept screaming obscenities at her and crying and breaking anything he could get his hands on and kick over and throw at the walls and smash against the ground. He had just lost a friend and a child and she dared treat them like this.

The nurse cowered back towards the door and yelled for security as Bucky finished ransacking the room with a hardy punch through one of the glass windows. He pulled his hand back and it was ripped to shit and drenched in blood. His body was exhausted as he collapsed on the floor and retched and threw up because of the rush of rage and hatred and grief and adrenaline that had just tore itself through him in forty-five seconds.

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Bucky acted out the way Steve wanted to, but couldn't bear to do when he had their baby in his arms. He protected the little boy against his chest while Bucky rampaged through the room, screaming at the nurse. When security came bursting into the room, Steve finally snapped out of it and rushed over so they wouldn't touch his husband. "Please, he's grieving. I'm a police officer, just... just, please, don't arrest him. I'll pay for the damages. I promise. He won’t hurt anybody. I’ll pay for what he did. Don’t touch him."

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Bucky was bawling on the floor with his legs pulled up tight to his chest. He couldn't save his parents, he couldn't save his grandmother, he couldn't save Missy, and he couldn't save his son. He wouldn't be able to save anyone. A scream boiled up inside him and he shook wildly when he lifted his face towards the ceiling and let it come storming out. He couldn't save anything he loved.

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The guards could tell that Bucky wouldn't do any harm if left alone, so they corralled the nurse out and left the two alone to grieve. Steve sat down on the floor next to Bucky and pulled him over. "I'm so sorry, Buck. I'm so, so sorry you're hurting."

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After a few long minutes of Steve cradling their boy in one arm and rocking Bucky back and forth as well, Bucky calmed down enough to speak. "Can I hold him again?" Bucky asked with a raspy voice from screaming. He looked down at his bloody hand that had bits of glass stuck in it. "Never mind. I probably shouldn't." He shook his head and looked to Steve. "I'm sorry. I just got so angry. You're hurting just as much as I am. But that fucking bitch just pushed me over the edge."

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Steve wiped the tears from his eyes. "It's not your fault," he said quietly. He held the lifeless baby closer and kissed the top of his head. He was so cold. "Now I'm afraid for Christopher," he whispered. "Did we really upset God enough to be punished?"

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"No!" Bucky gasped in surprise. "No, Steve! You would listen to that hateful little woman over your
own heart? Over what Father Frank says? Over what you believe God wants?" He locked eyes with Steve. "This wasn't because of who we are. This was because of Missy's addiction and because I couldn't help her get sober and stay sober. This has nothing to do with our relationship."

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"It wouldn't be the first time he's punished a parent by harming their child," Steve said. Steve looked so hurt and scared for what their future held. "This isn't your fault, either. You couldn't force her to give up her addiction. Only she had the power to do that."

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Bucky shook his head and looked away. He was entirely broken inside. And he was furious. Both at that nurse and at Steve for even entertaining the possibility that she was correct. "Steve, if that's the type of god you've decided to follow, I think you need to find a different one," he snapped but then softened again. "I don't want to talk about this anymore. It won't be long before we actually have to let them take him. And we have to go back to our other son and our girls." He felt so utterly defeated.

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Steve looked away and fell silent. He stayed with the baby for a little while longer, singing to him and telling him how much they loved him. He was able to keep it together until they had to give him to the nurses and he fell back into inconsolable sobs.

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Bucky had no tears left and no fight left inside him. He watched with heavy-lidded eyes as they rolled their son away and he held Steve's hand with his unbloodied one. He stared at the doorway for a long moment even after they were gone. Then a different nurse came back in and quietly walked them out and into the lobby where Bucky had to sign more papers about the cause of death of the baby and give the baby a name and a parentage. He signed his own name on the line for the Father. He never knew who the baby's birth father was and he didn't care. That boy was his and always would be.

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Steve was handed the pen and he wrote the baby's name as 'Grant Francis Rogers-Barnes'. He would fight anyone who tried to take that name away from their son. When there was nothing left to be done but wait for the paperwork to clear, Steve turned to look at Bucky's hand. "We should go to my mom and have her fix you up. We have to pick up Christopher from her too."

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Bucky nodded without saying a word. One of the quieter nurses who helped them out came up to them and said in a soft voice, "I am very sorry for your loss, Mr. Barnes, Mr. Rogers." Then she turned and walked off again leaving them once again in horrible silence.

"Where's your mom?" Bucky croaked and looked up at Steve after a few long seconds.

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Steve could barely get out a thank you to the nurse as she walked away. He tried to take a breath but ended up in a coughing fit. Once he regained himself he said, "At her house. She's waiting for a call to come by... but there's not much use coming by here now. She has a first aid kit at home. I figure
"you would prefer to have her help than to stay here any longer."

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Bucky pulled Steve in for a careful hug after he made it out of his coughing fit. His kissed the side of his face, not caring who was looking at them. "Alright, we might as well go talk to her now. And fix up my hand. And I want to hold Christopher all night. I don't want him sleeping in the nursery by himself tonight."

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Steve nodded. "I want him in our room tonight too." He actually probably wanted him in their room for the foreseeable future. He needed to stop a few times for a breathing break on the way there, but eventually, they made it to Sarah. When they got to his mom's house, she could tell by the looks on their faces that something happened. She didn't ask them to explain - she simply gave them each a tight hug before pulling Bucky aside to mend his hand.

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Bucky sat in silence again and let Sarah pick out the glass with a pair of tweezers. It hurt like hell but he knew it had to be done. He watched Steve feeding Christopher and trying to keep a happy face for their other son but he knew it was hard to. Nothing about this was easy. Nothing was good.

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After holding a cold, lifeless newborn in his arms, it was surreal to be around a baby so full of life. He answered Christopher every time he blabbered up at his dad but it was hard to stay focused. "Would you like me to spend a few days at your house?" Sarah offered. "Take care of the necessities and all that?"

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Bucky flexed his bandaged hand and came over to give Christopher several kisses all over his face. He didn't mind the idea of having Sarah with them for a bit but it would be up to Steve. "What do you think, Love?" Bucky asked him softly. "I can sleep out on the couch, the girls can have the master, and you and your mom can each take one of their rooms."

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"Papa!" Christopher squealed happily. He kissed his pop back and grabbed at his shirt.

"Yeah, we can make that work," Steve said. "Thank you, Mom." He would really need the company when the girls were out and Bucky was at work. To be honest, he was afraid of how he would handle all of this without another person around.

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"Yes, thank you, Sarah. That would be extremely helpful," Bucky said and forced a smile. He let Christopher chew on his finger a bit and just looked at him. He shuttered out a sigh and closed his eyes. He wanted to go home to his sisters and hold his family together. But he also didn't want to explain what had happened. They would have a million questions and he didn't think he could take it. The headache that had started when he was destroying the hospital room had not let up at all. "What do we do now?" he asked with a heavy emptiness weighing down his words.

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"We go home," Steve said. All he wanted was to stay in the comfort of his own home and mourn until it was time to bury their son. Sarah packed a bag of clothes and walked with them back to their place.

Becca and Lilly were already home doing their schoolwork at the kitchen table. "Jeez, what took you guys so long?" Lilly asked without lifting her head.

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Bucky clung to Christopher and held Steve's hand tight. He was right, he couldn't handle this. He couldn't handle explaining this all to his sisters. "Girls..." Bucky whispered to get their attention. He couldn't believe this was happening again. When their parents died, Bucky wasn't in Brooklyn and he thought everything was fine until he got home. Now here he was again, in the same home, with two more bodies to bury. He tried talking but it didn't work. Instead, all he could do was turn and quickly shove himself against Steve with Christopher held at his side. He just hid himself away against his husband and broke down once more.

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Becca and Lilly both looked at Steve for help when their brother suddenly started bawling. Lilly's attitude went away in seconds and Steve's throat closed up, unable to speak at first. He wanted to be able to grieve, but one of them had to tell the girls and Bucky was already down for the count. "Missy passed away today," he said quietly, "and so did the baby."

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Becca stared wide-eyed at Steve and then at Sarah, hoping someone would explain this more or say that they were just pulling a terrible, tactless joke. Lilly started in on the questions. "How? What happened to them? Why's Bucky's hand wrapped up like that? What's going on?" She rattled them off and then hushed up with Becca squeezed her arm lightly to indicate to leave it alone for now. Bucky peeled himself off of Steve and held out his arms for his sisters. "Come here," he choked. They both rushed over and collided into a hug with Bucky and Bucky held them so tight and just cried into Becca's hair.

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When Bucky moved to hug his sisters, Steve stood still as stone, watching the scene unfold without doing much of anything. Sarah walked over and gently held his hand in hers. Christopher, who didn't understand why everyone was crying, squirmed in Bucky's hold and started making upset noises. "Leeee," he murmured, grabbing for Lilly to hold him instead. "I'm so sorry, Bucky," Becca said softly, petting his arm.

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"Steve?" Bucky said hurriedly and scared, like he thought that in those couple seconds that he wasn't touching him, he had been taken away as well. Bucky handed their first son to Steve and pulled him into the hug, wrapping his arm around Steve and being sure he had contact with each member of his family.

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Christopher screeched at Bucky when he was passed over to Steve instead of Lilly. Steve wanted to hold his son desperately, but he gave him up so Lilly could cradle him in her arms to calm him down.
Steve pulled his mom into the hug and rested his face against Bucky's shoulders as he silently cried. They all stayed like that for a little while before Sarah gently pulled back. "We should all have some time to ourselves to reflect and mourn," she suggested. "And we can come together again at dinner."

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Bucky nodded and hesitantly pulled away from his sisters. He looked to his son and held out his arms. "Christopher, Sweetheart, can I please give you to Daddy now?" he asked cautiously and sweetly so the baby would be more apt to cooperate. Christopher giggled and held out his arms for Bucky to take him and Bucky smiled at him gratefully before passing him off to Steve who looked so desperate to hold his son.

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Steve hugged Christopher close and snuggled their boy tight. "I love you so much, Little Bean," he said. "I'm so grateful you are here all safe and healthy," he said. Sarah corralled the girls to their rooms to give their brother some space and Steve and Bucky sat at the kitchen table together with their son. "How are you about Missy?" Steve asked quietly, carefully.

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"What do you mean?" Bucky whispered as he pet Christopher's hair. He was convinced that this was his fault. She had told him that she had done coke while she was pregnant. Bucky believed it would be just the one time. He believed she would wait until the baby was born to do it again but she didn't. And it was on him. He knew where she was at and didn't do everything he could to help her.

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"I lost a son today," Steve said. "But you lost a son and a friend. You've got to be feeling worse than I am right now," he said. Christopher started to squirm and babble at Bucky, sensing that he was upset. "Does her aunt know yet?"

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Bucky was about to say that he didn't think it was possible to measure quite how much pain they were both in and they shouldn't try to compare but then he realized no one had contacted Missy's aunt yet. "Fuck..." Bucky hissed and covered his eyes with his hands. "Fuck, she doesn't know. She has no idea where her niece is or what happened. Now I have to call her and explain. Jesus Christ, my head hurts so bad." Bucky started crying all over again and just held his head on both sides as if he was worried that it would split open.

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When Bucky started crying again, Christopher started to cry too, probably worsening Bucky's headache in the process. "Hey, Bean... it's okay, shh," Steve said as he gingerly bounced the baby in his arms to try and cheer him up. "Give your dad a smile, yeah?" Steve put a hand on Bucky's shoulder. "Me or my mom can call."

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Bucky sniffled and tried to quiet down so Christopher would too. "I need to call Barbara and then I need call Tim and see if he can cover the next couple days so I don't have to come in. And I need to talk to Clint. And we need to set up the funeral for them. And I need to figure out how much I owe the hospital for damages. And I want Grant buried next to my parents but where will we put Missy? Should her parents get to hold her funeral instead?" Bucky rattled off so many problems and
questions as quick as his brain could think of them and he didn’t hear Sarah come back downstairs and stop to stand quietly in the doorway.

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Steve opened his mouth to talk, but Sarah came up and put a hand on each of their backs. "I'll take care of calling the hospital about the damages," she said. "And I'll call Tim for you." She didn’t know him but she could handle asking someone to cover Bucky’s shifts.

"We should let her parents have first say about her funeral," Steve added quietly.

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Bucky shook his head. "They didn’t care about her. They kicked her out. She didn't have anyone. And I promised her when she was taken away that I'd give her a good funeral." He wasn’t sure what good a funeral would do for her now but if that was the last way he could help her, then he was going to make sure she was laid to rest properly.

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"They're still her parents," Steve insisted. "And if they won't give her a funeral she deserves, then we will. But, let’s try to not worry about that right this second. We haven’t even talked to her aunt yet.”

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Bucky tried to listen to Steve but his breathing started to pick up and he felt dizzy and sick and his head felt like it was on fire. "She needed me. She needed me there for her. She needed a friend. I wasn’t there for her when I should have been. Missy needed me and I was too late. Our baby needed me and I couldn't save him!"

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Sarah took Christopher from Steve’s arms when Bucky started getting worked up again and Steve wrapped his arms around him tightly, holding Bucky’s body together so he wouldn’t melt into a puddle on the ground like he had at the hospital. "This isn't your fault, Bucky. She knew you were there for her, but she chose not to take your help."

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Bucky sobbed into Steve's chest and his body shook violently. He felt just like he did when his parents died. Hopeless, weak, guilty, small. He hated himself and he felt like dying. The difference now was that he had Steve. And Steve wasn't letting him go. He was holding on tight and whispering about how this wasn't his fault. He hadn't had that before. Before, he had two grieving, screaming little girls who desperately needed him but he didn't know how to help. "I want them all back," he whispered, meaning Grant and Missy and his parents. “I want them back, Steve.”

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"I want them back, too," Steve said. He rubbed circles over Bucky's back. "Fuck... I just wish he could have opened his eyes. Just once. I wish he got to see the parents that already loved him so much and the beautiful world he was brought into," Steve said tightly. "I wish Missy knew she had a whole life ahead of her. I wish she would have been able to move on from this."
Bucky nodded and pulled back so he could look Steve in the eyes. "Baby, I'm so, so sorry for how I acted in there," he said quietly. "Both the yelling and breaking things and also... how I was when you got there. I don't know why, but, when the nurse let me hold him, something inside me was convinced that everything was okay and I could make it all better."

"You scared me," Steve admitted in a whisper. "I thought... I thought we had a new, little boy to bring home and..." It was a gut-wrenching, earth-shattering way to find out their son was dead. Nightmarish. He'd dealt with trauma victims before so he knew Bucky couldn't help the way he reacted but it still was branded into Steve's brain. "You don't have to try to make things better."

"I know I scared you. And I'm so sorry, Baby," Bucky pleaded. "It just happened and I couldn't get back to reality for a bit. You can ask Becca, it happened before. There was a time earlier on when we were still in this house that I talked to Mom and Dad like they were here. It was a few days until I snapped out of it." He shook his head. "I'm so sorry, Steve. I should've held it together. But then I held him in my arms and my brain thought he had to be okay. He had to be alive."

Steve looked away. "I know you're sorry. I'm not upset with you." Steve knew he was going to have nightmares of it. Nightmares of Bucky standing in their room like that but except a dead Grant in his arms alone, it would be a lifeless Christopher right alongside him. It would take a while for that image of Bucky not to terrify him anymore. "He was a perfect, little baby," Steve said. "I didn't want to let him go. I want to still have him in my arms."

"Me too," Bucky agreed. "I still think they took him too fast," he mumbled something indiscernible and looked up at Steve again, a lot more serious this time. "You aren't still thinking about what that nurse said, right? You don't believe her. You can't."

Steve didn't answer Bucky directly. A part of him wondered if God let them have one kid to appease them, as a little pass so they would be happy even if he didn't approve of their relationship, but trying for any more would result in something like this. "Maybe we shouldn't have more kids," Steve mumbled slowly.

Bucky scrunched up his face in confusion. "You believe her?" he asked with a heaviness that hadn't yet turned to anger. "Really?" He shook his head. "After everything we have been through together. After all the times you prayed to your god and ended up getting what we needed, you believe her?"

Steve got tense. "We have one healthy son. We should count our blessings instead of trying to dig for more," he said. He didn't want God to think they were getting greedy with their luck. He didn't know what he would do if Christopher was taken from them.
"You want a dozen kids," Bucky said sternly. "You've said so. I want that too. We want as many kids as we can handle and that's what we are going to do. We have two now. One just doesn't get to be with us yet. He's with my parents for now." He couldn't believe that Steve was even thinking like this. "And some hateful bitch nurse shouldn't be able to change your outlook on us and your god and our family so easily."

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Steve's eyes stung with tears and he straightened his back. "I've changed my mind," he said in a clipped voice. "I'm allowed to change my mind and I'm not in a mood to discuss any of this." He let go of Bucky and got up to try to busy himself by cleaning the kitchen. "You don't believe in God anyway."

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"I believe in what he means to you!" Bucky snapped and stood up too. "And what the fuck do you mean you've changed your mind? You don't want kids anymore? Huh? Too goddamn late because we have kids! And we have this house. This house that we bought so we could have room for more kids. And we've gone through hell and back too many times just to stay together and be able to be who we are and have our family and live our lives."

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Steve was in the middle of washing a plate and when Bucky raised his voice at him, he reeled his arm back to throw the plate against the wall, but he stopped himself at the last second because he knew that the crash would make Christopher cry and he didn't want the girls worrying even more. "Just shut up, Bucky!" Steve shouted, giving him his back. "I want to be alone."

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Bucky didn't say another word. He stormed out of the kitchen, went to the nursery, grabbed the new crib, and dragged it out through the hall. He pushed it down the stairs and it tumbled loudly towards the front door. Bucky opened the door and kicked the crib through as best as he could. Once it was down at the sidewalk, he started ripping it apart and throwing it down on the ground as hard as he could. After a few minutes, it was crumpled into several pieces in front of the house, Bucky's hand was bleeding through his bandages, and he was furiously striding down the street, tears flying from his face.

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Steve frowned and started to scrub the countertops. He heard what Bucky was doing but he couldn't pull away from cleaning because he knew he would do something stupid too. Becca heard the commotion going on outside her window and ran out the door past the broken pieces of the crib to chase after Bucky. She reached out and held his hand, walking swiftly alongside him.

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Bucky gripped his sister's hand tightly and didn't say anything. The two of them walked for a while until they got to the cemetery. Bucky hesitated at the gate but then took a deep breath and went in. They went to their parents' graves and Bucky sat down in front of them with Becca standing over him. "I lost two more people today," Bucky whispered to them. "And it seems like Steve lost part of himself."

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Becca stood silently behind her brother and gently braided Bucky's hair as he sat there. "What happened with Steve?" Becca asked, frowning at Bucky. She didn't fully understand how devastating it was to lose a baby that they never got to take home in the first place but she could see how much it hurt them.

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Bucky sighed. "There was a nurse at the hospital who told us that God murdered Missy and the baby as punishment for us being queers." He held up his bandaged hand. "Then I destroyed everything I saw and punched a hole in a window. And now Steve is entertaining the possibility that that worthless homophobic asshole was right. He said he doesn't want any more kids."

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"Are you fucking kidding me? Fuck her," Becca snapped right away. Man, she would give that nurse a piece of her mind if they ever crossed paths. "Are you sure he's not just saying that for now because he's hurt?" Becca asked.

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"You can see it in his eyes." Bucky shook his head. "He's broken. He thinks that God did this on purpose. He thinks it's our fault for being gay. And I think it's my fault for not being more proactive with Missy." He turned and grabbed Becca's hand so she would come sit next to him where he could cuddle her close. "What if he decides he doesn't want to risk it anymore? What if he decides he's just going to leave and not be romantically or sexually involved with anyone so he won't upset God with being gay or whatever?"

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Becca wasn't much of a cuddler but she wasn't going to turn her grieving brother away. She scowled and leaned into his side. "Steve wouldn't leave us," she said. "He loves Christopher too much. And he loves you too much to hurt you like that." She wouldn't put it past Steve to abstain from romance and sex over this, though. She could see him just wanting his and Bucky’s relationship to move to a more platonic sort of coexistence. But Becca also knew that would destroy Bucky.

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"He's being ridiculous," Bucky snarled. "We just lost a child. Not a few hours ago, we lost our son. And he's letting his faith be pushed around by a random nurse? And he's saying he doesn't want any more kids. How could he do this today? I need him and he said he wanted to be alone." Bucky gently touched the grass of the spot right next to his mother's grave where he wanted Grant to go. "We lost a baby today."

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"How could he comfort you if he can't even take care of himself right now?" Becca said, very logical and trying to get Bucky to reason with her. "When Mom and Dad died, you couldn't take care of us right away because you were still grieving. We had to get by on our own, emotionally. I'm not blaming you or anything... but it makes sense." She looked at the empty spot where Grant's grave would soon be. "You're going to get through this, Bucky."

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"I understand that but why would he listen to someone he doesn’t know over me? I'm his husband," Bucky said desperately. He knew it would take a while for them both to be feeling back to normal.
but it hurt so much to know that Steve didn't even trust in what Bucky was saying. He sighed and looked at Becca. "They didn't let us hold him that long either. We needed more time but they took him away."

"It's not just her. I hear people say that gay people are the reason for everything bad in the world. It's a miracle that he's found some priest that doesn't call him the devil," Becca huffed but decided to leave it for now. "What did Grant look like?" she asked. "Was he cute?"

"He was perfect," Bucky said with a gloss of admiration in his eyes and his tone. "He had been dead for about a week already. So he was sick looking and cold. And sort of blue. But I could tell he would have been amazing. He would have been a happy baby and excited to learn and grow and be with his older brother and his aunts. He was perfect. And he was ours for a bit. He still is, but we just don't get to hold him anymore."

Becca wondered if Bucky would get all proud and emotional over all the kids he would end up adopting...if they ever adopted any more kids after this. He would. She knew he would. Bucky was always emotional about her and Lilly too. It was just how he was. "Did you get to name him? Officially, I mean."

"Yeah, he is officially named." Bucky nodded. "And then I had to immediately sign his official death certificate papers." He chewed his lip and blinked up at the setting sun. He looked back down and squeezed Becca's hand. "Mom, Dad. Wherever it is that you are right now - heaven or someplace - can you go find my boy? Grant Francis Rogers-Barnes. Can you just hold on to him until we get there? And if you see Missy Kurtz tell her that I'll never forget her and I'll make sure her funeral is nice whether her parents are involved or not."

"That's a hell of a long name," Becca teased lightly. "Would have been a pain in the ass to fill that out on college applications." She gave Bucky a hug. "They're looking out for him. I bet they love their grandson already."

"Hey, they named me James Buchanan. If they can handle that, they can handle Grant Francis." Bucky said with the smallest of smiles. He hugged Becca back then stood up. "Guess we should go back. It's going to get dark soon. And I want to be home. I want to hold Christopher."

Becca nodded. "I'm just glad I didn't get stuck with a name as crappy as yours," she joked with a little nudge. "I love you, Bucky. And I'm sorry you couldn't bring my new nephew home." She took his hand and walked back home with him.

They stopped at the stairs to their front door. The crib pieces had been cleaned up and Bucky figured
that either someone took them to use the wood or someone was big on stopping littering and cleaned it up. "Becca, I don't want to deal with Steve if he's still spouting nonsense," he said softly before heading inside.

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"He's your husband, not mine," Becca reminded him lightly before going in to check on Steve. He was lying down on the couch and not responding to anything so she went and got Sarah to talk to Bucky instead.

Sarah had Christopher in her arms and she looked at Bucky with the kindest of eyes. "What can I do to help? Dinner is almost done."

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Bucky shook his head, "I honestly don't know." He reached out for his son and Sarah passed him over. Bucky kissed Christopher several times and held him tight. "I'll be back in a bit," he said and took his son with him to the living room. Steve was facing the couch cushions and had a heavy blanket draped over him. Bucky noticed in the corner of the room the messily stacked remains of the crib. Steve had brought it back inside. Bucky walked slowly over to the couch and got on his knees. "Steve..."

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Steve didn't respond at first. He wasn't purposely ignoring Bucky, but instead had been stuck in a world of his own. He turned his head to look at Bucky and there was a deadness to his expression, like he felt like some sort of empty shell. "Yeah?" he mumbled.

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"Will you sit up so I can join you? Is that okay?" Bucky asked softly and readjusted Christopher in his arms. He didn't want to push Steve if he didn't want to be touched but Bucky really wanted to hold him right now.

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Steve let out a slow breath, as if it would have been simpler to just lay there forever on the couch than to sit up. He forced himself into a sitting position and made room for Bucky. "I don't think I'll ever feel truly happy again, Bucky."

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Bucky got up onto the couch and pulled Steve back down so his head was rested in his lap. He put Christopher on Steve's back and the baby laid on his stomach and hugged his dad with a pleased gurgle. Bucky didn't really know what to say. This was Steve's first real loss. Bucky felt the same way about his parents but he did feel happiness again eventually. But he didn't want to say that to Steve and minimize what he was feeling in that moment.

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Steve closed his eyes and was too tired to stop the quiet tears that came out. "I wanted another baby so bad, Buck," he said in a heartbroken tone. "It would have been perfect. I could have raised them both because I'm home now. We would have sung songs together while we waited for you to get back from work."
Bucky pet Steve's hair and hummed softly as he talked. "I wanted him too," he said and wiped some tears from Steve's face. "We were ready. We were preparing for a while with this one. We had a plan and we had everything worked out."

"I'm sorry I told you to shut up," Steve whispered softly. "I was upset. And I'm angry. I don't want to be the cause of another baby dying. It's not a risk I want to take. What if Christopher is taken instead?" he asked. "I need to see Father Frank."

Steve was getting worked up and Bucky could hear the strain in his breathing. "Hey, hey," he said quickly and picked Christopher up from Steve's back. "Here, sit up. Hold your son. He is here and he is safe. Nothing is going to touch him. Come here."

Steve slowly moved up again, practically dragging himself upright, and he held Christopher in his lap. "Dada," the baby said firmly and then signed 'play' because nobody played with him since he got home.

"You don't know that for sure," Steve said to Bucky.

Bucky sighed and looked at Steve. "No, I guess you are right. I don't know for sure. But what I do know is that we take care of him. And we do everything in our power to make it very unlikely that anything will happen to him. And I also know that even though it doesn't feel like it right now, we will be happy again. And I also know that God didn't want any of this pain for us. If he is like you say he is, there's no way he condones any of this suffering. And I also know that I love you. And I love all our kids - the ones we have, the ones we will have, and the one we lost. And we will survive this and see him again."

Steve's bottom lip quivered and tears started to fall again. Christopher looked over at Bucky and kept signing 'play' in hopes that they would do more than just hold him. Steve silently got up and carried Christopher with him to his blocks in the corner so he could sit there with him and help him build towers just to watch Christopher gleefully knock them down to start all over. "We should call her aunt if we haven't already."

"I'll do that now," Bucky said and stood up. He was so tired. And he was confused and disappointed that Steve wasn't jumping on board to agree with what Bucky was saying about God. Steve was always happy when Bucky agreed that Steve’s god was looking out for them. Bucky went to the doorframe and stood for a second. "What's going through your head right now, Steve? I don't know what you're thinking. I can't tell if you are angry with me. I love you. Do you still love me?"

Steve closed his eyes as he rubbed a hand over his face. "I still love you," he said softly. "But I don't
feel it in my heart. There’s nothing there - nothing happy, at least. I feel empty and spent.” He couldn't even manage a smile when Christopher looked up at him for validation as he knocked the tower down again.

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"Okay," Bucky said tightly and took a shallow breath before turning away so Steve couldn't see how much that hurt - how much that devastated him - so he couldn't see the sting in his eyes and the empty scream on his lips. "I'm going to call Barbara and tell her what happened," he said as flatly as he could and walked with purpose away from his husband.

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Steve didn't mean to hurt Bucky. But he'd rather be honest than lie. Steve couldn't feel any sort of joy or love. Even right now, he was taking care of his son more out of duty than because he wanted to play with him.

Barbara was, of course, distraught to hear the news but wasn't at all surprised. "She's been struggling for a long time," she said.

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Bucky sighed, "I know. I should've helped her more once she missed a few AA meetings in a row. But I figured she was just too fatigued with carrying the baby to show up and she knew what she was doing." He didn't have capacity for emotions anymore. He just told it like it was and stared straight ahead at the wall. "I trust I can count on you to inform her parents? I promised her a good funeral so if they don't want to do it, I will. Just let me know. And if they don't have a spot picked out for her to be buried, I'll have her buried by my parents where we are putting the baby."

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"You did everything you could. There's nothing any of us could have done to stop her from her addiction. She didn't want to stop. I know her," Barbara answered. "I'll let her parents know, but I doubt they'll have much to say about her final affairs. I hope you don't mind that I have her buried in my family plot. The baby can stay in your plot. He was always yours anyway."

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"Yes, I understand. She goes wherever you would like her to," Bucky agreed. "Is there anything else you would like to know before I go? My family needs me." That wasn't entirely true. His sisters were occupying themselves, Sarah was taking care of dinner and some cleaning, Christopher was focused on his blocks, and Steve had made it clear that he wanted nothing to do with Bucky for the time being.

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"No, that's all," she said. "I'll be in touch about her funeral." Barbara hung up.

Sarah called them all for dinner minutes later. Lilly had been crying in her room on and off the whole time so her eyes were a little puffy. Becca helped set the table and Steve put Christopher in his chair before sitting down with a blank look on his face.

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Bucky pulled another chair in for Sarah to sit with them and he hesitated for a moment before taking
his usual spot next to Steve. Everyone was quiet for a second and when Steve didn't offer to pray like he always did every night without fail, Bucky cleared his throat and said, "Well, I guess it's me." He sighed and shut his eyes, hoping at least Steve and Sarah would follow suit. "Um... Steve and Sarah's God, thank you for the good things you have given my family and thank you that I still have my sisters and my husband and mother-in-law and one of my sons. Please keep Grant and Missy safe for us. And tell them we can't wait to see them again." He paused for a second then mumbled, "Uh, okay, amen... I think."

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Steve looked down at his plate the whole time and Sarah looked a little upset that Steve didn't join in for dinner prayer. "That was lovely, Bucky," Sarah said appreciatively before serving them dinner. "I spoke with Tim, by the way," she added as she gave them all their helpings of food. "He says he will cover you as long as you need."

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"Thank you for calling him. I really appreciate it. And thank you for making dinner," Bucky said then got quiet again as he helped Christopher cut up his food so he could shove it into his mouth. Steve didn't move, didn't eat a thing. Lilly watched him nervously as she ate and Becca kept glancing between Sarah and Bucky hoping for some direction of what to do.

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Sarah gave Becca a look that silently said to let Steve do his own thing. Steve didn't remember it, but Sarah remembered how Steve got when he lost his father as a young child. He was acting very similarly. "You're my family. We always take care of our family," she said warmly. "I better get a good Mother's Day gift this year," she joked lightly as she reached out to give Bucky's hand a comforting squeeze.

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"Of course." Bucky nodded and tried to return the smile. Then he remembered Christmas was coming up in a month and a half. This would be Christopher's first Christmas. And they thought it would be the new baby's first one too. He sighed and closed his eyes just thinking about how nice that would have been. Christopher running around the living room as Lilly and Becca opened presents. And Steve sitting curled up on the couch holding a sleeping Grant who wasn't aware of what sort of festivities were happening around him. Christopher whined then and Bucky realized he had been signing for more food and hadn't been given any yet. "Sorry, Bean, sorry. Here you go," Bucky said hurriedly and cut up some more for him. "Here you go, Sweet Little Boy. No need to make noises. Papa has your food."

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Christopher ate until his belly was full and he looked pretty sleepy after that. Sarah cleaned up their dishes and put Steve's untouched food in a container. "Are there any errands you need me to run tomorrow?" Sarah asked.

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"I don't know," Bucky said again, feeling entirely unhelpful. "I guess I'll let you know." He nodded and took Christopher from his seat. "Becca, Lilly, Sarah will be here for a few days so she's going to need to borrow one of your rooms. And then Steve is going to borrow the other and you two can stay in the master bedroom. I'll be out on the couch." He sighed. "Steve, Baby," he said gently. "Do
"You want Christopher with you tonight or do you want me to watch him?"

"You can have him," Steve said flatly and gave both Bucky and Christopher a kiss on the cheek before going to Becca's room without another word.

Sarah got the girls ready for bed but instead of going to sleep right away, she went down to the living room where Bucky and Christopher were. "I'm sorry Steve isn't all there right now."

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Bucky was lying on the couch with Christopher asleep on his chest. He looked up at Sarah and patted the chair next to him for her to sit down if she wanted to. "When we were at the hospital, one of the nurses said that God killed Missy and Grant to punish us because we are queer."

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Sarah sat down and gave Bucky a sad little glance. "Steve isn't used to hearing that sort of hate," she said gently. "And he doesn't take loss like this very well." Sarah folded her hands in her lap. "I don't believe God is punishing you two. I believe God had a plan for Missy and Grant, but those plans weren't for them to stay on earth. It's an unfortunate tragedy that you have to suffer the loss of their lives."

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Bucky nodded. "I like that a lot better. Steve believes that nurse. It really fucked him up. I didn't think his faith was that easily shaken but it was. Now he is saying he doesn't want any more kids. And he is scared that something will happen to Christopher next. I'm worried Steve's going to take this too far and he is going to leave us. I know he loves his god more than me and that's fine, but not if he thinks what his god wants is for him to be straight and not be with me anymore."

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"I don't think he truly believes what she said," Sarah admitted. "But would you bet your son's life on a maybe?" She looked at the pile of broken crib. "Steve loves God. And that's why no matter what, he would never break the promise he made to him that he would stay by your side for all eternity. He also loves you far too much to ever abandon you."

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Bucky looked at her for a long moment. "Is it unfair that I'd rather he leave his religion behind if it meant that he thought we were wrong? I don't want him looking at me everyday and thinking, 'I vowed to stay with this man so now I'm stuck with him. He's the one who I've been sinning with and he's the reason my son is dead.'" He paused and thought. "Yeah, I don't think he should follow any god that tells him that what we have is unnatural or bad or a sin."

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"His religion isn't saying that. It's people misinterpreting his religion that are, and Steve is having trouble differentiating between the two." Sarah knew that this wasn't fair for Bucky to have to deal with. But there wasn't much that either of them could do at the moment. "He will come around," she said. "He was so excited for this baby. He will find it in his heart to bring more children into your home. Time and prayer will heal him and he will be a good husband to you again."
"Can you talk to him?" Bucky asked softly and pet the little hairs on Christopher's head. "Or help me get Father Frank down here to talk to him. He knows I don't believe exactly what he believes but I know what it means to him. And I think if someone who does believe like him talked to him instead of me it might help, you know?"

"Of course, I will," she said. "I plan on bringing him with me to church tomorrow. And if he won't go with his mother, then I'll bring Father Frank here." She squeezed his arm lightly. "You are so strong, Bucky. I can't imagine the loss you've suffered today. You deserve a husband that will help bear that sorrow."

"Thank you, Sarah," Bucky said with a little waver to his voice. "For everything you're doing for us." He let her give him a kiss on his forward before she headed up to bed. Bucky watched Christopher sleeping and breathing easy and hoped Steve wasn't having too rough of a time sleeping and breathing himself. He hated that they weren't wrapped up in each other's arms right now like they should be. But it couldn't be helped. It also couldn't be helped that Bucky didn't sleep for a single second during the night. He just had too much on his mind.

Chapter End Notes

Spoiler Warnings for tertiary character death and loss of a child and mental instability resulted from grief.
Sarah got the girls up and ready for school. Everyone had breakfast and she made lunch for them as well. However, despite her attempts at getting Steve out of bed, he refused. So she asked Father Frank to come in the afternoon. He spent nearly an hour talking with Steve and Sarah, but when it was over, he walked over to Bucky and gave him a rosary. "I know you don't believe. But if you ever do want to pray for your son, some of us hold rosary beads while praying. It's a connection to God the Father."

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Bucky took it gratefully and kept Christopher from putting it in his mouth. "Thank you, Father. How is Steve? Did he tell you that we made Grant's middle name ‘Francis’ after you? We were going to tell you when he was being baptized but that isn't happening now."

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Frank looked surprised and touched. "He did not tell me," he said softly. "I'm honored, truly." He sat down and gently tickled the bottom of Christopher's foot. "He is still in mourning. There are many stages of grief one has to endure before healing, as you know." The father sighed. "I reassured him that this was not his fault or the fault of your relationship."

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"Did he believe you?" Bucky asked with doubt and fatigue in his tone. He hoped Steve listened to Father Frank at least. There was nothing that Bucky wanted to do more than to go curl up with Steve and hold him but he doubted that his husband even wanted to see him.

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"I can't say for certain," Frank said. "But I can say that he is more convinced than before. This was an unfortunate and painful occurrence. God does not condone the hatred that women spewed upon you in your time of grief and need. And God most certainly isn’t punishing you. He is all-loving. Steve will remember that eventually.” He paused and gave a confident smile to Bucky and the wrinkles around his eyes crinkled up. "If we can get him out of the house and brought back into our sermons and community, he will have more people of faith to reassure him. It won't heal his loss but it will at least heal his guilt." Frank paused before asking, "Is there anything I can do to help lift the weight you carry?"

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"I'm not sure, Father." Bucky shook his head. "I have absolutely no answers at the moment. If you can perform Grant's funeral for us, that would mean the world. I'm not sure if Missy's aunt is holding her funeral or if that will be me as well, but I may need you for that one too."

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"Of course, I will help lay your son to rest," Father Frank responded with conviction. "You let me know about Missy and if she needs a priest, then I will see her to rest too." He kissed the top of Christopher's head and squeezed Bucky's shoulder as he stood. "I hope you find peace soon," he said gently before heading out.

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Bucky sat with Christopher for a couple minutes. He really hadn't let go of him much since they got home and he was anxious to move around. "Sarah!" Bucky called and went looking for her in the kitchen. The girls were back from school and working on homework quietly at the table and Sarah was reading from her Bible. "Do one of you mind watching him for a bit? I'm going to go talk to Steve." He set Christopher on the ground and the baby immediately started running circles around the table. "He has a lot of energy that he hasn't gotten to work out for a bit so please just make sure he doesn't bump his head or something."

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Sarah looked up from her Bible and then nodded her head. "Of course," she answered. She then looked over at Christopher and gave him a big smile. "Wow, so fast!" she praised, getting up to pretend to chase after him.

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Bucky trudged upstairs to Becca's room, worried about what sort of state Steve was going to be in. He didn't bother knocking - he figured if he asked to come in he would be told 'no'. The state he found Steve in wasn't too surprising. He was curled up in a tight ball on Becca's twin bed and he was staring out at nothing.

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Steve's hair was flat from lying in the same position all night long and throughout the day so far. When Bucky came in, he didn't move even though his eyes flickered over to see him. "Did Father Frank speak to you?" he asked.

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Bucky nodded and walked over to the bed. "He gave me this," he said and held out the rosary to Steve. "And I told him that we dedicated Grant's middle name for him. I think he really appreciated that."

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Steve made a tired noise. "He says this wasn't our fault. But it still feels like it somehow is," Steve said. "Why would something like this happen if we weren't doing anything wrong, Buck?"

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Bucky stiffened and stared at Steve. He really couldn't do this again. He couldn't have this whole conversation again. It was too much. If Steve really needed something to blame for this then Bucky was going to give him something to blame. It sure as hell wasn't going to be their relationship, though. "Sure. You're right. It happened because I did something wrong. Missy was struggling and skipping AA meetings and wanting to do drugs again and I didn't do everything in my power to help her. She told me about a month and a half ago that she did cocaine with a friend - while pregnant with our baby. Then she asked me if we would still want the baby even despite that mistake. I told her we would and asked her if she would wait until the baby was born to do drugs again. I believed her when she said she would wait." Bucky paused, his breathing picking up and tears brimming on his eyes. "But I also know how addiction works. And I knew the likelihood that she would do it again. And I also made the mistake of telling her how much I miss coke and how much I loved doing it and how great it felt when I did. I screwed her up. It's my fault she is dead and the baby is dead!" Bucky was crying and holding his arms across his chest and staring at Steve, waiting for him to get mad at him.
Steve's jaw dropped. Deep down he didn't blame Bucky but he couldn't help the swell of anger and hurt. "You knew about this? Why didn't you tell me? *Fuck*, how couldn't you tell me?" Steve covered his face with his hands. "Why would you tell her all that?"

Bucky shook his head. "I don't know. I regret all of it. But I was just trying to relate to her, make her feel like she wasn't alone. I was being honest with her. You should understand that. Your whole thing is honesty." At least it was sort of working. Steve was now mad at him and not mashed into the bed thinking about God punishing them for anything.

Steve looked away from Bucky, unable to bear to see him crying right now. He wanted to just curl up and waste away. "You should've told me," he said again. "We could've changed this. We could have kept them both alive, Bucky!"

"I know that," Bucky said somberly. "She told me not to tell you, though. She thought you'd arrest her. I think she thought that after the baby was born, you would have her arrested and she would go to jail. She liked you but she didn't like that you are a cop. Even though I told her you would never do that." He hesitated. "But this is all my fault. You're right. It's on me and I understand that you are angry with me. I'll just go. I'll leave you alone."

Steve frowned with disapproval and such a heavy heart. Bucky should have known him better and convinced Missy more that he wouldn't arrest her. He wouldn't arrest people in need. "It's not all your fault," he said. "But I do want to be left alone, Buck. I'm sorry."

Bucky nodded. He took a step forward and slipped off his wedding ring. He slowly offered it out to Steve. He hated that they were doing this again but he figured this would keep him distracted from blaming their sexuality on all this. Bucky would take all this blame if it helped Steve at all.

Steve looked at the ring for a moment before sliding his own off and swapping it with Bucky's. He placed Bucky's ring on his finger and curled back up under the blankets. He was done interacting for the day. He was ready to go back to wordlessly staring at the walls in Becca's room and counting to five while he breathed slowly, just to try to keep from coughing.

Bucky spent the rest of the day playing with Christopher in the living room and talking with Sarah. He felt like shit but he needed to take care of the son he still had. The girls just sat on the couch together and watched silently as Christopher worked on a block tower.

After laying in silence for a few minutes, Lilly spoke up. "Bucky? Can you walk with me to the
store? I want to get something but I don't have any money," she said.

"Can Miss Sarah go with you?" Bucky asked and looked over at her with pleading eyes. Lilly shook her head. She wanted to go walking with her brother. "Okay, Lil, let's go." He sighed and got up. "What is it you need?"

"It's nothing expensive," she said vaguely, not wanting to talk about it. Once outside, she admitted, "I want to get a blanket for Grant for his funeral."

Bucky took Lilly’s hand and squeezed it once. "Thank you, Lilly. Yes, that's really kind of you. We can find something for him." He sighed and walked on. "Lilly, I don't know how Steve and I are going to move on from this. I'm surprised how well I'm doing right now. Steve's shut down and I know I can't do that to you and Becca again. But I feel so broken."

Lilly gave Bucky a bit of a worried look. "You're not breaking up, are you?" She liked Steve and she liked how much better Bucky felt having him there. Her brother had changed so much for the better in this past year. "He's not talking to you?"

"He's hardly talking," Bucky said quietly. "And he hardly looks at me. I don't honestly know what's going to happen. Every time something comes up, he always reassures me that he would never ever leave and he loves me. But he isn't doing that now. And when I asked if he still loved me, he said ‘yes, but he didn't feel it in his heart'."

"Steve needs to stop being an asshole," Lilly said in a matter-of-fact tone. She was more emotional with her judgments than Becca was. "He's not the only one feeling like shit, but he's the only one shutting everyone else out."

"I'm okay with him being like this and wanting to be alone but I just need to know that we are going to be okay. I need to know that he won't leave and he still loves me and he still wants to try for more children later and he doesn't think that this is some big horrible plot against us because we are gay," Bucky rambled and took a deep breath.

"I can try and knock some sense into him. He's not even playing with his own kid anymore. I don't think he's fed Christopher or changed his diaper even once since you got home," Lilly said, putting her free hand on her hip.

"He hasn't. And it's okay. He needs time," Bucky said. "I just don't want Christopher thinking that
Steve doesn't love him anymore as well. Steve can be done with me but he can't be done with his son. Christopher needs him.

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When they got to the store, Lilly went to the baby aisle and started looking at the different blankets to find one for her nephew. "Do you really think he would abandon Christopher?"

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"I don't know," Bucky said with a heavy sigh. "I want to think that he wouldn't. But I can't figure out anything going through his head right now. I thought he would never question his faith in us like he did either. He’s so distant right now. Aren't partners supposed to work through tragedy together?"

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"Well, yeah, that's what they're supposed to do. People are also supposed to not do drugs but they break that rule, too," Lilly said. "Are we going to go to Missy's funeral? Or are only you going?"

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"I might be holding Missy's funeral. I'm not sure yet," Bucky said and looked at the three blankets Lilly was trying to decide between. "If you want to be there, you can. But I won't make you. I understand how tough it is going to funerals and you'll already have Grant's to attend."

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"I'd rather be there with you," she said. "You shouldn't have to go alone." Lilly landed on a blanket with little dinosaurs on it. "You think this one is nice? I think he would have liked having dinosaurs on stuff."

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"I think that one is great." Bucky smiled. "Maybe you can show Steve when we get home. Try to see if he will talk to you. What do you think?" He took the blanket carefully from Lilly and went to set it on the checkout counter.

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Lilly hugged Bucky and then took the blanket back once it was paid for. "I hope Steve wants more kids. I was kind of hoping for a niece," she said. "I love Christopher, but I want to have a fifty-fifty split."

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"I hope he wants more kids, too, Lil," Bucky said and started walking back to their place. "That was the plan - a bunch of kids in our new house. I'm just waiting for him to snap out of this and let us grieve together. He doesn't look at me and he hasn't touched me barely at all since we got home and I need to feel loved. I lost people, too, and I feel like I'm not actually getting to mourn."
The morning of Grant's funeral was the most difficult since they had gotten home. Bucky had made sure he got himself clean and dressed in a nice black suit and he got Christopher into the suit that Sarah had gone out and bought him. She had taken care of getting the girls ready and Lilly clung to the new blanket for Grant the entire time.

After a while, everyone was ready except for Steve. He still hadn't left Becca's room. He hadn't showered for days and he hadn't eaten. Bucky held Christopher in one arm and barged into Becca's room, holding Steve's suit with the other. "Steve, come on. I won't make you shower but you have to at least put this on. We have to go soon," he said firmly.

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Steve had been dreading this day. He felt as if the longer Grant spent above ground, the longer he could hold on to his memory. Once he was buried, then that was that. He looked over and had half the heart to say that maybe he shouldn't go. But he knew he would regret it and Bucky wouldn't forgive him. He dragged himself to his feet and slowly, mechanically changed into his suit. "Do you think they'll let us hold him one last time?"

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"We can ask to do that before the service starts." Bucky nodded and readjusted Christopher who was pulling at his hair and making soft noises to himself. "Father Frank will be there. I'm sure he will help us with that. He and Tim also worked to put together a memorial lunch at the shelter after the service is over. I'm going to go but you don't have to."

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"I'd like to hold him before the service." Steve knew that he would be more like a doll than an actual baby at this point. But he needed to hold his son one last time. "And I'd rather go home after the service," he said. Steve combed his hair back to at least attempt to look presentable. "Tell them I said 'thank you', though."

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"Okay, I will. Do you want to come back alone or do you want Christopher?" Bucky asked. "Because I was planning on taking him with me unless you want him for a bit. He misses you. He's been pretty confused that you haven't been around."

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"He'll probably be happier with you," Steve said. He looked over at their baby and Christopher smiled happily when he had his dad's attention. "I'll play with him later, once you're back from the lunch."

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Bucky doubted that Steve would actually do that, but he nodded anyway. "Thank you. Are you ready to go? I mean, as ready as we will ever be. None of this is easy." He fixed Steve's collar a bit and then stopped touching him because he wasn't sure if that would make Steve angry. "Your mom and the girls are waiting downstairs."
Steve had a pretty exhausted, depleted expression stretched over his face, but he did lean a little towards Bucky when he fixed his collar. He grabbed the teddy bear he'd bought for Grant - the one he took to the hospital - and followed Bucky downstairs. He shadowed his mom as they walked to church for the service, still not saying a word.

When they got there, Bucky took a deep breath before holding the door open for his family and then following them in. There were more people than he expected. A lot of the people he knew were there like Clint, Nat, Tim, and another man with Natasha who he assumed must have been Sam Wilson and they were talking with Evan and Monty. There were also plenty of people who he had never seen before but they all seemed to recognize Steve. Maybe they were coworkers or people of Father Frank's church.

Christopher started signing over at Clint when he saw him, remembering that Clint was the one adult who spoke through sign to him the most. Clint managed a smile and walked over to Bucky so he could give him a hug and say hello to the baby. "I'm so sorry, buddy," he said to Bucky softly.

"Thanks, Clint," Bucky said and held on to him in the hug. "Sorry, I didn't come tell you in person. Things have been overwhelming. Thank you for coming today. I love you, man. I really appreciate your support. "He looked over at Steve who was standing a few feet away by his mother and staring at the ground. "I hardly managed to get him out of bed to come today."

"It's okay, Bucky. It's not exactly something that's nice to have to tell people," Clint said. He glanced over at Steve. "He looks like hell," he said. "When's the last time he ate? Doesn't he have health issues he needs to worry about?"

"He hasn't eaten for four days, Sarah got him to have a slice of toast yesterday morning and he has been drinking water from time to time," Bucky said with a tired, guilty sigh. "And yeah, he's kind of sick right now and he won't do what the doctors suggest and he's being really stubborn and unreasonable. His body is all shaky and he can't stay awake for very long." He paused and shook his head, trying to shrug it off for now.

"Four days? Fuck, at this point we need Natasha to shove a sandwich down his throat." Clint sighed. A few churchgoers went over to Steve to give them their condolences but Steve didn't react hardly at all. "If there's anything I can do, let me know. We have enough coverage at the store for a while in case you need more time."

"Alright, I'm going to try to be back next week but I'll let you know," Bucky said. "And I might take you up on that offer to have Natasha knock some sense into him. If anyone can, it's her, probably." Father Frank called for everyone to sit down then and Bucky led his family up to sit in the front row.
He figured he could just ask to hold Grant once they were done. The baby wasn’t going anyway yet so they had a little time. Bucky sat his sisters down and then Steve and hesitated once again before sitting by his husband. He held Christopher on his lap but didn't reach out for Steve's hand like he so desperately wanted to.

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Throughout the whole sermon, Steve sat still as a stone and almost as if he wanted to disappear from this place until it was all over. He appreciated the support of his friends, family, and community, but he wanted a moment to himself - just him and his son to say goodbye in peace. When it was all over and time to go to the cemetery, he looked over to Bucky, his eyes stinging with tears. "I don't think I can do this."

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"You can do this," Bucky said and this time took his hand. "You can." He gave Christopher to Becca and walked Steve up to Father Frank. "Father, is it okay if Steve and I hold him one more time before we go lay him to rest?"

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Frank nodded and pulled them into a private room where the coffin was. Upon seeing the small intricate coffin, Steve made a choked sound and buried his face into Bucky's shoulder, gripping onto his shirt tightly. He squeezed Bucky's hand and gave him a small nudge to take their son out.

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Bucky kissed Steve's head and then gingerly took Grant from the coffin. He was dressed in a light blue onesie and was wearing a cap on his head. Bucky cradled him and touched his face that had been done up by the mortician to look less blue. Bucky did not appreciate it. He looked like something he wasn't. They were trying to make his son into what they thought he should look like. He was perfect how he was and he didn’t want anyone else to have touched him.

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Steve saw how Grant had been covered up and his bottom lip quivered. He took the blanket that Lilly had bought for him and dipped the corner in some of the holy water in the basin and gingerly wiped the makeup off so he would look how he had been born instead of what he was expected to look like.

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Bucky watched Steve and cried as he saw the mess of makeup wash away. Once he was done, he passed Grant over to Steve to hold and then he snuggled up against Steve's side to look at the baby. "Thank you for doing that, Steve. He didn't look like himself."

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Steve held Grant against his chest and kissed the top of the baby's head. "Your dad and pop love you so much, little man," he whispered. "I can't wait to get to meet you in heaven." He took a shuddering breath and turned Grant towards Bucky a bit in case he wanted to talk to him and say his goodbyes.

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Bucky kissed his son too and then held one of his tiny hands. A part of him hoped against hope that
he would cough and splutter and then start crying and open his eyes. But he knew there was absolutely no chance of that. "Your Papaw and Gran are going to take care of you until we can get there, okay? They are good people and they already love you so much. And so do we."

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Steve would’ve stayed there forever if they could. But he knew that it was time to let go of their little boy. He whispered words of love to him and sung him a little lullaby before laying him back down. He let Bucky tuck him in with the dinosaur blanket and he adjusted the teddy bear so it was snuggled up against his side. He reached down for Bucky's hand and gave it a squeeze. "Ready to go?"

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Bucky stared at him for a little while longer and just clung to Steve's hand. "Yes, I'm ready," he said and whispered one more time to Grant that he loved him. Then he let Father Frank lead them back out and tried not to look back at the two church deacons who were closing up the coffin to carry it out to head to the grave site.

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Steve was a little less distant after that, even though he didn't speak as Grant was blessed one more time before being lowered into his grave. They stood there as the rest of the funeral party left to go back to the shelter. Steve turned to Bucky and gently took his ring off and offered it back to him.

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Bucky looked down at the ring. He wanted to take it back. He did. But he had too much doubt about this still in his heart. "I'm sorry, Steve. This is a two-way street. We both have to be ready. I need a couple things cleared up first. We can talk when I get home from the lunch at the shelter."

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Steve's face fell and he looked away so Bucky couldn't see how upset he was. He didn't blame Bucky for needing more time. But Steve was desperate to have a peace between them again. "Alright... I guess I'll see you at home, then."

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"Still don't want to come?" Bucky asked sadly. "Clint and Nat and your new buddy Sam are going to be there." He planned on just spending his time talking with them and fielding condolences from other attendees and making sure Christopher didn't throw his food.

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"Not really," Steve said. "I'd rather remember him in peace and quiet than in a crowd." He didn't mean to come off as rude or ungrateful for the memorial service. It was just that his heart was too broken to handle any more of this.

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"Okay, Love. Christopher and I will be back home later." Bucky squeezed Steve's hand once and turned to go. "The girls and your mom are going home with you, but I'm sure they won't bug you if you want to be alone. See you in a bit."
Steve nodded. "Alright... I love you," he said quietly, tiredly. He kissed Bucky's cheek and then the top of Christopher's head. He held his mom's hand as he and the girls walked back home. As soon as he got back, he took a shower and laid down again, far too tired from the day to do anything else.

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Bucky wasn't out for very long. He didn't want to be away from the rest of his family too much on a day like that. But he knew somebody had to attend the lunch service and talk to people. When he got back home, he was exhausted. "Sarah, is Steve back upstairs?" he asked and set Christopher on the couch so he could strip off his little suit. The baby had been wiggling uncomfortably in it all day.

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"Yes, he is," Sarah said in a tone that suggested she was both worried and tired of Steve hiding away from his family. "How are you feeling, Bucky? I know it was a hard day today, but I remember feeling a sense of relief after my husband was laid to rest."

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"I am mostly just exhausted and ready for this nightmare to be over." Bucky sighed and picked up Christopher who was down to his diaper. "Would you mind putting him in comfier clothes so I can go talk to Steve. I upset him earlier and we have some things we need to discuss."

---

"Dada?" Christopher said to Bucky when he heard him say 'Steve'. He was getting smarter by the day. Sarah nodded and took Christopher. "Yes, Love, your dad's upstairs. You'll get to see him later," she said sweetly as she took him to the nursery to change him.

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Bucky knocked on the door this time before going in. Steve was sitting up instead of lying down and he was dressed in his pajamas once more. "I was told by just about everyone to give you their condolences and hugs."

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Steve's eyes flickered to Bucky and he drew his lips into a thin line. "Thank you," he said. A part of him felt guilty not being there at Bucky's side. But he felt like he would've made things worse by being there. "How're you feeling?"

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"Not great," Bucky said and gestured at a spot on the bed. "Can I sit? I think we should talk about a couple things because we just buried our son and I'm tired of not being able to be in your arms. Also, you need to eat." He pulled a bowl of apple slices from behind his back and handed them to Steve. "Please."

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"Yeah, sit," Steve murmured. He eyed the apple slices for a moment. He didn't feel like his stomach would agree but he would try to eat for Bucky's sake. He picked one up and nibbled at it lightly. "What do you want to talk about?"
Bucky sat down and pulled his legs up underneath him. "First of all, I want to know if you love me. I mean, actually love me. Because the other day you said you didn't feel it in your heart and that was a cruel blow to my already ripped up soul." Bucky was far too jaded to sugar-coat anything. He was just going to get to the point and get answers out of his husband.

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"I do," Steve said firmly. "The other day I didn't feel anything. I wasn't happy holding Christopher, my heart didn't soar when I looked at you... It wasn't that I loved you any less, Bucky, it was that I couldn't... couldn't handle anything."

---

"What about now? How do you feel about me now?" Bucky asked and stared desperately at Steve. "Are you angry with me? Do you feel love for me again? Are you going to stay and let us grieve our son together?"

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Steve reached out to hold Bucky's hand. "I feel blessed to have a husband stay by my side so faithfully when I haven't been the man he deserves," Steve said. "I want to make that up to you, Bucky. I want to be there for you."

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Bucky held on to Steve's hand tightly. "Okay. Next question." He turned a bit and took Steve's other hand as well. "What do you believe in now? Are you still buying into that crap the nurse said? Or did you remember that your god isn't like whoever it is she's believing in?"

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Steve looked down and huffed. "I don't know," he said. "Deep down, I don't believe that God would punish us for this. But I can't push out that fear that what if he might? I'm scared of losing you or Christopher."

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Bucky closed his eyes slowly in defeat and frustration. He let go of Steve's hands and rested his on his lap. He didn't know what to do. He needed Steve to be passed this. He thought he got him sort of past it when he shifted the blame to himself for how he acted with Missy. Steve was acting like he was the only one worried about losing more people. Ever since his parents died, Bucky lived in constant worry that everyone he loved would be taken away.

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"Buck..." Steve said with a frown. He watched as his husband pulled back and let go of his hands. He blinked and tried to scoot a little closer to get him back to him. "Please don't be mad at me. I don't want to leave you. I'm not sorry that we are together."

---

Bucky rubbed his face and tried not to start crying again. He cleared his throat softly and tentatively took one of Steve's hands again. "When... um... I guess... do you ever think you'll let that thought go? You'll go back to believing the god you listened to before?"
"I don't know. I want to, but right now, I can't shake the fear and doubt. I need time, Buck," Steve said quietly. He squeezed his hand. "I haven't had my faith shaken this bad ever before."

Bucky nodded and looked down. "I understand. You need time. And I guess I'm just going to have to be as patient as I can be. Because I don't have a faith that's part of me like you do so I don't know what this must feel like to you." He was trying his best to keep the conversation on what he could do to help instead of what he wanted Steve to do - that wouldn't be fair of him and it would just make Steve retreat again. "But, I do need to know what this looks like for us while you are working through this."

"What do you mean what this looks like for us?" Steve asked. He wrapped an arm around Bucky and gently pulled him against his side. "Do you think I'm going to leave or something, Buck?"

"I'm always worried you're going to leave when things get tough," Bucky admitted with a sigh. "But I mean, what's this mean right now? You've hardly looked at me or touched me and it's made me feel like you're blaming me because I'm gay and you're gay and we live together and all that shit. Like you just can't stand to look at me." He closed his eyes and shook his head. "I need to know if we are going back to normal. Going to sleep in the same bed, going to give each other morning kisses, and make love, and tell each other what we are thinking, and take care of our first born son together, and work through our grief as a couple."

"It's not you," Steve said. "I can't even play with our boy, Bucky. It doesn't have anything to do with our relationship. It has everything to do with the fact that I'm more depressed than I've ever been. I want to get through this together as a couple, Bucky. But I can't promise normal when I'm not feeling normal. I've never felt like this in my life. I don't know how to navigate it."

"Okay." Bucky nodded and swallowed around the lump in his throat. "Well, I'm going to go back downstairs to Christopher and make sure he is doing okay. I also need to get out of this suit. You can join us if you want. Like I said, he misses you."

Steve nodded. "He doesn't deserve an absent father. I'll go down and spend some time with him." This was the most he'd been out of the room all week. While Bucky changed, Steve went down to his mom and Christopher. His son bounced in his spot when he saw Steve and reached out for him.

Bucky put on some comfortable jeans and a sweater and then came back to the living and saw Christopher clinging desperately to Steve and talking up a storm. "Hey, Sweet Little Bean!" Bucky said excitedly, trying to put on airs for their baby. "Is Daddy back? Did Daddy come to play?"
Steve felt awful at how Christopher clung onto him like he would disappear if he let go. He rubbed the baby's back and gave him his full attention as he babbled. "He's got a lot to tell me," Steve said pleasantly as Christopher kept talking. "I guess I missed a lot."

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"Tell Daddy all about it," Bucky encouraged him and laid down with his head resting on Steve's thigh. "Tell him about how you've been running all around the house and making your Nana and your Pops chase you down." He giggled and reached up to lightly pinch Christopher's leg.

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"You're running now? But you were barely able to crawl yesterday!" Steve teased lightly. He tickled Christopher's belly before moving his hand to pet his fingers through Bucky's hair. "You're growing up so fast, Bean. You're going to be a big bean soon!"

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"Big strong bean!" Bucky agreed with a chuckle. "Pretty soon you'll be able to actually outrun Pops and Nana when we try to track you down." He glanced over at Sarah who was reading in a chair and smiling down at her book as she listened. This felt good. Steve was with him again and they were with their son. It could be better. They could have Grant sleeping in Bucky's arms while his brother played. But this was good.

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"Beeeeee," Christopher cooed happily, mimicking his parents. Steve let out a laugh and hugged his son. "You're such a good boy," he praised. "You want to play with your blocks some more? I know how much you love knocking them down."

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Bucky sat up and brought the box of toy blocks over to Christopher and Steve and started putting them in rows on the ground. "Steve, Baby, can I make anything for you to eat? How many apple slices did you have?" he asked it softly and lovingly so Steve would know Bucky was concerned but not feel like he was being nagged about it.

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Steve sat next to Christopher and helped him set up his little tower. "A few," he said. "I'm not very hungry, Bucky, I'm sorry. I'll try to eat more at dinner," he promised.

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Bucky nodded and pet Steve's hair. "You don't have to eat much. Just enough so you don't waste away. That's all I ask." He smiled softly and leaned over to gingerly kiss Steve's cheek. "I'm glad you're here right now. I really missed being with you," he whispered and rested his head on Steve's shoulder, just watching Christopher.

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Christopher could barely wait until the blocks were set up. He smashed them all down and bubbled with laughter. Steve managed a little smile and then turned his head to return the kiss for Bucky. "I love you, Bucky. I do," he said softly. "We can do this together."
"Yeah, we can," Bucky agreed and held tightly to Steve's hand. "I think it's a good idea for you to talk to Father Frank about this again, too. Get some of his opinions and thoughts about all it. He really wants to help us. He cares about you and knows how strong you are. And I know it would be good for you to talk with someone who shares your faith since I don't quite. You know?"

Steve nodded his head in agreement. "Alright," he said quietly. He knew talking to the Father would be a good idea in all regards, so he may as well. "We're lucky to have him, aren't we?"

"Yeah, I agree. He has been really good to us," Bucky said and got up off the ground. "I'm going to go check on the girls really quick and then I'll be back. In the interest of honesty and telling each other what we think, I really wish I could be drinking right now so I'm going to make a bunch of iced tea."

When Bucky checked on the girls, they were keeping themselves busy by playing a card game on the bed. They looked up at Bucky and waited for him to talk to gauge how things were going right now.

Bucky sighed and went to sit down next to Lilly. He pulled her in for a hug and kissed the top of her head. "How are you two holding up? Do you need anything? I was about to get some iced tea in the fridge for later."

"We don't need anything," Becca said. "We're sad Grant isn't around, but it's not like we were his parents or anything. We're mostly sad for you two."

"I understand," Bucky said sadly and looked at both of them in turn. "Thanks for being so helpful and supportive of us through this. I love you both so fucking much. I hope you know that." He kissed their foreheads and then went back downstairs to make iced tea.

Christopher had tottered after Bucky when he saw his pop go into the kitchen. "Papa," he said, then signed for food. Since Bucky was making tea he figured now was a good time to ask.

Steve quickly followed his son inside and scooped him up. "He's insatiable."

"What do you want, Bean?" Bucky asked and opened the fridge to pull out some different types of fruits and veggies. "You only get a little bit because I want you to eat your dinner tonight." Christopher made grabby hands at the blackberries and Bucky handed them to Steve so he could feed his son.
Steve gave Christopher his berries one by one since he couldn't be trusted to not mash them the second he had the chance. "I can't believe how much not being around for a few days affected him," Steve said.

"He's a growing little boy," Bucky answered and started the water to boil. "He needs his support system and he loves you so much. I think he just got pretty confused and nervous. He kept saying 'Dada' every time your mom or I mentioned you."

Once all the berries were gone, Christopher smiled at Steve and reached up to signal that he wanted to be held again. "I don't ever want to be that distant from him again. Or you," Steve said.

Bucky smiled softly into the tea he was letting steep and said, "I think Christopher would agree that he doesn't want you to be that distant again either. And I sure as hell don't." He poured the hot tea into a large pitcher and put it in the freezer to start cooling down. "We really do need you. And we love you so much."

Steve walked over to hug Bucky from behind and gave him a small kiss on his shoulder. "Well, I love you too. So very much," he said with an adoring smile. Steve kissed his cheek again and then stepped back.

"Can we sleep together again tonight?" Bucky asked and turned to lean against the counter. "I can ask Becca if she wouldn't mind sharing her bed with Lilly or taking the couch. The couch isn't too bad, I just want to be with you tonight."

Steve nodded his head. "I'd like that a lot," he agreed. "I miss waking up to you. And getting to hold you all night long." He really did miss out on a lot since they stopped talking.

"I'll talk to Becca later about it. I don't think she will mind," Bucky said and looked over at Christopher. He couldn't believe that they had just buried their second son that morning. Things felt so strange, like he was dreaming.

When it was bedtime, Steve tucked their little boy in and read him a story until he fell asleep. Steve then said goodnight to the rest of his family and snuggled into bed with Bucky. He had a hard time sleeping that night between breathing issues and nightmares about their son. But come morning, he was out like a log.
Bucky woke up before Steve and gently slipped out from under his tangle of arms and legs. He had something he wanted to do today so he wrote Steve a little note. The note said, 'I'll be back soon - maybe an hour or two. Please eat some breakfast. At least a piece of toast if nothing else.' Then he rolled it up and put it on the nightstand for him. He also very carefully took his ring back from Steve's finger and put it on, replacing Steve’s back to its rightful place.

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Steve slowly sat up in bed when the sun poured in through the windows and woke him. He looked to his side and frowned when he saw Bucky was no longer there. But then he saw his own ring back on his finger and a little smile came to his face. Steve said his morning prayer with Grant's rosaries and then went downstairs to make breakfast. He was feeling pretty okay at the moment.

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Bucky spent a good hour at the cemetery talking to his parents and Grant and petting the freshly turned earth above his son. It would be another couple weeks before the ground was solid enough for the gravestone to be put in and Bucky knew he would feel uncomfortable and worried about it until it was standing up next to his mother's stone.

After he felt like he wouldn't be able to stay any longer without crying, Bucky got up and headed to the tattoo shop where he had gotten his first tattoo a few months before. In simple script, he had them ink 'Christopher Leland' on his chest over his heart and then 'Grant Francis' right below it. He figured he would just add names under each one as time went on and they had more children - if they had more children.

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Once two hours had passed, Steve worried when Bucky would be getting back. He didn't panic or call around for him yet. Bucky must have just not noticed how long he had been out. When Bucky did finally end up coming home, Steve was laying on his back on the floor while Christopher climbed over him from side to side, content to use his dad as a jungle gym.

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"Hey, Little Bean!" Bucky said excitedly and got down on the floor with him and Steve. Lilly and Becca were putting together a jigsaw puzzle on the coffee table and Sarah was once again reading in the chair she had taken to. Christopher jumped into Bucky's lap and reached up to bang his hands on his chest excitedly. "Ow, ow, Christopher, hold on," he said and gently took his son's hands so they wouldn't hit his new tattoo.

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Steve gave Bucky a curious look when he was hurt by the hit. The baby wasn't strong enough to cause pain like that, after all. Christopher pouted a little and tried to wiggle his hands free. "No! Papa," he insisted in his little voice. He would've signed something at Bucky if his hands weren't restrained.

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Bucky let go of his hands and said, "But, Baby, it hurts a little because Papa did this today." He
lifted his shirt up to show off the tattoo. It was red around the lettering and his chest felt like it was on fire. But he loved it.

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Steve sat up when he saw that Bucky had gotten a tattoo. He moved closer so he could read it and he felt his chest get tight. Tears welled up in his eyes and he put a hand on Bucky's chest, just under his heart. "That's beautiful, Bucky."

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"You okay?" Bucky asked softly and took Steve's hand, feeling the ring back on his husband’s finger. He couldn't tell if Steve liked the tattoo or not. It might have hurt too much to see their sons’ names written out together like that while also knowing that their babies wouldn’t get to play and grow up side by side. "Should I not have gotten this?"

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"No, I think... I think it's a beautiful idea," Steve said softly. "It's just a shame he won't get to see his name on you for a very long time. I think it would be pretty special to know that his papa carries around his name forever now."

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"I think he can probably see it now. He just can't read. He's too young to you," Bucky said and smiled a little. If he believed his parents were watching over them, he had to believe his son was with them too. "And I figured I'd just add below their names if we have more kids." He looked over at the girls working on the puzzle. "And before you two think I forgot you, I want to do something for you as well but I want your help deciding what it should be."

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"You're going to have so many names on you, someone's going to think you're a road map," Becca snorted with a fond smile to show that she was mostly teasing.

"Yeah... especially if we end up having the dozen kids we planned for," Steve added. He wasn't completely sold on trying for more kids, but he did want them in theory. He also knew it would make Bucky feel better if he at least let the idea bounce around again.

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Bucky gave Steve a small, warm smile. He appreciated that Steve was trying to be confident for him. And Bucky hoped that soon Steve really would agree to more kids and put this paranoia behind him. It wasn’t like he wanted to go pick a new baby right that second, he just wanted to know that their future held more kids. Bucky looked to Sarah and said, "Well, Sarah everyone's getting in on writing on my body so now is your chance."

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Sarah looked up from her book and gave Bucky a sly smirk. "How about you tattoo your grocery list so you don't forget Steve's favorite crackers for the third time." She remembered how Steve whined to her that Bucky always accidentally got the wrong type almost every time he asked for them.
Bucky was taken aback but grateful for the change of pace with such light conversation today as opposed to the days before. "I get you your crackers, right?" Bucky asked Steve. "The ones with the dark green label and the cheese wedge with a face and a top hat," he said, concentration evident on his face as he worked to remember what Steve told him to always look for.

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"Love," Steve said with a patient smile. "It's the bright blue label and the yellow triangle man with a top hat. They're crunchier than the other ones and they have a little spice to them."

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"That's the same thing," Bucky defended. "Right?" He tried to think about the boxes at the store but couldn't recall what any of them looked like – the brand made too many different flavors to keep track of and their signature was always something in a top hat.

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Steve shyly shook his head. "No, Baby. They're not the same," he said. "I've tried to subtly differentiate between them so you wouldn't feel bad for getting the wrong ones. I dug myself into a hole when I donated all the boxes to the shelter and you thought I ate them all so you got more."

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"Mmm," Bucky hummed absently and crossed his arms. "Anything else I buy that you don't actually like?" He huffed and moved so he was right next to Steve as he helped Christopher put his blocks in color order - which Christopher didn't understand in the slightest but it was fun for Bucky.

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"No," Steve started to say but Sarah was determined to make her son embarrassed now.

"The cat-shaped brownies and the almond milk," Sarah said pointedly, hardly looking up at them for a second.

Steve puffed up. "Mom!" he scolded grumpily, like a teenager having to tell her not to show his baby pictures.

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Bucky blinked in surprise and flicked Steve's arm. He was learning so much today. "Well, the cat-shaped brownies were originally for Lilly for lunches but then I realized how much I liked them. They're so cute and delicious. So those are staying. And almond milk is good for you. They say cow's milk can stunt growth when consumed before puberty and can shrink men's testicles. And maybe you want tiny balls but I don't want you to have tiny balls. I like the size they are now."

---

Steve's cheeks went bright red at the mention of his testicles. Bucky could have zero inhibitions about what he said out loud sometimes. "Don't say that in front of my mom, Buck," he muttered.

Sarah just shrugged. "He's allowed to say that. Lord knows your father's balls weren't that big or else I would have had more than one son."

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"Oh, well, alright then." Bucky looked over at Sarah and chuckled. Sometimes she surprised him with her teasing. He kissed Steve's cheek and said, "But I promise I'll try to get the correct crackers from the store from now one. Not the cheese in a top hat. The other one."

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Steve covered his face with his hands because his mom and his husband were both embarrassing him so damned much. Christopher watched his dad and then copied by putting his face in his hands too. Steve then pulled his hands away and moved to kiss Bucky's cheek. He decided to change the topic again so as to avoid any more potential mention of anyone’s balls. "You think I should get a tattoo, also?"

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"Do you want a tattoo?" Bucky asked with a grin and lifted Christopher up and kissed him several times on his tiny hands still covering his face. "What would you get?"

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Christopher giggled at the kisses and pulled his hands away. "I don’t know," Steve said. "Maybe a shamrock with your names in the leaves. Or a tree. I don’t know. I'm not really a tattoo person so I haven't thought about that before."

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Bucky held up Christopher in front of him and said, "Bean, what do you think? Should Daddy get a tattoo?" The baby giggled and reached out for Steve. "I think either of those sound nice. Whatever you want." He paused and stood up. "Hold on. I have something that might work." He ran to their bedroom and grabbed the envelope of papers from the hospital. There was a copy of Grant's birth certificate and death certificate and some other official documentation and a piece of paper that had an ink splotch of Grant's feet.

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Steve scooped up his son and kissed his face all over. He rested his chin on top of Christopher's head and went quiet when he saw Grant's papers. It was just another nasty reminder that they didn't have another son they could be doting on. "His feet?" Steve asked quietly.

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"Yeah," Bucky said softly. "They gave me this in the envelope when we were leaving. I didn't want to look at it, though. And it didn't occur to me that it could be a really nice commemorative tattoo or something. The nurse said most parents frame these and put them somewhere they can see them."

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"Makes me wish we got Christopher's feet inked when he was little so we could have that to hang up, too. Then we could have both their baby feet together." Steve sighed and held the paper gently in his hand before giving it back to Bucky. "I think I'll do that."

---

Bucky took the paper back and put it in the envelope for sake keeping until Steve needed it again. "Well, Christopher is still a baby, technically. And he has feet. They are bigger now, of course, but we can just make one ourselves."
"It won't be the same, but it's better than nothing." Steve kissed Christopher's cheek and set him down to run around the room. "Did you go to Grant's grave today?"

"Yes, I did," Bucky admitted. "I spent some time there talking with him and my parents. Sorry I didn't tell you where I was going this morning. I know it probably wasn't good waking up to find me gone."

Steve shrugged. "It's alright. The note helped," he said. "I'd like to go to his grave today. You can come if you'd like but I understand if it's too much for you for one day," he said softly.

"I'll come with you if you want the company," Bucky agreed. "Do you want Christopher to come too or just us?" He ran his hand up and down Steve's arm and paid attention as Christopher picked up each of his blocks in turn and held them up to his parents as if he were showing them off.

"I'd like to bring him. He should be around his brother, you know? Even if he doesn't understand," Steve said and took blocks from his son as they were handed to him. He was happy that Christopher was doing so well right now. He still felt bad for abandoning him for days.

Bucky agreed and smiled faintly at Christopher. "He will understand eventually. It'll be good for him to go with us while he is little so it gets familiar to him. And I'm sure Mom and Dad would like to see the both of you again."

Christopher pushed one of his blocks into Steve's hand, making a loud little screech as he did so. Steve tossed the block from one hand to the next as he waiting for Christopher to go get the next block for him. "I'm glad you're comfortable visiting them now."

"Thanks to you," Bucky observed. "It definitely took a while but I needed the push you gave me. And now I can even go by myself and do mostly okay." He preferred to have Steve there but he also didn't mind the alone time with his parents.

"I'm proud of you, Buck," Steve said and gave Christopher his block back when he started to reach for it. "What do you think about getting Grant's feet tattooed on the top of my feet?"

Bucky nuzzled against Steve and tried to balance one block on top of Christopher's head. "Wherever you want them to go." He smiled as Christopher shook his head to get the block off. "I'll show you the tattoo shop where I've gone to get mine. And I can go with you if you want or you can do it
alone. It's your call."

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"I'd rather you come with me," Steve said. "I don't know anything about tattoos and would rather a tattoo veteran make sure that they're doing a good job."

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"Sure, Baby, I'll come with you." Bucky smiled warmly at Steve. "Although, I'm sure people with more tattoos than me wouldn't call me a veteran." Christopher rolled on to his back and stared up at the ceiling the way he did when he was getting sleepy and needing a nap.

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Steve nudged Christopher lightly before scooping him up so he could lay him down. "There's always someone who has more," Steve said pleasantly. "You ready for a nap, Bean? You have a big day so far?"

---

Christopher whined and closed his eyes like he was offended his dad would even ask. Bucky let them get up so Steve could put him in his crib for a bit. He looked around the living room and didn't see the pile of remains from the crib he destroyed. He looked in the kitchen too in case Steve had simply just moved them but they weren't there either. He got up quickly and went to chase after Steve. "Hey, Baby, what happened to the broken parts of Grant's crib?"

---

Steve put Christopher in his crib and sung him to sleep. When Bucky chased him down, he looked over at him in mild surprise. "Oh... I put it in the storage closet. I wasn't sure what you wanted to do."

---

Bucky let out the strained breath he was holding. "Okay. Good. My god, I was worried it was thrown out. I don't know why I decided to tear the crib apart, but I want to keep the pieces now."

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Steve wrapped his arms around Bucky's shoulders. "I couldn't throw it out. You were hurt and angry, Baby, that's why you broke it. Maybe we can build something nice out of it. Like a play table."

---

Bucky leaned into Steve and watched Christopher falling asleep. "Yeah, we can see what we have and see what can be done with it. Maybe a frame for his feet as well." He regretted breaking the crib but he also knew that he would never be able to put one of his other children in that one anyway. That crib was Grant's and he never even got to use it.

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Steve laid his cheek on Bucky's shoulder and frowned. "I wish he was here, Bucky. He would have had so much fun living with us and playing with Christopher." Steve would've loved to watch the
two of them sleep.

"I wish he was here, too," Bucky said quietly and reached up to touch Steve's hair. "I can see you falling asleep holding Grant while me and Christopher work on the best block tower ever. And we could have put Grant in hand-me-down clothes of Christopher's and have them share toys and stuff." He sighed and wiped at his eyes as they filled with tears.

"He was so tiny, Bucky. Imagine his little voice trying to get our attention. God, it would've been so perfect." Steve dried Bucky's eyes and kissed his forehead. "I'm so sorry he got taken away from us. From you."

"I love him so much," Bucky said softly and shook his head. "I know you do, too." He cleared his throat and nodded, trying to move on from the subject. "I have to go to AA tomorrow. I've missed two meetings now and I'm really feeling the temptation to drink so I have to go tomorrow. I just don't want to have to explain what happened to Missy to our group."

"Would you like me to go with you? At least for the part where you have to talk about that?" Steve offered. "I can ask my mom to babysit one more night before she goes back home. She's really helped us out a lot. We should take her for dinner or something when we are feeling better."

"Your mom deserves far more than just a thank you dinner. I'd give her a kidney if she needed it." Bucky smiled softly. "And let me think about it. I'm not sure if it would be the best idea for you to go. I'll let you know."

"Yeah, but she won't take more than that. Maybe if she needed remodeling on her house or something." Steve ushered Bucky out the door and held his hand tightly as they went back to the kitchen. "Whatever works for you."

"I can remodel her kitchen," Bucky offered. "I know she's complained about her cabinets lately. I can offer to do that for her. What do you think?" He took the iced tea from the fridge and poured a tall glass for himself and offered some to Steve.

Steve took the glass of iced tea and sat down at the table. "I think she'd like it but you would pretty much have to tell her that you're doing it instead of just offering it to her," he said.

"Okay, well then you make sure that's something she really wants and I'll make it happen," Bucky said and slipped his arms around Steve. "And, I don't want to nag, but did you eat at least something
for breakfast?"
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"I did have some toast," Steve said. "I'm going to be upset for a while... but I think laying Grant to rest really helped me heal a little. It'd be better if we could still hold him. But he deserves peace."
---
Bucky squeezed Steve's arm a little bit. "I understand. And I think we both need to just take our time to grieve. Although, am I allowed to be a little proud of myself for how I'm handling it this time around? I've kept it together. I've taken care of my family. I didn't break my sobriety. I didn't do anything rash."
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Steve kissed Bucky's lips lightly. "I am very proud of you," he said. "You kept it together even when I couldn't. I didn't support you these past few days and I'm sorry. But I'm also proud you were able to stay strong."
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Bucky leaned into the kiss, desperately wanting to keep that warm loving contact for as long as possible. "I have no room to comment or judge how you reacted to loss. You did so much better than I did when my parents died. You needed space and time to yourself and that's fine. I understand that need."
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Raphael came up to them then and meowed loudly because he wanted to be fed. "Thank you for understanding, Love," Steve said. "I think I'm ready to let myself heal from this loss." He would still hurt for a long time, though. There was no way around that.
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"After Christopher wakes up from his nap, we will go to the cemetery. How's that?" Bucky asked and let go of Steve to get food for the cat. It was Lilly's turn to feed him and she obviously forgot again.
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Raphael brushed up against Bucky's legs as he poured food into his bowl. Bucky was probably his favorite after Becca. They both fed him well and generally let him be unless he wanted petting. Everyone else tried to play with him and he just wanted to sleep in the windowsills. "I like the sound of that," Steve said. "I think I'm going to end up visiting the cemetery daily for a little while."
---
"That's perfectly fine, Steve. Whatever you need to do is fine." Bucky came back and sat down at the table. "All I know is, this time, I'm not staying away from the cemetery for four years. I'm visiting my son and my parents. I'm not going to let Grant think I'm abandoning him."
---
Steve nodded. "I want him to know we love him just as much as Christopher even though we didn't
"get to know him yet," he said. "Christmas, birthdays, all that. We'll be there for him."

"Yeah." Bucky nodded and looked away. He hated that he kept crying and he didn't want to start in on it again because then so would Steve and they would both be messes again. After all, he just got Steve out of Becca's room finally. "Uh, can I make you any small snack? Like half a sandwich or some cut up carrots?"

Steve's bottom lip quivered as he reminded himself of what they lost. He wanted desperately to have that little boy in their house. "Maybe some carrots," he said in resignation. "My stomach feels all twisted into knots."

Bucky got some carrots out and washed them for Steve. "Here, just eat one. If you can't manage more than that it's fine. Just at least eat one." He sighed and gently touched Steve's chest. "How do your lungs feel?"

"I've learned how to breathe when I'm awake and inactive so I won't cough," Steve said and took the carrot and nibbled at the end. "I haven't done much activity so I can't say for sure how they'll feel when I'm walking around."

"Okay," Bucky said and ate a carrot as well. "That's good, at least, that you aren't coughing when you're awake. Have you heard from the precinct yet? I know Fury called to give condolences for Grant but has anyone said anything about retirement yet?"

"They called but I didn't answer yet," Steve said guiltily. "I should probably go down tomorrow. It's... it's just I couldn't think of doing anything or functioning outside of Becca's room. I'm sure Fury will understand."

"I'm sure he will," Bucky agreed. "It's been a rough couple weeks for you. I'm guessing he won't mind waiting a bit." Lilly came slowly walking into the kitchen then. She grabbed a popsicle from the freezer then picked up Raphael who was trying to fall asleep by the kitchen sink.

When Lilly came into the kitchen, Steve nudged her. "Hey, you," he said. "You didn't feed your cat today. I'm sure you'd hate it if we forgot to feed you, so please be more mindful, alright?" Steve reminded patiently.

Lilly looked at him for a second like she was going to protest with something or other then she nodded solemnly and said, "Yeah, I'm sorry. I'll remember for next time." She held Raphael up to
her face and said, "I'm sorry, little guy. I'll remember to take care of you better."

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Steve knew that Lilly wasn't having a good day either, so he didn't scold her too much. He reached out and squeezed her shoulder. "Thank you," he said softly. The cat meowed at her and swished his tail back and forth a few times. "Would you like to come visit Grant with us when Christopher wakes from his nap?" he asked her.

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Lilly looked between the two of them and bit her lip. "Do I have to? I kind of don't want to go to the cemetery for a while now. We've been too much lately. It hurts a lot."

"No, Lil, you don't have to go," Bucky said. "But you are welcome to if you change your mind."

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Steve felt guilty for making her uncomfortable. He had only been looking to include her so she wouldn't feel left out. "I'm sorry you're hurting, too, Lilly," he said softly. "Is there anything I can do to make you feel better?"

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Lilly shook her head and silently left the kitchen. Bucky watched her go and then took Steve's hand. "She's okay. This isn't quite the same on the girls as it is on us but it still hurts. And it reminds them of our parents."

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Steve frowned as he watched her retreat. "I still feel bad for her... We weren't even supposed to get Grant. You didn't even want to have another kid so soon and I pushed."

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"Baby, hey," Bucky said and leaned forward to bring Steve in for a soft kiss. "Don't think like that. Once we decided to take Missy's baby, I was on board and I was excited as all hell for a second child. And if it weren't for that decision, we probably wouldn't be in this house - my parents' old house. And I know the girls like being back here. We were all ready for Grant and excited to have him."

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Steve returned the kiss lightly but his mind was distracted. He sighed softly and leaned into Bucky's side. "I guess we did gain a lot from our excitement for our little boy. He changed our lives for the better and we never even got to see him open his eyes."

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Bucky couldn't help the sting in his eyes and the prickle through his nose. He buried his face in Steve's neck and held him close for a few moments. Christopher started screaming for attention then and Bucky hopped up to go get him, a headache already brewing behind his eyes as he pushed open the nursery door. "Christopher, it's okay," Bucky said and picked up the little boy. "Please stop crying." He bounced him up and down and rummaged in the top dresser drawer for a clean diaper.
"Your dad and pop are going to clean you up, Bean," Steve said to the baby. He took him from Bucky to lay him on the changing table and take his pajamas off while Bucky found a change of clothes.

"So much crying, Little Bean," Bucky said grumpily but still lovingly. "Come on, nothing to cry about. We're taking care of you, aren't we?" He huffed and wiped Christopher's face of tears. "Please stop crying."

Steve took the dirty diaper off and began to wipe up his mess. He kissed Christopher's face a few times once he was all cleaned and tidied. The baby slowly stopped crying when he didn't have a dirty diaper anymore. "There we go, Bean."

Bucky sighed and let Steve hold Christopher while they went back to their bedroom to get some medicine for his headache. "That kid can really scream," Bucky said as they headed back to the kitchen to get some water.

"Yeah. He's got a heck of a set of lungs. Maybe he'll become a singer. Not a classical one, but the kind that screams over loud guitar noises like that group that did 'Back in Black'." Steve chuckled.

"You mean AC/DC." Bucky nodded and then rested his head on his hands. "Steve..." he said cautiously and looked up at him. "We are good parents, right?" he asked and looked at Christopher. Sometimes he felt like he wasn't everything he could be for his son. Especially on days when Christopher was upset and Bucky couldn't handle him or his head hurt too badly.

"What? Of course, we are good parents," Steve answered with a frown. "Why wouldn't you think we are, Babe?" he asked. Christopher started to suck on his thumb and Steve gently bounced him in his arms. "You love your pop, right?"

Bucky smiled weakly at his son and reached out to touch the top of his head. "I love him too. I just feel like I could be so much better for him. You know? I could be so much better than I am now."

Christopher gurgled happily up at Bucky and smiled. "Bucky, you are the best parent he could ever ask for," Steve said. "I love how you are with him, Sweetheart. I admire all you do for him."

Bucky looked at Steve for a long moment and nodded his head in resignation. "Okay, I believe you. I just sometimes feel like you are naturally better at this. I had to learn how to parent quickly but you
"sort of just knew how."

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"What? You're kidding me. I learned from you. I saw how you took care of your sisters and copied that," Steve said. Bucky had definitely been doing this longer than him and he was very good at it, despite what Bucky thought about himself. "You're a better parent than you think."

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"Hey," Bucky said softly and pulled Steve in for a kiss. "I love you. Thank you. Sorry for being irrational about it. You know how I get." He sighed and pet Steve's hair. "Are you ready to go to the cemetery? You still want to go?"

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Steve took a deep breath and then nodded his head. "Yeah... I'll get his coat on." Steve dressed Christopher in warmer clothes and then met up with Bucky in the kitchen. "Alright, I'm ready to go."

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Bucky and Steve made their way to the cemetery with Christopher babbling about nothing in particular. Once they got there, Bucky had to take another moment at the gate before deciding in to go. Lilly was right, they had been at the cemetery a lot lately.

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Steve's breath caught in his throat when he saw the little mound of dirt where his son was buried. He slowly sunk to his knees and held Christopher close as he kneeled in front of the earth. "Hey there, baby boy. We miss you already..."

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Bucky sat down next to Steve and took his hand. He was quiet for a bit, just letting Steve have a moment to talk to his son. "We brought your big brother. He may not understand yet but he will. And he will always love you too."

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Steve gave Bucky's hand a tight squeeze and leaned his head on his shoulder. "Grant is here, Bean. You never got to meet him, but he's your baby brother," Steve said sweetly to Christopher. "You want to talk to your brother?" he asked, pointing at the mound.

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Christopher didn't understand but he reached towards the ground with grabby hands. He probably wanted to get his hands in the dirt. "Christopher, can you say 'Grant'?' Bucky asked and repeated himself slowly.

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Christopher looked up at Bucky because he was using that voice that signified that he wanted something from him. The baby squinted his eyes for a moment and then declared happily, "Papa!"

Steve shook his head with a smile. "I guess it's a little too early for that."
"Well, at least he knows us." Bucky shrugged and kissed the top of Christopher's head. He looked down at the mound of dirt and then over at his parents’ graves. His son had only been buried the morning before and Missy was being buried the next day. "Steve, are you going with me to Missy's funeral?"

Steve stared in silence for a while. "I'm mad at her," he admitted. "I'm so angry she didn't let us help her." He wiped at his eyes. "But... I'll go. I have to forgive her. And I have to let her know she is still loved by us."

Bucky squeezed Steve's hand and rested his head on his shoulder. "Baby, if you don't want to go, you don't have to. I'm not going to be angry or anything. I understand. I just thought I would ask so I knew where you were at with it. But, seriously, you don't have to go."

Steve shook his head. "I want to be there to support you. And I don't want to hold a grudge against someone who needed help. No matter how hurt I am by her decisions," he said.

There was a cool breeze circling around them and Bucky wished they could get picked up and carried away by it for just a little while. "Okay, well it's tomorrow at noon. Barbara called me with the church address. And she will be buried in her aunt's family plot a few neighborhoods over."

Steve nodded and looked sadly down at the grave. Christopher started grabbing fistfuls of dirt and Steve had to pull him back to stop it. "Alright. I'll give the precinct a call in the morning and head over after her funeral."

"I hope you get good news, Steve," Bucky said and tried to smile. Of course, it wouldn't erase what happened to him and it wouldn't fix his lungs or make it possible to be an active officer again. But maybe he could get a good retirement package and be able to help support his family with Bucky being the only one with an income. They also had the settlement money that was still coming in and would be for a long time.

"I hope so, too," Steve said. "I'll work an easy job if I have to. But it'd be good if I got to stay at home with our son. Now, more than ever, I truly appreciate the blessing he is for us."

Bucky got Steve's attention and stared into his eyes. "Steve, don't get another job. Just stay at home with our boy. Do what you wanted to do this whole time and be a house husband." He grinned and looked around them a second before giving him a kiss. "If we really need more money, I'll work more or get a second job."
Steve felt guilty making Bucky work extra hours to make up for his lack of a job. But it really would be amazing to be able to stay home and raise their kids. "Alright," he said. Steve rocked Christopher in his arms and said a few prayers for Grant before deciding they should probably head back.

Bucky said goodbye to his parents and his son and then followed Steve back out through the cemetery. Christopher whined a bit to be put down so Bucky let him walk down the sidewalk a ways while holding on to his hand tightly. When they got to an intersection, Bucky was quick to pick him up again before he decided he wanted to cross it.

Steve smiled as he watched Bucky lead their son down the street. "You two look so cute," Steve said. "I can't believe how good he is at walking. I want him to stay little forever."

"But if he stays little then if we have other babies, he will be their very tiny big brother," Bucky reasoned and nuzzled his nose on Christopher's cheek. "You don't want to be a tiny older brother, do you? You want to be a big strong older brother who protects his siblings just like me."

Christopher blabbered excitedly at Bucky in response. "You'll be a good big brother, right? If God lets us have more kids, you're going to give Bucky a run for his money for brother-of-the-year," Steve said.

"Do your worst, Little Bean," Bucky said excitedly then toned down to look over at Steve with an intent expression. "So... are you saying we can have more kids? That's okay with you again?" He had been so worried that Steve was never going to even consider it again.

Steve ducked his head a little and said, "I need a sign from God first. I want kids, but I need to make sure that God’s plan isn't for us to only have one." Christopher saw the sweets shop and started to tug on Bucky's hand to go over to it.

"No, Bean. You can have strawberries or something when we get home," Bucky said and lifted him up so he couldn't escape Bucky's grasp. "What would a sign from God look like, Steve?" He wanted to know what it was he should be looking for to know if Steve was going to want more kids or not.

Christopher whined. When Bucky didn't head over, he looked to Steve. "Dada?"

Steve ruffled his hair. "Sorry, Christopher. No sweets today." He changed his focus to Bucky and shrugged his shoulders. "Well, it's hard to describe. It could be anything, really."
Bucky sighed. Steve was giving him nothing to work with. "Okay, just let me know if you see the sign you need. Because I'm sure as hell not going to know what it is."

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"Maybe God will be giving you a sign," Steve said with a playful smile. "He wants to make a believer out of you even though I know better than to bother you about it."

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"But if I don't know what I'm looking for then how will I know it's him and not just coincidence or something?" Bucky asked back with a soft smile that showed he wasn't trying to be belligerent. He really did believe in what God meant to Steve. He just wasn't sure about whether the big guy was for real or not.

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Steve smiled. "You'll know," he said. "God finds a way for you to know something for sure. You know that gut feeling you get that you can't explain? It's kind of like that."

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Bucky sighed, "Steve, my gut feelings always mean something bad is about to happen. I don't really want another one of those feelings for a long while if I can avoid it." They got back to the house and Sarah was getting all her things ready to go back to her own place.

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"Maybe that's just God getting on you for not going to church," Steve teased as he walked over to his mom so he could give her a big hug. "Thank you so much, Ma. I don’t know what I’d do without you."

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Bucky quietly and gently joined the hug so Sarah was sandwiched between them with Christopher clinging to Bucky's shirt and whining about being squashed. "Thank you, Sarah. We really needed you this week. All of us did."

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Sarah smiled and gave Steve and Bucky both a kiss on the cheek before parting so Christopher wouldn't throw a fit. "You know I love you and your sisters. And I'm sort of stuck with this one," she said as she nudged Steve.

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"Me too," Bucky said with fake annoyance and then gave Steve a smile. "But, honestly, we really appreciate you being here for us. And please know that we are all here for you if you need anything as well."

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"Of course," Sarah said. She gave her grandson a kiss and said goodbye to them all and then left to head back to her own house.

"She's a saint, I swear," Steve said with a happy little grin. He loved his mother so much.
Bucky locked the door behind her and let out a sad little sigh. "Yeah, she is. It was really helpful having her around. And she's just good to be around too. I know the girls love being with her. She's a good influence on them.'

"She's so happy to have you guys as part of her family. Ever since I moved out, I've always worried that she was lonesome. Even though she insisted I go and start my own life," Steve said.

"Do you think you and her would be happier if she lived with us?" Bucky asked and set Christopher back down so he could run around. He immediately found Raphael and started to grab at his tail. "We could probably turn part of the living room into a guest room and make it work."

Steve considered it. "You know, she might. And, I haven't told her, but I really do worry about her living alone. It's not that she can't get around, but this place isn't exactly free of crime," Steve said.

"Then let's think it over and see how we could make it work to have her here. Then we can talk to the girls and make sure that's fine with them. And then we can bring it up to your mom and see if she even wants to live here," Bucky said.

"I think that's a good plan," Steve agreed. "I'm such a mama's boy, Buck. I love the thought of living with my mom again," he said. "We are going to bicker over who gets to cook, though."

"I know you're a mama's boy, Steve." Bucky grinned. "You don't hide it very well." He took Steve's hand and pulled him towards the living room. "Come on. Let's just curl up on the couch for a bit." After Raphael ran off, Christopher decided he wanted to sit next to his toy box and pull out each toy one by one and then set them on the ground in front of him like a toy army.

Steve cuddled up next to Bucky on the couch and reached his arm over to massage his back. "Look at him," Steve said softly. "He's such an adorable boy. I wonder what he's thinking about doing with them."

"I really don't know," Bucky said and leaned into Steve. He watched Christopher pick up one of the toys and hold it out in front of him for a second. Then he bit it and then returned it to the box. "Clearly, that one didn't make the cut."

Steve snickered. "Not tasty enough. Maybe he's still holding a grudge that mean old Papa didn't let him get all the sweets he wanted," Steve suggested. "Poor baby."
"He doesn't need them," Bucky said sternly. "He was perfectly fine with having fruit as sweets until his daddy let him taste some chocolate. And then his aunts gave him gummy bears and pudding."

Steve smiled guiltily at Bucky. "But he looks so happy when he has junk food. What's the point of being a kid if you don't have unhealthy stuff every now and again?" he defended lightly.

Bucky glanced at Steve and huffed. "I just wanted to push it off until he discovered it himself. Then I wouldn't be able to blame you and the girls for his sweet tooth." Christopher seemed to know he was being discussed. He picked up one of his toys, a small plastic dinosaur, and brought it over to the couch to hand it to Bucky.

"Well, I made the executive decision to let him enjoy life a little earlier." Steve stole the dinosaur before Bucky could get it. "My dinosaur," Steve said playfully.

Christopher shook his finger at his dad. "No, Dada, no," he scolded Steve.

"Steve, that's my dinosaur," Bucky said in exasperation and took it back. Christopher gripped the edge of the couch and tried his best to lift himself up on to it but he couldn't make it. Bucky reached down and brought him up so he could cuddle down with a content little sigh.

Steve watched as Christopher climbed into Bucky's lap. "He sure loves his papa today," Steve said with a smile. He tangled his fingers lightly into Bucky's hair. "And to think I thought I was his favorite."

"You're still his favorite, Baby," Bucky said and glanced over at Steve. "He's just thinking that if he is all sweet to me then I'll give him candy or something else in exchange." He looked back down at his little boy and said, "But that's not going to happen, is it, Bean?"

"He knows how to butter us up already. All it takes are those cute eyes and he's got us wrapped around his little finger," Steve said with a gentle laugh.

Christopher signed 'treat' a few times. "Papa," he huffed.

"Not me," Bucky corrected. "I'm a rock. Look at this kid. He's fucking adorable but he can't have sugar right now. Now, if he wants some fruit, he may have that." Bucky signed 'fruit' and Christopher whined in response.
Steve's heart melted and he pouted a little when Christopher whined. "Hey, Bean, it's okay. You can have sweets tomorrow, okay?" Steve looked at Bucky. "I don’t know how you can say ‘no’ to that face."

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Bucky kissed the side of Steve's head and smiled. "Steve, you'll have to learn how to. I know it's hard but he can't always have what he wants. You're good at telling Lilly ‘no’ when she wants something unreasonable. Just apply that to Christopher."

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"But Christopher is my perfect, little baby boy and Lilly is a big mean teenager," Steve joked. He kissed Bucky back and kept his eyes focused on his husband while Christopher called him and begged for sweets.

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Bucky gently put his hand over Christopher's mouth for a second and said, "No, Sweet Boy." He sighed and snuggled his son close. "How about we do something fun. Maybe do some art or something?" He looked to Steve for help. "What do you want to do?"

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"I don’t know if I'm in the mood to draw," Steve answered and looked away. Anything he made would be about Grant and he didn't feel like bringing those feelings up. "How about we get the girls and play a board game?"

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"We could but Christopher can't play board games," Bucky said and looked down at his son who was flopped over in his arms and sucking on his fingers. "You guys can play and I'll just get him some crayons and paper."

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"We could build a play fort and watch a movie. We can pull the couch cushions and drape a blanket over it," Steve suggested. "That way Christopher can join in."

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"Yeah, let's do that." Bucky smiled. "I'll get the girls and make some snacks while you all get the fort set up." He handed Christopher off to Steve and got the girls to come downstairs with the promise of popcorn and movies and soda.

---

Steve sang to Christopher and danced around the living room with him while he pulled the cushions off the couch. The baby blabbered happily even though he wasn't keeping the tune very well. "Can we get ice cream?" Lilly asked Bucky.

---

"We don't have ice cream here, Lil," Bucky said and started pulling snacks from the cabinet. "But I guess we could go down to the ice cream place real quick and get some. Go ask Steve if he wants to
"Who has teenagers but no ice cream?" Lilly asked. "Steve! We're getting ice cream, you want to go?" she shouted. Christopher squealed loudly in response followed by Steve saying that he would stay in.

Lilly came back into the kitchen holding Christopher who was bouncing excitedly in her arms. Becca followed after them and said, "Hey, pick me up some ice cream, too."

"No, if you want ice cream you have to go with us," Bucky said to her and went back to find Steve who was adjusting the pillow fort. "Hey, you don't want to come with us? I'm betting if you get Christopher a little bit of something sweet, you'll be his favorite again."

Steve considered it and then dusted himself off. "Alright. I'll go," he said. "Only because I want to make my boy love me more." He grabbed his jacket to put it on again. "So what happened to no more sweets for Christopher?" he teased.

Bucky sighed and put on his shoes before getting Christopher's coat. "Well, if he sees Lilly and Becca with ice cream then he is going to be angry as all hell if he doesn't get something too. And I'm really tired and don't want to deal with the crying and the screaming."

"You hear that, Bean? You finally wore your old man down," Steve said. Christopher smiled happily at his dads. "I'll only give him a little bit," Steve promised.

"Let's see if they have sherbet there or something because I'm still pretty sure he is lactose intolerant," Bucky said and herded the girls out the door. He stopped Steve so he could adjust Christopher's hat. When they got to the ice cream shop, Christopher immediately understood what was happening. He started to screech and tried to get down out of Steve's arms.

Steve laughed and got a better hold on their son. "Whoa, calm down, Bean. We have to behave-" Steve started but Christopher was in no mood to stop trying to get out of Steve's arms. "Christopher," he said in his stern voice.

Christopher stopped wiggling and stared up at his daddy. He looked like he was going to cry but then he just stuck his lower lip out and waited. Bucky huffed and took his son. "Steve, you go get him something and I'll go sit with him so he knows he can't act like this."

Steve felt bad for making his son almost cry, so he was quick to kiss his cheek. "Be a good boy,
Christopher," he said gently. "I love you, okay?" he said it for Christopher but the look he gave Bucky told him that he was talking to him as well.

---

Bucky sat back in a quiet corner of the shop and held Christopher to him. He bounced him lightly and tried to get him to smile but he was not having it. "Come on, Bean," Bucky said softly. "Daddy just doesn't want you to get hurt or anything. If you fell, you could have really injured yourself and then Daddy and I would have been so scared and upset and worried. You don't want that, right?"

---

After they all got their ice cream, Steve walked back and Christopher started squirming when he saw that they all had ice cream. "Dadadada!" he shouted, making grabby hands for it.

Steve shook his head at his son. "Christopher, you need to be calm."

---

Christopher looked confused and tried again to reach for the treat. "Love," Bucky said tiredly and turned him around to face him. "Christopher, Sweet Boy, you need to calm down. Calm. I'm going to give you to Daddy. Please just be still so he can help you eat your snack."

---

Steve picked up Christopher and the baby knocked the ice cream right out of Steve's hands. He had just been trying to grab it before Steve had finished adjusting him in his arms. Christopher stared at the ice cream on the floor for a moment before starting to bawl.

---

Bucky groaned and picked it up off the floor. "Jesus Christ," he said softly and started cleaning up the mess. Becca handed her ice cream to Lilly to hold so she could go to the counter to get another one for Christopher.

---

"Becca, wait," Steve said. He gave the worker an apologetic look for the noise. "He was impatient and rude, so he shouldn't get another tonight. He can have a snack from home if he wants something later."

---

Becca sat back down and said, "Are you sure? He's just going to keep crying about it." Bucky tossed the napkins and the mess into the trash and signaled that he was going to go clean his hands in the bathroom really quick.

---

Steve nodded. "I'll take him outside so you can eat in peace," he said. "Stay put until Bucky comes back." Steve walked out with his crying son and tried to pacify him.

---

Bucky came back and found Steve and his son were gone. The employee behind the counter was staring at him and he looked away quickly. "Where did Steve go?" he asked Becca and handed Lilly
a napkin to wipe her face.

---

"He's outside with the crying machine," Lilly said, pointing at the window where Bucky would be able to see his boy still wailing at Steve and knocking his fists against his arms. "Babies can suck sometimes."

---

"Hey, no complaining," Bucky said pointedly. "I brought you for ice cream, didn't I? And you were much worse as a baby than Christopher is. I can guarantee that." He pulled his hair back in a ponytail and told the girls not to talk to strangers while he went out to Steve for a bit.

---

Steve had managed to get Christopher's screaming to a manageable whining with crocodile tears still streaming down his face. "I know he doesn't fully understand," Steve said to Bucky. "But I don't want to let him think that was okay."

---

"I understand," Bucky said and offered to take the baby from Steve. "I think he's at that age where he is finally aware of himself enough to be selfish. It won't last forever though and he will learn how to be a good kid."

---

Steve waved him off and kept Christopher in his arms. "If he calms down, should we get him another?" Steve was already backtracking on his decision to not give him any more because he had been fresh.

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"That's up to you, Steve," Bucky said with a sigh and kissed Christopher's cheek. "My head hurts too much to decide and I just kind of want to give him whatever he wants so he doesn't cry again. So you should make that call."

---

Steve exhaled slowly and looked at Christopher. "You stressed your pop out, Bean," Steve admonished lightly. He bounced him in his arms and then told Bucky he'd be right back. "You got to behave yourself this time, Kiddo."

---

Bucky sat down on the curb and waited for his family. He patted his pockets, looking for his pack of cigarettes. He knew he really needed to stop smoking - especially now with Steve's lungs. But he felt so awful and he figured one was okay.

---

The group of them came out a few minutes later and Steve was feeding a happy Christopher some ice cream. "Bucky," Becca scolded when she saw him with a cigarette. "Come on."
Bucky took one last drag and put it out. "I was just waiting for you guys. It was just one," he said and flicked it into the trashcan by the door. "Is he happier now?" Bucky asked Steve and looked to Christopher who was making little noises every time another spoonful was headed towards his mouth.

---

"So? Steve's lungs are shit," Becca said, interrupting Steve’s chance to answer Bucky before she could get in some more reprimanding.

Steve nudged her lightly. "Don't curse in front of the baby, Bees."

---

Bucky tensed up and looked over at Becca. "I get that. I know. And I never smoke around any of you and I never have. And I've cut back since Steve's had his... accident. But I also haven't had any alcohol for," Bucky took out his chip and showed it to her, "five months! And I just sometimes need something."

---

Becca looked like she had a smart comment to say but Steve gave her a look that silently told her to shut it. "I'm proud of you, Bucky," Steve said instead. "You're doing an amazing job with this. And if the occasional cigarette keeps you from drinking then I can't complain."

---

Bucky was grumpy the rest of the way home but he softened once he saw the pillow fort they had abandoned earlier in favor of ice cream. All he wanted to do was to curl up with his family and watch something shitty on TV. "Here, Steve, I'll go give Christopher a quick bath while you all decide what to watch."

---

Steve gave Bucky a slow kiss as he passed their son over. "I love you, Sweetheart," he said. "You be good for your papa," Steve added to Christopher. He gave his boy a kiss too and started to look for a movie.

---

Christopher was pretty amped up from having a treat so he was extra messy in his bath. Bucky ended up just taking off his own shirt while he bathed him because he kept splashing him so much that he was drenched anyway. The good thing was, this time, at least Christopher didn't get soap in his eyes. That happened more than it should and it always made bath time worse.

---

After much debate and bartering, Becca decided that they would watch *Sleeping Beauty* with the promise to Lilly that she would get to pick the next two movies they watched some other time. Steve went up to the bathroom to check what was taking Bucky so long. "How's our little bean doing?"

---

"He's really energetic at the moment and I can't get him to calm down for me to finish washing his hair," Bucky said and slumped on the edge of the tub. "You want to give it a try?" he asked and
handed the shampoo to Steve.

"Sure." Steve walked over and knelt by the side of the tub so he could hold Christopher steady. He carefully put the shampoo in his hair, only using a little drop so there wouldn't be too much to clean up. "There we go, Little Bean. You're being such a good-" Christopher started squealing happily and splashing everywhere.

"What'd I tell you?" Bucky said with a huff and toweled off Steve's arms and his face. "This is partially why I didn't want him to have any sugar." He gently held Christopher's hands together in his and cooed at him so he wouldn't think something was wrong. "Alright, try now."

"But it makes him happy. He gets so excited for treats," Steve complained. While Bucky had their son's hands busy, Steve quickly washed the shampoo from his hair. "There we go, Love."

"See? Isn't that better?" Bucky asked his son and hoisted him up out of the bath and into the towel Steve had waiting. "Now, maybe you will start to calm down a little bit so we can have a nice easy family movie night."

Steve swaddled Christopher in the towel and kissed his face plenty of times as he went to get him changed in the nursery. Christopher was brought downstairs in his lion pajamas and Steve let him crawl to the fort all by himself.

"Can we start the movie now?" Lilly complained and peaked out from under a mass of blankets. Bucky sat down and scooted Lilly over so Steve could come cuddle up next to him. "You weren't waiting that long. We're here now."

Steve snuggled up with his husband and watched fondly as Christopher made himself comfy by sprawling himself across Lilly's lap. "Why do you like Sleeping Beauty so much, anyway?" Steve asked Becca.

Becca shrugged and put a baby blanket over Christopher. "I don't know. Maybe the animals. They are all pretty cute. I love animals." She didn't even seem too convinced by her answer but that's all she had.

"Beh," Christopher huffed as he shook the blanket off. Steve snorted at the attitude Christopher was giving everyone. "It's a good thing you love animals when you have Lilly as a sister," he joked.
"And Christopher as a nephew," Becca countered with a dry smile. She had taken to being so much
gerrier lately to her brother and Steve than she had been. With Steve's new physical ailment and the
loss of their son, there was too much going on with them for her to pile on the petty things.

Steve gasped dramatically. "Our son is a perfect human being," he said in a faux scandalized tone.
"You hear that, Bean? Your aunt is slanderung your name."

"Telling it like it is," Becca confirmed with a shrug and pulled a blanket tightly around her shoulders.

They watched the movie together mostly in peace. Lilly fell asleep about half-way through with
Christopher still laying on her lap. It took him a bit longer than usual but, eventually, he fell asleep as
well. When the movie ended, Bucky shuffled the girls off to bed and then headed for the master
bedroom while Steve got Christopher in his crib.

Steve settled their little boy down for sleep before joining Bucky in the bedroom. He wrapped his
arms around his husband and kissed his cheek. "Hello, Sweetheart," he said. "How are you feeling?"

"I'm okay. My headache is gone." Bucky cuddled close to Steve and gave him a kiss. "It was a bit of
a day, wasn't it? How are you? Anything you need?" He finished up by giving Steve another kiss
and holding his hands firmly on Steve's hips.

Steve leaned into Bucky's side. "I need to fall asleep with my husband and feel like everything is
okay." Taking care of the girls and their son kept his mind busy, but once left alone, the depressive
thoughts threatened to kick back in.

Bucky nodded and pulled Steve closer. "I'm right here, my handsome man. And I love you so
much." He kissed a soft trail across Steve's face and then came back to his lips. "Can we cuddle and
fall asleep naked?"

Steve nodded and slowly started to unbutton Bucky's pants. "That's fine with me," he said. "I like it
when we fall asleep like that. Makes me feel really connected to you."

"Good. Me too. I love just being you and me with nothing between us." Bucky slowly slipped his
shirt off and tossed it towards the closet then started to gently tug at Steve's pants. "I love you so
much, Steve," he said and leaned in to give him another kiss as Steve took off his pants for him.
Once they were both naked, Bucky gently trailed his fingers across Steve's chest to rest on his heart.
Bucky's new tattoo was still red and burning but he couldn't help but look down at it every couple of
seconds.

---

Steve laid down and looked into Bucky's eyes. He saw him looking down at the tattoo and his heart clenched uncomfortably. "He should be here right now," Steve mumbled. "Waking us up every few hours and pissing off the girls."

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Bucky put a gentle hand on Steve's neck and looked at him lovingly. "I know. Then he would get Christopher up too and we would have to bring them in here with us to fall asleep. Christopher laying on my chest and Grant squirming all over the place."

---

"I want him back so bad. He fit so perfectly in our arms. We probably could have fit him in a stocking for Christmas and taken the most adorable pictures," Steve said. He took a few deep breaths and looked away from Bucky for a few moments. "How long is this going to hurt, Bucky?"

---

"Steve, Baby, this could hurt for a while," Bucky said softly and wiped a tear from Steve's face. "And then it'll stop hurting all the time and only hurt a little each day. Then it'll stop hurting daily and only hurt so often. Then it'll only hurt when we think about it too much."

---

Steve frowned and buried the side of his face deeper into the pillow. "I don't want to hurt but I also don't want to ever forget him," he said. "He deserves better than that."

---

"You'll never forget that precious little boy," Bucky promised Steve with a gentle smile. "I never forget my parents. I think about them everyday. But nowadays it doesn't always hurt. It'll stop hurting all the time, Steve. I promise you that."

---

"He really was precious. I was afraid I couldn't love another kid like I love Christopher but he proved me wrong," Steve said. "I don't want to sleep tonight. I'm afraid of getting nightmares."

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"I don't really want to sleep either," Bucky admitted and kissed Steve. "We can just stay up for awhile if you want. Find something to do. And, honestly, if you don't want to go to Missy's funeral tomorrow, you don't have to."

---

"I want to be there for you, Baby," Steve said earnestly. "And she doesn't deserve to be alone when she's laid to rest. She deserves her friends and as much of her family there as possible."

---

"I have a feeling it may end up being us, her aunt, and maybe a couple other people," Bucky said.
"I'll be surprised if her parents show up." He shook his head to get the thought out. He was angry with them for the way they treated her when she needed them. He hoped they weren’t there tomorrow because he didn’t think they deserved her. But he also hoped they were there so he could give them a piece of his mind. "Anyway, are we going to sleep or staying up?"

---

"I'm going to try staying up," Steve said. "I hate sleeping now. I haven't gotten a good night's sleep since the fire." It was true. Steve slept for short amounts of time and infrequently and it had just been worse since losing their son. He was severely sleep-deprived and malnourished.
Missy's funeral was small just like Bucky thought it was going to be. Her parents were not there. Bucky thought it was only going to be him and Steve and Barbara until some of Missy's friends showed up and then so did a couple people from their AA group.

---

Steve dressed in his suit for the second time and stood close by Bucky's side. There wasn't as much of a service as there had been for Grant, but a priest still prayed for her soul to be delivered to heaven. After she was lowered into the ground, he looked to Bucky. "Do you want some time to talk with them?" he asked as he nodded to Missy's friends from AA.

---

"No, I'll see them Thursday," Bucky said and stared down at the grave. "I don't want to be here anymore." He had tried to stop himself from crying during the service but it just didn't work. "Let's go. You're going to the precinct, right?"

---

Steve hugged Bucky tightly and snuck in a quick kiss to his cheek. "I'm so sorry, Buck," he said softly. He pulled back and herded him out of the cemetery. "Yeah. Fury will be pissed if I don't show up today."

---

"Okay, I'll head back home unless you need me there with you," Bucky said and stuffed his hands in his pockets as they trudged down the street. "Although, Becca is in charge of both Lilly and Christopher this whole time. I'm thinking she will want me to relieve her soon."

---

"It's okay. I'd rather go on my own. They like you there, but they may be wary of my husband when they're telling me how much they're going to be able to give me," Steve said. "I love you, Bucky. I'll see you later."

---

“Love you, too.” Bucky nodded and touched his shoulder gently before heading home. He hoped Steve would get good news but he wasn't going to get himself too worked up only to be disappointed.

---

In the end, Steve was let go without having to worry about their finances too much yet. He was retired on disability with his health benefits still intact and a large chunk of his pay disbursed to him. He wasn't allowed to work elsewhere for a year, but that wasn't an issue to Steve. What hurt the most was being asked to turn in his badge and uniform and clean out his desk.

---

As Steve was clearing out his things, Natasha and Sam came over and stood close to him but not
close enough that it seemed like they were being intrusive. "Hey, Steve," Natasha said somberly and watched him stack up his papers to shred.

---

Steve looked up from his box of files and gave her a tight smile. "Hey," he said. "I was just, uh... taking care of my things. Looks like you won't be seeing much of me around here anymore."

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"I see you all the time outside of here, though," Natasha said with a smile. "You know how Clint and Bucky can't be apart for too long. More than a day of not working together makes them antsy."

"And I just wanted to say how great it's been working with you, Steve, even if it was for a short amount of time," Sam said with a genuine smile. They had gotten really close in the short amount of time they had been partners.

---

Steve's lower lip trembled in response. He loved being a cop so fucking much and he hated having it being taken from him. He met so many people here and they all would throw themselves in front of a bullet for each other. He hugged Sam tightly and then let go. "Bucky wants you all over for dinner sometime," he said for lack of anything better to say. He was too upset to come up with a decent conversation.

---

"Sure," Sam said with a grin and looked to Natasha. "I don't have much going on at the moment and I'd love to meet your family."

Natasha nodded, "Clint and I will bring you with us next time we go over there, Sam. Clint keeps forcing me to hold their son so I'll get used to the idea of children but I keep telling him 'no'."

---

Steve turned to Natasha and said, "I've already told Bucky to tell Clint that there's no way in hell you're having a kid. The closest he's getting to a son is Christopher."

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"Don't tell him that because then he will never leave your house," Natasha said. "You'll need to build him his own room or squeeze him into bed with you and Bucky."

---

"We need a bit of liveliness in our house right now anyway. He's welcome," Steve said. "It's been really rough, Nat. You have no idea. Yesterday was the first day I had an actual meal," he admitted. "My mom had to take care of us."

---

"I'm really sorry about your son," Sam said and shook his head. He knew that he was stillborn but he didn't know what exactly had happened. But he understood the pain of loss. He had experienced loss before and he knew what they must have been going through. "I'm here if you ever want to talk."
Steve let out a heavy sigh. "Grant was perfect," he said thickly. "It's going to be hard getting past this... but thank you for your condolences." Steve put together the rest of his files. "I think... I think I'm going to shred these now. I don't have much left to pack up."

---

Natasha and Sam both gave Steve hugs goodbye and let him go about his business. They didn't understand everything he was feeling but they could imagine how hard all of this negative change was on him all at once.

---

Steve carried his belongings home in a little box - pictures from his first day on the job, a few awards for good service, copies of the paper from his first arrest. He arrived home with a heavy heart and went right to their bedroom to hide his things in the back of the closet.

---

Bucky and Christopher were folding laundry. Christopher's job was to toss the laundry around and make Bucky go pick it up. Steve didn't come to them when he came home and Bucky figured he needed his alone time so he would just give him a few more minutes then go find him.

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Steve came downstairs a few minutes later and took a seat next to Bucky on the couch. Christopher gurgled happily at his dad and threw a sock in his direction. "Hey," Steve said. "Good news is we don't have to worry about our finances."

---

Bucky leaned over and kissed Steve's cheek. "Bad news is that you're no longer a police officer," he said sadly and put one of Christopher's shirts on top of his little head. "How are you feeling? What did Fury say?"

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Christopher pulled the shirt off and giggled up at his pop. Then he tossed the shirt on the ground. "I kind of feel empty," Steve said. "That place meant so much to me," he mumbled. "I'm on seventy-five percent and disability, which means they pay me seventy-five percent of what I made working there until social security kicks in when I'm retiring age."

---

Bucky sighed and pulled Steve in for a hug. "I'm so sorry, Baby. I know you loved being a cop." He kissed him once then reached to pick up Christopher. "But, now, you can do what you were wanting to eventually do. You can stay home with this precious little boy. And look how happy he is to see you."

---

Steve sighed and looked down at his son who was waving a single sock up at him. He managed a smile and pulled the little baby up and cuddled him. "Hey, Bean. You having a fun time making a mess of the clothes?"
"Tell your daddy how many times I've had to take his underwear off your head or how many times I've folded Lilly's soccer jersey because you tossed it as far as you could," Bucky said to Christopher with an amused albeit slightly tired smile.

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"I bet that was a lot of times. Are you going to be a good baseball player, Bean? Because of all this throwing you're doing?" Steve kissed his nose and tickled his feet. "Need any help folding, Bucky?" he asked.

---

"No, I'll finish up if you can just keep him occupied for a bit," Bucky said and continued folding. "Steve, Baby, I'm so sorry you had to leave today. Did you have to turn in your badge and gun today too?"

---

Steve let out a heavy sigh and nodded his head. "I'm a civilian now and that means I can't have police-issued property. They're going to send me a retiree badge but I can't have my active duty one."

---

Bucky bit his lip nervously. He knew Steve didn't feel comfortable without having his gun nearby. He wondered if he could just get his own personal firearm to keep in the safe. It had taken Bucky a while to get used to having a gun in the house but now it would take Steve a while to get used to not having one.

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"What are you thinking?" Steve asked as he held Christopher upside down by his feet, causing the baby to let out big belly laughs that made Steve chuckle with him.

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Bucky looked over at the two of them and smiled softly. "Just thinking about you. Thinking about how you must feel right now. Trying to figure out how I can help but knowing I probably can't. Wishing I could fix this and make your lungs all better."

---

"I feel pretty terrible about it," Steve said. "But it could be a blessing in disguise, as much as I'm not enjoying it right now," he admitted. "You don't got to worry about me."

---

"I'll still worry about you," Bucky said and reached out to touch Steve's face. "I'm your husband and I love you. It's part of my job to worry. But, I think, eventually, this pain will go away, too. And you'll feel better. Not today, but sometime."

---

Steve leaned into Bucky's hand and gave a nod. "If you say so," he sighed. Steve held Christopher the right way again and kissed his cheek. "What've you been up to besides laundry?"
"Just waiting around for you," Bucky said and stood up to go put the laundry away. "We had a snack earlier and then sat around for a bit then did the laundry. Christopher was angry that I ran out of oranges to give him so he threw a small fit for a couple minutes."

"I'll pick some up first thing tomorrow," Steve said. Christopher was a real fiend with his snacks sometimes. "I'm not allowed to work for a year for legal reasons," Steve added as he remembered that condition. "So I can't run that art group until next year."

"What?" Bucky asked, confused. "You can't work for a year? Why is that a rule? You didn't do anything wrong. You got hurt on the job. That's not right. What if you lived by yourself? How do they expect you to sustain yourself for a full year?"

"It's because they don't want me aggravating my lungs," Steve said. "They expect that I would be able to get by on what I'm getting paid which is seventy-five percent of what I would normally get. And that's a decent wage, Buck," he said.

Bucky nodded and took Steve's hand. "It just doesn't sound fair. I get for liability or whatever that they can't have you hurting yourself more but... I don't know. It just seems really unreasonable to make you wait an entire year."

"It's how long the doctors recommended. They say if I don't injure myself further in a year, my lungs won't degenerate any more than a normal person's would," Steve explained.

Bucky took a shallow little breath and squeezed Steve's hand. "Do you know how often you need to go in to see the doctors about it?" All he wanted to do was pull Steve close and hold him and kiss him and make him feel loved and safe. But Steve didn't seem like he really wanted to be touched too much.

"Once every other week," Steve declared with a little grimace. He hated going to the doctor's and he hated feeling like he was fragile. "And if I don't go, I risk my pension." It wasn't Fury's rules, so it wasn't like he was trying to dick him over.

"I'll go with you every time, if you want. But I'll also not go at all if that's better for you," Bucky said and gestured for Steve to follow him to their room so he could put their clothes away.

Steve held Christopher close and followed Bucky upstairs. "It's okay. I'd rather not bother you with
"I'd love to go for a run," Steve said bitterly. "Or work out." He hadn't done that in what felt like forever. "Can you give me a massage after I lay Christopher down?" The baby babbled at Steve when he heard his name. "I feel wound up."

"Yes, of course, I'll give you a massage," Bucky promised. "And if you wanted to do less strenuous workouts or go for walks, can you do that? Something that doesn't work your lungs too much?"

"Yeah, I'm allowed to go for walks. But that's not the same," Steve said with a dramatic sigh. He shook his head and looked to Christopher, trying to shake this from his mind for now. "You ready for your nap, Bean?"

When Steve left to take their son for a nap, Bucky decided he would light some candles around their room just as a special little something as he massaged Steve. He knew it wasn't going to change the restrictions put on him and how he was feeling but maybe it would show him a little bit more that Bucky would always care for him.

Christopher had tired himself out with the laundry, so it didn't take long for him to fall asleep. Steve went to their bedroom and he smiled a little when he saw the candles. "You're such a sap," he said appreciatively as he took his shirt off.

"Well, you made me this way," Bucky retorted with a warm, loving smile. He gave Steve a kiss before gently nudging him to lay on the bed. He crawled up on the bed too and hovered over him. He loved this man so much and he just wished he could make everything right for him.

Steve laid down on his stomach and closed his eyes. "I don't know what I'm going to do once you're back to working full time," he said. "It's hard not to focus on the bad when I don't have distractions."

"Don't have distractions?" Bucky repeated in surprise. "Baby, you're going to have our son all day. And if you haven't noticed, he is a lot of work sometimes. You'll be plenty distracted by him."
"He takes naps," Steve reminded with a pout. "And sometimes you're not home at his nap time," he elaborated. "And the girls have school."

---

Bucky thought for a moment as he worked his fingers smoothly but firmly across Steve's shoulders. "How about we get you a puppy?" he asked absently and leaned down to kiss Steve's neck once.

---

Steve paused, unsure if Bucky was making a serious offer or just thinking out loud. "Wait, are you joking?" He kind of liked the idea of getting a puppy. It'd be better than a grown dog that may not get along with the cat. But Steve hadn't even considered that as an option.

---

Bucky stopped massaging Steve for a second and tilted his head to look at him. "No, not joking. At least, I think so," he said tentatively then went back to working down his mid back. "You can pick out a little guy and give him a good name and bring him home."

---

Steve let out a little groan when Bucky managed to crack his back. "You would be okay with that? I don't want to make you have to deal with a dog just because I'm lonely."

---

"I don't want you to be lonely while I'm at work," Bucky answered and spent some time on a knot right along Steve's shoulder blade. "I honestly don't think I will mind. You know how I was with Raphael. I swore up and down I wasn't going to like him or feed him or anything but now I love the tiny fluff ball."

---

Steve closed his eyes and imagined having a puppy scampering around the house, playing with Christopher and protecting him too. "I want a German Shepherd," Steve admitted. "Wouldn't that make a great pet?"

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"That's what we had when we were younger," Bucky said fondly. "Her name was Maisie and she was so good with Lilly when she was a baby. I think a German Shepard would be a great dog to get. What would you name it?"

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Steve liked that this wouldn't be the first Shepherd in the household. "I don't know what I would name it. I would have to meet it first, you know? I don't know if I would get a boy or a girl either."

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"Well, you have some time to think it over," Bucky said as he massaged the curve of Steve's lower back. "Just be strong when Lilly wants to name it. She will say it's not fair because Becca named Raphael. But you know Lilly isn't going to help you take care of the dog at all and it'll be your dog mostly anyway."
Steve snorted. "Please. This is my depression dog. She’s not naming it," he said. Of course, he’d raise it to be a family dog but he wasn’t going to let Lilly call it hers especially if she took care of it as much as she took care of the cat - which was practically never.

"Depression dog?" Bucky questioned. "That's sounds so sad. Why can't it be your ‘companion dog’?" He finished up rubbing across Steve's back and he laid down on top of him with his head on his shoulder blade.

"Well, it's the truth," Steve said. "I'm depressed and I'm getting a dog to help stop that depression," he answered. He managed to let Bucky lay on top of him for a minute or so but he began to squirm. "Hard to breathe," he murmured.

Bucky quickly rolled off of him and laid close up against his side. "I love you. And I think a dog will be good for you," he said and slipped his hand in with Steve's. "Sorry for squishing you. How does your back feel now?"

"It feels a lot better. Thank you, Love," Steve said. "Do you want to nap until Christopher wakes up?" he asked. "Or do you want to do something else?"

"Like what?" Bucky asked softly and trailed his hand down Steve's spine lightly, hoping to give him some chills. "I'm really okay with anything you feel like doing, Baby." He was just happy Steve felt like doing something other than stare at the wall.

Steve shuddered pleasantly when Bucky touched his back. "Maybe... maybe we can look in the phone book and call around for people who might breed German Shepherd puppies?"

Bucky grinned and leaned in to kiss Steve's shoulder. "Sure, Steve. I don't really know where to start but we can call some animal shelters and see if they know anyone."

Steve turned over and pressed their lips together lightly. "Come on. Let's go calling around for our new troublemaker," he said as he popped off the bed and hovered over Bucky to wait for him to get up too.

"Hold on. Kiss me again," Bucky demanded and gently pulled Steve back down for another kiss. He felt like they hardly had any contact lately and Bucky was starving for touch and attention. He sighed contentedly and just held Steve close for a bit.
Steve cupped the side of Bucky's face and drew him in for a slow kiss. When they parted, he bumped their foreheads together gently. "You're the best husband a guy could ever ask for, you know that?"

"You've told me," Bucky said quietly. "Sometimes I can't believe I managed to get so lucky to be yours. And coming home to my family is always the best part of my day and getting to see our girls and our son and your beautiful face." It was true, too. He did feel so lucky. But he still felt that he and Steve weren’t completely fine. Steve still didn’t linger too long with his kisses and cuddling was frequently just a means to falling asleep.

“Come on, let’s go,” Steve said with a proud smile. They had a lot of hard times during their year together. But it was all okay when they got to come back together at the end of the day. And now they were going to get a dog for Steve. He nudged Bucky to follow before heading to get the phone book.
They had called around for dogs at different shelters but in the end, it was Clint who gave them the lead. Clint loved dogs. He had to stop to pet every dog he crossed on the street or in the park. He knew the right people to talk to for a puppy for them. Steve had decided to leave it as a surprise for the girls to come home to – puppies were always a good surprise. Steve also decided he wanted Bucky to help him pick one out and they decided on a little girl pup with huge paws she kept tripping over. Steve insisted on carrying her home even though they'd bought a carrier and a leash. "Buck, isn't she just precious?"

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"She already peed on me and we have had her for less than an hour," Bucky said grumpily but then looked at how happy Steve was holding the tired little puppy close to his chest. "But, yes, she's really fucking adorable and you know I love animals and this is all your fault, Steve, and I want to squish her face with my fingers."

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Steve nuzzled the top of her head. She still smelled like a baby and she had a huge case of puppy breath. "I want to give her a pretty name," Steve said. "To fit the kind of gorgeous pup she is."

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"Like what?" Bucky asked and scratched behind the puppy's ears. "Something fancy like 'Cassandra' or 'Gloria' or 'Valerie'?" Bucky looked at her and stared into her sleepy little puppy eyes. He was already getting pretty fond of her.

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"I like 'Gloria'," Steve said. "That suits her." The puppy was too tired to try to look at all the interesting things around her. In fact, when they got back home, the first thing she did when she was put down was find a comfy place to curl up and sleep.

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"I guess being carried all the way home was tiring," Bucky said flatly and worked on getting his sleeping son out of his stroller. He had been napping the entire time and missed all the festivities of picking the puppy. Bucky was grateful. He had been worried that he would cause a scene in the pet shop.

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Steve busied himself with filling up the water and food bowls for the dog. He had a bunch of chew toys littered about for her as well. "I've never got to have a dog before," Steve said. "I've always wanted one."

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Bucky held Christopher as he started to wake up again. "I'm so happy you get to have one now. You look so pleased with yourself. I love it. But are you really naming her 'Gloria'? I said that one as a joke. I mean, you get to name her, so if that's what you chose, I'll have to deal with it."
"Well, I thought ‘Gloria’ was a nice name," Steve admitted. "The only name I kept thinking of was ‘Princess’," he admitted, and he wasn't sure how Bucky felt about naming their dog ‘Princess’.

"Princess?" Bucky scoffed. "Steve, come on. How did you managed to name two children with good names but can't name a dog?" He sighed. "Fine. ‘Gloria’ it is. So long as it isn't ‘Princess’ then I think everything is fine."

"I don’t know... with the amount you dislike the name ‘Princess’, I kind of want to name her that now," Steve teased.

Christopher saw the puppy lying on the carpet and pointed at her. "Papa." He signed 'cat' at Bucky.

Bucky signed back 'dog' and said, "Dog," to Christopher clearly and firmly and pointed to her. "Steve, Baby, if you name that dog ‘Princess’, I'm calling it ‘Gloria’ anyway. The puppy was sleeping soundly but now Christopher really wanted to go greet her and he was desperately trying to get down from Bucky's arms.

Steve had purposely picked out a puppy that was pretty mellow because he knew that Christopher would be growing up with it. He didn't want a dog that would be rough with a baby around. "I'm going to ask the girls what they think when they get home." He carefully scooped the puppy into his arms and brought her over for Christopher to have a closer look.

Christopher shrieked in excitement and reached out to grab the dog's ears. She just opened her eyes and looked at the baby for a long moment before yawning and licking his hand, which elicited a second gleeful shrill sound. "I think he likes her."

"Oh my god, our son is so adorable," Steve said. The puppy nudged her wet nose at Christopher's cheek and sniffed him curiously. "Are you being a good girl, Princess?" Steve asked, smirking over at Bucky when he said the name.

"Yes, ‘no-name-the-dog’ is going to be a great addition to this family," Bucky said and tried to hold Christopher back from wanting to jump out of his arms. "I wonder how Raph will take to this new animal in the house?"

"Knowing him, he's probably going to avoid her," Steve chuckled. "And reluctantly endure any time she chases him down to play." Raphael loved Becca and Bucky the most. Lilly gave him more treats but the other two weren't so chaotic and loud.
"Maybe they will be friends when they are both sleeping," Bucky offered and reached out a hand to pet the puppy and got a happy lick on his palm. "So, is this dog going to be sleeping in our bed? Because we tried that with Bourbon the plush dog and he ended up in Christopher's crib."

"I'll let the puppy decide where she wants to sleep," Steve decided. "Except Christopher's crib. That's Bourbon's sleeping place."

The girls walked through the door a few minutes later chattering to each other idly. But when Lilly saw what was in Steve's arms, she gasped, "Oh my god!"

Both girls dropped their things and came running over. At first, Christopher thought they were excited to see him so he was pretty mad when they ignored him in favor of the puppy. "Whose dog is this?" Becca asked cautiously, not wanting to think it was theirs and then be told that Steve was just dog-sitting for a friend.

"She's my dog, uh, our dog - the family dog," Steve said. "I'm thinking about naming her 'Princess', but Bucky says 'Gloria' is a better name." The Pup yawned and licked their hands when they went to pet her.

Meanwhile, Christopher huffed out "Beh!" and "Lee!" to get the girls' attention.

The girls both looked at Christopher quickly and said a rushed 'hello' and kissed his head to satisfy him. Then they returned their attention to the dog.

"What happened was, I suggested 'Gloria' as a joke but Steve liked it. Then I poked fun at him for choosing it and now he wants to ruin the dog's life by naming it 'Princess'. Steve, all the other dogs at the dog park will make fun of her," Bucky insisted.

"It's not ruining her life by naming her that," Steve said. "The dogs don't know English. She's going to be fine."

Lilly shook her head. "Both of those names are lame. You got to give her a cool name light 'Lightning' or 'Havoc'."

"Lilly," Bucky started and gave Steve a knowing look because they had talked about how Lilly would do this. "This is a family dog, yes, but it's Steve's dog first. That means he is naming her and taking care of her and all of that. And if he really, really wants to go with 'Princess' then I will have to just find a nickname for her. But, I highly advise against it." He added the last part with a look to Steve.
Lilly made a face and Steve pouted when Bucky continued to lobby against the name. "Well, how about ‘Diana’ after Princess Diana? Or we can name her ‘Eleanor’. Or ‘Rosie’.

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"I'm fine with any of those," Bucky said and adjusted Christopher in his arms. "‘Diana’ is really nice. But it's up to you, Steve." The puppy looked up at Steve and yawned again before licking the bottom of his chin. "I think she is tired waiting for a name."

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Steve giggled and kissed her snout. "Alright. ‘Diana’ it is. But I'm still going to call you my princess," he said. He pet her soft head before letting her rest on the couch because she looked worn out already.

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"Diana," Bucky nodded in agreement and watched Lilly flop on the couch next to the puppy just so she could stare at her. The puppy peeked an eye over at Lilly briefly before going back to sleep. "Becca, do you remember Maisie? And how old she got and how she would fall asleep on dad's legs and he wouldn't be able to get up until she moved."

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"Yeah, I remember," Becca said with a grin. "I used to put bows on her collar and she would shake them off. Aren't there pictures of me riding her like a horse when I was a baby?" she asked.

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"Yeah, somewhere there are," Bucky said with a smile. "She was so good with you and Lilly when you were small. And Dad loved taking pictures of you and the dog going on adventures all day. I can try to find those later." Bucky kissed Christopher's cheek. "She was really good at knowing when Becca was about to cry. She would get all up next to her and lick her legs and nudge her and try to distract her from whatever it was that was getting her going."

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"I hope Diana is just as good with Christopher. He seems to really like her." Steve had to remind their son that the puppy was sleeping every time he fussed to be taken closer to her.

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Bucky turned again so Christopher couldn't see the puppy. "I think she will be. She seems like she is really mild-tempered so that's perfect for having children around." The puppy's ears twitched and she let out a big sigh but didn't open her eyes.

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Christopher fussed and started to whine when he couldn't see the dog. Raphael came in just then and his tail swished when he saw another animal. "What are you guys in the mood to have for dinner?"

Steve asked.

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Bucky looked up at Steve with surprised eyes. He hadn't made their food since Grant died. It might
be a small step, but it was a good step in the right direction. This meant Steve was feeling even the slightest bit better. "I'm okay with anything you all want," Bucky said and set Christopher down who immediately ran to the dog.

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When Christopher went to the dog, Raphael ran in front of him to stop him in case the puppy was hostile. He jumped onto the couch and started to sniff at Diana, who rolled onto her back and pawed playfully at the cat. "Lilly, you have any preference for dinner?" Steve asked.

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Lilly always had a preference on dinner. "Noodles, but not spaghetti. More like noodles and cheese with chicken but no vegetables," she requested with arms crossed.

Becca rolled her eyes and said, "I'll eat her vegetables. I know what's good for me."

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Steve smiled, happy to have a little sense of normalcy back. Diana wagged her tail and licked Raphael until he ran off to prevent the pup from messing up his fur. So she started licking Christopher's face instead. "Look, Buck," Steve gasped.

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Bucky turned to look and saw his son sitting still and letting Diana lick her face. "Oh my god. Camera, Steve, camera!" Bucky yelled and waved him off to go get it as he stood and stared at the two of them and his heart melted.

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Steve ran to grab their camera and was practically wheezing when he got back. He managed to get a few photos before Diana looked at him curiously, not recognizing the noise and being wary of what it meant.

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Bucky had forgotten about Steve's lungs in his haste to capture the moment. But he also didn't want to ask Steve if he was okay and draw attention to the fact that his lungs weren't perfect anymore. "Those are going to be great pictures to have when he is older," he said instead and gave Steve a kiss on his cheek.

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Diana hopped off the couch and stumbled over to sniff at Steve's legs. Steve coughed and held onto his chest until he caught his breath again. "Yeah. It was worth it."

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"See, Steve?" Bucky asked and pet Diana's head. "She already knows when you're not alright. She's going to be great for you to have around. Diana is just like Maisie was." Even though he was already sure about it before, he was convinced now that it was a good idea to have this dog for Steve.

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Steve smiled shyly. He knew that he was going to have some pretty rough times ahead and it was
comforting to know that Diana was such an attentive dog. "Yeah, we definitely picked a winner," he agreed. "Alright, I better start dinner."

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"Do you want my help? Or have you - like Lilly - decided I'm never touching dinner again?" Bucky asked and watched Christopher attempt to hoist himself up on to the couch. He gave up after a few tries and flopped down on his butt.

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Steve walked over to their son and helped him onto the couch. Raphael joined him and bumped his head gently against him, looking for attention. "It's okay," Steve said. "I'd rather take care of it myself."

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"I get it, I get it," Bucky mumbled. "I can't cook. I know." He took the camera and got a picture of Raphael and Christopher sitting together and then one of Lilly holding Diana. "I'm going to try to work on colors with Christopher while you cook. I think he almost knows which is red and which is blue."

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Steve went to work in the kitchen for their dinner while the rest of them occupied themselves in the living room. "Can Diana sleep in my room?" Lilly asked Bucky. "I think she really likes me."

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"No, Lil," Bucky said and brought Christopher to his blocks. "Diana is Steve's dog. He may let you have her in your room occasionally but you'll have to talk to him about that. And especially not right now while she is young because she will need to go out to pee a lot."

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Lilly pouted. "But she's so cute..." Diana let out a playful bark and squirmed to get down. She was awake now and wanted to explore. "Why did you guys get a dog out of nowhere?"

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"I suggested it for Steve and he thought it was a good idea," Bucky said simply. He wasn't sure if Lilly needed to know what he and Steve discussed about their lives when they are alone. He also wasn't sure if Steve would appreciate Lilly knowing he was feeling so down about not having a job on top of everything else that he was worried he would be so lost and lonely when no one was home.

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"I think it's a good idea too," she said. Then she caught Diana going to the corner to pee on the carpet. "Oh no! No, Diana, bad dog!" She scolded. The pup darted under the table when she heard Lilly yell at her.

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Bucky huffed out a sigh. "Steve!" he called out. "Diana needs to go out. Can Lilly do it?" He didn't
want to just have her do it if Steve had some sort of training plan already worked out in his head.

"I'll do it," Steve said. He was a bit possessive over Diana already and he didn't want to give Lilly an excuse to lay claim on his puppy. "Can you mind the pasta while I take her out?" He walked over and scooped her up from her hiding spot.

Bucky sent Lilly to watch the pasta since he was working with Christopher who vaguely seemed to get it. When Steve came back in with the dog, Bucky said quietly so no one but Steve could hear, "Baby, you're going to have to make it super clear to Lilly that Diana is yours. She asked to have her sleep in her room."

Steve let Diana off her leash and watched as she explored her new home. "Isn't one animal she doesn't take care of enough?" he huffed softly.

"She's not going to listen to reason about this, either," Bucky warned. "You're just going to have to be gentle but firm that she can't steal your puppy." His eyebrows were furrowed and he was staring down at the blocks. "Check this out. I think he can do it this time." He got Christopher's attention and said, "Red."

Because Christopher was perfect at not showing off when Bucky wanted him to, he gurgled at Bucky as he tried putting his foot into his own mouth. "Ah, yes. I see he grows smarter by the day," Steve teased.

"Goddammit," Bucky breathed and gingerly pulled Christopher's foot out of the way. "Okay, I'll keep working on it. If you need help with dinner let me know. And talk to Lilly." He moved most of the blocks behind him so Christopher could only see one blue and one red. "Let's try this again."

Christopher made an annoyed noise at his pop which had Steve chuckling softly as he went to the kitchen. He took over the pasta and hesitated before taking a breath. "Hey, Lil?" he murmured softly. "Can I talk to you for a minute?"

Lilly popped up to sit on the counter and slowly started eating pretzels out of the bag. "Yeah?" she asked with her mouth full and her eyes half shut staring at nothing in particular.

"I, um... I'm happy that you like Diana, but she's my dog. Of course, you're allowed to pet her and play with her, but most of the time she's going to be with me. She's not even going to be Bucky's dog - and me and Bucky usually share everything," he said.
Lilly stopped eating and looked to Steve. "I understand. It's not like took her from you. I just wanted to take her outside and stuff." She pouted and put the bag down so she could cross her arms.

"I know," Steve said. "But I'm going to be the person handling all that stuff. I'll walk her and take care of her. You can play with her when I'm doing other stuff, alright?" He drained the pasta and checked on the chicken and vegetables.

Lilly squinted. "Is this cause I asked Bucky if she could sleep in my room?" she asked and watched as Diana stumbled her way into the kitchen and ran around the table a few times.

He separated the pasta into bowls and added meat to Lilly's. "Yeah," he said. "I know she's cute, but she's going to need to use the bathroom a bunch and her bed is going to be in our room," he said.

Lilly was annoyed. She felt like she hadn't done anything wrong. She just wanted the dog to be as much hers as it was Steve's. "I never get to have her to myself sometimes?" she asked. She still didn't get it.

"If I'm not around, you can have her to yourself. But if I'm around, she's supposed to be with me," Steve explained patiently. "Just like how you have plenty of stuff you'd let me use when you aren't using them but that doesn't mean I get to take them whenever I want."

Lilly scrunched up her face and looked down at Diana again. "Well, when are you not going to be around?" she asked and hopped off the counter with a thud. "You don't have a job anymore. You can't work for a whole year. You'll always be stuck here." She flung her hair back and storm out the kitchen to head to her room saying, "And ‘Diana’ is a stupid ass name!"

Steve felt a bit stung. *Stuck here.* Stuck in the house with no second son to take care of, no badge, no job to keep his mind off things. He lowered his head with a frown and turned back to making all of their food. Diana whined and nudged him for something to eat, so Steve gave her a piece of chicken.

Bucky heard Lilly shout and stomp off so he picked up Christopher and came to the kitchen. "Baby?" he said tentatively and came up by Steve. "Didn't go so well?" he asked and rubbed Steve's back. "Do I need to talk to her?"

Steve was visibly upset but he was holding himself together. "She can be so rude sometimes," he murmured quietly. And she knew exactly what to say to really get to him. She was learning from
Becca, it seemed. "I'm not really that hungry anymore, Buck. But dinner's ready."

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Bucky nodded and set Christopher down. "Here, I'll make Lilly a plate and she can eat in her room tonight. I'll tell her she needs to apologize and then I'll get Becca for dinner. How's that?" He kissed Steve's shoulder and grabbed a plate to start filling up for his sister.

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"I don't really feel like taking an apology right now," Steve admitted. He wasn't so mad that he wouldn't forgive her but he didn't have the energy to deal with it right now.

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"Okay, no apology, she will just eat alone," Bucky said and squeezed Steve's arm before heading up to Lilly's room. "Hey, Monster. You really upset Steve. I need you to eat up here by yourself tonight."

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"Well, he wouldn't be upset if he wasn't hogging the dog," she answered. "We're a family. It's not just him around here." She took her plate and ate a bite moodily.

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"It's his dog, Lilly," Bucky said again. "Steve needs this puppy. We got it for him. He's going through a lot right now and we all need to support him." He huffed out a sigh. "If you want more food you can come down but then come straight back up." Bucky nodded and closed the door behind him on his way back downstairs.

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Steve was downstairs feeding Christopher his dinner while Becca patiently waited for Bucky to come back down. "Everything okay?" she asked.

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"More or less," Bucky answered and sat down to his plate of food. "She's just being unreasonable." He noticed Steve hadn't set a plate out for himself. "Baby, is it okay if I ask you to eat a few pieces of chicken and maybe like one or two bites of noodles?"

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"I'm really not hungry, Bucky," Steve said. He wasn't trying to be difficult. He just really felt awful right now and he didn't feel like he could stomach anything. "Maybe later if I'm feeling better."

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Bucky sighed and nodded. "Maybe later," he conceded. He and Becca started to eat quietly and Diana came to lay on Steve's feet under the table. Christopher worked on putting food into his mouth and made little bubbles of noises as he went.

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After they all ate, Steve made a bowl of puppy food for Diana and then scooped up Christopher.
"You want to help me give our bean a bath?" Steve asked.

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"Yeah, let’s get him cleaned up. He has sauce in his hair," Bucky chuckled and went with Steve to the bathroom and started the water running. "Steve, I'm really sorry Lilly was so mean. She isn't good at understanding things like this."

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"You don't have to be sorry for her being mean," Steve said as he helped their squirming son out of his shirt. "It's not your fault. I'm just... I feel so tired and awful, Bucky. I can't stand it."

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"I know, Love, I know," Bucky sighed and grabbed Christopher's duck for him to play with. "I think she just doesn't know why it is that Diana is going to be so important for you to have around. She just thinks it's another pet."

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"I know she doesn't understand. I wish I didn't have to explain it for her," Steve said. Diana came bounding up to them then and before Steve could stop her, she climbed over the edge of the tub and got into the water with Christopher. That made the baby squeal and splash around as Steve tried to wash his hair.

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"Shit, fuck," Bucky gasped as he was splashed by the puppy. He grabbed a towel and wiped off his face. "Steve, is it okay that she is in there or should I get her out?"

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Diana drank from the water and seemed to have a real good time hanging around in it. Steve quickly pulled her out so she wouldn't get sick from the soap bubbles in the water. "Dada!" Christopher complained.

"No, Love, the puppy will get sick," Steve said as he wrapped her up in a towel.

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Bucky took the puppy in the towel from Steve and held her close so she wouldn't get cold. "I think Diana and Christopher are going to get along really well. He isn't afraid of her and she doesn't seem to mind him."

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"Yeah, that was actually really damn cute," Steve admitted. He calmed Christopher down enough to wash the top of his head. "She is such a sweet puppy. I love her already even though she peed on you."

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"I love her too," Bucky confessed. "And Christopher's peed on me several times before so I suppose I should just be used to it by now." He dried off the puppy's fur and then set her back down, making sure she didn't rush off to the bath once again.
"I think you make a really good target for pee. You should be a toilet for Halloween," Steve teased. Diana tried to jump into the bath again but Bucky stopped her. Christopher waved at her and babbled as Steve finished washing him. "There we go, my clean boy!" he said as he hoisted him up.

Bucky immediately reached to start draining the tub just in case anyone felt like diving in once more. "Okay, Bean, are you sleepy now? Is it bedtime?" He gently dried Christopher's hair as Steve held him.

Steve kissed him a few times on his chubby, little cheek and smiled as he giggled. "Christopher says he wants his papa to sing him his lullaby tonight," Steve said.

"Oh, but which one?" Bucky asked with a happy smile as he took the baby from Steve. "Because Papa has so many options and he doesn't know which is your favorite one, Bean."

"I know my son's favorite lullaby," Steve said in a semi-defensive tone. "He loves 'You Are My Sunshine'. It makes him smile every time."

"But that's the lullaby you sing him, Steve," Bucky corrected softly and brought Christopher to the nursery. "I sing him soft rock ballads and crooners tunes." He smiled over at his husband and reached for his hand.

"It's my lullaby for him so therefore it's his favorite," Steve said in a matter-of-fact tone. He took Bucky's hand and kissed his neck lightly. "How about some Queen?"

"Okay, Queen," Bucky agreed with a nod. "Which Queen, though? 'Love of My Life'?" he asked and pulled out a pair of pajamas for his son who was pulling at the towel he was wrapped in, desperately trying to get free. "That sounds like a good one. Then Daddy and Pops are going to go lay down and sleep because it's been a long day and Pops has to work really early tomorrow."

Once the towel was off of him, Christopher yawned and didn't look like he was going to fuss about getting clothes put on. "I'm going to miss you being home with me all day," Steve sighed. "I love having you around - so does Christopher."

"I love being here with you both," Bucky said and cinched the last button before laying Christopher down. "I would much rather be with my favorite people than be at work with Reggie all day tomorrow. But it can't be helped." He sighed. "And before you know it, I'll be home again."
Christopher was almost asleep by the time Bucky was done dressing him. "Yeah, but at least you've got Clint and now Tim so it's not just you against the stoners." He placed a hand on Bucky's back and leaned his head on his shoulder.

"'Bucky and The Stoners' sounds like a band name," Bucky offered with a chuckle and gave his son a gentle kiss before singing him part of a Queen song until he was completely asleep. He and Steve just stood and watched him breathing for a bit before deciding to leave him be.

Steve leaned over the crib and simply wondered at how amazing his little baby boy was. He watched as Christopher turned onto his side and balled his little fist up against his chin. "We are so blessed to have him, Bucky. He's amazing."

"He's perfect," Bucky agreed and took one of Steve's hands. "But let's let him be. He needs his rest as much as we do." He silently pulled Steve from the nursery and back to the master bedroom. "What are your plans for tomorrow?" Bucky asked once their door was shut. He really needed to take a shower so he just started stripping down and hoped Steve would decide to join him and just be near him in the warm water.

Steve reluctantly left Christopher's room and he followed Bucky into the bathroom after he stripped down as well. "I was thinking of taking Christopher to Grant's grave," he said. "Then doing some painting with him and training Diana when he's down for his nap."

"That sounds like a good day. I think Christopher is missing doing art with you," Bucky said and started the water running. "What sort of training will you do with Diana? Like bathroom training and commands and things? Or do you want her to be able to be like a rescuer dog?"

"I want to have Diana trained in everything. I hear that Shepherds are really smart, so I want to do as much as I can with her," Steve said.

"That's a good idea," Bucky agreed and pulled Steve into the shower with him. "Were you ever one of the guys who got to work with the K-9 unit at the precinct?" He didn't necessarily want to bring up the police station but he hoped talking about some good parts of it would help ease Steve into a lull of comfortable memories instead of pain.

Steve's eyes got sad when Bucky brought up the precinct. "No, I didn't get to. I always got to pet them when they were off duty, though. I can't count how many puppies they brought in there."
"That's pretty special." Bucky smiled and tried to get Steve to come back to him and be a little okay again. He pulled Steve to him so they were chest to chest and he reached around and rested his hands just above Steve's ass. He missed Steve's body. He missed it being all over his and he missed Steve's cock inside him and how beautiful Steve looked when he rode Bucky. He missed being intimate and connected with his husband. But that wasn't happening anytime soon. Bucky was worried it may not happen ever again. But he couldn't think about that right now. So he sighed and let go of Steve to start washing them up. "I think Diana and you will have a lot of fun training together."

Steve leaned into Bucky and nuzzled him lightly. He didn't really have it in him to have sex even though he loved Bucky dearly and wanted to make him happy. Usually having Bucky's hands so close to his ass would have Steve wanting more and more but instead, he gave Bucky a chaste kiss on the shoulder as a weak consolation. "Yeah, getting her was a really good idea, Buck. I owe you for that one."

"You don't owe me," Bucky said softly, sadly, because he knew Steve was so broken inside right now and he wasn't sure when he would be feeling okay again. "I want to make sure you're getting whatever you need while I'm not around and having a companion in Diana was a good option."

Steve washed Bucky's hair diligently. It was the best he could do right now for intimacy. He kissed the tip of his nose when he was done. "I owe you for everything good in my life," Steve said sweetly, managing a little smile over at him.

Bucky nodded and tried to return Steve's smile. He finished washing off and hopped out of the shower to grab his towel. He was pretty quiet as he dried off and waited for Steve to do the same. Once they were all dressed and ready to sleep, Bucky sat on the edge of the bed and stared at the wall for a long moment.

Steve laid down in their bed and was still and quiet. Diana climbed up awkwardly onto the bed and curled up at the foot of it. Steve didn't speak at first but then he finally murmured, "I'm sorry that I'm not good company right now."

"It's okay," Bucky said in a whisper so faint he wasn't sure he said it. "I'm going to go outside for a bit. Just sit in the cool air for a while. I need a few minutes." He got up and tugged on one of Steve's sweaters and put on a hat over his long wet hair.

Steve just stayed there, not moving an inch. When Bucky left, he wept quietly and cuddled Diana to his chest. He felt doubly awful because he knew Bucky was hurting too and Steve wasn't doing much to help. They felt so distant from each other.
Bucky sat out on the steps by their door. He smoked a cigarette and let tears fall down his face. A couple people passed him by and a few gave him sympathetic looks. He felt lost. He was trying so hard to make sure everyone in his family was doing okay that he hadn't even taken a moment to make sure he was okay. He really, really wanted to drink. He hated that he kept thinking that he could just go slip off and get a couple shots at the bar. He couldn't let himself do that. But he wanted it so badly.

Becca came out after a while. She had smelled smoke coming in through her open window and she heard Bucky shuffling around so she decided to go see what was up. "Hey," she said. "You want to talk?"

Bucky looked over at her and sighed. "I'm not sure. I don't even know if I can properly explain in words what's going on right now," he said and reached out to squeeze her shoulder once. "I just don't know what to do anymore, Becca."

Becca reached over and squeezed his hand in turn. "With yourself? Or with Steve?" she asked. "Is that why you guys got Diana? Cause of Grant?" She assumed that they got a puppy to help with the loss of the baby.

"With myself and with Steve," Bucky confirmed. "I keep just going and going and trying to fix every little thing in hopes that I don't self-destruct like I did when Mom and Dad died. But I haven't taken the time to just be upset. Steve got to grieve. He laid up in your room for days. I haven't done anything close to that. And I don't think it's fair. But Steve also has other things going on and he can't work and he's so broken inside and I thought that a puppy might help him not be so lonely and directionless when he is home alone."

"You won't self-destruct," Becca said quietly. "You're better than that now." She crossed her arms and offered, "I can help run the house. Just for a little while so you can have the time you need. I'm a bit of a pro at that by now."

Bucky gave her a weak little smile. "Thank you, Becca. But I don't want you to have to do that again. You had to do it before for a while and I don't want you to go through that stress again. It's my job, my responsibility. I'll have to just handle it."

"Nope," she said stubbornly. "I'm going to handle it. You got to heal. And it's not often I'm in an understanding and generous mood, so take it while it lasts."
Bucky looked to Becca and shook his head with a little grimace of a smile. "Fine. We will do it together." He sighed and stared off down the street again. "Do you have any ideas or advice on how to get Steve to... be with me, I guess? He's so distant and I miss him. He's better now than a few days ago but he still hardly touches me or even looks at me and we haven't had sex since before the fire and I miss being connected and intimate with him."

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Becca gave Bucky a look that pleaded with him to not dare tell her more than she needed to know about his sex life. "You're asking your little sister who's never had sex how to make your husband have sex with you?" she questioned in disbelief. "Uh... I don't know. Have you tried getting him in the mood? Or doing stuff for him so he doesn't have to be the one starting stuff?"

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"I am asking you because it's important that you understand that sex can be beautiful when it's with someone who loves you and you love them back. It can be healing and good at bonding two people. It's not always got to be some flashy desperate thing like on TV," Bucky said. Becca was now fifteen and Bucky was worried everyday that she would come home late crying because some boy convinced her to have sex with him and she regretted it. Bucky regretted a lot of the partners he had before Steve and he knew he didn't want that for his sisters or his kids.

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"I know that," she huffed, getting flustered and embarrassed. "I'm still saying that you have more experience in that field so I don't know why you're asking me. Try talking to him, maybe? Actually, no. He may feel even worse because he's not giving you what you want."

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"It's not even that I'm trying to get him to make love with me," Bucky said with a huff. "It's more that I'm trying to get him to open back up to me and let me be there with him - physically and emotionally and mentally. Right now, it just sort of feels like he is making himself interact with me so I don't get mad. Like we just... coexist."

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"So what if he is forcing himself to interact with you?" Becca asked curiously. "That means that he loves you enough to care about your feelings even when he's upset, too."

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Bucky considered it for a moment. "Yeah, I guess that makes sense. And since I just can't push a button and make him all better then I'll just have to deal with what I can get at the moment." He sighed and pulled her in for a really quick hug and then let her go again so she wouldn't get grumpy.

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Becca brushed herself off as if the hug was a personal offense to her pristine ego. She gave Bucky a look but eased up shortly. "You've had practice with losing someone important to you. This is Steve's first real loss. It's going to take him longer."

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"That makes sense too," Bucky agreed. "But that doesn't mean losing Grant hurt me any less than it
hurt Steve. I just wish we would have been able to have those few days to grieve together instead of him ignoring us and making it so me and Sarah had to ignore our own thoughts and feelings about this to take care of everything on our own and also worry about Steve."

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"Yeah, it was shitty he hid for almost a week," Becca agreed. "But I guess we can't change the past. Only what we're going to do with the cards we've been dealt with," she murmured, nudging him.

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"You're a smart kid. You know that?" Bucky asked and stood up. "You had to grow up pretty quick because of me. And I'm really sorry about that. I wish I could go back and be there for you and Lilly when you needed me to be."

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"We still need you. Sometimes. Lilly more so than me," she said. "You're here for us now." Becca headed back inside before she said any more sappy stuff and embarrassed herself.

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Bucky spent a few more minutes staring at the moon and Brooklyn and just trying to work things out in his head. Then he trudged back inside and pulled off his jacket before slipping into bed next to Steve and spooning him close to his body. Steve had calmed down since Bucky left but he fell into an uneasy sleep.

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Diana wagged her tail when she saw Bucky but she didn't get up. Steve leaned back against Bucky's chest and let out a little whine. His breathing started to pick up until he worked himself up into waking quickly. His eyes snapped open and he looked back at Bucky. "Sorry," he apologized tiredly, thinking that he woke him.

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Bucky shook his head and caressed Steve's face gently. "Did you have a bad dream?" he asked and kissed Steve's neck. "I just got back in. I'm sorry I was out for a while. Becca and I were talking."

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Steve nodded. He had consistent bad dreams since the fire. They only got worse after Grant. He kept his gaze lowered so he wouldn't meet Bucky's eyes. "Are you feeling better?" he asked. Steve hoped that Bucky came to peace with whatever made him have to go outside.

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"A little bit," Bucky confessed and wrapped his arms tighter around Steve. "Go back to sleep, Love. I'm here now. I'll be gone when you wake up in the morning, just so you know."

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Steve closed his eyes and pretended to sleep just so Bucky would go to sleep as well. But it took him a couple hours before he finally was able to rest. He just couldn’t stop thinking about what he lost and worrying that he was going to lose everything else if he didn’t pull himself together soon.
Bucky and Steve were sitting on a bench inside the tattoo shop waiting for their turn. Steve was going to get his first tattoo today. He brought the ink print of Grant's feet and was clutching on to it tightly as he waited for the tattooist to be ready for them.

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Steve had still been feeling off. Having Diana helped fill the emptiness when Bucky wasn't around. He visited Grant every day and his headstone would be put in soon. But it was still a lot to handle. "Does it hurt a lot?" Steve asked. "Your skin looked pretty irritated afterwards."

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"It hurts a little bit," Bucky admitted. "I don't think it hurts as much as some people try to say it does. I think they just want to look tough." He smiled at Steve and nudged him. "Where are you putting your tattoo again?"

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Steve nodded. He could handle a little pain. "I'm going to put it on the tops of my feet. It's like he's always walking with me," he said. "Or like how I would put Christopher's feet on mine while he learned how to walk."

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Bucky smiled and wished he could give his husband a kiss. "I love that. He's always with you." The tattooist ushered them back and Bucky gave Steve's shoulder a squeeze and prompted him to give the ink print to Randall. Randall was quiet but kind. He was very nice to Bucky the two times he was here and Bucky was confident in his skills to do the feet properly.

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Steve took his shoes off and felt a little weird when Randall washed the tops and shaved any hairs off to have a clear canvas. Steve gave Bucky a nervous look when he heard the needle going and hissed when it pierced his skin. "That fucking stings," he murmured to Bucky.

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"You're doing it, though. You've got it," Bucky said warmly and offered Steve his hand. He figured it wouldn't seem weird if he held Steve's hand while he was getting tattooed. "It'll be done soon."

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Steve squeezed Bucky's hand and Randall stared for a moment before brushing it off and focusing on his work. It took just over an hour to do, but it looked perfect. Steve was afraid to look at it yet. "How is it?" he asked Bucky.

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Bucky loved it. It looked exactly like Grant's feet. "It's wonderful, Steve," Bucky said and gently took the ink print back from Randall. "It looks exactly like this." He wanted nothing more than to hug his husband and hold him tight. This was an important moment for them - for Steve.
Steve chanced a look and felt his breath catch in his throat. It was fucking beautiful. He teared up and stared down at the tattoo. "Wow, oh, Bucky... it's just like his feet. It's so perfect," he said and wiped at his eyes.

"I know," Bucky said softly and pulled out the money from his wallet, being sure to tip Randall very well for his work and his discretion about the two of them since they had made it clear by now that they were probably not just friends.

"You should keep your feet uncovered as much as possible so it'll heal best. That means no heavy socks or shoes for a bit. Also, be sure to wash it frequently and gently," Randall warned Steve. Steve thanked him over and over and let him wrap his feet so he could get his socks and shoes back on for now.

Once Steve was ready to go, Bucky handed him his coat and held open the door. "Let's go home, Baby," he said softly and touched Steve's arm as he passed him. "Do you like it? Is it what you hoped it would look like?"

"I love it," Steve assured him. "I'm... I'm so happy you suggested his feet. I'm so surprised with how much it matches the original." Steve was so overwhelmed with emotion that it was hard to speak.

Bucky handed Steve the ink print and zipped his jacket up. "Yeah, Randall did a really good job on it. I really like it. I'm glad you do too. The bummer is now it'll hurt for a couple days and if Diana or Christopher step on your feet that'll be pretty painful."

"Yeah, my feet feel like they're on fire right now," Steve admitted. He was walking stiffly as they left the shop and headed back home. "Diana is starting to understand some commands."

"Oh yeah? Which ones?" Bucky asked. "I noticed she's been sitting at the door when she needs to go out. That's a good step in the right direction. She's only peed inside twice in the past couple days."

"I taught her 'leave it' and 'stay'. I got to make sure that she knows to back off when she has to, you know? And I give her lots of treats when we go for walks so she wants to be outside anyway," Steve explained.

"How have the walks been?" Bucky asked cautiously, insinuating that he wanted to talk about Steve's lungs but also not wanting to push that angle. "Do you just go to the park with her and
Christopher or have you been walking on the sidewalk down our street?"

"I take her on short walks sometimes so she gets used to the leash. It's getting harder to breathe with
the air being so thin," Steve admitted. "We go to the park every day, though. I keep her by me and I
let Christopher wander on the grass. He's too small for the playground."

"I wish I could be there with you," Bucky said sadly. "I'd love to sit and watch our boy explore and
find butterflies and bunnies." He smiled at the thought. He hated that he was at work so often. But
even with Steve's settlement and his disability pay, they still needed one of them to work. And
Bucky did love his job even though he complained about it sometimes.

"Me, too. There's so many times when I'll turn to show you something and forget that you're at
work," Steve said. "Christopher started talking to the flowers the other day. He was too adorable,"
Steve gushed.

"Oh, god, I want to see that!" Bucky whined and pouted. "Is it like when he sits and babbles at Raph
while he is taking a nap? Because that's one of my favorite things. He gets so upset when the cat
wakes up and walks away."

"I'm thinking about buying one of those JVC video cameras. Only having pictures isn't enough to
capture our son growing up. I want to have tapes, too," Steve said.

"I think you should definitely do that," Bucky agreed. "I want to be able to see those videos and
show him when he is older." He unlocked their door and found Becca and Lilly hovering over a
puzzle in the living room and Christopher passed out on the couch with Diana curled up next to him.

"I thought it would be fun. I'll do video logs and everything." Steve smiled when he saw Diana poke
her head up. She flipped onto the floor so she could run up to them quickly to greet them. "Hey, little
princess," he said as he picked her up. "Say 'hello' to Bucky."

Bucky leaned in so the puppy could lick his face and he chuckled. "Hello, Diana. It's good to see
you, too." He wrapped an arm around Steve's back and said quietly, "I've got something to show
you. It's hidden in our room."

Steve perked up a little. "Oh?" he asked. He set his puppy down and Diana sniffed at his feet as if
she could tell something was different. "Let me kiss Christopher first." Steve walked over and tucked
a blanket over their sleeping son and kissed his head. He said 'hello' to the girls and then motioned
for Bucky to lead them.

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Bucky brought Steve to their bedroom and had him sit down. He still had the ink print and he set it beside Steve so he could go rummage for what he was looking for. Eventually, he pulled out a medium-sized wooden picture frame and brought it over to Steve. Bucky had taken parts of Grant’s ruined crib and made a frame to put the feet in. "I made this," he said and showed it to Steve. "It's made of some of Grant's crib."

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Steve's bottom lip quivered the second he saw it because he already knew what it was. He gingerly ran his fingers over the frame. "Bucky... it's beautiful," he said softly. He gently placed the ink print into the frame, making sure the glass flattened out the paper so there weren't wrinkles. "Look. Now his crib can still protect him."

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Bucky nodded and leaned into Steve to give him a kiss. "Where do you want to hang it up?" he asked and sat next to him so he could look at the frame with him. "I was thinking the nursery but it's honestly wherever you think is best. Since I made it, you get to choose where it goes."

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"I'd like to have him in here for a little while," Steve said. "But then he should go to the nursery. You know, kind of like how Christopher shared our room at first," he explained. Steve kissed Bucky's cheek. "I love you so much, my handsome woodworker."

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Bucky pulled Steve in to give him a kiss on the lips, needing as much contact as possible right now. "I love you, too," he said and took the frame to set it on their dresser for the time being. "I think he should be here with us for a while, too. Then he can join his brother."

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Steve cried a little because he missed their baby but only a few tears fell. He leaned down to take his socks and shoes off. "You're so talented," he sighed. "All the stuff you're able to do with your woodworking, it's amazing."

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"Thank you, Baby," Bucky said with a smile and grabbed a sweater for himself. "I wonder if I could make any money from it. Like work on my whittling and make animal figures for people. Or make cribs or plaques or things on commission. Do you think people would buy them?"

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"I think loads of people would," Steve said. "But maybe just do whittling and plaques. I kind of like the thought of only our kids getting to have one of your handmade cribs."

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"Yeah, okay. just for our kids," Bucky agreed happily. That was another indication that Steve was
thinking of future children so he was going to take it. "How do your feet feel?" he asked and squatted down to look at the tattoo again. It really did look just like Grant's feet.

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"They feel sore. But it's a good kind of sore. Cause I know it'll heal and now I get to have our little boy with me everywhere I go. Just like you do," Steve said pleasantly. "I feel better."

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Bucky invaded Steve's space a little more and pulled him close. "You feel better? What's going on in your head?" he asked and pet Steve's hair. "I want to know what you're thinking, how you're feeling. I miss you."

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Steve snuggled against Bucky's side and leaned into his hand as he pet his hair. "I've got a lot of stuff going on in my head. I keep looking for signs that Grant is okay and that God is looking over us."

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"He's okay," Bucky assured his husband. "He is with my parents. They are taking care of him and just waiting for all of us to be able to see them again. I know it. You think I don't believe what you do but some of it makes sense. I don't know about whether there is only one God or whatever but I know there is a heaven and there is someone looking out for us and our family."

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Steve gave a little smile and kissed Bucky's jaw. "I know you believe a little bit of the same stuff as I do," he said. "And... I'm getting more used to being home on my own. Sometimes it's even a little peaceful," he admitted.

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Bucky gently pulled Steve down so the two of them were laying next to each other on the bed. "It's good to have some time to yourself. Maybe you can do some drawing and painting and just something for you."

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"I'm still not in much of an art mood," Steve said as he gently scratched his nails over Bucky's back. "But I'm still doing a lot. I'm cleaning and training Diana and that's about it."

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"Training Diana is good. But what are you cleaning?" Bucky asked. "The house is pretty much perfect as it is. The only room that needs work is Lilly's but she's not going to clean her room at all."

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"I'm washing the outside of the house so there's no dirt on it. And I'm trying out a few new disinfectants for the bathroom," Steve said. "And I'm plotting out which plants we can use in the garden."

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Bucky smiled and brought Steve's hand to his chest and held it close. "That sounds good. What sort of plants are we going to get? Flowers or vegetables or something like that?" He knew Steve liked flowers but he thought it would be good to try to grow some herbs or something too.

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"I want flowers for the outside. But I've been taking a few trips to the library to scope out some books on growing vegetables. I'd love to be able to grow a few inside the house in containers or something. Potatoes don't need too much sunlight."

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"Yeah, I agree," Bucky said and smiled at him warmly. "I think vegetables are a great idea and maybe like some rosemary or thyme or something. You love cooking with herbs and spices so that would be a good idea."

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"That would be so amazing. What would be even better is if Raphael didn't dig in the pots all the time. He loves knocking stuff over." Steve was about to gush more about what he'd learned about growing herbs when there was loud commotion from downstairs.

"Bucky!" Becca shouted when the front door slammed open as a man made his way inside.

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Bucky shot out of bed and went tearing down the stairs. "Becca! What's going on!" he shouted as he ran, nearly taking a tumble in his haste.

"There's a man in the house!" she shouted back and was followed by Diana howling wildly and Christopher screaming and crying.

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There was a young man with sunken in eyes and unevenly cut hair looking a little strung out on something coming through the foyer to the living room with his eyes set on Christopher. Steve wished he had his gun. He wished his lungs weren't seizing on him like they were right now. Instead, he grabbed his baseball bat from the closet and held it tight. "What the hell are you doing in our home?"

The boy looked up to Steve and Bucky and pointed at them and said, "You queers took my son!"

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Bucky wasn't having this shit. The second he tried to touch Christopher, Bucky ran and launched himself on top of the intruder and brought him to the ground in a struggle of fists and legs. Lilly was yelling from the sideline and Becca grabbed Christopher and Diana as quickly as she could and held them close.

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The kid fought tooth and nail as Bucky tackled him. He was a damned good fighter and wrestled Bucky to the floor but only got two punches in before Steve swung the bat at his middle to get him off. He backed off of Bucky and fell back on the ground. "You fuckers don't get to keep him!" he snarled from his crumpled heap. "He's mine and Missy's!"
Bucky was coughing on the ground and clutching his chest as he tried to right himself. There was blood in his mouth and on his face and rage in his heart. "The fuck are you talking about?"

"I heard she gave our baby to two fags," the boy spit out and held his stomach as he watched Steve's bat closely.

Steve kept a close eye on the bastard as he hurried to help Bucky onto his feet and a good distance away from the boy. "He was never your baby," Steve hissed, tensing up. "Missy wanted us to have him. She trusted us! When was the last time you even saw her?"

"I got scared when she told me she was pregnant," the boy defended and seemed to calm down ever so slightly, ready to make his case. "But I'm ready now and I don't want my kid being raised by you cocksuckers so I want him back!"

Steve was so hurt and angry. He gripped the bat so tightly his knuckles went white. "Well, congratulations, you got your fucking wish that we can't raise him," he snarled. It was rare that Steve swore like that, especially with the girls and Christopher around, but he was enraged. "Missy died from an overdose and so did our son."

Bucky was crying silently and holding his kids together and trying not to get any blood on Becca who was pressed up right under his chin. The kid looked from Steve to Bucky then to Christopher. "I'm not dumb. I see him right there."

Steve placed himself between the intruder and his family. Christopher was beside himself and Diana was caught between licking Christopher's face and barking at the kid. "You can't tell the difference between an infant and a newborn? Christopher is close to a year old."

"Do I look like I spend a lot of time around children?" the boy asked incredulously but then stopped for a moment to think things through. "If that's not my son... then he really is gone?" His face drooped and he looked down at the floor for a second. "They died?" he asked softly and looked back up at Steve desperately. "What happened? She really overdosed?"

"They're gone. Dead. Never coming back," Steve said sternly, angrily. "You ran away from an amazing baby boy and his mother who needed you."

Bucky clenched his jaw and stared at the kid. He was with Steve. He was angry as hell too. But he also understood how the boy must be feeling. "You..." he started and let go of his family to address
the boy. "How about you take a seat?" He gestured at the chair by the couch and then lightly pushed Becca towards the stairs, whispering for her to take Lilly and Christopher up to her room and wait there.

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Steve got defensive when Bucky offered this asshole of a kid a seat after he came in, beat him up, and tried to take their son away. And that wasn't even touching his raging homophobia. "What the hell are you doing?" Steve hissed. "I don't want him here."

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"Just..." Bucky pleaded with his eyes. "He just learned his ex-girlfriend and her child are dead. He probably blames himself for not being there for her when she needed him, just like I do." He nodded and glanced over at the kid who was still trying to decide whether to sit down or not. "What's your name, Kid?"

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"The ex-girlfriend and child he abandoned," Steve reminded Bucky. "The child he only wanted because two big flaming queers wanted to give him a good home," he added in a hurt tone. He didn't stop Bucky because the kid wasn't worth the argument even though he felt worse and worse the longer this kid was around.

The boy shifted on his feet awkwardly. "Jason," he answered.

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"Sit, Jason," Bucky said firmly in the best fatherly voice he could manage. "Steve, please get me a cold rag. I've got blood all over my face." He winced and sat back on the couch as Jason hesitantly sat in the chair and stared at him.

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Jason sat, too afraid of Steve's bat to do otherwise. Steve went to the kitchen and grabbed a cold rag and a small pouch of ice to help the swelling. "When did she overdose?" Jason asked tentatively.

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"About a month ago," Bucky answered and tried pulling Steve to sit next to him when he came back. "I don't know why. She overdosed and I was called into the hospital. The baby had already been dead for about a week. There was no way to save either of them."

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Steve didn't sit down but he stood next to Bucky, bat still in hand because he didn't trust this kid. Jason looked pretty upset to find out that both of them were dead. It was shocking to him so it hadn't processed fully. "Did she say anything about me?"

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Bucky looked at him and then up at Steve. He sighed and bit his lower lip for a second. "Never," he said softly. "I'm sorry. I asked about who the father was a couple times but Missy always shut the conversation down and I never wanted to pry too much about it."
He wiped at his eyes. "I guess I deserve that. As soon as she told me she was pregnant, I left. I moved to my cousin’s in Jersey so she wouldn't know where I was. Didn't even tell my parents and it worried them sick."

"You were gone this whole time?" Bucky asked and pulled the ice from his face. "How did you even find out about us? Or know where to find us and that we were the ones who were supposed to have the baby?"

"I snuck into her aunt's place while Barbara was at work and went into her room. I found her diary and read that she was giving it to you. I found your number and address as her emergency contact," he explained.

Bucky sighed and shook his head. "Wow, well that's really illegal. Don't do that again. You're going to get yourself arrested." He looked up at Steve who hadn't said a thing. "What, Jason, what did you hope would happen when you came here today?"

"I wanted to get my baby and find Missy and tell her we're going to raise it," Jason said. "I already dropped out of school. I would have gotten a job to buy it diapers and stuff."

"Oh boy," Bucky rubbed his hands over his face. "I'll tell you what you are going to do now. You're going to get back in school, and you're going to stop doing stupid shit and whatever drugs you're on right now or any other given day. And you're going to leave us alone."

Jason didn't look too jazzed to be told to go back to school. But he also wasn't going to try and piss on their doorstep again. He got up and slunk towards the door before asking, "Can you tell me where they're buried?"

Bucky considered for a second. "You can know where Missy is. But the baby was ours. He still is. And, I'm sorry, but you can't know where he is. You need to understand that." He found a piece of paper and wrote down where to find Missy. "You should talk to Missy's aunt about this too."

Steve may have gone nuts if Bucky would have given this kid Grant's location. Jason saw the look on Steve's face and didn't dare push. He took the paper and nodded. "Yeah... thanks..." he murmured and slunk out the door.

Bucky locked the door behind him and pushed on it for good measure. He watched Jason walk
Steve practically erupted. He never yelled at Bucky like this before. "He comes into our house, terrorizes your sisters, tries to steal our son, calls us queers, beats the shit out of you and you invite him to sit down? I don't care if he's young, he abandoned them! He tried to take Christopher! Our boy! And he gave you a bloody mouth and punched you in the face! He screamed disgusting slurs at us and you give him a chair next to you!"

Bucky closed his eyes and let the tears stream down his face. He held himself against the door, arms behind his back and head lowered in submission, and bit his lip to keep it from quivering as Steve yelled. Bucky's whole body shook but he didn't dare open his mouth and inevitably make the whole thing worse.

Steve was panting because he was so worked up and lord knows his lungs wouldn't do much for him nowadays. He felt awful that he made Bucky cry but he was so angry and upset over this kid barging into their home. "What the hell were you thinking?" he shouted.

Bucky shook his head and opened his eyes slowly. He kept himself as far from Steve as he could. He wasn't scared but he was nervous. He didn't want to mess up more and send Steve further into his shell than he already was lately. "He needed help," Bucky whispered.

"No, he doesn't. He's not sorry he left them! He doesn't want to go back to school! He only gave a shit about Grant because he didn't want us to have him. He was only going to go back to Missy because we are together. Not because he loves her! Not every deadbeat kid needs help, Bucky. Some of them will just take and take for as long as they can and they don't care who they hurt," he barked.

"He went to her house before knowing what happened to her or whether she was keeping the baby." Bucky corrected softly. "He cared enough to come back to find out what she was doing then he got mad when he found out the baby wasn't going to stay with her."

"How do you know why he came back? For all you know, he could've been looking to borrow money. Or he needed a place to crash cause his cousin kicked him out. He snuck into her room and read her diary to snoop on her," Steve said in a clipped tone. "He's a fucking homophobe who abandoned his kid before it was born. I swear if he asks her aunt where Grant's grave is and I catch him there I'll beat the ever-loving shit out of him."

Bucky choked on a sob and looked away. He was just trying to help. Jason looked like he was hurting. Even though he came in and fought with them and called them names, Bucky's paternal
instincts kicked in and he just wanted to help him.

---

Steve was absolutely livid in a way that Bucky had never seen before. All the emptiness and depression Steve had felt bubbled up into an ugly wrath. Before he said anything that would make Bucky feel worse about himself or do any significant damage to their relationship, Steve ground out an angry, "Go check on the girls," before storming up to their room and slamming the door shut.

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Bucky slid down the door and sat curled up in a ball and let himself just cry and take in shaky breaths. He knew why Steve was angry but he hoped that someone as giving and gentle as Steve would at least sort of understand. Instead, he just yelled and made Bucky feel like shit.

---

The second the door was slammed, Becca ran after Steve and started screaming at him and banging her hands on the door because he wasn't allowed to talk to her brother like he was. That led into another shouting match that had Christopher crying again despite Lilly attempting to make him feel better.

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Bucky stayed put. It was his turn to shut down and he was going to. Steve had his time and now Bucky was going to hole himself up somewhere and grieve his son and be angry and be alone. After a minute or so of the shouting and crying coming from upstairs, Bucky yanked on his shoes and slipped out the door. He didn't know where he was headed yet but he was going somewhere.

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Steve and Becca went at it pretty bad until he pushed her out of his room and went to grab Christopher and Diana. He locked himself in his and Bucky’s room with his crying son and held him until his screaming died down. The baby was miserable even with the puppy around trying to make things better. Becca made dinner that night because Steve was still angry with her. As time went on, he kept checking the clock, wondering and worrying where Bucky went off to.

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Bucky walked for a while and eventually found himself at one of his old bars. He pulled up a stool and waited for the bartender who used to be a pretty good acquaintance of his. The two of them talked for a while and Bucky fought with himself several times before ordering a drink. The second he finished it, he hated himself and immediately paid and got the fuck out of there before he had any more. He couldn't do that to his family.

---

Steve layed in bed with Christopher until Bucky got home. The baby kept crying whenever he was put alone in the nursery, so Steve kept him company. When he heard the door open, he brought Christopher downstairs with him and he didn't know how, but he got the vibe that Bucky had gone to a bar.

---

Bucky saw Steve and his son and he didn't say a word. He just reached into his pocket, pulled out
his six months sober chip and handed it to Steve before going to slump on the couch and stare at the wall, wanting nothing more than to erase the entire day away.

---

Steve's stomach sank when he was handed the chip. Christopher squirmed and reached for Bucky, asking for his pop pathetically. So Steve carried him to the couch and placed him next to Bucky. Christopher immediately crawled into Bucky's lap. "Are you drunk?" Steve asked.

---

"No." Bucky's voice was thick and heavy and low. He wanted to crawl into a cave and hide away for a while. He couldn't stand the expression of disbelief and frustration on Steve's face. "But I had one drink. One. I regretted it right after I had it and left so I wouldn't order any more. But one drink still counts and tomorrow I'm back to day one."

---

"I thought this was a sobriety chip. Not a 'haven't drank since this date' chip," he said. Steve sat down next to him, still mildly angry and hurt but he calmed down considerably over the hours.

---

Bucky nodded but didn't look at Steve. "Yes, it's also Alcoholic's Anonymous not 'Occasional drink when things go to shit' Anonymous." He sighed and glanced over at his husband as he held his son close. "For some people, the chip is for if they get drunk. For others, like myself, the promise we make to ourselves on our first day is no more alcohol at all, ever. So, no, I'm not drunk, but I did break the promise I made to myself and to all of you."

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Steve put the chip in his pocket with a sigh and he reached out to hold Bucky's hand. "I know you'll be able to go another six months and longer without it, Buck," he said. "I'm sorry I yelled at you. I was really hurt."

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Bucky shook his head and kept his eyes on Christopher who was tugging on his papa's hair and fidgeting. "It's okay," Bucky mumbled. "You had every right in the world to be mad." He didn't honestly believe it. He understood Steve's anger but he didn't think he needed to be so enraged with him. It did really hurt. Bucky wouldn't deny that. He was just hoping to help. For all he knew, that kid might change for the better and he had a part in aiding that.

---

Christopher kissed Bucky’s cheek and then tried to grab for another handful of hair. "Maybe we can do something tonight. To make you feel better..." Steve wasn't in the mood for sex or to get off. But he knew that Bucky was missing that physical connection so maybe Steve could try to give him a blowjob as an apology.

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Bucky shrugged dismissively and held Christopher's hands, addressing him, "You, Little Bean, should be asleep right now. Why don't you let Daddy put you down for bed while Pops makes himself some tea and a snack." Bucky just felt terrible about everything and he didn't want to cause
Steve any more trouble. He also was still pretty shaken up from being yelled at and he didn’t really want to do anything right now except eat and cry.

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Christopher whined when Bucky held his hands. Steve picked their baby up and went to lay him down to sleep. Christopher was extra upset and took longer than usual to fall asleep. Steve came back down a half hour later to see what Bucky was doing.

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Bucky was back on the couch with a mug of chamomile tea and half a sandwich. He was staring out the window at the nighttime street and the people milling about getting home too late. He could feel Steve watching him and he sighed. "I... I just thought I could help him. He seemed like a directionless kid with too much guilt in his heart and too many bad habits. He's just like me at his age."

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"He's not just like you," Steve said. "When you had to take care of two kids, you stayed. You didn’t run away. You messed up along the way, but the important thing is that you were there." He sat down next to Bucky gingerly. "I've seen plenty of kids like him as a cop. They can't get help until they want to help themselves."

---

Bucky looked over at Steve next to him and adjusted so he was cuddled up against his side, finally giving in a little bit. "Well, maybe what I said will help him get ready to help himself. I just thought about what my father would have done in that situation and he would have calmed the kid down and had a firm talk."

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Steve looked away. He felt so bad about yelling at Bucky. And he understood that if Bucky was trying to emulate his father, then he really should have tried to be more helpful during Bucky’s talk with Jason. "Well, maybe you did help him start to help himself. But I don't want to see him ever again." He usually was a forgiving and understanding person. But Jason must've been the exception for some reason.

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"Me either," Bucky agreed. "And we don't have to. I highly doubt he ever wants to see us again. He was clearly not a fan of me and especially not you." He twined his fingers with Steve's and took a shallow breath. "And if you're worried about it, we can call Barbara and make sure she knows not to tell him where Grant is. I don't want him anywhere near our boy or my parents."

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Steve seemed fixated on how much Jason rubbed him the wrong way. "Who the hell does he think he is, anyway? That he, a teenage drug addict, would make a better parent than us? Just cause we are gay?"

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Bucky squeezed Steve tight for a moment and kissed his neck. "I'm sorry, Baby. I promise I was
mad too. I was more scared for our kids than mad, though. I probably shouldn't have tackled him. My jaw hurts and I think my eye is bruising." He looked down at his hands that were cracked on the knuckles from punching. His one hand was still pretty mangled from when he punched a hole in the glass window at the hospital too.

"You do have a swollen lip," Steve pointed out. "Christopher sounded so scared. I haven't heard him cry like that before. He refused to be put in his crib earlier today and napped all evening with me."

Bucky winced and shook his head. "I don't want to hear him make those noises again. It hurt so bad. I didn't know what to do. I was so terrified when Becca yelled for us. I didn't know what was going to happen."

"I'm going to get a gun permit," Steve decided. "He was just a kid. But we're a somewhat openly gay couple with a growing family and I'm not taking any chances." He didn't want to shoot or kill anyone. But Steve was going to protect his family.

Bucky took a deep breath and nodded in resolution. "I figured you would want to do that. I understand. I know it'll help you feel more comfortable. The baseball bat won't necessarily always do the trick." He squeezed Steve's hand and took a drink of his tea. "We should go to sleep."

"I think I'm going to stay up for a bit," Steve said. "But I'll come to bed with you." He got up and headed for their bedroom with Bucky. "Becca and I fought pretty bad today. She's probably going to be pissed at me for a while."

"I heard you two for a bit," Bucky said quietly. "I couldn't listen to it for too long I had to get out of here. How bad did it get?" He knew that Becca could be very sharp and brutal when she was on the attack. Especially if her siblings weren't being treated the way she thought they should be.

"She told me I wasn't allowed to raise my voice at you so I told her she wasn't the boss of me and that she raised her voice at us all the time and she wasn't having it." Steve closed the door to their room lightly and sunk into the bed. "I respect that she was looking out for you, but I was in a mood."

Bucky stripped off his clothes to get in pajamas. "I understand. Just give her a day or so. I'll talk to her about it too. Jesus, it's just one thing after another around here sometimes. I just want a calm couple of weeks. Christmas is really soon and I want it to be normal and calm."

Steve laid his head down on the pillow. "We can't even spend a year without one of us in the
hospital. I'm not holding hope for a normal and calm few weeks," he answered.

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"I am," Bucky said and pulled on a pair of sweatpants to sleep in. "I have to believe that things are going to be better for us soon. I'll go crazy if I can't hold on to that hope." He considered putting on a shirt but then decided against it as he laid down in bed and wormed underneath the covers.

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Steve stroked his fingers through Bucky's hair and kissed his forehead. "Well, then, I guess I'll have to hold on to hope if you're going to," he sighed. "Get some rest, Buck. Tomorrow will be a new day. Hopefully, a better day."

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Bucky nodded and leaned in to give Steve a kiss and then rest his head against his chest. "I love you, Steve. I'm sorry about today," he said in a low gravelly whisper. He sighed and shut his eyes to go to sleep. He hoped tomorrow would be better.
Chapter Summary

Thanksgiving with Sam. Bucky isn't a fan.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

For Thanksgiving dinner, Steve had convinced Sam to spend the evening with them. This was after Sam was at first worried that he was encroaching on family time but Steve repeatedly told him he was welcome with them anytime. Steve had also gotten an adorable turkey outfit for Christopher that the baby kept trying to pull the tail off of. The real turkey was roasting when Sam came over and knocked on the door.

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Bucky was trying his damnedest to get his sisters and Christopher ready for their guest to come over. He had met Sam previously at Grant’s funeral but he hadn’t spoken more than a handful of words to him. He considered this to be their first real introduction and he wanted it to go well since he knew how important of a friend and partner Sam was to Steve on the force.

When Steve went to get the door to bring Sam inside, Christopher reached for the pile of mashed potatoes and then deposited some directly on Bucky's shirt. Bucky griped and complained as he quickly slipped the shirt off and told Lilly to grab him another. The first impression Sam would get of him was Bucky standing shirtless over his son who had potatoes on his face and seemed to refuse to let his papa clean him up.

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Sam walked into the kitchen and let out a bark of laughter when he saw Christopher making a mess and Bucky doing his best to keep everything under control. "Potato lover, huh? I see your kid takes after his Irish side."

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Bucky sighed and looked up at Steve for help. "Hi, sorry, you're Sam. We met vaguely at the memorial service. This isn't really the way I hoped to introduce myself and our son.” Christopher gurgled in laughter happily and Lilly trotted back into the kitchen with a new shirt for Bucky.

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"It's fine. Now I can see why Steve likes you so much," Sam joked lightly, gesturing at Bucky’s shirtlessness and smirking at Steve.

Steve patted Sam on the back and introduced everyone properly for the first time. "That's Lilly-Bucky's younger sister. Becca is setting the table. Baby Christopher is a mess, and Bucky there? He's my mess," he said in a loving tone.
Bucky quickly buttoned up the new shirt and gently shook his head at Steve. "I wasn't a mess today until your child decided he was going to have mashed potatoes before dinner."

Christopher looked up at Bucky and said, "Papa?" and then pointed to Sam in confusion.

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"What's the matter, Kid, never saw a black guy before?" Sam teased.

Steve ruffled up Christopher's hair and cooed, "That's Sam, Sweetheart. Can you say ‘Sam’? Saaaaaaam," he tried to get Christopher to mimic him.

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Bucky extended his hand to Sam to shake. Sam smiled back and then gestured at Bucky's shirt. "You buttoned it wrong," he said.

Bucky looked down and, sure enough, he skipped a button so they were all pulled up one after the other. "Dammit, Steve, I'll be back." He was just going to put on a goddamn sweater.

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Sam and Steve chatted while Bucky changed. It was obvious that the two had a great chemistry together and they had been perfect partners when they were on patrol together. It made Steve miss it so much more again. When Bucky came back, the two of them were snickering over some inside joke from a stakeout with Natasha. "So what's on the dinner menu?" Sam asked.

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Bucky adjusted Christopher's Thanksgiving outfit and sat down next to him. Becca and Lilly were waiting patiently for dinner to start and Bucky could tell Lilly was just dying for the turkey to get out of the oven. "Steve made turkey and other typical Thanksgiving food."

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Steve took the turkey out and smiled when he saw Lilly's eyes get as wide as dinner plates. He carved it and had them all say grace before they were allowed to dig in. Sam kept sneaking scraps to Diana under the table whenever Steve wasn't looking and she happily nudged his legs and snuffled his knees for attention.

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Bucky wanted Steve to enjoy his time with Sam as much as he could. He also wanted him to eat. So Bucky tasked himself with feeding Christopher before he got anything for himself. His son could normally feed himself now but the potatoes had already posed an issue so Bucky was going to feed those to him instead.

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"So how's working at the record store?" Sam asked. "Steve tells me it's mostly just you, Natasha's boyfriend, and some stoners," he said. "I miss getting high every once in a while. Used to love toking it up on the weekends," he sighed.

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Bucky chuckled and glanced at Steve. "Yeah, it's pretty good usually. Clint and I basically run
everything and our buddy Tim fills in where he can and does everything else. The other kids just handle the cash and angry customers because they are good with high-tempered people."

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"See, Steve? We should have a department of officers who get high and settle all the petty shit we deal with when we should be working on cases that matter. Oh crap, I forgot you don't like cursing in front of the kids," Sam said when he saw Steve's little look that he tried to hide.

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Bucky looked from Steve to Sam. Bucky cursed in front of the kids constantly. And Steve didn't like it when he mentioned drug use at all but he didn't seem to mind that Sam was discussing it in jest. "Right..." Bucky said awkwardly and finally started eating his own food. "Are you seeing anyone, Sam?"

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"Not at the moment. I'm still kind of new to the area and ever since this guy had to get booted from the force," Sam pointed a thumb at Steve, "I've been working extra. They don't make cops like they used to," he said with a sad sigh.

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"Well, what are you into?" Bucky asked. "We've got a couple nice stoners of several varieties you can choose from at the record shop. And I also know a lot of regular customers who are single and looking. Might be able to work something out when you aren't too busy."

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"Well, I don't think I would want to date a stoner," Sam said. "I'm looking for a real woman, you know? Someone who's a responsible adult who can call me on my crap and who loves to cook. Man, I miss my mom's cooking. That was the hardest thing about moving out of her house," Sam sighed.

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Bucky looked over at Steve and took his hand. He probably felt the same way about leaving his mom's house too. "The only real sort of woman I know is Natasha and Clint is never giving her up," Bucky noticed Steve hadn't really eaten too much. It looked like he had taken a few bites of potatoes and maybe one piece of turkey. Bucky didn't want to vocalize his concern at the table so he just softly nudged Steve and shot a discreet glance at his plate.

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Steve looked down at his plate and slowly picked at his food. He hadn't quite gone back to his normal appetite even after all these weeks. "That's okay. I'll wait forever for her," Sam said with a playful smirk.

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"Don't say that around Clint. Those are fighting words," Bucky warned lightly and saw out of the corner of his eye as a tiny potato covered hand reached up and smacked him in the beard. "Oh, Jesus," Bucky murmured and looked over at his wildly giggling son.
Sam saw the hand going over towards Bucky and wondered if Bucky would notice it before it made contact. And then couldn't help but laugh again when he saw Steve's husband get smacked with more potatoes. "Oh, Buck," Steve sighed sympathetically as he leaned over to clean up his face. "Christopher, you're being fresh."

Bucky took the napkin from Steve and cleaned himself off. "Christopher, please behave," he asked his son softly and wiped his hands of potatoes. Bucky sort of felt like his son had decided that he was going to spend as much of his strength as he could to humiliate his pop while they had a guest over.

Christopher kept smiling and cooing at Bucky to get out of trouble but Steve shook his head in disapproval. "You want me to feed him for you, Buck? We should get his plate cleared as soon as possible. For your sake."

"I've got it," Bucky sighed and held Christopher's hands together as he worked on feeding him the last bits of his potatoes so he wouldn't have any left to toss. "I promise he's not usually like this," Bucky said to Sam. "He's just acting out to impress you. He demands a lot of attention."

"Well, he's impressed me," Sam said. "He's a stubborn, little thing. I can already see him eyeing your sister's food for ammunition now that his is all gone."

Bucky pushed Lilly's plate over a bit so Christopher wouldn't be able to get at it. "Steve and I think he's going to be a pitcher one day. He will end up in the major leagues before we know it. I don't know if either of his biological parents were athletic but I wouldn't be surprised."

"Well, they had to have been athletic. They literally ran from the law," Sam said. "Man, his dad was something. He broke the nose and arm of the officer that caught him."

Bucky shrugged and offered Christopher some green beans. "When I was younger and dumber, I was really good at running when the police showed up. Something about the threat of being caught that causes a person to become an Olympic long-distance sprinter."

"Thank god he didn't run when this officer showed up. I'm glad he didn't play hard to get," Steve said, kissing Bucky's cheek. Becca gave a look like she was personally offended at how bad that joke was.

"If anyone played hard to get, it was you," Bucky defended lightly and took Steve's hand. "I didn't
think you were ever going to admit you really wanted me." He chuckled and then remembered they had company. He cleared his throat. "Sam, besides being an officer, what do you like to do?"

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"I was shy and repressed," Steve defended lightly.

Sam looked up from his food and said, "I like going to baseball games and playing sports. I'm a big Red Sox fan."

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"Red Sox?" Lilly spit out incredulously. "Where are you from? Because if you aren't actually from Boston then it makes no sense for you not to be a Yankees man."

Bucky blushed on behalf of his ill-mannered sister. "Lilly, don't be rude. Sam can like whatever team he wants to."

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"I'm from D.C. and I'm a Boston fan," Sam said, smirking because it was funny how worked up Lilly got over her team. "It's okay. I've dealt with a lot ruder," Sam said with a little dismissive wave of his hand.

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"Still," Bucky said quietly and eyed his sister so she would know to behave, please. He looked down at Christopher who had finally given up trying to make a mess and was instead yawning and tugging at his Thanksgiving outfit angrily. "Steve, I might need to put him down for a nap or an early bedtime."

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Steve pouted. "Christopher, don't tug. It's a cute outfit," he said to his son as he scooped him up. Steve kissed his face a few times and held him to his chest. "I won't be long. I'll get him ready for bed and hope he sleeps through the night."

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"Oh, you're taking him?" Bucky asked a little nervously. He didn't know if he wanted to be in charge of entertaining Sam while Steve was getting their son to sleep. But he figured he wouldn't argue if Steve wanted to tuck Christopher in.

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"Yeah, you got to put him to bed last night. Don't worry, Sam doesn't bite," Steve said. He winked and carried their son over to his room, singing pleasantly to him.

Sam watched Steve head out and he gave Bucky an amused smile. "You guys got a cute kid."

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"Thank you," Bucky said. "I love our son. I'm very grateful to have him. And thank you for coming to Grant's funeral as well. I know Steve was distant that day but I know he appreciated it and he does miss working with you."
“I know Steve was hurting that day, I didn't take offense. And we definitely miss him too.” Sam paused when he saw some sauce on the tips of Bucky's hair and a little piece of potato. "Oh, wow, Steve wasn't exaggerating," he said blankly. "Uh, you got a bit of food in your hair."

"Hmm?" Bucky asked and reached up to touch his hair. "Oh, uh, was Steve telling you about Christopher pulling on my hair or something?" Becca handed him a clean napkin and he worked on getting all the stuff out of his hair.

"Nah, he said you got food in your hair all the time when you ate," Sam said casually. "I thought he was always exaggerating when he talked about it." Becca gave Sam a little cursory look to try and get him to shut up.

"What?" Bucky scrunched up his eyebrows and cocked his head to the side. "That's weird. I don't do that. My son puts food in my hair sometimes." Bucky tried defending himself but Lilly got his attention and discreetly indicated that he also had food on the side of his beard still.

"I think you've got a bad case of denial, Bud," Sam said. "Your son threw potatoes at you, but I don't think he had his hands on the stuffing that made its way to your beard. That's why I'm clean-shaven. I don't have to deal with the surprise food."

Bucky scoffed quietly and wiped at his beard. "Uh-huh..." he said in a noncommittal tone. "Anyways..." He was annoyed. It wasn't his fault that his son made a mess of him. And it wasn't his fault that he got stuff in his beard. He didn't think Steve cared that he was just the slightest bit messy sometimes. Hell, Bucky and Steve both called him a dirty hippie all the time. Now Sam comes in and says Steve's been complaining about him?

"What? You think I'm a jerk now because I pointed out the food in your hair?" Sam challenged, seeing how Bucky immediately shut him down. "Come on, I didn't mean to make you embarrassed or anything."

"No... no, it's just that Steve's never mentioned it before. It's just a little weird," Bucky said and sighed. He hoped this wasn't like a pet peeve of Steve's that he just had been keeping to himself. But Bucky also didn't appreciate Steve discussing him with other people - especially about something they haven't even discussed themselves.

"What? I thought he talked to you about everything," Sam said.
Steve came in right then and stood awkwardly for a moment before sitting down, noticing that Becca and Lilly both looked to him with weird expressions. "What'd I miss?" Steve asked.

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Bucky cleared his throat and readjusted in his seat. He absently pulled his hair up on his head and tied it back. "Uh, nothing." he said and forced a smile over at Steve. "Did Christopher go to sleep easy enough?"

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Sam crossed his arms since his food was finished anyway and he wasn't going to accidentally incriminate Steve some more. Steve nodded and said quietly, "Yeah, he did. I think he was really happy to get out of that turkey outfit."

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"It took you about ten minutes to get him into the damn thing to begin with," Bucky sighed. "Poor Little Bean just wanted pajamas." He smiled over at Steve so he would know he wasn't trying to poke fun.

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"But he made such an adorable turkey, Bucky. Just wait until you see what I've made for him for Christmas," Steve said. "I've got a Santa suit for him and reindeer antlers for Diana."

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Bucky shook his head. "My god, Steve. Keep it up. I want to be the favorite parent anyway." He chuckled and glanced over at his sisters who had been having a silent conversation together with their eyes since he and Sam had their misunderstanding.

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"Hey, quit that. He's going to love having all the adorable pictures when he's older." Steve didn't understand how embarrassing it would be for a teenager to see those pictures. "So, who wants dessert?"

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"What did you make?" Bucky asked and got up to help Steve clear away everyone's dinner plates so he could put the dessert plates out on the table. Becca couldn't help but fix the things Bucky placed haphazardly.

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"I made apple pie, rice pudding, and some tiramisu," Steve said. "There's plenty to go around- but we got to save some for my mom, I'm bringing some by tomorrow for her."

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Bucky finished handing everyone new plates and forks and waited for Steve to set the dishes down. He waited until everyone else had served themselves before he got himself some dessert. But now he was self-conscious and was trying to eat his food as carefully as he could so as not to make a mess.

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Sam couldn't help but be a little amused as Bucky cautiously ate his food. When a little piece of piecrust fell in his beard, Sam covered his mouth but said nothing. "How is it?" Steve asked. "I added extra sugar."

"It's really good, Baby," Bucky promised and nodded his head. Lilly agreed wholeheartedly and Becca tried to get Bucky's attention so he would know that he had pie on his face. He could pull back his hair, but his beard was not safe.

"Something wrong?" Steve asked when he saw Becca making an odd motion.

She paused and then shook her head. "No," she answered. Sam was practically beside himself trying not to laugh at the scene unfolding in front of him.

Bucky got the hint and wiped off his beard again. That was it. He was shaving tonight. He was going back to baby-faced Bucky for a while. He sighed and put his hands in his lap. Bucky was just going to keep still and fairly quiet until Sam left so he would save himself any more frustration or embarrassment.

When dessert was done with, Steve pressed a little kiss to Bucky's cheek and cleaned up. He bustled about the kitchen, clearly happy to get to be so domestic. After Sam left, Steve went to Bucky's side and nudged him. "Isn't Sam great?" he asked.

"Uh-huh," Bucky said gently but not very meaningfully and pulled away to help Steve finish up the cleaning so they could get to relaxing sooner. Bucky wanted to shower and shave his goddamn beard. He even considered for a second cutting his hair but he could never do that.

Steve frowned, sensing that something was off by the way that Bucky was acting. So he walked up to him and hugged him from behind. "Hey, Love," he said softly. "Something wrong?"

"Nah, man," Bucky said in his hippie speak that he only used when something was actually wrong and he was doing a bad job hiding it. "I'm just pretty tired out. I need to take a shower."

"I know something's bothering you," Steve pointed out but he wasn't going to nag Bucky over it. Hopefully, he would come out with whatever it was and let him know.

"Right now, what's bothering me is how gross I feel. I was chasing Christopher around all day while you cooked and I've been a little sweaty," Bucky said and turned around to give Steve a hug and a kiss. "You need any more help? I'm going to shower if you don't."
"Alright," Steve gave in. "You can go shower, I'll come up once I'm all set." Steve cleaned up the kitchen and put all of the leftovers in containers, shuffling the girls off to bed before retiring to his room again.

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Bucky showered himself off and shaved his beard so he was all skin on his face. He sighed and looked at himself in the mirror. He didn't look bad, just different. Maybe even a bit younger and cuter and less like the dirty hippie he was. He decided to give his hair just a short trim and he was about to make the first cut, a little shorter than usual, as Steve walked into the master bathroom.

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Steve went to the bathroom to brush his teeth and looked a bit surprised when he saw Bucky with a bare face. "Hey, I liked that beard," he said softly. "And that's a bit short, don't you think? I thought you liked your hair long, Baby."

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Bucky sighed and held out the scissors to Steve. "You do it," he said grumpily and sat on the closed toilet lid so Steve could cut his hair. He knew Steve liked his beard and his hair but he also didn't like his mess, apparently. Steve couldn't have it both ways and Bucky already shaved.

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"Baby..." Steve said as he set the scissors aside. "Love, what's the matter?" Steve asked. "I know you don't want your hair cut that short. I've never seen it that short before."

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Bucky looked up at Steve and clenched his jaw as he thought. Bucky was still wrapped in a towel from his shower and he adjusted it a bit just for something to do. "Just thought you might like it better if it wasn't so in the way."

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"What? Bucky, that's crazy talk. I love your hair. And your beard. What would make you think that it was in the way?" Steve asked as he crossed his arms at him.

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Bucky shook his head like Steve should know. "Because... I'm messy, I guess." He shrugged. "And I get stuff in my hair and my beard like food and stuff. I just thought you'd want me to clean up a little bit."

---

"I don't want you to cut your hair off because you're messy, Bucky," Steve said. He hadn't figured out that Sam had said something. "You have beautiful hair." Steve pet his fingers through it for emphasis.

---

Bucky watched Steve touch his hair gently and he leaned into the feeling. "But I know you hate
when I get food in my hair. Sam said so." Bucky sort of felt like he was tattling on Sam. But Sam was sort of tattling on Steve, too, so he thought it was probably acceptable.

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Steve blushed deeply when Bucky brought up that Sam said something. "I don't hate it," he said, but Steve was a terrible liar. "Look, alright. It bothers me, but not so much that I want you to cut your hair because of it."

---

"Why didn't you say something?" Bucky asked firmly and took Steve's hand. "You could have pointed it out forever ago and I could have been more careful about not making a mess of myself. You know I eat like a wolf, you said so on our first date."

---

"I didn't want you to feel bad," Steve said. "You acted so weird after I came back from tucking in our son, which, I guess, was because Sam told you that you were a messy eater. I never wanted to say anything but I didn't want to hurt your feelings."

---

Bucky gently pushed him out of the way so he could get up to get dressed. "Well, Sam was pretty entertained by the way I eat. Made him chuckle a few times, if you didn't notice." Bucky didn't like being the object of humor. He liked making his family laugh, but being laughed at was different. He hung his towel up to dry and strode naked across the room to get some pajamas on.

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"Baby, Sam is a good guy. I'm sure he wasn't trying to be mean." Steve followed Bucky out and took his hand again. "Love, please. I'm sorry if I upset you by not telling you. I was just trying to avoid making you self-conscious."

---

"It's fine," Bucky mumbled and scratched at his crotch absently and then wondered if that was another thing he did that Steve didn't like. He wasn't like Steve. Steve was proper and put together and always looked nice and presentable. Bucky was the guy that parents warned their kids not to date – the crass inconsiderate slub with rocker hair and a strong disdain for authority. "Just tell me things that bother you. Tell me, not your friends. I don't like the thought of people watching how I do things and thinking, 'That bugs Steve. Bucky really does do it a lot. I wonder what Steve is thinking. Wow, that is annoying.'"

---

Steve sat on the edge of the bed and looked up at Bucky with a concerned pout. After a moment of consideration, he sighed and let his shoulders drop. "Alright... I'm sorry for not telling you, Buck."

---

Bucky stuffed his hands in his pajama pockets and laid down. "Anything else I do that you don't like?" he asked flatly and pulled the blankets up to his shoulder. "Also, I am sorry for shaving my beard without letting you know. I know you liked it a lot. It'll grow back, though."
Steve snuggled up to Bucky's side closely - much like how Diana would tuck her tail in and snuggle up to them if she was caught doing something wrong. "I can't think of anything else," he admitted. "Do I have any habits that bother you?"

"No, you're perfect," Bucky said genuinely but also sort of grumpily like he was mad he couldn't think of a pet peeve he had for Steve. "Anyway, I think we should try to sleep, okay? I am tired and my face is cold so I'm going to tuck in under this blanket."

Steve blushed at his answer and wrapped his arms securely around Bucky's waist. "Alright. Sleep well, Baby," Steve murmured softly. "I love you so much, alright?"

Bucky fell asleep wrapped up in his husband. Although, halfway into the night he woke up with a hard on that was demanding his attention. He may or may not have had very sexy dreams about Steve and since it had been about two and a half months since they did anything physical at all, he was feeling the need. But he also knew Steve didn't like it when he got off without him so it's not like he could jerk off while Steve slept. Bucky groaned and sat up in bed, ripping his shirt off. He was a little sweaty already. He needed to distract himself so he rolled off the bed and on to the floor and started doing push-ups.

After a few minutes, Steve made a small sound when his personal body heater suddenly wasn't there. He woke himself up from his slumber and tiredly rubbed at his eyes. When he saw Bucky doing push-ups on the floor, he blinked and asked, "What're you exercising for?"

Bucky huffed out breaths through each push-up and glanced over at Steve. "Distraction," he choked out and kept going. He wasn't the best at push-ups but he was already almost to a hundred and he was pretty damn proud of that.

Steve pulled the blankets closer around himself. "Distraction from what?" he asked in an incredibly tired voice. "Come back to bed, Love. It's cold."

"Distraction from this," Bucky said and tilted so he could point at his obvious erection comically tenting his pajama pants. Then he returned to the push-ups. "Got to just sweat it out for a bit."

"Oh," Steve said, sounding a bit surprised. After a long pause, he sighed and said in a whisper, "Just get off if you need to." Which was an uncharacteristic of Steve to be so casual about that and to allow Bucky to take care of himself.
Bucky glared at Steve in the dimly lit room and paused his push-ups. "You hate that, though," he said and stood back up, pressing his hands down on his cock so it wasn't distracting as they talked. "It's just been so long and I'm not good at going this long without sex. We've done this too many times before. With us in hospitals or injured or whatever."

---

Steve rubbed at his eyes again and turned onto his side. "I'm just going to have to live with it," he murmured. "I haven't been in the mood. So it isn't your fault that I'm not doing anything for you. So, I may as well let you take care of yourself."

---

Bucky wasn't so sure. Steve didn't sound like he actually wanted him to touch himself. It sounded more like he was exasperated with Bucky for being so horny sometimes. But, he didn't know if Steve was ever going to let him do this himself again or not and he wasn't sure when they were going to be intimate together again either. So he nodded, went to rummage in his nightstand for his pictures of Steve in compromising positions and then headed to the bathroom.

---

Steve felt sorry and useless for not being able to give Bucky what he wanted. He wished he could've faked being in the mood enough to be intimate. But that wouldn't have been fair to Bucky or himself. Ever since the fire, Steve didn't really feel so attractive anymore and losing his son ruined his mood entirely. By the time Bucky finished in the bathroom, Steve was asleep again.

---

Bucky tiptoed out of the bathroom and laid back down in bed. He didn't feel much better. He may have solved one problem but he didn't solve the bigger underlying issues they had. But he couldn't fix everything in one night. So he rolled to face Steve and pulled him in close to him. "I love you. I really do," he whispered as softly and warmly as he could and hoped it got into Steve's dreams. Steve automatically moved closer to Bucky in his sleep and made a tired noise in response.

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When morning came, Steve was still snuggled up to Bucky. He was practically glued to his side. He blinked slowly awake and just stared at Bucky for a long moment. Smiling softly at his husband, Steve reached up and gently started to play with his hair.

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Bucky felt something tangled in his hair and his mostly still asleep brain worried that Raphael or Diana had decided to mess with it. He woke up and found himself looking into Steve's eyes. "Hey, Baby," he said quietly and gave Steve a little squeeze.

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Steve leaned forward and kissed Bucky's cheek. He took a deep breath and just decided to say what was on his mind. "I'm sorry that I can't be more for you, Buck. I know that we haven't been intimate for a long time... and I don't blame you if you're feeling frustrated."
Bucky sighed and shook his head. "I just... it's fine. I promise. And I've been good and haven't done anything even when I've really, really wanted to. But last night I just couldn't ignore it anymore. But it wasn't the same by myself. It's not that I just want to get fucked and get off. I want to be with you and melt into each other and find our release together as husbands."

---

"I know," Steve said. "I also know that I can't do that right now. I haven't felt aroused or felt much of anything for a while," Steve said. "I mean, I get out of breath if I go too quickly up the stairs. I don't want to have a coughing fit and need to take a break in the middle of sex."

---

Bucky sighed and tucked his head underneath Steve's chin so he could kiss his neck and hide away. "I'm sorry," he said softly. "I know you've been hurting and you've been frustrated and I probably haven't helped you at all. I've been too consumed in myself again."

---

"You haven't been consumed in yourself, Buck. You can't help how you feel just like how I can't help how I feel." Steve kissed the top of his head and hugged him. "I love you, Sweetheart."

---

"I love you, too," Bucky said and then pulled back to see Steve's face. "We're going to be all right... right?" he asked. "I mean, maybe not soon but eventually everything's got to be okay again, right?"

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"I believe we will be okay," Steve said. "Time heals." He drew Bucky in for a slow, loving kiss before pulling back. "Do you want breakfast before you go to work, Love?"

---

Bucky shifted on the bed to lay back and stare at the ceiling. "I don't want to go to work. I want to stay here with you," he complained but eventually got up to get dressed. "But, yes, it'll be busy today and Tim is already stressing out about it."

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"Everyone starting their Christmas shopping, huh?" Steve murmured as he got up and got dressed. "How's he doing, by the way? Has he worked things out with that guy he likes?"

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"No," Bucky sighed in annoyance. "He keeps talking about him but isn't doing anything about it. I know he's been better about his drug use but he still will probably be deported." Bucky was just getting tired of hearing about it all the time. Clint just casually turned off his hearing aid whenever he was done listening. Bucky couldn't do that.

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Steve gave Bucky a sympathetic look and kissed him before heading out of their room. "Maybe he can find a lesbian he can fake marry to get citizenship and then he could stay here."

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"That's illegal, Steve." Bucky chuckled and went to the nursery to collect his son. Christopher was standing up in his crib and holding on to the railing with one hand and Bourbon the dog with the other hand. "Hello, sweet Little Bean. You slept very well through the night, didn't you?"

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Christopher bounced on his feet excitedly when Bucky came over. "Papa! Hi!" he said happily. He reached up to be picked up and the second he was out of his crib, he squirmed to be put down to play.

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Bucky kissed him a few times as they made their way downstairs before setting him down so he could run to the living room to play. "Okay, after breakfast, I'll need to leave. Please give your mom a hug for me when you see her today. Are you still planning on going to the cemetery? How's your tattoo feeling? It's been a few weeks. It should be healed."

---

Christopher went right to his blocks and babbled excitedly as he played. Diana sat next to Steve, patiently waiting for scraps as he cooked. "I think it's just about healed," Steve said. "It doesn't itch anymore and it stopped flaking." He brought their plates to the table and sat down.

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Bucky glanced over at Christopher to make sure he was just going to stay put and play while he had breakfast. "I'm surprised he hasn't wanted food yet," Bucky mused and then sat down at the table. "You still happy that you decided to get it?"

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"He'll make himself pretty darn hungry. I imagine he's got about five minutes before he comes in here whining for food," Steve said pleasantly. "Yes, I'm really happy I got the tattoo. I never would have thought I would want one."

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"Good, I'm glad you like it." Bucky smiled and reached across the table for Steve's hand. "I think it's really wonderful. Now we both have reminders of him with us all the time."

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Steve nodded. As if on cue, Christopher came tottering in, whining for food. Steve laughed and gave Bucky's hand a squeeze before pulling Christopher up into his high chair. "Are you hungry, Bean?"

---

Christopher signed for food and whined a little bit. He was getting bigger and smarter every day. He had a nice crop of hair on his head and he was starting to show specific mannerisms and tendencies. He was becoming a real little person and Bucky couldn't help but smile at his and Steve's little boy.

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"Alright, you want some pancakes?" Steve got him some pancakes and cut them up into itty, bitty pieces for him. He set them on his plate and smiled as he ate. "He's so perfect," Steve sighed. "You
know he tries to copy Diana sometimes by barking at her."

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Bucky whined and looked up at Steve, "No! Really? I haven't seen that. I want to see that." He hated that sometimes he wasn't around for adorable or important moments in his son's life. "Please try to record that."

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"Record him with the video camera we don't have?" Steve joked. He wanted to save up for a good one. Steve pulled Diana - who was getting really big - into his lap. "Diana, speak." It took a few times of Diana barking for Christopher to look up from his food and give a few quiet 'woof's back at her.

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Bucky nearly choked on his food. "Oh my god!" he gasped and grinned at his son. "That was too fucking cute. Do it again." He tried woofing back to Christopher in hopes that he would do it again but he just giggled at his pops and mashed a piece of pancake into his face.

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Steve smiled dumbly because their son was perfect and it was funny watching his husband bark at him. "He's so cute. Sometimes he and Diana will go back and forth for a few minutes. She loves playing with him." He kissed the top of Diana's head and set her back down.

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Bucky got up from the table and kissed his son on his cheeks and gave him a tiny hug. Then he went to Steve and sat in his lap so he could give him several long kisses interrupted so Steve could breathe. "I have to leave. I don't want to but I have to," he said and sighed.

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Steve kissed Bucky back gently and stroked his fingers through his hair. "We'll be here for you when you come back. I'll be sure to take plenty of pictures for you, Baby." He sighed and walked Bucky to the door. "I love you. I hope today is a good day. Please don’t forget that I love you."

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Bucky nodded and gave Steve a kiss and a hug before heading out the door to go to work. He knew that eventually things would have to be okay with them again. But it was just so difficult to know when that would be. And Bucky was getting more and more dejected every day with worry that he and Steve may never go back to how they were.

Chapter End Notes

Also, Bucky's grumps with Sam will eventually ease. We wanted to portray an exaggerated version of how they are in the movies, more directly annoyed and more like Bucky has an unfounded dislike that he's sort of conjured up out of nothing for a bit.
A few weeks went by and Bucky was feeling pretty good in some areas and downright awful in others. This was now his fifth Christmas without his parents and his first without Grant. But it was also his first back in their old house and Christopher's first Christmas. Steve and Bucky took the day to just go spend as much time as they needed getting presents for their kids and whatever else they could want. Steve was in charge of picking out the right things and Bucky was in charge of making sure their son didn't try to run too far away in the store.

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Steve didn't realize how hellish shopping for toys with a baby would be until he took Christopher out to get presents for Christmas. He giggled with glee as he made his pop chase him around the store. "I tried to tire him out before this, I swear," Steve said.

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"It's fine," Bucky sighed as he brought Christopher back over to Steve and held him close. "He's just so excited by all the colors and things." Bucky held Christopher with one arm and moved him so he was zipped up inside his jacket with just his head sticking out. If anyone saw Bucky from the side and didn't see Christopher's little face pouting out of his chest, people might think Bucky was very peculiarly shaped.

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Christopher huffed. "Papa. Papa." He tried to get his attention and he couldn't even point or sign to him because his arms were squished inside the jacket.

"Do you think we should get Lilly another baseball card binder?" Steve asked.

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Bucky just kept holding Christopher in the jacket and occasionally looking down at him and kissing his head so he would know he wasn't ignoring him but still sort of ignoring him anyway. "Well, you usually help her sort through it when she decides to rearrange it. Is she out of room in the one she has?"

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"She's got plenty of room, but this one is nicer. Maybe I should just get her replacement pages if she's attached to her old one, but needs to put her cards in pages that aren't ripped." He found a baseball mitt and asked, "Think she would ever want to have a catch?"

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Bucky chuckled and said, "Yeah, go ahead and get her some baseball equipment. She's been antsy
since soccer ended so maybe this will satiate her for a while." While Bucky talked, Christopher managed to wiggle one of his arms up so he was able to shove his hand against the underside of Bucky's chin where his beard was slowly growing back.

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Steve tried out a few different mitts before settling on one. He tossed it in the cart and smiled as Christopher tried to show Bucky a teddy bear. "Papa," he huffed. "Burr," he said as he tried to say 'bear'.

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"I see it, Bean," Bucky said and tried tucking his arm back into the jacket. "But you have Bourbon back at home." An elderly woman, who had clearly been listening in the whole time, looked up then in alarm thinking for a moment that Bucky let his child have alcohol. She must have decided against her initial speculation because she shook it off and returned to her business.

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"Papa," Christopher continued to whine.

Steve snuck in a few toys into the cart for Christopher, including the bear when Christopher wasn't looking. "Do you have Becca’s Christmas list with you? We can hit the bookstore on the way back."

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"Back pocket," Bucky said and twisted so Steve could see the neat blue envelope that Becca had sealed her book list in. She was very particular this year about what she wanted. Although, she was particular most years.

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Steve took out the envelope and sneaky squeezed Bucky's ass while he did it. "She even wrote the product numbers on it. I don’t know whether to be impressed or offended that she thought we might get the wrong *History of Iroquois Women Part 5* by Lois Lowell," Steve laughed.

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Bucky scrunched up his face and stared at the list. "Wow, I didn't even know Becca had parts one through four. That's like a textbook, isn’t it? Is she just reading textbooks for fun now?" he asked with just the slightest edge of concern in his voice. She didn't ever go out with friends and she hardly spoke to her study group anymore. Sometimes Bucky worried about her.

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"Yeah, she's been saving up money to buy these expensive books. I've been paying her to babysit when I want to nap or to go out grocery shopping whenever I'm not feeling well," he explained. "She bought most of the earlier volumes." He shrugged. "Alright, I guess it's time to check out."

---

Bucky kept Christopher zipped up in his jacket when they went back out to the street. It was cold and the toddler was not a fan of the harsh wind. "Steve, you might think I'm overreacting or something but I'm pretty concerned that Becca doesn't have any friends."
Christopher snuggled close to Bucky once they were outside, finally content to be in his jacket. "I don't think you're overreacting," Steve agreed. "But she won't listen if I try to talk to her about it. But she doesn't seem sad right now."

Bucky watched the streams of other cold New Yorkers walking past them and wondered what troubles they all had. "I just know she hasn't gone out with friends since the incident at the party with Nicole. She doesn't talk to anyone much and she hasn't mentioned going to her study group for about three months."

"Maybe you should try talking to her. Or we can try and find some clubs for people that like the same things she does so she could make friends there," Steve suggested.

"Yeah, I probably should talk to her," Bucky decided and held open the door to the bookstore for Steve. "I just don't want to point it out and make her upset or something. You know? She's always had a hard time with friends."

"Do you think that she stopped talking to her friends because of the party?" Steve asked. They were stopped by a few women on their way into the store who told Bucky how adorable his son was. Steve preened proudly as well but didn't say anything so they wouldn't get bothered for being a gay couple with a son.

Bucky awkwardly thanked the women that blocked his way and even let one touch Christopher's head to say 'hello' but then he quickly moved them along because he didn't want a stranger touching his son too much. "I wouldn't be surprised. I know she got in a huge fight with Nicole about abandoning her during the party."

They went into the bookstore and Christopher poked his head out a bit more once they were in the warmth. "She still has had enough time to make new friends. Either she doesn't want to or she's having a hard time doing it."

"I'll talk to her," Bucky said with strong resolve. "If I can help, I want to try. I don't want her being lonely all the time. Constantly reading or doing puzzles with me and Lilly probably isn't too good for her. She needs social interaction."

"I agree," Steve said. "I was kind of hoping that she would make more friends." He pulled a few of the books and tucked them under his arm. "She still hasn't totally forgiven me for yelling at you. I don't want to sound mean but maybe she has a hard time making friends cause she has a hard time
letting go when people mess up."

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"That seems like an accurate assumption." Bucky nodded. "Maybe you should talk to her too," he suggested and found one of the books on Becca's list and handed it to Steve. "You know, to see if she's still harboring anger at you for it."

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"I'd rather not poke the bear but if you want me to talk to her, I will," Steve said. They were able to find all but one book, which Steve asked one of the shop attendants to call them about once it was in stock again.

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"I just think it's important for you two to talk out your issues. That's what you'll be doing with our kids and Becca is a good place to start," Bucky urged him gently and readjusted Christopher in his jacket. Christopher was a lot calmer in the bookstore. There weren't as many things that he wanted.

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Steve paid and put the books in his backpack. "Can I have an easier teenager to practice on? Maybe one less opinionated?" Steve joked. He tapped Christopher's nose lightly and then led them out of the store.

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"Nope, you've got the ones you've got," Bucky chuckled back at him. "But don't stress too much. If you work on keeping calm when you talk to her then she will be calm too. She mirrors the intensity of whoever she is talking with."

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"I guess that explains why she was screaming at me the last time," Steve said. "I hope it goes well. I hate it when she thinks she can lord something over me."

When they got home, the girls were playing cards in the living room. "What do you got there?" Lilly asked with interest.

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Bucky let Christopher down and he immediately ran to Diana. "Christmas is in a week and a half, Lilly. You can't know what we bought," he said firmly and took all the stuff from Steve to go hide it in their room.

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"It's not like I believe in Santa anymore. Can't I just have it already?" she whined pathetically to Steve. "There's a message on the machine for you guys, by the way."

---

Bucky returned from hiding the presents to find Steve in the kitchen listening in on their messages. Bucky was distracted by his hunger and the tiny hands of Christopher pulling on his pant leg to lift him up. He wanted a snack as well and if Papa was eating then he was eating too.
The message was from Father Frank. His call sounded pretty urgent. "Buck, do you mind if I go down to the church? Father Frank wants to see one of us and I figured you'd want to stay home and play with Christopher."

"No, Love, of course not," Bucky answered with a warm smile and handed Christopher a carrot. "Want me to make dinner? How long will you be?" He munched a carrot as well and watched his son work on gnawing at the end of his.

"I don't think I should be too long," Steve said. He didn't think Bucky should be in charge of dinner because his cooking wasn't exactly the best, but he didn't want to insult. "How about pasta, if you wouldn't mind?" Pasta was easy to make.

"I'm on it," Bucky promised and pulled Steve in for a kiss before he went. Bucky was curious what was going on and he really hoped nothing bad had happened at the shelter. Steve wouldn't be able to handle it if there was another problem to add to his list.

Steve took a train to the church and popped in quickly to the shelter to check in on everyone and see if they needed anything. Thankfully with Christmas around the corner, donations had been more plentiful than normal. He went to the Father's office to see what was going on. "Good evening, Father. I got your message as soon as I got home."

"Steve, my boy," Father Frank smiled and got up to greet him. "Thank you for coming down so quickly. We found something outside about an hour ago that I thought you might want to take a look at. Follow me to the bunks, please."

Steve’s worried expression melted away a little when he saw the Father's smile. He followed. "Hopefully it's a good thing? I know the hate messages stopped when we kept washing them off the sides of the building."

"Yes, those have indeed stopped, thank the good Lord," Father Frank said cheerily and opened the door to the bunks. There were a couple of shelter volunteers and guests lingering over one of the beds and staring down.

Steve's curiosity increased when he saw everyone gathered around one bed. They saw him and the Father and stepped back a little to give them space and Steve's breath caught in his throat. "Oh my god," he gasped. There was a tiny little baby girl swaddled carefully in a blanket and wearing plain pink pajamas that looked like they were straight from the hospital. She was looking around at
everyone and blinking a little like she intended to fall asleep. Steve rushed forward and brought her into his arms because she looked so lonely without anyone holding her. "Why?" He turned to Father Frank. He couldn't imagine someone abandoning such a helpless little thing.

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The baby hiccupped and looked up into Steve's eyes, pleading with him to not let her go. Father Frank sighed and gave him a small smile. "No one but God can know for sure why she was brought here today. We can't know what was going through the mind of her mother or father when the decision was made to give her up. But whoever brought her here knew that she would be protected by us and given a good home somehow. Bringing a baby to a church or shelter like ours is much better than abandoning them elsewhere."

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She was so small - not as small as Grant - but definitely smaller than the baby Steve was used to holding. He saw the look on her face and he was quick to kiss her little forehead and tuck her closer to his chest. "Was there a note? Or anything?" Steve asked.

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Father Frank shook his head and reached into his pocket. "This is all she had," he said and held out his hand to Steve. The baby had been dropped off with a small coin from a foreign country and the blanket she was wrapped in now.

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Steve took the coin and decided he would research with Becca to see where it was from. He rocked her gently in his arms. Maybe this was his sign. Maybe God was bringing a baby to him - to their church, to his shelter - to let him know they could have another baby. "I... need to talk to Bucky. But, can I bring her home tonight? So she has someone to take care of her?"

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"I wouldn't want it any other way, Son," Father Frank said and squeezed Steve's shoulder. "I know you and your husband have a lot going on at the moment so I understand if she is not in your future. But I thought I would bring you to her before I sought another family."

---

"Thank you. Thank you so much," Steve said. He gave him a hug, careful not to squish the baby. She looked like she had just been born that day, or a few days ago at most. He held her inside his jacket the whole way home, talking softly to her to keep her calm. When he got back home, Diana noticed something different right away and started sniffing at him. He went up to their room and called for Bucky to come over so he wouldn't freak the girls out with their guest.

---

Bucky had fallen asleep on the couch with Christopher on top of him. Becca had to shake him to get him awake. "Steve's yelling for you!" Lilly shouted in his ear.

"Fuck, loud, okay, I'm up," Bucky grumbled and set his son on the ground to play so he could go trudge up the stairs to Steve.
Steve tried to lay the baby down but as soon as he did, she began to tear up, so he held her to his chest again. His back was to the door when it opened. "Buck," he said softly. "I need you to stay calm, alright? I just... I just brought her here because Father Frank says she was left outside the church and she needed a home to stay in," he said as he turned around to show him the little newborn in his arms.

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Bucky was taken aback and he shook his head in surprise. "What... what?" he asked and looked from Steve to the baby. "How... how are you coming home with a second random baby? It's like déjà vu from when you brought Christopher home. How do you do that?" he asked in awe and took a few steps towards Steve and the baby. "Oh my god, look how tiny she is."

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The baby looked up at Bucky with big eyes as she snuggled deeper into Steve's arms. "I don't know. I didn't try to." He could feel himself tearing up. "I think this is our sign, Buck," he said softly. "The one I was looking for. And... I know she's not Grant. No one can ever be. But maybe our family can be a little bigger now."

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"You want to keep her?" Bucky asked quietly and let the baby grip on to his index finger tightly and stare up at him in wonderment and curiosity. "We just lost a child, Steve. They just put his headstone in last week."

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"I know," Steve said, ducking his head a bit. "But I think God brought her to us. You asked me how we would know what would be a sign and, you know, here it is. She was brought to our church, out of all the churches in the city, just before Christmas. She's his gift to us."

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Bucky locked eyes with Steve for a long moment and took deep breaths. He wanted to say yes. He wanted to tell Steve that they could keep her. But part of him worried that was unfair to Grant. Would it be like they were forgetting or replacing his loss with another baby? "Can I have a bit to think it over?" he whispered.

---

Steve nodded his head. "Yeah, yeah, of course, Bucky." The newborn turned in Steve's arms and her little hand flailed out because she didn't have much control over herself yet. She still held onto Bucky's finger tightly with her other hand, though. "Would you like to hold her?" Steve asked.

---

Bucky smiled weakly and nodded, sitting down on their bed so he could hold her more securely. He held her up for a moment to take a good look at her and then he brought her to his chest and she just sort of felt like she belonged right there. Bucky couldn't help the small whine that escaped him and the tears brimming his eyes. She was perfect and so beautiful and so attentive and he felt himself falling for her already. "She does look like a Sarah," Bucky said quietly and glanced over to Steve.
Steve sat next to him and wrapped his arms securely around his husband. "I still miss Grant so much, Bucky. I visit him every day. I'll miss him forever," Steve said. "But she's our gift. Our sign. I know she is," he said. He wiped Bucky's tears away and kissed him lightly.

---

Bucky leaned into Steve and watched as the baby blinked slowly and eventually fell asleep. They were quiet together like that for a while, Bucky just thinking to himself about the whole thing. He would never forget Grant but he did want more children and he didn't know when they would have an opportunity again. And Steve had been so hung up on needing a sign and if he felt like this was his sign then Bucky needed to get on board and fast because it was already settled before Steve even got home. Bucky nodded and held Steve's gaze. "I guess I'll be adding to my tattoo soon."

---

Steve watched the little baby doze off feeling safe and comfortable in Bucky's arms. He laid his head on his shoulder and watched her for a little while. When Bucky agreed to keep her, Steve felt the tears fall freely down his face. He felt a rush of emotion - joy, relief, sadness, and loss. He wanted Grant here. He wanted his baby boy here with his new sister. He felt relieved because, at long last, the lingering doubt of being punished by God was lifted. And now, they had a little girl. He hugged Bucky tightly and kissed his face over and over again.

---

Bucky giggled under the onslaught of kisses and love and he checked on the baby who was awake again and looking up at them like she was surprised they dared wake her up so quickly. "Baby, Love, Steve," Bucky said happily and got him to stop kissing him and pay attention. "I don't have another crib yet. I'm really busy at work this week with Christmas coming up. And we don't have any clothes for her." He sighed. "But we have a baby girl. Oh my god, I can't wait to see your mother's face when you tell her what this baby's name is."

---

Steve eased up and gave both Bucky and Sarah an apologetic look. "I still have Christopher's smaller clothes. They'll be a bit big, but it's better than nothing," he said. "I can go shopping tomorrow. Christ, this is going to be a trip carrying two babies while shopping. During Christmas time, no less." He shook his head. "My mom is going to lose it. She'll be so happy. Man, the girls are going to freak out too."

---

Bucky grinned and passed Baby Sarah off to Steve. "Let's go show them," he said and rubbed his thumb on Steve's cheek. "I don't know how they will react but it's not like we can hide up here forever." He gave the baby a gentle kiss on her head and said, "Okay, Sarah May, are you ready to meet your aunts and your big brother?"

---

Steve took the baby back and smiled as she gave a big yawn. He carried her downstairs to find Diana sitting at the bottom just waiting for their return. She let out a single bark that startled the baby and she started to cry. "The hell is that?" Lilly asked as she came running to see what was going on.

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Bucky quickly hoisted the dog up to keep her from causing too much ruckus and he stared over at
Lilly who was yelling for Becca and looking at the bundle in Steve's arms. Becca came around with Christopher on her hip, "What? Why are you all so loud?" she asked and then stopped when she saw the new baby.

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Diana licked the baby's cheek, which only stopped her crying because the baby didn't know what the dog just did. Steve smiled nervously at the two of them. "This is Sarah May," Steve said. "She was left at the church earlier today, so... she's going to be part of our family now."

---

"You're kidding," Becca said and set Christopher down. He whined and went to pull on Bucky's pant leg. He didn't like not being the center of attention and right now his little sister had all eyes on her.

Bucky put Diana down and grabbed his son to give him a kiss before showing him Sarah. "Look, Bean, this is your baby sister."

---

"I'm not kidding, Becca," Steve said. "She's ours."

Christopher looked over at the little bundle that dared to be in his dad's arms. "Dada," Christopher said in a determined tone before reaching out for Steve to hold him.

"Let your pop hold you, Bean," Steve said patiently. He kissed Christopher's cheek. "I'm holding your sister."

---

Christopher whined and looked to Bucky for help. Sarah yawned again and stuck her tongue out for a second absently. He was still unsure how they were going to pull this off but he knew they were going to figure it out somehow. "Steve, let's call your mom and have her come over. We can surprise her."

---

Steve's heart melted when he saw their daughter yawn again. He knew it would take time for Christopher to adjust to not being the only child anymore, but Steve was confident that he would learn to love his sister. "Alright," he said excitedly. "She's going to be so happy, Bucky." He started to dial the phone and when his mom picked up, he invited her for dinner and she agreed to come by.

---

Bucky held Baby Sarah as Steve remade the dinner that he had been working on earlier. He tried to be sneaky about it but Bucky understood that Steve's mom wouldn't like what Bucky made. He wasn't offended. He knew he couldn't cook. And he sure as hell wasn't complaining that he got to hold their baby girl while Steve was occupied.

---

With Bucky sitting down with the baby, Christopher decided to climb into his pop's lap and lay heavily on top of him to look at the distraction in Bucky's arms. He didn't seem to mind the baby too much so long as he got attention, too. When Steve's mom arrived, Steve had just set the plates out
and he ushered Bucky aside so she wouldn't see him right away.

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Bucky held onto Baby Sarah tightly and watched her sleep. Christopher got distracted when his nana came so he padded over to her quickly so she would give him attention before anyone else saying, “Nana! Nana!”

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"Hello, my sweet boy! Aw, did you miss your nana?" she asked as she scooped him up to give him plenty of kisses. She gave her son a hug and walked over to greet Bucky as well. But then she saw the little bundle in his arms and immediately started to cry.

---

Bucky gently traded Sarah Christopher for the baby and offered her a seat at the table. "Steve brought her home today. Someone left her at the shelter and Father Frank called to have Steve come see her."

---

"Papa. Nana," Christopher huffed when he had to share his Nana with this little intruder too. "Oh, aren't you so precious," she said softly. "And you're keeping her? I have another grandchild?"

---

"Yeah, you have yet another grandchild." Bucky smiled and grabbed Steve's hand and leaned into him. "Do you want to know her name?" he asked Sarah and looked to Steve so he could tell his mom what their new baby girl was called.

---

Steve squeezed Bucky's hand and kissed his cheek. Sarah nodded and the baby another kiss. "We named her Sarah May," Steve said with a hint of pride in his voice.

Sarah's lower lip quivered. "You didn't!" she gasped, feeling so blessed.

---

Bucky grinned at her and adjusted Christopher on his chest. "I think it's a perfect name for her," he said softly and knelt down on the ground with his son so he could still be with his nana but not in her way.

---

Sarah held the little baby closer. "She does look like a Sarah," she agreed. "I don't know what I did to deserve such an amazing son-in-law. But I thank God every day that Steve found you."

---

Bucky didn't know what to say so he just blushed a little and looked over at Steve and said softly, "Thank you. I'm beyond grateful that Steve found me too. I don't know where I would be without him. He's given me so much."
Steve wrapped his arms around Bucky and nuzzled him affectionately. It was like this baby lifted the dark clouds that hung over him. Baby Sarah stirred and started to fuss and whine. "Crap," Steve gasped. "We don't have baby formula."

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"Shit," Bucky winced. "Okay, you stay here and I'll run to get some. We need more diapers too." He hurriedly pulled on his shoes and his jacket and then looked around for his wallet. "Babe, where's my wallet?"

---

Steve looked around, frowning. "Do you think you may have left it at one of the stores? I don’t remember you having it out though. Maybe it’s at the record shop.”

---

Bucky went to the living room to look and found it sticking out the top of Christopher's toy box. "Steve," Bucky called and came back to the kitchen. "Your son was hiding it in his toys."

---

Steve laughed. "Christopher, why did you take your pop's wallet?" he scolded lightly. Christopher immediately started to blabber on at him in a defensive tone. "Why is he always my son when he's up to no good, huh?" Steve joked at Bucky.

---

Bucky sighed and tucked his wallet into his jacket pocket. "Because, he just is," he said and gave Steve a quick kiss. "Okay, I'll be back. Baby Sarah needs to eat. We can figure out the crib later."

---

Steve lifted Christopher up and carried him around. His mom managed to soothe the baby by rocking her gently and humming. Steve suspected that she had a new favorite grandchild even if she wouldn't ever admit to it. "Don't be too long or else we'll eat without you," Steve said.

---

"You can eat, that's fine," Bucky said quickly and scampered off to the store. He picked up formula and diapers and a couple pajamas and outfits. He didn't quite know what to do about a crib so he figured the baby might just have to sleep in their room for a few days until he could make a new one.

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When Bucky was getting rung up, the cashier laughed. "You looked frazzled,” the kid said and eyed Bucky’s fidgeting hands and messy hair.

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"New baby," Bucky gasped softly and helped them bag up his purchases. "We weren't ready at all. She was kind of a surprise and now I have no crib and we didn't have formula and she needs clothes," he rambled for a minute or so and then handed his cash to the kid.

---
The cashier gave Bucky change and slipped a condom in with it. "So the next one isn't so much of a surprise," he joked with a friendly smile.

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"Oh, uh," Bucky cleared his throat and nodded. "Thanks." He took his bags and hurried back as fast as he could. When he got there, he passed the formula to Steve and then unpacked the clothes in the nursery and pocketed the condom for the time being. He'd throw it out later.

---

Steve started making the formula, managing to do it with Christopher held against his hip. He filled the bottle and then gave it back to Bucky. "Ma, can you let Bucky feed her? I think he needs some bonding time with his daughter," Steve said.

---

Sarah, albeit slightly reluctantly, gave the baby to Bucky and started helping Becca make sure everything was ready for them all to eat dinner. Bucky sat down and fed the fussy newborn as everyone else gathered around to eat. "There you go, Baby Sarah. That's better. Who knows how long you've gone without eating."

---

Sarah May guzzled down the formula hungrily when the bottle was offered to her. "Oh yeah," Steve said as he pulled out the foreign coin. "Father Frank said she had this with her. I think it's from the country her parents came from, maybe," he said.

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"Let me see that," Becca said and held out her hand for it. "Huh," she mused and stared at it. "Well, it's definitely middle European. Probably not Soviet. Maybe Yugoslavia."

Lilly scoffed and spoke with her mouth full, "How would you even know it's Yugoslavian? There's about twenty different countries in middle Europe. It could be any of those."

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"Hey, that's a start," Steve said. "I don't think I even know where Yugoslavia is. Maybe I can go to the library and look up books on currency in countries or something."

---

"I'll go with you!" Becca said excitedly. It was like a treasure hunt to her now. She wanted to uncover the answer and be like an academic detective.

Bucky grinned at Steve and his sister. "I wonder why she was left with that coin. Do you think it's like a ritual or is it more like a family heirloom or like a religious thing. Hell, maybe they just hoped someone would think it was incentive for keeping her?"

---

Steve smiled, always a sucker to have Becca on board with something. "I don’t know. Maybe once we verify what country it's from, we can look into books that talk about the culture and stuff."
"Father Frank didn't see who dropped her off?" Bucky asked, hoping to get a little bit more information. "And she didn't have anything else with her?" With Christopher, they knew exactly who his parents were and they knew his birthdate and all that. With Sarah May, they might not learn anything about her family.

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"No, he didn't. He says that she only had her blanket and that coin," Steve said. Sarah May squirmed because she needed to be burped. "So your guess is as good as mine. I guess it's a shame we didn't install those security cameras. But we decided not to cause the vandalism stopped."

---

Bucky adjusted the baby and patted her back lightly. "Well, I guess we can just start with the coin then." Christopher, who was being fed by Steve, decided that not enough people were paying attention to him at once so he started banging his fists on the table and whining loudly.

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"Hey," Steve scolded, tapping Christopher's fists before putting the fork down so he could hold him with both hands. "None of that, son. Tell me what's wrong," he said, trying to get his son to use what little words he had.

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"No!" Christopher shouted and wiggled a little bit before pointing to Bucky and saying, "Papa, no!" Clearly, it was going to take some time for him to be alright with sharing his parents. Sarah May seemed to get upset because of the yelling and she started to cry and bunch her face up in her distress.

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Steve looked to his mom for help, but she shrugged. She hadn’t dealt with any of this because Steve was an only child. "Christopher," Steve admonished. "Baby, you can't yell. Shhh, quiet voice." The boy kept pointing at Bucky angrily. "She's your family now, Bean, we love her. Can you love her, Sweetheart?" He kissed Christopher's cheek and carried him over. Steve held his arms so he couldn’t hit her. "Give her a kiss." Christopher looked at Steve like he was crazy for asking him to kiss this crying child.

---

It took a few seconds of Christopher staring down at Sarah May before she decided to stop crying. She quieted down and slowly reached a hand up towards him and made a soft gurgle in the back of her throat in curiosity. "There we go," Bucky sighed in relief. "There we are, Sweet Pea. It's just your brother. No need to be afraid."

---

Christopher gave her an unimpressed look at first. Then he put his hands on her face just because. Sarah May scrunched up her face and Christopher immediately pulled his hands back and looked up at Bucky to see what he was supposed to do.

---

Bucky giggled softly as he watched the interaction. "See, Bean, she just wants to know you too."
She's just as confused and curious as you are right now," Bucky spoke quietly to his son and looked up at Steve a few times. "She's going to love you so much, Christopher."

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"You're being such a good boy," Steve praised and kissed the top of Christopher's head. Steve gave Bucky such a happy smile as their children interacted. Then Sarah May sneezed which made Christopher jump in his spot, which had Steve roaring with laughter.

---

Sarah May seemed surprised by her own sneeze and looked up at Bucky like he could explain what had just happened. Bucky grabbed a napkin and wiped her nose. "Steve, do you want to hold her for a while? It's getting late and Christopher needs a bath."

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"Yeah," he said. Steve took Sarah May in one arm and passed Christopher off with the other. "Does your dada love you? Yes, he does," Steve cooed at her as Bucky headed upstairs.

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After a long time, Bucky came back downstairs with wet hair and a severely grumpy face. Christopher had decided to be as difficult as possible for his bath and wouldn't let Bucky wash him at all for a long time. Eventually, he worked it out, but still.

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Sarah May had been an absolute angel the whole time and didn't mind being passed around between her dad, her nana, and her aunts. When Bucky came back downstairs, Steve gave him an apologetic smile. "At least you won't feel so bad going to work now," he joked.

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Bucky sighed and gave his daughter a kiss and then Steve. "When I went to grab his bath duck from the water, he grabbed my hair and pulled it into the tub." He sat down with a frown and looked to Steve. "I want brownies."

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"I don't like that kind of behavior from him," Steve said. "I thought we taught him better than that." Christopher was still very young, though. "Want me to bake brownies for you, Love?"

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"He's just acting out for attention. Becca did the same thing as a kid when Lilly came around." Bucky yawned again and slumped his head on the table. "You don't have to bake me anything. I'm just complaining. We should try to sleep soon."

---

Steve passed Baby Sarah off to his mom, who seemed to refuse to leave until she had to because she loved her little granddaughter so much. "Then I'll bake something for you tomorrow for when you get home," Steve said. "Let's get Sarah May some sort of sleeping arrangement and get some rest while we can."
"I was thinking of putting her in Christopher's car seat in our room. That way she is near us but safely in her own space," Bucky offered. He wasn't sure what Steve wanted to do but it was the only thing he could think of at the moment.

Steve nodded. "A car seat will have to do for tonight, I think. Maybe if we at least get her a crib mattress, we can put bumpers up so she can't escape," he said.

Bucky nodded. "I'm planning on buying lumber tomorrow after work and then spending a few nights over at Clint's working on a new crib while you're asleep. And it won't bug Clint because he can't hear me making noise in his cellar anyway."

Steve nodded but couldn't help but let out a little whine. "But you won't spend too many nights away, right? I want to cuddle you." The look on Steve's eyes suggested that he wanted to do a little more than just cuddle.

"I have to make her a crib," Bucky said, not understanding the underlying implications in Steve's tone. As far as he was concerned, he wasn't expecting sex until all his kids were grown up and out of the house, and maybe even then. "I smashed Grant's crib so it's not like we can have her in that one until she had her own. It won't take me long."

Steve made a small face when Bucky didn't understand what he meant by cuddling. His mom saw the look in his eyes and tried not to laugh. "Yeah," he said. "I know you're going to make her an amazing crib, Baby." He turned to his mom. "Would you like to stay the night? It's a bit too late for you to walk home on your own."

"Oh, I may as well," Sarah said happily and gave them both a small smile. "But, I'll just stay on the couch tonight. No need to give up your bed." She didn't want to intrude on their private time if that's what was going to happen tonight. "I'll be sure to make breakfast for Bucky before he leaves for work."

Steve hugged his mom. "Love you, Ma." He nudged Bucky and carried Sarah May upstairs and tucked her into Christopher's car seat. Steve covered the baby in a second blanket to make sure she didn't get cold during the night. He forgot that he had left his house keys in Bucky's jacket so he went to take them out and was confused when he pulled out a condom with them.

Bucky stripped down and took a very fast shower. He was tired as hell but he also felt gross from having frantically run around the city all day. He was in the middle of drying off when Steve came
back up to their room.

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Steve made sure the girls and his mom were nowhere to be seen - and little Sarah May wouldn't know what a condom was anyway - before surveying the condom’s dark blue packaging. Steve unwrapped it and stuck it over the top of his head like a swimming cap. He walked into the room like nothing was going on and waited for Bucky to notice.

---

Bucky glanced into their room when Steve came back and he saw him sitting on the bed casually with the condom on his head. "What in the hell?" Bucky chuckled and put his towel on a hook to go try to pry the condom from Steve's head. "So you found that in my pocket? I meant to throw it out."

---

Steve backed his head away so Bucky wouldn't be able to take it off. "I left my house keys with you," he said. "I found this when I was getting them from your jacket." He dodged Bucky's hand again. "So are you seeing another man?" he joked. "Or did you decide you wanted to last a little longer next time or something?"

---

Bucky grabbed Steve by the shoulder firmly and pulled it off. There was a light red ring on Steve's skin from where it was stretched around his head. "The boy at the cash register asked why I was running around with my head cut off. I told him there was a surprise baby and he gave me this and told me it was so the next one wouldn't be a surprise. I didn’t have the hear to tell him that my husband and I don’t use condoms."

---

Steve was grinning dumbly when Bucky finally got the condom off but he had to cover his mouth to stifle his laughter. "Sorry I can't give you any planned babies," he said. "I hide my pregnancy really well."

---

"Oh no, I noticed you getting a little bigger in the middle but I never thought it was a baby," Bucky joked back and lifted Steve's shirt to look at his perfectly cut abs. "Fuck, I can't even joke about that because you've got no fat on your body anywhere."

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Steve put his hands on Bucky's waist and pulled him forward so he was laying on top. "Now I've got fat on my body," he teased with an obnoxious smirk.

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"See, but that's not funny because it's true," Bucky said with a pout. He was still naked from his shower and his hair was wet and sticking to his face. He willed himself not to get too excited because he had a feeling Steve would give him a few kisses and roll him off so they could sleep. And Bucky really didn't want to have to take care of his own erection again.
"You're not fat. But I wouldn’t care if you were." Steve slid a hand down Bucky's back slowly and when it got to his ass, he gave it a firm squeeze. He looked into Bucky's eyes with the biggest 'fuck me' expression he could muster in hopes that he got the hint.

---

A warm rush went through Bucky's body from his chest to his cock. His gut clenched and his face heated up and he knew he must have looked desperate because his eyes fluttered back in his head and he let out a choked little whine. "Remember when you thought I was gaining weight when I was buying pants a size small to show off my ass?"

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"I remember," Steve purred. He rolled his hips slowly against Bucky's as he pressed slow, hot kisses over his neck. "It did get me to look at your ass," he admitted.

---

Bucky gasped and bit his lip. He leaned in closer and sucked on Steve's neck for a few seconds then pulled back. "Sorry, I got carried away," he apologized and brushed Steve's hair back. "I just miss you and you're so sexy and warm and perfect and I want to be with you again. I want to feel you."

---

Steve let out a little moan and tilted his head back. Steve was hard and his dick was pressing up into Bucky desperately. He sort of thought that would have been Bucky’s clue that Steve wanted him too. "Do you want to be on top tonight? Or do you want me? Fuck, I don't care how we do this, Buck, I just want you."

---

Bucky breathed deeply a few times. He was all the sudden intensely overwhelmed. "Are we..." he started with wide hopeful eyes and with his hips grinding his cock down against Steve's. "We're doing this?" he asked. He wanted to make sure he was actually hearing Steve correctly and they were actually going to make love again.

---

Steve cupped the sides of Bucky's face and kissed him slowly. "Yes," he breathed out. "Yes, Baby, I want you. I'm sorry it took so long, but I want you so bad." He tangled his fingers in Bucky's hair and gave a little tug because he knew he liked that.

---

Bucky let out a low moan and felt his face blushing up even more. "Please, Steve, please," he whispered and shut his eyes. "Please, I need your cock. I want you inside me, please. It's been so long. I need you so bad. I've missed you. Please. Fuck me."

---

Steve shifted their positions and pinned Bucky back down on the bed. He bit and sucked marks all over his neck and collarbone while he took his own clothes off. "Gonna give you-" he had to pause to breathe. "-everything you want."
Bucky nodded and let his mouth just hang loosely open as Steve went. "I love you," he said and felt a lump forming in his throat and tears brimming on his eyes. Steve was back. He was with him again. They were going to be together again and Bucky finally felt like Steve had snapped back and reconnected with him. "God, I love you so much, Steve."

---

Steve gently wiped the tears from his eyes. "Shh, shh, it's okay, Beautiful," he whispered. Steve decided to take his time to practically worship Bucky's body. He worked down his torso, kissing him everywhere and littering his entire body with bites. He sucked marks on the insides of his thighs and when Bucky was aching for it, he grabbed the lube and coated his fingers with it so he could push one inside.

---

Bucky couldn't help but cry silently the entire time Steve worked down his body. He was so overwhelmed with emotion and stimulation. He was beyond elated to have Steve on him again. "I love you," he whispered when he felt Steve's finger ease into him. "I missed you."

---

Steve gently worked his finger inside Bucky's ass and stretched him slowly. He pushed a second one inside once he knew Bucky was ready for it. "I missed you too, Buck," he said softly, kissing the inside of his thigh. "I'm so sorry I didn't pay attention to you like you needed."

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"You're here now," Bucky breathed and let his hand find Steve's head so he could gently brush his fingers through his hair. "You're here now, Baby. You love me? Tell me how much you love me, please. I need to hear it."

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"I love you," Steve breathed out. "I love you with all my heart, Baby. I think about you every moment of the day and miss you when you're gone." He pushed a third finger into him and looked up at him. "And I can't imagine life without you."

---

Bucky whimpered and stared down at Steve. "I need you. I need your cock. Please, I want you inside me now," he whispered softly and gently but urgently. "Make love to me. Kiss me, come inside me. Let me feel it. Let me feel you."

---

Steve moved up and claimed Bucky's lips in a slow kiss. He guided his dick into Bucky's ass and moaned at how amazing he felt. "You're perfect," he breathed out. "You're my perfect husband."

---

Bucky gasped loudly when he got Steve's dick seating all the way inside him. He whimpered and his body gave a needy shudder. "Finally," he whined and gripped on to Steve's arms. "It's been so long." He was so happy. Steve was going to make love to him again and he felt amazing. He didn't care if Steve needed to take breaks to breathe. He was going to have to be used to that now for the rest of their lives. He just never wanted this feeling to end.
Steve couldn't go too fast without needing a breather. He rolled his hips steadily into Bucky's ass over and over, spreading him open with his dick and giving it to him slow and deep. "You feel amazing, Love," he gasped out. He kissed down his neck slowly.

Bucky let himself cry again and just feel every point of connection between his body and Steve's. He didn't even care about his own release he just wanted to be intimate with Steve. He was vaguely aware that he was hard but it didn't occur to him to do anything about it. He was so focused on Steve's beautiful face and Steve's gentle, meaningful thrusts.

Steve rocked into him slowly and took Bucky's dick into his hand. He stroked it with every thrust and claimed his mouth again in a kiss. "You're perfect," he said breathlessly. "And mine. You're mine forever, Buck."

"I'm yours," Bucky agreed and dug his fingers into Steve's sides tightly. "I'm yours forever. I'll love you forever. I'll be here for you forever. Whenever you need me, for whatever you need me for, I'll be here for you."

Steve gasped and worked his hips a little faster into his husband. He knew he wasn't going to last long because they hadn't done this in so long and he was a little over eager. "Buck, I'm so close-" he came hard inside of his husband, pushing further up and shaking as he rocked against Bucky through his orgasm.

Bucky clenched his ass down around Steve's dick to milk his come from him. Bucky came seconds later with a happy bubble of surprised and relieved laughter that ended in a choked kiss when Steve's lips found his.

Steve whined softly when Bucky's ass clenched down on him. "Fuck," he swore. Once Bucky was finished coming, he broke the kiss and leaned down to lick the come off of Bucky's chest.

When he was done, Bucky pulled Steve down on top of him and held him close. "Thank you, thank you, Baby. God, thank you," he said quickly and kissed Steve's face and neck over and over again. "I love you. That was perfect. Thank you."

Steve snuggled up against Bucky and hugged him close. "I love you too, sweetheart. I promise I won't wait that long to make love to you the next time," he said.
Bucky sighed and closed his eyes. "How about we give it about an hour then? We have some catching up to do," he offered and slipped his hand with Steve's and brought it to his lips to give it a kiss.

---

Steve laughed. "We should probably wait until Sarah May needs a diaper change and wait until after we put her back to sleep," he said. "We aren't going to get a full night's sleep for a while."

---

"Is that a promise that we can have sex again after she goes back to sleep?" Bucky asked and glanced over at the car seat where Sarah May was curled up tightly in the blankets and sleeping soundly. He got the feeling she was going to be a calmer, easier baby than Christopher. He wasn't sure why but that's what he thought.

---

Steve nodded. "Yeah," he said with a happy smile. He followed Bucky's gaze to the sleeping baby. "She's our beautiful, little daughter, Bucky," he sighed dreamily. "I don't think my mom likes that she has to share her," he chuckled.

---

"Your mother is welcome to visit her every day if she wants," Bucky said happily. "So long as she doesn't run off with her," he added for good measure. Sarah May started to squirm and make upset noises then. Bucky got up and pulled on Steve's pajama pants so he could go to her and make sure she was okay.

---

"Do you still want to ask if she wants to move in with us?" Steve asked and sat up. The baby needed a diaper change and she was also upset that she woke herself up because of it.

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Bucky took care of the diaper and made sure she was clean enough that she didn't need a bath yet. "If we can think of a good way to convert part of the house into another bedroom for her, I think it would be a good idea to ask her. I don't know if she would even want that but I'd like to give her the option. I think you would like having her here too and I know the girls would." He got a clean diaper on the baby and left her pajamas off for a bit. He knew how important it was for babies to have skin to skin contact with their parents so he laid her on his chest and gently sat down next to Steve.

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Sarah May whined and let out little, pathetic cries until she was cleaned up and had her diaper changed. Once she was held, she calmed down and pressed her cheek against Bucky's chest. Steve watched her and smiled. "She's so little," Steve said. "She really loves you holding her."

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"She's so precious," Bucky agreed softly and stared into her huge brown eyes. "I hope you and Becca find out where her biological parents were from. I want to be able to learn about the country and make sure she knows those parts of her life."
The baby looked up at Bucky's face curiously and looked like she was trying to understand what he was saying. "I hope so too," Steve said. "Maybe we could even learn a few words of their language or something." Steve stared at Bucky, unable to help himself from wondering if they would’ve kept her if they had Grant. Would there be two little newborns lying on Bucky's chest right now?

Bucky kissed her soft dark hair and nuzzled his cheek on her head. "I love you, little one," he whispered to her and then looked to Steve with a warm smile. "I'm really happy we have her. I wish all our children were here but I'm grateful for the two who are. And we won't ever forget Grant and I'm going to make sure our kids know about him."

Sarah May yawned and her little tongue poked out just a little as she closed her eyes and tried to sleep. Any time Bucky moved, she made an unhappy sound to make him stay. "I'm happy we have her, too," Steve said. "Father Frank will be so happy to hear she has a home now."

"You know," Bucky said quietly so he wouldn't disturb the baby's sleep, "When Becca was born, she was really, really tiny. My father was so worried that she was sick. He was convinced that something was wrong. And my mother kept telling him that she was fine and he needed to trust her on it. But he wasn't sure because he was used to me as a baby. I was an average baby and was healthy and everything and a good weight. But Becca was so small and he was scared. But Becca was fine. But then when Lilly was born a little over two years later, she was huge. Huge. And my father was worried she was too big and had some sort of disease. He was always worried about something with the babies. Something was always scaring him."

Steve smiled fondly as he listened to Bucky talk about them as children. "He worried because he loved you guys," Steve said fondly. "And in his defense, Becca and Lilly are aliens, I'm sure of it," he joked.

"I think if my sisters are aliens that makes me an alien too," Bucky joked and took Steve's hand. "But, yeah, Dad was always really nervous about us getting hurt or sick when we were young. He used to tie a balloon string around Lilly's wrist when we went to stores so if she ran off he could just follow the balloon."

"I may have to steal that idea from him," Steve laughed. "Christopher has a one-track mind and I can see him going wild once he knows I'm distracted and he gets faster on his feet."

Bucky chuckled. "Yeah, it was effective. He would sometimes yell at the nearest store clerk to stop the orange balloon. And then I'd have to hold Lilly as tight as I could while he checked out so she didn't run off into the street."
"I love how she always was the wild child. I wonder if ours will be the same - Christopher being the chaotic but loving oldest sibling and Sarah May being the quiet type," Steve wondered.

"Sarah May is already striking me as the quiet one," Bucky said and looked down at the little baby girl again. "But I do think Christopher will be the loud attention-seeking child." He sighed and nuzzled close to Steve. "What do you think our other kids will be like? How many will we have? Where will they come from?"

Sarah May balled up her little fist and rested it in front of her face. "I don’t know... I think seven kids is a nice number," Steve said. "Wouldn't it be nice to have twins?" he asked. "I would love that. Maybe they'd be from someone who knows us and don't want to raise kids, but wants their kids to have a good home."

"Ooh, twins!" Bucky smiled at the thought. "That would be perfect." He thought for a second and just stared at Steve, perfectly content in that moment. "You do know that now we need to think of more names. We have three kids and we've used up six names."

"What if we named a girl Rebecca Lilly?" Steve asked, only half joking. "Or maybe we can leave it as a surprise. There's a patron saint for every day of the year. Whatever day we have our next kid is the name we give him or her."

"What if we get like the patron saint of sleeping in too late and our next daughter is called like ‘Snorah’ or something?" Bucky joked back. "But it's a pretty good idea. We can leave that as an option."

"That's not how it works," Steve laughed. "They're bible names like ‘Mary’ or ‘Joseph’ or ‘John’. And if we get a kid that's the opposite gender we can do the other gender version of that name," he said.

"Sure," Bucky said, still thinking he was pretty funny. "Although, ‘Norah’ is a pretty nice name too. How do you feel about that as an option? We are having a lot of kids so we are going to need a lot of choices."

"I think it's a pretty name," Steve agreed. "We need about a dozen names for the kids we have left. By the way, I kind of like always using Sarah's middle name. ‘Sarah May’ is real pretty, you know?"
"Me too, I love it. ‘Sarah May’,” Bucky repeatedly happily. "And it distinguishes between the
Saras. I was just going to call her ‘Baby Sarah’ but that won't work once she is older. So ‘Sarah
May’ it is."

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"'Baby Sarah’ is still adorable, though. Little baby Sarah May,” Steve said in a loving voice. He
hugged his husband and daughter gently. "She will always be my baby, though."

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"I guess we won't have to worry about who is a daddy's boy or momma's boy because they only
have daddy's," Bucky said and got up slowly to take his daughter back to the car seat to sleep. "I was
always such a daddy's boy."

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Sarah May stirred at first but once she was tucked in, she seemed to be fine with her sleeping
arrangement. "I know you were," Steve chuckled. "I can tell by the way you talk about him."

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"Steve, I wish you could have known him," Bucky smiled and laid back down. "I'll never be near as
good a father as he was. He was so smart and kind and calm and loving and he always knew what to
do and what to say."

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"You should give yourself more credit. You're an amazing father already," Steve said. "One of these
days, our kids are going to look up to you like you do to him." He kissed Bucky gently. "I wish I got
to meet him, too."

---

Bucky nuzzled close into Steve and kissed his neck and his cheek and his lips. "He would be so
proud of us," Bucky said and wrapped an arm around Steve's middle and rested a hand on his ass. "I
can't wait to see him again."

---

Steve purred at the kisses and pressed himself up against Bucky. "I know, Baby. But you got to take
the long road there, got it?" He slowly moved his hand up his torso.

---

Bucky sighed and gave Steve another warm, wet kiss. "Are you ready to go again? How do you
want to do it this time? I don't care. I just want to make love again, please," he said and pushed Steve
over a little so he was on his back.

---

"Mmm, you're already stretched," Steve purred. "And I don't think I'm ready to be sore while
chasing our baby around all day," Steve said. "How about you ride me? So I get a nice view?"
Bucky glanced back to make sure Sarah May was asleep. "Yes, I'll ride you," he said eagerly and worked the pajama pants back off. He then straddled Steve and started grinding down against him to get him hard again. "I knew you had to have missed my ass. I wasn't sure when it would be but I knew you'd eventually have to get back inside me."

---

Bucky was so fucking sexy when he took what he wanted. Steve gripped his hips when Bucky started to grind on him. "Fuck," he swore softly. "I did miss it. Maybe I wanna stare at it while you ride me. I don't know whether I want to see that more now."

---

"Better decide quick because I'm about to get on you. You just got to tell me which way you want me to be," Bucky said and spread his cheeks apart so he could feel the slide of Steve's cock gently between them.

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Steve was getting hard quickly. "Let me have your back to me," Steve said. "I want to watch your gorgeous ass the whole time, Bucky." He grabbed Bucky's ass firmly and gave it a good squeeze. "And tomorrow you'll wear your tight jeans, right?"

---

"Baby, I'll wear whatever you want me to," Bucky said and gave him another kiss before turning around so Steve could see his ass. "Since I can't see you, you have to talk to me the whole time," he said and held Steve's dick firmly in his hand as he sat down all the way.

---

Steve let out a low groan as Bucky sat on his cock. He instinctively rolled his hips up and he dragged his nails lightly down Bucky's back. "You look so good like this, baby," Steve purred. "You have no idea."

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Bucky hummed happily and worked himself on Steve's cock. He wondered for a minute if Steve wanted him to ride him like this because he was worried about his lungs. He knew it was going to change things now but he hoped that they could work out what to do together.

---

"God, I wish you could see yourself right now," Steve moaned. "You look so good all spread for me." He reached around so he could stroke Bucky's cock slowly as he rode him.

---

Bucky whined and pressed himself against Steve as best as he could before lifting back up and slamming his ass back down. "Tell me what you need, Baby," he said pleasantly and looked back at Steve. "Tell me what to do."

---

"Go faster," Steve gasped out. "Say my name. I need to hear you, Sweetheart." Steve dragged his
nails down Bucky's back as he rode him.

---

Bucky nodded and bounced faster and faster every minute or so on Steve's dick and let out a string of soft but desperate, "Steve, Steve, Steve, Steve," each one getting higher and more strained as he neared his second release of the night. They really hadn't been going for long but they both were ready to come again.

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Steve grabbed Bucky's hips and pulled him down harder every time Bucky came down on him. He rolled his hips up into him and gasped softly at how great Bucky's ass felt. "I'm so close, Baby. Don't stop, Buck. I need you-

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The second Steve stopped talking, Bucky came hard in long spurts out across the bed. He had to cover his mouth so he didn't make too much noise. But he also didn't stop riding Steve and made sure he kept up with him so he could bring him to orgasm as well.

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Steve dug his nails into Bucky's hips, leaving ten little marks in his skin. "Oh, Bucky!" he moaned loudly. He shuddered as he came deep in his ass. Sarah May had woken up at some point and was staring with her big, brown eyes at a colorful picture on the wall from her spot in the car seat.

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"Fuck!" Bucky swore and quickly pulled off of Steve and covered himself up. "Goddamn it. She's awake," he whispered and looked to Steve for help.

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Steve laid back and closed his eyes blissfully after he came. But when Bucky said that Sarah was awake, he quickly covered Bucky up and grabbed his underwear so he could be decent. "Don't worry, Buck, she doesn't know," Steve said even though he felt bad. He walked over and watched her as she pointed to the picture for a moment. "Hey, Love, you can't sleep?"

---

Bucky wrapped the blanket around him tightly and scooted off the bed to go clean himself up. He was dripping Steve's come down his legs and was pretty damn sweaty. When he got back, he pulled on pajamas again and laid back in bed to wait for Steve to get Sarah May back to sleep.

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Sarah May made quiet noises up at Steve, who cooed and sung to her until she drifted back off. Once she was asleep, Steve went to Bucky's side and wrapped his arms around him. "How're you feeling, Baby?"

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"So good, you have no idea," Bucky said and nuzzled into Steve. "I'm so in love with you it's amazing," he added and gave Steve a few short kisses. He was a little worried that the exertion was a
bit much on his lungs.

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Steve was breathing in short, little breaths but seemed to have a good handle on it so far. "I'm so glad I was able to make you feel better. You deserve the whole world."

---

"You are my world," Bucky said with a smile. He knew it was cheesy but he really felt that way and Steve needed to know that. Steve needed to know that, even though they had gone a while without being intimate, it's not like Bucky was angry about it. He was mostly concerned for Steve the entire time and missing his husband. Not just mad that he hadn't been able to get off.

---

Steve felt his heart swell happily. He kissed Bucky slowly and then laid his head down on the pillow. "I don't know how I'm going to let you go off to work when all I want to do is lay with you all day."

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"You say that all the time," Bucky said with a chuckle. "But you always do alright when I get back." He snuggled up closer to him and yawned. "If you felt like having morning sex before I go to work I won't be opposed. You can try to see how far you can get before I wake up," he offered and yawned again.

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"Well, it's still true. I would spend all my waking moments with you if I could," Steve said. He gave Bucky's ass a little squeeze. "If I wake up before you, I'll make tomorrow morning worth your while."

---

Bucky nodded and hummed happily. He looked to make sure Sarah May didn't need him then he buried his face in Steve's chest and fell asleep. He had really good dreams about Steve and him together that night. Everything was okay again for just a little while in that moment.
Steve woke Bucky up with another round of sex. They were able to cuddle for a while before Sarah May woke up, soon followed by Christopher. When Bucky got to work, Clint noticed that he was walking with a bit of pep in his step. "Got laid?"

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"Three times, motherfucker!" Bucky shouted triumphantly, winning the attention of a startled Tim and a group of teens off by The Rolling Stones records. "God, Clint, it was awesome," Bucky said and flopped down in the chair by the cash register.

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Clint laughed and tossed an inventory sheet over to Bucky. "Three times? Christ, when did you have time to sleep? I'm shocked you showed up on time."

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"I was woken up by round three so I wouldn't miss work," Bucky informed him proudly and glossed over the inventory sheet for a second. "Jesus, it had been so long. I was ready to go again almost immediately after we finished the first time. I know I've been complaining about it almost as much as Tim has been complaining lately."

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"I'm not going to lie, it was killing me having you complaining so often about your husband not giving it to you..." Clint said. "So Steve is feeling better finally?"

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"You complain about Natasha, too, so don't think you're exempt," Bucky said and started sifting through boxes by his feet to make sure all the new shipment was in. "But, yeah, we had a bit a miracle happen yesterday and it just sort of clicked Steve back into place."

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"I don't complain as much as you do. I've not had a dry spell with Natasha like you had with Steve," he said. Clint paused and then looked at him with interest. "What miracle is that?"

---

"Oh, uh, we got a baby girl," Bucky said with a shrug like it was no big deal and then shot Clint a big grin.

Tim stopped what he was doing and looked over at Bucky with wide eyes. "What? How?"

---

Clint’s jaw dropped and he had to make sure he read Bucky's lips right. "You're joking! Oh my god!" he said excitedly. "That's amazing. How? What's her name? Is she a cutie?"
Bucky smiled and giggled a little at Clint and Tim's excitement. "Her name is Sarah May. She is beautiful and perfect. She was dropped off at the church and Father Frank called Steve to come see her. And he brought her home and convinced me to keep her and now she is ours."

---

"I'm totally coming over to meet her and play with her as soon as I can," Clint said.

Tim looked happy as all hell for Bucky. "Look at you getting your own brood of children," he laughed. "Kids are the best, aren't they?"

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"Yeah," Bucky agreed and gave Tim a nudge. He knew he had been doing at least a little better lately now that his divorce had been finalized for a bit and he had partial custody of his kids. All to do was to find him someone to be with. "You both are welcome to come over to see her sometime. I'm sure Christopher misses your faces. I know oddly enough he misses Natasha. He saw a picture of her in her police uniform and started clapping and pointing."

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"In all fairness, I want to clap and point too whenever I see Natasha in uniform. She's sexy all the time, but exceptionally so in uniform," Clint said. "Let's all have dinner at your place this weekend. I'm sure Steve won't mind the company."

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"I know what you mean," Bucky said with a wistful sigh. "Steve's uniform was so gorgeous on him. And he has a great ass and I think the precinct purposefully gave him pants that squeezed his butt too much. They knew what kind of assets he was bringing to the job."

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"I'm sure if we ask Natasha nicely enough she can find a uniform they're about to throw away so Steve can still dress up for you sometimes," Clint offered.

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"Yes, please," Bucky whined and pulled his hair back. "Although, he may not want to wear it since he isn't an officer anymore. It may just make him upset." He shook it off. "Anyway, yes, Steve would love the company. You both are invited."

---

"Yeah, Steve is a real sensitive sort like that," Clint said, not in a condescending tone, though. He knew Steve was emotional and wore his heart on his sleeve and that was part of what made him such a nice person. "So any other news outside of sex and babies?"

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"Not that I can really think of," Bucky said with a little smile. "I mean, that's big news. A new baby girl and I finally had Steve's cock in my ass again. Three times, no less."

---

Tim blushed a little and looked away. He was a bit of a flirt but he also never out-rightly talked about
sex. But Bucky had no such restraint. Neither did Clint. They were like two horny old housewives talking about their nights with their partners in giggles and raised voices. Tim shook his head. "You're shameless," he said in a tone that somewhat envied Bucky's ability to be so open about his relationship with his husband. "Well, I'm happy for you. And I can't wait to meet your new daughter."

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"Thank you. She's wonderful. I'll let Steve know that you both are coming and Natasha too and maybe someone with you, Tim?" Bucky asked and raised his eyebrows, fishing for information on the guy he had been interested in for a while now.

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Tim blushed shyly and shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know if he's safe to be around babies. He's good with my kids, but I don't think he realizes how fragile they are. He accidentally broke my kid's finger throwing the ball too hard when they were having a catch."

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Bucky shook his head, "Yeah, how about just you then. It would be fine but I don't feel like watching him the entire time. Also, we might as well not because if he still has even a bit of a drug problem, Steve won't want him in the house."

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Tim got a guilty look on his face as if it was somehow his fault that his crush hadn't cleaned his act up yet. "I'm sure he won't be offended," Tim said. "He understands."

---

Bucky gave him an apologetic look and sighed. "I've just been on thin ice with Steve lately especially with people in the house," he informed them. "And I just got sex back so I don't want to risk anything," he jokingly added then paused before saying, "Grant's biological father more or less broke in."

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Tim’s eyes went wide. "Wait, what?" Clint had been told this story already so he went about his business. "What the hell happened?" Tim asked.

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"He came looking for Grant," Bucky said sadly. "He wanted him back. But he didn't know that Grant and Missy had both died. He even confused Christopher for a newborn and tried to take him. He and I beat each other up a little bit."

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"Jesus Christ," Tim said with a frown. "What kind of idiot mistakes a ten-month-old for a newborn? He sounds like he shouldn't be anywhere near kids."

---

Bucky nodded solemnly. He still believed that Jason could turn himself around. He might end up
being a really good man and a loving husband and father. Bucky had to believe that. He saw himself in Jason. "Anyway," he mumbled. "We have been really careful lately because of that."

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"I get it," Tim said. "Would it be weird if I brought something for the new baby? It's just exciting, you know? You guys are so lucky to have another kid."

---

Bucky smiled again, thinking of his little baby girl at home now with his husband and son. "No, of course not. You can bring her something." He turned to Clint and got his attention. "Also, I need to be at your place for a few nights to build a crib. I'm not asking if I can because you owe me."

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"What do I owe you for? I gave you a Christmas bonus," Clint joked. "Your kids are spoiled with love, I don't know who else builds cribs for each of their kids."

---

Bucky gave him a look and said, "I don't think you want me to explain in front of Tim why you owe me. I was told to keep it in confidence." He didn't really have much but he and Clint discussed so many things that he was told to keep secret that he kind of wanted to watch Clint squirm to figure out which one it was. "Besides, I won't bother you at all."

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Clint paused for a moment, going through his mind to think of any dirty secrets he told Bucky lately and there were too many to measure. "You're pulling a mind game on me, I know it," he complained mildly.

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"But, you are too worried to deny me," Bucky said with a smirk. "Besides, you told me Natasha is working late shifts this week so having me over for a couple of nights will stave off your loneliness a bit."

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"It won't stave off my loneliness, it'll stave off my jerking off time," Clint said in a grumpy voice but his smirk showed that he was messing around. "Alright, enough gossip. Back to work now."

---

Bucky picked up a large box to start unpacking it and, while Clint was still paying attention to him, said in surprised reverence, "Natasha lets you jerk off by yourself?" Clint knew Steve wasn't fond of Bucky doing anything sexual without him but Bucky didn't know Natasha was okay with it. He figured she was like Steve.

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"Well, sometimes she gets in a mood where I'm not allowed to do anything without her say so. And sometimes she's in a mood where she doesn't want anything to do with me sexually and she says I'm less obnoxious when I beat off instead of wait for her mood to end," he said.
Bucky nodded as he listened, "Huh... I'm not sure if I would prefer that to my situation or not. They both have pros and cons. Now I'm going to be thinking about this all damn day." He glared down into the box of records and sighed. "Alright, let's get this inventory out."

About halfway through the day, Steve ended up coming by the store with Sarah May in the baby carrier on his front and Christopher strapped in on his back. He had a brown bag with him. "You forgot your lunch, Buck," he said as he greeted him with a kiss on the cheek since there weren't customers around.

"Hey, Baby," Bucky said warmly and took the lunch from him. He gave Sarah May a kiss and then Christopher who was moving as much as he could in the carrier and making nonsensical noises. "Come say hello to Clint and Tim. They are in the back organizing the next round of boxes."

Christopher whined when his papa didn't go right to him. He looked even more offended when both Tim and Clint gasped and rushed to his baby sister. Sarah May's eyes went wide at all the people crowding her. "You should have seen her, Buck. She napped on Diana all morning long."

"You let our baby sleep on the dog?" Bucky asked, a little scandalized. He helped Steve get both kids out of their carriers and Bucky made sure to hold Christopher while everyone was paying attention to Sarah May. He didn't want him to feel left out.

Steve pulled out the Polaroid picture he took as proof of why he should let the baby sleep on the dog. "Look, it was cute."

Christopher hugged Bucky tightly. "Hi, Papa," he said happily. "Play?"

"No play right now, Bean," Bucky said and gave him another kiss. "Papa is at work. But I'll be home later and we can play."

Christopher wasn't too happy about that and he started to pout and reach for Bucky's hair to tug saying, "Play, play, play."

"Christopher," Steve scolded when he saw their son pull Bucky's hair. Sarah May hadn't heard Steve use his stern voice yet and her lip started to tremble a little even though it wasn't directed at her.

"It's okay, Steve," Bucky said softly and yanked his hair back into a ponytail. "Bean, we have been over this. You can't pull Papa's hair. It hurts. Ouchie." He sighed and held his son with one hand and touched Sarah May soothingly with the other to calm her down.
Christopher eased up when Bucky insisted that it hurt. He kissed his cheek and tried to act all cute and coy to get out of trouble. "Can I hold her?" Clint asked. "Natasha needs to see her when we go over for dinner. There's no way she could say no to a baby after seeing this one."

"She said no after seeing Christopher," Bucky said, confused. Steve gently handed Sarah May over to Clint and Bucky watched as she reached her little hand up towards him and kept her big brown eyes locked to his.

"Yeah, but she's smaller and quieter and cuter. Christopher is loud and she doesn't like that noise," Clint said. "Also, he pulled her hair and only I'm allowed to do that." He smiled at the baby and kissed her little hand. "Hello, cutie. You like your new home?"

"Clint, you asshole, don't say one of my kids is cuter than the other. Christopher already isn't sure what to do about Sarah May. He is used to all the attention," Bucky scolded his friend and gave Christopher some loving kisses and adjusted his shirt. "You are just as cute as your sister."

"What?" Clint asked innocently. "I'm not his parent. I don't got to pretend that I love them all equal." Christopher looked at Clint and started to sign to him asking him to play and Clint sighed. "Fine, Fine. You're just as cute." He handed Sarah May back to Steve and motioned for Bucky to put Christopher down and he pretended to chase Christopher, who giggled as he tottered around.

Bucky sighed contently and slipped his hand with Steve's. Reggie was the only one out on the floor at the moment and earlier he had just been holed up in a corner smoking. Bucky knew he needed to get back out there but he didn't want Steve and his kids to leave. "Steve, I was telling Tim and Clint they could come over this weekend for dinner if it's okay with you."

Steve cuddled Sarah May and gave her face a few kisses. "That's great," Steve said. "The more the merrier. Natasha can come too, of course." He looked happy to get to prepare for company coming over.

Bucky smiled a small, happy smile. "You need me to get our son from Clint? I don't know if you need to be going now. Thank you again for bringing me lunch, Baby. I appreciate it." He checked the time and couldn't wait to be back home.

"It's okay, I'll get him," Steve said. "I got to go shopping for some more supplies and some toys for Sarah May. I don't want to try getting Christopher to share his just yet," he explained. "But I'll see you at home." Steve kissed Bucky's cheek. "I don't mind bringing your lunch. It gives me an excuse
"I love you, Baby," Bucky said and gave Steve a kiss and said goodbye to Sarah May. "I'll be home late. I'm going to get lumber and get started on the crib. Clint reluctantly agreed. I might be blackmailing him just a little bit."

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Steve laughed. "Smart," he said. Steve collected Christopher and brought him back home. He would've stayed out at the park but Sarah May was still too little to stay out that long.

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Bucky worked hard the rest of the day and then went over to Clint's to get started making Sarah May her own crib. By the time he got back home, everyone was asleep and the lights were all out. Bucky was hungry so he made himself a sandwich and sat out on the couch and turned on the midnight news while he had his food. That's where he fell asleep, with a plate on his lap and some random news channel showing him the scandals of the day.

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When Steve got up to take care of Sarah May in the middle of the night, he heard the TV going downstairs. After changing her diaper, Steve carried her down and sat next to Bucky. He kissed his cheek and snuggled up close as he entertained their daughter by wiggling his fingers in front of her.

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Bucky roused from sleep a few minutes later. "Oh, hey, Baby," he said with a yawn and cuddled closer to Steve. "I think I fell asleep." He gently pet his hand on his daughter's hair and yawned again. "What time is it? I was at Clint's awhile."

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"It's around two in the morning," Steve said. Sarah May smiled up at her dads and snuggled deeper in the blanket Steve held her in. Diana came trotting over and curled up at Steve's feet. "How's the crib coming?"

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"It's okay," Bucky said and held up his hand with a bandage on it. "Accidentally got a cut but it wasn't too bad." He reached down and hoisted Diana up on to his lap. She was pretty big now but still a pup. He gave her some pets and love and closed his eyes. "I should be done with the crib in a few days."

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Diana's tongue lolled out of her mouth and she looked happily over at Bucky before licking his face a few times. "Sarah May is going to love it," Steve said. "Are we going to keep her in our room for a little while?"

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"I think that is probably best," Bucky said. "That's what we did with Christopher and I'm not sure
when he will be entirely comfortable with her to have her sharing the nursery." He thought again about Grant. He wondered if he would have agreed to having Sarah May if he was still there with them. That would have been a lot of babies at once. But he also already loved his daughter so much that he couldn't think about not immediately taking her in regardless of how many kids they had.

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Sarah May cooed and made soft noises up at Bucky as if she was trying to communicate with him. Steve's heart melted. "Maybe once she starts sleeping through the night we can consider putting her and Christopher together. I hope by then he learns that his little sister will be his best friend."

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Bucky watched her closely and smiled down at her. He really did love her so much. "Christopher will get used to her in time. Becca wasn't fond of Lilly at first but she sucked it up and now they are almost amicable with each other."

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"These two are a little closer in age. So I'm hoping that they're even closer than Becca and Lilly. I know they will have arguments sometimes, but I hope they are so close it's not a big deal," Steve said. Sarah May smiled softly up at Bucky and made a humming noise.

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Bucky gasped excitedly and took one of her tiny hands. "Look at those big brown eyes! What do you see, Sweetheart? Do you see Papa and Daddy? Do you see Diana and your new home? I love how surprised and curious you look all the time."

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Sarah May looked enraptured as she was given attention. "Oh, look at her," Steve said in a soft tone. "It reminds me of Christopher when he first came home. He didn't know what to make of everything."

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"He was also pretty quiet like she is," Bucky mused. "Man, but he grew out of that incredibly fast." He reached over and pulled Steve close to him to give him a slow gentle kiss. "I'm really tired and I have work tomorrow. Can we go to bed?"

---

"Yeah. It's like he isn't the same baby anymore. He's his own little person now." Steve returned the kiss and held Sarah May close to his chest. "Yeah, we can go. I think this little one is ready to be put back to sleep. Am I right, Sarah May?"

---

Sarah May yawned in response and squeezed her hands into tiny fists a few times. Once they were back in the master bedroom and she was put back to sleep, Bucky changed into his pajamas and flopped down on the bed. "God, it's been a long day. I hauled so much inventory and then lumber."
Steve curled right up with Bucky. "You work so hard for your family, Buck. You're such a great father, you know that? I tell Christopher all the time how much you do for him. He may not understand completely, but, the thought is there."

---

Bucky smiled and gave Steve a kiss. "That's so sweet. Thank you, Baby. I know I complain about my job sometimes and I'm going to work on that. But, it's a good job." He knew now with Steve out of a job and four children in his care, Bucky would never be able to go back to school. It hurt a little to think about since he got his hopes up before but he was just going to have to deal with it. His family needed him and he was going to work every damn day so his husband and his kids could all have safe, comfortable, happy lives.

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"You're allowed to complain, love. Work sucks sometimes. You know how much I loved being a police officer and there were some days I wish I hadn't shown up for work at all." He pet his fingers through Bucky's hair. "We have an amazing life because of you."

---

Bucky pulled Steve close and kissed him several times. "God, I love you so much. And I'm going to make you all so happy. That's all I want. For you all to be happy and have good lives. And I want to see our kids all grow up and learn and explore and become kind and caring people."

---

Steve wrapped his arms around Bucky and kissed him back lovingly. "I'll make sure of that, Bucky. Our kids are going to be so amazing. I'll raise them right and you'll set a good example of what hard work is and how they always have to set time aside for family."

---

Bucky kissed along Steve's neck and moved on top of him. He was a little too tired for sex but making out until he fell asleep was a good option. "How many kids are we having again? Tell me about them. How many girls and boys? And what are we going to do once we outgrow this house? Are we going to move out to Long Island and have a yard for all those kids?"

---

Steve arched his back and rubbed lazily against Bucky just because. "We are going to have four more. I want to have... two girls and twin boys. Or maybe twin girls? I don't know. But they're going to be the best. And we're never moving out of this house. We can build an extra room and get rid of the little yard. We can take the kids to the park if they want to run."

---

"We are having no yard here?" Bucky asked and grinded back against Steve. "If we just buy out the property next to us then we can tear it down and just expand this house sideways so we still have a little bit of yard."

---

"Buy out the property next to us, huh? You plan on hitting the lotto, Babe?" Steve teased lightly. "How're we going to afford all that land plus all our kids?"
Bucky lifted Steve's shirt up so he could kiss at his chest. "Yeah, I can make it happen. I'll save up. I'll get another job. I don't care. It seems like a good idea so I'll see if I can't make it work. I want the perfect house for our family."

Steve purred when he was kissed and scratched his nails gently against the back of Bucky's neck. "My perfect provider of a husband," Steve sighed dreamily. "I'll help you, too. You deserve to have time to spend in our home with our kids. You shouldn't have to work day in and day out."

Bucky licked over Steve's abs and then kissed his chest again before deciding to give it a rest because he was really tired. He curled back up next to Steve and held his hand. "I think once you are able to work again, you should do the mommy-and-me art classes but that's it. I want you to be able to do all the things that you want to and nothing else."

Steve groaned softly at the lack of contact from Bucky. They were both too tired to keep it up but it still felt good. "I want to do those. I think it'll really take off, especially for all the stay-at-home parents who want creative outlets for their kids, you know?"

Bucky nodded and nuzzled against Steve. "I think it'll be great. I think you'll make friends and do a lot of good for our kids and other kids. Maybe Christopher will become the next Picasso. How does that sound?"

"I like the sound of all that," Steve agreed. "Christopher is going to be the best artist, I bet. He's going to be the best at whatever he sets his mind to. Cause he's our kid."

"We are going to raise a brood of beautiful talented genius children," Bucky said with a warm smile and gave Steve another kiss. "And I'm going to love every second of it." He sighed and closed his eyes. "Okay, now it's sleep time. I'm so tired."
Christopher didn't understand what was going on exactly, but he seemed to know that something exciting was going to happen with the way the house was bustling. Lilly had been the one to wake him up and she had him on her hip as she came crashing through Steve and Bucky's bedroom door. "Wake up! It's Christmas morning!"

---

Bucky immediately groaned and rolled onto his stomach and held a pillow over his head. Sarah May, who now had her own crib in their room, woke up surprised and worried but didn't cry. She just watched with big eyes from where she was laying, waiting to be picked up. "Lilly, I swear to god!" Bucky grumbled. It was last year all over again. He wanted at least another hour of sleep. And he knew Becca was probably asleep still as well.

---

Steve gave Lilly a tired glare and tried to ignore her but Christopher was squealing excitedly and asking for his daddy. He groaned as he sat up and reached out for his son. "Lilly, go wake up your sister like you woke us and see if you still have arms left to open your presents after."

---

Lilly excitedly dashed out of their room to get Becca up. Bucky groaned again and moved to shove his face against Steve's side. "What time is it?" he asked and huffed out a big sigh. "Every damn year with this. Every year. She can't just give me until like ten in the morning? That would be nice."

---

"Next year we should rig the door to dump a bucket of water on her," Steve said. It probably would be worth the cleanup, though if they had done that this year then Christopher would've been caught in the crossfire. "It's eight in the morning," Steve said tiredly. "I want to nap but we already have two babies looking for attention."

---

Bucky sat up and looked over at Sarah May who was quietly reaching her hand out to him and pleading with her eyes to be picked up. Bucky rolled out of bed and tugged on his pajama pants and a jacket that he left unzipped so Sarah May could lay on his skin and calm down. "Hello, Sweet Pea," he said and lifted her gently out of the crib.

---

Sarah May really was such a loving, sweet baby. She always looked to be held even though she didn't cry when she had to wait. She made little noises at Bucky and laid her cheek on his chest. "It's a shame she can't open presents yet."

---

"I don't think Christopher is really going to understand the concept either," Bucky said and sat on the edge of the bed. "He might just shake things and hope for the best." He couldn't believe that it was both of their babies' first Christmas. They had Christopher for a while now and he would be a year old very soon. And Sarah May was about two weeks old today. It was so surreal to him.
"I know but he at least can kind of tear the paper. Right, Bean? Are you going to open the presents Santa brought you today?" Steve asked his son. Christopher nodded his head automatically because Steve was using his excited voice.

Bucky scrunched up his nose and grabbed one of Sarah May's blankets and laid it on her back. "Oh, so we are doing Santa?" he asked and looked to Steve. "Just that we didn't talk about it. But that's okay. We can do Santa."

"Santa is fun," Steve said. "And also a good motivator to scare them into behaving," he added. Sarah May gurgled happily and tried to reach up to feel Bucky's face.

Bucky kissed his daughter's fingers and smiled at her. "Scare them into behaving?" he repeated incredulously. "That's the Catholic boy in you talking. Don't you think they should behave because they love us and know what's right?"

Christopher huffed. "Papa." He sighed that he wanted Bucky to give him a kiss.

"They should behave because they love us. But it doesn't hurt to have some backup," Steve offered.

Bucky nodded and gently set Sarah May down on the bed and leaned over to give Christopher a kiss as well. "Okay, Sweet Pea," he turned back to his daughter. "Let's get you changed and dressed and then we can go have Christmas."

Sarah May gave Bucky no problem being changed into the elf costume that Steve insisted that she wear. Christopher reluctantly wore the Santa outfit and Diana looked downright pathetic having to wear the antlers that Steve made for her.

Bucky sighed and watched his two children and the dog staring up at him like they had no idea what was happening to them. "Steve, these poor babies look miserable," he said and picked up Sarah May.

"No, they look damned adorable," Steve said. Sarah May gurgled up at Bucky and laid her head on his shoulder. Steve had a sneaking suspicion that she liked Bucky more than him.

Bucky shook his head and pulled Steve in and gave him a kiss. "Hey, we got engaged a whole year ago today at a whole different home with only two kids in our care and no dog." He smiled at his
husband. "I know the day took a turn for the worse last year but I'm not letting that happen this time. This is our son and daughter's first Christmas," he looked down at Sarah May and then to Christopher. "And Papa is sober and hasn't had any alcohol for five weeks. And Nana is coming over later and your brother is with Granny and Papaw and watching over us all today."

---

Steve smiled widely. "Time flies, doesn't it?" he said. "I love how much we accomplished in a year, Buck. We built our family, got ourselves a house. There isn't a thing in this world we can't do." Becca had made her way downstairs and Lilly started shouting for them to hurry up. Steve snuck in a kiss. "I'm proud of you, Bucky."

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"I'm proud of both of us," Bucky whispered back and then led them downstairs to his sisters. "Okay, Lilly, okay. Jesus," he whined and sat on the couch next to Becca who was wrapped in a blanket and staring at Lilly like she was going to be her first murder victim. "Lilly, why don't you help Steve get a bottle for Sarah May and a snack for Christopher then we can start."

---

Christopher's eyes went wide when he saw all the brightly colored boxes all around them. Sarah May was interested in the bottle but Christopher completely ignored the snack in favor of walking over to examine the boxes. "Christopher is getting it already," Steve said.

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"Okay, Bean," Bucky said to try to get his son's attention. "Let Daddy help you open presents. And they aren't all for you." Christopher had already laid his body over top of a large present for Lilly like he was claiming it as his own now.

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Steve got up and gently lifted Christopher off the large present. "No, Dada!" he whined. Steve laughed and kissed his cheek before picking out one of Christopher's presents - a new set of blocks. "Here, Baby Boy. Let's open this one." He looked up at Bucky to make sure he was watching.

---

Bucky held Sarah May and fed her while he kept his eyes on Christopher as he opened his first Christmas present ever. After Steve showed him how to rip it the paper, he got the hang of it and started tearing it to shreds. He was far more focused on the paper than anything else and hadn't even realized he had new blocks.

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"Christopher-" Steve started to correct, but his son was loving the paper so he wasn't going to bother. "Lilly, you can open yours now." The youngest Barnes tore at the biggest present immediately.

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Lilly's breath caught in her throat. Bucky had talked with Natasha and Sam and they managed to pull some strings to get him in to see the coach of the Yankees. He brought a Yankees fan jersey with him and asked the coach if he could get the entire team to sign it. Just so happens that the coach's nephew was in the same company as Sam in the military so he was happy to oblige him. After all
was said and done, Bucky had a Yankees jersey signed by the coach and the entire team placed neatly in a glass case for his sister. "You like it, Lil?" Bucky asked softly and grinned at her.

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Lilly literally screamed in excitement. "Oh, my god! How did you do this?" She would've flung herself at him if he didn't have the baby, so she settled for only half squeezing the life out of him in a hug. "This is amazing!" Christopher started screeching to join in on the excitement.

---

Sarah May and Becca were both startled and annoyed by the noise. Becca shoved her fingers in her ears and pulled her blanket tighter around her. Sarah May looked up at Bucky and quietly pleaded with him to make it stop. Bucky held on to Lilly with one arm and gave her a kiss on the cheek. "Is it a good gift? Do you like it?"

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"Fuck, yeah, it's a good gift!" Lilly exclaimed. Steve chose not to scold her for cursing because she was so happy. "Sorry, Bucky, but I don't think any of the other gifts you got me could beat this."

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Bucky gave her a squeeze then let go. "I'm glad you like it. And it's okay that you don't think the others will live up to it. It's probably true." He readjusted Sarah May in his arms and then said, "Becca, are you going to open your stuff or no?"

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"I had to wait for the banshee to pass so my ears were safe," Becca sassed, giving Lilly a glare. She was more reserved as she opened up her presents, looking pleased but not too overjoyed or else it would ruin her aloof reputation.

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Bucky looked to Steve a few times as Becca worked through her gifts. He hoped he would get some sort of enthusiasm when she opened her complete history of the Roman Empire, which she had been wanting a while but she just mumbled, "Thank you," and smiled tiredly at the two of them.

---

Steve gave Bucky a hug and a kiss. "Don't take it personally," he murmured softly to him. He passed Bucky a box that said 'From Christopher' on it. Inside was a shirt that said 'My Son Loves Me'. It was cheesy, but Steve wanted to get stuff appropriate from their kids for Bucky.

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Bucky thanked his son who didn't care about anything but his new toys. "And thank you, Steve," he added. "You really are my perfect dorky husband." Steve helped Christopher open the boxes to his new toys and would bring Sarah May her presents so Bucky could open it for her. It was mostly rattles and pacifiers. Once everyone was done with presents, Bucky handed Sarah May to Becca and said, "Alright, Steve, your big present from me is outside in the lawn so come on."
"Oh?" Steve asked, sounding very interested. "I don’t know if you'll be able to outdo what you gave me last year, Babe." He pushed up close behind Bucky as they walked to the back door.

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"I can try," Bucky said warmly and opened the back door for Steve. Bucky had gotten him a set of gardening tools both for large plots and for small pots. "I know you won't be able to plant much with the land we have but you can give it a shot."

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Steve gasped and beamed brightly. "Oh, my god, Buck! This is perfect!" he said as he rushed outside in the cold to look at all the tools. "I can plant tomatoes in these big ones! And herbs in the little ones!"

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Bucky chuckled and leaned against the doorframe to watch Steve in all his excitement. "You like it, Baby?" he asked and shivered a bit in the cold. "It’ll be awhile before you can use it but at least you have it."

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"Are you kidding? I'll be able to plant stuff and keep them in the kitchen until springtime," Steve said in an excited tone. He brought the pots inside and kissed Bucky's face a few times. "I love you," he said happily.

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"I love you, too," Bucky said and kissed Steve back slowly before hearing his kids making noises in the living room. "We probably won't get Christmas sex this year, will we? We have too many kids to keep track of."

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Steve laughed. "We can try, but I wouldn't hold my breath," he said. "I'm lucky if Sarah May gives you five minutes alone with me. She loves you." He took Bucky's hand and walked inside to see Christopher loudly shouting as he banged the little toy drum he got for Christmas.

---

Bucky held on to Steve until Becca came over to deposit Sarah May back into his arms. She loved her but she was also clearly done holding her. Bucky held his daughter close and kissed her head. "She loves you, too," he said to Steve and held her up to him. "I'm just glad she hasn't yet learned Christopher's trick of hair pulling."

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Sarah May smiled happily up at her pop and reached up to hold Bucky's shirt in her little hand. "Sarah May got you something for Christmas, too," Steve reminded. Bucky hardly opened his presents.

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Bucky nodded and sat back down on the couch. "Okay, what did I get, Sweet Pea?" he asked his
daughter and waited for Steve to bring him whatever it was he needed to open. He meant to tell Steve not to get him anything this year. They were going to be slightly strapped for cash this month and next month and he didn't think he needed anything at all.

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Steve handed Bucky a box that had a comfy flannel sweater inside of it and on the cuffs, all three of their children's names were embroidered on it. Steve knew money was tight but he wanted to make this special since it was their first Christmas married and with kids. Also, Bucky needed warm clothes.

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Bucky opened up the gift and felt the fabric against his face. "Thank you, Sarah May, this is really nice and very soft." He hadn't yet realized what was on the sleeve. "Here, Steve, can you hold her and I'll put this on?" He passed his daughter off and pulled the sweater on then he saw the cuff and gasped. "Oh, hey," he whispered and looked at it closer. "Look at that. Steve, Baby, I love this. This is my new favorite sweater. Thank you. Did your mom sew this?"

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Steve smiled proudly and nodded. "Yeah. I saw the sweater in the store and knew it was comfy, but I wanted it to be special. I was going to try to do it myself but I didn’t have the skill.”

---

Bucky pulled his husband close to him and gave him a kiss. "I love it. She did a great job. I'll be sure to tell her when she is over later." He smiled and just looked at Steve for a bit then added. "Did you want to go over to the cemetery before she gets here or do you think she will want to come with us?"

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Steve returned the kiss sweetly. "I think she would want to go with us," he said. "I think she knit something for Grant’s grave. We know the grave keeper will probably end up throwing it out, but she wanted to make it for him anyway."

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"Okay, then we will wait for her to get here," Bucky said softly and went to pick up Christopher from the ground. "Right now, though, we should get some breakfast. Because I'm hungry and I think the girls are too."

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"Papa," Christopher whined, grabbing his block just in time and then calming down.

Steve asked, "What would you like to eat, Love? How about chocolate chip pancakes?"

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"I'm fine with that," Bucky said happily and held Christopher against his chest. "You want pancakes, Bean?" he asked and brought him to the kitchen following Steve. "He should also have some fruit."

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"Of course," Steve agreed. He put Sarah May in her rocker in the kitchen so he could start on
breakfast. Lilly was marveling at the signatures Bucky got, Becca was curled up with Raphael on the couch with her book, Diana was gnawing on her new bone, and both Bucky was occupying Christopher. "We need to do a Christmas card next year."

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"Who would we send a Christmas card to, Steve?" Bucky asked and cut up some bits of apple for his son. "I mean we can do it but we don't know people and the people we do know already see us all the time." He thought about the types of people who usually got Christmas cards - extended family, old friends, former coworkers. Anyone who he used to know wouldn't know he was married to a man so it wasn't probably smart to go sending his uncle and aunt a card of him and Steve and their kids.

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"Clint, Natasha, Sam, Mom, Tim, anyone from the shelter who made it back on their feet, Father Frank, Laura, Monty," Steve listed off the top of his head. "All the people in Seneca who know about us."

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"Okay, fine," Bucky sighed. "We can do that next year." Christopher started shoving apples into his mouth and Bucky had to move them farther away from him so he wouldn't choke. "I got another card from my uncle and his family. It was just as heartless as usual. Just the same, 'Sorry my brother and his wife are dead. Have a good Christmas,' and that's all. I've stopped replying. I figure if they actually cared, they would call sometimes."

---

"Papa," Christopher huffed. He started signing that he was hungry and was making the most pathetic faces up at Bucky for sympathy.

"You think we should send him one, too? I mean, there's not much to lose. You never talk with them anyway," Steve asked.

---

"No," Bucky said firmly and handed Christopher one more piece. "Last time I saw them was the funeral. They were cold and distant and didn't seem to care that my parents were gone. And they used to call but that stopped about three years ago. They don't give a shit about us and I don't really give a shit about them."

---

"Alright," Steve said. It wasn't worth the argument or the headache to try and convince Bucky otherwise. He took everyone's plates and put food on them. "Can you set the table, Love?"

---

Bucky stood up slowly and helped get the table all ready. Then he went and got Becca from the living room and took Sarah May from her rocker. "I just don't want them seeing the two of us and our babies and then calling to tell me how disgusting I am and call us names and, I don't know, threaten to take the girls to California. It'll just be a mess."
"I understand," Steve said. "It's a shame that they're not more involved. If you were my nephew, I'd have done anything I could to help."

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"Yes, but, Steve, you are a nice person. Uncle Gregory is not," Bucky sighed and sat down. "He never liked my dad too much and we never really knew why. And my cousins liked the girls but never liked me and I don't know why either."

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"Maybe they've got a thing against good, honest men." Steve kissed Bucky's face a few times before taking his own seat. "Let's hope that he will come around one day, yeah?"

---

Bucky nodded and played with his daughter's soft dark hair. "I guess so," he said and kissed Sarah May gently. He was quiet for a while just thinking about it. He knew he should probably just contact them and decide once and for all if they were going to be a family again or not.

---

Steve ate his food and smiled as Christopher mashed his cut-up pancake bits into his face. "I think we should make some hot cocoa to take to the cemetery with us so it won't feel so cold out," Steve said.

---

"That's a good idea," Bucky said with a sigh and grabbed Sarah May's hand when she reached up at him. "I'm a little worried that it'll be too cold for Sarah May. I mean, it's snowy out and, even if I bundle her up, it still might not be enough."

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Steve nodded. "We can ask my mom to bring her back if it's too cold for her. Out of all of us, I think she wouldn't mind heading back early from the cemetery." Sarah May let out a big, excited squeal.

---

"What's up, Baby Girl?" Bucky asked his daughter and kissed her hand. "Did you hear that Nana is coming?" He stood up again with her to get the bottle he had waiting. She was probably a little hungry again. "And I don't think your mom will complain about getting to have Sarah May for a while."

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"My mom would take her home with her if she had the chance," he laughed. A couple minutes later, Sarah knocked once on the door before coming inside even though they knew she had a key. And true to Steve's prediction, the first one she kissed was Sarah May.

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Bucky greeted her and passed his daughter off to her nana. "Merry Christmas, Sarah," Bucky said and offered her a seat at the table. "Did you walk here in the snow or take a cab?" He hoped she didn't walk. It was pretty far to walk in the weather.
"I took a cab," she said with a shrug.

"Mom," Steve scolded because he knew she was lying. Sarah gave her son a little smirk and then cuddled her granddaughter.

"Nana!" Christopher gasped excitedly and ran over to her.

Christopher tried crawling up into Sarah's lap but couldn't get up. Bucky came over and quickly lifted him up so he could say 'hello' to his nana. "Nana, no!" he grumped and pointed at Sarah May. "No, no," he repeated and tried to pull her hands away from the baby.

"Hello, Christopher," Sarah said sweetly to her grandson, ignoring the protest and pulling as she kissed his cheek. "Can you show Nana what Santa brought? Did you get new toys?"

Christopher whined and looked to Steve for help. Bucky peeled him off of Sarah and said, "Bean, let's show Nana what you got." But Christopher only screamed at being taken away and he squirmed violently in Bucky's arms. Sarah May also got upset at the noise and started to cry.

Becca looked up from her book in annoyance when both babies were suddenly screaming and crying. Steve quickly took Sarah May from his mom and tried to soothe her. Sarah went over to calm her grandson. "What's all the fuss, little guy?"

Christopher clung to his nana and kissed her face. "Nana!" he said eagerly and burrowed into her neck.

Bucky sighed and rubbed his temples. "I'll be right back," he said and trudged off to get some headache medicine with Diana padding after him.

Sarah chuckled and hugged Christopher closer. "Such a fuss just to get my attention! Christopher, your nana loves you both." She kissed the top of his head and Steve managed to calm down Sarah May while Bucky got medicine.

Bucky took some medicine and then got food for the dog before going back to the living room and flopping on the couch. "Steve, Love, why are our children so loud today?" he sighed and closed his eyes. "I just want a short amount of quiet time."

Steve sat down next to Bucky with Sarah May in his arms. "Because this household was never meant to be quiet from the day we moved back here." He smiled and kissed Bucky slowly. "The
babies will have to nap eventually."

---

"When will that be?" Bucky groaned and looked at Sarah May who was wide-awake. "You think later your mom would watch the kids so we can have quiet alone time. We don't even have to have sex but maybe just a nap?"

---

Sarah May wiggled happily in Steve's arms. She really was such a cute, little girl. "Sure. I was going to suggest that, too." He used his free hand to play with Bucky's hair. "You want to try sneaking up there now?"

---

Bucky nodded and got up from the couch. "I'm going to go lay down and you come join me when you can," he said and slipped off upstairs. He really was pretty worn out. This Christmas wasn't as stressful as the last Christmas but he was still pretty worked up. His parents and his son should be there. And his one-year-old was acting up and he was just so tired.

---

Steve stayed downstairs for a little bit to make sure the world wasn't going to collapse on itself and then he had his mom look after both of their children so he could join Bucky upstairs. He climbed into bed with him and kissed his face. "You want a massage, Buck?"

---

Bucky hummed contently when Steve started touching him. "Oh, I don't mind. Whatever you want to do. I'm serious about a nap, though. If you don't feel like doing anything then a nap is fine. But if you want to do something I'm good for that too."

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Steve kissed along Bucky's neck. "Well, how about I massage you and if you get in the mood, we will do more?" He gently started to massage Bucky's shoulders.

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"Okay," Bucky said and then groaned when Steve hit a knot on his back. "You want to just massage me and then maybe we can do sixty-nine and call it a day?" he asked and let his eyes shut. "That feels good. Thank you."

---

"I like the sound of that," Steve purred. He kissed him a few times while his hands worked over Bucky's torso. "You are such a dad," he chuckled fondly. "Too tired for sex."

---

Bucky winced a little when Steve hit a particularly sore spot. "Normally, I would argue with you but I just don't have it in me," he said with a sigh. "It's a weird phenomenon. It's like, when I got the girls, I became a pseudo-dad with some little hiccups and headaches and then when I became an actual dad it all just intensified."
Steve went easier on the sore spot and smiled fondly at his handsome husband. "It's because the girls were their own people and they were your sisters first. Our kids look to us for everything."

"Yeah, I thought it would be so easy for me to raise babies because I helped with the girls as babies. But my parents really had their hands full and I never realized," Bucky said and reached a hand back to feel Steve. "It's a little different when you can't make the excuse that you have homework to do so you don't have to help two-year-old Lilly to eat her vegetables."

Steve nodded. "I bet your parents have the biggest ‘told you so’ look like right now," he said. He kissed along Bucky's shoulders. "We got to come up with clever ways to trick our kids into liking vegetables."

"Christopher likes vegetables so far. At least some of them," Bucky said and gently rolled over on to his back and pulled Steve down on top of him. "I have a feeling it won't be that much of an issue with him." He closed his eyes again and held Steve close to him. "I could fall asleep."

Steve snuggled in close to Bucky and ran his hands along his sides. "Then how about we forget about sex for now, Handsome? Let me cuddle you to sleep."

Bucky whined and pressed his face against Steve's chest. "Fine, but let me suck you off tonight after everyone's asleep, at least?" he asked and paid attention to Steve's warm comfortable weight on top of him.

Steve laughed and gave Bucky a kiss to his soft hair. "Of course. I can't turn down my husband blowing me." He slid his hand lower on Bucky's body and snuggled in, draping the blankets around them. "Go to sleep, Papa."

"That's ‘Mr. Sweet Ass’ to you," Bucky mumbled and drifted off to sleep with Steve secure next to him and his family safe with their nana downstairs. He savored every second of getting to sleep soundly with Steve for just a bit.

Bucky got about forty minutes of napping in before Christopher started calling for his dad and pop just because he couldn't find them and Nana didn't quite cut it.

Bucky grumbled and rolled over on his side. "Steve," he said quietly. "Steve, Christopher," he mumbled a little louder. There was a gentle knock on the door and Sarah's voice calling out to them.
to see if she could come in with their son.

"Yeah, Ma, come in," Steve said tiredly. Sarah opened the door and Christopher came running in, making excited noises as he tried to climb up the bed. Steve hoisted him up and the baby let out wild, little giggles and he crawled over and flopped down between the two of them.

Bucky sighed and rolled to face his son and pull him in to kiss his head. "What's wrong, Little Bean?" he asked and pet his son's light long hair. He was serious about never cutting it. He wanted it to be down to his back and beautiful.

"Play?" Christopher asked hopefully as he wiggled around. He didn't understand what Christmas was, exactly, but he could feel the energy in the house and knew it was exciting.

"The girls didn't want to play blocks with him," Sarah explained.

Bucky sat up, bringing Christopher with him and he pulled his hair back. "Okay, Bean, blocks for a little bit then we are going to go to the cemetery to see you brother and Papaw and Granny."

Christopher smiled up at Bucky and held on to him. Steve rolled out of bed and combed his fingers through his hair. He took Sarah May from his mom and cuddled her. "Should she be out in the cold?" she asked, nodding at Sarah May.

"I was thinking she would be okay for a little bit if we bundle her up nice and warm," Bucky said. "But if you think that's a bad idea, I'll just stay here with her." He kept finding himself looking to Sarah for parenting advice when he questioned himself too much.

"Yeah, Ma, we can bundle-" Steve started to say, but Sarah shook her head firmly.

"I'll stay home with her. She shouldn't be taken outside before she's had her vaccinations. I'm not even worried about the cold so much," Sarah offered.

"I'll stay with her, Sarah," Bucky said and held Christopher against his chest. "I went to the cemetery yesterday with Steve so you should go today. I wouldn't mind a little quiet time with Sarah May anyway."

Sarah wasn't going to argue with Bucky over it. Christopher allowed Bucky to hold him for a few moments before he started to squirm again. "Play, Papa, play," he reminded.
Bucky nodded and took his son downstairs to play. He brought out his new blocks and some toys that crinkled and squeaked. "Okay, Christopher, let's play. Papa is ready to play." He started building up a block tower so Christopher could knock it down as Steve moved to come sit behind them on the couch with Sarah May.

When some of the toys squeaked, Diana came running over, thinking that it was for her. She sat patiently, tail wagging as she waited for the toy. Christopher gleefully knocked down the tower every time Bucky set it up. "I'm a little concerned how much he enjoys that," Steve said, half joking.

"Maybe he will become a demolitions expert," Bucky offered and once again built the tower up as he saw Diana out of the corner of his eye steal a toy from Christopher's pile and then hide off under the couch with it.

"But he makes such pretty pictures," Steve said. "He's got to be an artist."
He didn't notice that Diana ran off with a toy but Christopher did. "Ana, no!" he said, chasing after her. "No."

Bucky grumbled and hurried after Christopher before he could crawl under the couch after the dog. He hoisted him up and plopped him down next to Steve and then reached under the couch to grab the toy from Diana saying, "Leave it. Diana, leave it."

Diana dropped it but started to pace and whine. Her ears pinned back until Steve gave her one of her own chew toys. "Should we start getting him ready for going out? Or do you want to watch both the kids while we go?"

"That's up to you, Babe," Bucky said with a sigh as he got back up off the ground. "I was thinking I would just rest here with Sarah May but if you don't want to take Christopher then I'll keep him too."

"I'll bring him with me," Steve said. "I want him to see his brother today." He kissed Bucky's cheek and picked up their son. "You want to go out and see your brother and grandparents, Bean? You like the outside, don't you?"

Christopher bounced and giggled in Steve's arms, excited about what was going on even if he didn't understand. "Can you make sure he keeps his hat on this time? We lost another one a few days ago when he went to the store," Bucky said.
Steve grabbed Christopher's jacket and started to get him dressed. He kept wiggling, so it was a bit difficult. "Of course," he said. "I haven't lost a hat yet, have I?"

---

Christopher bubbled a laugh at him and Bucky sneered at Steve. "Well, it's difficult to keep track when he wiggles all over the place and yanks it off," he grumped and pet Raphael when he came over to rub on his leg.

---

Steve got Christopher into his coat and he put hat and mittens on as well. This time he had Christopher in a Santa hat. "I think you secretly didn't like the last hat he had."

---

Bucky stared at the hat and rolled his eyes. "My god, that poor child," he said quietly and looked at his son who was already reaching up to try to grab the hat from his head. He got up and pulled Steve in close for a kiss. "Be safe. Tell my parents and our boy I love them."

---

"I will tell them that. And all the good stuff that's been going on," Steve promised. He kissed him once more and herded his family out. Once everyone was gone, Sarah May looked over at Bucky with an expression that conveyed that she was grateful for some quiet.

---

Bucky kissed his daughter's dark curly hair and moved to lay on the couch with her nestled on his chest. He sang to her for a bit until she fell asleep. It only took a couple minutes for him to follow her lead and drift off with his hands holding her securely in place.

---

The house was silent except for the occasional patter of Raphael's paws on the floor. They napped together for a while. It was peaceful and serene up until there was a thud followed by a yelp as Sarah May began to cry from the floor. Bucky’s grip on her must have loosened during his slumber.

---

Bucky jolted up from the couch and his blurry eyes tried to figure out where the noise was coming from until he saw Sarah May down on the ground. "Oh, fuck, baby!" he said and quickly but carefully picked her up and held her close to his chest. "Oh, my god. Baby girl. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry, Sweetheart. How long have you been there? Are you hurt? Sarah May, I'm so sorry." The baby kept crying as he checked her over for any bumps, bruises, or cuts. "Oh, my god. Let's go to the hospital. I can't tell if you are okay."

---

Sarah May kept crying loudly, sounding more scared than hurt. The cat came bounding into the room to examine the ruckus. The family came home moments later to the scene and Steve rushed over to see what's going on. "Bucky, why’s she crying like that?"
Bucky turned towards Steve, scared and worried. "Steve, she fell!" he said hurriedly and gently bounced her, trying to get her to calm down. "She fell off the couch. She won't stop crying. I don't know what's wrong with her. Please, help me, please!"

---

"She what? Weren't you watching her?" Steve asked in a scared voice as he took her and started to look her over for injury.

Both parents were now panicking and Sarah calmly walked over and gave them both a pinch. "She's probably fine, stop freaking out or else you're going to scare her more."

---

Bucky shook his head and kept panicking anyway. "We were sleeping on the couch and she must have rolled off or something. She just started screaming and I didn't know what to do. I think we should take her to the hospital. We need to make sure she is safe."

---

Sarah took her granddaughter from her son's arms and lightly bounced her while singing and smiling, completely ignoring the two men's concerns. Like magic, Sarah May's crying started to subside and Steve nudged Bucky to take a look.

---

Bucky watched but kept a strong hold on Steve's hand and chewed his lip. "Is she okay?" he whispered and looked to Sarah and then to his daughter. "Steve, I swear I didn't mean to drop her. She just fell. I didn't mean too."

---

It was Steve's initial instinct to want to scold Bucky for falling asleep on parent duty but he bit his tongue because he knew it was an honest mistake. Sarah was able to calm the baby down before she offered her back to her parents. "See? No harm done."

---

Bucky quickly took Sarah May back and kissed her over and over and then apologized a million times to her and to Steve. He felt his eyes watering up and moved to lean into Steve and wait for him to wrap his arms around the two of them and hold them close.

---

Sarah gave her son a scolding look because she could see that initial judgment in Steve's eyes. He sighed and wrapped his arms around the both of them. "It's okay, Buck," he said softly. "Accidents happen."

---

Bucky apologized again and watched his daughter who was now perfectly calm and making fists with her hand on his chest. "She's okay. She's okay. Everything's okay isn't it, Sweet Pea?"

---

Sarah walked over to Bucky and gave his shoulder a gentle squeeze. "Babies are more resilient than
you think," she reassured. "God may have made them to need us, but he knew that us humans are prone to little accidents like this."

---

"She was just so scared," Bucky added, nervous again. "She screamed so loudly. I was so worried." He took a deep breath and looked up to Steve. "Baby, I'm so sorry. Are you mad? You're mad. I'm sorry."

---

"Well, it probably was one of the scariest things that happened to her. She's not yet a month old, a lot will scare her," Sarah reassured.

Steve looked down at his daughter. "I'm upset. But I'm not mad at you," he answered.

---

Bucky nodded and sat down on the couch. "Christmas is not my day," he said and stared at Steve. So far this year wasn't as bad as the last year but it was still not great. "At least she's not actually hurt."

---

Sarah May seemed to have already forgiven Bucky. She gurgled and reached up for him so he would play with her hands like he usually did. "It's better than last year. Maybe next year we will have a Christmas without incident," Steve offered.

---

"Or at the very least, maybe next year it won't be my fault. Maybe you'll mess up for once," Bucky said lightly but sort of meant it. He hated always being the one who ruined everything. It was never really Steve's fault. It was always him.

---

"I'd rather that neither of us mess up," Steve said. Christopher came trotting over with a new toy in hand. He wiggled it in Sarah May's direction and Steve gasped. "Are you trying to share with your sister?"

---

Sarah May stared at Christopher and then slowly reached out and tried to grasp the toy. It was too heavy for her to hold so it dropped and Christopher huffed as he picked it up again. "No, Ya-Ya," he said and held it out again. When it dropped for a second time he said, "No, Ya-Ya!" and tried again.

"Is he trying to say 'Sarah'?' Bucky asked and heard Christopher say 'Ya-Ya' again. It hadn't occurred to him that he was going to start to try saying her name. "That's precious. Say it again, Bean."

---

Steve smiled widely. "I think he is," he said happily. Christopher watched to make sure the toy didn't drop again. "You think he's realized she's here to stay?"

When Sarah May didn't use the toy right, he reached up for it again. "Ya-Ya. Play."
Bucky giggled and watched Sarah May look all confused at her big brother. "I think he knows now. He's been pretty good with her for a couple days." He smiled up at his husband and said softly, "Hey... how was Grant today?"

Steve handed the toy back to Christopher, who tried to show her how to get it to make the noise. "Ma made a blanket for his grave," Steve said. "And the grass around him was cut recently. I think they knew people were going to visit more often because of Christmas."

"That sounds nice," Bucky said warmly. "But, how was he, do you think? You think he knew it was his first Christmas? Do you think my parents have been giving him a good holiday?" he asked and thought about how much he wished they all were here with him. He wanted this house filled with his family.

Steve kissed Bucky's forehead. "I think he would be just as confused as Sarah May right now, but I think your parents are giving him the best holiday they could," Steve said. "He knows he's loved."

"Okay, good." Bucky nodded and grabbed on to Steve's arm. "I love you, Baby," he said quietly as another apology for not going to the cemetery and also for accidentally letting their baby drop on the ground. Christmas really was always stressful in some way or another.

"It's alright, love," he said. Steve stroked his fingers through Bucky's hair. He was clearly a little emotional over not being able to have their baby boy here, but he held it in. "We have the rest of our family here, safe and healthy."

"Yeah, safe," Bucky scoffed sarcastically. "Except I dropped our newborn on the ground." He sighed and checked over Sarah May once more just to make sure she really was completely fine. He held her close and changed the subject. "Did you want to talk to your mom about her moving in? We haven't asked her yet and today might be a good day to ask."

Steve held Bucky's chin firmly and pulled him in for a kiss. "She'll live. We probably will mess up plenty more in the future," he said. Sarah May smiled up at her pop and reached up for his face too. "Yes, let's ask her today. She's going to be excited about it. I know it."

"Come on then. Let's talk to her," Bucky said and stood up from the couch with Sarah May. "Where did she run off to? Also, where did Christopher go? Also, where's Diana and the girls? Jesus, there's so many kids and animals to keep track of, my god."
"Probably cooking something in the kitchen. I know she wanted to make us dinner," Steve said. "And wherever food is, Diana is." When they got to the kitchen, Christopher was in his high chair playing with some noisy toys while his nana cooked. "Ma? We got something we want to talk to you about."

Sarah turned to face them and held out a spoonful of something for Steve to taste saying, "Yes, my dears, what is it?" She then picked up another carrot and handed it to Christopher who dropped his toy in favor of the carrot and started gnawing on it.

Steve automatically ate whatever was in the spoon just because he never turned down something his mom made. "Well," he said. "We were thinking, you know how much our kids love you and you're here often enough. We figured, well, if you were interested, we wanted to know if you would want to live here with us. We could turn half the living room into your room."

Sarah stopped what she was doing and looked between her son and Bucky and her two grandchildren. "You want me to live here?" she asked in surprise and gave a small smile. "Really?"

She started tearing up and Bucky reached out and touched her arm gently to show his support. "We would love to have you here if you would like to live here with us and the girls and your grandbabies."

Steve nodded. "I love you, Ma. And so do our kids. And it's silly for you to live all on your own when you've got the rest of your family who loves your company right here." Sarah hugged her son tightly and kissed his cheek before pulling Bucky into the hug too.

Bucky chuckled when he was pressed into the hug and he slipped his free hand around his husband's hips and smiled up at him. "So, you still haven't answered. Are you going to come move in here? Because we all would love to have you."

"Stop being so fresh," Sarah scolded lightly. "Of course, I'm going to live with you." She turned to Christopher. "You hear that, my beautiful grandson? Your nana is coming to live with you!"

"Nana!" Christopher yelled and made grabby hands for her. "Nana! Nana!" he repeated and bounced in his high chair.

"I think he is excited," Bucky said and grinned at his son. "And I think it'll be really easy for me to convert the living room to a bedroom for you really fast. It'll be great."
Sarah picked up Christopher from his chair and snuggled him. "Oh, how I miss when you were this little, Stevie," Sarah sighed. She kissed the top of Christopher's head. "This is the best Christmas present you could've given me."

---

Bucky smiled and pulled Steve close to give him a kiss and hand Sarah May to him. "There's no hurry for you to move in. So whenever you feel ready and comfortable, that works for us. I'll get started on your room as soon as I can and make quick work of it so you can move in whenever you want."

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"I'll give my landlord notice. Maybe I can be moved in before Valentine's Day. That'll give you enough time, right?" Sarah asked Bucky. "I don't have many things."

---

"That's plenty of time," Bucky said with a nod. "Any certain things you want done for your room? Any specifications? You are getting one hell of a window in there! Becca may be slightly upset about not having a good window to read by anymore but she would get over it."

---

"I just want a nice, private place I can sleep at night. And a dresser to hold what few things I have," she said. "I'm sure Becca will get over losing her spot when she realizes there's another adult to help with the babies so she doesn't have to."

---

"Oh, yeah, I'm guessing Becca will be happy to have you here for lots of reasons including that," Bucky said as the girls came back into the kitchen.

Becca grabbed an apple and said, "What's going on?"

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"My mom is coming to live with us," Steve said excitedly. "We are going to turn the living room into a bedroom for her. Isn't that great?" Steve was hyping it up a little in case Becca chose to be grumpy over it.

---

Becca surprised them all by being vocally excited about something for once. "You are?" she asked with wide eyes and hugged Sarah. "Oh my god! That's amazing. When are you moving in?"

---

Steve looked at Bucky in shock when Becca got excited. "Well, we were talking about sometime early February," Sarah said as she hugged her back tightly. "I'm glad you're happy to have me here. I love spending time with you."

---

Becca kept a hold on Sarah and said softly so only Sarah could hear her, "It's like having a mom here again." She detached from her then and calmed back down. "I like having you here. I'm glad that
you'll be living with us."

---

Sarah looked both touched and surprised that Becca saw her as a mother figure. She hugged her
even tighter before letting go. Steve laid his head on Bucky's shoulder and watched his mom wear
the biggest smile he'd seen since she found out that Sarah May was named after her. "Alright, you
boys have to stop giving me good news for five minutes so I can finish dinner."

---

"I've got nothing else," Bucky said. "Babe, anything else?" he asked Steve and sneakily held his ass.
He was feeling more awake now and wanted that Christmas sex that he hadn't gotten earlier. It
probably wouldn't happen but he could try.

---

Steve took Sarah May and kissed her little face. "Nope. I got nothing but a baby." Steve's mom put
Christopher back in his high chair and went back to cooking.

---

Once they were done with dinner, Sarah decided to go home for the night instead of staying there.
The girls went to sleep a few hours later and Christopher was bathed and put in his crib to sleep. All
that was left was Sarah May. "Okay, time for you to have your bath, Sweet Pea."

---

Sarah May squirmed and kicked her legs excitedly as she was carried to her little bathing seat. "She
really loves the water," Steve said fondly. "I think she'd stay in it all day if she had the chance."
Steve walked up behind Bucky and ran his hand over his back.

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Bucky bathed their baby girl so carefully and cooed at her the entire time. "I can't wait for her to be
big enough to go swimming. She'll have so much fun. Won't you, Sarah May? You'll be our little
fishy baby!" He chuckled and finished washing her and then wrapped her up in a towel. "Say
goodnight to your daddy so we can get you dressed and in your crib."

---

Sarah May seemed to really enjoy herself as Bucky bathed and spoke sweetly to her. Once her bath
was over, Steve picked her up and gave her little face a few kisses. "Good night, Sweet Pea. I love
you so much!" He passed her back to Bucky and headed to their room so he could change.

---

Bucky got Sarah May tucked into her crib and he quietly sang to her until she fell asleep. He wasn't
sure how long she would remain asleep so he quickly slipped back to their bedroom and stood near
the door for a couple seconds just admiring Steve. "Hey, Merry Christmas."

---

Steve pulled Bucky into his lap and kissed up and down his neck affectionately. "Merry Christmas,
my lovely husband," Steve said sweetly. "You have a good day, even with the chaos?"
"Yeah, it was better than last year," Bucky sighed and wrapped his legs and arms around Steve. "How was your Christmas, Baby?" he asked and gave Steve a kiss on the cheek. "Better than last year for you? At least this year we have our kids and I am sober as the day I was born."

Steve smiled. "My Christmas was amazing. We got to spend it together, married, with our kids. I got pots to plant my herbs in and we got to make my mom very happy. You've been sober for so long now and we may even have sex tonight."

Bucky whined and squeezed Steve. "'May even have sex?'" He repeated. "Come on, don't mess with me on Christmas. It's quiet. Everyone is asleep. I've looked so cute today. And my dick has been so patient."

Steve laughed and pinned Bucky under him so he could kiss down his throat. "You did look pretty damn cute all day," he said. Steve slowly moved his hand between Bucky's legs and gave a squeeze. "You want to be on top tonight?"

Bucky breathed deeply and pulled at Steve's hair a little. "Yes, if you'll have me?" he said and reached back to touch Steve's ass lightly. "I'll spread you nice and open and eat you out until you come and then I'll let you have my Christmas cock. How's that sound?"

Steve moaned softly at the tug. He was getting hard and he wanted nothing more than to be intimate with his husband. He nodded wordlessly and grabbed at Bucky's shirt to pull it off.

"Or do you want me to skip to just fucking you? Because I'm good either way," Bucky said and got off the bed to strip himself all the way and then to start unbuttoning Steve's pants and tugging them down off of him.

"I kind of want you inside me right away," Steve said. "I miss you." Steve wiggled out of his clothes and pulled Bucky back down so he could roll their hips together and Bucky could feel how hard Steve was for him.

Bucky giggled and pushed his cock against Steve's. "Okay, my sweet man. Hand me the lube and I'll get inside you right away!" he said it with the same air as an attendant at a hotel answering a room service call.

Steve laughed. "Stop that, you dope. You don't sound sexy like that." He reached into the nightstand
Bucky took the lube and slicked up two fingers. "You are special. You're so perfect. You're my favorite man in the world. And I love you so much." He gently started teasing his fingers on Steve's hole and popping just his fingertip inside and then back out a few times. "I love the year we have had together since last Christmas. I've loved seeing you as such an attentive and honest and caring father for our kids and guardian for the girls. I've loved seeing you learn and grow with Christopher and work out how to be the best dad you can be."

Steve whined softly and tried to press down to take more of Bucky's fingers. He dragged his nails slowly down Bucky's back and watched his face as he spoke. "You're everything to me," he said softly. "Every day of my life gets better when I have you around. I can trust you with everything."

"I trust you with everything, too," Bucky promised and pushed two fingers all the way inside Steve. "Now you talk. Tell me what you want. Either sexually or as a couple or as parents or anything. Just tell me what you want for the both of us."

Steve let out a pleased noise as Bucky pushed his fingers inside. The stretch stung a little but he loved it. "I want you to make love to me slowly," he breathed out. "And hold me all night while I tell you all the reasons why I love you." He tangled his fingers in Bucky's hair and gave a little tug. "And tomorrow, let me spoil you."

"I'll do all that for you, Love," Bucky said warmly and added another finger. "I'll be nice and slow for you and mean every thrust. How will you spoil me tomorrow, though? I want to know."

Steve spread his legs and rocked his hips some more. "I'm going to wake you up nice and slow with a morning blowjob," he purred. "And then I'm going eat your ass and try to make you come again."

"Yes, please," Bucky whined and removed his fingers. He lined his cock up with Steve's hole and, slow as he could, pushed in all the way as he kissed Steve deeply. He stayed still inside Steve just kissing him for several long moments until he just couldn't stand it and needed the sweet friction of the pull of his cock inside Steve's ass.

Steve's back arched off the bed when Bucky slid inside of him. He let out a low, desperate moan and dug his nails into Bucky's back. "Yes, that feels so good, Buck," he breathed. "Keep going, Sweetheart."
Bucky obliged him and carefully and slowly eased in and out of his hole with a gentle rhythm that matched Steve's already slightly labored breathing. "I hope I haven't said it so much that it doesn't mean anything anymore, but you are so gorgeous."

---

Steve blushed a little at that. After getting injured and then let go from the police force, Steve’s self-image really suffered. "Keep saying that to me," Steve admitted shyly. "I need to hear it."

---

"Oh, Baby, you are so beautiful," Bucky said warmly and gave Steve a kiss on the neck. "You will always be the most handsome man I have ever seen. And as we grow old together, you’ll still be the most handsome. I’ll always love waking up and seeing those gorgeous eyes greeting me and those perfect warm lips giving me morning kisses."

---

Steve practically lit up with the compliments and he smiled happily as Bucky praised him while he made love. Steve wrapped his legs around Bucky's hips and moved with him. He pulled him in for a searing kiss, pouring every ounce of love into it. "I don’t know how anyone could've let you go. You're perfect."

---

Bucky chuckled and stared into Steve's eyes. "They just knew I was waiting for you. So they needed to let me go find you." He grinned and kept a hold of Steve, not wanting to ever stop. "I know I’ve messed up a lot, but you have always been my best decision."

---

Steve felt so fucking amazing and lucky to have someone so perfect to call his husband. "You have come so far, Bucky," Steve said. "I'm proud of the man I married." He reached down and grabbed Bucky's ass firmly while the other hand tugged at Bucky's hair. "Give me more."

---

Bucky was proud of Steve, too. He was proud of the way he reacted to any troubles that came their way and any adversity he faced. He was proud of how natural he was at being a good father. "More what?" Bucky asked. "What do you need, Baby?" He quickened the pace of his thrusts ever so slightly in case that was what Steve was asking for.

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"More of your cock," Steve gasped out. His ass clenched tightly around Bucky's dick. "I want to come, Buck. I want to feel you come inside of me, too."

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Bucky nodded wordlessly and slipped his hand securely around Steve's cock to start stroking him. He moved a little faster inside him and hummed. "Tell me if you want me to slow down."

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Steve threw his head backed and moaned Bucky's name. "Don't slow down," he gasped. Steve
dragged his nails up Bucky's spine and angled his hips so Bucky could push in deeper. "I'm so close."

---

Bucky hoisted Steve's legs up on to his shoulder so he was folded in half. He worked in and out on him quickly and kissed Steve through it all. He felt himself nearing orgasm as he pumped Steve. It only took a few more seconds before he was gasping Steve's name and spilling out inside him.

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Steve cried out and bit Bucky's neck as he went rougher. When Bucky came, Steve did so moments later and his ass clenched around Bucky's cock. He moaned out Bucky's name and held him against his body by wrapped all four limbs around him and keeping him close.

---

Bucky chuckled at Steve monkeying his body around him. He laid down on top of Steve and kissed his neck and made his way up to his lips. "How was that?" he asked softly and sucked in Steve's lower lip for a second before letting go. "You bit my neck kind of hard."

---

"That was perfect," Steve said, sounding thoroughly fucked out. He smiled devilishly and kissed Bucky's sore neck. "I'd be more sorry if you didn't like things getting a little rough," he said.

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"That is true. I like it rough sometimes," Bucky said and gave Steve another kiss. "Was it a good ending to your Christmas?" he asked before hearing simultaneous crying coming from the nursery at once. "Dammit, they're both up."

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Steve nodded. "The best ending I could ask for-" he fell silent and chuckled softly. Of course. They had to go back to being dad's now. "Want me to take care of them both, Love?"

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"No, I'll help," Bucky said with a yawn and got up to tug on some clothes. "Which one do you want?" He asked as he buttoned up a cardigan and tossed Steve his pants. "Here's hoping the girls didn't wake up."

---

Steve cleaned up and threw on some pants. "I'll get Sarah May," Steve said. When they got in, Christopher was crying and pointing at Sarah May's crib to blame her for being woken. Steve picked up their daughter and tried to hush her before they woke Bucky's sisters.

---

Bucky took Christopher into his arms and kissed his cheeks. "Baby Bean, what's wrong?" he asked and bounced his son. "What's the problem? Did you get woken up?" Bucky yawned again and held Christopher close. "Steve, I'm going to take him to our room and lie down."
Christopher immediately started blabbering at Bucky, complaining about all the noise and how he wanted to sleep, probably. "I'll catch up later," Steve said. He sung and cradled their baby girl and calmed her down. Once alone in the bedroom, Christopher flopped onto the bed with his pop. "Leep?"

---

Bucky nodded and snuggled his son on to his chest. "Yes, Bean, sleep," he said and re-buttoned his cardigan over Christopher so he was secure. "Daddy is taking care of Sarah May then he will be back. Until then," Bucky yawned and closed his eyes. "You and I are going to sleep."

---

Christopher snuggled up to his pop and balled his fist up against Bucky's chest. All he wanted to do was go back to sleep, so he was out like a light within moments. Steve came back about ten minutes later after putting Sarah May back to sleep. "Oh, man. You two are so cute."

---

Bucky was right on the cusp of sleep when Steve came back and he grumbled his annoyance just a little bit. "Is Sarah May asleep?" he asked in a gravely tired tone without opening his eyes at all. "Our bean is asleep so that's good."

---

Steve nodded. "She's all changed and ready to sleep for a while." He got into bed and kissed Bucky's forehead before kissing the top of Christopher's head. He stroked his fingers through Bucky's hair. "Merry Christmas, Love. Sleep well."
Bucky was frantic. Steve had sort of sprung the idea of going on a trip earlier that day and now he was packing up all of the things that the babies would need for a week away at Seneca. Neither of the babies had the right sort of winter gear so Bucky sent Steve to the store with Lilly to get what they needed. While Becca helped watch Sarah May and Christopher, Bucky threw tiny hats and gloves into a bag filled with diapers and wet wipes.

---

Steve knew it was last minute, but he got it in his head that he wanted to spend their anniversary in Seneca and, damn it, they were going to do it. He returned from shopping with a bag full of warm clothes for their kids and an extra sweater for Bucky as a little gift. "Buck, how's packing? You almost done?"

---

"Oh, I'm almost done with the kids' things but I haven't even started on our stuff at all. And Sarah May threw up on Becca earlier and seemed very pleased with herself. However, Becca was decidedly not pleased," Bucky said and took the new winter clothes from Steve and put them in the bag before zipping it up.

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"Well, I guess it's giving Becca even more incentive to wait to have sex until she’s ready to have kids." Steve kissed Bucky's cheek in passing before heading downstairs to pack a bunch of snacks for the ride up. "My mom will be here in an hour. She says she wants to pay for the gas and tolls so we don't have to."

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"Well, that's not your mother's choice," Bucky said and tossed a few bags towards the front door. "She should just relax and have a good time. I want her to love this trip so she will want to go back with us. And I'm also still holding out hope I can convince you to move out there when we are old."

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"Yeah, good luck trying to persuade me," Steve snorted. He put the snacks in a little cooler and handed Bucky some water bottles. "Unless you move the city and my ma to Seneca, you're going to have a hard time getting me out there."

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"I can move your mom. The city has to stay," Bucky said. "And I think that Sarah would eventually side with me if she has a good time and if I can convince her it'll be good for the two of us to eventually move there. She'll be happy to come along. Right? Get her a cabin of her own right next to ours. Our kids can visit their parents and Nana all in one trip."

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Steve paused for a moment, having just realized something. "Wait, I don't want to move if our kids are staying in Brooklyn. They're our babies, they're going to stay in the city," he said in a pathetic tone.
Bucky exhaled softly and set aside what he was doing to come hover over Steve. "Steve, Honey," Bucky said, pulling out the only endearment he used when he was frustrated. "Work with me here. You really want to live in the city forever? *Die* in the city?"

Steve looked up at Bucky with a bit of a pout on his face. He knew what being called ‘Honey’ indicated and he decided to get on the defensive fast. "Why not? What's so bad about the city that you don't like it? We all grew up here. At least two of our kids were born here. Grant and your parents are buried here. I don’t know why we got to rush away."

"We aren't rushing away. I'm saying fifty years or so," Bucky said. "You know I love the city and what it's given us so far. But I want to live my last years peacefully and quietly and die the same way. I never used to think I would live past forty years old - figured I would kill myself before then. But now I have you and our family and I want to live as long as possible. And I want us to have a few calm years together before we go."

Steve’s pout got sadder when Bucky spoke about dying or killing himself at a young age. He looked down at him and let out a sigh. He wanted to be in the city. But he also loved Bucky more than this city. "Well, if that's what would make you happy. Then that's what we will do."

Bucky brought their lips together in a gentle but meaningful kiss. "Hey, I love you. You know that?" he asked and held Steve's face in his hands. "I'm not going anywhere. I could never leave you or the girls or our children. Okay?" He sighed and gave him another kiss. "I'm sorry I brought it up. Give me a smile?"

Steve huffed softly and looked over at Bucky. "It's what you want, though," he said with a frown. "You've done so much for me and our family. You're the one who's going to be working hard while I get to stay at home with our kids. If that's where you want to spend our retirement, then you deserve it."

"It's fine, Steve," Bucky said with a tick of disappointment. He did want that and he sort of agreed with Steve that he deserved to have it but he also didn't want to retire out of the city with Steve just doing it to please him. He wanted them both to decide on it. "That's years down the road. We can discuss it when all our kids are married and have lots of children of their own and I'm able to stop working. No need to worry about it now. Let's go on vacation instead."

"What?" Steve asked with a frown, knitting his eyebrows together. He was a bit upset that Bucky was still disappointed even when he was pretty much just agreed to it because he loved Bucky enough to go along with it. It was like he couldn’t win right now.
"Nothing," Bucky said with a sigh and stood up straight. He checked the time. Clint would be coming soon to drop off his mom's big van that they were borrowing for the trip. Steve no longer had a car since he didn't have the cruiser and now they had a lot more people to squish into one vehicle. "I shouldn't have brought it up. We are going to have a lovely time together on the lake in the snow with all our kids and your mom. That's all we should be thinking about right now. Clint said he would be around soon with the van so do you mind watching the kids while we load up? Also, I already packed Diana's travel bowls and food so don't worry about what she needs."

Diana's ears perked up when she heard her name. She was currently sprawled out on the floor, wagging her tail as Christopher tried to mess with it. Steve still looked a little hurt but he focused on their kids instead. He could make a big deal out of nothing sometimes and this was one of those moments. "Yeah, sure," he sighed. Sarah and Clint arrived at nearly the same time, both swarming the kids to say hello to them.

Bucky wasn't surprised that Clint got preoccupied with playing with Christopher and wouldn't help him load. It was pretty typical of him. But Bucky also didn't want to complain about needing help loading because then Steve would try to help and then get hard of breathing and become angry with himself. So Bucky just worked on tying sleds to the roof alone. He wasn't even sure they would be able to use the sleds but Lilly insisted on bringing them.

Lilly was practically bouncing with excitement. "Can we go hunting? I want to catch a bunch of animals." Lilly didn't quite grasp the whole concept of hunting. Her take on it was more like butterfly hunting just with a bigger net. "I'm not going to have to babysit at all, am I?"

"Lil," Bucky grunted from his spot on the side of the van. "Go bother someone else for just a few minutes. Or, actually, no. Go help Becca get Raphael's food and water set up. Clint is going to come take care of him while we are gone. You should go show him where all the cat stuff is."

Lilly huffed and stomped back into the house. She bullied Clint away from the kids to show him where everything was. Sarah took the babies to dress them up nice and warm for the ride and when they all gathered to head in the car, Christopher stared confusedly at it. "Dada?"

Bucky was just pushing the last bag into the back when everyone came out, ready to go. "Okay, pile in. Girls, you are the back row with Diana. The babies are with me in the middle and, Sarah, you are Steve's navigator." He cracked a big smile at his family, proud of the haphazard yet secure way he shoved the van together on his own.

Steve thanked Clint and they were on the road in no time. Sarah May's big, brown eyes stared out the window in wonder and occasionally she would try to reach out at something. "I can't believe we
"all fit," Steve chuckled. "Is everyone comfy back there?"

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"No," all three Barnes siblings chimed at the same time. Becca and Lilly were squished to the sides of the van with Diana - happy as a clam to be going on an adventure - lying out in between them. Bucky was squished with two car seats on either side of him that made it difficult to move. And while Sarah May was content to watch the world go by, Christopher was just discovering if he reached just right he could grab his papa's hair.

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Sarah let out a laugh. "Well, the two of us are comfy up here," she teased them lightly. Whenever Christopher managed to grab his papa's hair, he would squeal and giggle with delight for managing to succeed in this little challenge.

"How much longer until we get there?" Lilly asked.

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Bucky sighed and tugged his hair away. He didn't want to put it up because he knew Christopher would start crying and it was too small of a space to have crying children in. It was so loud and he would definitely get a headache. Also, the girls would be incredibly annoyed. "It's a few hours to get there, Lil," he said and rummaged in his bag for a snack and passed it to Lilly, hoping it would satisfy her for a bit.

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"I wonder how Christopher will like playing in the snow. We haven't had a real good snowfall in the city yet, but we could probably build an entire igloo while we're upstate," Steve said.

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"I think he's going to love it," Bucky offered as he pulled his hair away again and got an angry grunt in return. He looked over at Sarah May who was still watching the window and opening her eyes slower and slower each time she blinked. Bucky was hoping the both of them would fall asleep in the car and Sarah May was getting pretty close.

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Christopher stretched as high as he could to grab a fistful of Bucky's hair. Becca couldn't help but snicker. "Still glad you have kids?" she teased. "Just wait until his hair is long enough. Then you can tug on it and see how he likes it."

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"I won't pull on my son's hair," Bucky said patiently and held both Christopher's hands to prevent him from trying again. "I wish I could magically make him sleep, though," he grumbled and put a pacifier in Christopher's mouth and handed him a small plush bear so maybe he would get distracted and then fall asleep.

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"Wrap him up in his fuzzy blanket. If he's swaddled and kept real warm, he goes to bed in almost an instant, most times," Steve advised. His mom helped Bucky dig around for the blanket.
Eventually, after being tucked into the blanket and crying because his hands weren't free, Christopher did fall asleep. Sarah May was then wide awake because of the noise but she was content to stare at Bucky and stick her tongue out occasionally when she yawned and got too tired to pull it back in. The trip went smoothly after that and when they arrived at Seneca, Lilly and Becca damn near burst from van the first chance they could.

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Diana was quick to follow the girls out and she started to prance around the place and shove her nose in the snow to try and sniff out all the new scents around her. Steve carefully took Sarah May from the car seat and grabbed a few bags with his other hand. "Feels good to stretch my legs out again."

---

Sarah was quick to get Christopher and she brought him inside to get him a snack while Bucky started to unpack. Lilly was distracted by chasing Diana around in the snow and Becca was claiming where she was going to sleep in the cabin. Steve had decided to rent a large cabin this time that would fit all of them. "Someone please help me?" Bucky yelped as he was bombarded with all their stuff spilling out the back of the van.

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Steve set their daughter down in the living room in her carrier and rushed outside to help Bucky. He coughed and panted but continued to pick up the various bags anyway. "I see this vacation is already relaxing for you," he joked.

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Bucky scoffed and just threw his sisters' bags into the cabin and didn't care if they got annoyed with him for it. "Oh, I'm already planning a nap for as soon as I can," he said and started untying the sleds from the roof of the van. "Do Mindy and Fred know we are here? Or are we surprising them?"

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Steve kissed his cheek and made a second trip back once he put the bags inside. "I didn't tell them. We can swing by their shop after you've had your nap," Steve suggested. "We can tell them about the kids."

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"Can we bring the kids?" Bucky asked and slid the sleds out of the way of the van towards the shed. "I'm guessing Mindy would be pretty mad at us if we told her that we brought our babies but didn't bring them to meet her."

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"If you want to. I just figured you'd want a little break from Christopher trying to pull your hair," Steve teased. He gave Bucky's ass a playful swat. "They're going to love them so much. Our kids are wonderful."

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Bucky grabbed Steve's hand and pulled him in to give him a kiss. "Well, maybe you can hold
Christopher and I'll hold Sarah May. That way my hair is safe." He gave Steve's ass a squeeze back and leaned against him a bit. "You remember how great our trip here last time was?"

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Steve smiled into the kiss. "I loved the last time we were here. I got to meet the people who knew you growing up. You got your dad's old book and we got to be lazy in the fishing boat. And guess what, Buck? This vacation is going to be even better."

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"It'll probably have significantly less sex," Bucky said and took Steve's hand and brought it up to his chest. "But that's okay because I get to be here with you and our kids. And we can see Christopher playing in the snow for the first time. And Diana already seems to be having fun."

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"We can duck out in the woods and have sex with a moose watching us," Steve joked. He brushed his fingers gently over Bucky's cheek. He slid his other hand into Bucky's shirt and touched his back lightly. "Love you."

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Bucky loved the feeling of Steve's warm hand on his back and he was getting a little antsy. "Hey, you think we could slip off and give each other blowjobs out in the shed? It's cold out here and I've got a nice warm mouth."

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Steve let out a laugh and nipped at Bucky's lower lip. "I like the sound of that. Just check it for squirrels first, I don't want them going after our nuts."

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"I'll guard your nuts, don't worry," Bucky said and pulled Steve towards the shed. "Come on. Let's show the squirrels how it's done, yeah?"

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Steve laughed giddily and ran along with Bucky to the shed. He opened the door and as soon as it was shut, he pinned Bucky up against the wall and started pressing hot kisses down his throat.

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Bucky hummed and immediately slid his hands down the back of Steve's pants. "God, I love you, Steve," he said and pulled their crotches close together so Steve could feel his already hard dick pushing against his zipper. "Guess what."

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Steve grinded their hips together and he slowly kissed his lips. "What?" he asked as he unzipped the front of Bucky's pants. "What smart ass response do you have?"

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Bucky chuckled and kept his gaze locked with Steve's. He wasn't wearing underwear. Steve would
soon find out if he looked down. Bucky had packed all his clean ones and didn't have time to wash any laundry so he just went without.

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Steve blushed when he was met with Bucky's bare cock. "You're such a ham," he laughed, kissing him before sinking down to his knees and pulling Bucky's pants down just a little ways.

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Bucky giggled back and looked down at Steve. "Hey, I had a good reason for going commando," Bucky defended. "You sprung this trip on me so I packed all my clean underwear and you didn't give me time to do laundry for the rest. It was this or reuse a dirty pair and I preferred this option. And I think you do too."

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Steve smiled and nipped at Bucky's thighs lightly. "You know, you sound very ungrateful that your loving husband decided to surprise you by organizing a trip to your favorite getaway spot," Steve teased.

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"You sound like you don't have my cock in your mouth," Bucky sassed back and pet Steve's hair. "Just kidding, I am very grateful. I love that you did this for all of us. I think it's a great idea before the girls go back to school."

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Steve rolled his eyes at all of Bucky's sass and then kissed lightly along his hard cock. "That's what I like to hear," he purred. He slowly took his husband into his mouth, moaning low as he sunk his head down on Bucky's dick.

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Bucky whimpered a little bit at the feeling and let his head flop back and hit the wall. "Steve, Baby, your mouth feels so perfect around my dick. I swear, if I could, I wouldn't go a day without having your lips around me."

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Steve groaned softly as the head of Bucky's cock slipped down his throat. He reached back and massaged Bucky's ass-cheeks lightly as he worked his lips steadily over his husband.

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Bucky whined again and stared down at Steve. He was so pretty down on his knees taking his cock like that. He couldn't believe that they had been together for a year and a half now and almost been married for a whole year. Sometimes it felt like he had known Steve for a lifetime - that they had been connected forever just couldn't reach each other.

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Steve looked up at Bucky, drinking in the sight of his husband looking so needy and aroused. He loved having him in his life and knowing that they had an amazing future ahead of him. Steve
moaned around Bucky's length as he hollowed out his cheeks and guided Bucky's hand to his hair

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Bucky grasped at Steve's hair and brushed it from his eyes. "I love you, Steve. I love you so much," he said and kept his eyes locked to Steve's. "Thank you for planning this trip. I'm glad to bring our kids here for the first time."

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Steve dragged his tongue over the underside of Bucky's cock and looked like he would've said something if his mouth hadn't been occupied. He towed his nails slowly down Bucky's thighs.

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Bucky groaned and tightened his grip on Steve's hair. "I'm going to come, Steve. Let me come on your face, please?" he asked and pet a thumb over Steve's cheek. He had let some stubble grow and Bucky was loving it.

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Steve pulled back and aimed Bucky's cock towards his face without question. He jerked Bucky off quickly, thumbing at the head and closing his eyes so he wouldn't get come in them.

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Bucky came with a deep groan and shaky knees. He shot out streams of hot come all over Steve's face and coated his lips. And the second he was done, he pulled Steve up and started kissing him clean through gasps of Steve's name and deep moans.

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It wasn't often Bucky asked for that but Steve didn't mind. He kind of liked the way it made him feel like he belonged to Bucky. Because, Lord knows he wouldn't let anyone else do that. He purred and kissed Bucky back happily. "You look so sexy when you come."

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"Baby, I'm nowhere near as sexy as you," Bucky said thankfully and scratched a hand through Steve's hair again. "I want to get you off now, though. How do you want it?" he asked and tucked himself back into his pants before slipping a hand down Steve's jeans.

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Steve smiled and leaned heavily against Bucky. He hummed softly and pushed his hips into Bucky's hand. "I want you to make me come any way you want," he breathed.

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Bucky nodded and used all his strength to hoist Steve's up to sit on the counter in the shed. Then he smiled at him and slowly released his dick from the front of his jeans. He didn't really have many adventurous ideas that they could implement in the shed with limited time and no lube, so he just decided to give Steve head too and hope that it held him over until they could do something else.
Steve laughed when Bucky lifted him up onto the countertop. "My big, strong husband," he complimented. Steve closed his eyes and tilted his head back when Bucky took his dick out. He raked his fingers through Bucky's hair. "Gonna put that pretty mouth to good use?"

"You gonna make me?" Bucky said slyly and gripped the base of Steve's dick a little tightly. He wasn't going to make him beg, though. He got down on his knees in front of Steve and carefully licked a few times around the head before taking the whole thing down at once.

"Please. You can't help yourself," Steve laughed. He moaned low as Bucky took him into his mouth. He gripped his hair tightly and was starting to really get into it when Diana started scratching at the door.

Bucky groaned and popped off of Steve. "Ignore her for a few minutes?" he asked and looked up at Steve, desperate to help his husband come. "I just started. She's fine, right?" he whined and squeezed Steve's leg.

Diana seemed to be trying to get to Steve and was excited that she found where he had went off to. She barked and scratched at it again. "Diana, go lay down, girl," Steve called out.

The dog kept it up for a couple more seconds then whimpered and seemed to settle for a bit. "Okay," Bucky sighed. "I'm going to suck you off before she finds someway inside here," he said quickly and took Steve's dick again as fast as he could as if he was going to get a prize for giving head the fastest.

Steve gave Bucky an apologetic look for his dog but then closed his eyes and groaned when Bucky started to suck him off like his life depended on it. "Fuck. Your mouth feels so good."

Bucky hummed around him and pulled out all the tricks he could to make Steve feel good but also speed the process along before they got interrupted again. Bucky knew that not everyone liked giving blowjobs. He knew some people who hated it. But Bucky really honestly loved it. And he hadn't loved it quite so much until he got to do it with Steve. Everything was better with Steve.

Steve didn't last very long. Blowing Bucky had made him so goddamn hard to start with and it was hard to last when Bucky gave blowjobs like a goddamned champion. He warned him before coming deep down his throat. "Fuck-" he swore.

Bucky sucked off every bit of come Steve gave him and swallowed it all with Steve watched with
dark eyes. He slowly moved back up Steve's body and licked into his mouth as he zipped him back up in his pants. Diana went back to scratching at the door and Bucky bit Steve's lip lightly before backing off again.

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When Diana started whining and scratching again, Steve laughed. "She's our other daughter," he joked as he opened the door for the dog.

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Bucky sighed and moved out of the way so Diana could come bounding in and pounce on Steve. "No, Steve, I think she thinks she's your protector. Even from me." He felt a rush of cold blow in on the breeze through the now open door. "Alright, I'm cold now let's go see what everyone is doing."

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Steve scooped his big puppy up into his arms and kissed her snout. Diana panted happily and wagged her tail as Steve carried her inside. Sarah had both of her grandchildren in her lap while Becca and Lilly played checkers with each other on the floor. "Where were you guys?" Lilly huffed.

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"Looking in the shed to see if we had any ice skates or if I'll have to run out to the store a few miles out," Bucky said and sneered at her like she shouldn't doubt that he was doing just that. He walked over to Sarah and slipped his arms around Christopher and tickled him as he picked him up. "Hello, Bean!"

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Steve covered his mouth to hide his guilty smile when Bucky seamlessly lied. Christopher giggled and hugged Bucky. "Papa!" he said happily. He pulled back and signed 'I love you'. Steve had been teaching that one to him.

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Bucky gasped and kissed his son. "I love you too, Christopher!" He said and then signed back to him. "And Papa is so proud of you. And I'm so excited to play in the snow with you and skate on the lake with you and make you really cold hot chocolate so you don't burn your little tongue."

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Steve smiled proudly at the two of them. Christopher giggled when he saw the reaction it got from his pops. He signed it again and wiggled excitedly in Bucky's arms. "Play?" he asked him.

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"Yes, play, of course!" Bucky said and pet Christopher's hair. "Let's you and I go get you all bundled up and then we can see if Daddy wants to make some snow angels. Do you think Daddy wants to make snow angels with us, huh?"

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"Yeah!" Steve said excitedly. "Let's play outside in the snow, Bean!" Steve got up to grab the baby bag and shuffled around for Christopher's warm clothes.
"Sarah, are you good to take care of the baby while we play for a bit?" Bucky asked. "I'm hoping to wear him out so nap time comes easy in about an hour."

"Of course," Steve's mom replied. She let Sarah May grab her finger and pull it towards her mouth. Christopher waved at his nana to make sure she didn't forget he was there. "Hi, Nana!"

"Nana is going to stay here with Ya-Ya for a bit while we play, okay?" Bucky said and nuzzled his son. "Come on, let's put you in warm clothes. Daddy is all ready to help us out. Look at your handsome Daddy, Christopher. Doesn't he look so happy to be here with us?"

Steve smiled and kissed both Bucky and his son. Once he got their little boy bundled up, he ushered them out the door and got a handful of snow to hold up for Christopher. "Look, Little Bean. It's snow!" He held it out to him closer.

Christopher looked at the snow mound for a second and then mashed his tiny gloved hand into it and giggled. "Oh, look at you! You've got it already," Bucky said cheerfully and brushed a few snowflakes from Christopher's hat. "You're so adorable, my precious boy."

Steve threw some more snow up in the air and watched as Christopher laughed hysterically at that. "Oh, he's so cute, Sweetheart," he said. "Look how happy he is!"

Bucky knelt down in the snow and set Christopher down so he could explore on his own for a little bit. Bucky looked up to Steve. "So, do we dare take him out ice skating on the lake or do we think that's got the potential to be too dangerous?"

"I don't think I want to risk him on the ice," Steve said. "He's too little and if the ice is thin I don't want to have him fall through." Christopher sat down in the snow and started to dig in it.

"Okay, I'm fine with that," Bucky said and pulled Steve down to kneel in the snow with them. "If it's thick enough ice then I think Lilly and I will skate. But I figured we should decide about Christopher together, of course."

Steve started to pile the snow onto Christopher's legs and bury him a little. He kissed his son's cheek and then laid back so he could make a snow angel. "You having fun, Christopher?"
When Christopher saw his daddy making a snow angel, he squealed and shook himself free of the snow to crawl on top of him and lay down on Steve's tummy. "Dada! Dada!" he yelled and banged his gloves on Steve's coat.

"Hello, Christopher," Steve said and picked him up. He held him up above him and made airplane noises. "Does your Dad and Pop love you? Yes, they do!"

Bucky laid down and rolled so he was pressed up against Steve's side with a hand resting on Christopher's back. "I think he likes the snow, Babe," he said and kissed Steve's cold cheek. "He's doing pretty well. Doesn't look too cold yet."

Steve turned his head and looked over at Bucky. "He's so cute. I love how much fun he's having. And you look pretty damn cute yourself. Your cheeks are rosy."

"Do I look handsome in the snow?" Bucky looked at the ends of his hair and saw some snowflakes sticking to it and sparkling in the sun. "I haven't played in the snow for probably ten years. When Lilly was young, she and I would make snowmen in the park after school."

"Did you ever make igloos?" Steve asked. Christopher crawled off and started to attempt to run in the snow but he fell because he couldn't lift his feet high enough.

"Oh, Bean!" Bucky yelped and crawled over to grab him. He wasn't crying but he looked stunned and confused by the cold snow sticking to his face. Bucky quickly took off his own glove and wiped Christopher's face clean. "Poor sweet boy." He chuckled and looked to Steve. "No, I've never made an igloo."

Christopher looked too surprised to be upset as his pop started to dust the snow off of his face. "Maybe we can get the girls outside to make an igloo. Wouldn't that be cool, Buck? Christopher will love it."

"How do we do that without ice blocks?" Bucky asked and looked around at the snow he saw around him. "I mean, we can try. Becca probably will stay inside this entire trip but Lilly will help us out." He smiled and leaned into Steve. "How about we go get Sarah May and we go see Fred and Mindy."

"You can make a good enough igloo out of snow. This isn't too fluffy and will hold up," Steve said.
Christopher tried and failed again at walking in the snow, so he settled for crawling. "Sounds like a plan."

"Okay, Christopher, let's go," Bucky said and scooped him up. The toddler immediately started whining and trying to get back down. "Bean, we're going to get your sister and then go meet some very nice people. No need to be upset."

Steve always hated hearing his son whine like that, even though he knew it was how babies pretty much communicated. Steve tried to console him with a bit of snow but Christopher wasn't having it. When they got inside, Becca huffed. "What's he crying about now?"

"He's fine. He just wants to be in the snow," Bucky sighed and passed Christopher off to Steve so he could get Sarah May. "Hello, Sweet Pea, are you ready to go meet some people who I'm sure will be so pleased to meet you?" Sarah May gurgled quietly and reached up for Bucky from her Nana's arms. Christopher calmed down a little when Bucky came back and he grabbed his sister's hand and said, "Ya-Ya, hi!"

Steve's heart just about melted when Christopher reached for her hand. Sarah May smiled over at him and flailed her free hand as if she wanted to say something, but didn't know how to. "You're such a good big brother, Christopher," Steve praised. "You want anything from the store, Ma?"

"Just some orange juice if they have any," Sarah said and got up to make a snack for herself and the girls.

Lilly jumped up and said, "Oh! Can you grab some gummy worms! I've wanted gummy worms all day."

"Yes, I will get gummy worms," Steve promised. He helped Bucky load their kids in the car and then got into the driver's seat so they could get on the trail. "They're going to freak out. Two kids in one year is crazy even for a normal couple."

"We have never been normal, though," Bucky observed and looked back at the babies in their seats. "But I think Mindy and Fred are well aware of that." When they arrived, Bucky carefully took Sarah May out of her carrier and held her close. She was looking around at everything she saw and silently cataloging the world around her. "Which one do you want?" he asked and came around to Christopher's side.

Steve picked up his son from the carrier. "I think I'm going to take my beautiful firstborn," Steve said. He kissed Christopher's cheek. "Look at this handsome boy. He's grown so big." Steve
bounced Christopher in his arms as he led the way inside.

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Fred was distracted reading the paper and Mindy was chattering away at him as if he was listening. When the door shut behind Steve and Bucky, it made a loud enough tinkle sound on the bell that they both looked up. Mindy gasped with wide eyes and came rushing towards them. "Boys, where did you come from? And who are these angels?" she asked and looked into Sarah May's curious eyes. "What are you doing here this time of year? No one but the residents are up here in the winter!" she paused again and slapped her hand on Bucky's shoulder in mock chastisement. "And why didn't you call first?"

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Steve smiled proudly. Christopher let out a small squeal as if to remind Mindy that he was there, too. "It was a bit last minute... we decided on a whim that we wanted to spend our anniversary here. And Bucky said we should come visit so you get to meet our children."

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Fred came over and gently shook Christopher's hand. "Now, how did the two of you rascals manage to get two little babies in less than a year?" he asked and let Christopher slap his arm happily. "Took me and Min four years after getting married to decide we were ready to start for Junior. And he waited another whole year to be conceived."

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"I was on a drugs raid and found this little boy abandoned in the house. His parents went to prison, so I adopted him. And Sarah May was left at our church," Steve explained. "We are very blessed," he said. "We would've had a third baby – Grant. He would have been about two months old now. But he passed before his birth."

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"Oh, lord..." Fred gave them both a sympathetic look and squeezed Steve's shoulder. "I'm so sorry to hear that, boys. Do you mind if I ask what happened?"

Mindy cleared her throat and looked at her husband sternly. "Fred, Dear, don't intrude."

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Steve ducked his head and swallowed the lump in his throat. He wasn't really over it. He wouldn't ever be. "His mother was a good friend of ours. She wasn't well and when she passed, so did our son," he said. Steve was still bitter over her choice to harm herself and their boy, but she was Bucky's friend and she carried their baby for what life he had. "It was a tragedy."

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Bucky leaned into Steve and kissed his neck once. "It's been a really rough couple of months for us. We are beyond grateful to have Sarah May but we really miss Grant. He will always be ours. But it's difficult. I'm sure you understand."

Mindy nodded and gave a small smile. "Well, how about you let me hold this baby girl while you shop for what you need, Bucky?" she said to change the subject.
Christopher watched as Bucky passed his sister over to Mindy. "Ya-Ya," he huffed, reaching out for her. Steve walked closer so their son wouldn't feel left out. "They are both so sweet," he said. "I know I'm biased, but our kids are really amazing."

Bucky picked up a basket and started collecting a few things they may need. Fred leaned back against his counter and said, "I remember being out on the lake one day with Old George and Jamie. Junior had just gotten his first ever girlfriend. I was talking about how I couldn't wait to be a grandfather. And George looked to Bucky and said, 'With the amount this one even acknowledges girls, I'll be lucky to have even one grandchild.'" Fred chuckled. "Boy, if he could see you now. Married to a fine officer of the law and raising two of George's grandbabies already."

Steve chuckled and kissed the top of his son's head. He set Christopher down so the boy could totter around. "What sort of stuff did George say he would want to do with his grandkids? Or things he hoped Bucky would do as a father?"

"Oh, he was pretty typical," Fred said and watched his wife holding Sarah May. "He wanted to do the type of things he didn't get to with Bucky. He was still in the navy when Bucky was a young boy and he was away a lot overseas. George would tell me how much he hated missing Bucky's first words and his first steps. And he didn't get to be the one to teach him how to ride a bike or how to play ball or shave his face when Bucky got a light beard in at age ten. George wanted to get to do all those first time things with his grandson. But he didn't end up getting that either, did he?"

Steve gave Christopher a sad frown. He hated that he wouldn't ever know either of his granddads. After a moment of thought, he said, "He gets to do all of that with Grant. Maybe Christopher and Sarah May aren't lucky enough to grow up with them. But our other little boy will be." He managed a little smile. "And Bucky will be around for our kids."

Fred patted Steve's back and shut up so he wouldn't make things worse. Mindy seemed to have taken to Sarah May and she looked up from her for just a second when Bucky came back. "So, Dears, you two weren't the only ones who thought it was a good idea to come to the lake for New Year's. Junior and his wife brought their kids up as well. Maybe you all can join us tonight for dinner."

Steve gasped. "That'd be perfect! All of the kids can play together. Christopher's never had a playdate before," he said. "And I got to introduce you to my mom, too. It's how Sarah May got her first name."

Mindy smiled and traded the baby for Bucky's basket so she could ring them up. "I would love to meet her, Steve."
"Is Junior still a firefighter?" Bucky asked and adjusted Sarah May's hat. "I haven't seen him for so long. It was great seeing Jesse last year. It'll be nice to catch up with Junior too."

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Christopher started to get into mischief when he found a few trinkets so Steve was quick to scoop him back up. "He is," Mindy said proudly. "He saved a family the other month. Carried them all out on his own."

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"Is he still a giant?" Bucky asked, a little distracted remembering when Junior was a teenager and Bucky was an impressionable young man coming of age and finding his sexuality. Junior had been one of his first crushes and he spent so much time trailing him around.

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"He's six foot seven and all muscle," Fred said proudly. "He got those genes from me. His good looks come from his mom." Fred nudged his wife gently with a loving smile.

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Bucky cleared his throat and said, "I wonder if he still has that scar on his upper arm. Remember that? I was being a show-off and jumped from that tree into the water. And when I didn't come back up right away, Junior sliced his arm on a log in the water jumping in to get me."

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"Were you trying to impress the cute boy you hung out with every summer?" Steve teased. "No wonder you swooned for an officer who could come to your rescue."

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"I like to be rescued by handsome men when I do dumb things, so what?" Bucky defended with a little embarrassed smile and paid Mindy for their supplies. Mindy told them to come to dinner at seven and then she sent them on their way.

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"Say ‘bye-bye’ to Mindy and Fred, Christopher," Steve guided his son.

Christopher waved his little hand and chirped, "Bye-bye!"

Sarah May squirmed a little when they went back outside in the cold. "Ma will be sad she doesn't get to cook the first dinner here," Steve chuckled.

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Bucky scoffed with a smile. "I'm sure your mother is more reasonable than that. She'll be happy to be with more people. Your mom is a hostess by nature. Even when she's the guest, she's still entertaining," Bucky said and clicked Sarah May into her car seat while Steve got Christopher settled.

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"She's going to insist on baking dessert to bring over," he chuckled. As Steve settled Christopher in
his seat, he started to wriggle and point, blabbering loudly at Steve. He turned around and gasped when he saw a large deer near the clearing.

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Bucky looked to see what they were staring at and he grinned at his husband and his son. Steve had only ever seen deer up at the lake and this was Christopher's first time out of the city so it was new to him too. The deer watched them for a couple seconds then Christopher made a loud noise and it turned and ran back the way it came.

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Steve loved the city but he was a sucker for animals and he loved the variety of creatures here. However, as soon as Christopher made barking noises at it, thinking it was some weird dog, the animal ran. "Aw, Bean. Did you scare the big old deer away?"

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Christopher whined and looked at retreating deer. He reached for it and glanced at Steve like he could make it come back. "Dada no!" he said and pointed towards the woods. "Dada!" He whimpered and took a few shallow breaths what were usually a telltale sign that he was about to start crying.

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Steve started to tickle Christopher's sides and started making silly noises in an attempt to distract him. "Hey, Bean! Let's go back to Nana! You want to play with Nana?"

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Christopher tried to make his sad little upset noises again but he recognized what his daddy meant and he did want to see his nana. "Nana," he agreed quietly and stopped staring at the woods.

Bucky sighed in relief and got into the passenger's side. "Wow, good job. Crisis averted. He never listens to me like that. He always cries anyway."

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Steve kissed Christopher's face a few times and got into the driver’s seat. "He loves his nana," Steve said. "She's a surefire way to get him to stop crying."

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"Well, then let's go to her," Bucky said and looked back at his son. "Let's go get Nana!" Christopher bounced happily and sat as forward as he could in his car seat. Bucky turned back around and held out a hand for Steve's. That's what he loved most about Seneca. He could be more publicly open with Steve here. Fred and Mindy loved them and some of the other residents did too or at least didn't mind them. Only a few were against it but they were pretty much outweighed in opinion and power.

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Steve held Bucky's hand and brought it to his lips to kiss the back of it. "I love you." When they got back to the house, Steve was happy to see Lilly bundled up and building a snowman. "I guess retiring here wouldn't be such a bad thing."
Bucky looked to Steve and squeezed his hand. He didn't want to start another argument like they had that morning. So he just leaned into Steve and gave him a kiss. "We can discuss it later down the road," he said with a smile. "But thank you for considering it for my sake."

Steve nodded and gave Bucky a gentle kiss. He gathered Christopher and held him on his hip. "Lee!" The little boy said happily, waving over at Lilly. "You think we are going to see more deer?"

Bucky grabbed Sarah May who was shivering and walked her towards the cabin. "I think we might. Although, they are probably hiding somewhere warm in all this snow." Bucky reached for Steve to follow him. "Come on, Christopher needs Nana and Sarah May needs some warmth."

Steve took their son inside and he squealed happily at the sight of his nana. Sarah smiled and stood up so she could take her grandson. "Did you boys have a good time?"

"Yes, it was great to see them," Bucky said and laid Sarah May down on the couch so he could wrap her tightly into one of her baby blankets. "They invited us over for dinner tonight. Their oldest son is going to be there with his wife and kids."

"Oh, that's so sweet of them," Sarah said pleasantly. "I'll bake a cake for everyone. It would be rude to go empty-handed. How many people will be there besides us?"

"I'm not sure," Bucky said as he sat back on the couch and held his daughter. She was sticking her tongue out slightly and staring at him quietly. Her dark hair was growing fast and curling up on her head. "It'll be Fred, Mindy, Junior, his wife, and their kids, but I don't know how many they have."

"I'll just assume they have three kids. If I underestimate, you boys don't take any and I'll make you some when we get back," Sarah said.

Sarah May gurgled up at her pop and reached up for his hair. Bucky's eyes went wide and he gasped. "No," he said softly and looked up at Steve. "She's learned her brother's bad habits. Look!" Sarah May was gripping on to the end of a chunk of Bucky's hair and silently humming at him happily.

Steve let out a booming laugh. "And she used to be such an angel. Now she's learning from her mischievous big brother." Christopher was happily singing nonsense at his nana, completely unaware that they were discussing him.
"Don't laugh!" Bucky said, scandalized. He gently pried his daughter's hand from his hair. "There's only two solutions. You grow your hair out so they do this to you too. Or I have to cut mine and I know you like my long hair."

Steve gasped. "You're not being serious, are you?" Steve liked having short hair, but he loved Bucky's long hair more than keeping his own and this wasn't the first time Bucky had threatened to cut his hair. And as much as Steve knew Bucky's hair was important to him, Bucky was also impulsive enough that he just might do it.

Sarah May reached up again and this time actually tugged down on Bucky's hair, hard. "Ow, fuck," Bucky groaned and looked to Steve. "Come, just... come take her so I can have Becca braid my hair."

"Don't swear," Steve scolded. "Christopher can hear you." He hurried over and took a hair band from his wrist and started to braid his hair diligently, gently tugging it from his daughter's hands.

Bucky gritted his teeth and said, "It was an accident." Although, he still didn't see what the big deal was with swearing around the kids. He and his sisters heard swearing their whole lives. But he wasn't in a mood to fight Steve about it.

Once Bucky's hair was braided, Sarah May looked around wildly to see where all of her pop's hair had gone. Thinking it disappeared, or not recognizing him, her eyes started to water and her lower lip trembled.

Bucky looked down at his daughter and then over at Steve. He didn't know what to do. He wasn't going to just give her his hair back. Also, he had a headache. "Please, take her. Steve, please," Bucky said and held her up to him. He hated that sometimes he just didn't know what to do and, if his head hurt, he needed help. It was just like his mom. Sometimes Bucky and she would be home alone with one or both of the girls and if she got a headache, she needed to hide away in her bedroom in the dark and wait it out while Bucky held down the fort.

Steve quickly took his daughter and kissed her face. "Hello, beautiful girl! Do you want your plushie? I know how much you love your bear!" He swayed her gently as he took her to the toy bag and successfully avoided a cry fest.

Bucky quietly sneaked off to his and Steve's room and curled up on the bed. He took some medicine and pulled out his wallet from his pocket. He was back up to two months sober and he kept his chip
in his pocket as a reminder. He took it out and turned it over in his hand to try to help calm himself down. He then took out a copy he had made of Grant's footprints that he kept with him everywhere he went.

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A few minutes later, Steve came inside with Diana at his feet. He had set Sarah May down for a nap with her bear. He walked over and wrapped his arm around Bucky's waist. "Hey, Beautiful," he said softly. "You alright?"

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Bucky sighed and closed his eyes. "I'm sorry, Steve," he said quietly. "My headaches have been getting worse and more frequent. I'm sorry. That's not how a father should be. I should be able to handle taking care of my own baby girl."

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"Hey, it's alright, Love," Steve said as he kissed his face a few times. "We support each other. Remember when I couldn't even walk and you were right there with me to get me through the day?"

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"Yeah, but we didn't have kids then," Bucky sighed. "And you're all better now. I don't know why I get these headaches. It's just that they come on so sudden and then I just get so grumpy and I'm in pain and I can't stop our baby girl from crying because I took my hair from her."

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Steve massaged the back of Bucky's neck. "Well, what if I couldn't walk tomorrow? I wouldn't be a bad parent because of something I can't control. What's important is that you do your best."

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"I don't want to think about that," Bucky mumbled and touched Steve's chest. He had already been through so much when he was an officer. Sometimes Bucky forgot Steve had been shot and then he would take off his shirt and he would see the scar. And sometimes Bucky forgot Steve's lung were at half capacity and then he would try walking up a flight of stairs and be breathing heavily by the time he reached the top.

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Steve eased Bucky to lay down and he laid on his side next to him with his arm wrapped around his waist. "You're an amazing dad, Buck. Our kids look up to you so much. And your sisters do, too."

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"I could be better," Bucky said softly and grabbed his two-month chip. "I know that I am getting better and I've been more stable and sober now than I've ever been. But I could be so much better as a guardian and a father."

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"We always can be better. That's what makes us human," he said. He held Bucky's hand and kissed the sobriety chip too. "So strive to be better, just like you do every day."
Bucky nodded and tucked the chip back into his wallet. He pulled Steve in for a kiss and held his hands on either side of Steve's face. He kissed him several times on the cheeks and neck and then back to Steve's lips. "I love you. I'll work on being better. I promise."

Steve hummed softly as Bucky kissed him. He stroked his hand over Bucky's hair, careful not to disturb the braid. "I know, Love," he said. He rested their foreheads together and laid there for a several long minutes before giving him a nudge. "We should probably check on the kids."

Bucky groaned quietly and sighed. "How much headache medicine is a guy my age and size allowed to take because it's not gone. It's better, but not gone," he said and sat up slowly in bed, rubbing his eyes and trying not to get down on himself again.

"Two pills every six hours, no more than six pills a day," Steve said. He had read the instructions on the bottle for each of the different headache medicines Bucky had. "You should get that checked out, you know."

Bucky pulled on one of Steve's jackets and zipped it up. "You've been saying that for a year," he mumbled and checked himself in the mirror. He just hated going to the doctor. He even hated having to be there with his babies and seeing them get vaccines. He knew it was important for their health but it scared him. Doctors scared him.

"I know. Because I want to make sure you're healthy and that this isn't some underlying issue. What if it's something completely curable and you've been suffering for no reason?" Steve asked.

Bucky took Steve's hand. "But, Steve," he looked into his husband's eyes and pleaded with him to understand. "What if it's not curable? What if some doctor tells me I have to live with it for my whole life? At least now I get to pretend it's just an unfortunate occurrence that will fade once my kids are all grown and my life is quiet and peaceful. Or what if it's something curable but they would have to do surgery? I don't want someone digging around in my head, Steve."

"You should at least know what you're up against, Baby. What if it's something that'll only get worse unless you get surgery? Or get it treated. If you won't do it for yourself or for me, then do it for our kids."

Bucky knit his brow and frowned in concern. He didn't like that option either. His mother had those problems until she died. What if she actually had some issue that would have killed her a few years down the road anyway? What if that's what Bucky had too? "I'm scared," he said and flicked his
eyes across Steve's face.

Steve gave Bucky a tight hug. "You don't have to be scared about it. It could be nothing. But we won't know for sure unless we see a doctor about it," Steve said gently.

"You have to go with me," Bucky said and gripped on to Steve. "I can't do it by myself. I need you there." He really was scared but he knew Steve was right. And he would do it for his husband and his sisters and his kids.

"Of course I'd go with you." Steve leaned forward to kiss him softly. "How could I not? Besides, it's not like I have a job I have to answer to."

"Okay. When we get home, I'll call and schedule something," Bucky said a little reluctantly and gave Steve a hug before pulling him up off the bed. "Alright, now we can go back out there. We need to wear Christopher out and let him nap before we go to Mindy and Fred's tonight."

Steve sat up and got onto his feet. When they got into the babies' room, Christopher scampered over to them. "Papa!" he shouted excitedly.

"Bean," Bucky said and scooped him up off the ground. "How is my sweet baby boy?" he asked and laid down on the ground with him on his chest. "You want to play? We have blocks. Daddy packed the blocks. Right, Daddy? We have blocks?" He figured he could handle playing blocks with his son right now. That wasn’t as much of a risk of having his headache get worse than some of his noise-maker toys.

"Blahs" Christopher said in an excited, little voice as he tried to say 'blocks'. Steve laughed as Christopher crawled all over his papa's chest. He smiled and pushed the bag of blocks over to them.

Bucky grabbed Christopher's toy bag and helped take out all the blocks for him. "Steve, I don't think we are going to have speech problems with Christopher. He's so smart," Bucky said and looked to Steve then to his son. "Tell Daddy how smart you are, Little Bean. Say 'blocks'!"

"It's cause he gets so much attention and we all talk to him every day," Steve said. "And he really is a smart boy."

Steve watched proudly as Christopher held up a block. "Dada! Blahs!"
Bucky beamed at him and kissed his cheeks a few times. "You're such a brilliant little boy. Look at you!" He helped Christopher build a block tower and tried again to help him with colors. "Okay, Bean, purple," he said and held up a block that was more magenta than it was purple.

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Christopher threw his hands up and said, "Papa!" in a big voice. Steve let out a laugh. Christopher's brain only went so far. Sarah May looked out of the crib at them and let out an unhappy noise.

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"I guess that is pretty close to 'purple'," Bucky decided and looked over at Sarah May. "Do you want me to take Christopher to a different room so she can rest a little longer?" he asked Steve and pulled a block from Christopher's hand before he could throw it at his Papa's head.

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"It's alright. I think poor Sarah May has to get used to a bit of noise. I don't think there will ever be much peace and quiet in our home," Steve said.

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"No, I'm sure not," Bucky laughed. "With the amount of kids that we are going to have, there isn't going to be silence for decades." Christopher grabbed a different block and starting gnawing on it. "Sweetheart, you're going to hurt your gums."

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"Papa, no!" Christopher scolded, copying Steve's tone the best he could since he was used to his dad reprimanding him when he misbehaved.

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Bucky shook his head, taken aback. "Baby, I don't want you to cut your gums on blocks. I don't want you hurting yourself, Christopher."

Christopher just yelled, "No!" again and bit down on a block.

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Steve didn't like it when Christopher raised his voice like that, so he got up and gently-but-firmly took the block from his hand and started to put them in the bag. "All done, Christopher. We don't yell at our papa."

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Christopher immediately started crying and trying to pull the bag towards him to get the blocks. He screamed a little and Bucky hoisted him up so he couldn't get to the toys. "Bean, shush, please," Bucky said and tried to calm him down. He pet his hair but nothing was helping.

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Sarah May turned started to cry at the noise. Steve sighed in defeat and gently took her from her crib and rocked her back and forth. "I'm sorry, Sweet Pea. I'm sorry it's so loud."
Bucky kissed his son and bounced him to try to get him to quiet down. "Steve, can I give him a toy? Please? Just one of his plush dinos or something? He's not going to stop," Bucky pleaded with Steve and felt as Christopher reached back and pulled the ponytail from Bucky's braid and started to tug on it.

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Steve shifted Sarah into one arm and took Christopher from Bucky and held him in his other. "I'll calm him down," Steve said. "Christopher, you are being a bad boy right now. Don't pull on Papa’s hair."

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Christopher curled up into Steve's chest and clunked his head on his shoulder and cried. Bucky carefully took Sarah May and held her close. She was looking up at him with big wet eyes and her nose and cheeks were red. "It's okay Sweet Pea. It's okay. You're a sensitive one aren't you?"

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Sarah May looked pathetic and all sad over the ruckus her brother was causing. Steve kissed his son’s face over and over. "Little Bean, you were being very fresh. I love you so much but I can't have you treating your pop like that."

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Sarah May reached a hand up and touched Bucky's beard that had grown back in the last month. Sarah May seemed to like his beard. She liked to pet it. Bucky kissed her hand and sighed. "It's fine, Steve, he's just grumpy because he needs to nap. If he sleeps now he can get an hour or two in before we have to go."

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While Steve tried to settle their son down in his crib, Becca came over to Bucky and looked at the baby in his arms. She was hoping she could get them both to calm down and stop being so loud. Becca pet her hand over Sarah May's hair. "Even though she's adopted, she kind of looks like you."

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Bucky glanced at his sister. "You really think she looks like me? I always thought Christopher looked like Steve. That kid is definitely Irish. I don't know what Sarah May looks like but she does have darker hair like mine." Bucky looked into her dark brown eyes and smiled. "I can see it. Except her eyes."

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"He does look like Steve," Becca agreed. "I guess you two really lucked out that you not only got kids, but ones that could pass for your biological ones," she said. "Are you guys ever going to try to find a woman to do that test-tube thing to have ones that have your genes?"

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Bucky sighed and watched Steve across the room tucking Christopher in. "I'm not sure. We haven't discussed that. I don't know if either of us would feel comfortable doing that. And I know that there are so many kids like these two that need families. I plan on talking to him about it at some point but not yet. We got really lucky with these two and it's still very raw what happened with Grant."
"Yeah, I guess," she sighed. Becca felt bad for her brother and Steve even though she didn't understand what pain it was to lose a child. "If I told the me from a year ago that you'd have two kids I don't think I would have believed you'd be responsible enough for them," she joked.

Bucky scoffed. "Thanks," he said grumpily and looked to Becca. He knew she was just trying to be nice but it was a little annoying to him that she was so dead set on him being irresponsible. He knew it was a trend for years but it was different now. "Do you want to hold Sarah May so I can help Steve's mom make that cake?"

Becca looked at the baby. Usually, she didn't hold them. She typically minded them while they slept or were in their carriers, but she wasn't too afraid to hold her. "Alright." She held her hands out for Sarah May.

Bucky carefully passed his daughter off to Becca and sighed. He kissed Sarah May's head and then went to help in the kitchen. Bucky wouldn't admit it, but his head still hurt and he wanted a little break from watching the kids. Also, his mind was running through too much at once and he could use a distraction of attempting to help make dessert.

Sarah could tell that Bucky was frazzled, so she made him some hot chocolate and insisted that he sit down. "Vacations aren't vacations for parents. It's just watching your kids in a different place."

Bucky smiled weakly at her and took the hot chocolate. "I commend you, Sarah. Being a parent is hard work. I thought I would have this all worked out since I've raised two girls for five years. But it's definitely different raising babies. And when I was helping with my sisters as newborns, I could hide in my room with an excuse of doing homework or something. I can't quite do that anymore."

"Now imagine if you did it on your own and then you'd have a look into my life," she joked softly. "But I'm pretty sure you've had a taste of that already." She placed the cake in the oven. "You'll learn to manage over time."

Bucky laughed humorlessly. "Yeah, there's no way I could do this on my own. I hardly managed on my own with the girls. Just ask either of them... or Steve or Clint or anyone in Brooklyn. I know for a fact I would be a failure if I didn't have Steve. He makes me better. You know that?"

"You would've found a way even if you hadn't met my son," Sarah said. "You two make each other better." She took a seat across from him and gave Bucky a loving smile.
"Thanks," Bucky said and smiled a little sadly at her. "I'm really glad that you're so loving and understanding of Steve. I don't think many parents would be supportive of their son marrying a man. I'm pretty sure my parents would have been okay with it. I think they knew I was gay even though I didn't say anything. But, my point is, you mean the world to Steve and he was so scared about telling you. You remember. And I just want to thank you for being so good to me and my sisters. You didn't have to be. But you were."

"I was hurt at first that he was so afraid to tell me. I thought, what kind of mother am I that my own son can't tell me who he loves? But after seeing what you poor boys have gone through, I understand why he was hesitant to tell me," she said. "You don't have to thank me for anything. I mean, what kind of mother would I be if I didn't embrace my son's family?"

Bucky reached out and gripped Sarah's hand. "It's been really nice having a mother around again. I know it's been great for the girls. Sometimes I try to be my dad and I just can't be as great with my sisters as he was. I think it really helped them when you came along and treated them like your own."

Sarah held Bucky's hand and smiled over at him. "It makes me happier than you know to have such a big family now. Steve was always enough for me. But opening my heart to more children means the world." She then pulled her hand back and gave Bucky a little swat. "Now, go see if your husband needs help with anything."

"Yes, ma'am," Bucky said and stood up. "Thanks for letting me take a break with you." He downed the rest of his hot chocolate and went off to find where Steve had gone with Christopher. Hopefully, he had him down for a nap and they could take it easy before they needed to go out again.

Steve had both children sleeping soundly in their little crib and he was watching both of them. He looked up when he saw Bucky approach. "Hey, Baby. Feeling better?"

"Yeah, I'm feeling better," Bucky promised him and slipped his arms around Steve's middle. "How long have they been asleep? I don't want to disturb them. They might sleep until we have to go."

"About five minutes or so. Once Christopher saw how comfy Sarah May looked, he wanted in on the slumber party, too," Steve chuckled.

"I'm really glad he's warmed up to her so quickly," Bucky said in a soft whisper and leaned into Steve. "I was a little worried. But now he wants to be close to her and tries to teach her what he has
learned, either good or bad. And I just love it when he says, 'Ya-Ya' to her."

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Steve smiled fondly. "We raised him right. He wants to help her, when he’s not in a bad mood," he chuckled. "And, you're right, his name for her is too damn cute. I wonder what Sarah May is going to call him when she first learns how to speak."

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"I'm not sure but it'll be just as adorable and I'll probably be just as emotional," Bucky said and gave Steve a kiss. "Just imagine the last kid we have might be a baby while Christopher is a teenager. Imagine that baby learning to walk and talk and having Christopher around to show them the ropes because by then he will be an old pro at babies running all through the house."

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Steve laid his head on Bucky's shoulder. "He's probably going to start asking us to slow down on the kids after the fourth or fifth," he joked. "He's going to be a loving older brother just like you are."

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"Oh, come on, he will know we want a dozen or more and he will recognize the challenges and rewards in that. Just you wait, he's going to be helping take the youngest to kindergarten and little league practices."

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"Why would we need him to do that when I'll be home?" Steve asked. "I wonder if he's going to be tall. Or if he's going to be a little guy. It's not like we know too much about where he came from. I'm convinced Sarah May is always going to be tiny."

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Bucky chuckled softly and held Steve's hand. "Baby, I know you'll be home but what if you've got to do something like a doctor's appointment for one of the other dozen kids and need Christopher to pick up the youngest ones." He nuzzled against Steve and added. "I just hope we can figure out where Sarah May's biological family is from. Maybe we can ask Fred what he thinks, he's a smart guy, well-traveled."

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Steve shrugged a bit and looked down at their kids. "I guess. I do want Christopher to be a good brother but I don't want him to feel like he's playing third parent, you know?" He shifted his gaze to Sarah May. "Let's ask Fred, sure."

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"Baby, he's not going to be a third parent. I'll be around. But you know with all those kids, if I'm at work and you have to be somewhere else with one of the others, then he might be our helper," Bucky said. "I helped my mom with the babies when I was younger. Dad was working and Mom had me there to help. It's just how it is when you are a sibling."
"I suppose. I wouldn't know, I guess. Being an only child wasn’t like that," Steve said. Sarah May made a little noise in her sleep and stretched her legs out.

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Bucky held his breath for a moment, hoping he hadn't woken his daughter. "Let's let them sleep," he whispered to Steve and gently pushed him so he would get going. "Christopher will be a terror at dinner if he doesn't get a nap right now."

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Steve nodded. He took Bucky's hand so he could lead him out of the room. "They're perfect," he sighed. "Even though Sarah May started pulling your hair."

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"It's okay. I'll have to get used to it. That'll be my life until all our babies are grown up," Bucky said and squeezed Steve's hand. "I'll just wear my hair in a braid for years and hope that no one else besides those two learn how to pull it out."

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Steve chuckled. "Yeah, I still can't believe that we have two little babies to raise and we've only been married a year. Talk about luck, huh?"

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Bucky smiled back and rested his head on Steve's shoulder. It would be three beautiful little babies in a year, but Bucky wasn't going to mention that. "We are just about the luckiest men in the world, I'd think. I know I am. I landed a perfect guy like you and got him to marry me. That's lucky."

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Steve pet his hands over Bucky's hair. "I'm the lucky one." He pulled back and moved to hover over by the couch. He plucked Becca's book from her hands playfully. "Tell me I'm the coolest brother-in-law ever and I'll give you the book back," he teased.

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Becca stared at him as she reached into her backpack next to the couch, pulled out a different book, and started reading where the bookmark was. Bucky laughed and took the book back from Steve. "This is why you can't mess with her, Baby. You can't win against that stonewall face."

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Steve watched in disbelief and then let out an indignant chuckle. "Alright, you win," he sighed. "Sarah May isn't allowed to learn that from her. I need to win against my own kids."

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"Why do you want to take books from our kids?" Bucky said and pulled Steve on to the other couch with him. "Don't we want them to be smart? Or at least smart enough to pass school and all that. Smarter than me. That's a good gauge for it."
"Well, I want to be able to mess with them sometimes without losing to them because they are being smartasses with me," Steve complained.

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Bucky giggled and got Steve's face in his hands. "Am I going to have to be the strict parent? Don't make me do that, Steve. You know you're more cut out for that." He kissed Steve and tugged his hair just a bit. "Our kids are going to come crying to me that their daddy is pulling pranks."

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"What? Just cause I used to be a cop I got to lay down the law in my own home too?" Steve smiled and kissed Bucky's lips lightly. "I want to prank my kids. It means that I love them."

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"You can prank them if you want but don't be mad at me when the sensitive ones come crying because they don't like pranks," Bucky said. "And you know I hate most pranks so I'll be on their side."

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Steve smiled fondly. "Well, that's what family is for. They get on your nerves because nobody else is allowed to," he said. "It'll help our kids build character and stand up to bullies."

---

"Okay, whatever you say, Love," Bucky chuckled and then covered up a yawn. "Can we nap while the kids are napping so we will be ready for dinner tonight? Look, Becca is reading. Lilly is still outside in the snow. Your mom is..." Bucky glanced over at Sarah in the kitchen. "...sewing a rip in my jeans. I didn't even pack those pair. Did she take them from the laundry to fix them on this trip?"

---

Steve let out a laugh because that was so typical of his mom. "Yeah, she still refuses to let me throw away any clothes just because there's a hole in them. I swear I planned on mending them when I got back." He kissed Bucky's forehead. "Let's go nap, Baby. I'm sure we will need energy for later."
The babies let Steve and Bucky nap for about an hour before there was simultaneous crying coming from their room. They managed to get the both of them settled down and ready to go to Fred and Mindy's. Shortly after, they arrived at the house with Lilly and Becca behind them and Sarah holding her dessert proudly. Fred and Mindy were excited to see them all again and welcomed Sarah in first since she was carrying a heavy-looking cake. "Looks like we are having a full house tonight, eh, Jamie?" Fred chuckled.

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"Jamie?" Becca asked curiously and looked to Bucky with a sly smile.

"Shut it," Bucky said back to her before shaking Fred's hand and following him through the hall to the dining room. They owned one of the largest cabins around the lake. They had been in this one since their oldest boy was in primary school. Bucky was about to ask where Junior was when a beast of a man came into the dining area carrying a tray of barbecue chicken for Mindy. "My god, Junior..." Bucky whispered and caught himself looking him up and down. He looked so much like he did when he was younger, just a lot bigger. Bucky was back at age twelve, breaking his leg on a hiking trip with Junior and his brothers and being carried all the way back down the hill in Junior's strong arms.

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Steve had been standing with a baby in either arm and for once, he felt a tinge of jealousy when he saw Bucky looking some other guy over like that. It didn't help matters that Junior really was a good-looking guy. He coolly walked over and stood next to Bucky with a smile. "Hi, I'm Steve. I'd shake your hand, but my hands are occupied with mine and Bucky's kids," Steve said with a bit of a pointed edge.

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"Right, uh," Bucky cleared his throat and took Christopher from Steve. "Junior, this is my husband Steve. I, uh, I can't believe you're here. I haven't seen you in about eight years. How's the fire department?"

Junior smiled and shook Steve's hand. "Good to meet you, Steve. I'm Frederick Watkins Jr. so I'm usually just called Junior. And the department is good. I'm the chief of my division now."

---

Christopher hadn't seen someone so tall so close to him before. Even he was staring up at Junior with his mouth open in awe. "That’s pretty young to be a chief already. You must be doing a great job there," Steve said. "Hey, uh, I heard you were bringing your kids around. Can Christopher play with them?"
"Yes, of course," Junior said and gestured towards the door for the kitchen. "Bucky, my wife and kids are in the living room if you want to take your son to meet them. You remember where it is, I'm sure." He smiled and started putting utensils and napkins around all the plates. "And, yes, as a matter-of-fact, I'm the youngest chief in my department's history. Although, don't let that impress you much. I am already thirty-three. The second youngest chief was thirty-five." Junior nodded and glanced over at Bucky who was still pretty distracted.

Steve nodded at Junior. "It's still pretty impressive."

Some kid's laughter could be heard in the other room and Christopher urgently tugged at Bucky's shirt. "Play?" he asked.

"Yes, Bean," Steve said softly. "Buck, can you show me to the living room?"

Bucky snapped back. "Yeah, yes, sorry." He touched Steve's arm and guided him through to the kitchen door. Mindy waved at them from where she was showing Becca how to drizzle some sort of sauce on to a casserole. Bucky walked them through the kitchen to the hall and then pointed where a woman and three kids were sitting in a circle playing with a set of farm animals. "There we are."

Christopher gasped and started to squirm excitedly when he saw the toys. Steve set him down gently and said, "Play nice, Christopher." He smiled over at the woman and waved. "Hello, I'm Steve. My son hasn't really gotten a chance to play with other kids yet. Just his sister."

The woman smiled back at them and held out her hand. "You're the husband?" she asked in a light southern drawl and her red hair bounced as she moved. "Mindy told me about you two. She's very proud of Bucky. Practically considers him a fifth son." She waved Bucky over to join them and shook his hand as well. "I'm Maureen. Nice to meet you both."

Steve smiled. "Yeah, I am. We're here for our anniversary," he said. "It's nice to meet you, Maureen." He shook her hand and took a seat to keep an eye on Christopher, who was, so far, behaving himself. Sarah May stared at Maureen's red hair. "What are your kids' names?"

Maureen gestured to the oldest, a boy of about five or six, "This one is Freddie - Fred Watkins the Third, I'm sure you could guess. Then we have Camilla and then Helene." She patted her stomach softly. "And we have mystery Watkins number four in here."

Steve gave her a big smile. "Oh my god, congratulations!" he said. "How far along are you? Do you know if it's a girl or boy yet?" he asked.
Maureen giggled and said, "Well, I'm about three and a half months along. Junior doesn't want to know if it's a boy or a girl so we aren't finding out this time. But I'll let you in on a secret that you can't share with my husband." She looked past Steve and Bucky as if she expected Junior to be right around the corner. Then she covered Freddie's ears and whispered. "I know it's twins. We haven't gone to prove it yet but I can just feel it. Junior's going to be so excited."

Steve grinned even wider. "Oh, man. That's amazing!" he said excitedly. "Did you hear that, Buck?" Christopher looked up from his playing when he heard his dad get excited and he let out a happy shout too, copying him. "Congratulations."

Bucky nodded and looked over at Maureen, "Yeah, congratulations. Five children is a lot. How many do you and Junior want to have? Steve and I are shooting for something like half the population of Brooklyn."

Steve laughed and nudged Bucky lightly. Sarah May whined at the jostling movement and buried her face in Steve's chest. "I'm thinking five is enough. But I'd love however many children we have. Sometimes things happen that we don't plan for... like twins," she chuckled.

Bucky took Sarah May from Steve so he could hold her still and secure so her daddy could help Christopher play. "That's good. That's just about how we feel. We hadn't necessarily planned for the children we have. They sort of found their way to us in a stroke of luck or a miracle or something."

Steve saw Christopher getting a bit possessive over a toy so he asked Christopher to see it. The toddler surrendered the toy to his dad and started playing with a new one. "I would love to have twins," Steve said. "I bet in a year's time you're going to tell me twins are more of a handful than I can imagine."

"I bet in a year's time we will have twins of our own somehow and we can commiserate together," Bucky said and pet Sarah May's hair.

Maureen chuckled and handed Christopher a plush dog that one of her girls had discarded in favor of a toy car. "I heard you two saw Jesse last year. He and Junior were fishing together a few weeks ago and they discussed you both. Of course, we didn't know then that you already had two little ones. I bet Jesse will be happy to hear it."

"Yeah, I got to meet Jesse the last time we were here. He's a pretty nice guy, I like him," Steve said and watched Christopher wave the plush dog around. "Have you been thinking of names for the future kids yet?"
"We don't know," Maureen said and rubbed her tummy. "If it is twins like I believe, and if they are girls, I would like to name them for the both of our grandmothers."

Junior came in then and Maureen motioned so Steve would know to hush up. Junior bent down and gave his wife a kiss then ruffled Freddie's hair. "Maureen, are you boring these gentlemen?"

"She's not boring us," Steve said. "We are talking babies and I love kids." He tickled Sarah May's feet. "So what's it like once they start talking in full sentences?"

"Overwhelming," Junior said and took a seat next to Bucky on the couch. "It's wonderful and you're so proud of them. But then they start back-talking and it gets a little more complicated than it was when it was just cute."

Steve eyed Bucky to make sure he wouldn't swoon over Junior when he sat down next to him. "Christopher will learn quick that we won't stand for back talking," Steve said. "I want to make sure our kids know respect." He watched as Christopher started a game of throwing the stuffed toy and then chasing after it.

Bucky couldn't really help himself but give Junior another once over as he sat next to him. "Junior, I remember when you were a teenager and you were dating this girl from Paramus and then the second you found out she never wanted kids you were out of there. But now, seeing you actually married with kids is just wild."

Steve huffed softly and gave Bucky a small nudge when he caught him staring. Junior chuckled politely and said, "She was a nice girl. But I wanted kids so bad. I'm glad I was able to meet my soul mate and have a bunch of baby Junior’s and Maureen's."

Maureen blushed and smiled over at her husband. "Only took you a vacation to Alabama to find me," she said happily and picked up her youngest who was trying to crawl under the couch.

Junior nodded and looked to Steve. "And I'm glad Bucky found you. Me and all my brothers are. We were always pretty worried about him. Never thought he would get to find a guy quite like you." He turned his attention back to Bucky, "And, yes, the four of knew where your interests lied even when we were kids. You were just about as subtle as you are now, Jamie."

"I'm lucky to have found him. God made us for each other, I'm sure if it. And he's given us our children because he sees how we cherish each other." He picked up Christopher so he could cuddle him. "I'm glad I'm not the only one who noticed Bucky still eyeing you," he said to junior.
"I..." Bucky started to try to defend himself but couldn't think of a valid response. "Yeah, well, I guess I should thank you for not treating me any different for who I was."

Junior nodded and clapped Bucky on the back. "I kind of liked it. It was pretty endearing to have my own shadow around this place when you and Old George came to town."

"Now you've got three little shadows running after you all the time," Steve said with a nod at the children. Christopher climbed down from Steve's lap to get the stuffed toy. He came back up into Steve's lap and pushed the toy towards his little sister. "Ya-Ya."

Sarah May looked at the plushie for a second and then extended her little hand to try to grip on to it. It dropped when Christopher let go and his sister wasn't able to hold it up on her own. Christopher grumbled but tried again but to no avail. Mindy came into the living room with Becca tucked right next to her so they could call everyone for dinner.

"Ya-Ya," Christopher huffed in frustration as if Sarah May was a lost cause. The little baby smiled over at her brother, amused by him playing with her. "Alright, little bean, it's time to eat." Steve signed 'food' to Christopher and scooped him up into his arms.

Christopher happily signed back to Steve and wiggled in his arms. He was hungry. The rest of them followed Steve to the dining room and sat down together. There were only so many high chairs so Bucky and Maureen both ended up holding their youngest kids.

Before he dug into his own dinner, Steve cut up the food for Christopher and made a bottle of formula for the babies so Maureen and Junior wouldn't have to worry. "Thank you for having us all over for dinner," Steve said. "It's nice to be back."

Mindy, who had been talking up a storm to Sarah about nothing in particular, waved her hand dismissively. "Oh, it's no trouble. We weren't sure when we were going to see you again."

Fred nodded and swallowed a bite of his food, "In the future, a couple of phone calls between visits wouldn't kill you."

Steve gave a guilty smile. "Yeah, I suppose we could have been more communicative," he admitted. "I'll write down our phone number before we go in case you want to call us about something, too."

Fred nodded his thanks and looked to Christopher who was shoving warm noodles in his mouth and trying to talk through it. "Your boy has a lot to say, doesn't he?"
"Yes, he does," Bucky agreed as Sarah May finished up her bottle. "He's really smart too. He can say a lot of different words really well and then others he tries to say but can't quite get there."

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"Yeah, like ‘Sarah May’. He can't say her name, so he made one up for her," Steve added. He kissed his son's cheek. "Junior didn't talk for ages, but, when he did, he said things right for the most part. I guess he didn't want to do things until he knew how to do it right," Fred said.

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"Junior has always been that way with most everything," Mindy added. After he knew he was going to marry Maureen, he didn't speak of it until he had the perfect proposal plan. And when Maureen wanted to start having kids, Junior had to read as many parenting books as he could until he thought he was ready."

"Wow," Bucky murmured. "Steve's kind of the exact opposite. Once he feels something, he's set on it until he gets it. It's all very quick with Steve. If you aren't right on board with him, you're going to fall behind fast."

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"Hey," Steve laughed, giving Bucky a nudge. "It hasn't steered us wrong, has it?" He looked over at Fred. "He talks as if I'm impulsive, but it's not like I brought a kid home out of the blue or anything," Steve joked.

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"Yes, you did," Bucky chuckled. "Twice! It's not like it happened once and it was a good story for later. That's how both of these babies came into our home. I can only imagine I'll get back from work one of these days and Steve's adopted an orphanage."

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Steve dramatically crossed his arms. "You hear this guy? He wants a big family and complains when I give him one. What other gay couple do you know who has two kids?" He smiled at his husband to show he was messing around.

---

Bucky huffed and looked to Steve. "Do you hear complaining?" he asked and leaned in a little to Steve but didn't kiss him. He wasn't sure if that would make anyone uncomfortable or not. "I'm just saying, let me try bringing home a baby next time. I want in on the fun of seeing your face all surprised and a little frantic like mine gets."

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"Oh, man. If you bring home a baby, I'll go nuts," Steve said. "Can you surprise me with a baby? You don't even have to ask me first, just bring them home." He was already getting excited over the thought of it.
Bucky touched Steve's lips with his thumb to hush him. "I'll try my best, Love," he said softly and then turned back to everyone else. "We need more names, though. We have exhausted three names including middle names so maybe we should work on that before I bring home a baby."

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"You could name the next one after me," Fred suggested shamelessly.

Steve smiled over at him. "I wouldn't be opposed to adding that to the list of potential names," he answered. Steve had a few bites of his dinner before adding, "I love having kids. It's better than I could've ever imagined."

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Bucky smiled. "It's not very surprising to see Junior with kids. He was always caring and naturally pretty paternal. But I'm guessing it's strange seeing me settled down with kids."

"You were a wildcard," Junior agreed.

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"Bucky's a great father," Steve said. "He works hard all day but always has enough energy to play with Christopher and Sarah May. And he takes them to the park whenever he can or when I'm feeling sick."

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Junior nodded. "I remember once when Bucky was really small, maybe seven or eight, he found an injured fox on a hike with us. My brother Michael told him to leave it because there was no way to save it. But Bucky took off his shirt and rigged it up like a sling and brought the fox all the way back to the cabins."

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Steve looked over at Bucky with love in his eyes. "That's my husband. He's very caring." Steve wasn't as cautious as Bucky and leaned over to kiss his cheek lightly. "You got to tell me more stories about Bucky when he was little. I never get to hear this stuff at home."

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Bucky shied away and blushed a bit. He was more sensitive and nervous than usual given their company. "Babe," he said softly and looked up at everyone, a little embarrassed. "I don't think everyone wants to hear little Bucky stories."

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"But I want to hear little Bucky stories," Steve said pathetically. "You don't tell me enough from your childhood so I will try to get that information when I can."

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Maureen giggled politely at the exchange. "I must admit, I wasn't very sure what to think of two men marrying each other when Junior first told me about you two. It's nice to see that your marriage isn't any different than ours. I'm relieved to know that any initial reservations I had were wrong."
Bucky looked to Steve briefly with wide eyes, worried what he would think or say. "I know it's a bit surprising at first but all love is the same. If it's a consensual, loving relationship then it shouldn't be any different than a man and a woman."

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"I think so, too. And you too are just lovely together," Maureen said pleasantly, reaching over to hold her husband's hand. Christopher finished his food and then immediately started to sign 'more' at Bucky to make him get more dinner.

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Bucky checked what Christopher had eaten and then gave him just a little bit more green beans and carrots. "That's it then, Bean, you'll get grumpy if your tummy is too full." While Bucky had his head down trying to discreetly wipe some food out of his beard, Sarah passed some more chicken to her grandson.

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Steve snickered behind his napkin when he saw his mom spoil their son. When dinner was over, Steve and Sarah insisted on helping clean up. "Buck, can you keep an eye on the kids while I wash the dishes?"

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"Yes, I've got it," Bucky said and took each of their kids in his arms and went to the living room to let Christopher play with Maureen's kids. Maureen sat on the couch and held her stomach lightly.

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"It's nice that the both of you take such an interest in your kids," Maureen said to Bucky. "All of my friends' husbands want no part in child rearing. It's a shame."

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Bucky gave her a sympathetic smile. "I couldn't imagine not being involved with my children's lives. That's just not who I am. Or who Steve is." He paused and smiled thinking of his husband. "Steve is so good with the kids. He knows how to be a good parent from how his mother raised him. And I learned from my mom and dad. I don't know if Junior has told you about Old George or not."

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"He's told me some stories of him. Sometimes he says that he can't believe an eccentric, wild guy like you came from a stoic man like him," she chuckled. "He sounds like he was a good man and probably the perfect personality to compliment yours."

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"He was a good man," Bucky said with a weak smile. "He was the absolute best. The best father I could have asked for. I miss him so much." Bucky paused and shook his head. "He and my mother worked really well together. She was energetic and all over the place and he was always calm and quiet and soft. I think I ended up being a mash of the two of them."
"Kids tend to pick up a lot of traits of their parents," Maureen said. "I hope all of my kids pick up Junior's bravery. I'm really nervous but he runs right into things without letting his nerves get to him."

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"That's how it is with Steve. He's so courageous. Not that I'm not brave at times, but he's a lot like Junior in that way," Bucky said and gently brushed a hand over Sarah May's curls. "Steve doesn't shut down in the face of immediate crisis like I do. His creeps up on him later, like Jesse. Have you heard the story of when Jesse had an entire conversation with a heat-wave hallucination back in '72?"

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Sarah May smiled and reached up for Bucky's hand, but didn't have good coordination so she missed. "No, I didn't hear about that," Maureen answered. "What happened?"

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"Oh, Jesse had too little food in his system and basically no hydration and it was one of the hot summers up here," Bucky started. "We saw him laying out in the grass talking to himself so we went to see if he was okay and when we asked who he was talking to he said 'my new friend Jeremy' and just looked at us like we were crazy."

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Maureen laughed. "Oh, my. I probably would've panicked and called an ambulance for him. I always worry about the worst-case scenario. I've taken so many unnecessary trips to the ER because I think something is worse than it is."

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"I understand that," Bucky chuckled a bit and nudged Christopher with his foot away from pulling up the carpet. "Steve and I have had enough hospitals and doctors to last us our entire marriage. He was shot, I was beaten half to death, and then after October... I'm sorry. I'm bringing us down."

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Maureen gasped and covered her mouth. "Oh, my god. That's awful." She gave Bucky a sympathetic, gentle touch on his arm. "I'm so sorry you two had to endure so much in such a short time." She looked a bit uncomfortable even though she was doing her best to be reassuring.

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"Sorry, sorry," Bucky repeated and wiped at his eyes. "I'm horrible company right now. I'm so sorry, Maureen. I'm going to go find Steve." He felt terrible. He couldn't keep himself from thinking about Grant as he picked up Christopher and held both his children close to him as he went to find his husband.

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Steve was in the middle of washing out a pot when he saw Bucky coming in with their kids in his arms. He could tell right away that he was upset, so he swiftly dried his hands and went over to him. "Hey, Baby, what's the matter?"
Bucky shook his head and was careful not to squish the babies as he melted into Steve's open arms. He just breathed carefully and shut his eyes. "I'm sorry, I just got worked up. It just came on really suddenly and I just got overwhelmed really fast. I'm sorry. It's okay. I should just take the kids back to the cabin."

"Papa?" Christopher murmured softly, squeezing his shirt in his hand. Steve hugged Bucky and pet a hand through his hair. "You sure you don't want me to come with you, Buck?"

"I don't know," Bucky whispered and kissed Christopher's head. "Can you just watch them for a bit. I'll just go take a break outside and calm down. Maybe that'll help. I'll just take a minute."

"Alright," Steve said. He took their little babies from Bucky's arms and kissed him once more. "I love you," he said. Christopher whined softly when Bucky walked away, but Steve was quick to console him.

Fred came in a couple seconds later with a smile on his face and a laugh in his throat, ever a jubilant man. "Oh, what's wrong, Baby Chris?" he asked and assessed both children. "Where did Jamie go?"

"Well, how can I help?" Fred asked and offered to take Sarah May. "How has he been with his drinking? I remember that being quite a point of contention around our barbecue last May. Just wanted to see how he was making on. Old George used to sit and talk to me about all the times his wife drank instead of communicating and working through things. It pains me to know that Jamie picked that up."

Steve passed his daughter over, who fussed a little but didn't cry. "He's sober," Steve said. "He's been going to meetings for a while now and I'm really proud of him. He's only drank once in months and he didn't even get drunk that one time."

"Good, you don't know how glad I am to hear that," Fred said and rocked Sarah May gently. "She's got some dark eyes," he said, changing the subject. "And she's really attentive. She doesn't stop looking at you except to blink."

"She's a real thinker," Steve said. "I love the way she looks at Bucky. I think she really wants to
understand what's going on and can't wait to interact with us." He hugged Christopher closer to his chest. "We would have had three kids," Steve sighed. "And I think that's what's eating away at Bucky. It drowned me for a while, but Sarah May pulled me out of it."

---

Fred looked over at Steve for a few long moments. Sarah May, not getting attention anymore, quietly reached a hand up to touch Fred's cheek. "What do you mean, son?" he asked cautiously and gestured for Steve to sit down with him.

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"Our son, Grant, was stillborn," he said quietly. "When he died, I was in a bad place. I was forced into retirement from the police force because of an injury. And then our son dies. I thought God was punishing us and I was afraid to do anything with Bucky or else I'd lose Christopher or someone else I loved," he explained. "But my priest called me one day and said a baby was left at the door of our church. I knew it was a sign from God letting us know everything was okay. But because I was so distant, I wasn't there to help Bucky heal."

---

Fred nodded and reached to squeeze Steve's shoulder. "So now Bucky, who had to pick up the slack, keeps having these breakdowns?" He sighed and looked over at a picture hanging on the wall of his family - his wife and all four sons. "Steve, I don't know how it feels to lose a child. I've thankfully never had to experience that. But I know how much I love my boys. And I know how much it hurts me to think about the day I will leave them. And if my pain is even fraction of the pain you both feel... well, I'm incredibly sorry and also extremely proud for how well you two have handled things. I mean, you are still here together, and you've got two children with you. That's very good."

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Steve nodded, looking a bit guilty. He couldn't help how he felt back then. He was in a better place now and tried to help Bucky but some things were too little too late. "Thanks," he said. "Bucky's been so strong. He amazes me and you'd be so proud if you got to see how he handles everything day to day. He really looks up to you."

---

Fred smiled warmly. "Well, I always did have a soft spot for that kid. And Old George was one of my closest friends even if he was a bit younger and only came around a few times a year. I sort of feel like I owe it to him to keep an eye on his kids, you know? Like George has put me in charge of watching them a bit. I'm sure you understand."

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Steve nodded. "I'm sorry you lost a good friend," he said. "He sounds like a great person and he left behind a lot of people that loved him. I'm just glad Bucky was able to keep the family together so we could bring everyone up here again."

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"I agree," Fred said and touched Sarah May's hair. "Although, I'm not kidding about some phone calls every so often. Let us know when you find little Jewish girls on church steps and decide to take them home. I don't want the next time you come up here to be a surprise, either. Give us warning so
we can prepare for you two and the kids."

---

"Jewish girls?" Steve asked. "You think Sarah May is Jewish?" He looked over at her. "We found a coin with her, but thought it was from Yugoslavia or somewhere in Europe like that."

---

Fred gave Sarah May a once over and shrugged. "Well, she looks Jewish, doesn't she? The big brown eyes and that soft curly dark hair. That was just my first thought. I assumed you two met at least one of her biological parents. But Yugoslavia could be possible too. Do you have that coin with you?"

---

"Oh no. If she's Jewish then I can't baptize her at our church," Steve said in a worried voice. He would have to find a synagogue to take her to. "We didn't meet her parents. She was left and that was that." He shifted Christopher onto his hip so he could dig the coin out of his wallet - he always kept it with him.

---

Fred gently took the coin from Steve and looked it over. He squinted at it and turned it over a couple times like he was decoding it. "I'm sorry, son, I don't know where this came from. Your little girl could be from anywhere. But I'm sure there are archives at the libraries on currency from around the world."

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Steve sighed and took the coin back. "The libraries we went to didn't have anything in the archives we could find. We got to find a place that specializes in this kind of stuff." Christopher tried to grab the coin, but Steve put it away.

---

Fred thought for a second and then stood up, gently holding Sarah May in one arm. He rifled through a contact book and found a name. He took a paper and wrote down a name and number. "My second boy - Carlton - was the only one who tried going to college. He wanted to go into history. This is the name of the director of the school he was in at the university. Carl kept her number after he left the university just in case he wanted to go back. She might be able to help."

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"That's perfect, thank you!" Steve said excitedly. He took the paper and folded it neatly into his pocket. "You're Christian, right? How would you handle it if you adopted a kid from a different religion?"

---

Fred considered for a moment and watched Sarah May's big happy eyes flitting around at whatever she wanted to stare at. "Well, son, I'm not entirely sure," Fred said. "On one hand, having her in the religion of her heritage is a beautiful thing and helps her know where she came from before she was blessed to be given to you. But, adopting her into your family might also mean adopting her into your faith and that way also making her not stick out so much from her siblings or feel different or
strange. I'm sure it may be odd if she was getting two different religious influences in her life."

Steve nodded. "I don't want to deny her the culture she was born from," he said. "But she's also a part of our family now and maybe she's too young for a little while to make the choice for herself what she would like," he sighed. "I guess we will find out what she is soon enough and go from there."

Fred slapped Steve on the back again and shook his shoulder. "You'll make the right decision. You're a smart man. And you're a good man."

Bucky came back inside then, wiping his eyes and smelling like cigarettes. He stopped in the doorway and saw his perfect little family sitting with Fred and he tried not to tear up again. He just couldn't stop imaging having Christopher running around in front of them while Grant and Sarah May both wiggled in their arms and watched their older brother. He wanted Grant back so badly.

Steve felt his throat get tight when he saw Bucky come in still upset. He walked over to him and wrapped an arm strongly around his shoulders. He pressed his lips to Bucky's temple lightly. "Hey, Love. You feel like heading home?" he asked.

Bucky nodded silently and gripped on to Steve. "I'm sorry," he said softly and moved to take Sarah May from Fred. "Steve, if you want to go get the girls and your mom, I'll get the kids into their car seats."

Steve kissed Bucky one more time and let him go. He turned and apologized to Fred, promising that they would be back soon and he thanked them for dinner as well. He said goodbye to Mindy, Maureen, Junior, and the kids before gathering the rest of his family to head into the car.

Once they got back to the cabin, Bucky helped get the kids inside and filled up the tub so he could give Christopher a bath. He had Sarah May sitting in a carrier by the tub waiting her turn and reaching down to grab her toes. Bucky wasn't sure what the rest of his family was doing, he pretty much ignored them all in favor of having some quiet time with his babies. "I love you both so much," he whispered to them and started humming a lullaby as he washed Christopher's hair.

Christopher splashed around in the tub a little, giggling as he played in the water. He looked up at his pop and signed 'I love you' to him. He couldn't say the words yet but he understood the tone Bucky used with him. Sarah May smiled and squirmed happily whenever Bucky gave her attention.

Bucky finished washing Christopher and let him run around the bathroom while he bathed Sarah May. When he was done, he opened the door and Christopher shot out in search of his daddy with
Bucky close behind him. Steve was sitting in the living room with his mother talking when Bucky and Christopher found him. "Hey," Bucky mumbled and looked to Steve.

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"Hello, Bean!" Steve said excitedly when Christopher came running over to him. He scooped his son up and kissed his belly, causing the little boy to squirm and laugh. He looked up at Bucky and patted the space next to him on the couch for him to sit.

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Bucky sat down next to Steve and leaned into him. He sighed and kissed his daughter's head before holding her close so she could warm up after her bath. "I'm sorry, Steve," Bucky said and looked up into Steve's eyes. "I just got a little overwhelmed tonight."

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"It's okay, love," Steve said. "I miss him, too. And some nights hurt more than others. This will be the first time I'm not seeing him. I've visited him every day since he's been laid to rest."

---

Bucky nodded and kissed Steve's cheek. Bucky had hardly been able to go to the cemetery lately. He had to work damn near every day and once he got home from work he wanted to spend some time with Christopher and Sarah May and the girls before flopping into bed with Steve and sleeping until he had to start the day over again. "I'm sorry, Baby. I know this is hard for you too. I did tell Clint to check on Grant every so often while we are gone and he promised he would. And Tim said he would light candles for him at church on Sunday since you won't be back yet."

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Steve nodded, feeling better knowing that their friends were taking care of their little boy while they were away. "It would have been so amazing to have him and Sarah May together. They'd be so close in age, all of them could have even been in the same grade at school..."

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Bucky's lip quivered and looked away. "Can we talk about something else?" he asked hurriedly and gripped his daughter tighter. "Just anything... It was nice seeing Junior again and meeting Maureen and their kids." He pressed his cheek to Sarah May's.

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"Papa," Christopher murmured, seeing Bucky get upset again. He crawled onto his pop's lap and snuggled him next to his sister. "I think it's great that she's having twins," Steve said.

---

"Junior is going to be so excited. That's so many kids," Bucky said and held Christopher safely next to his sister. "He loves his family. You can tell. Maureen was saying how a lot of her friends' husbands don't participate in the parenting too much. Also, I was worried for a bit that she wasn't going to be accepting of us but she seemed okay with it."

---
Steve nodded. "I'm excited for them. He seems like a really good guy. I got a admit, I wasn't too happy with how much you were staring at him, but I guess I can find it in my heart to forgive you."

---

"I'm sorry," Bucky said with a small bashful smile. "I'd never do anything. I promise. And you're still the most handsome, sexy man I've ever seen. I'm not kidding. It was just a little strange seeing him again after so long. He was my first crush. You know? He was my... sexual awakening." Bucky blushed and looked away.

---

Steve rolled his eyes. "Oh my god, Bucky, you're being so embarrassing," he said fondly. He kissed his husband's cheek. "I know you wouldn't do anything. But I couldn't help but be a little jealous. I miss being strong and able to do anything."

---

"Baby, you're still strong," Bucky said and gripped Steve's hand. "You are. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have been staring at Junior. I didn't realize you were thinking like that. He is a good man but you are a thousand times greater and stronger and you're mine."

---

"I'm not as strong as Junior is. He still gets to save people," Steve huffed. "I wish I could go back to the department sometimes. I love staying at home and raising our kids, but I still miss being a cop."

---

"I know, Love, I know," Bucky said and scooted Christopher on to Steve's lap. "I want you to look into our son's eyes. I want you to look at him and look how young and helpless he is and how much he needs you. Then I want you to try to tell me again that you aren't strong. Try telling him that you aren't strong. Do you think either of us are going to believe you?"

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Steve looked down at their little boy, who smiled and started to mumble nonsense at him. Steve immediately felt better and signed 'I love you' to his son before kissing the tip of his nose. "You're the best, Bucky. I get it. I do."

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Bucky held Sarah May up to Steve. "Same thing with Sarah May. Look into those big eyes and try to doubt yourself. Try to tell her that you aren't her big confident brave Daddy who will always be there for her." Bucky nodded and waited for Steve to respond.

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"Dada," Christopher started to complain when Steve started to give Sarah May his attention. Steve laughed and kissed both of his kids. "Alright, you win, Babies. I'm your big, strong Dad."

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"My turn," Bucky said and directed Steve's attention to him, a gentle hand on his cheek. "Try telling me that you're not everything I need. Try telling me that you're not still my protector and my perfect
lover and the best father for our kids. Hold me and kiss me and make love to me and try to think about anything but how well we fit together in every aspect of our lives."

---

"Buck. My mom is right here," Steve groaned, getting all nervous and embarrassingly hiding his face against Bucky’s hand. "You made your point, I get it. I was being dramatic." He laid his head on Bucky's shoulder.

---

"Your mom understands," Bucky protested and gave Steve a kiss. "She's just happy I'm around to argue my point so you don't keep feeling bad." He got up carefully and went to Sarah so she could say goodnight to her grandbabies.

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After they settled their kids down for sleep, Steve let Bucky watch over them to have some alone time again. He checked in on the girls since he hadn't spoken to them much today. "How are you two doing? Need anything?"

---

Becca had just been in the middle of lecturing Lilly about picking up her things from the ground. They weren't doing so well sharing a room at the cabin. "We are fine," Becca said and waved Steve off.

Lilly shook her head with wide eyes. "Becca is being mean. Can I sleep in your room tonight?"

---

"I can't tell if you're being serious or not," Steve said. He already was picking up Lilly's things from the floor since he was so used to cleaning up his kid's messes. "But if you genuinely want to sleep in our room, that's fine. Bucky and I are probably going to be asleep soon anyway."

---

Lilly sighed dramatically and helped Steve finish picking up her stuff. "No, it's fine. I might end up out on the couch, though. Don't be surprised," she grumbled and gave a glare to Becca.

---

"Alright. Well, goodnight. You two better not start World War Three by morning." Steve closed their door and said goodnight to his mom before finally turning in for the night. "Today was long," he groaned.

---

Bucky was already half-way to sleep when Steve came in. "Yeah," he sighed and rolled to face his husband. "We both had little breakdowns. We were with a lot of people today." He reached out for Steve's hand.

---

Steve kissed the tip of Bucky's nose. "But it was still a good day. I'm glad we're here and I'm glad you get to have a whole week where you don't have to work. Enjoy it."
Bucky nodded and plastered himself against Steve. "I'm so cold and tired," he mumbled and kissed Steve's cheek a few times. "How much sleep do you think we will get before one of the babies wake up?"

"I don't know. But let me take care of them tonight, love, and you get your beauty sleep, okay?" He pulled the blankets close around the two of them and snuggled Bucky as closely as he could.

Bucky sighed and closed his eyes. "I'm naturally this gorgeous, sleep has nothing to do with it," he murmured and drifted off gently to sleep wrapped in Steve and feeling utterly secure.

Steve fell asleep shortly after and got up all three times their little babies cried. But on the third time on his way back, he shouted a loud “Oh my god!” when he went to the kitchen to get some water and saw Diana proudly sitting, muzzle bloody and head held high, next to a dead raccoon. It must've gotten in through the window or something.

Bucky heard the shout and he quickly rolled out of bed to find Steve. "Baby? What's wrong? Where are you?" He found Steve standing there with Diana looking pleased as a peach. "Holy fuck!" he whispered sharply.

Steve stood there in shock at the sight in front of him. He wanted to praise the dog for protecting the house but he was still amazed that a fucking raccoon got in. "I don't want to touch it," Steve grimaced. "Poor thing." He scratched Diana behind her ears so she wouldn't think that his shock was anger at her.

Bucky grumbled and took an extra trash liner from the closet. He pulled his hair back on his head and then scooped the dead raccoon up into the bag. "We can't put this in the trash outside. We will have all sorts of animals coming for it. I got to go get rid of it out in the woods away from the cabin."

Diana started to circle them and whine once the raccoon was picked up. "I'll come with you," Steve said as he started to bundle up. "It's just creepy. I don't want to go near it."

"I'll hold the very scary dead rodent," Bucky said and pulled on his boots and coat, hoping his pajamas would be warm enough. "Is a raccoon a rodent? Or a marsupial? Or is it something weird like in the bear or fox family?"

Diana followed them out, scouting ahead and very much in protection mode. "Marsupial I think. I
don't know. Definitely not a rodent." He shivered when they got outside. "I got to find out how it got in."

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"Yeah, we can look once we get back. I don't like the idea that an animal could get in and bite one of our kids or your mom or even Diana," Bucky said and held the bag out a few inches from his body. "Although, it is reassuring that Diana has an instinct to protect us like that."

---

Steve nodded. "She's a good girl." Diana would occasionally sniff at the bag to make sure the animal wouldn't magically wake up and be a threat. "It's just a shame the animal didn't get scared off and got killed instead."

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Bucky sighed and came to a tree he thought was good enough. He dug with his boot in the snow and then dumped the raccoon out of the bag before covering it with snow again. "Alright, do you have any last words for your dog's first kill?"

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Diana growled softly at the dead animal, so Steve was quick to calm her. "Uh, Mr. Raccoon, I'm sorry you tried breaking and entering into the wrong house. I hope you didn't leave a family behind and that you're having fun in the big trash can in the sky."

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"Very nice," Bucky mumbled and balled up the trash bag to take back to the cabin. "My balls are frozen. Let's go back." Bucky yawned and watched Diana jump a few feet ahead of them into the snow happily.

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Steve snorted and hurried back. The cold left him even more short of breath than usual. Once inside, Diana started to sniff around in case of more danger. Steve found the open window above the sink in the kitchen and promptly shut it. "There we go."

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"Who left that open?" Bucky asked and washed his hands in scalding hot water to get rid of any germs or blood from the raccoon. "We should probably wipe down all these counters just in case."

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"I don't know. Could have been one of the girls or my mom. I didn't open the window." Steve got a rag and some soap so he could start washing down the counters. "Can you make sure the windows aren't open in the babies' room?"

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Bucky nodded and rushed off to check on the kids. No windows were open and they were both sound asleep. "Everyone's fine," Bucky said once he got back. "Everyone's asleep."

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Once the counters were clean, Steve cleaned off Diana's muzzle and praised her softly for her good work. He gave her a hug before standing up. "Thank god," he sighed. "That was an adventure."

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"Can we sleep now?" Bucky whined and shivered where he stood. "We still have a few hours before the girls wake up and want to do something. And I want to get as much sleep as I can."

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"Alright," Steve said. Just in case of emergency, he left Diana in the babies' room to watch after them. He was happy to go back to bed and fall asleep with his husband. The day really did just keep going for them and he was exhausted.
The rest of the night was peaceful but the morning started with a cacophony of babies crying and Becca shouting that she was going to rent her own cabin if they didn't stop. Needless to say, it wasn't a good start for anyone.

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Diana was pacing in the room and whining when Steve came in. He picked up both of his children and laid them on the table to change their dirty diapers. "Hey, beautiful babies, you don't got to cry. I've got you."

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Bucky walked in just as Christopher was reaching over to grab his sister's little hand and hold it tight. Sarah May calmed down a bit and Christopher stopped crying as well. "Ya-Ya," Christopher murmured and watched her carefully.

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Steve gasped. "Bucky, look," he said, pointing to their naked little kids, half-changed into clean diapers. "He's holding her hand!" he whispered excitedly.

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Bucky watched quietly and leaned down to their level. "Did you bring your camera, Steve?" he whispered and pet a gentle hand on Sarah May's soft hair and lightly bopped her nose then did the same to Christopher. "They are so adorable."

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"Yeah, it’s in the blue duffel bag," Steve said. He got their kids into fresh diapers and tickled their bellies. "Are you being a good big brother, Christopher? I love you so much, Bean."

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Bucky snapped a few pictures and then set the camera aside so he could pick up his son. "You are such a good big brother, aren't you? Tell Daddy that you love Ya-Ya. You are our sweet little Bean."

---

Steve pointed to Sarah May and signed 'I love you'. Christopher got the hint after a few times and then signed 'I love you' to the baby. "Yes! Such a smart boy, Christopher! Good job!"

---

Bucky praised Christopher and gave him a few kisses. "Okay, Steve, let's go get breakfast ready. I'll feed the babies while you cook? How's that sound?"

---

"Sounds perfect." Steve hurried off into the kitchen to cook. "Hey, Becca," he greeted. "Did you sleep well last night?" Even though the babies woke her up.
"No," Becca grumbled and left in an angry huff for the living room.

Bucky set Christopher up in his high chair and held Sarah May as he made up a bottle for her and cut up pieces of fruit for Christopher. "What are we doing today, Steve?"

Steve sighed, deciding not to bother Becca with her current attitude. "I was thinking maybe making a proper igloo today. Or maybe having a campfire and roasting marshmallows so we can make s'mores."

"We can do both of those things. At least, if we can manage to make a fire in this snow," Bucky said and sat down to feed Sarah May. I was thinking of calling Tim later today to make sure everything is okay on his end."

Sarah May ate her food readily, hungry after sleeping for so long. "Yeah, calling Tim would be a great idea," Steve agreed. "You can tell him about our surprise visitor in the night."

"I'm sure Tim will be very excited to hear about our raccoon problem. He's big on animals, though, so let's ignore the part where it was mauled to death by a German Shepard," Bucky said with a chuckle and Lilly peeked into the kitchen, curious about what they were talking about.

"We can tell him Diana chased him out instead of killed him," Steve decided. Lilly gasped. "Diana killed someone?" she squawked, jumping to the worst conclusion right away.

Bucky nodded and sighed. "Yes. She killed a little old man who got lost and wondered our way. Steve and I buried him out in the woods late last night. It was a bloody ordeal. Took hours. Dragging the body was the worst part. But the digging was bad too."

"That's not funny," Lilly huffed. "What really happened?"

Steve smiled. "Someone left a window open last night and a raccoon got in. Diana made sure it didn't bother any of us in the middle of the night."

Lilly crossed her arms and glared at Bucky. "Would that have been that hard for you to say?" she asked.

"My way was far more fun," Bucky defended lightly and smiled at his sister. "Did I not make it believable enough? Can't see your brother burying a body in the snow?"
Lilly just rolled her eyes and sat down at the table. Steve put a bowl of fruit out and gave Lilly a morning hug. "You want to build an igloo today, Lil?"

Lilly grabbed a handful of strawberries and popped one in her mouth. "How are we going to do that?" she asked and scrunched up her face. "We don't have ice blocks."

"You can make an igloo out of snow. It's just got to last a few hours, it's not like we are going to turn it into a home." Diana came trotting up to Steve, looking for some attention. He pulled the big dog into his lap and got some happy face licks in return.

Bucky finished feeding Sarah May and held her close as she snuggled against his chest. "Later, we are going to try to make a fire and roast marshmallows. How does that sound? We might be able to ice skate as well."

"I like marshmallows," Lilly decided. "But is the ice thick enough for skating?" she asked. "I mean, it's a lake, right? How frozen is it?"

"It should be," Bucky said. "I'll test it out. I've never ice skated on this lake before but I would think it would be okay." Sarah came out of her room then. She made her way to the kitchen and the first thing she did was to hold her arms out to take Sarah May from Bucky. Bucky handed her over.

Steve laughed at how possessive his mom was over Sarah May. He knew that she loved Christopher but their daughter had a special place in her heart. "You shouldn't be the one to test it. We should ask Fred and Mindy what they think."

Bucky shrugged. "It's fine. I'll just be careful about it," Bucky said and handed Christopher apple slices one by one and watched him eat them a little too fast in his excitement for more apples. "Slow down, Bean."

Steve looked to Bucky with a set knit in his brow. "I don’t know. What if you fall through? I don't want you to get hurt, Love," he said with a little frown.

"I won't fall through," Bucky assured Steve. "If I can see that it's too thin, I won't go out. Don't worry, Baby," he reached a hand out for Steve to take and waited patiently for his husband to oblige.
Steve took Bucky's hand and gave him an unimpressed look but he didn't argue the point further. "Dada," Christopher said, demanding Steve's attention. He signed for more food since Bucky stopped giving him apples.

---

Bucky squeezed Steve's hand and gave him a confident little smile. He wasn't sure if they would have time that night to have some private time. They might be too tired. Bucky just wanted to make love with Steve in the place where they had their honeymoon almost a year before. Having babies definitely put a damper on their formerly rampant sex life.

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Steve leaned over to kiss his husband and then got up so he could entertain their children. He sang to Christopher and played with his hands so he wouldn't get upset that they weren't giving him any more food. After a while, they were ready to get outside. "Should I tell the girls to get bundled up, too?"

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"Sure, we can all go work on that igloo," Bucky said decidedly. "Do we want your mom to keep both kids with her while we are outside or just Sarah May?" he asked and watched Sarah holding her granddaughter against her chest.

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"Let's have Christopher come out for a little bit and then we can let him go back in. He needs to experience some good snowfall, you know?" Steve said.

---

Bucky agreed and went to take Christopher to get bundled up. He was being pretty squirmy but eventually Bucky got him all settled. When Bucky set him down so he could himself ready to go outside, Christopher trotted his way out of the room like a little blue silky marshmallow.

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"Oh my god, look at him!" Lilly cooed, nudging Becca. "He looks so dumb and cute," she said. Becca looked up from her book and snorted at Christopher waddling around.

"Come on, girls, we're going to go build an igloo," Steve said. Lilly was quick to get outside but Becca dragged her feet a little with it.

---

Bucky and Lilly were outside with Christopher waiting for Steve and Becca to be ready. Christopher was having a good time sitting in the snow and watching Lilly attempt to do cartwheels. Bucky was trying his best to get Christopher's hat to stay on but every time he put it on, his son would absently reach up and pull it off, eyes still glued to Lilly.

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Becca finally was coaxed outside once Steve promised to make her hot chocolate when it was time to go back inside. Steve snapped a few pictures of his family with his camera before heading over to Bucky and Christopher. He knelt in the snow and started to create a mound for the igloo wall.
Christopher hopped up excitedly when he saw Steve building and shouted "Dada! Dada!" and stomped his way across the beginnings of the igloo.

Bucky chuckled and scooped up his son. "Here, Bean, let's you and I let Daddy and your aunts build the igloo and we will work on not destroying it like your block towers."

"Oh, Bean," Steve said, unable to get too upset at his son for destroying the start to the igloo. "I love you," Steve said to the baby as Bucky scooped him up. Becca was a good help with the structure, and soon they had one side looking pretty sturdy. "What do you think, Buck?"

Bucky, who had been working on paying attention to Steve and also entertaining Christopher, beamed at his husband and said, "I think I don't know what you are going to do to make this a real igloo but you look cute doing it."

Steve pouted. "It's going to be a real igloo," he defended. "Look, this wall is holding up just fine," he started on the other wall, putting in extra reinforcement so it wouldn't fall and prove Bucky right.

"I know it is, Steve," Bucky said and laid back in the snow with Christopher on his chest securely. "And besides, I said you look cute. Because you do." He smiled over at him and felt snowfall on his hair.

"You don't get to say I'm cute in the same sentence as you not believing in my igloo," Steve countered. He stole a kiss and went back at it. That is, until Diana went crashing through it as she chased a rabbit across the yard.

"No!" Christopher shouted at the dog and added a hearty 'woof' for good measure.

Bucky sat up and gripped Steve's arm. "Steve, oh my god. I'm so sorry. I jinxed your igloo. Here, let me help you fix it. I'll put our Bean inside with your mom and we can make it properly."

Steve could only sit there in shock as his dog burst through the side of his igloo. Lilly found it a little funny but had the sense not to laugh. His shoulders slumped and he let out a soft sigh. "No," he mumbled. "Don't worry about it, Buck. It probably wouldn't have stayed up for long anyway."

Bucky slipped Christopher on to Steve's lap and used his free hands to pull Steve into a warm kiss to get his attention. "You wanted to build an igloo. Let's build an igloo. I'm sorry for doubting it. Let me help you build a suitable one, please?"
Steve hugged his son, who cuddled into his chest for warmth. He wasn't complaining about the cold but Steve figured that they should get him inside soon. "Alright," Steve mumbled. "She only knocked down one part anyway."

Bucky nodded and picked up Christopher. "Come on, Bean. Let's go to Nana." He took their son inside and quickly stripped him of his snow gear. He set him up with some blocks and plushies to keep him entertained as Sarah held his sister. Bucky went back out and tackled Steve to the ground to give him a deep kiss before they got started on the igloo.

Steve couldn't stay sad when he had such a loving husband there to cheer him up. After about an hour, they were able to build a pretty decent igloo. "Hey, Lilly! Come look! I bet all three of us can fit inside!"

Lilly bounded over and flopped down into the snow in front of the igloo. "No way all three of us fit," she said doubtfully and gave Steve and Bucky both a once over. "Steve, your shoulders are too wide and Bucky's legs take up too much room."

"Excuse you," Bucky scoffed with an offended but humored laugh. "It's tall, I'll just lay on top of Steve or sit in his lap and then you can fit in there too."

"Yeah, look!" Steve said and got inside. It was a little squished but he was able to get in easily enough. "Check it out! The inside is roomier than you would think," he said. Lilly crawled in with a bit of persuading.

"What are you talking about? It's tiny in here!" She complained, her shoulder mashed against Steve’s arm.

Bucky giggled at the two of them squished inside the igloo and he decided to stay outside of it. "Steve, it's a great igloo," he said and reached for his hand. "I told you it would work." He smirked at Steve, knowing that that would earn him some sort of eye roll or smack on the leg or something. He had been quite the nonbeliever about the igloo but Steve did manage to pull it off.

Steve puffed up and opened his mouth to argue but then he realized that Bucky was messing with him. "You're a jerk," he laughed. Diana saw everyone piling in so she stuck her furry head into the entrance. When she couldn't get any further, she barked at them.

"You love me, Punk," Bucky answered and pet Diana with his gloved hand. "Your brave protector doesn't like not being able to get to you, though." He got closer to the dog and said, "I'm not going to hurt him. He's safe in there, Diana, don't worry."
The pup whined when she couldn't fit inside with the rest of them, so Steve let go of Bucky's hand for a moment to pet her snout. "It's okay, girl," he soothed. "Should we go get Christopher and see if he wants to play in the igloo?"

"I'll get him," Lilly said and squeezed past Diana, ready to be out of the tight spot already.

While Lilly was gone, the dog pushed herself inside the igloo and plopped her head on Steve's lap and whined. Bucky pet her back and cleared his throat. "So, uh, do you think we can get some alone time later today?"

Steve rubbed Diana's head and ears gently, loving how much of a little guardian she was. Steve looked over at Bucky with a sly smirk. "What kind of alone time?" he asked innocently but suggestively.

Bucky smiled down at the ground and chuckled a little. "Yeah, Steve, if you want, it can be that kind of alone time," Bucky said and looked back up at Steve a little more seriously. "But, I also have something I want to talk to you about as well. More of a question, I guess."

The sly smile faded because Steve didn't want to tease if Bucky genuinely wanted to talk about something. "What'd you want to talk about?" he asked. Diana's ears perked up when she heard the change in Steve's tone.

Bucky shifted uncomfortably and made a fist with his gloved hand. "Do you want to talk about it now? Or later? Lilly will be out with Christopher soon, I would think. She just needed to get him bundled up again."

Steve looked over at Bucky and saw how he looked uncomfortable. "We can talk now," he said. "We can tell Lilly to play with Christopher by the shed until we're done talking."

Bucky gave Steve a weak smile and nodded. "Sure, yeah. We can talk now. It's nothing bad. I've just been thinking about a question Becca asked me yesterday. And now I have the same question and I don't know where you stand on it so I've been worried about asking you."

Steve squeezed Bucky's hand gently and would've kissed his cheek if he could've reached his face. "What'd she ask?" He was always a little nervous with anything related to Becca.
Bucky took a deep breath and looked at Steve intently. "She asked if we were ever going to have biological kids of our own. Like through one of those places that does the ‘test-tube-baby’ stuff. And I told her that we hadn't discussed it. But now I've been thinking about it." He took a short breath and then continued his ramble. "And I was thinking that maybe you wouldn't want to because there are so many children that need homes already. But maybe you would because you want a mini-me of you and me. But maybe you wouldn't want to because it wouldn't be half you and half me. And then I was frustrated that science can’t just make that happen and I can't give you a baby like that and then I just got tired."

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Steve was a bit surprised by the question. He looked down at Diana briefly before looking back up at his husband. "How would we even do that? I don't want to have sex with some woman - or for you to - just to have a kid that looks like one of us. And how would that make Christopher and Sarah May feel?"

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"No, no," Bucky shook his head and looked away for a second. "It's the process with those sperm banks where a woman takes someone else's sperm and her own egg and carries a baby to be a single mother or whatever. She has the eggs, we have the sperm. They put it together and put it back inside her so she can grow the baby." He paused and bit his lip. "So it would be like that. A woman we choose would be a mother for us and our sperm would be put in her and she would carry the baby then give it to us."

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Steve didn't know how he felt about that. It didn't feel natural. And he was happy with adopting the kids that needed homes instead of making new ones. He did his best to keep a neutral expression because he didn't want Bucky to feel bad. "Well, how do you feel about doing that?" he asked.

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Bucky whined and scrunched up his face. "I don't know. I was hoping whatever your opinion was would help me figure out what I thought," he said and pleaded with Steve to help him out. He really wasn't sure how he felt.

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Steve sighed. "I don't want you to feel a certain way just because of how I feel," Steve said. "What's holding you up? What's making you feel conflicted?" Steve asked patiently.

---

Bucky thought for a second and then said, "Well, a part of me likes the thought of having one kid that has the Rogers DNA and one with the Barnes DNA. But I also understand the strangeness of it all and also I wouldn't want our adopted kids to feel any lesser than those two. So I just... I want you to tell me what you feel."

---

Steve shrugged his shoulders up a bit. "I don't know. I mean, yeah, it would be nice, but I don’t know how I feel about making some kids out of a test tube. It's a bit too much like playing God." He gave Bucky an apologetic look. "And I don't want Christopher or Sarah May to even think they may not be enough for us."
Bucky smiled softly again and looked down with a nod. "Yeah, I understand. Then we won't do it." He pet Diana some more and shook his head. "I'm sorry I brought it up. I just have been thinking about it. And I just needed to talk to you or I would just keep thinking."

"Are you disappointed?" Steve asked. Bucky did say that a part of him wanted that and while Steve wasn't enthralled with the idea, he also didn't want to shut Bucky's hopes down in an instant.

"No," Bucky said honestly. "It's not something I was dying to have. You know I've always been more than happy to adopt every child we see that needs us and I've never needed one that was biologically ours. I promise, this isn't a dream of mine. You didn't crush anything. So don't get all mopey on me and think you're taking something from me."

Steve pouted a bit when Bucky told him not to get mopey. Sometimes he wasn’t able to help that. "You can't blame me for wanting to be sure," he said.

He was about to say something else but then Lilly shouted from the porch. "Bucky! Christopher got poop all over his snowsuit!"

Bucky groaned and crawled out of the igloo shouting back, "Well, did you put him in the suit without a diaper?"

There was a pause and then Lilly's returned, "Sorry!"

Bucky turned to Steve in the igloo and sighed, "I'll be back, Baby. I'll clean him up and bring him to you so you can show him the igloo."

Steve's mom loved to take care of the kids but this was a job that she would only do if she had to. Bucky walked into the cabin to Christopher giggling playfully, his snowsuit in utter disarray. "I definitely don't miss this part of parenting," Sarah said sympathetically.

"Well, I'll definitely not miss it once all our kids are out of diapers," Bucky answered and held Christopher out at arm’s length. "If you want to go check out the igloo and talk to your son for a bit, you can put Sarah May in her crib while I clean him up."

"I think I will stay inside where it’s warm," she chuckled. "But thank you for the offer." Sarah looked perfectly content snuggling on the couch with Ya-Ya. "He's been talking about that igloo all since we got here. I'm glad you finally got to build it."
"It's been an ordeal," Bucky said as he tried to get Christopher to stop squirming as he cleaned him up. "Christopher stomped the beginnings of it and once Steve had a wall up, Diana ran through and crushed it. He almost gave up but we got it done together. I hate that sad little defeated look he gets when he decides something isn't worth doing anymore. You know the one."

---

Sarah laughed. "Yes, I know the one," she said. "He is a big baby sometimes. But I love that he's still got his childish side to him." She kissed the top of Sarah May's head. "Are you going skating?"

---

Bucky nodded along and worked on getting Christopher into a new diaper. "I'm not sure. Steve doesn't want me going out to test the ice. So I'm not positive that we will be able to skate. I think I'll be fine but he's worried I'll fall into the lake or something."

---

"Well, he's right to worry a little. It means he loves you," she said pleasantly. Christopher giggled up at his pop and signed 'I love you' a few times because he usually got a big response whenever he did that.

---

Bucky signed back, 'You got poop on you' with a large grin and Christopher just stared back in confusion because he didn't know those signs. "I know he's just being concerned, but I think I can go out on some ice and be fine. I mean, if I take one step and it's starting to crack then that's a no."

---

"You're also dating a city boy that is afraid of anything having to do with nature," Sarah chuckled. "I admit that was my fault. I made him in love with the city life. I didn't even take him to see Long Island."

---

"Married to," Bucky corrected softly. "I think he just likes worrying about me. He gets bored if I'm not turning his hair grey prematurely. You know?" he said and picked up a newly cleaned Christopher. "But it's okay because I worry about him too."

---

"You're doing your marriage right if you still date each other," Sarah reminded. "Makes the romance feel young still, trust me. It'll make your twilight years even better."

Once Christopher was changed, he waved his hands at Bucky. "Woof!"

---

Bucky smiled at his mother-in-law and thought on what she said. "I guess you're right. I hadn't thought of it like that." Christopher barked at his pops again and Bucky looked at him with a fake surprised face. "What? You want Diana? Are you done looking at Papa? You want the doggy? Okay, let's go to Diana and Daddy."
Christopher nodded his head excitedly, wanting to go play. When Bucky carried him outside, he looked around because he could hear his dad talking to Diana but he couldn't see him. "Dada?"

"He's in the igloo, Bean," Bucky said and crouched down to the igloo’s opening and set his son down. Christopher yelped when he saw his daddy and the dog and he flopped himself against Diana's fur. "Okay, Steve, he's all clean. He was a mess."

Steve laughed and held his son against Diana so he wouldn't wiggle too much and bother her. "That bad, huh? I'm glad you were the one to clean it," Steve laughed.

"I only took this one this time because I'm hoping it makes up for doubting your igloo and I'm hoping my skills as a good father are a turn on and I'll get laid tonight," Bucky said and flopped back into the snow so he was sticking half-way into the igloo with his feet dangling out.

Steve snickered. "Everything about you is a turn on for me," he said. Steve played with Bucky's hair and looked happily down at him.

Christopher started to climb all over Bucky. "Papapapapa," he chanted as he moved.

"Yes, Little Bean?" Bucky asked and looked down at his son crawling around his chest. "Am I your jungle gym? I'm not a very good one. There aren't even any monkey bars." He giggled at his own joke because he thought he was pretty funny.

Christopher sat on Bucky's chest and looked at his face. He immediately started to blabber nonsense, happy to have his pop's attention. "I think he's critiquing your joke," Steve responded.

Bucky shrugged a bit and glanced over at his husband. "I guess I should get used to it. I have a feeling this one is going to be snarky. For sure, he's going to be talkative. I mean, he already is." Christopher's blabbering got louder and he mashed his gloves on to Bucky's chest almost as if he was signaling his annoyance at being interrupted.

Steve tickled Christopher's side and said, "Don't be rude, Bean, we were still listening." As soon as their son had the stage, he kept talking to the both of them in his baby chatter. After a while, he seemed to grow tired of talking and tried crawling out of the igloo so he could explore.

Bucky let him get out of the igloo and he knew he wouldn't be able to get too far so he just let him do as he wanted so long as Bucky could still see him. "You're mom and I were talking while I was changing him. She was telling me the importance of still dating even when you're married. I think we
should take a weekend soon to ourselves. Have a fancy dinner out together, catch a movie, go to a hotel again and just be us. What do you think?"

---

Diana slunk out of the igloo right away to follow Christopher out and walk circles around the place. "A whole weekend?" Steve asked. He didn't think he could be away from his kids for that long. "Can we try maybe a dinner date first?" he asked. "You know, dinner and a movie. Work up to a getaway."

---

"No night alone together? With nothing to interrupt us?" Bucky asked somewhat incredulously but could tell Steve was going to struggle leaving the babies. Bucky knew that feeling, that's how he felt about leaving the girls anytime he was gone for too long and he probably felt the same about the kids but he hadn't been away from them yet. Steve had to be away from Christopher back when Bucky kicked him out during the Tish debacle. So it made sense that he would be wary of having to leave his babies again. "Alright, fancy dinner and a movie. But you are buying me dessert, Steve. That's non-negotiable."

---

"You know how Christopher was when I was gone for a couple days. I don't think he would understand if we both were gone. And Sarah May is still so little," Steve defended. "But, I'll treat you right, Love. And get you whatever dessert you want. And maybe in a little while, we can do a night away."

---

Bucky nodded and shifted so his head was on Steve's lap. "Okay, Baby, we do what you are most comfortable with. I just want something. I don't want to lose the magic or whatever. Don't want you waking up and seeing my face and for you to say, 'Oh... I see you're still here.'"

---

"What? I could never think that about you," Steve said. "I'm going to wake up seeing your face and thank God I get to have another day with you," Steve said softly. "I love living with you and raising our family together."

---

Bucky smiled up at his husband. "I know you do. And I love living with you and having our family. I just worry. You know me. I get scared that I'm not enough or I'm not what is best for you. And I know you'll say I'm being ridiculous and I know you're right. I'm sorry, Baby."

---

"I'm always right," Steve teased.

"Papa!" Christopher called out. "Woof!" Another deer had wandered by and Diana stood at Christopher's side, debating whether or not to chase it.

---

Bucky crawled over to his son and pulled him into his chest. He also put a hand around Diana's
"Diana, stay," he said sternly and looked back at Steve. "Is she allowed to chase the deer or should she stay put?"

"Don't let her chase it. I don't want to scare the poor thing." It was one thing to attack an intruding raccoon. It was another to go after a deer in its own habitat. Steve crawled out and pet Diana's fur to calm her.

"Dada, loo!" Christopher said, pointing to the deer for Steve to look at.

Bucky let go of Diana once Steve was there to be with her. "You think it's time to head back inside for a bit? Christopher's lips are turning blue. I think he needs a warm bath and then a nap. What do you think?"

The deer traveled on, making its way into the woods. "Yeah, I'll take care of him since you already did the dirty work for today," Steve said. "I should probably wash up Sarah May as well."

"Okay, do you want me to make you a snack or anything while you do that?" Bucky asked and saw Christopher yank his hat off for the thousandth time. "Sarah May ate recently and Christopher can wait for a snack until after his nap."

"Christopher," Steve scolded lightly, putting his hat right back on his head.

"Dada, no," Christopher complained.

"I'll wait until the kids want to eat again. I don't want to have Christopher getting jealous over food." He walked back to the cabin, where his mom already was giving Sarah May a bath in the sink.

Bucky trailed after Steve with Diana close on his heels. He helped undress Christopher and then went with Steve to sit in the bathroom while he bathed their son. "So, guess who I heard talked to Father Frank about getting church married like we did," he said as he reached for a hairbrush to start yanking through his long, scraggly hair.

Christopher splashed happily in the tub as Steve cleaned him. He squealed in delight when his dad tickled his feet. "Is it Monty?" he asked. "Or Tim and his sort-of boyfriend?"

Bucky nudged Steve with his foot. "Yeah, Monty and Evan. How did you know? They weren't going to do it because neither of them are really religious or anything but Evan convinced Monty because Evan wants to marry him anyway once the law catches us."
Steve chuckled. "I was just guessing. That's amazing," he said. "Are they going to have a ceremony that friends and family can go to? We have to get them a wedding present."

"We can get them a present. I'm not sure if it's an open ceremony. Monty just told me about it the other day. They don't know when they are going to do it either," Bucky said and reached out to give Steve's ass a squeeze. "Knowing Monty, he will at least have an extravagant party afterward in his honor."

Steve blushed when Bucky squeezed his ass and went back to bathing their son. Once he was all clean, Steve swaddled him in a towel and kissed his face a few times. "You think they're going to look to have kids, too? It'd be nice to have play dates."

Bucky reached out and gripped Christopher's little hand a moment. "We can ask them. Monty doesn't strike me as the fatherly type. You know? But maybe I'm wrong. I've just seen that boy drunk off his ass and sucking cock in the last stall in the club countless times. But Evan has changed him. And if Evan wants kids, Monty will give that man anything he wants."

"Don't say that in front of Christopher," Steve hushed softly. "Besides, you were a real wildcard for a while and you cleaned up. Now you're going to be raising a baseball team's worth of babies with me."

"Two baseball teams," Bucky corrected. "Then we can each coach our own side and see if Team Pops or Team Daddy wins." He chuckled and pet his son's damp hair. "You get first pick, Steve."

"That's eighteen kids, Buck," Steve laughed. He didn't sound opposed but he also didn't find that doable in their little Brooklyn house. "You can't make me pick which kids are on my team."

"But we need two teams, Steve," Bucky defended lightly and pulled him in for a kiss. "I'm telling you, we can just buy out the houses next to us and build attachments so we have one big mega-house."

"Are you serious about wanting that many kids?" Steve asked. "Cause I would love keeping our doors open forever for any kid that wants parents and a family," he said.

Bucky grinned and shook his head. "I don't know. Maybe. Let's stick to our dozen for now and then we will see how we feel once we get there. I always was worried I would come home to find you
adopted an orphanage."

---

Steve gently tapped Christopher's nose once. "Well, it's your turn to surprise me with a baby next time. And you should know me better, Buck, I only bring home one at a time."

---

"I'm working on it," Bucky said with a smirk. "Who knows, our next baby could be being conceived right now. Although, that would be three very young children all at once."

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"It's kind of weird to think that," Steve chuckled. "But I'm home all day. The only person we got to worry about upsetting by having so many babies is Becca. I think we need to take them out somewhere - or maybe you can have sibling day with them."

---

Bucky nodded and pulled his hair back. "I was considering asking if you thought it would be a good idea for me and the girls to take a weekend trip somewhere. We can just do all the things they want to do. Like we did when they were kids and our parents took them on special weekends away. That or, I know we have talked about them going out to California to see our cousins. I'm just not sure if they would want to do that, though. We weren't ever that close."

---

"I think it would be a great idea," Steve said. He got Christopher dressed in his pajamas now that he was dried. "You really should do it, Buck. You guys deserve some Barnes family time."

---

"But what about you?" Bucky asked and slipped his arms around Steve's middle. "Won't you be lonely without me? Don't you want to be in on family time? We are all a family now."

---

"I think you and your sisters need to have some time with just the three of you," Steve said softly. "I can spend time with our kids and my mom. I'll miss you but I won't be lonely."

---

Bucky kissed Steve's neck and sighed. "If you're sure you will be fine. I'll miss you, too. I don't like not sleeping in the same bed as you. I've only done it a handful of times but each one of those nights has been awful."

---

Steve made a happy sound at the kisses and started to carry Christopher to his crib. "I know. But it'll only be a weekend. And it'll make it so much better when we get to sleep together again."

---

"Maybe I'll just take a bunch of your sweaters with me so I can smell you while I'm sleeping. That might help," Bucky suggested and helped tuck Christopher in. Sarah had already brought Sarah May
in for her nap and the baby was sleeping soundly in her little crib next to Christopher's.

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"Weirdo," Steve teased. Steve laid Christopher down, who thought about putting up a fuss but after seeing his little sister sleeping, he decided that he should sleep, too. "You want to sing to him?" Steve asked.

---

"How am I a weirdo? You're the one who stole a few pairs of my underwear when we were first going out. Don't think I didn't know about that. I've just been too scared thinking about possibilities of what you did with them to bring it up," Bucky teased back and pulled a little wooden chair close to the cribs so he could sing a song to his children so they would sleep soundly.

---

Steve blushed deep red. "I noticed they were getting kind of worn so I got rid of them hoping you'd get a newer set finally. It worked, but I thought you didn't notice me taking them."

---

Bucky let out a disappointed grunt. "Well, that's just nowhere near as fun as the scenarios I have been picturing this whole time. I regret bringing it up and ruining the mystery." He cracked a grin so Steve would know he was mostly kidding.

---

"What were you hoping for? That I secretly have an underwear thing and I was sleeping in them every night when you weren't around?" He pet his fingers through Bucky's hair and drew him in for a kiss.

---

Bucky held Steve close as his kissed him and then popped back off with a little whine. "Yeah, just a little bit. There were other options, but we can discuss those later tonight when we are all alone. For now, let's sing our babies a song and then leave them be for their nap."

---

Steve put his hand up Bucky's shirt and gently scratched his nails over Bucky's back. Christopher looked up at his parents and drifted slowly off to sleep when Bucky sang soft songs and lullabies to him. Once he was asleep, Steve snuggled against Bucky's side.

---

Bucky leaned into Steve and let his own eyes close gently. He hummed softly and whispered, "What do you want to do now? We can play board games with the girls or take a walk in the snow with Diana. Or just be alone for a bit."

---

Steve nuzzled at Bucky's neck and placed a few, gentle kisses there. "Let's be alone for a bit," Steve murmured. He slid his hand up the front of Bucky's shirt and thumbed over his nipple.
Bucky bit his lip and took a shuttering breath. "Is it that kind of alone time?" he asked with a low growl and walked them towards the door. "Or are we going to snuggle and fall asleep? I'll be perfectly honest, I'm fine with either one."

---

"Let's fool around a little," Steve purred. "And then take a nap." Steve was in a bit of a mood to get off with Bucky and he was a little determined to make it happen while they had the chance.

---

"Yep, yes, let's do that," Bucky said and urgently pulled them into their bedroom and shut the door firmly behind them. "What are we doing? Did you have something in mind or no?"

---

Steve backed Bucky towards the bed, nuzzling at his neck and slowly pushing Bucky's pants down. "Maybe just jerking each other off and taking a nap right after?" he asked.

---

"Sure, yes," Bucky said and stuck his hands down the front and back of Steve's pants. "I'll get on the bed. I want your weight on top of me, please. Straddle me."

---

Steve groaned softly and moved over his husband. He kissed him deeply, pressing his body down against his. "I love you," he breathed out. "Entirely. Without question."

---

"I agree. Without question," Bucky said and got at Steve's hard cock and started pumping him. "Steve, I have a question. You remember a while ago you mentioned having sex under the pier at Coney Island? Do you still want to do that? Sounds like a good summer plan."

---

Steve made a soft sound when Bucky started jerking his cock. He dragged his nails down Bucky's front and took his dick into his hand. "I like the sound of that," he said. "We can ride the cyclone. And then we can ride each other."

---

"You know what else?" Bucky said and gripped at the base of Steve's dick for a second tightly. "We should try to go when they have fireworks. Maybe your birthday. Fucking under fireworks sounds like something out of a movie, doesn't it?"

---

Steve thumbed at the head of Bucky's dick as he sucked a hickey onto his husband's neck. "You're being a real romantic here, Buck," he chuckled. "I guess we know how I'm spending my birthday this year."

---

"I guess we do," Bucky agreed and slipped his free hand into Steve's hair. "And what are you doing
for my birthday this year?” he asked and quickened his pace as he jerked Steve. "We can't do what we did last year - getting blackout drunk and fucking into oblivion. We still don't remember anything about my birthday."

---

Steve nudged Bucky's hand aside so he could grip both of their cocks and start rutting up against him, grinding their hips together. "Let’s go away for your birthday," Steve said. "That'll be the mini vacation you were asking for."

---

Bucky moaned at the friction of Steve pressed up against him and he closed his eyes for a few moments. "Where should we go?" he asked and then looked back up at Steve. It can't be too far. Manhattan? Maybe."

---

Steve was getting close and it was becoming apparent by the way his hips started jerking erratically forward instead of at even strokes. "Let's do that," he said. "We can be tourists for a day."

---

Bucky nodded and wrapped his hand around Steve's to help encourage him to go faster. "I love you," Bucky moaned quietly and felt his orgasm sneak through him so he was spouting come out on to his stomach and Steve's hand.

---

Steve let out a small groan when he felt Bucky come on him. His orgasm soon followed and he rode it out, happy to have Bucky underneath him. When it was over, he collapsed on top of Bucky, smearing the come between them. He panted, out of breath and needing some time to catch it.

---

Bucky wanted to kiss Steve but he also wanted to give him some time to breathe. He held Steve close and licked and gave little bites wherever he could on him. He also held his hands firmly on Steve's ass and massaged what he could reach.

---

Steve's breath was short and stuttered. Bucky massaging his ass didn't help him calm down, but he loved it anyway. When he finally was able to breathe regularly again, he wrapped his arms strongly around him and kissed his jaw. "That was amazing. As usual."

---

"Meh, sure," Bucky shrugged, trying to pretend like it wasn't wonderful knowing it would get a little rise out of Steve. "How are your lungs? You okay? I bet it's been harder to breathe in the winter air, hasn't it?"

---

Steve's head snapped up at Bucky, looking offended for just a moment before realizing Bucky was messing with him. He huffed and gave Bucky's side a little tickle in retaliation. "I'm fine," Steve
insisted stubbornly.

---

Bucky squirmed under the tickling and giggled in such a way that he would deny it later if he was asked. "I'm just asking if you are okay. I know you don't like me asking but you would do the exact same thing if it were me with a chronic injury."

---

"Fine..." he mumbled. "Yeah, it's harder to breathe when the air is cold. But I'm fine now. We jerked off, we didn't run a marathon." Steve was still a bit touchy about the subject. He didn't take illness well.

---

"Okay," Bucky said and held up his hands defensively and shut up about it. "You want to take a little nap for a bit? We can hope that the kids stay asleep for longer than us so we can have a bit of a break. Your mom told me yesterday that vacations aren't vacations for parents, it's just watching your kids at a different location. She's right."

---

"My mom is always right," he chuckled. Steve really was such a mama's boy. He kissed Bucky and snuggled in close. "I love you. Let's catch a quick nap before the kids need us."
Later that day found Steve and Bucky helping Lilly on to the lake to ice skate. "Okay, Lilly, you got this," Bucky said softly and held her hands as she tried to stomp her way carefully across the ice.

---

Steve let out a laugh even though he wasn't much better. But at least he didn't look like Godzilla on skates. He went at a steady pace and watched them from a little distance. "Try gliding instead of stomping," he suggested.

---

Lilly chewed her lip nervously and stared down at the ice. "I'm going to let your hands go now, Lilly," Bucky said and carefully started easing away from her. "You'll be fine. Just shuffle your feet then glide like Steve said."

---

Lilly moved her feet but fell right on her ass. Steve felt bad for her even though it was pretty funny how fast she went down. "Ugh, ice-skating is the worst!" she complained.

---

Bucky helped her back up and said, "You'll get it, Lil. Don't worry. You're the one who wanted to do ice skating in the first place. Just go slow at first." He let her go again and zoomed over to hold Steve's hand. "Come skate to us!" he called out to her and waited.

---

Steve gripped onto Bucky's hand because he also didn't feel incredibly confident being able to stay on his feet, even though he was faring better than Lilly was. After a while of shuffling and trying to glide, she finally was able to skate over to them.

---

"Yeah! You did it!" Bucky shouted in encouragement and held her close to him when she flopped into his arms. He laughed and kissed her head before letting her go again. "You’ll get used to it." They skated around slowly for a few minutes while Bucky just tried to make sure neither of them fell. He felt bad that he had never taken Lilly ice-skating in the city before. He made a mental note to take her to a real rink sometime soon.

Bucky took a few circles around the two of them and then stopped when he noticed Diana sniffing around the cabin intently and sticking her nose in the air to get whatever scent she was looking for. "What's Diana doing?" he asked Steve and pointed at her.
Steve looked over and frowned when he saw that his dog was up to something. He skidded to the edge and took off of his skates once he was on solid ground. "I'll check it out," he said. Becca had been out with Sarah May and Christopher earlier but they all went inside a few minutes before. He figured he’d go check on Becca and see if she knew anything. "Hey, do you know why Diana is acting funny?"

Becca was in the middle of changing Sarah May's diaper and she wasn't quite paying attention to anything else. "She's your dog, Steve. I don't know what she's doing. Isn't she out with you guys?"

"She's looking around like she's hunting," Steve said. He paused for a moment, seeing Sarah May but not his son and Becca didn't seem to notice anything else going on around her. "Becca, where's Christopher?"

"Playing with his blocks over there," Becca paused and looked over to where her nephew had been just a few minutes previously "Christopher?" she questioned and held Sarah May close to her chest. "Christopher!" she yelped and started looking behind all the furniture and under the tables.

Steve's stomach dropped. "You weren't watching him?" Rather than look inside, he darted back outside to Diana to try to find any sign of his son. "Bucky, Christopher's gone!" He yelled out at his husband.

"What?" Bucky shouted across the lake, unable to hear Steve. He turned to Lilly. "Let's go back in, Lilly. I don't know what he said. He doesn't look okay." Bucky came back in with Lilly and took off his skates quickly. "Baby, what's wrong?" he called to Steve as he tromped in his socks towards him.

Steve was able to find a big line of broken snow from someone or something going clumsily through it. "Diana, go get him," Steve urged, pointing the dog in the direction of the trail while Bucky came over. "Becca lost Christopher," he said in a panic before following his dog.

Bucky was very confused but he immediately followed Steve and the dog. "Christopher?" he gasped and started running behind Diana as she sped up now that she had a clear trail to go after. Bucky forgot about Steve's lungs as he sprinted far ahead of him, leaving him shouting after him.

After about five minutes of wandering into the woods, Christopher was cold to the bone. He had gotten snow in his little suit and long ago abandoned his hat. Realizing nothing was familiar, he started to cry, which Bucky was able to hear faintly from where he was. Steve tried to keep up but ended up hugging a tree as he wheezed and tried not to pass out from his lack of air.
Bucky and Diana heard Christopher's screaming and crying and ran to him. The moment he got to him, Bucky dropped down into the snow as fast as he could. He unzipped his coat and jacket and lifted his shirt up to pull Christopher inside next to his warm skin. He popped his little head out of the neck of Bucky's shirt and whimpered against Bucky's collarbone. Bucky zipped his jacket and coat back up quickly and held his shivering boy. "Steve! Steve! We're here!"

Diana barked and whined as she circled Bucky once he had Christopher in his arms. She jumped up and put her paws on Bucky's stomach so she could sniff the bundle. Steve was barely standing by the time he reached Bucky. He was holding onto another tree for support and he was crying.

Bucky heard Steve's shallow panting and rushed over to him to hold him steady against the tree. He pressed close to him carefully to try to combine his and Steve's warmth to help Christopher. "Steve," he said slowly, "I know you just ran out here but we need to get back to the cabin. Christopher needs a warm bath and dry clothes and then needs to be swaddled. We need to go back."

Steve didn't think he could move for a little while. He hadn't pushed himself this much since his injury and he couldn't believe how crippled it left him right now. He wanted to go back and comfort his son, but Christopher needed to get warm. "I'll catch up," he wheezed out.

Bucky was worried like hell for Steve but he needed to get their son to the cabin. "Diana," he said and looked to the dog. "Stay here with him. I'll send Lilly out to you."

He gave Steve a gentle, quick kiss and started off towards the cabin quickly with Christopher saying, "Papa," repeatedly through his tears and shivering.

Diana understood 'stay', so she waited with Steve dutifully. When Bucky got back to the cabin, Christopher was still whimpering and shaking like a leaf. Becca looked beyond distraught when she saw Christopher. "Oh, my god! He went outside?"

When Christopher felt the jacket get taken off from around him, he started crying again. Becca had Sarah May in her arms still, who looked over at Bucky curiously. Becca was just barely holding back tears as she nodded her head. She set the baby in her car seat and buckled it up so she couldn't go anywhere then got her shoes on and hurried outside to tell Lilly to go get Steve.
Bucky tried his best to placate his son as he held him close and got a bath running. He had to maneuver the both of them out of their clothes while he held him so he wouldn't be more upset. After a few minutes, they were both sitting in the hot bath and Bucky was singing softly to Christopher and petting his hair, just waiting for Lilly to get back with Steve.

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"Papa..." Christopher mumbled, his face all wet with tears. Once he got warmed up, he finally started to relax a little.

Steve finally arrived almost ten minutes after Bucky got Christopher in his bath. "Is he okay?" he asked and came close to them both.

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"He's okay." Bucky nodded with a sigh and wiped at his eyes. "Get over here, he needs you." He wanted to ask about his lungs but figured that would cause a fight and he didn't want to argue at the moment.

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"Hey, my beautiful boy," Steve said softly as he knelt down at the side of the tub. "You gave us a big scare. I bet you scared yourself too, Bean." Christopher looked up at his dad and made a noise but wasn't chatty like usual.

---

Bucky felt Christopher make fists against his chest as he stared at his daddy. "I think everyone was scared. Are you okay, Baby?" he asked, trying not to sound like he was asking about his breathing and instead just asking in general. “Where are the girls and your mother? Does someone have Sarah May?"

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"My mom has been taking a nap all afternoon," Steve said. "Becca has Sarah May and I think we need to talk to her because she's crying about Christopher. Lilly is trying to help her but I don't think it's working."

---

Bucky agreed with a short nod and looked down at his son again. "What happened? Was Becca just not paying attention? Or did he just manage to sneak off? It's not like her to be irresponsible."

---

"She was changing Sarah May's diaper when I came inside. It looked like she was safe to take her eyes off for a few minutes while she took care of her," Steve said. He was upset but knew it was an honest mistake. It wasn't like Becca was trying to be unattentive.

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"How did he get out the door?" Bucky asked. "He's too short to reach the knob." Christopher squirmed just a bit and started taking slower, deeper breaths. "He's falling asleep."
"I'll have to have a look," Steve said. "Want me to put him to bed? I think our little guy has had enough adventure for one afternoon." He grabbed a towel so they could take him out of the bath.

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Bucky licked his lips nervously and then reluctantly handed their son off. "I don't want to leave him," he said as he popped the tub cork out to drain the water. He got out of the tub and wrapped himself in a towel, already missing holding his little boy against his chest and keeping him safe like a father should.

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Steve wanted to hold Christopher and keep him safe - he practically fainted trying to get to him - and he wanted his little boy to know that he would always be there for him. But he saw the look on Bucky's face and passed him back after giving their son a kiss. "Let's put him down for a nap together."

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Bucky nodded and held his towel tightly wrapped around him as he carried Christopher to the room to get pajamas on and have a nap. He gave the baby back to Steve and picked out clothes for him to dress their son. "I'm going to go put on clothes quickly while you dress him then I'll come tuck him in with you."

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Steve nodded. Christopher looked up sleepily at him and didn't put up his usual fussing. Steve got him into his pajamas and rocked him in his arms. He didn't want to put him down until Bucky was back. "Hey there, Little Bean. Your Papa and I were so worried about you."

---

Christopher just looked up at his daddy and blinked slowly. Bucky was back in a few minutes and came to stand behind Steve and hold him and their son. He sighed and watching Christopher who was just a few quiet seconds away from being completely asleep.

---

Steve hushed for a little while and once Christopher was properly asleep, he laid his head on Bucky's shoulder. "I was so scared," he whispered.

---

"Me too," Bucky said and watched Christopher's chest and tummy moving up and down as he slept and breathed easy. "It's so cold out there I hope he doesn't get sick. And there are animals and things he could get hurt on. I'm so glad he's safe back home with us."

---

"Diana saved the day again. We have to give her a treat tonight. Maybe make her some chicken to throw in with her regular food." He kissed Bucky's cheek. "I'm so happy you had us get her. She's perfect."
"She's a good dog," Bucky agreed and pulled Steve towards the door saying, "Let's let him have a nap." He knew they needed to go talk to Becca, and they would, but he pulled Steve to their bedroom first. He clung to him, with both hands flat on his chest like he could heal his lungs if he pushed like that. "Sorry, I just need a minute."

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Steve wrapped his arms around him and tucked Bucky's head into his shoulder. "It's alright," he said. "I need a minute, too." He didn't realize how fucked up he would get over losing his kid for a few minutes. It was awful.

---

Bucky took in a shuttering breath and felt some tears roll down his cheeks. He couldn't think too hard about what just happened and what could have happened otherwise he would start really crying and going to the worst-case scenario. Worst case scenario being, his son lost forever in the woods or something just as gruesome and a second child of his is gone forever. He cleared his throat and shook the fear and morbidity from his mind. "Steve, I know you don't want me to ask, but how are you breathing now? I was scared for you out there too but I needed to get our baby back home."

---

Steve was a bit of a helicopter parent to begin with. But after this, he would find it near impossible to let his kids out of his sight, even when he had another responsible adult watching them. "I don’t know. Ask my doctor." He hated that he got so defensive when Bucky asked about his lungs. And he knew he meant well, but he couldn't help but get a bit angry. Especially when he couldn't get to his own son quick enough and that terrified him.

---

Bucky tensed up noticeably and clenched his jaw as he looked up into Steve's eyes. He waited a few seconds to see if Steve would like to try again or apologize, but he didn't. "Fine. I'll stop asking," he said quietly but grumpily. "Who gives a shit?" he added in a mumble.

---

Steve didn't like upsetting Bucky, but he also couldn't find it in himself to apologize for his answer. Sarah came in with a knock on the door. "Bucky, Becca is crying and she isn't telling me why," she said. "I thought you should know." She was concerned since Becca usually didn't keep stuff from her. All she knew was she woke up from her nap and went to get some tea when she found Becca crying in the living room.

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"Thanks. I'll come talk to her." Bucky nodded, thankful for an excuse to let go of Steve. He was admittedly annoyed with him at the moment. Bucky went to find Becca who was crying with her head on Lilly's shoulder. Bucky carefully sat down on the floor next to her and pulled her in close to him. "You know, when I was really young and you were about three, we were playing hide and seek. And at one point, you hid so well that I couldn't find you anymore. And I was around thirteen so I should have been able to find you. I was so nervous that you had disappeared. I kept trying to tempt you out saying, 'Baby Bear, I have jelly beans just for you.' But you just kept hiding. When I finally woke Mom up from a nap and she found you, you had fallen asleep on the bottom shelf in the pantry next to cereal boxes and pancake mix."
Becca hadn't let go of Sarah May since she got her from her car seat. She wanted to hold her close and protect her. She looked up at Bucky with a frown and had an ashamed expression on her face. "That was hide and seek. I wasn't playing hide and seek with Christopher," she said, not feeling better by the story. "You didn't let me wander outside in the snow as a baby."

"It was an accident," Bucky said and kissed her head before working on wiping her tears away with his shirtsleeve. "You were preoccupied with one baby already. I understand. Having two little ones under your watch is difficult. Did you just leave the door open a crack or something so he escaped?"

Becca shook her head. "I didn't open any of the doors. I made sure they were -" and then she paused as she looked at the kitchen door that led outside. "He must've gone out the doggy door," she said. Becca looked miserably up at her brother. "What if something had happened to him?"

Bucky looked to the dog door, which was just a perfect size for Christopher to walk right out. "Becca, Sweetheart, we can't think that way. Nothing did happen to him. He is safe. He is warm and asleep in his crib and he's just fine now."

"Can I go see him? I won't wake him up, I promise," she said. Sarah May wiggled in her arms and reached up for Bucky, wanting to go to her papa. The fact that Sarah May wanted out of her arms made Becca feel worse.

Bucky gently took his daughter and held her close. "Of course, you can go to him," he said and squeezed Becca's arm. "He probably won't wake up so don't worry about that. He's pretty tired."

Sarah May gurgled up at Bucky and reached her hands up to touch his face. When they got to the nursery, Becca leaned over the side of the crib and watched Christopher as he slept. "Was he scared?" Becca asked.

Bucky sighed and touched his sister's hair to gently play with it. "Yes, he was scared. But he was out by himself in the woods. You would be scared too. He's fine now. He is safe and all better. He just didn't know what was happening. He probably just wanted to find me and Steve and then got distracted by an animal or something and followed it to the woods."

She sniffled but seemed to calm down after seeing her nephew all safe and bundled up in his bed. She tucked a bit of his hair behind his ear and straightened up. "Poor baby."
Bucky kissed her head and held her close. "Sarah May is beyond grateful that you took good care of her. She knows you could have just called us in to change her diaper and hold her but you did that for her. She loves you and so does Christopher. And now you know what it was like when I was helping mom take care of you and Lilly as babies. I know you don't quite remember our little monster when she was that young, but still."

---

Becca looked over at her niece and reached over to hold her hand. Sarah May grunted softly because she had been in the middle of grabbing for Bucky's hair, but allowed Becca to hold her hand instead. "And he's only just learned how to walk. I don't want to be responsible for him when he's old enough to climb."

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"That's okay," Bucky said and watched his sister interact with his daughter. "You don't have to be. Steve isn't working. So normally, he will be here for them. I'm sorry if we made you do anything you didn't want to do. I'm sorry if you didn't want to watch out for them. One of us should have stayed here so you didn't have to be in charge if you didn't want to."

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"It's not that I don't want to take care of them. I like being there for them. It's just... it's scary," Becca admitted shyly. It wasn't often she was proven wrong and she was so used to naturally having a handle on things.

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Bucky gave her a little smile. "I understand. Being responsible for human lives is very scary. It was bad enough when I was young and Mom needed a break so I was in charge of the both of you. But I knew that if something was seriously wrong I could go wake her up. But when Mom and Dad died... I was terrified. I thought for sure I was going to completely ruin your lives. I had no one else to turn to if I needed help or didn't know what to do. I don't know what I would do without Steve here to help both with you two and our children."

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"Well, you wouldn't have kids right now if Steve wasn't here," she said. "And I may have filed for early emancipation to try to get a job and my own place if you kept at things the way you were going before Steve." Becca shrugged. "But you got better. So there's that. This is just more proof to me that I'm not having kids until I'm about thirty."

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Bucky couldn't help but get upset. He looked her in the eyes and felt his own tearing up. "You were considering filing for early emancipation? How do you even know what that is?" he asked quietly and stared at her. He couldn't bear the thought of his sister leaving him. Better yet, she would leave Lilly? He understood her wanting to be rid of him back when he wasn't doing well but it wasn't like he ever hurt his sisters or treated them poorly. He just fucked up his own life a lot.

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Becca winced, realizing she probably shouldn't have said that. She shrugged her shoulders up nervously and crossed her arms over her chest. "I learned about it from this one girl in my class whose older brother did it. I wouldn't have gone far anyway. And it's not like I actually did it."
Bucky shook his head and covered his eyes with his free hand. His breathing was becoming unsteady and he sort of felt like he was on the verge of a breakdown. "When was this?" he asked, keeping his face partially covered as he wiped at his eyes. "How many years ago I mean?"

Sarah May saw her papa start to look distressed so her face scrunched up and her bottom lip jutted out as she cried softly and quietly with him. "Just forget I said it," Becca said, still looking away from her brother. "It doesn't matter."

Bucky looked back over at her and said in disbelief, "Our parents had just died and you were going to leave us too?" He shook his head and held Sarah May close to his chest. He wanted to add that regardless of all the things that he did wrong, he never wanted to leave his siblings. "I need to go find Steve," he mumbled and turned to leave.

"I wasn't going to leave!" she tried to say in her defense. Moving to her own apartment somewhere else in Brooklyn wasn't leaving them. She huffed and turned back to Christopher when Bucky left. She already regretted talking about this.

Bucky went to find Steve and immediately pressed himself to his chest once he got there. Sarah May was still upset but she calmed down slightly when she had hands on both her fathers again. Bucky just worked on calming down and trying to push the thought of Becca leaving from his mind. He constantly dreaded the day that she would go off to college and not live at home anymore. He hated thinking that it almost happened far sooner than he anticipated.

When Bucky came in upset, Steve was concerned. He didn't think Bucky would forgive him so soon after being short with him but he wrapped his arms around him regardless and kissed his head. "Hey, what's wrong?" Steve asked. "Is it something with Christopher?"

Bucky shook his head. "No. He's fine. He's asleep. It's Becca." He paused and thought over their conversation. "She spent years making me feel like the worst sibling in the world but I never wanted to leave my family. She would leave us. Just leave us and go off on her own when we needed her. Jesus..."

Steve frowned and pulled Bucky to sit down on the edge of the bed with him. "What makes you say that?" he asked. "Is she looking to move out? What did she say?" Bucky had himself put together again and while he knew their kids could be loud, he didn't see why it was so bad that Becca wanted out.
Bucky shook his head and leaned into Steve. "Not anymore apparently. But, at some point, she was trying to file for early emancipation. We just lost our parents and then she was going to up and leave Lilly and me? She's got to know that would have killed me."

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"What? Are you kidding?" Steve frowned, genuinely disappointed in Becca even though he wasn't as hurt over it as Bucky was. Family was everything to him and to Bucky as well. Becca thought of herself more than the rest of them did. "Why would she even say that to you?"

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Bucky shook his head and let some more tears build up in his eyes. "I don't know. I have no idea why she thought I wouldn't be upset after hearing that. My god, Steve, I can't lose her too. She would leave us like that? Does she even know what it was like for me to be constantly worried that my baby sisters were going to die just like my parents? I was terrified."

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"Oh, Buck... I'm so sorry," Steve said softly. "Kids can do stupid, selfish things. And if you try to force her to do something she doesn't want, then she's only going to resent you for it. I want her to stay, too. And I want to help take care of her, too. But maybe we got to let her realize her limits on her own."

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"But I don't want her to leave," Bucky whined and clutched on to Steve. "I've taken care of her since she was a baby. I was ten when she was born. I held her in my arms when we were in the hospital and I promised to always protect her. And she's hardly even acknowledged everything that I have done for her. Brothers who have done a fraction of what I have can get triple the love and gratitude. She thinks Mom was the one who raised her while Dad was working but it was me! Mom was horribly depressed after Becca was born and Dad was crippled and honorably discharged and working a low-paying job. There were week-long stretches where I would only be able to get my mother out of her room to breastfeed Becca and then she would be right back in bed."

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Sarah May whined softly when she was squished between them and Steve leaned back a little while keeping his hold on Bucky. "I know, Buck, it isn't fair. I know how much you did for her - how much you still do." He pet his fingers through his hair. "You're such an amazing brother and an even better dad," he said. "One day she's going to realize that, too."

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"No, she won't. She will never see me the way I would like her too," Bucky said grumpily. "She's always been selfish. And I know I have been selfish at times too but Becca... Becca has consistently been this way. To her, our parents' jobs were to support her through her academics and clubs and study groups so she could grow up to be this genius. And Lilly and I were meant to be her fans or something. We were always second-rate to Becca in her eyes."

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Steve frowned, upset on Bucky's behalf. "Maybe we should let her start doing things on her own now. And she'll realize all that it is that you do for her, Buck," Steve said softly. "We're supposed to support her, but if she thinks she's better because she gets good grades or something, then we aren't
raising her right."

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"She's fifteen," Bucky said. "She's just wildly immature and self-centered. She would like to think she's all grown up because of her experiences but there is a difference to being hardened for your age having seen too much and being a mature adult."

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"Most fifteen-year-olds are that way, Love," Steve sighed. "We got to teach her that's not how the Rogers-Barnes family treats each other." He kissed the top of his head. "Maybe my Ma can give us some advice."

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Bucky nodded and held Sarah May closer. "That's a good idea. We should ask your mom. For now, though, I want to forget it and just move on. I've got a headache anyway and Christopher will be waking up soon, I would think."

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Sarah May squeaked softly and put her hands on Bucky's face. "Do you want me to hold her so you can have a nap? Or maybe I can watch over while you lay down with her?" Steve offered.

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"You can have her." Bucky nodded and handed her off to his husband. "I'll just take some medicine and have a nap. But please just stay with me a bit. At least until I fall asleep."

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Sarah May's face scrunched up and big, fat crocodile tears formed when Bucky passed her over. "Oh, don't be like that," Steve said softly to his daughter as he cradled her close. He sat down next to Bucky's spot on the bed and rocked her. "Looks like you're still her favorite," Steve sighed.

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"She just wants my hair," Bucky said quietly and pulled a blanket over himself. "Now that she has taken to Christopher's habit, we won't be able to get her to stop, I'm sure." He sighed and held a hand on Steve's thigh.

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Steve shifted their little girl into one arm and used his free hand to pet his fingers through Bucky's hair. "I wonder if our other kids will be hair pullers, too," Steve said. "Your hair is just that irresistible, I guess."

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"If we get another hair puller, I'm cutting it," Bucky mumbled as an empty threat and rubbed his hand soothingly up and down Steve's thigh. He added quietly, "Can we make love tonight? We are leaving tomorrow afternoon so I think it'll be our last chance here for a while."
"No," Steve whined softly. He loved Bucky's long hair. But when Bucky asked to make love tonight, he nodded. "That'd be really nice, Buck... maybe we can shower together before. Make a nice evening doting on each other, you know?"

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"Yeah." Bucky smiled warmly. "I love when we do that. I like just, you know, being together and loving on each other and feeling each other's bodies. After the day we have had, that's exactly what we need. We just need some peace and quiet and alone time."

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"That sounds perfect," Steve said. "After all, we got to celebrate our first year as a married couple the best way we can." Steve loved the intimacy he and Bucky had. "You mean so much to me, Buck. Everything good I have in this life is thanks to you."

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Bucky scooted closer and used Steve's thigh as a pillow. "You know I feel the exact same about you. I love you so much. Now, let me rest so I'll be awake when we have sex later, okay?" He chuckled and shut his eyes.

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Steve laughed and nodded. He gave Bucky some peace and quiet after that. Sarah May dosed off in his arms, too. Steve only got up when it was time to make dinner and his mom was more than happy to take her granddaughter from him.

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Bucky was so tired. He slept straight through dinner and only woke up when Steve came back into the bedroom and quietly shut the door behind him. Bucky rolled over and sat up. "Hey, what time is it? Are the kids asleep?"

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Steve sat on the edge of the bed and put an arm around his husband. "It's nine," he said. "I put both the kids to bed and I saved some dinner for you if you want some." Steve kissed Bucky's forehead. "I would have woken you but you said you were tired."

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Bucky held Steve close and breathed him in. "It's okay. Thank you for saving me food. I'll eat later." He reached up and pulled Steve close for a kiss. "You still want to shower and have sex? Because I do," he pouted a little and widened his eyes hoping to entice Steve.

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Steve laughed and leaned in to kiss Bucky slowly. "Not even awake for a full minute and you're already looking for some." He ran a hand over Bucky's chest. "Take my clothes off," he purred.

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Bucky nodded eagerly and reached for the hem of Steve's shirt. "Baby, you know you can get me going with just a look. Just the way you walk into a room can get me hot. Those precious little looks
Steve slid his hands down Bucky's body. "I know," he said with a hint of pride in his voice. "Sometimes I like to give you a big pair of bedroom eyes when I know we can't do anything just cause I like to rile you up. I love it when you look at me like you can't wait to get in bed with me."

"I can never wait to get in bed with you," Bucky said and tucked his hands in the front of Steve's pants. "Every minute apart is twice as long as every minute together." He smiled up at him and he shed Steve of the rest of his clothing and started in on his own. "You want to start the shower warming up?"

When Bucky started to undress himself, Steve put his hands on Bucky's to still them and then pressed his naked body to his husband's clothed one as he kissed him deeply. "Feel how hard I already am for you?" He brought Bucky's hand down between his legs. "I'm saving this for later." He tugged Bucky's lower lip between his teeth before hurrying to start the shower.

The second Steve was off of him, Bucky let out a breath he didn't realize he had been holding. He wasn't kidding when he said that Steve still did things to him. "Jesus," he whispered and quickly rid himself of the rest of his clothes before going to join Steve. "Is it warm? I'm so cold. Feel my nose."

Steve got the water just a little steaming so it would help quell the winter chill. He turned and pressed his lips to Bucky's nose. "You're right. Your nose is really cold." He pulled Bucky into a tight hug and nuzzled his neck. "Let me warm you up."

"Yes, please," Bucky said and wrapped an arm around Steve as he kissed his neck and his jaw. "So," he started, letting his hand find its way to the base of Steve's cock. "How are we doing it tonight? I'm good any way you want it."

Steve breathed out and looked down at Bucky with dark eyes as he touched him. "I was thinking of tying your hands to the headboard," Steve said. "And taking you nice and slow from behind. I'll kiss your neck and play with your nipples until you're begging to come."

Bucky whined and bit once lightly at Steve's neck. "Did you bring the ties? Because I didn't," he said and slowly squeezed his hand around Steve repeatedly. He didn't want to stroke him because he wanted him to last so he could get fucked nice and slow like Steve said.

Steve panted softly against Bucky's skin and dragged his nails slowly down his back. "I did," Steve
"You think I would come here unprepared?" He gave Bucky a cocky, little smirk. "Quit teasing me and wash my hair," he demanded lightly.

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"But you usually wash my hair," Bucky combatted but soaped up his hand with some shampoo anyway. He brought only one bottle of shampoo for himself, Steve, and the babies. It was a baby safe no-tear type of shampoo that smelled like grapes. Bucky giggled. "Your hair has purple in it."

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"I'll wash your hair next, don't worry." Steve smiled and closed his eyes as Bucky washed him. "I can't believe you only packed the baby shampoo," he chuckled. "We really are dads now."

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Bucky flicked Steve in the side of the head. "It was going to take up too much room to bring our shampoo too. And it's not like this bottle says not to use on adults. And if it gets in your eyes, you won't cry about it," he joked and gave Steve a wet kiss before pushing him under the stream of water to wash out his hair.

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Steve tilted his head back. "It does smell good," he agreed. "I wouldn't mind using this more often. Less bulk to carry in the weekly shopping if we are only buying one kind of shampoo."

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"Yes, but, we will have to buy it more often if we are both using it as well as the babies. Right now we use hardly any," Bucky said and handed the bottle to Steve once he was done washing his hair out. "Guess what, Baby."

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"True, but we only go through a bottle of shampoo a month for each of us and I do the shopping every week." Steve took the shampoo and poured it in his hands. "What?" he asked, threading his fingers through Bucky's hair.

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"Our anniversary tomorrow is the same day that I have been sober for three months again. I'll get my chip the next time I go in," Bucky said and gave Steve a little kiss. "I'm getting back up there. It was easier the second time around."

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"I'm so proud of you, Buck," Steve said softly. He massaged his scalp as he worked the shampoo into Bucky's hair. "It may have been easier for you this time, but I still know how hard it was for you to do it. You should be proud of what you've done."

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Bucky hummed happily and paid attention to the wonderful feeling of Steve's fingers in his hair. "I think I really am proud of myself. It was really difficult to start both times but once I'm on a roll it's so much easier to just think about my family and keep going. I want our babies to never have any
memories of me being drunk or even having a sip of beer or anything."

"Our babies won't," Steve said confidently. "Christopher and Sarah May and Grant and all our future kids will only know you as the totally rad Papa that you are," he said sweetly. "You're such an amazing man, Bucky. I'm so happy you're my husband."

It still hurt whenever they mentioned Grant. Bucky figured it would always hurt. He smiled up at his husband and brought him in for a kiss. "You're perfect. You know that?" He slipped his hands over Steve's wet ass and squeezed. "I'm all clean now. And I'm going to be cold when I get out of this shower so I'll need you to warm me up."

Steve didn't like the hurt in Bucky's eyes when they mentioned their second son, but Steve couldn't bear to not include him. He was still their baby boy. "I'll be sure to keep you warm all night long, Love. Every night." He turned off the taps and grabbed a towel so he could wrap Bucky snugly in it.

Bucky felt like a wet puppy wrapped in a towel with a smaller one on top of his head. His dick was focused in on Steve's naked wet body before him and it was sticking out, tenting the green towel comically. "As unromantic as it sounds, I'm ready for your cock."

Steve laughed at the sight of his husband. He loved these honest, human moments with him where Bucky was being... Bucky. He cupped the sides of his face and pulled him into a slow kiss. "You're not ready until I'm three fingers deep, putting you on the verge of coming."

Bucky whined and gripped on to Steve. "Yes, whatever you say, Baby." He quickly dried his hair off and tossed the towels aside. "The kids are asleep, right? I don't like the idea of them crying for us while I'm tied up in bed. Remember last year when we used your handcuffs and we couldn't find the keys at first?"

Steve giggled childishly at the memory. "That was really funny." It was only funny because it didn't turn into a mess. "Yeah, they're asleep, Babe. It's just you and me tonight." He nudged Bucky into their bedroom and gave him a light push onto the bed. "Let me see your gorgeous ass."

Bucky fell back on to the bed and he was quick to roll and get on all fours so Steve could see him. "Are you going to eat me out a little bit before we fuck? I would really appreciate it if you did but only if you want to."

"Well, I wouldn't ask to look if I didn't want to have a taste," Steve hummed. He ran his hand slowly
down Bucky's spine before going into the duffel bag. He pulled out a silk rope and some flavored lube. He put the lube on the bed in Bucky's line of sight before getting on the bed as well. He kissed Bucky's wrists and then started to tie them up.

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Bucky was very compliant as Steve tied him up. He got a good look at the lube and noticed it was a new bottle of a new flavor. "Steve," he gasped and stared at his husband. "Did you go to the sex shop? All on your own? Because I know I didn't buy that bottle."

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Steve smiled proudly as he tied Bucky's wrist to the headboard. "I did," he said happily. "I told my mom I had to get some last minute groceries. And since you can eat this, I technically wasn't lying." He took the bottle and poured some onto his fingers quickly.

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"You cheeky bastard," Bucky snarked back at his husband. He couldn't see him at all. All he could see were his arms and the strands of wet hair that were falling in his face. "Can you put my hair up? It's going to drive my crazy if it's slapping all over my face while you rail me."

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"I can't believe you asked me to do your hair the second after I get lube all over my hands," Steve complained. He wiped his hands clean on a few tissues and got a hair tie out. He pulled Bucky's hair neatly back into a clean ponytail and tied it up. "How's that?"

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"I didn't know you had lube on your hands. I can't see you at all," Bucky defended and pushed his ass out a little more so Steve wouldn't be annoyed. "But thank you for putting it up. Now it'll be easier for you to grab on to as well, right?"

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"You're still a pain in the neck," Steve goaded fondly. He lubed his fingers up again and teased Bucky's hole by smearing a little lube around the rim. "You really like it when I pull on your hair, don't you?"

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Bucky groaned and pushed back some more. "Please, fingers, please," he whined and hung his head. "You love pulling on my hair and you love that it gets me going. Don't even try to pretend you don't. You love my hair. You love my cock. You love my ass."

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Steve slowly eased a finger inside of Bucky's ass and pushed it in until he was down to his third knuckle. He carefully pulled Bucky's hair to tilt his head back, exposing his throat so Steve could kiss it. He added a second finger and began to thrust them inside and out. "I do love all of that," he decided.

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Bucky’s breath hitched in his throat and he glanced over at Steve. "You are so handsome when you’re opening me up. You're eyes get this special glow - this hungry need to be inside me. They don't look quite like that any other time. And, god, I love it."

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Steve smirked. "It's because I know I'm the only person on this earth who gets to do this now." He moved behind Bucky and spread his ass apart so he could stick his tongue between his two fingers and open him up even more.

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"Fuck, Steve!" Bucky gasped and bit his lower lip. He sort of forgot how good it felt to have Steve's tongue inside of him. It really was one of his favorite things. "How does your new lube taste?" he asked and then quickly added, "Never mind. Tell me later. I don't want you to stop to talk."

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Steve pulled back to circle the tip of his tongue around Bucky's hole before plunging back in. He moaned low, hard as anything because he knew how much Bucky was enjoying himself right now. He wanted to give him the night of his life. Once he felt Bucky was relaxed enough, he worked a third finger inside of him.

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Bucky just focused on breathing. He wanted Steve to fuck him into next week but he also wanted to be patient and take everything Steve wanted to give him. He also couldn't move his arms and he so desperately wanted his dick to be touched. "Were you planning on me coming with you in my ass or before?"

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"I don’t know," Steve said. "We'll see how long you last." He licked a stripe down to Bucky's balls and kissed them once. He spread his fingers wide inside of his husband and asked, "Want me to spank you a little?"

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Bucky’s voice was a little too high-pitched when he said, "You know I always do," in a desperate, pleading way. He never wanted to directly ask Steve to get rough with him because he didn't want to push him. But if Steve instigated it then he didn't have a problem with asking for a little.

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Steve didn't like raising his hand to Bucky. But he was willing to experiment a little and it wasn't like he was going to put much heat into it. He still worked his fingers deep into his husband's ass and just as he pushed them back inside again, he gave a firm swat to Bucky's cheek with his free hand.

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Bucky groaned and shook his head. "You know what would look nice?" he asked. "A bright red handprint with a hickey in the middle. You mark up my neck all the time. Mark up my ass too. Make it last a few days. Show off your work to yourself when I get dressed in front of you. Give yourself something to look at."
"I'm not leaving a handprint on you," Steve answered calmly but decisively as he swatted him again. He gave a little smack to Bucky's balls too, for good measure. "But a hickey I can do." He kissed the small of Bucky's back before biting lightly at the swell of his ass. He kissed the red skin and started to suck a mark there.

Bucky nodded and clenched his fists. He wished he could see what Steve was doing. "So hickeys and bite marks?" he asked and clunked his forehead on the wood of the headboard in front of him. "But no hands? Not that I'm complaining. You do want you feel comfortable doing. I'm just curious."

"Yeah, because those don't require me raising my hand to you any harder than this," Steve said. He moved to Bucky's other cheek and slowly sucked a new mark. "I don't like hitting people." Especially not someone he loved, even though Bucky insisted that he liked it.

"I know. I get it," Bucky said. "Just bite me pretty good then. How's that?" he asked and shut up again so Steve could get back to it. It was getting later and even though they both wanted to enjoy their time together, Bucky worried one of the babies would wake up and need them. But he didn't dare interrupt Steve again. He wanted his cock too much. If there was a problem, he would just wait for Steve tied up like he was. He would just deal with it.

Steve took his time and went back to eating Bucky's ass out and making his hole sloppy with spit and lube. He bit a few marks onto his ass and his upper thighs to lay his claim on his husband. Finally, it was too much and he couldn't handle waiting any longer to be inside of him. The second he pulled his fingers out was the same second he was pushing his cock deep into him, stretching him wider and filling him up until he was balls deep in his ass.

Bucky gasped and moaned and bopped his head on the wood of the bed again. "Fuck," he whispered and pulled at the restraints, wanting to get to his hard leaking cock. "Your dick feels so nice. I'm so warm and full. It's amazing. Please, fuck me. Go slow at first, let me feel the drag."

Steve grabbed Bucky's hip with his hand and did just that. He slowly pulled his hips back so his cock drew Bucky's hole outwards as he pulled away. Then he pushed back just as slowly. He panted against the back of Bucky's neck, desperate to go faster but holding back because Bucky wanted him to go slow.

Bucky groaned a little loudly and had to bite a corner of the pillow in front of him to stifle the sound. "How good does that feel?" he asked and tried his best to looked back at Steve. "I bet it looks pretty damn amazing too."
"I wanna fuck you into next week," Steve answered back in a low voice. He pulled back to watch Bucky's hole move with his dick. It looked fucking amazing. "Wish I had my camera in reach. You look so hot."

Bucky giggled a little deliriously and sighed. He squeezed his ass around Steve's dick then said in a low growl, "Then fuck me. I can tell you just can't wait. Give it to me good."

Steve reached over to hold onto Bucky's hair and wrap it around his fingers. With his other hand on Bucky's hip, he held him steady as he tore in, practically jackhammering himself into his husband's ass. He knew he couldn't keep this pace up for very long at all but, god, it was satisfying.

"Christ!" Bucky yelped and clenched his fists in the restraints. "Don't stop, Baby. Please!" he said and arched his neck back as Steve pulled on his braid. "Kiss me. Kiss me," he begged and shut his eyes tight.

Steve's balls slapped against Bucky's skin as he pounded his ass, gasping for breath with each thrust. He leaned down and gave him a deep, searing kiss as he fucked him. "You feel so good, Buck."

Bucky nodded and panted as well. "Hold the base of my dick. I don't want to come too fast. I want to last with you." he gasped a few times and felt himself getting close to orgasm already which he didn't think was very fair.

Steve let out a breathless laugh and grabbed Bucky's dick. He held it firmly as he rocked in and out of his ass. He leaned down and bit Bucky's shoulders, marking him wherever his mouth could reach. "We can always have round two."

"I'll fuck you in the morning before anyone is awake?" Bucky suggested. The need to come passed slightly as Steve held his cock. Steve also needed to slow down a bit because of his breathing and Bucky was content to let them ride it out a little slower.

"Deal," Steve answered. Because he had to go slower now, Steve let go of Bucky's hair and started to push a finger inside Bucky's ass next to his dick. "How's that, Love?"

"Feels perfect," Bucky said and unclenched his fists. "Can my arms be let down so I can hold you?" he asked softly and looked back at Steve. "Want to touch my husband. Want to see his beautiful eyes."
Steve sucked one last mark onto Bucky's neck before reaching up to untie his husband's hands. He helped Bucky onto his back and covered Bucky's body with his. "You look so good under me."

"You look so good above me," Bucky said and carded his fingers into Steve's hair. "God, I fucking love you. Make love to me. Slow and calm and passionately. Love on me and split me open and make me yours. It's been a year married but we have so many ahead of us."

Steve was out of breath but determined to keep going. He buried his face in Bucky's neck and rolled his hips slowly into his husband, savoring each moment. "We are going to have so many good years spent together, Bucky. It's going to be beautiful." His thrusts started to become a bit erratic as he found his orgasm building up. "I'm so close, Buck," he breathed out.

"Come for me," Bucky whispered and held Steve close, his own dick waiting impatiently between them. "After you come, can I jerk off over you so I'll come on your chest, please?"

Steve thrust in a few more times before he came deep in Bucky's ass. He rode out his orgasm and collapsed next to Bucky, panting in short breaths. He made a vague gesture with his hand to show he was fine with Bucky doing whatever he wanted on him.

Bucky rolled so he was straddling Steve's chest but hovering over him so he wasn't crushing his lungs. He could feel Steve's come leaking from his ass as he hurriedly pumped himself to orgasm and shot streams of hot come over Steve's neck and chin.

Steve breathed out as Bucky came on him, kind of loving how Bucky laid his claim on him. "Take a picture," Steve purred, feeling pretty sexy at the moment and knowing it would be good material for Bucky to look at later.

Bucky nodded and quickly got off of Steve. He rummaged in his bag for the Polaroid, thinking that was better than using the one they would need to develop. He came back and hovered over Steve once more. Snapping a picture of his husband covered in his come, Bucky giggled and gave Steve a little pinch to his side. "Here, I'll get you a towel." He handed the photo to Steve to wait for it to show up as he hopped to the bathroom.

Steve blushed at the sight of himself like that. "I'm going to look at this when I'm seventy and be jealous of the body I have today," he said. He set it aside and crossed his arms behind his head. "We are starting to grow a pretty big collection of dirty pictures of us."
Bucky giggled and lay down next to Steve, grabbing the camera to snap a picture of them laying together. "I think one of your new hobbies should be scrapbooking. You can make one for each of the kids and make new ones as everyone grows up. And you can make a special secret one of just shots of us in compromising positions. It'll be like our own personal porno mag."

Steve smirked over at Bucky. "Just wait until you see your birthday gift." Steve had secretly been taking loads of pictures of Christopher and now of Sarah May as well as Becca and Lilly whenever they were in a good mood so he could make a scrapbook for Bucky. "We got to find a good way to hide the secret scrapbook because the kids will get smarter as they get older. We can't afford them finding that."

"We will just hide the secret scrapbook in with our sex box in the closet," Bucky suggested and rolled to snuggle close to his husband. "I have a pretty good anniversary present for you tomorrow. At least, I think it's good. I hope it's good... Shit, you're going to hate it."

"We got to find a better hiding spot for that, too. I have a feeling Christopher is going to be a curious, adventurous one." Steve looked curiously over at Bucky. "And why would I ever hate anything you gave me?" Steve asked.

"Well, because now I'm worried it isn't a good enough gift," Bucky whined and gave his husband a kiss on the cheek. "Also, it's at home so you'll have to wait until tomorrow evening. But if you hate it you have to at least pretend it's okay and then I'll get you something else later."

"I know I'm going to love it, Buck," Steve said. "I'm excited to give you yours, which is also at home," he laughed. "The girls and babies may not be a fan of it. But I think you will be."

"Oh? Now I'm curious," Bucky said and held Steve's hand. "We still need new baby names by the way. How do you feel about ‘Cornelia’ or ‘Claudia’ for a girl? I know they are a little fancy but I like them. And ‘Daniel’ for a boy?"

Steve smiled fondly and kissed Bucky's neck. "I thought you wanted to take a break from babies because we already got two," he teased. "How about whatever baby you bring home, you pick the name. Whatever you want." He slid his hand up Bucky's chest.

"You don't mean that," Bucky said. "You know you want a part in naming every kid that comes into our life. And there is always the chance that you're going to be the one who brings another baby home before I do."
"You're right. I don't. I was trying to be nice," Steve said with a little laugh. "All of those names are nice, Buck. It's just a shame I can't make a baby with you. Then again, we'd have a million if we were able to make babies because of sex."

Bucky chuckled. "Let me once again say how happy I am that I'm not the one who has to produce these children." He squeezed Steve's ass gently. "Any names you have in mind? Any Irish names we should put on the table?"

"Like I've said before, you'd have one after the other," Steve snickered. "'Sean' and 'Colleen' are good Irish names," he suggested. "Ma says I would have been 'Colleen' if I was a girl."

"I like 'Colleen'. Do you like 'Colleen'?" Bucky asked. "I could see Sarah May helping her little sister Colleen on her first day of school. That's adorable." He smiled up at his husband.

Steve nodded his head. He thought it was a nice name and it would make his mom happy, too. "We can put 'Colleen' on the table. You want to go to sleep now? Get a few hours of sleep before round two tomorrow morning?" He yawned and pulled the blankets up over them. But as soon as he did, he heard Sarah May start to cry, which meant that Christopher would start to cry. Steve let out a sigh and started to get dressed. "I'll get them settled."

"You need my help?" Bucky asked but couldn't keep his eyes open anyway. Before Steve was done getting dressed and could answer, Bucky was almost asleep and curled up waiting for Steve to come cuddle him once again.
Bucky woke up before Steve. He stretched and got up out of bed to use the restroom. A winter storm was starting up outside and Bucky could see out the window at the snow falling quickly. It was a perfect anniversary morning. He finished wiping his thighs of Steve's come and then checked himself in the mirror to make sure he looked as handsome as he could before going back to Steve.

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Steve rolled over in bed when Bucky left and he opened his eyes soon after. He made a soft sound and sat up, stretching. He stifled a yawn and smiled when he saw Bucky coming back over. "Hey, Love. Good morning," he said. "It's a miracle. Both babies slept through the night."

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Bucky grinned at Steve and stood in the bathroom doorway in all of his naked glory. "Morning, my sweet husband. A year and several hours ago you dragged me all the way to a church and you married me for better or worse."

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Steve drank in the sight of his gorgeous husband. "I know," he said. "It was the best decision I ever made. I was so happy when Father Frank agreed to marry us. With all the rejections, I was afraid of losing hope."

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Bucky moved over to the bed and crawled on top of Steve to sit in his lap. "I love you so much. This has been an amazing year. One year, three babies, a bunch of AA meetings, and opening up the shelter."

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"Don't forget Diana," Steve laughed and ran his fingers through Bucky's hair. "You make me a better person, Bucky Barnes," he said in a loving voice. "I couldn't do it without you."

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"Rogers-Barnes," Bucky corrected and gave Steve a long kiss. "And I could never forget Diana. Hell, she destroyed a raccoon in our cabin and I had to bury it in the woods. She's not forgettable."

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"Rogers-Barnes," Steve agreed. "Yeah. She's one hell of a dog. She also sniffed out our son who wanted to go on a little snow adventure."

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"Oh, god, don't remind me," Bucky groaned and wrapped his arms around Steve. He let a hand trail down to hold Steve's flaccid dick while he slowly started to grind his own against Steve's leg.

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Steve let out a little hum when Bucky started to feel him up. "Mmm, got plans for me this morning."
Husband?" He rumbled low, knowing the answer already.

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"Yes," Steve purred slowly. "I want to feel your nice, thick cock deep in my ass. I want to make it so you got to give me breakfast in bed cause I won't be able to sit at the table, I'm too sore."

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Bucky moaned and licked at Steve's throat. "I'll fuck you well, Baby." He let go of Steve's cock and grabbed the lube to start fingering Steve open. He teased around his hole and slowly pushed his pointer finger inside of him.

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Steve arched his back and let out a soft moan as Bucky opened him up. "Shit, god," he breathed out. "Been a while since you fucked me. I miss feeling you on top of me. Looking down at me with dark eyes and making me feel like the hottest fella alive."

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"You are the hottest fella alive," Bucky promised and worked a second finger inside, quickly following with a third not too long after. "I just love having your cock up my ass and I forget how much I love being on top and getting to see your gorgeous face as I split you open."

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Steve blushed deeply. "You know how to get me going," he rumbled low, burying a hand in Bucky's hair to give a little tug. "Fuck me now, Love. I want to feel you inside me finally."

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Bucky nodded and removed his fingers. He slicked up his cock and tucked the head against Steve's hole. He slowly pushed in, trying his best to go as slow as he could and feel every inch. "Your ass feels so amazing, Baby."

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Steve gasped and let out a soft whine as he was entered. His toes curled and he took little breaths so he wouldn't get overwhelmed. "Thanks, my mom gave it to me," Steve joked with an obnoxious smirk.

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"Oh! Come on!" Bucky grumped and sat all the way back so his cock popped back out of Steve. "Don't bring up your mother during sex." He whined and pinched Steve's thigh.

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Steve threw his head back and laughed heartily at Bucky's reaction. He wanted his husband's dick
back in him but the joke was well worth it. "Quit whining and get back inside me before I finish myself off," he laughed.

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"I don't think you deserve it after that nonsense," Bucky said and laid back. "Maybe I will just let you finish yourself. I'll just wait here for you to decide." He knew he was being a bit of a brat but he liked it and he knew it would get Steve a little.

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"No," Steve whined, climbed on top of Bucky. He kissed and nuzzled at his neck. "You were just saying how nice my ass felt, Buck, don't you want to put your dick back in again?" He rubbed his body up against Bucky's slowly.

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Bucky hummed happily and laid back with his hands behind his head. He pointed at his dick and said, "Sit," while staring at Steve. "Show me you deserve it. Show me that you belong to me as much as I belong to you."

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Steve gave Bucky a stubborn look, almost tempted to refuse because he was a mule like that and it was usually him who pulled this kind of stuff, not Bucky. However, he also was really fucking aroused and wanted Bucky inside of him. He straddled Bucky's hips and slowly sank down on his cock, letting out a satisfied moan as he filled him up again.

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"Oh, man, I can see it on your face. That took a lot of humility from you to do, didn't it?" Bucky chuckled and started fucking up into Steve. "But, lord, you look so good like this."

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"Shut up and rail me," Steve huffed, a little annoyed that Bucky could see how much Steve wanted to protest. He wasn't willing to admit how bad he wanted it. He closed his eyes and rocked his hips in rhythm with Bucky's thrusts.

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Bucky nodded and held on to Steve tightly as he started to really pound into him as best as he could from his position. "You love me? I love you," he said through panting breaths and looked up at his husband.

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Steve rocked his hips and brought his hand down to stroke himself as he rode Bucky's dick for all he was worth. "I love you," he gasped out. "I do, Buck, always."

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Bucky groaned and watched Steve like it was the last time he was going to see him. "You are so beautiful," he whispered. "My god, I can't believe you are who I get to wake up to every morning. You're perfect in every way, Steve. Inside and out."
Steve's muscles clenched down around Bucky's cock as he nearly came but stopped himself by grabbing the base of his cock tightly. "Show me how much you love me," Steve gasped out. "Let me feel it, Bucky."

Bucky nodded quickly and sat up to hold Steve to his chest as he flipped them so he was back on top. He gave Steve a warm, wet kiss before taking Steve's cock in hand and pounding into his ass much harder now. "Like this, Baby?"

Steve cried out when Bucky tore into him and he buried his face in his husband's neck. Within moments, he was shooting messy spurts of come between them. "Fuck," he swore. "So good, baby."

Bucky kept railing Steve through his orgasm and sucked the come from his fingers. It took him another several minutes before he was ready to come too. He bit down on Steve's shoulder and came hard and fast up into his husband, happy that he held out for longer than Steve this time.

Steve took what Bucky had to give him and when it was over, he let out a satisfied breath and laid boneless on top of him. "That was awesome," he breathed out.

Bucky wrapped his arms around Steve and sighed contentedly. "Happy anniversary," he said and kissed Steve's head. "This was a good way to start the morning. Sex with you always is."

"I agree, though I'm still a little grumpy that you pulled out of me," Steve chuckled, running his fingers gently over Bucky's jaw. "I think we got to spend the mornings of each anniversary just like this."

"You got what you wanted in the end anyway," Bucky observed and pet Steve's hair. "I'm really happy we get to have our anniversary morning where we had our honeymoon. And I'm glad all our kids got to come this time."

Steve got a sad look in his eye for a moment because that wasn't true since Grant wasn't there. He didn't push the point and instead drew Bucky into a slow kiss. "This place is special to you. And now it's special to me."

"I can't wait to bring Christopher here when he's old enough to learn to fish. It'll be so much fun. I'll tell him everything my dad told me." Bucky grinned thinking about it and pushed the both of them up on the bed so he could get up to get dressed.
Steve grinned. "He's going to look up to you just like you looked up to your dad," he said. "You're going to be his best friend and know all the tricks of the trade. And then you can point to the forest and tell him about the time he scared the hell out of us."

Bucky chuckled and pulled on his pants. "You might think that, but just watch, he will end up being all about you. Daddy's boy, making art and staying in the city. I'll have to rope a different kid into coming to the lake with me."

Steve wanted all their kids to think he was pretty cool, but he knew that Bucky was really the fun one between the two of them. "Maybe kid number six will be your outdoorsman," he joked.

"With my luck, none of them will come out here until kid number twelve," Bucky said and tossed Steve his clothes. There was some commotion coming from the nursery so Bucky went to go get the babies.

When Bucky got to the nursery, Christopher was flinging his stuffed toys out of his crib to Sarah May's delight. Each time he threw one out, she would squeal happily, so he would throw another out.

"My god, babies," Bucky breathed and picked up Christopher's toys. He tossed them all into his crib and then picked him up. Steve came in and got Sarah May from her crib and held her close. Bucky stared into her big brown eyes and leaned over to kiss her hair. "I wish we knew where she was from. We really need to figure that out as soon as possible."

"Fred gave me the name of someone who may know," he said. "I was thinking about calling her when we got home. I'm kind of worried because Fred said she looks like she could be Jewish. What if we got to raise her with a different religion to respect where she's from?"

Bucky traded babies with Steve and held up his daughter above his head. "Are you Jewish, baby girl?" he asked and kissed her cheek. "Would it be so bad, though? I mean, we need to make sure she knows about her culture and stuff. Especially if she is Jewish, there is a lot to make sure she knows. I mean, my family is partially Jewish on my mom's side but we never knew anything about the culture at all which is sad. And I want Sarah May to know about that stuff no matter what culture she is from."

"It wouldn't be bad, Buck, it's just... I don't know if it'll make her feel different if I take her to synagogue while everyone else goes to church," Steve said in concern. "I don't want her feeling left..."
out.

"Well," Bucky started and held her back down against his chest. "What if I take her to synagogue while you all go to church?" he asked softly and made sure not to make eye contact with Steve. He had never made any indication of wanting anything to do with their children's religious upbringing.

Steve looked at him, a little surprised. Christopher squirmed in his arms until Steve gave him one of his stuffed toys. "Are you sure?" he asked. "How do you feel about that?" Steve wanted to be involved still. Even if they were going to be a multi-faith household, he needed to have them all be involved with each other in some way or another.

Bucky let Sarah May tangle her hand in his hair gently as he looked down at her. "Well, it's important to you for them to have religion in their lives and I can handle taking any Jewish kids we have to synagogue so they can be with their people."

Steve didn't know what he did to deserve such a perfect husband to help raise their children together. He pulled him close and kissed his lips. "I love you," he said softly. "Alright, but when we adopt in the future it's either got to be a Jewish baby or a baby that can be raised Catholic because we don't have a third parent to take them to their place of faith. When they grow up, they can practice something else if they want but only after they can take themselves," he joked.

"I don't think that'll be a problem," Bucky said and pulled Steve in for another kiss. "There aren't many other religions in Brooklyn than Catholic and Jewish." He stopped and looked at both of their kids. "I wonder where the next one is going to come from."

Christopher pressed a kiss to Bucky's face as well since he was close enough. Steve insisted on kissing Christopher's little face at every opportunity as a part of helping their son would grow into an affectionate, little man who wasn't emotionally stunted. "I don't know. But they'll be perfect no matter what." He nudged Bucky and headed for the kitchen.

Bucky followed him happily and chattered to his daughter as they went. He stopped when Steve stopped and they both stared at the sight waiting for them in the kitchen. There was a small cake that said 'Happy Anniversary' and pancakes and fruit all prepared on the table. Sarah was pouring orange juice and Becca and Lilly were setting the table.

Steve stopped and gasped when he saw his family at the table already and breakfast made. "Oh, my god, you guys!" Steve said excitedly. Christopher knocked on Steve's chest and pointed at the cake, knowing exactly what he wanted to eat.
Bucky gasped in surprise and pulled his sisters in for hugs careful not to squish his daughter. "You did all this for us?" he asked and looked between them and Sarah. "This is so thoughtful. Thank you."

Lilly, never good with tact, said, "Yeah, I'm hungry and I wanted to wake you up sooner but Becca said you guys were having sex and I had to wait."

Steve blushed a bright red and gave Becca a small glare. "Becca!" he accused. He didn't know why she had to be so crass about that stuff.

"What? It's not like you guys were exactly being quiet," she said back.

"Yes, I was!" Bucky defended. "I thought I was doing pretty well being quiet on this trip." He looked to Steve who was still bright red and glaring at him now. He cleared his throat and added, "We are here now. Time to eat, right?"

Steve hated when Becca had to talk about their private life with Lilly, who he thought was too young for this stuff. He took a seat after putting his son in his high chair and cutting up his pancake into bite-sized pieces. Sarah could tell Steve was a bit embarrassed because he usually got quiet and moody, so she kissed the top of his head before sitting down. "I'd like to go to the shop one more time before we leave," she told him.

Bucky nodded and went straight for the cake, bypassing any real breakfast. "Yeah, we can do that. I want to say goodbye to Fred and Mindy before we head home," he said and took a bite of cake before grabbing some fruit as well so it wasn't like he was only having cake for breakfast.

When Christopher saw his pop eating cake, he let out a loud noise to get his attention. "Papa!" He signed some attempts at words, looking pathetic as he begged for the cake.

Steve shook his head. "He's a menace," he said fondly.

"It's my fault," Bucky chuckled and cut off a small piece of cake and fed it to his son. "Although, you were also the one who convinced me that it was okay for him to have sweets. Remember that?" Bucky asked and leaned in to give Steve a little kiss.

"Well, that's because I'm determined to give my son a good life," Steve joked.

After Christopher got a mouthful of cake, he pointed to his baby sister. "Ya-Ya," he said, trying to get his papa to give his sister some cake.
Bucky pet Christopher's blonde hair which was growing out down below his ears now. "I don't think Ya-Ya is old enough for cake, Bean," Bucky said. "I know she's growing up fast but cake comes later."

"Steve, can you get the syrup?" Becca asked. Steve shook his head and motioned for her to get it herself. Becca looked kind of shocked that Steve didn't spring into action to help her like usual.

Becca slowly got the syrup and then adjusted back in her chair, shooting Bucky a questioning glance which he didn't pick up on as he was distracted by Sarah May. "She's so strong. Isn't she, Steve? Christopher was sick and weak when we got him but Sarah May has been a lot healthier so far."

Steve was still really upset with Becca for hurting Bucky's feelings by saying how she had considered emancipation and now with her comments this morning about sex, he had some more ammunition and reason to be a grump at her. "Yeah, that's cause we got her from the start and we were able to make her big and strong. Okay, not big, because she really is tiny. But strong. Maybe she will be a gymnast."

"Maybe her aunt Lilly will help her with sports, huh?" Bucky asked and looked to Lilly hopefully.

Lilly nodded and talked through a bite of cake. "Fuck yeah, I need someone to work out with. I'll train her to be so good at sports, just wait."

"No swearing in front of the babies," Steve said patiently to Lilly. He would've been more upset if she hadn't just been talking about how she was going to spend time with her niece. "Papa," Christopher said to get Bucky's attention. When Bucky looked, he signed 'I love you' and then 'more' before pointing at the cake.

Bucky signed back that he loved him too but didn't hand him anyway cake. "Have some more fruit before cake," Bucky said and handed Christopher a strawberry as he ate one himself and smiled to try to intrigue his son into wanting fruit too.

"I think he's starting to learn how to butter us up," Steve said. "He thinks he's so cute. He's right. But I have a hard time saying no to that adorable face." He finished up his breakfast and stood up before going to wash up.

Bucky took Christopher and held him in his lap. He let him have just a few more bites of cake and then set him on the ground to run off his morning energy. "Baby, should we give them baths before
we go or just wait until we get home?"

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"I don't trust them to stay clean on the ride home, I'd rather bathe them before bedtime," Steve answered. Christopher looked up at Bucky with a big smile and then tottered off to go find Diana to play with. "You want to do anything before we start packing up?"

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"No, all I want to do is make sure we say goodbye to Fred and Mindy. Also, I wouldn't mind seeing if Junior and Maureen are still around. We can say goodbye to them too," Bucky said and wiped Sarah May's mouth with his sleeve.

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Sarah May scrunched her face up and turned her head when Bucky wiped her mouth. Steve chuckled and cleaned up the rest of the dishes. "We can call the shop before we go and see if they can swing by so we can see them too."

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"Okay that sounds good," Bucky said and reached for the phone. It wasn't capable of making calls outside of the cabin grounds but you could call to other cabins or to the shops. He dialed for the tackle shop and waited for Fred to pick up.

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"Seneca Tackle Shop, Fred speaking," Fred greeted in his pleasant customer service tone. Steve overheard him using that voice and couldn't help but giggle because it was far from how he spoke among friends.

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"Fred, it's Jamie," Bucky said with a chuckle. After he finished on the phone he hung up and said, "Steve, the four of them are going to be at the tackle shop in a few minutes to say goodbye. So if we want to go we should head over now and pick up anything we will need on the trip back."

Lilly piped up with, "I need more gummy worms!"

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"Jamie," Steve whispered under his breath. He went to go get the babies' jackets so they could be bundled up for the trip. Christopher seemed unwilling to get dressed. "Lilly, get your nephew in his hat and I'll buy you gummy worms," Steve said.

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Lilly quickly complied and worked on getting Christopher all set to go outside. "He doesn't want to wear the hat, Steve," she said and glared at her nephew. "Do you have a different hat that he likes better?"

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"I don't know why he doesn't like that hat. His nana worked so hard knitting it for him," Steve said and kissed his son's head. "Maybe we can give him one that doesn't cover his ears?" he suggested.
Becca came over and gently pushed Lilly out of the way and took the hat saying, "Give me that." She then rolled the bottom of it once and put it on Christopher's head so it wouldn't cover his ears. "There."

"Let's see if that will last," Steve said. Sarah May was a lot easier to handle. She let her parents dress her without complaint. "Should we walk or take the car? I don't know how the roads are going to be."

Bucky looked outside and checked the roads. "Well, how much do we need to get from the store? Because if it's a lot, we should take the car. What do you think?"

"I don't think we need all that much. And worst comes to worst we can make a pit stop along the way," Steve said. "I'll empty the duffel bag and take it with us."

"Okay, that sounds good," Bucky said. "Sarah, you're coming with us, right?" He looked to the girls as well. Becca was back on the couch reading and Lilly wasn't paying them any mind as she started putting Christopher's toys back in the bin they brought.

"Yes, of course," Sarah said as she got her coat on. She picked up her grandson. "Becca, Lilly, get dressed. We're all going to say goodbye to Fred and Mindy." Sarah thought it would be rude if the girls didn't go.

Becca wanted to protest but she didn't dare be rude to Sarah. And Lilly hadn't even realized she was invited. Once everyone was ready, they headed out. It was about a seven-minute walk to the shop and Bucky had Sarah May tucked into his jacket by the time they got there because she was so cold.

There was a surprising amount of deer in the nearby woods, probably looking for food to scavenge. Christopher barked at every one even though Steve reminded him that they weren't doggies. When they arrived at the shop, Mindy exploded with excitement at seeing the babies again.

Bucky looked around and noticed that there were a lot more people in the shop that he didn't recognize than the day before. It made him a little uncomfortable. Fred and Junior both came up to Bucky and clapped him on the back with a resounding, jovial, "Jamie!"

Steve went over to Maureen to say hello since Mindy was gushing over his son and insisted on holding him. "How've you been?" he asked. "We're going to be leaving around midday, but it's great
Maureen gave Steve a short hug and said, "Well, honey, we weren't going to let you go without a goodbye. Junior insisted. He said that he used to worry about Bucky but now that he has met you, he knows that he is going to be okay. I think Junior sort of felt like Bucky was one of his brothers back in the day."

Steve smiled. "Bucky is such a good man. You have no idea what a pleasure it is to be around him all the time." He pulled out a pen and notepad from his pocket. "Can I have your address? I'd love to send a care package for you after the new babies are born," he said the last part a little lower so Junior wouldn't hear the news of it being two kids.

Maureen grinned and wrote down their address. "Thank you, Steve. Be sure to put a return address so I know how to reach you as well. And please don't let it be long before our families get together again. I think the brothers are planning a get together this summer. You all should come along too. You can meet whichever ones you haven't yet."

"Let me know which dates they're coming. I'll add our phone number in the package. I'm sure Bucky would love to come up here again if he can get out of work for it." Lilly came up to Steve then, holding the biggest bag of gummy worms he'd ever seen.

"Steve?" Lilly asked with wide eyes and held up the bag so he could see it. "This will last me like the entire trip home and then maybe another day. I promise I'll be so quiet in the car and I won't bug Becca this time and I'll braid Bucky's hair so the babies don't pull it."

Lilly was in his good graces today, so he sighed and handed her money to go buy it. "I don't know what I'll do when Sarah May turns her age," he said to Maureen. "I don't want her to grow up too fast, but you're always curious to find out who they're going to be, you know?"

Maureen nodded and watched Lilly run off. "I know exactly what you mean. And I just love those little moments you get as they grow up. First time they crawl, first word, first laugh. It's so great. I might just keep having Junior's kids just so I can keep seeing those firsts."

Steve nodded in agreement. "Bucky keeps saying that he's glad he doesn't have to carry all the babies that I want to have. I don't blame him, pregnancy looks like a lot of work."

"It is a lot of work," Maureen agreed. "And you've seen my husband. He's a big guy. His babies
don't come out small. And now that there are two in here, I'm a little worried I'm not going to be able to move at all in a few months."

---

Steve patted her shoulder and gave a little smile. "I don't envy your job." He excused himself because he found some dog treats Diana would love. "Bucky, you want anything?" he asked as he brought it to the register.

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Bucky, thankful for the distraction from being regaled by Fred and Junior with stories of how obvious his childhood crush on Junior was, came over to Steve quickly and picked up a bag of pretzels. "I wish I knew how to drive so you could be in the back with all the hair pulling this time."

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Steve smiled and put an arm around Bucky's shoulder. "I could teach you, you know. If you want to move up here, I can't be the only one with a license," he teased. "It's not so bad once you get used to it."

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"I'm twenty-six. I'm pretty sure it's hard to teach adults how to drive," Bucky said and tossed his pretzel bag into the basket Steve had. There was some whispering behind them and Bucky glanced back to see a few men talking to Fred and pointing their way. Bucky looked back ahead and gripped Steve's arm and whispered. "Baby, we may have a problem in a couple of seconds. Keep a calm head."

---

"Adults learn new stuff all the time. You're no different, you can do it." He smiled at him but then followed Bucky's eyes over to the men talking to Fred. Problem was, Steve didn't know how to keep a calm head. He dropped his arm from Bucky and walked over. "Is there a problem, gentlemen?"

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"Steve!" Bucky tried to grab him but he was already gone.

Fred held up his hands as Steve came over. "Son, I've got this handled. You two just get what you need and head on back." Junior slinked up next to his father in case he and Steve needed his help with anything.

---

"I saw them pointing over at us," Steve said to Fred. "I appreciate the help, Fred, but whatever these fellas have to say, they can say it to my face." Steve was geared up for a fight, like usual, right until Christopher came up to him with a little toy whistle he found.

"Dada!" He waved it up at him and Steve frowned, backing off so he could pick up his son.

---

Bucky came over and held his hand on the back of Christopher's head, just protecting him a little more. "Junior," he said with a nod. "You are your dad got this? Steve and I should go. Come on,
Babe, we need to go. Let's pay Mindy.

---

Steve shot the group of other men a dirty look and then managed a smile as he looked back at his son. "I see the toy, Bean. Do you want it?" He went over to Mindy again so he could pay her what was owed. He still felt a deep anger in his chest, but he couldn't do anything with Christopher in his arms right now.

---

Bucky kept a hold on Steve while he paid so he wouldn't just turn around and start a fight. Once they were all ready to go, he cast one more look to Junior and Fred who were having a heated but whispered conversation with the men. Then he gave Mindy and Maureen hugs and promised Mindy that he would call when they got home so she knew they were safe.

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"I have half the mind to go back in there," Steve growled under his breath as they walked out. "Who do they think they are, thinking they can point at us like we're some sort of sideshow?" Christopher happily blew on his whistle while Steve talked.

---

Bucky's heart was heavy. He wanted to fight for them too but he didn't dare start something in front of the kids or in Fred's shop. "Steve, if you did go back, you'd end up having to throw some punches. Then your lungs would give out and I'd have to step in for you and I just don't feel like getting beat up today."

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"Oh, yeah, my lungs, great," Steve scoffed bitterly. "Guess now I'm just another fag who's not man enough for a fight." He passed Christopher over to his mom because the whistle blowing right in his ear was agitating him even more.

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Bucky gritted his teeth and followed after Steve as he quickened his pace towards the cabin. "Did I say that?" he asked with an edge. "Did I say you were a fag who couldn't fight? No! I'm just trying to be rational so you don't have another episode like the other day in the woods where you were so out of breath you couldn't move."

---

"It's just throwing a few punches, it's not bolting full speed in the woods, worrying whether or not my son is alive and safe," Steve ground out. "Just forget it, Buck. I guess we just got to grin and bear it, right?" He snorted and rolled his eyes.

---

"Jesus Christ, Steve!" Bucky groaned. He was pissed off now and all rational thought was gone. "It's like every time I show concern for your health, I may as well have insulted you instead. I may as well have said you were a weak fag who can't defend his family. That's what you feel like I did. I may as well have said that my husband, the man I married, the man I love, the light of my life, my everything, is a sick old queer now! I may as well just stop caring, huh? You seem to hate it when I
show concern! I may as well just stop giving a shit about your well-being, right, Steve?"

---

"Every single thing that I can't do or you think I can't do, it's because of my lungs. I won't die if you stop hounding me over them. I get it. They don't work normal." Sarah May started to fuss and cry when she heard the raised voices several feet ahead of her.

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Bucky looked at his daughter and lowered his voice but not the tone. "I'm your goddamn husband, Steve!" he whispered harshly. "I'm not hounding you. I'm making sure you don't make them worse! I'm allowed to be scared that you're going to hurt yourself. I'm allowed to worry about you. You worry about me all the time. Don't tell me you don't."

---

"I worry about you, but I don't tell you that you can't do stuff. I don't say that like you can't make us breakfast because you don't cook as well as I do. And I don't guilt you about your lungs when you go for a cigarette," Steve countered.

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Bucky shook his head. "Steve, that's low. You know I smoke because, if I don't, I will drink. And you don't want me to drink, so I am in AA and doing everything I can to make sure I don't relapse. And it's not like I tell you that you can't do things, I just try to make sure you don't overdo it and hurt yourself."

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"Well, stop trying to curtail how much I do. I know my lungs better than you and if I want to push myself, then I'm going to do it. The worst that's going to happen is I got to take a break," Steve said.

---

Bucky shut his mouth and glared up at Steve. "Fine," he spit out. "I'll stop giving a shit about your fucking lungs. You're welcome." He wanted to be done with this so he sped up ahead and tossed his hair so it was falling into his face as he walked, hopefully hiding the way his eyes were gleaming with tears.

---

Steve was getting worked up and upset but he didn't look at anyone else. When they got back to the cabin, he immediately started to pack up everything they wouldn't be using for the rest of the day just to make it easier when they left.

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Instead of helping, Bucky headed for the shed. He locked the door behind him and sat on a stool in the corner and pulled out a cigarette. He hated himself for needing one after what Steve had said but he just couldn't help it. He just smoked and cried and screamed into his arm, angry as hell that this happened on their anniversary.
Sarah had Lilly look after the babies for a little while so she could go out and check on Bucky. She could tell by the smell of the cigarette smoke where he was and she knocked on the shed door. "Bucky, it’s Sarah. Can I come in there?"

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Bucky put out the cigarette, wiped his eyes, and unlocked the door, gestured for her to come in. The second the door was closed behind her again, Bucky pulled her in for a hug and choked back a frustrated sob. "I just want to make sure he is safe."

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Sarah wrapped her arms around him. She wasn't as strong as Steve but she still gave pretty tight hugs. "I know, Bucky. I know Steve is being difficult with you," she said. "You're not doing anything wrong. You're being a good husband to my boy."

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"He acts like I'm not his husband. He acts like I'm his chief or his father or something. He's such a baby sometimes," Bucky said and looked into Sarah's eyes which were the same as Steve's. "Was he like this when he was a child and he was sick all the time?"

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Sarah nodded. "He was worse. That boy was practically dying of a fever and he still tried to sneak out to go to the movies. I caught him passed out on the sidewalk once." She sighed and rubbed a hand over Bucky's back. "I won't say he'll come around on this. But I will say that one day when he pushes too far, he'll be grateful that you worried enough to help him."

---

Bucky sighed and pulled away. He grabbed another chair and offered it to Sarah as he sat back down on the stool. "I just don't get it. It's like he is perfectly fine with taking care of me all the time but he hates it when I try to do the same. Like he only is happy if I'm worse off than he is."

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Sarah took a seat. "I don't think he sees it that way," she said. "He's fine with taking care of other people, but he doesn't like it when he's anything but healthy. I bet you he wouldn't complain if you helped him with whatever project he was struggling on, but if it’s health-related, he has zero tolerance."

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"But when it's health-related I worry about him. He's the one who said we are going to live to be one hundred years old. He's the one who helped me realize I could live a long happy life with someone. He's the one who got me to vow to myself that I would never try to take my life again and I would put in the effort in AA to become sober. But I can't be concerned for his life?" Bucky asked in disbelief.

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"You married a mule in that aspect, I'm sorry to say," Sarah said. "What you've done for yourself is amazing, Bucky. And I'm so happy you're making those changes for your family." She squeezed his shoulder lightly. "I can't change who he is, but I can at least tell him to be nice to you on your
anniversary. He knows better than to go against his mother."

---

Bucky gave a little chuckle. "Thank you. I appreciate that. I hate that sometimes things can be going so well and then one small comment or choice and then we are like this." He looked around the shed. "I've wondered a few times since his accident, and since losing Grant, if Steve should see a therapist a few times through this. I don't think he has really grasped what happened to him in that fire. And Grant was the first death in his life that affected him like this. I know you lost your husband but Steve never really knew him, right? So it's not quite the same."

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Sarah didn't seem to look like she approved of her son going to a therapist. She didn't think someone outside of the family had any business in knowing about their home life and her son's personal life. "I don't know if he would go for that. And what would he get there that he wouldn't get from his talks with me?" she asked.

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"I don't know. It's just a suggestion," Bucky said softly and looked away nervously. "I wouldn't think of it if Steve doesn't suggest a therapist for the girls and I all the time. And I used to always tell him no but now I'm thinking that maybe we all could use some help. I know my sisters and I haven't healed from losing our parents. And I can hardly even think about Missy and Grant."

---

Sarah was more private than Steve. She didn't think an outsider had any business in their lives. She didn't think that Bucky or the girls should go see a therapist either. She figured that family and God were the only resources that would need for healing. "Well, it's your decision to make," she said patiently. "I'm not going to stop you from trying to do the right thing."

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Bucky sighed and rubbed at his eyes. "Sarah, I don't know what the right thing to do is. I feel like I'm trying, you know? I think I'm trying really hard. I go to AA twice a week. I keep my job at the record shop and pull my weight and everyone else's. When I'm out, I constantly look for things that Steve or the girls or the babies might like so I can bring it home to them and see their faces light up. I try to be the best brother I can be and the best father any kid could have. And I'm trying to be the husband Steve deserves but he keeps getting angry with me. I'm just so confused."

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"You're doing the right thing," she insisted. "If my son is getting angry at you for caring, that's on him. That's not a reflection of your commitment," she said. She cupped his chin so he would look at her. "You are the best person my son could ever marry," she said firmly. "And he needs to understand that caring about his disability isn't a personal offense."

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Bucky nodded along with her as she spoke and then got up to pull her in for another hug. "Will you talk with him sometime? Try to help him realize I'm not trying to antagonize him about this. I'm not sure if he will stop believing it but he may act better and that's a step in the right direction."
Sarah nodded. "Of course, I will. I can't have my boy giving my son-in-law a hard time, can I? I raised him better than that." She gave Bucky a reassuring smile and hugged him one more time. "Come on. I'm sure Lilly needs help with your kids by now."

---

Bucky sighed and opened the door of the shed. "I guess you're right." He didn't really want to go back inside but he had no choice. When they got to the cabin, Lilly was trying to hold on to both babies at once and Christopher was pulling at her hair. "Hey," Bucky said and pulled his son off of his sister. "Where's Steve?"

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Christopher gurgled up at his dad and then started reaching up for his hair. "I don't know, he's been back and forth pack- oh, there he is. He just went into the bedroom," Lilly said as she watched Steve move around down the hallway.

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Bucky sighed and watched his husband go to the bedroom and shut the door. "I guess I'll leave him alone for a few minutes. He doesn't look like he wants to talk to anyone."

Becca shuffled around the cabin, picking up little things and putting them away. "I keep hearing him coughing. But I didn't dare ask about it."

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"Yeah, asking him about his coughing is a one way trip to being on his shit list," Lilly answered as she ate her gummy worms by the handful. "Seriously, what's up with that? He's so rude."

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"Lil, eat one worm at a time. You're going to choke," Bucky said and pulled the bag down from her mouth. "And let's not get too frustrated with Steve. He's going through a lot. And his mother is going to give him a kick in the pants so that's nice."

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Lilly looked up at Sarah with a few worms hanging out of her mouth, which made her look like an octopus. "Really?"

Sarah laughed. "Yes. He's going to get a talking to."

---

"Until then, I may as well go talk to my husband," Bucky said with a little sigh and put Christopher down on the ground. "Lilly, start packing your stuff up, okay? Becca's cleaning up out here and you need to do your part too. Sarah will watch the babies."

---

Christopher took off as soon as he was put on the ground and laughed wildly as he explored. When Bucky got to the bedroom, Steve was sitting on the edge of the bed, looking a little out of breath.
Bucky brought with him one of Sarah May's socks that had been laying in the hallway. Steve must have dropped it as he was packing the kids' things together. Bucky closed the door behind him and leaned against it. "It's amazing that something so small, that has a foot tiny enough to fit in a sock like this, can grow up to be an adult with passions and problems and relationships and decisions. And we get to raise those tiny little things. That's pretty amazing, Steve."

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Steve looked over at his husband, who was holding the little sock. "You used to be that small once," he murmured. "We're going to raise a lot of little owners of little socks like those." He scratched the back of his neck, knowing that probably Bucky wasn't too pleased with him right now. "She's going to grow too fast."

---

Bucky gave a small smile as he put the sock in with the rest of the babies' clothes. "So, are we going to discuss it or push past it for now?" Bucky asked, implying without directly vocalized their argument. "I'm okay with tabling this until after our anniversary is over."

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"Let's push past it for now." Steve clearly was going to try and push past it for as long as possible. He looked over at his husband and managed a little smile. "We got to keep the smiles going for our anniversary."

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"I don't think the smiles count if they are forced, Steve," Bucky said lightly and worked on folding his clothes and putting them into his bag. "If we are pushing past it, we need a new conversation so I forget about it for now."

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Steve nodded and ran his hand through his hair. "Before we go home, I'd like to get pictures of all of us in front of the cabin," he said. "I want to do one every time we come here, especially with the babies."

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"That's a good idea," Bucky said and zipped up his bag. "Are we going to try to get our son back in his snowsuit or just let him take a few pictures in his normal clothes since he's going to want the suit off before we go home."

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"No snowsuit. We'll make it quick. I don't want to wrestle him and put him in a cranky mood for the road trip," Steve said. "Sarah May, too. Just a quick in and out will do."

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"Okay, well, Sarah May is going to want to sleep soon so I'm thinking now is a good idea," Bucky said and pulled on a jacket. "Want me to wear anything in particular or just this?"
"We don't got to wear anything special," Steve said. "We only got to stand in the same place every year." He stood up and went back to packing. "Do you want to lay her down to nap or should I?"

---

"I've got her," Bucky said and pulled Steve away for a second to give him a firm kiss on the lips. "I love you," he said pointedly and hugged him tightly. "I hope you know that. I love you so much." He sighed and pulled away again. "Happy anniversary."

---

As Bucky walked out of the bedroom, Sarah walked in looking like a woman on a mission. She closed the door behind her so she could talk to her son. Becca and Lilly were chatting and giggling to each other behind their hands because they'd never seen Steve get in trouble with his mom before.

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"Can it," Bucky warned his sisters and grabbed Sarah May from Lilly. "Come on, Ya-Ya, it's nap time for a little bit. Oh, my sleepy girl, you can't keep your eyes open." He gave her a few kisses on her head and made sure the girls would take care of Christopher while he put her to sleep.

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Sarah May stared sleepily at her pop and was out in seconds. She didn't even try to stay up in her crib. Diana followed in and laid at the foot of the crib, which she did sometimes. After a little while, Sarah emerged from the bedroom and went to find Bucky so she could give him an 'I gave him an earful' sort of look.

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Bucky nodded once to Sarah and gave a grateful little smile. He figured it was best to leave his husband alone for a while so he pulled up a chair next to Sarah May's crib and just watched her sleep. She was so little and Bucky was so happy that she was in his life. He watched her chest rise as she breathed and hiccupped a few times in her sleep.

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"They're amazing when they're this little, aren't they?" Sarah sighed. "She's got you wrapped around her finger. And she sees the world so differently from the way we do."

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"I love her so much," Bucky whispered and gently touched his daughter's hair. "How is Steve? Is he moping?" he asked and let Sarah May squeeze his finger tightly as she yawned and wiggled around.

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"Of course, he's moping. Who likes getting scolded by their mom, especially as an adult?" She shrugged her shoulders. "He will get over it. He's not that upset over it."

---

Bucky looked around the room, absently trying not to think too much about his parents. "I don't know. I wouldn't mind getting yelled at by my parents just about now. Or maybe get some marriage advice or parenting advice. I miss them everyday. I can't believe they haven't gotten to meet Steve or
"Yes, I guess you're right," she answered. Sarah gave Bucky an apologetic look and then sighed. "They're looking over you. I'm sure they're proud of you and the family you've built. I guess I got to love these kids extra to make up for your parents not being on this earth."

Bucky smiled and reached over to squeeze her hand. "I'm very grateful to have you here. Steve loves you so much. And the girls respect and admire you. And your grandkids just adore you. And you're going to have so many grandkids, Sarah."

"I'm counting on it. I don't want you guys to stop bringing home little ones for as long as I'm around. I always wanted to have plenty of babies, but I couldn't marry another man after Steve's father," she said.

"I understand what you mean," Bucky said. "I know I shouldn't, but I worry all the time that Steve is going to be taken away from me. Just like my parents. And I would never be able to even look at another man the way I look at Steve. He's my everything. He really is."

She nodded in understanding. "My husband wasn't perfect. But he was my soul mate. I hope you never have to experience losing your other half." Sarah sighed. "Steve is stubborn. There's no way this world will take him prematurely."

"That's a good point. He is very stubborn and he loves his family too much to let anything take him away. Hell, he's survived a gunshot to the back and a house fire in one year alone," Bucky said and stood up slowly. "I should probably go talk to him."

"You should. I think I wore him down a little so he knows to suck up to you a little." She made a shooing motion to have Bucky go talk to his husband. She wanted to stay here and watch over her granddaughter.

Bucky went to the kitchen and cut off a piece of the cake from breakfast and grabbed a fork. He brought it to the bedroom and came in slowly, holding it out as an offering. "You can't have all this. I want some, too. But I figured we could share it. I'm not afraid of your germs."

"I would hope not. You lick my asshole," Steve snorted. He gave Bucky a little glance and then kissed his cheek lightly. He was hoping to get a laugh out of Bucky or something.
"There's a sexier way to say that, Steve," Bucky murmured and took a bite of the cake, looking up at him with a cautious glance like he wasn’t sure yet where Steve was and how he was feeling.

---

"Well, I wasn't looking to be sexy, ass-licker," Steve snickered. Like he was one to talk. He'd eat Bucky out any day of the week. "I'm sorry I got upset at you before, Buck. I shouldn't have hurt your feelings like that."

---

Bucky looked away for a moment and then back at him with a little frown. "You just got to realize that I'm not saying it to make you feel small, I'm just concerned about you and I'm trying to be the husband you deserve."

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Steve stole a bite of the cake as he gathered his thoughts. "It makes me feel small. Even though that's not what you mean to do." Steve sighed and placed a careful hand on Bucky’s thigh. His husband’s body was warm and the sweats he had on were soft.

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Bucky nodded and wrapped an arm around Steve. "Okay, I acknowledge that. And I'll try to keep that in mind. But please meet me halfway here, Baby. This has to be a give and take. I'll listen to you about how you feel and work on making sure I don't make you feel that way anymore and you listen to my concerns and know where my heart is at."

---

Steve leaned into Bucky's side. "I'll try," he mumbled. "Only because I don't like seeing you upset and I don't want my mom to get cross with me again. She's a scary woman when she's mad," he said. "She completely took your side on this. I was blindsided by that."

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Bucky chose to ignore that comment. He thought he was being the logical one and Sarah realized that. "Steve, I have an idea but I don't know if you'll like it. But it's kind of your idea anyway and you say it all the time."

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Steve was so used to his mom backing him up on everything so it was weird to have her back his husband up instead. "What is it?" Steve asked, grimacing a little because he wasn't sure what Bucky was getting at.

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"Therapy?" Bucky asked softly and offered Steve the last bite of cake. "You always say that the girls and I could use some help and I think you're right. And I think you could, too. We might want to consider having some appointments set up."

---

Steve was about to take the last bite but he pulled his head back with a frown. "Therapy?" he
repeated. Steve didn't seem to be sold on the idea. "I don't need it," he answered. "I'm fine without it."

---

Bucky took a deep breath and looked away from Steve. He needed to keep as calm as he possibly could while discussing this with Steve. They didn't need another fight. "You did say yourself that the girls and I might benefit from a therapist, right?" Bucky asked softly and slowly. "You've said it a few times."

---

"Well, you would," Steve said. "But I'm not an ex-drug addict or an ex-alcoholic or a teenage girl who lost both my parents at a young age." He didn't mean it in a harsh way. He just thought they went through more than he did.

---

"Mhm," Bucky hummed vaguely and bit his lip to keep from snapping at Steve. "You lost a part of your health and your son. And you don't think you could benefit from just a few sessions with someone who wants to help you?"

---

"I don't need it," Steve said again firmly. "I have you and my mom to talk to. I don't want to go to a stranger about my problems that I can solve with the people in my own home," he insisted.

---

"But it's okay for the girls and I to go?" Bucky asked, trying not to get offended. "I get it. I'm a former addict and a recovering alcoholic. I've lost my parents and my son and a friend. But I believe you have just as much cause to get help as I do."

---

"I'm not going to therapy, Bucky. I don't want to and you can't make me go, just like I can't make you and the girls go," Steve said evenly. "If I need outside help, I'll go to Father Frank."

---

Bucky huffed out a frustrated little sigh. "I'm trying to tell you that I'm open to it now. AA is sometimes like therapy and I'm used to that so I'm not so scared about going to a regular therapist. And I think the girls would do it if we asked. And it's your idea anyway and it could help you and us."

---

Steve shrugged. "If you think it'll help you and the girls, then that's great. But just because it may be the right decision for you doesn't make it automatically the right decision for me," Steve answered.

---

Bucky was silent. He looked to Steve then back at the ground then to the door. He wasn't going to win with Steve today. It had been Steve's suggestion and now he was too good for it? Or was it that
Steve thought only Bucky was messed up enough to need help. Bucky didn't care anymore. He was going to just drop it for now. He stood up and headed for the door. "Maybe we should take that family picture now and head home."

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"We don't have the same problems, Bucky," Steve said as he stood. "I'm not saying it because I mean any harm by it. I'm saying it because what works for you doesn't always work for me." He grabbed his jacket and started to bundle up.

---

Bucky sighed and laced his shoes again. "Let's forget it for now. You said smiles. So let's go have some smiles on camera," he said and left the bedroom to go get their children. Sarah May wasn't too bothered when she was woken up but Christopher was very annoyed that he was being taken away from his blocks.

---

Steve tried to get Christopher to cheer up but all they got was pictures of them with a grumpy son and Bucky giving a half-smile and dead eyes. Steve was kind of ready to go home, upset that he couldn't seem to keep Bucky in good spirits today. As they piled into the car, he looked over to Christopher. "Wave bye-bye to the cabin, Christopher."

---

Christopher just started to cry and try to get out of the car seat. He usually loved car rides but right now he didn't want to have anything to do with it. Sarah May fell back to sleep quickly and was perfectly fine with being in the car. Bucky quickly took some headache medicine before getting in. He pulled his hat down over his eyes and leaning back.

---

After a little while, Sarah picked Christopher up from his car seat and held him in her arms. "What's the matter, Christopher?" she asked.

Lilly looked miserably over to Bucky. "Why is he crying?" she asked.

---

Bucky shrugged. He was shutting down. His head hurt and the light from outside was too bright. He had not had a good day and it sucked that this was his first marriage anniversary with Steve. He just wanted to be alone but he couldn't be just then and it wasn't like he could drive and just pay attention to the road.

---

When they finally got home, Steve helped Bucky unpack the car while his mom looked after the babies. When everything was out, he walked over to his husband and held him. "How about I give you your anniversary present and maybe that'll lift your spirits."

---

Bucky stared at Steve for a few seconds. He wanted to say that he was just going to go lay in bed for a bit. But he decided he should at least try to make the day better. "Sure," he sighed. "Your present is
wrapped up and hiding in the closet."

---

"Let me give you yours first," Steve insisted. He went to grab the guitar case from under the bed- it was an American Fender Strat. Steve knew that Bucky usually played his acoustic but the guy at the guitar store said that the model he picked was a good one and Steve wanted to give Bucky something new for his music. "I didn't know what amp to get with this, but maybe we can go shopping for it together."

---

Bucky gasped and opened the case to reveal a sleek black guitar with a perfect pearl finish. "My god," he breathed and picked it up out of the case and held it close. "This is beautiful. Why did you get it for me, though? I have a few guitars already and amps are so loud. Won't it annoy you?" Bucky set the guitar down again and pulled Steve in for a hug and a soft kiss. "Thank you. I love it." He gripped Steve's hand then let go to get Steve's presents. "My gifts to you aren't anywhere as good as this but, I mean, at least I got you something."

---

"I'm glad you like it, Buck. I want to support your hobbies, so please don't feel like playing guitar will annoy me." Steve sat down on the bed with one of the presents Bucky had for him. "I'm sure I'm going to love it," Steve said as he opened it up.

---

Bucky had bought Steve two books. The first was a memoir and advice book about a single mother who ran a wedding dress company from her home while raising five kids. Bucky figured it could help give Steve some help with how to start his 'mommy-and-me' painting class when he finally did. The second was a book of sign language that he bought so Steve could learn more and also teach the kids.

---

Steve thumbed through the first few pages of the book to have an idea on what it was and then beamed when he realized what the story was about. He was also excited for the sign language book because now he didn't have to keep waiting for the library to have one available. "These are perfect, Bucky. Thank you."

---

Bucky sighed. He looked down and mumbled, "Sorry, I know they aren't great or anything. It was all I could think of and all I could afford with my own money. I've been putting cash away from my own pay for a while so I didn’t have much loose spending money."

---

"Baby, you got them for me, which makes them great," Steve said. "You work so hard and you help keep the roof over our heads, Love. I don't care how much money you spend on me. So long as you're here for me and our kids, that's all I want."

---

"I am here. I'm always here. And I always will be," Bucky said and glanced over at the books again.
"And that's... that's why I think you all deserve more. And I think I can give you more. But not right now. Not with what I'm doing." Bucky paused and took both of Steve's hands in his. "The money I've been putting away is so I can pay for college. Eventually. I want to go to school and get a degree and be more for you than just a record shop employee."

---

Steve gasped and his face lit up. He squeezed Bucky's hands. "That's amazing, Bucky," he said. He sobered up after a few moments and smiled. "Baby, you are enough exactly as you are, working where you are, but it makes me so happy that you're going to go back to college."

---

Bucky sighed in relief and melted against Steve. "I just want more for you than what you have right now. And if I have a degree, I can do something really good that'll pay better. I can buy a place downtown where you can have an art studio and teach in the back. And I can start some sort of company or something. Maybe I'll go for law school or something like that."

---

Steve smiled broadly at him. "Look at you being all smart," he said. Steve kissed his cheek. "You know I don't need you to spoil me like that, right?" He pet his hand over Bucky's arm. "I can start saving to help you. You don't got to do this alone."

---

Bucky nodded. "Only if you want to. I purposefully am pulling from my pay so all the money you get goes to our family and not to me. I can do it. I can save up." He gripped Steve and pulled him over towards the bed. He was still pretty tired and wanted to sit.

---

Steve took a seat next to him and gave him a gentle look. "I'll spend smarter," he said. "So we can save up more for your college. I want to help you any way I can." He kissed along Bucky's jaw. "It'll mean a lot to me."

---

"Thank you," Bucky said and leaned against his husband. "It's all for us. I just want you to have the perfect life. As perfect as I can make it." He pressed his forehead to Steve's and kissed his cheek. "Can we start over today? Can this be our restart? Let's let the rest of the day be just like this. Us being us."

---

Steve moved over Bucky and laid him back on the bed. "Sure," he said. He kissed along his jaw and down his neck. "I want to make you happy on our anniversary. Because one year just flew by."

---

Bucky gripped on to the back of Steve's shirt and tangled their legs together. "Just, just..." he paused and gently pushed on Steve's chest. "You know I'm just trying to figure out how to help you, right? You know I'm not trying to make you angry. I love you. I love you to the moon and back. The moon, Steve. That's so fucking far."
"I know you're trying to help," he said. Steve smiled over at him and pressed their lips together. "You make me feel loved every day. There isn't a second that I doubt how much you adore me, Bucky. I just get frustrated and I can work on that."

"Really?" Bucky asked nervously and stared up at Steve. "Sorry, sorry, I'm just getting self-conscious. You know me. I'm sorry. I'll stop." Bucky shook it off and shut his eyes and groaned. He couldn't just let things go. "I just hate seeing anything but happiness in your eyes."

"Of course, really," Steve said gently. "Baby, I know that there isn't a thing in the world you wouldn't do for me." He pet his fingers through his hair. "What makes you think I don't believe you?"

Bucky just wanted to cuddle up with Steve for a while until it was time to make dinner. And he didn't want to discuss it anymore. "Nothing, it's fine. It doesn't matter. I'm being paranoid and unreasonable like usual."

Steve didn't push. Instead, he simply kissed Bucky's forehead once more. "Alright... I love you, Sweetheart." He snuggled up on the bed with his husband and without even meaning to, he fell asleep on top of him.

Bucky was going to strike up a different conversation with Steve but then his husband was breathing as best as he could against his neck and was sound asleep. Bucky chuckled but let him stay that way. His weight on top of him felt so warm and familiar and perfect. It was so comforting. After a bit, Bucky fell asleep as well, content to hold Steve and feel their heartbeats together.
For the next couple weeks, Bucky had been pretty busy catching up on work. But, at long last, they were able to book a doctor's appointment for him. The babies were left with Steve’s mom and the girls so it would just be the two of them. As they sat in the waiting room, Steve gently nudged Bucky. "You're fidgeting. Relax, it'll be okay."

---

"I'm scared out of my mind," Bucky murmured back and stared straight ahead at the door, waiting for the nurse to come take them back. "What if I'm dying?" he asked and gasped like it had just occurred to him that he could be seriously ill. "Oh, my god. I'm dying."

---

"You're not dying, Buck," Steve said. "You probably have some minor thing. Like asthma but with your brain," he tried to pacify him. He wished he could hold Bucky right now but he didn't want the doctors and nurses treating him poorly or turning him away because he was gay.

---

Bucky's breathing picked up rapidly like he was starting to hyperventilate. He kept whispering, "Oh, my god, oh, my god," as he stared at the door. He hated going to the doctor's. He was so uncomfortable. He wanted to run out of the building and go straight home but he couldn't. He pulled his hair back nervously and tugged on it like it would help to ground him.

---

It broke Steve's heart to see his husband this upset. He was about to try to talk to him more when Bucky was called to enter the exam room. Steve stood up and offered Bucky a hand to help get on his feet. "Come on, we can get this over with quick."

---

Bucky shakily took the hand and managed to get on his feet. He wanted to keep a hold of that hand the entire time but he knew he couldn't. So he dropped it and tried his best to walk tall into the exam room with the nurse leading and Steve behind them. He wasn't going to be able to handle this. He wasn't going to survive. He knew they were going to take some x-rays of his skull and measure some body functions and brain waves or whatever. But he was terrified of all of it.

---

The doctor arrived in the room with the nurses and shook both of their hands. "Hello, Mr. Barnes. I'm Dr. Farmer. I hear you've been having some chronic headaches?" he asked, speaking in a friendly manner to get Bucky to open up a bit.
Bucky nodded nervously and looked over to Steve to make sure he was still there. "Yes, Sir. They used to be just every so often but now they are frequent and strong. It started getting bad about three years ago but it's been a lot worse over the past year as well."

"Alright," Dr. Farmer said. "So, what I'm going to do is give you a regular physical first because it looks like you haven't gotten one in a while. Once we're done with that, we will set you up in the MRI and we can look in that noggin of yours."

Bucky gasped softly but nodded. He was so beyond nervous. The nurse handed him a cotton gown and said, "Go ahead and get dressed down to this. You can keep your underwear and socks on," she said kindly. "The doctor and I will wait outside." She turned to Steve. "Sir, would you like to wait in the lobby until Mr. Barnes is ready to leave?"

Bucky looked to Steve and shook his head. He needed him here. He couldn't do this if he left him now. It was bad enough he wouldn't be able to go back to the MRI with him. But at least he could stay until then.

Steve gave the nurse a gentle smile. "I'm his moral support. Don't worry, I'll make sure he won't escape through the window," he joked. Once the two were out and the door was locked, Steve gently ran his hands over Bucky's chest. "It's okay, Baby. It's going to be alright," he said softly. "Give me a kiss and tell me that you believe me."

Bucky took a few uneven and scared gasps of breath but then pulled Steve in for a gentle kiss. "It'll be okay," he stammered and nodded. "I'm trying to believe it. Not that I think you're lying but I'm just worried it won't end well." He slowly started stripping down and then pulled the gown on. He felt way too exposed and vulnerable.

Once Bucky was in his gown, Steve cupped the sides of his face and held him for a moment. "I love you," he said firmly. "It'll be done soon enough and we can go back to our babies and your sisters and my mom." He hugged Bucky before going to get the doctor.

The doctor and the nurse came back in and Steve sat down again. Bucky was sitting on the exam table and nervously swinging his legs. But Steve was right, he had to keep telling himself that he just had to get through this and then get home to his family. He just had to keep breathing and try to think about his babies and his sisters and Steve and his home and his family.

The doctor had Bucky go through all the routine exams, took his culture, drew his blood, took his pressure and reflexes. He pulled out a chart and started scribbling things down. "I've got to ask some health questions, Mr. Barnes. Firstly, are you on any medication?"
“Um… yeah, I think so,” Bucky muttered and looked to Steve. He didn’t actually know if he was on anything that wasn’t available over the counter. “I take pain medicine for my headaches but it’s just Advil. You know, ‘used to take Aspirin, used to take Tylenol, but now I take Advil. Advil: Advanced medicine for pain’… Right? Like the commercials?” Bucky mumbled, all awkward and nervous and blabbering.

“Right, yes,” the doctor said disinterestedly as he wrote on Bucky’s chart. “Do you smoke, Mr. Barnes? Are you sexually active? Do you use protection?”

Bucky huffed a sigh and locked eyes with the doctor for a second like he was mad that he was asked those questions. "Yes, I smoke. Yes, I am sexually active. But, no, I do not currently use protection. I have in the past, though. But I've been tested about a year and a half ago and I'm clean."

Dr. Farmer checked off a few more boxes. "Have you and your girlfriend been exclusive to each other since you were last tested? It's advisable to get tested again if not," he reminded. "Do you have any allergies?"

"Yes, exclusive on both our parts," Bucky said with a tick of annoyance. "And no, I don't have any allergies. Just seasonal stuff with some pollens that show up in the parks. Oh, and this one brand of laundry detergent that we don’t use anymore anyway." He sighed and looked to Steve. He was jumpy and now was getting worked up.

Steve gave Bucky a gentle look to try and calm him down. After a few more questions, the doctor told Bucky that they would go in for their MRI scan now so they could try and find the root to his headaches. Bucky was led to an adjoining room and was told to lay on the curved white tray.

Bucky did as he was told but his anxiety spiked the second he couldn't see Steve anymore. He knew he was on the other side of the window watching him but when they put him in position, he could only look up at the ceiling. "I feel like I'm in Coma. Michael Douglas movie, 1978. I think some French woman played the lead, I can’t pronounce her name.” Bucky said, trying to keep his cool, and glanced over at the doctor. “I don't want to do this, Doctor," he said quickly and tried to sit up but was pushed down gently by the nurse. "I know nothing's wrong. I want to go home."

"Mr. Barnes, this will not take long," he said. "You have to get this checked out if it has been something persisting for so long," the doctor warned. "Close your eyes and don't open them until I tell you. It'll make it go by quicker."
Bucky's body shook and he wished he could hear Steve's voice or see his face or know what he was thinking. He relaxed as best as he could and shut his eyes. There were noises happening around him and he was trying not to freak out too bad the entire time. It, thankfully, didn't take as long as he thought but it wasn't speedy like the doctor would have had him believe either.

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After the scan was done, the nurse helped Bucky back to his feet. "That wasn't so bad, was it?" the doctor asked with a smile. "You can go ahead back to the room and get changed while we look at the results."

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Bucky nodded followed the nurse back to his exam room. Steve was back in the room with him and the door was shut behind him. Bucky turned and gripped Steve, collapsing into his arms and bopping his head against his shoulder. "Steve," he whispered and tried to get his heart to stop beating so fast.

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Steve wrapped his arms strongly around him and kissed his face a few time. "Hey there, Love. You were so brave. You did such a good job in there." He smiled down at his husband. "Look, it’s over now. Let's get you dressed."

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Bucky worked on calming down as he pulled his clothes back on. Once he was settled he sat back on the exam table and continued to focus on trying to regulate his breathing. "What if something’s really wrong?" he asked. "What if I'm really, really sick and we just didn't know it. What if it’s a tumor or something, Steve?"

---

Steve ran his hand over Bucky's arm gently. "Nothing is going to take you away from me, Bucky," he said. "Whatever it is, you are going to get through this."

---

Bucky's lip quivered but he nodded and got quiet as he waited for the doctor to return. When he did, Bucky sat up a little straighter and tried to read his face. He couldn't tell if he was bringing good news or bad news. The doctor smiled at him and the nurse handed the doctor Bucky’s file.

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Steve was a safe distance from Bucky when the doctor came in and he looked over at him hopefully. Dr. Farmer reviewed the file one more time like he was just making sure he wasn’t missing anything before looking up at Bucky. "Mr. Barnes, from what I can tell based off the scans and the x-rays and your other tests, you have what is called Chiari Malformation," he said. "It's a defect present since birth that basically causes a gap in the base of your skull so part of the brain tissue is sitting on top of the spinal canal. For some people, it can be quite the non-entity. They might not experience symptoms bad enough to question that anything is out of the ordinary. But others, like yourself, have more severe effects like your bouts of headaches, nausea, or dizziness that you get so often. And I'm sorry to say that there is no real cure, but there are ways to treat it. I could put you on stronger medication to help relieve symptoms as a start and we can check back with you in a few months to see how you are progressing.”
"What..." Bucky breathed and touched the back of his head. "I have a birth defect?" He was partly relieved that it wasn't something like cancer but he still figured that a malformation was a big deal. "Um, so what? I'm just going to be like this forever?"

The doctor nodded. "Yes, barring some miracle. Most people are able to live normal lives with it. It's only in rare, extreme cases that it becomes an issue and only because of other health problems adding to it. And only some extreme cases can be fatal, but I'm not worried about that with you."

"Do other health problems include being a former drug addict and alcoholic?" Bucky asked and looked from the doctor to Steve. The nurse handed him a pamphlet and Bucky scanned over it. It looked like there was no conclusive evidence that it was hereditary but some cases of parent and children pairs both having it were recorded. His mother could have had the exact same thing.

"No, it's more like health problems surrounding bone, nerve, and spinal damage. But it looks like you haven't been in any accidents or anything of the sort. And other than your migraine symptoms, you aren't experiencing other nerve issues like numbness or immobility, so you don't have to worry on that front," Dr. Farmer explained.

Bucky nodded and clutched on to his pamphlet. "It says in here that there are spinal injections? Could I do those? Do they hurt? They sound like they hurt. It's got to hurt. I mean you're stabbing between my spine." His breathing picked up again and his heart rate increased as he got scared all over again.

The doctor nodded. "Yes, there is an injection of sorts that could help. Its purpose is to get any fluid build up out of there so it relieves the pressure that causes pain. That's the main reason for them. But several doctors will do that and then actually inject a steroid to help but it's not a once and done sort of fix either," he said. "It is one of the more popular treatments to alleviate the symptoms, however."

Bucky looked to Steve. They would have to discuss what they thought was the best course of action to take with this. But right now he was so tired and on edge and he wanted to go home. "Is there anything else I need to know for now? I would kind of like to get out of here."

"Well, nothing now. I'll call you after your other test results are in. But, for now, you are free to go." Dr. Farmer gave Bucky a pat on the back and a kind smile, hoping he wasn’t too freaked out about this whole thing.

Bucky thanked the doctor and the nurse and followed Steve closely as they exited the building. He
was so overwhelmed. He didn't know where to begin or what to say. He was scared. This could get worse, probably. And he was nervous about the thought of getting injections. But it sounded like they could help ease his pain.

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Once they were out of the office, Steve nudged Bucky. "It's not a tumor! And look, now you can understand what's going on. I... I know it's not as nice as being told nothing's wrong with you, but now we have answers."

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Bucky looked up at Steve then down at the ground to wipe at the tears in his eyes. "Let's get back home. Okay? Let's just get home. I want to lie down. My head hurts and I'm trying to process this and not think about it at the same time."

---

Steve's heart broke to see his husband so upset. He hurried them home, feeling like it took entirely too long to get there. Once they were back, he greeted Diana briefly and let the girls know they were back before ushering Bucky into their bedroom.

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Bucky collapsed on the bed and started to cry in earnest. He curled up in on himself and just shook with frustration and from the pain in his head. He wished his mother were here. He wanted to know for sure if this is why she had problems too or if it were something else. He reached down and grabbed his family album that he kept next to the nightstand and he opened it to a picture of his mother beaming brightly and holding a small baby Bucky in her arms, proud of herself for just birthing her first born.

---

Steve laid down behind Bucky and wrapped his arms strongly around his husband. He pressed his lips to the back of his neck and let Bucky cry. When he picked up the picture, Steve looked curiously at it. "You think you two have the same thing?"

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Bucky shook his head and handed Steve the pamphlet. "It's anyone's guess. It says there is no definitive proof that it can be hereditary but there are recorded cases of parent-children pairs with the same condition. But we will never know because my mother is dead and I can't talk to her about this. I can't talk to her and ask her how bad her headaches really were. Or ask her why she let me practically raise the girls for her instead of going to get help to try to ease her pain. I can't ask her anything about this."

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Steve gently rubbed his hand up and down Bucky's side. He slipped his hand under Bucky's shirt so he could feel warm skin on skin. "Maybe she was even more scared of going to the doctor, Baby. It took a lot of convincing to get you to go."

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"I did it for you and our kids. I did it for my family," Bucky said and put the photo album down on
the mattress. "She couldn't have done the same for us?" He cried some more and tried to find comfort in Steve's warm body around his. "I'm sorry. I'm just so frustrated about this," he added, apologizing to Steve but really more like apologizing to his mother.

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"It means she raised you right. She raised you to make better choices than she did, just like you're going to raise our kids to make better choices than you have." He kissed his shoulder gently. "You are such a good dad, Bucky."

---

Bucky wiped his snotty nose on his sleeve and buried even further against Steve. "Do you think the girls are freaking out? All they saw was me storming up to our room crying. I don't want them to think I'm dying. And our babies probably miss us."

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"They're probably worried. But maybe because I was calm they'll know that it's nothing threatening," Steve said. He kissed Bucky's temple. "Maybe holding our son and daughter will make you feel a little better."

---

"Maybe," Bucky agreed and wiped at his eyes again before sitting up in bed. "Can you go talk to the girls and your mom about this and just give me a few minutes? Then I'll come down and be with everyone."

---

Steve nodded and pressed a few kisses to Bucky's face before standing. "I love you," he said warmly, then he left to go seek out the rest of their family.

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When Steve came downstairs, both girls were sitting at the table with Sarah discussing in whispers what they thought was going on. Sarah noticed Steve first and gave him a sympathetic, worried look, assuming the worst. Lilly jumped out of her chair and said quickly and softly, "What's wrong with him, Steve?"

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Steve walked over to Lilly and pet his hand over her hair. "He's alright, Lilly, just a little shaken. We found out why he has his headaches. He was born with a condition that puts pressure on his head right here," he said, tapping the back of her neck. "There are a few treatments for it, but they're a little scary."

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Lilly's eyes were wide and terrified. She didn't really understand. All she knew was that her brother was upstairs crying and when Bucky cried it was because things were not okay.

Becca looked to Steve and quietly asked, "Chiari malformation?" She had been researching on her own the various things that could be causing his headaches since he was a kid and why they got worse with time.
Steve hugged Lilly tightly. "Your brother is going to be fine. He doesn't even need those scary treatments necessarily. There's easier stuff out there." He looked over at Becca, a little surprised that she knew already. "Yeah, how'd you know?"

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Becca nodded and crossed her arms. "Steve, you know me. You really think I haven't been researching possibly diagnoses?" She stood up and went to get a glass of water and a small bowl of fruit for Steve. She understood that he probably needed some comfort as well. His husband was hurt and upset and he couldn't fix it.

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Steve would've been a little more annoyed at Becca for not pushing the subject about her brother's help to him more if she knew a possible cause, but she was being sweet so he let it go. "Do you know different ways he can help treat the symptoms?" he asked.

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"Honestly, Steve," Becca said and lowered her voice so she wouldn't scare Lilly who was listening intently. "From what I know about it, the spinal injections are the best thing for it. It hurts but it'll help the most to relieve the pressure. I think that's your best bet. Medicines may help the headaches not hurt as much while they are going on but the injections will prevent them from coming so often anyway."

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"I barely got him to go in to get examined. I don't think he's going to buy into the injections until he's got no choice but to," Steve said. "And I don’t know what to do to make him feel better. He's upset because your mom's not around for him to talk to about it."

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Becca sighed but nodded. She knew her brother. She knew he was so scared about the doctor's and anyone messing with his body like that. And she understood how he must be feeling and why he wished he could talk to their mom. "We have to try," she said finally. "We have to try to convince him to do the injections. It's going to be the best for him."

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"We can try, but I'm not about to force him into anything he's not ready for. You wouldn't like it if I tried to shove a decision on you," Steve said back kindly but firmly. "He was shaking in the exam room. I felt so bad for him and I don't want to put him through too much."

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"Then we take it slow," Becca decided. "I do want to help, Steve." She reached out and grabbed his arm and squeezed it. "He's my brother and I love him and I don't want him to have this pain anymore."

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Steve paused but did end up nodding at her. "Alright," he sighed. He gave her a brief hug before
stepping back. "Why don't you go up there and try to cheer him up? I'm sure it'll mean a lot to him."

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Becca agreed and grabbed a few cookies to take to Bucky. The second she was gone, Lilly yanked on Steve's arm and pulled him closer to her, so she had his attention. "What spinal injections? What are they going to do to him?" she asked hastily and squeezed his arm too tight.

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"Don't worry, Lil. They won't do anything to your brother that he's not okay with," Steve said. "There's a medicine that can be put into his spine that will stop the headaches from happening so much and so strong. But getting stuck in the spine is kind of hard to handle for a lot of people."

---

"Bucky's not going to die, is he?" Lilly asked softly, her eyes still looking scared. "He will be okay? What if they mess up the injection and hurt his brain? Steve, you can't let them hurt him like that."

---

Steve was quick to answer. "No, no, he's going to be just fine. This isn't something that kills people." He kissed the top of her head. "I won't let anything bad happen to him. I promise." There was faint crying coming from upstairs and Steve pushed Lilly's shoulder. "Come on, Lilly. Let's go take care of the babies."

---

Bucky heard the babies and he and Becca went over to get them settled down again. Lilly and Steve came a little after them and Bucky was holding Christopher who was clinging to his pops neck and blabbering at him. Becca had Sarah May and she was crying softly and needed a diaper change. "Steve," Bucky said softly and held their son. He was still pretty emotional but hearing his baby boy talking to him was helping.

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Steve took Sarah May from Becca and started to change her diaper. "Are you telling your pop a good story, Christopher? Listen close, Buck, he's getting to the best part."

---

Bucky chuckled kissed Christopher's cheek. "He says that he wants someone to play blocks with him." The girls both left so Steve and Bucky could be alone again and Bucky gave them each little kisses on their heads as they went.

---

Steve picked up their daughter once she was changed and held her up. "How do you like the sound of that, Ya-Ya? You want to try to play blocks?" Steve asked in an excited tone. The baby cooed and reached up at her dad in response. "I think that's a yes, Bucky."

---

"Blocks it is!" Bucky said happily, trying to be okay so his babies didn't see him so upset. "And maybe a snack for Papa because he is feeling lightheaded and a little sick," he added and looked to
Steve. "And a little bit like I could collapse at any second but I'm fighting through it."

---

"You want me to take care of them for you, Love? If you're not feeling well, you should get something in your stomach." Steve walked them all downstairs to the toy chest to get Christopher's blocks. Their son started bouncing in Bucky's arms excitedly when he saw them.

---

Bucky nodded and set Christopher down. "I'll get some food and water and then join you in a few minutes. I'm just feeling a little shaky again. It's still a lot to process." He sighed and watched his son grab a block and hold it up proudly to him.

---

"Your pops will be right back, Bean," Steve said. He sat down with Sarah May in his arms and placed a block on her tummy next to her hand. She made a surprised sound and pushed it on the floor, then stared at it.

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Christopher picked up the fallen block and held it out for his sister again and said, "Ya-Ya, blah!" and tried to get her to hold it. She dropped it once more and then giggled a little because it made a nice thump sound against another block.

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Steve's heart melted at the sight of them playing together. This was what he dreamed of. The two kids made each other laugh by Christopher handing over the blocks and Sarah May dropping them. "Are you two being silly?" Steve asked them. He wished Bucky could see.

---

"Ya-Ya, play!" Christopher said excitedly and looked to Steve, proud of his sister. "Dada, play!" he said and handed him a block as well. "Papa, play!" he added and turned to try to find Bucky but didn't see him anywhere. "PAPA!" he yelled loudly for him to try to get his attention.

---

"Oh, bean." Steve laughed as he waggled the block. "Your papa will be right back," he promised. "Let me see that block," Steve said as he reached his hand it for the one Christopher had in his hand for Bucky.

---

"No, Dada," Christopher said and pushed Steve's hand away. "Papa," he added in finality so Steve knew that this block was not for him.

Bucky came in a few seconds later and sat down between Christopher and Sarah May. "How are my babies?" he asked, holding a pile of carrots.

---

Steve leaned in and gave Bucky a kiss on his cheek. “Christopher doesn’t want me to have that block. It’s for you, not me,” he informed with a little smile.
Bucky traded Christopher the block for a carrot and grinned at his son. "So, only I am worthy of this block?" he asked and held it up. "I don't see what's so special about this one other than the fact that it is blue." He giggled and set the block on his knee as he ate some more carrots and offered one to Steve.

Steve took the carrot. "I guess Daddy can’t have that particular blue block," he chuckled. "Your son loves you so much. Isn't that right, Christopher?"

Christopher was distracted then. He had a carrot sticking out of the side of his mouth as he worked on putting blocks on top of each other. He was definitely getting better at figuring out how to make them stay. "I love him, too," Bucky said warmly and watched his son. "And I love you, Ya-Ya," he added and pet his daughter's hair.

Sarah May reached out for the tower Christopher was building, trying to get to it to no avail. But Christopher clearly didn’t approve of her trying to mess with his little tower so he let out an unhappy screech that startled her and she began to cry.

Steve held her close, rocking her slightly to calm her. "It's okay, Sweet Pea. Your brother just really likes his block towers. Please stop crying, my sweet girl."

Christopher looked at Bucky to see if he was in trouble. "Bean, you have to be gentle. Use your quiet voice, shh," he whispered. "Ya-Ya didn’t do anything wrong, Bean."

Sarah May calmed down fairly quickly until she wasn’t crying anymore but sniffling. "Poor girl. She doesn't understand," Steve sighed. "She was just trying to play."

Bucky breathed a sigh of relief. "I think she's just a pretty sensitive little kid. She likes peace and quiet." He rubbed her head and hummed to her softly. "And our Bean likes noise and commotion."

"She's such a sweetie. I love everything about her," Steve said softly. "And I love you too, Christopher." He kissed his son's head and gave him a playful nudge. "I was thinking about calling that professor Fred was talking about."

"Yeah?" Bucky asked and took Sarah May from Steve. "The one who can help with the coin? Maybe you should take Ya-Ya with you to meet her. Seeing her in person might help the professor know if she is correct."
"Maybe," Steve said. "How does that sound, Sweet Pea? Do you want to go on an adventure with your dada to see where you're from?" He reached out so he could hold her hand. "She will probably like how quiet an office will be," he chuckled. "After being here all the time."

---

"I think she will like that. And it'll be important to get to know where she is from. I want to make sure we give her a life that involves her heritage. I'll even read about the country or religions or anything just so I'm prepared," Bucky said.

---

Steve loved being able to raise their little kids. He laid down on his stomach and helped Christopher put some toy animals around the tower. "You're a great dad, Bucky. She's lucky to have you."

---

"You say that all the time," Bucky said with a little grin. "You know they have two dads, right? You know you're a great dad too, right?" Christopher got bored with Steve and the animals quickly and he stood up and started toddling over to Diana who was napping in the corner. Ever since they finished making half the living room into Sarah's room, Diana was spending a lot more time moping in the corner and missing when it was bigger and easier to run around.

---

Diana's ears flicked once and she huffed softly. She tolerated Christopher tugging lightly at her tail but didn't look to be very pleased about it. "I'm good, yeah, but you're better at it than I am." Steve paused and then told their son, "Christopher, be nice to Diana."

---

"That's a lie," Bucky muttered with a little scoff. He gave Sarah May to Steve and crawled over to his son. He gently scooped him up and tickled him to distract from being taken away from the dog. He needed to learn to leave her be while she was napping. The poor girl wouldn't get any sleep otherwise.

---

Diana's tail thumped once in gratitude when Bucky took Christopher away and she flopped onto her side with a tired sigh. "It isn't. You're so good with them, Buck. And as much as you work, you're never too tired to give them love," Steve protested.

---

"Can we just agree that we are both equally as good fathers?" Bucky asked, cutting to the chase. "My head still hurts a little and I don't want to argue about this with you." He sighed and looked at Christopher in his arms and got solemn again. "I just... I can't even wrap my head around what exactly is going on."

---

Christopher wiggled in Bucky's arms and blabbered at him some more. "Becca seemed to know a bit about it," Steve said. "She did some research apparently. And she was able to name it before I could tell her what it was."
Bucky sighed and tried to smile at his son but it looked more like a grimace. "Did she say if there’s any way best to fix it? Like go in and move a part of my skull so there isn't pressure? I would rather do that one big surgery once than do injections all the time, I think."

"She thinks the injections are the best bet for you," Steve said honestly. "She didn't mention the surgery, but both options seem to have their pros and cons," he said. He kissed Sarah May's cheek, which made her smile all big and bright. “But, I don’t really think you would like doing surgery, Baby.”

Bucky nodded and sighed deeply. "Do you mind watching them?" he asked and set Christopher down on the ground by his blocks before getting up. "I'm going to go take a shower and lay down." He was so beat. He just wanted some time to himself – time to just think and be alone and try to be okay.
A few weeks later, Steve found himself set up with an appointment to meet with Fred's contact, Dr. Callahan. Steve kissed Bucky goodbye and left Christopher with his mom so he could take his daughter on the train to her office. When they arrived in the waiting room, Sarah May was looking around with big curious eyes. Occasionally, she would point at something and gurgle at him. She was always so interested in new places.

---

Dr. Callahan came out of her office and ushered the two of them in. "Hello, Mr. Rogers," she said with a smile and stuck out a hand to shake. "My secretary told me you have some questions of genealogy for this little one?"

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Steve shook her hand. "Yeah, thank you for meeting with us," he said. He took a seat and cradled his little girl in his arms. "My daughter here - she was left at our church and we adopted her," Steve explained. "So, my partner and I wanted to raise her knowing her culture, but we don't know what her culture is."

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"Right," the woman said and nodded to Steve. "Well, let's have a look at that coin you've brought me, yes? I have a bit of practice in international currency and I have read several books on the subject."

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Steve fished around in his pocket and produced the coin. "Here it is," he said. "We thought it was maybe from Hungary or Yugoslavia. Fred thinks she may be Jewish. I don't really know."

---

Dr. Callahan looked over the coin and even pulled out a little magnifying device and took a closer look at the words there. "Well, it isn't strictly Hungarian but it is European. It isn't German. Maybe Bulgarian, Austrian, Belgian. It's definitely older but not old, if that makes sense." She grabbed a book and leafed through it then looked up at Sarah May over her glasses. "She does appear to have similar features to the Jewish that is certain."

---

Sarah May reached up to try and grab her glasses, but Steve gently redirected her hands to stop her. "I was raised Catholic – recently, I've been attending a more nondenominational church - and I'm raising my son to be in the Christian faith as well, but my partner is willing to take Sarah May to synagogue so she can learn her religion if she is Jewish," Steve said. "Have you come across many multi-faith households?"

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"No, I can't say I have," Callahan said with a shrug and looked back down to her book. "This looks somewhat like a schilling, but not a modern one. And at first glance, it has similarities to a forint but it isn't that either." She hummed and flipped to a different section in the book she had out. "I think
it's Austrian. It seems to be an older sort of Austrian schilling. I think your safest guess now is that she came from there," she concluded and looked up at Steve. "Austrian-Jewish also seems highly likely considering this symbol here towards the bottom of the coin is a Hebrew marking. Here's a coin very similar to that one." She turned the book around and showed Steve the picture and compared it to the actual coin. "Unless you can find more information about your daughter, I think you can rest easy in the assumption that her birth parents were at least of Austrian-Jewish descent. It's very possible her grandparents came to America to escape the Nazis." Dr. Callahan gave Steve a gentle smile. "Sounds like she will have to be taking this one to synagogue. Is she Jewish? Your partner?"

---

Steve beamed down at his little girl. "You hear that, Sarah May? You're Austrian and Jewish. Isn't that fantastic?" he said brightly to her. Steve looked up at the picture, seeing how similar it was to the coin as he added, "My partner is atheist, or agnostic, I'm not entirely sure. But they're willing to go so our little girl can learn her religion. I guess I'm going to have to study up on Judaism as well," he chuckled.

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Callahan nodded and passed the coin back. "There are several good sources at most libraries that would help you learn about the religion and the culture. Let me write down some of my favorite authors’ works for you. And you might even be able to access some archives detailing immigration into New York back around the time of the war. Maybe if you see some names and some pictures, something might jump out at you."

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"That'd be amazing. Thank you so much for your help, you have no idea how much it means to us." Steve hugged his daughter close and kissed her hair. She started to whine softly because it was almost lunchtime for her and she was getting a little antsy.

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"Of course," Dr. Callahan said and handed the list to Steve. "Do you and your little miss have any other questions?" She asked and reached out a hand to shake Sarah May's tiny outstretched one. She had been trying to point to the ceiling fan but was cut off.

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"Nope, you've answered them all. Thank you again. I'm so happy to know more about our daughter, even if it's hard to know exactly for sure," Steve said. He thanked her once again and headed out of the office. Once Steve got home, he quickly made up a bottle for Sarah May and then sought out Bucky to tell him what he learned.

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Bucky was holed up in the master room with his photo album open to the same picture of his mom and a pile of tissues surrounding him. He had talked to Becca and they concluded that he really should give the injections a try. Then he got emotional and had been crying and talking to his mom for about an hour when Steve found him.

---

"Buck! Bucky?" Steve's tone went from excited to concerned when he saw his husband crying. "Oh,
Love, what's wrong?” he asked. He sat down next to him and dried the tears from his face. "Hey, Baby, I love you. I'm sorry I wasn't here sooner.”

---

Bucky hiccupped and shook his head. "Nothing. It's fine. I'm fine. I'm just a little upset," he said and closed his photo album. "What did the professor say? Do we know where Ya-Ya is from? Or was she unable to work it out?"

---

"She figured it out," Steve said. "We are the proud parents of an Austrian-Jewish little lady. Or at least, it's incredibly likely," Steve said. "She even gave me a list of books we can read about it."

---

Bucky's face lit up and he brought Steve and Sarah May into his arms and gave them both kisses. "Sweet Pea, you are Jewish! I guess it makes perfect sense. And Papa will take you to synagogue so you can be with your people. And we will learn about Austria because I know nothing about Austria." He giggled and sniffled back tears again. "So, are you thinking she was born here after immigrant parents came over and couldn't take care of her?"

---

Sarah May smiled at her pop and reached so she could hold onto his shirt. "I think so,” Steve offered. “I wondered if her parents immigrated here recently. But Dr. Callahan made a good point that their parents might have come over during the holocaust. It would make sense why they would leave her at a church instead of a synagogue since they've seen how Jewish people have been persecuted."

---

"That does make the most sense. If my family was persecuted I would probably want to try to get my little girl somewhere so maybe no one would know she was Jewish." Bucky sighed and wrapped her up in a blanket with him. "But there isn't any worry about that now. She is ours and we love her and we will make sure no one hurts her for who she is."

---

Sarah May, sleepy from drinking her bottle so fast, was quick to close her eyes once Bucky swaddled her in warmth. "Yeah," Steve said. "She's our perfect, little daughter. And we are lucky to have her." He laid down next to Bucky and played with his hair. "Feeling better?"

---

"Oh, I'm better now that you’re here,” Bucky said and let their daughter fall asleep on his chest. "I just keep thinking about my mom. Keep wishing she was here so she could help me figure out what to do. Becca and I basically decided that we should try to do the injections. But I'm just so scared."

---

Steve kissed along Bucky's shoulder and looked at him gently. "I'm sorry you can't go to her for advice. It would've been nice to have someone understand what you're going through," Steve said. "What if we find other people who do the same treatment? They can talk you through what they went through."
Bucky shook his head. "That might just make things worse. I don't want to be more scared by what they say." He squeezed Steve's leg and said quieter, "Can we leave it for now? I'm going to cry again. And I just want to look at this sleepy baby girl for a while."

Steve nodded. "Right, okay, whatever makes you happy, Love," he said. He rubbed Bucky's back lightly. "I had to hold back with the professor. She kept referring to my partner as a 'she' but I didn't want to risk being thrown out."

Bucky sighed and gave a weak smile. "It's okay. You did the right thing. I mean I don't know if you noticed but I had to tell the doctor about my long-time girlfriend who I don't use protection with when we have sex." He took a breath and looked back to Sarah May. "It hurts not be open but, it's just safer that way."

"Yeah, you and your long-time girlfriend must be popping babies out every nine months," Steve teased and tickled Bucky's side playfully once before going back to doting on him. "I understand. Sometimes it's worth being open and other times? Not so much."

Bucky nodded solemnly and adjusted so he was pressed to Steve's side. Sarah May was asleep now and he just watched her breathe and occasionally squirm on his chest. "She's so beautiful. Isn't she just the sweetest thing? I can't believe we were lucky enough to have this precious little baby come to your church."

Steve looked over at their daughter and smiled. "Yeah, she's our little blessing," he said. "We are so fortunate to have two healthy kids running around. " They would've been luckier to have Grant here too, but he didn't want to mention him right now and make them both upset. "I love her so much."

Becca came in then like a whirlwind and deposited Christopher on the bed. He was wearing two different socks and no pants and a shirt that had a dark stain on the front. "I'm sick of him trying to yank out all my hair. And he doesn't want to wear his pants. Please, I can't take this anymore. Please."

Steve was surprised to have Becca come in so suddenly. He set up and reached for his son. Christopher sat innocently on the bed and sucked on his thumb but crawled to Steve when he saw his dad’s open arms. "I got him, Becs, you don't have to stress," Steve said. "Let's get you changed out of that dirty shirt, son."

Becca left with a huff as Bucky sat up slowly with Sarah May. "Well, I guess we don't get much
down time around here, do we?" He sighed and held his swaddled daughter to follow Steve to the nursery.

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Sarah May whined quietly when she was moved but didn't raise a ruckus. "I guess that's parenting life for you," Steve sighed. He wrestled Christopher into a new shirt and pants then put a matching pair of socks on him. After making a bit of a fuss, Steve calmed him down with some plush animals.

---

Bucky did love being a parent. But sometimes he wished things were just slightly quieter. But he knew that it came with raising two babies. "How about after dinner, we put them down for bed a little early and just have some us time for a while."

---

Steve was able to get Christopher giggling as he paraded animals in front of him, making silly noises in the meantime. He paused to answer, "Of course, Love. I'll tire Christopher out so he will go right to sleep."

---

"Okay," Bucky smiled softly. "I know your mom already had plans to make dinner so I'll put Ya-Ya down and go help her. She said that there is a lot of vegetable chopping that needs to be done. She also said something about it being a French meal her friend suggested so I don't know what it is we are trying tonight."

---

"Ya-Ya," Steve chuckled softly. "I can't believe Christopher practically renamed our daughter," he joked. Christopher looked over and waved at his sleepy sister. "I like it when Ma tries out new recipes. They're always so good."

---

Bucky carefully put Sarah May in her crib and made sure there were no loose blankets or anything she could get tangled in. "I just like using 'Ya-Ya' around Christopher so he knows he did well in learning that that's his sister. Isn't that right, Bean? You know your sister, don't you?"

---

"Ya-Ya," Christopher repeated and waved at his baby sister.

Steve kissed Christopher's cheek. "Let's see if we can have you skip a nap, Bean. So you will go to bed tonight nice and worn, yeah? Maybe you'll sleep until the sun comes up, too."

---

"Until the sun comes up!" Bucky said excitedly to his son and gave him a kiss before heading down to help Sarah make dinner. Steve was usually pretty good at getting Christopher to play a lot instead of wanting his nap. Maybe they could actually pull this off.

---

Steve was able to keep their son occupied and once dinner was ready he woke Sarah May up to
come sit with the family. He had both babies in his arms as he came into the kitchen, Christopher squealing excitedly. "Smells good, ma."

---

"Thank you, Steven," Sarah said and turned to help get the babies in their seats. Bucky was stirring a pot of sauce that was supposed to go over the dish. He had some sauce in his hair that he hadn't noticed and he had been given apron because he made a mess of his shirt.

---

Steve took a wet cloth and cleaned up Bucky's hair. He kissed his cheek lightly. "Want to watch the kids and I'll take over, Love?" Steve asked, rubbing his back.

---

"I'm almost done here," Bucky said with a frustrated huff - not at Steve, but at the sauce. "Someone just taste it and tell me if it's done then I'll pour it on the food." He was no cook but Sarah let him help more than Steve did. He liked to help if he had direction. From Steve he got more of, 'It's okay, Baby, just sit down. You don't have to help.' Which Bucky felt like translated to Steve not wanting any help.

---

Steve nodded and kissed his husband once more before going back to entertain his kids. Every time Christopher looked a little sleepy, Steve would start talking to him in excited voices. Sarah came over to test the sauce and gave a nod of approval. "It tastes fantastic, Bucky." Sarah was a lot more patient in the kitchen than Steve was. She wanted to share her expertise with Bucky since he wanted to help out.

---

Bucky nodded sharply and, with Sarah's supervision, poured it over the dish. He felt a weird sense of pride at having helped make a dinner that tasted good. He brought it over to the table and called the girls in who happily trotted over with the promise of food. "After Steve prays, he has some pretty cool news to share."

---

After their prayers, Steve held Sarah May's hand lightly and looked to the rest of his family. "Today, we found out that Sarah May is Austrian and Jewish."

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"Austrian," Becca murmured and squinted at Sarah May. "How come I never considered Austrian?" Becca really liked to be right. She liked to know everything. And he hadn’t figured this one out before someone else did so it made her a little annoyed.

“Like you really knew,” Lilly mumbled sarcastically.

"So, I will be taking Sarah May to synagogue while Steve takes Christopher to church. We talked about it and decided that we want her to be with her people," Bucky said confidently.
Steve bit back a laugh at Becca and Lilly, not wanting to exacerbate things. Lilly giggled when Bucky said he would take Sarah May to synagogue. "You sure the place won't burn down by your presence? You don’t believe in any of that," she teased.

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"It very well may," Bucky said with a humored nod. "If so, I'll just rebuild the place, no hard feelings." He smiled over at her and pinched her arm. "And if we have any other children that are Jewish then I will take them as well."

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Becca groaned and interjected, "You're not going to have more anytime soon, are you? I don't think I can handle another baby crying around here. I really can't, Bucky."

---

"We make no promises," Bucky said quietly and took a bite of food. "It is apparently my turn to bring home a baby. I don't know how Steve keeps finding children around Brooklyn that need him but I guess I need to step up my game eventually."

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"Yeah, Steve's got you beat by two," Lilly snorted. "He's got a magical ability to find babies. Like a bomb-sniffing dog, except, instead of bombs, he finds babies, and, instead of being a dog, he's your husband."

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"That's a very weird analogy," Bucky said and shot a little glance to Steve. Dinner went like usual with Becca and Lilly talking about something with school and then getting into an argument about something unimportant. This time it was about whether Becca's shoes or Lilly's shoes were better in the snow. But once they were all cleaned up, the babies were ready to have their lullabies and go to sleep.

---

Diana barked few some scraps and Christopher barked back out of habit. Steve chuckled at his boy and his dog and picked his son up into his arms to take his kids up to the nursery. Once he had both of their little ones to sleep, Steve walked out of the nursery and put a hand on Bucky's shoulder. "How're you feeling?"

---

Bucky smiled warmly at his husband and tugged him into their room. "I feel okay right now. I feel like I haven't seen much of you lately since I worked so much this week. And I feel like maybe we should fix that. Wasn't it one of your '86 New Year's resolutions to have more quiet time with me?"

---

Steve followed Bucky without complaint into their room and ran his fingers through his hair. "It was. It's a harder resolution to keep with two babies running amok," Steve said. "But we have tonight. Let's make the most of our quiet time now."
"Candles?" Bucky asked and slipped off his shirt preemptively. He went into his nightstand and grabbed a bag of chocolate he kept there. He offered some to Steve and then went to get the candles. "There was an early Valentine's sale and Clint bought too much so he gave me some the other day. Be careful, though, it's an assorted bag. Some have cherries inside and they are not good."

---

Steve kissed Bucky's cheek and helped light and place the candles. "What's wrong with cherries? I like the gooey stuff they put in the center of those chocolate covered cherry things."

---

"Then you can find all the cherry ones for yourself and give me all the caramel ones," Bucky suggested and finished on the last candle before flipping out the lights so it was just a soft warm glow. "Also, I want you naked. We can lay around and eat chocolate and make out for a bit but I want you naked while we do it."

---

"Pushy," Steve snickered as he laid back on the bed. He slowly undressed in front of his husband, doing his best to make a bit of a show of it, but it didn't work all that well because he was a huge fucking dork. "Come here and give me a kiss," he hummed happily.

---

Bucky worked off the rest of his own clothes and piled all of their discarded garments into the hamper in the closet so it wasn't messy in their room. He then went and laid down next to Steve, kissing him as he grabbed another piece of chocolate. He pulled away from Steve and took a bite. It was cherry. He took the other half and fed it to Steve.

---

Steve happily ate the other half of Bucky's chocolate. He ran his fingers slowly up and down his husband's body, loving how lucky he was to have a man like him at his side. "Tell me more about how your week went, Buck. I want to hear."

---

"Well, it was okay. Clint was hardly there because he was so sick so Tim and I had to hold down the fort. Reggie found that if he smoked weed in the women's restroom then I wouldn't find him as fast. But it's hard not to smell it regardless." Bucky chuckled and took another chocolate. "And one of my AA group mates had to bring his son in with him and the kid decided to piss in the corner of the room and it was just a big ordeal."

---

"I should stop by and bring Clint soup," Steve said, making a mental note of it. He was home anyway and could make a run for soup while he was taking the kids around in a stroller. He also couldn't believe that Reggie still had his damn job with the amount of weed he smoked at work. "How old was the kid that peed?"

---

"Around seven. Old enough to know not to piss in the corner of a meeting," Bucky said grumpily. "But anyway. That was my week. Enough of that though, I want to make out with you. You look so
beautiful and the candles are glowing around your face and I want to be all over you and inside you.

"Better to piss in the corner than in the middle of the meeting," he teased. Steve leaned in to kiss Bucky slowly. He trailed a few kisses lower and lower down his chest. "You're such a romantic," he sighed. "How are you so amazing? How did I ever deserve you?"

"Because you're perfect and you deserve someone who knows you are and wants to praise every bit of you," Bucky said confidently and moved to push two fingers against Steve's lips so he would suck them. "That's how."

Bucky could still make his heart flutter like it was their first date all over again. Steve locked eyes with Bucky, smiling over at him before slowly taking his fingers into his mouth. He bobbed his head and worked his tongue around his fingers, making a show of it.

"You're so hot," Bucky breathed and pushed his fingers in just a bit more before taking them out. "Suck my cock for a while?" he asked, putting his hand on the back of Steve's head. "Then I'll open you up and make love to you. How does that sound?"

Steve was still blushing a bit and he nodded his head. He moved down Bucky's body, kissing him as he went. He looked up at his husband through hooded eyes and gave a few little licks at the tip before slowly taking a little into his mouth.

"Yes, thank you, Baby," Bucky gasped and massaged the back of Steve’s head as he worked down his cock. He took another chocolate from the bag - a caramel one this time - and popped it into his mouth, happy to have thought to grab them. It felt like a pre-Valentine's day treat with the chocolate and the candles. He loved it.

Steve hollowed out his cheeks as he worked his tongue along the length of Bucky's cock. He was slow but made little noises every time he came off with a wet pop to take a breath. He reached over to play with Bucky's balls, palming at them while he sucked him off.

Bucky smiled down at his husband and let him keep going for a few more minutes. Eventually, though, he gently pulled him off of his cock. "Come on, let me have your ass. Want to lick you open. But you got to do something for me." He grabbed the new flavored lube he got and shimmied so he was close to Steve's ass. "You never sing for me. I want to hear you sing something for me."
Steve was really blushing now. It wasn't like he was embarrassed to sing in front of Bucky but it was so intimate right now and he loved it. He laid back and spread his legs for his husband. He thought for a moment and asked, "You want something Irish?"

---

"I would love something Irish," Bucky said sweetly and kissed a line down Steve's inner thigh before working back up and licking at his hole. He put a drop of the flavored lube on his tongue and then pushed around his rim before sticking just the tip inside and back out.

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Steve let out a soft moan and arched his back off the bed, wanting more. He started to sing an old Gaelic hymn to Bucky, one of his favorites, but it was clear that Bucky eating him out was affecting his singing.

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Bucky hummed happily and looked up past Steve's body up into his eyes. It was a good choice of song. It had a lovely melody from what he could hear. But he definitely didn't understand the words being sung in a language he knew nothing about. Bucky got a little more lube and spread it on two fingers before pushing them in alongside his tongue and fucking in and out of Steve.

---

Steve wasn't able to finish the song. By the time Bucky added his fingers inside of him, Steve was moaning Bucky's name instead. He tugged at his hair and scratched his nails down his back. "So good, Buck."

---

Bucky chuckled and moved to kiss at Steve's thighs before taking his cock into his mouth. He sucked on it for a while and added a third finger into Steve's ass. But then he just got impatient and wanted to be inside of him already so he moved Steve's legs up so his ankles rested on his shoulders and then he lubed himself up before easing inside with a breathy groan.

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Steve dug his heels into Bucky's back as he felt his husband enter him. He closed his eyes and tilted his head back with a satisfied sigh. "Tell me all the things we are going to do in our quiet time this year, Bucky," he breathed out.

---

Bucky held Steve steady and picked a slow, deep rhythm. "There will be more of this. And more candles. And more talking about how we are doing. We don't get many private moments anymore to just be us and catch up. I want to try to fill all our time with good memories and love and touches and sex like this."

---

Steve moaned and squeezed his muscles around Bucky's cock. He loved how full he felt with his husband seated deep inside of him. "I like the sound of that," he groaned. "We should try something new maybe," he said. "I can try to be a little more open-minded."
Bucky gasped and stared at Steve. He loved when Steve suggested something new. "New how?" he asked tentatively and picked up his pace ever so slightly. He wanted to make love so good to him but he was getting slightly excited.

"Oh, my god, you're like a dog with a bone," Steve laughed. He had to pause to breathe because Bucky was doing such wonderful things to him that took his breath away. "I was considering a previously-banned object."

"You mean the previously banned object that I threw out in the move?" Bucky asked with a little grunt as he pushed in a little harsher. He supposed if Steve was serious, he could get a new one. But he liked Phillip. They went through a lot together.

Steve nodded. "I've felt awful about it ever since you threw it out, Buck," Steve said. He blushed deeply and said, "I already bought one. Back when I got the flavored lube." He had hidden it away until he had been ready to bring it up.

"What?" Bucky's movements stopped almost completely. "Am I dreaming? My husband bought a sex toy? There's no way." He was honestly having a hard time wrapping his brain around the fact that his husband bought a sex toy. That was just so incomprehensible to him. "I don't believe you."

Steve blushed even deeper and swatted Bucky's chest. "Don't stop," he complained. "I'm an adult. I can buy any amount of sex toys for us as I want," Steve insisted, trying to make Bucky stop making such a big deal out of it.

Bucky started moving in and out of him again and shook his head. "Sure, you're an adult. And adults can buy sex toys. But you're Steve Rogers-Barnes, my husband. And you don't buy sex toys. I'm just in a bit of shock. I'm allowed to be shocked."

"Would you prefer if I stole it instead of bought it?" he joked. Steve let out a satisfied sound when Bucky started to finally move in him again. He curled his toes and closed his eyes. "I'm getting close, Bucky"

Bucky shook his head and grabbed the base of Steve's cock. "Not yet," he growled softly and kept going inside him. "I just can't believe that after so long of being so against it, you are suggesting it and bought something. Has sex with me gotten boring or are you doing this cause you think it'll make me happier?"
Steve whined when Bucky held the base of his cock. He wanted to come so bad but he didn't try and force the issue. "What? Sex with you could never be boring for me," Steve balked. He almost sounded offended at the insinuation. "I wanted to make you happy."

"You do make me happy," Bucky said and let Steve's dick go again. "You make me beyond happy. And you didn't need to buy a sex toy to make that happen. It was my choice to get rid of Phillip because I thought it would make you happy. And I knew it didn't need him to be completely satisfied. I have you." His words were shrouded in breathy gasps and light moans and he noticed that he had picked up again and was getting just about close to coming. "If you want to try using the new one, I am more than happy to. But you have to be sure. And not just because you think I want it. I want it to be your choice."

Steve genuinely was grateful that Bucky was being sweet and making sure this was something he was definitely okay with, but all Steve wanted to do was for Bucky to make them both come and let them talk about this later. Sometimes, Bucky could just get so distracted during sex and that was starting to get to Steve. He reached up and gave a little tug on Bucky's hair. "I'm a grown man, Buck, and I'll use a sex toy if I want to. Now, shut up and make love to me, you dope."

"Of course, Baby," Bucky said and leaned in to give Steve a kiss, bending him in half and pushing his cock even deeper inside. "I really fucking love you," he whispered and stayed close to his face while he rolled his hips in smoother, longer movements, concentrating on the sounds of Steve's breathing and the feeling of his ass holding him inside.

Steve cupped Bucky's face and drew him in for a slow, messy kiss. He whimpered Bucky's name softly as he came, shooting hot spurts of come on his chest while his ass reflexively clenched down around Bucky's cock.

A smiled of relief ghosted over Bucky's face when Steve came. He was worried that he had killed the mood enough that Steve wasn't going to come at all. "Feels so good, Baby," he whispered and reached between them to collect Steve's come and suck it from his fingers. "Can I fuck you a little harder now?" he asked and pleaded with his eyes. He really wanted to just go for it until he finished inside of his husband.

Steve moaned at the sight of Bucky licking his come off his fingers. That man was sinfully sexy. He nodded and the second Bucky picked up the pace, Steve's nails scratched down Bucky's sides as he did his best to keep quiet and keep stable on the bed.

Bucky fucked into Steve so fast and well. He could tell the sensitivity from just having come was getting to him. Bucky put his arm in front of Steve's mouth. "Bite down if you need too. I don't want
to wake anyone."

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Steve ended up sinking his teeth into Bucky's arm without thinking in order to stifle the noises he was making. It wasn't hard enough to break skin but it would probably bruise a bit. His thighs shook and he took what Bucky had to give for a little bit but finally, he let go of Bucky's arm and gasped out, "Too much."

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"Okay, I'm coming, I'm coming," Bucky said breathlessly and his body arched back as he shoved into Steve one last time and released his load firmly up inside him. He slowed his breathing and then pulled out, sticking a finger in to get some of his come and then offered it to Steve.

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Steve's hands moved to the mattress and he gripped the sheets. He didn't know how long it took for him to catch his breath but when he opened his eyes and saw Bucky holding his finger up to him, he lifted his head and licked it clean, too hazy to speak.

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Bucky wiped the rest of Steve's come off his stomach and moved to curl up right next to him. "I love you so much," he breathed and kissed Steve's chest and neck. "That was amazing sex. You feel so good around me, Baby. And the faces you make just ruin me."

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Steve buried his face in Bucky's shoulder, feeling a little clingy and wanting his husband's arms around him. "Keep talking sweet to me," he murmured. "I like it when you sweet talk me, Buck."

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Bucky held Steve close and kissed his cheek and his forehead and his lips. "You sang so well for me. It was beautiful. I loved every second of it. And you're body is just so handsome and it's all mine and I'm so glad it gets to just be you and me forever."

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Steve smiled, loving the praise and looking up into Bucky's beautiful eyes. "I'll always be yours, Buck. I can't see myself raising my family and spending my days with anyone besides you. I don't know how I managed before I knew you, Baby."

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"I love you so much it's ridiculous," Bucky said and tugged the blanket up over Steve before getting up to blow out the candles and come back. "Now, it's time to sleep. I have work early tomorrow and I think you need to find me a synagogue."

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Steve chuckled softly and kissed him a few times. "Yeah, looks like, eventually, you're going to be helping our little sprout find her roots. You're the best husband I could ever pray for." He closed his eyes tiredly and soon found himself drifting off to sleep, warm against Bucky's body.
Chapter Summary

First half of Christopher's first birthday.

When February finally rolled around, Steve and Bucky prepared to celebrate their son's first birthday. They were lucky enough to have gotten Christopher's birth certificate reprinted from the hospital after the adoption paperwork went through. They weren't so lucky to know when Sarah May was born so they just had to make a good guess and stick to it. But today was their oldest baby's birthday and everyone was very excited.

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Steve couldn't stop talking about Christopher's birthday the whole week leading up to it. He made plenty of decorations to dress up the house and Sarah found the perfect recipe for his cake. When Steve woke up that morning, he nudged Bucky awake. "Buck. Bucky, wake up. It's Christopher’s birthday!"

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Bucky slowly opened his eyes and blinked up at Steve. Then he remembered what was happening and he sat up quickly. "Is he awake?" he asked and hastily pulled on a pair of pajama pants and a jacket. "Have you gone in there yet? Get the camera."

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"Not yet. I didn't want to go in without you," Steve said. He kissed Bucky's cheek and got up so he could get the camera. "I can't believe he's already a year old, Baby. It feels like yesterday I was bringing him home and hiding him away in our bedroom."

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"I love him so much. We are so lucky," Bucky said happily and gave Steve a kiss before dragging him to the nursery.

Christopher was sitting up in his crib and looking over at his sister saying, "Ya-Ya," repeatedly and trying to reach his hand through the bars to get to her.

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Steve was able to sneak a picture of Christopher standing in his crib before the little boy noticed his parents walking in. Sarah May was still sleeping, so Steve didn't get too loud. "Hey there, Bean! It's your birthday today! You've been on this earth for a whole year. Isn't that amazing?" He picked him out of his crib and gave him a kiss.

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Bucky immediately pressed himself to his husband and son and planted kisses all over his little face. "Sweet boy, you are a year old!" He pet his long hair and looked up at Steve excitedly. "Our boy is growing up."

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Christopher smiled and hugged Bucky's neck. Steve snapped another picture because their boy was so darn cute. "Papa," Christopher said to him. "Ya-Ya play?" He pointed at the crib with his sleeping sister in it.

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"Ya-Ya is sleeping," Bucky said quietly. "Dada is going to check your diaper and take you downstairs for breakfast and I am hoping to try to pick up your sister as carefully as I can so she doesn't wake up. And then we can play all day. Okay, Bean? And then later Uncle Clint is coming over with Aunt Natasha and Tim to have dinner and cake and bring you new toys and things!"

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"Oh, Dada gets to change the dirty diaper?" Steve snorted. He took his son from his husband but Christopher found it an opportune time to practically shout at his papa and babble at him because he was getting excited at all the talking Bucky was doing with him. Sarah May, thank god, still slept.

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"Shh, Bean," Bucky chuckled and gave him a kiss. "I know it's your birthday but let your sister sleep a little longer." He hovered over Sarah May and slowly scooted his hands underneath her back and head. Then he lifted her up and tilted to put her on his bare chest before zipping up the jacket around them both. "There we go," he sighed happily.

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Sarah May made a quiet noise but didn't wake up. She looked so damned adorable swaddled up in Bucky's jacket and Steve took a picture of that too. He set the camera and the pictures down and turned so he could change Christopher's diaper and sing to him as he did so. When he brought him downstairs, his mom excitedly greeted her grandson and wished him a happy birthday as well.

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The girls were already downstairs helping Sarah make pancakes. Lilly had been shunned to a corner of the kitchen to cut fruit quietly by herself and she looked very unhappy about it. But she brightened up with she saw her nephew and came to give him a happy kiss to which he screeched, "Leeee!" and banged his hand on her shoulder.

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Steve smiled proudly at his son. Lilly was usually more fun to him than Becca so Christopher usually had a big reaction to seeing Lilly. "Why the long face before, Lil?" Steve asked. "Don't like cutting fruit?"
Lilly huffed and held up a hand with a bandage on two of her fingers. "I burned myself on the skillet," she mumbled. "So they thought it was better that I cut fruit instead."

Bucky held Sarah May and looked at his sister’s bandage for a second. "Well, maybe next time then. And Christopher will be so happy you cut fruit for his birthday since he loves fruit."

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"Aw, I’m sorry," Steve said. He hugged her with his free arm. Just as Bucky said that Christopher loved fruit, their son started to reach for the strawberries Lilly had cut.

"Leeeee," he whined before signing that he was hungry.

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Lilly gathered a few strawberries into her hand and gave one to Christopher who grabbed it and shoveled the entire thing in his mouth. Sarah and Becca started setting the table and Sarah said, "Okay, boys. Tell me the plan for the day. I know your friends are coming over this afternoon to celebrate and I know Steve has been decorating. I've got the cake covered and Bucky is ordering pizza later. So what else do we need to do?"

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"Well, I was thinking we should go to the cemetery to celebrate with Grant and Bucky's parents, too. And maybe we can go to the zoo at some point," Steve offered.

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"That sounds like a good plan," Sarah said with a smile at her son and her grandbaby. "But isn't it a little too cold for the zoo? You'll only see a few indoor animals. What if you took him to the ice rink? I think they have a small children’s rink that you could go in."

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"But Christopher loves to go to the zoo," Steve whined.

Lilly snorted. "Just do the ice rink, Steve. I want to watch Christopher try to skate. He'll probably be a goofy clumsy mess. It’ll be adorable and hilarious."

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Sarah May started to squirm in Bucky’s jacket and Bucky unzipped it so she could see what was going on. "Steve, Baby, we have time for both today if you want to do both. It won't take long at the zoo since it really will only be a few animals and then we can skate for just about an hour."

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Steve walked over to kiss their daughter good morning. "We can do both. I wanna do as much as we can with your little boy on his first birthday," Steve said. "Isn't that right, Bean? Are you gonna have a big day?"
"Dada!" Christopher yelped and bounced in his arms. "Dada, bay," he pointed to the strawberries and repeated himself, trying his best to say 'berry' but getting nowhere with it.

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Steve gasped. "Berry? Do you want another berry, Sweetheart?" he asked, getting all excited over the new word. He gave his son a berry as a reward and looked to Bucky and his mom to make sure they heard.

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"Ooh!" Bucky's eyes went wide and he kissed his son and praised him. "Berry. Good boy, Christopher. You talk so well. You're going to be such a genius child. I just know it."

Becca finished setting cups on the table and said, "Sure, he still has a hard time saying 'Beh' for me but 'Bay' he can get."

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Steve chuckled as he set Christopher in his high chair. "That's cause berries make him happy and you boss him around," Steve joked. "Becca is a hard name. The 'k' sound is one of the toughest for young ones to get out."

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"Yeah, you remember Lilly calling us Bessa and Bussy for about three years," Bucky said and got Sarah May situated in her chair before helping her with her bottle. She was almost at the age where she could start having a few solids but they wanted to wait it out with her for a little longer since sometimes she didn't even want her bottle.

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"Bussy," Steve snorted in amusement. Sarah May drank down her bottle while the rest of the family ate their breakfasts.

"I'm so happy for you two," Sarah said. "I love the big family you've given me. And my wonderful grandchildren and my favorite girls," she continued.

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Bucky nodded and looked to Christopher who was happily shoving pancakes into his mouth. "I love my family so much. That includes you, Sarah," he said. "And I can't believe that this Little Bean is a year old. We won't have even had him for a year for another few months. But he is ours now and we get to have this day with him."

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Sarah smiled and looked around at her growing family. Her friends complained she was hanging out less with them, but she loved her family so damned much and loved spending time with them. "You are such a good father to your children, Bucky. They're lucky to have you."
Steve whined. "What about me, Ma?"


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"He's alright," Bucky agreed jokingly and gave Steve a little smile.

Christopher jumped to defend his daddy by tossing a syrupy covered bit of pancake at him and yelling, "Dada, Dada!" excitedly.

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Steve looked at the pancake bit that flopped onto his plate and then picked it up to feed his son. "Yes, Bean, your dada loves you so much. I'm good to you, right? Almost as good as your pop," Steve defended.

Becca finished up her breakfast and put her plate in the sink. "If we go skating do I have to skate too?"

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Becca had been acting up a little bit the day before, complaining about how the house was going to be too loud for Christopher's birthday. It had escalated into a fight with Bucky and they hadn't really resolved it yet. "I don't care if you just stay here all day," Bucky said with a twinge of annoyance. "Your nephew might want his aunt around for his birthday but he also won't remember today so I don't care what you do."

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Becca gave Bucky an annoyed look. "Fine, then I'll go to a friend's house all day. I think I'll sleep over there, too. Since you don't care." She crossed her arms and headed out of the kitchen and back up her room.

Sarah gave Bucky a small frown. "That went well," she said calmly.

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"She doesn't care about him so why should we try to make her interact with him?" Bucky defended lightly. "She's just dealing with us until she can leave and then we won't see her hardly ever again. It's better for Christopher if he learns that his Aunt Becca isn't going to be around much."

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Lilly stared up at Bucky with a frown. "Becca isn't going to leave us," she said.

Steve didn't have high hopes for Becca being around the family much once she had her freedom, but he also didn't want Lilly to get upset. "She loves us, Lilly. Don't worry. You're gonna see your sister as much as you want."

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Bucky thought it was best to just stay out of it. This was Christopher's birthday. He didn't want
anyone to fight or cause a bigger scene. So he just sighed and got up to give Lilly a kiss on her head as he went to get some more juice in Christopher's sippy cup.

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Steve shook his head and squeezed Lilly’s arm. "She's just upset right now. It'll be fine. She’s not leaving right now. How about you give Christopher some more fruit and that will make him happy," he suggested.

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Lilly nodded and tried to push the worry from her mind as she gave Christopher some more strawberries and a piece of cantaloupe that he rejected by spitting out back into her hand. "Eww, Christopher," she giggled. "Don't spit up in my hand."

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Steve snorted. "It's his birthday. He can do whatever he wants," he said. "Once he's full, we should all get ready for the big day ahead of us," Steve said before going to Bucky.

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Bucky was cleaning up the table and putting things away. He sighed when Steve came over and brought him into a tight hug. "It's our baby's first birthday," he said really quietly and gave Steve a sad little shake of the head. "And his aunt doesn't even care."

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"His aunt is being a dumb teenager," Steve answered and kissed Bucky's cheek. "I disagree with her. I think she's wrong for what she's doing. But she will come around one day. There were plenty of things as a teenager you did that weren't good, but you've gotten better."

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Bucky nodded and sighed. "I just want her to be with us again. To be my little sister like she used to be. To be Lilly's confidant again. To be a good aunt for our kids." He glanced over at Lilly who was holding Christopher on her hip and trying to clean Sarah May's face up at the same time.

---

Steve sighed and played with Bucky's hair lightly. "Sweetheart, it will happen. I promise." He kissed the top of his head. "Not as soon as we would hope, but it'll happen." Then he whispered, "Look at Lilly. She's changing. Look how much she tries to take care of our babies."

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"Yeah, I guess you are right," Bucky said softly and watched his sister and his kids. "She is really good with them. And they love her." He turned and finished cleaning up and shook his head. "Anyway, I need to let it go for now. Let's get ready to take our boy for a great birthday."

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Steve nodded. "Go get dressed for the day. I'll get our babies ready," he said. Steve turned to Lilly and thanked her for looking after them before telling her to wash up and get dressed. Next Steve would have to wrestle Christopher into his clothes and a damned hat.

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Bucky got ready quickly and took over the responsibility of watching Sarah May. Steve had had no problems at all getting her ready to go out. But he was currently trying to carefully wrestle their one-year-old into his coat as he screamed, "No, Dada, no!"

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"Sweetheart, I hear that you don't wanna wear this," Steve said as he fought one of Christopher's arms carefully into the sleeve of his jacket. "But you will get sick if you don't wear this. This is so you stay healthy and strong on your birthday."

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"Here," Bucky said and grabbed the little dinosaur plushie that he had gotten for Christopher. "Hold this so Daddy can put your coat on. You love Dan the Dino. And Dan wants you to be all cozy so we can take you out. You can even take Dan with us. How is that?" he asked and let his son take the plushie.

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Christopher waggled the toy and started to babble at Bucky, eyes locked on him as he had quite a story to tell. Steve laughed once he got him all zipped up. The second he tried putting on the hat, Christopher snapped his head at his dad. "No!" he said firmly.

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"Hey," Bucky mumbled to Christopher and pet his head. "Come on, Bean. Daddy needs to get the hat on. Let's be good for Daddy." He looked at the back of Christopher's coat and saw it was the one that had a detachable hood. "Steve, where's the hood on this one?"

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"Diana chewed it up when she was a puppy," Steve groaned. "You think we can button a different hood to it?" They had a few jackets with removable hoods for Christopher.

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Bucky grumbled and shook his head. "Of course, she did," he set Sarah May into her crib and went to try to find a different hood. "Here. Try this one. It's the same size but a different color. It may work."

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Steve tried it out and sighed with relief when it mostly worked. "Why do you have to fight the hats, Christopher? They keep you warm." Christopher seemed to ignore Steve in favor of watching his pop walk around. "Can you watch them while I get changed?" Steve asked.
"Yes," Bucky said and took Christopher. "We will go put on shoes downstairs while we wait." He held Christopher on his hip and grabbed Sarah May from her crib and took them both downstairs to get their shoes and found Sarah waiting in her room with the door open looking at pictures of a baby Steve.

Sarah looked up when she heard Bucky pass. She hurried over to show him a picture. "Look! I just found it. It's Steve on his first birthday. I don't think you've seen a picture of his dad before, but that's him," she said. In the picture was a young man proudly holding his son in his arms. Steve was sleeping soundly and the man had a cigarette hanging from his lips. "If it wasn't a cigarette in his mouth, it was a bottle," Sarah sighed with a little laugh.

Bucky looked at the photo and then up at his mother-in-law. He hated that, because of him, Steve knew exactly what it was like to have a husband like Joseph Rogers. He had worked so well in AA and was doing really well but he still smoked. He needed to work on reducing his smoking but it was so hard. He just looked back at baby Steve and his father. "He looks a little like him. I mean, I think Steve's got a lot of you in him. But he looks like his dad, too."

Sarah truly did miss her husband. After his time in the army, he became an alcoholic, but, before that, he was an absolute dream. "I'm glad Steve looks more like me than him. My husband was very handsome, but I would be mad at God for making me carry a baby for nine months, give birth, and have him be a copy of what his father looked like when I did all the work."

Bucky chuckled and gave her a little side hug. "I understand. You made him. You put in the time and energy. The man's part in reproduction isn't difficult at all. My mother used to complain about how she was never comfortable when she was pregnant. Something was always wrong. And she said to my father that he had to do what he could to make himself uncomfortable too. So for a whole week, he slept with a bag filled with ping pong balls under his side of the bed."

"Sounds like your dad did his best to support her," Sarah said. "I wish I could have had more children with my husband, but I suppose one pregnancy is enough torture." She hugged Bucky and went to set the picture back down. "Let me get my coat on and I will be right out."

Bucky let her be and went out to wait in the hall for everyone. He imagined what it would have been like if Steve had younger siblings. How much younger would they be? How many would there be? Would they love and support him like their mother? Would they love their nephew and niece? Would Bucky have gotten the sibling talk - 'If you hurt him I will end you'?
Steve came down a few minutes later dressed up all nice for their outing. "Hey, Love," he greeted. He kissed Bucky's cheek and gave him a hug. Everyone except Becca piled up to the door. "Alright, are we all ready to go? Lilly, can you let Becca know that we're leaving?"

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Lilly glanced to Steve then to Bucky. "Yeah, sure, I'll be back," she shucked off her coat and ran upstairs to talk to Becca. She was gone for a long time but when she came back, she was followed by Becca dressed up to go outside and looking resigned about the entire thing. But she was at least there.

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Steve was worried why it was taking so long but when Becca emerged with Lilly, he smiled. "I'm glad you decided to come." He held Christopher, who wiggled in Steve's arms and sung softly to himself as they all filed outside to have their outing. "Zoo or skating first?"

---

Bucky wasn't sure what had changed her mind but he wasn't going to ask and risk her turning right around and heading back home. He just pulled her in to kiss her head and then let her be again. "I think the zoo first. Are we going to the little one here or are we going to go on a day trip to Manhattan?"

---

"Let's stay close to home," Steve said. Once they were outside, Christopher tucked closer to his dad's chest. "Told you that it was cold out, Bean," Steve chuckled. "Do you think they'll have the petting zoo open? Christopher loved it last time but it's not always there."

---

"Probably not," Bucky said and kept a hold on Sarah May who was so bundled up there was no way she could feel any of the cold. "I mean, I guess it's possible but don't hold your breath. I think we will be lucky to see a few cold-climate animals who are still around."

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"Aw, man," Steve sighed. "No animals for Christopher to pet today. I guess Diana will have to do, right, Bean?" He kissed his boy's cheek. When they got to the zoo, the crowd was very light. There were only a few exhibits available for viewing. "Look there's penguins! See, Baby?"

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Christopher squealed and tried desperately to get down from his dad's arms. "Dada! Dada!" he yelped and got a few looks and giggles from the other attendees of the zoo and their children.

"Bean, Shh," Bucky chuckled and felt Sarah May tap the palm of her hand on his cheek and whine softly.
Steve laughed. "Yes, I know. It's exciting." He let Christopher go down so he could go to the glass barrier. Christopher didn't seem to realize there was something between him and the penguins and he trotted face first into the glass and fell back on his ass.

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Christopher didn't cry. He just looked up at his dads with wide confused eyes and a pouty lip. "You're okay, Christopher," Bucky said softly and squatted down by him with Sarah May still in hand. "Get up, Baby. You can watch the penguins but you can't get to them."

---

Becca and Lilly hid their laughter behind their hands. Steve kissed his son's cheek and pet the top of his head. "You got to be careful, son."

A worker saw what happened and rushed over. "Is he okay?" she asked worriedly.

---

Bucky sat down on the ground near Christopher and held Sarah May in his lap. "Yes, he's okay. Thank you. He just gets way too excited sometimes. It's his birthday. And I think he knows that something special is happening." He checked Christopher's head and hoped that he didn't get a bruise.

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She gasped and then waved at Christopher. "Happy birthday!" she said excitedly. After a moment of consideration, she said, "Don't tell anyone else, but I'm closing this section down in a half hour to feed the penguins. I can let you guys pet one, if you want. Birthday treat."

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"Bean, did you hear that?" Bucky asked excitedly. "The nice lady is going to let you see one of the penguins. You have to be good, though. Can you do that?" He knew Christopher had no idea what was going on but he could try to get him to understand a little bit.

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Christopher nodded his head because he could hear the excited tone and wanted whatever his papa was offering to him. The woman laughed and said, "Alright. Enjoy the other exhibits for the time being. The seals are always friendly to visitors."

---

Bucky thanked her and then got up from the ground. He stretched a little and then let Sarah May have her hat off since it was a bit warmer where they were. "Steve, you think it'll be okay for him to touch the penguin? I don't want him to freak out."

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"Buck, when are any of us ever going to get that close to a penguin again? We should give it a try,"
Steve said. "If he freaks out, we won't let him go near it. Simple as that." Sarah smirked because she knew Steve really wanted to touch the penguin too.

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"Okay, yeah, yeah, let's let him see the penguin. I'm sure he will be okay. And Ya-Ya might even want to touch it," Bucky said.

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They headed over to the seals and Christopher stood with his hands on the glass. "Ya-Ya. Ya-Ya, loo!" he said, staring at the animals that swam by. "Woof," he added. Every animal was a dog to him right now.

---

Sarah May only stared at her brother and made fists with her hands uncertainly. She made a quiet little gurgle of a noise and crinkled her eyebrows. "I would tell him not to woof at the seals but I don't know what noises they make," Bucky said.

---

"Don't they make dolphin noises?" Steve offered.

Becca rolled her eyes. "Seals don't make dolphin noises, dolphins make dolphin noises," she answered.

"They make noises like this-" Lilly said, before making an 'arf arf' sound to try to imitate what she had heard on a movie before.

---

Christopher thoroughly enjoyed the seal sounds that Lilly made. He laughed incredibly loudly and tugged on her pants excitedly wanting to be picked up. The worker came back around then and said quietly to Bucky, "If you want to follow me. I'll take your son to see the penguins."

---

Lilly picked up her nephew and continued to make seal sounds at him quietly. Steve perked up when they were approached and quickly nudged Lilly to go follow her. "Oh boy, Bean. Are you going to see the penguins?"

---

Christopher still had no idea what was happening but he loved how eagerly his dad spoke so he nodded and giggled and held on to Lilly tightly as everyone trailed into a large feeding room behind a door marked 'Trainers Only'. Bucky had Sarah May tucked close to his chest and she looked around curiously but also a little nervously because she was unfamiliar with what was happening.

---

The worker had the penguins swarming her because she had a huge bucket of fish. She tossed a few
to the birds and after they calmed down, she was able to pick up a baby one since it was easier to manage. "See? He's a baby just like you," she said as she held him out to Christopher.

---

Christopher moved in Lilly's arms frantically trying to get to the penguin. Lilly was fine until he started whining and she promptly handed him over to Steve. Christopher giggled excited and said, "Dada, loo!" And pointed at the baby penguin before gingerly petting its head.

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"I see, Bean! You're being so nice to the penguin. I'm proud of you. Can Daddy pet the penguin?" Steve asked. Christopher had all eyes on the bird and he shook his head, wanting to keep petting it by himself.

---

"Christopher, can Ya-Ya pet the penguin?" Bucky tried and got Sarah May a little closer to the animal. "Can you show her how, Baby Boy?" He held Sarah May's hand out and reached to have her touch the penguin’s flipper. She was confused but intrigued and made a little whine in her throat but let her Papa direct her hand.

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Steve stepped back so Sarah May could touch the penguin. "Isn't she so cute? Look at her go," Steve said.

The worker smiled. "She's adorable," she said. "How old is she?"

---

Bucky smiled at his daughter and held her up a little more. "She's around a little more than three months. We aren't sure when she was born exactly. And Christopher is one year today." He glanced up at the worker and saw only kindness in her eyes. She didn't seem off-put by the fact that these kids were his and Steve's together. But maybe she didn't realize they were a couple.

---

"Oh, is she adopted? But she looks just like you. Her hair is so similar." the worker said. She looked at Christopher and to Steve then back to Bucky, seeming to finally put the pieces together. "Oh! You're not two families, are you?" She didn't seem upset or disgusted by it. She seemed surprised and a little excited over seeing a new kind of family.

---

Bucky chuckled nervously and looked to Steve then their son. "Yeah, this is our family. Our kids." He smiled over at Steve then the woman again. "And my sisters and Steve's mother." He introduced them in turn and hugged Sarah May closer as she turned to get away from the penguin, decidedly uninterested in it anymore.
"It's so nice that you have such a big family," she said. "I can't believe you have kids. I mean... I don't think there's anything wrong with it. But I've never heard of it happening before." The woman smiled softly. "It looks like your daughter isn't as big of a fan of penguins."

---

Bucky nodded and reached out his hand to shake hers. "Steve and I are very grateful for our family. And I appreciate you letting us come see this penguin. Christopher really likes it. Don't you, Bean?"

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"Hey, a birthday is only once a year. We all got to do our part to make it special, right?" She smiled. "I got to scoot you guys out of here, though. I'm sorry. We have to open the exhibit back up for everyone else."

---

Bucky thanked her again and they were shown back out to the main hall. Bucky leaned over to Christopher to give him a little kiss and then he handed Sarah May to Lilly. "That was pretty amazing, Steve," he said and gave him a nudge. "I think the kids liked it."

---

Steve was grinning from ear to ear. He cuddled his son against his chest. "That was amazing!" he agreed. "And you guys were all ready to skip past the zoo. I don't think the skating rink will be able to beat petting penguins. Penguins! Can you believe it?"

---

Lilly gave Sarah May back to Bucky after he got his coat zipped back up. She yawned and reached up for Bucky's hair, tugging gently. Christopher giggled and bounced in Steve's arms, reaching towards his sister. "I think it was a good call to come here."

---

Steve moved closer so Christopher could grab his little sister's arm and babble at her excitedly. He seemed to realize more day by day that Sarah May was going to be his best friend around here. "Do we want to see anything else here or should we go skating?"

---

"I'm ready to go skating," Bucky said and looked to Lilly and Becca. "You two want to go skating?"

Becca shrugged but Lilly was very much for it. "Yes! But can we get hot chocolate at some point? I know we have cake for Christopher's party later but hot chocolate sounds so good right now. Don't you think?"

---

Steve played with Christopher's little hands. "I don't know. I'm not really feeling like hot chocolate. The weather isn't right for it," Steve said in an aloof tone, clearly messing around with Lilly just because it was fun. Sarah smirked because she used to do the same with her son.
"That's fine, Steven," Lilly said and turned her nose up. "I made ten dollars selling some books at school so I'll have enough for hot chocolate for the next week and a half."

Becca squinted at Lilly and said, "No, you have five dollars. Because you owe me five from those days you forgot to grab your lunch and had to buy school lunch."

"Spoilsport," Lilly complained.

Steve chuckled and gave them both a small nudge. "We can get hot chocolate on our way home, but first we are going to the rink to skate," Steve said. He walked back outside and as soon as a gust of wind blew by, Christopher let out a shudder and pressed against Steve.

Bucky looked over and saw Christopher's hood was halfway off again. "Steve, his hood," he chuckled and pointed at it. "You know, Bean, you wouldn't be so cold if you just wore a hat instead. Look at Ya-Ya. She lets us put hats on her." Sarah May looked up at him from her place tucked into his jacket. She was perfectly warm how she was.

Steve started to put his hood back on and Christopher whined and pushed it off. "Dada," he huffed out softly. Steve let out a resigned sigh and instead used his free hand to cover the back of Christopher's head from the cold. "This kid is quickly getting a stubborn mind of his own."

"He picks it up from you, Babe," Bucky muttered with a little smile. When they got to the ice rink, Bucky gave Lilly the money to get skates for everyone and they all waited next to some heating vents inside the rental place to get warmed up. "Steve, I think we need to buy some of those baby carriers. You know the ones that go on your chest? Because more often than not, Sarah May needs to be in my coat and it would be easier if I didn't have to hold her steady."

Steve looked over to their little girl and nodded. Steve preferred to hold them with his own arms but he agreed that it would be easier to move about and multitask when they didn't have to hold them steady. And on top of that, the kids would only get bigger and heavier and would tire them out. "Sure," he said. "I'll get one for them next time I'm shopping," he agreed.

"Thank you," Bucky said. "I know you're taking Christopher into the toddler and parent rink. I don't think Ya-Ya should go in because she can't even stand. So I'll just sit on the bench and watch you guys. How's that?"
Steve cuddled his little boy. "I'll do that. But we should trade off, Buck. You deserve to have some fun with Christopher on his birthday and I'll sit with Sarah May for some of the time, too. Wouldn't that be better?"

---

"I'm more than happy to let you skate with him, Steve," Bucky said. "I'll just hog him later during his party. You know Clint is going to want to keep him to himself so I'll just be the pushy father who steals my son back from my best friend." He grinned and watched Lilly come over with several pairs of skates slung over her shoulder. "Is Sam going to be able to make it?"

---

Steve wasn't going to argue. He wanted to spend as much time with his son as possible. He kissed the top of his head. "Yeah, Sam is coming but he's going to be late. I think I'm going to take a tally of how many times Christopher goes between you and Clint. Almost as many times as he's going to hint to Natasha how much he wants kids."

---

"Hey, if Clint wants to hold our children, then he can come over and visit more. I want to hold my boy on his birthday," Bucky said. Sarah May hiccupped and yawned and burrowed farther into Bucky's coat. "I think Nat could handle a baby who was quiet like Sarah May. Christopher is a little much for her but she at least will hold Sarah May sometimes."

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"Problem is you can't tell if a baby is going to be quiet or not. Christopher was silent as anything when he first came here. Now he has a heck of a lot to tell us. Steve set their son down so he could get him into his skates. Christopher sat there watching his feet curiously.

---

Bucky nodded. "I just know that Clint loves Natasha so much but he also wants to have a child. I'm guessing he would be fine with adopting a baby but, even then, Natasha would have to be on board with it." He sighed. "But let's not think about that right now because I'm going to get bummered out."

---

Steve put his skates on his own feet. Christopher tried to stand but he couldn't with the skates on and he babbled up at Steve as if to ask what the hell was going on. Steve snorted and picked him up. "Yeah. We will let them figure that out. Alright. Let's go, this is going to be adorable."

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"You got it," Bucky said. They all made their way out to the rink. Lilly and Becca headed towards the normal rink with Sarah. Bucky took up residence on a bench near the toddler rink, waiting patiently to see Christopher's first step on the ice.

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Steve helped Christopher into the rink. He held him up by his hands and made sure Christopher kept his balance. He kept trying to walk normal but would slip and slide. He would've fallen if Steve hadn't been holding on to him. "Dada?" he asked in a confused and slightly distressed tone because he didn't understand.

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Bucky laughed even though he felt bad about it. He could tell that Christopher was going to take a minute to get used to skating. He watched Steve’s smile get bigger and his heart clenched with how much he loved him and their kids. "Steve, you two look great!"

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"Look, Bean! Slide your feet!" Steve said, guiding his legs so it would hopefully make a little more sense. Christopher didn't quite get it but he didn't seem as upset as before. "I think it's going to be a while before he does this on his own," Steve said as he skated closer to Bucky.

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Bucky got up from the bench and came closer to the edge of the rink to lean on it with Sarah May on his hip. There was no one else in the toddler rink with Steve and Christopher so Bucky wasn't nervous to come up and speak openly. "He's doing okay, though." He grinned and watched Sarah May reach out to touch Steve's arm. "I think she wants you," he said. "She hasn't had much Daddy time today."

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Steve's heart melted when his daughter reached out to him. He picked Christopher up and then leaned over to kiss his daughter's cheek. "Hello, Beautiful! I promise I'll hold you lots today when your papa has your brother," he said sweetly. "It's incredible, Bucky. I can't believe how much they trust us."

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"They are our babies. Of course, they trust us. We take care of them and we love them and make sure they are safe and happy," Bucky said warmly and let Sarah May bring his finger to her mouth to suck on it. "And this one is hungry."

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"I know, but still... it's amazing that we get to be the people that give them their world until they learn to make it on their own." Steve set Christopher back down. "Let's skate some more, Bean. But don't be too cute for a little while, your pop has to go feed your sister."

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Bucky left to go back inside. He got their bag and some baby food and applesauce that he brought with them. "You are such a strong girl, Ya-Ya. Yes, you are. And Papa is so proud of you. And so is Daddy. And you can be with Daddy all evening, okay? I know you want him."
Sarah came over to Bucky when she needed a break from skating. "Look at her," she said fondly. "Soon enough she's going to be feeding herself. And then what are you going to do?" She chuckled. "Want me to hold her so you can skate?"

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"Once that happens, we will get a new baby. I don't think Steve and I could handle not having an infant that we need to care for like this," Bucky said. He let Sarah take his spot and he gave his daughter a kiss. "Okay, Ya-Ya, be good for Nana while I skate with your aunts."

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Sarah laughed. "Babies can be a little addicting. I was always a little sad whenever Steve passed a milestone that meant I wouldn't be able to take care of him like I did before." She cuddled her granddaughter while Bucky went to spend some time on the ice.

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Bucky went out and found his sisters. "Hey!" he shouted and zoomed past Lilly. "Bet you can't beat me three rounds around the ring, Lil!"

"You're on, Buck!" Lilly shouted back and skated faster, easily catching up to Bucky. Since they got back from Seneca, she had been going to skate when she could and got really good at it really quickly. Bucky wasn’t that surprised since she picked up other sports pretty easily.

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“You two are children!” Becca shouted and took her time as her siblings raced each other.

"You're not as fast as you used to be," Lilly said with a challenging smirk. "Raising babies is making you an old man, Bucky," she snickered as she smoothly glided past him.

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"I've been an old man since the day you were born then, Lilly!" Bucky shouted back and tried to speed up. But in the end, Lilly did win. As much as Bucky liked to think he was faster, Lilly was far more agile and athletic in comparison.

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Lilly let out a triumphant shout that made a few people turn their heads when she beat her brother. "Hah! Take that, Bucky!" she said as she punched the air.

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Bucky stopped and leaned against the edge of the rink, just watching Lilly's victory lap. Becca was going slow and just skating casually. Bucky could tell she liked it even if she originally hadn't wanted to be there. He also figured that Lilly was the one to convince Becca to come with them. Bucky was just glad she was there. He slowly made his way out of the adult rink and over to the toddler rink where Steve and Christopher were still the only ones around. "How is our sweet boy doing? Your mom has Sarah May."
Christopher seemed to understand at this point that he couldn't walk like normal when he was on this strange floor but he still couldn't skate on his own. "I think he's having fun with the challenge," Steve said. "Isn't he adorable? Look at how hard he's trying."

Bucky watched his son as he was being held up by Steve. He moved his feet ever so slightly and stared at Bucky with curious but no longer nervous eyes, as if he figured that his dad didn't have the answers as to what's going on so maybe his pops did. "Have you tried letting him move on his own? He may be able to take a step or travel a few inches."

"I don't want him to fall," Steve said with a pout. But after a look from Bucky, he carefully let go of Christopher's arms. As soon as he realized he was standing alone, Christopher started shouting and bent his knees before straightening up to try and move but he didn't budge an inch.

"There you go! See, he's fine. Good job, Bean," Bucky said and carefully got into the rink and squatted down across from his son. "Come on, Christopher, skate to me. You can do it." He reached out his arms for him and waited with an excited face. Their boy was growing up and he couldn't believe it.

Christopher got excited when he saw his papa come into the rink. He tried to run to him in his haste and almost fell forward but Steve caught him. Their son giggled and tried again but would maybe get a few inches closer before Steve had to catch him from falling.

Bucky kept his arms out for his son. Steve would right him every time he almost face-planted but then, eventually, Christopher made it to Bucky and he jumped right into his arms and squealed. "Oh, good boy! Look at my strong bean. You made it all the way to me!"

Christopher burst out into big, belly laughs when he finally made it to Bucky. "Papa!" he shouted excitedly and then hugged him around the neck. "He's so darn cute," Steve said.

Bucky held him close and kissed his cold cheeks. He saw Becca out of the corner of his eye head back inside. "You think we should head out soon? I know Lilly is still going but I can always bring her back some other time. The babies will need naps soon and we still want to go visit Grant and my parents."
Steve put his hand on Christopher's back and kissed the top of his head. "We should, yeah," he said. "I don't want to have to cut Grant off short. He deserves to see his big brother on his birthday." He stepped out of the rink and started to unlace his ice skates.

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"Okay," Bucky said. "You want to call our monster back in? She will get less mad at you for telling her to stop skating than she will if I tell her." He sat down on the bench next to Steve and sat Christopher beside him as he took off his skates and then his son's tiny skates.

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"Sure thing," Steve said. He gave Bucky's shoulder a squeeze because that was the closest thing to kissing he could do in public. Steve went over to the other rink and told the Lilly that she had to come in. Lilly complained and whined but eventually made her way slowly to the door.

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A little while later, they got to the cemetery and went over to the graves. Grant was protected right next to Bucky's parents and he knew that his son and his parents were happy to see them. Then Bucky noticed a set of fresh flowers on Grant's grave. It wasn't the kind that Steve usually brought when they visited. They were bright pink and yellow and looked like they had only been there about a day since they weren't covered in snow.

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Steve was surprised to see the flowers there and he looked to Bucky. "Do you think Natasha and Clint stopped by?" he asked. Steve usually got white or blue flowers for their little boy and he knew that Bucky had been too busy with Christopher's birthday to visit. "Who else could've visited today?"

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Bucky shook his head. He had no idea. Then it occurred to him that Missy's birthday was in February. He didn't know what day it was but he knew it was February. "Steve..." Bucky whispered and looked up at him. "Missy's birthday in this month. Her aunt must have come by." Missy's grave was in a plot on the other side of town, nearer to her aunt's house. Bucky needed to go visit her sometime for her birthday. But he was surprised that her aunt would come this far just for Grant.

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Steve gave Bucky a surprised look. Of course. Barbara was a good woman who did her best to try and give Missy a second chance. At first, Steve had been bitter and upset over Missy self-destructing and taking their son with her. But now he felt it all was an awful tragedy. He felt himself tear up a bit and he rubbed at his eyes. "We should visit her."

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"Hey, hey," Bucky shook his head and pulled Steve in for a side hug so he wouldn't squish Sarah May. "It's okay, Baby. I was planning on visiting her and you can come along if you want but you don't have to." He knew Steve was still angry at Missy at least a little bit. Bucky had been too but he also understood how addiction worked. He was more angry with himself for not being able to help.
Steve rested his cheek on Bucky's head. "I want to go. I want to do it for her and for her aunt," Steve said. He knelt down at his son's grave. "Hey, Grant, hey, Baby Boy. I hope you're having fun with your Granny and Papaw," he said softly. "Christopher turns one today. He's growing up so fast."

Bucky smiled softly at his husband and then took Christopher from Sarah in one arm so he could kneel down next to Steve with all their children together. "Grant, I have your brother and sister. Christopher is very excited today. Ya-Ya isn't quite yet aware of what's happening so she's a little more tired. I'm betting Papaw and Granny have been cherishing every day they have gotten with you. And Daddy and I can't wait to get to see you again."

Steve sniffled a little. He still cried pretty much every time he came here. He couldn't help it. He wished he had all three squirming little babies in his arms. Grant could've been a big, chubby baby. Or maybe he would've been tiny like Sarah May. People could've confused them for twins since they were so close in age. After a little while, Steve had to stand and pace a few feet back because it hurt too much to see his name on the grave.

Bucky watched Steve move away and he decided it was best to let him have a couple moments to himself. "Baby Boy," Bucky started and wiped his eyes. "You would be five months old here pretty soon. You and Ya-Ya would have made the same milestones together. We would have to have taken an even bigger car to Seneca to fit everyone and the dog. Oh, Grant, Baby, you would love the dog. I hope you aren't allergic. She's really playful and gentle."

Sarah went to go comfort her son while Becca and Lilly were talking to their parents but after a few moments Lilly walked over to Bucky and sat down next to him. She rested her head on his shoulder. "Are you okay?" she asked.

"No," Bucky whispered. He still had both babies in his lap and Christopher was getting restless as Sarah May was falling asleep. "I want them all back," he added a little louder. I want Mom and Dad celebrating their grandson's birthday. I want Mom to be holding Sarah May as she sleeps and Dad is helping cut the cake because I've got to make sure Christopher doesn't throw his food and Grant just won't let Steve put him in his high chair cause he wants his Daddy." Bucky started openly crying then and he squeezed his kids closer to him. "I want Missy back, too. I want her coming to AA and NA and getting better and asking for my help. I want to see her get a job and an apartment and be her own person again."

Lilly started to tear up as well because she wanted her parents back, too, and she hated seeing Bucky this upset. She sat up on her knees so she could hug him around his shoulders and she kissed his
cheek. "I want them back, too," she said softly. "I wish I got to meet Grant. It would have been really loud with three babies but I know he would've been really good."

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"He was so beautiful," Bucky said and choked on a sob. "Such a precious little boy. He just wanted a home and to be protected and cared for." Bucky touched the gravestone carefully. "Your Daddy and I would have kept you safe. We love you so much and not a day goes by that we don't miss you. I see your little face when I sleep sometimes. And I hear the..." his voice broke and he looked away. "...the monitor flat-lining and I see Missy and you on those beds. Just calling out for me to bring you back but I can't."

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"He would have loved living with us," Lilly said, trying her best to be supportive. "I could've shown him how to play ball. Steve wants his baseball team, right?"

Steve came over when he saw his husband crying and he stood behind him so he could stroke his hair. Christopher whined and tried to climb up Bucky’s chest but all he was doing was annoying Sarah May and making her whine.

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Bucky sniffled and nodded. He loved his family so much. He loved how supportive they were. And he loved those he had lost too. And one day he would be back with them. And everyone would be back together again. He just wished it could be now. He sighed and gently touched the flowers. "Grant, Baby, we need to go. Daddy and I will be back in a few days. I'll see you and Papaw and Gran then. Okay? Be a good boy for them, please."

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Steve picked up Christopher so he would stop bothering his sister, who was about two seconds from crying. "I'll bring some pretty flowers to make your bed look even nicer," Steve promised. He kissed his son's cheek and bounced him lightly in his arms. "Come here and give me a hug, Buck," Steve said softly to his husband.

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Bucky wiped his eyes and gently held Sarah May as he got up and pressed himself to Steve. He just clung to him and let himself cry. He wasn't sure if there were other people in the cemetery but he didn't really care at the moment. He just hugged his husband and then looked up into Steve's own red, tearful eyes and gave a weak little smile.

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Steve wrapped his arm around Bucky and gently pet the back of his head. "I love you, Bucky. I miss our boy, too. And I'm sorry you're missing your parents and Missy," he said.

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"I love you too," Bucky said. "I know you are missing our baby boy. And we will come back in a few days. We can go to Missy and then come to Grant and just stay a while and talk to him. Just the
two of us. But, for now, I think Ya-Ya needs a nap and Christopher is dying for us to pay attention
to him again."

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Steve nodded and kissed Christopher's face a few times and promised that they would play when
they got home. Christopher recognized the word ‘play’ and stopped fussing so much. "When we get
home, I can put Sarah May down so you can focus on the birthday boy," Sarah offered.

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"Thank you, Sarah. I'll take you up on that," Bucky agreed and held his daughter close. She was
already asleep in his arms and he didn't want to jostle her too much on their way back home. "She
might need a diaper change so I can do that first if you want me to."

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"Don't worry about it," Sarah said. She didn't mind doing diaper changes and she knew that Bucky
and Steve weren't feeling their best right now. "I'll take care of that too. You just focus on
Christopher for now and giving him a good birthday."
Chapter Summary

Second half of Christopher's birthday.

When they were finally home again, Diana barked and excitedly pranced around at their arrival. Bucky handed Sarah May off to Steve's mother. Then he took Christopher from Steve. "I'm going to get him a snack and then we are going to play a bit. Can you call Tim and make sure he brings Christopher's shoes that he found at work. He took them home and forgot to bring them to me the other day."

Steve nodded and went to call Tim. Christopher exploded into conversation with Bucky and got even more excited when he realized that it was snack time. "Papa," he said and then signed that he was hungry a few times. Christopher was almost always hungry.

"What do you want, Bean?" Bucky asked. "Carrots or strawberries or banana bits or broccoli or oranges?" He smiled and nodded every time he sat a new piece of food in front of his son. "Which one do you want, Little Bean? Whatever you don't want, I'm giving to Daddy because he needs snacks too. And whatever Daddy doesn't want, Papa will eat." He spoke like he was just so excited to have a snack with his son. And he loved the giggles it got out of Christopher.

Christopher focused really hard when he saw Bucky hold up the bananas for him. "Ba....bana," he babbled at Bucky, reaching for the fruit. Steve came in just after and stood behind Bucky so he could rub his shoulders lightly.

Bucky peeled the banana and ripped off bits for Christopher. He leaned back into Steve and felt strong hands rub his tired, tense shoulders. "He picked the banana. What do you want? I want the strawberries if you don't."

Christopher mashed the bananas in his fingers before eating it as messily as possible. "You can have the strawberries. I'm more in the mood for grapes." Steve was fine with either and would prefer Bucky to be able to have what he wanted right now.

"Okay," Bucky said and tilted his head back to look up at Steve. "Kiss me," he requested and smiled.
up at him. "And then help me clean up his face because that child can't eat bananas without covering himself in them."

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Steve leaned down and pressed their lips together. "I love you so much, Handsome," he said. "And I'm so happy we can celebrate our son's birthday." He rubbed his hand up and down Bucky's side once and got a wet paper towel to clean Christopher's face.

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Christopher was a little grumpy about having to have his face cleaned but he let his dad do it anyway. "Dada, no, no, no," he grumped the entire time and then let out a little huff of annoyance once it was all done.

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"Yes, yes, yes," Steve said with a laugh. "You have to get that mess off your face, Bean." He kissed his cheek once it was clean and let Bucky pick him up.

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"Let's go play while Ya-Ya is napping. Soon some friends will be over and Nana will have dinner and cake all made up for your party," Bucky said and squeezed Christopher's little hand in his for a moment.

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Steve gasped excitedly and said, "Is Papa gonna play blocks with you? Are you gonna build with your pop and then knock them all down?"

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"Yes, we are!" Bucky said and went to the living room. He started setting blocks up on the ground. Diana came over and laid down behind Christopher. "Bean, can you ask Daddy if he wants to play?"

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Christopher made himself comfy on the floor with his pop and was about to play. But then he picked up a block and went tottering over to Steve. "Dada!" he called up at him before handing the block over. He tugged on his pant leg and Steve pretended to not understand for a moment until Christopher said 'play'.

Steve sat down next to his husband and placed his block on top of another. "He's getting so smart, Buck."

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"He is so smart," Bucky agreed and lined up three different colored blocks. "Christopher, red," he said and waited to see if he had gotten any better at colors yet.

Christopher looked up a second and then down at the blocks and then hoisted up one red block.
Steve gasped. "Good boy, Christopher. You are so smart!" he said proudly to his son, who laughed and wiggled the block in the air.

"Papa!" he repeated again and held the block out for Bucky to take.

Bucky took the block and held it close. "For me? Thank you, Bean. Can you give Daddy the blue block?" he asked and pointed to Steve. "Blue, Christopher."

Christopher thought for a second and then lifted up the green block and thrust it out to Steve. "Dada!"

“Oh, maybe the red one was a coincidence,” Steve laughed when Christopher held up the green one. "Thank you, son. I love green," he said. He picked up the blue block and handed it to Christopher. "Here, have the blue block. Blue." He smiled over to Bucky. "How did we manage to get such a perfect family?"

"I don't know," Bucky said and started building a foundation for a block tower. "I'm thinking it's got to do with how much we were made for each other, and how much we wanted this life, and probably a little of your god helping us out."

"And now we may have Sarah May's god's blessing, too. Even though, they're kind of the same person, right? Or is that not correct?" Steve wondered and tried to remember what he had learned about other religions when he was in school. "Well, regardless, doesn't hurt to have an extra deity looking down on us."

A few minutes later there was a knock on the door as Natasha and Clint arrived, causing Diana to prance and bark. Bucky got up and picked up Christopher. "Come on, Bean, let's go great your guests. Are you going to be a good host? Gonna invite them in?" he asked and looked to Steve. "Do you want to get Ya-Ya while I let them in?" He gave Steve a kiss and then went to open the door.

"Sure thing," Steve said. When Bucky opened the door, Natasha and Clint greeted Christopher excitedly. The little boy squealed and waved at the two of them. He signed hello to Clint because it had become second nature to know that Clint liked signing over talking.

"Hey, guys," Bucky said warmly. "Come on in. Steve is getting Sarah May." He led them into the
kitchen where Diana decided to jump on them and bark repeatedly with her tail wagging so hard she hit Bucky's leg pretty hard. Raphael was, naturally, hiding out of sight. Clint reached for Christopher and Bucky sighed and handed him over. "You may hold him, you may not keep him. You and me and Tim are all going to be fighting over him tonight."

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"I'm keeping him," Clint said decidedly. "Isn't that right, Christopher?" Clint started to sign over to Christopher and smiled down at him because he loved the little guy so much.

Steve came downstairs with their daughter. Diana followed along Steve's side and nosed at his leg. "Hey, Nat," Steve greeted. "Want me to put your coats away?"

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"I got it, Baby," Bucky said and picked up Natasha and Clint's coats. "Tim should be here soon. And Sam is still coming later, right? Should we wait to have dinner until he gets here? I don't know if Lilly could handle that."

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"Yeah, Sam is coming but he's not going to be able to do dinner," Steve said. "Once Tim shows up, we can have dinner." He kissed Bucky's cheek.

"So what have you done today?" Natasha asked Bucky.

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Bucky turned to Natasha and said, "Well, we went to the zoo and a trainer let us into the feed room and we all got to pet a baby penguin. Christopher was very excited. So was Steve. Sarah May was confused about the whole thing, I think. Then we went ice-skating. And then we visited Grant and my parents. Steve and I shared a breakdown and then we came home and we've been playing with blocks and waited for you guys."

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Nat glanced over at her boyfriend and the birthday boy before looking back at Bucky. "Sounds like someone had a good day so far. It's a shame they don't remember stuff when they're this young, you know? I guess you have to wait until three or four, yeah?"

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"Yeah, it would be nice if he got to remember his first birthday. But that's okay. He will have tons more birthdays," Bucky said with a little grin. "I'll go ahead and help him set the table. Tim should be here soon."

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Tim arrived a few moments later and after greeting everyone, went to go find Raphael since he loved cats. It took a few minutes to get him to come back to the kitchen with everyone else. The house was loud but full of life and Steve looked so happy to have everyone here.

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They all couldn't fit around the table so they just sort of moved whatever chairs they could into the
kitchen and had everyone sit down. It was cozy and intimate. "Okay, Steve, do you want to pray
then I'll read the Jewish prayer." He had gotten a few things from a rabbi and had been practicing
learning how to say them so he could do that for Sarah May. It was difficult to get the words right
but he was getting better as time went on.

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Steve took his usual spot next to Bucky and squeezed his knee. He said a prayer, thanking God for
the food and for bringing them all together in good health. He rubbed Bucky's back encouragingly as
he recited a Jewish prayer, incredibly proud of Bucky for being so involved in Sarah May's heritage.
Clint was the first to dig into his dinner once the prayers were done.

"Bucky," Lilly asked, "Becca says that babies can't remember stuff until they're like...five. Is that
true? Because I feel like I remember stuff from when I was three."

---

"Well, I don't honestly know the answer to that, Lil," Bucky said. "I guess if Becca says they don't
remember until they are five then that's probably right."

Becca squinted her eyes at Lilly and shook his head. "What do you even think you remember from
three years old?"

---

Lilly turned casually to Becca and said slyly, "I remember you picking your nose so deep it was like
you were scratching your brain."

Becca blushed and shot her an annoyed look. "You're making that up," she accused and got even
huffier when Lilly started mimic picking her nose.

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"Alright, alright, gross, stop it," Bucky said and reached across Steve to pull Lilly's finger down.
"Becca was five when you were three. I think that excuses the nose-picking. Also, Lilly, I saw you
pick your nose like three weeks ago while you were watching TV."

---

It was Lilly's turn to blush and Becca snickered. "I see Bucky pick his nose every day," Clint joked.
"He thinks no one can see him in the back room. But I see all." Christopher mashed his dinner into
his face as he chatted baby babble to join the conversation, not wanting to be left out.

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"Yes, Clint, the difference is that I'm not ashamed," Bucky said with a sly smile and took his napkin
to start wiping off Christopher's face. "I may have married a perfect gentleman, but not even he can
tame the dirty hippie that I am and always will be."

---

"Papa," Christopher said in mild frustration. He was perfectly happy to wear his dinner and didn't
want to be cleaned. Steve rubbed his hand over Bucky's back. "I know I married a dirty hippie and
I'm proud of it. He's the best guy I could ever ask for."
"Thank you, Baby," Bucky said happily and kissed Steve's cheek. He looked over to Tim then and made eye contact. "Alright, Timmy my man. You haven't been around lately and I haven't worked with you for weeks. Somehow I always get saddled with Reggie." He glared at Clint for a second. "Anyway, tell us how it's been with that guy... um, Joel, is it?"

Tim smiled shyly. "Things are going okay. We are still together and he's cleaning up. He's still struggling, though," he answered. "I wish I could bring him down to meet you guys but I don't want to have him around kids yet, you know?"

Bucky nodded and gave an apologetic and understanding little smile. He knew how hard it was to let go of addiction. He had had his fair share in that department. "Well, we appreciate it. Right, Steve? And we are more than happy to meet him when you believe he is ready. It's really important that you support him so much. I admire you for not giving up on his care."

Steve held Bucky's hand. "Yeah. We would be happy to meet him. Maybe we can go out to dinner sometime so we can get to know him in a setting that doesn't have kids," he suggested.

"That could work," Tim said and gave a thankful smile. "I think you guys would like him. He just needs some extra patience and understanding. I haven't told my kids or my ex-wife about him yet, though. I'm too worried what will happen. It was hard enough to get the custody I got."

"Yeah," Steve said. "I'm sorry you can't tell your kids about him, but I don't blame you." Steve remembered how heartbreaking it had been to be away from his son for the couple days that Bucky kicked him out of the house. Tim had dealt with much worse than that.

Tim shook his head and smiled. "Anyway, that's not really a pleasant thought for right now. It's a birthday! Christopher should be telling us about something. How about it? What's on your mind, little one?" Christopher just reached a food-covered hand towards Tim and burped. "Good story, Kid," Tim replied.

Steve let out a laugh at his son, who smiled up at them because he knew he did something cute judging by their reactions. Sarah tried to clean him up again but Christopher pulled his hands back and complained at his nana. "That boy is going to make such a mess to clean up," Steve chuckled. "Taking after his papa."

"I've got to have some messy kids," Bucky said and pet his son's hair. "It wouldn't be fair if all of them are neat like you. I don't want to be outnumbered. I'm used to living with messy Barnes' all my
life. Don't want my kids and husband to take over."

"Yeah, Steve takes over everything," Lilly agreed. "Who takes their shoes off at the door? I don't want to walk barefoot all the time. It's cold."

Steve pouted. "That's what the slippers are for."

Sarah turned and explained to their guests, "My boy thinks that just because I raised him one way, that way must be the only right way. It's endearing but it causes some arguments."

"Baby, those slippers are embarrassing," Bucky said and squeezed Steve's leg. "That's why Becca hides them when you aren't here."

"That's why Becca hides them when you aren't here," Bucky looked back over to their friends and grinned at Clint. "I mean, I'm not a mess all the time. I'm really organized at work. Right, guys? I make sure the store looks great. I mean we all spend most of our time fixing what Reggie and those other two mess up."

"But the rabbit ears are adorable," Steve whined under his breath. He really did have a bad habit of picking out horrible clothes just because they had animal ears or faces on them.

"Yeah, the store looks great," Tim agreed. "Until the customers put everything out of order."

Natasha spoke up and looked to Steve. "So, Steve, you'll never believe what happened at the precinct the other day. You remember Richard? He's the one who arrested Clint and Bucky last year in May because they looked like those burglars we were looking for."

Sometimes Steve avoided hanging out with Natasha or Sam because he missed being a police officer so much and he didn't want to feel that pang in his stomach when something happened that he would've usually known by now. "Yeah, I remember. What happened?" he asked, keeping his face neutral.

Natasha grinned and set her fork down so she could lean in a little closer. "He came out. Stood up in front of us after a briefing and said he figured out he was gay. He told us he felt confident telling us because of you. You were kind of his inspiration. And he admitted to me later that you were part of the reason he questioned his sexuality to begin with and he had a big crush on you."

Steve certainly hadn't been expecting that. He looked over to Bucky in shock and then to Clint to confirm that she wasn't joking. "Wait... really?" Fury must have been having a field day with being the chief to the gayest police force in the city – first him, then Susan, now Richard. "Did he always have a crush on me?"

Natasha nodded and sat back again. "I'm not joking. It happened. Fury glared at him for a long
moment and said, 'Alright, kid, come to my office so I can give you the same speech I gave Rogers.' He looked terrified. But everyone responded to him pretty well. You sort paved the way after you came out. I don't how long he was crushing on you but he was. Still is, apparently. Says he misses you."

---

Steve laughed. He remembered the talk Fury had with him and, while he had been nervous for that talk as well, everything went much better than he thought it would. He felt a bit proud of himself for being open with who he was because now other people wouldn't feel the need to hide. "You can tell him that he's welcome to come to events at the shelter. Maybe he'll even meet someone he likes there."

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Bucky's head shot up and he looked to Natasha, shaking his head. "Tell him the husband says he is allowed to come to events at the shelter if he doesn't still have a crush on Steve or if Steve isn't there. That or he should be prepared to face me if he flirts. He put my ass in jail, I'm not letting him hit on my husband too."

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"Buck-" Steve said, getting a bit flustered. He supposed it was fair for Bucky to get defensive about making sure someone wasn't crushing on his husband - especially when that someone arrested him wrongfully. However, Steve couldn't help but be a bit sensitive over it and Bucky's jealousy after the whole Tish thing.

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"I'm just saying," Bucky said defensively but quietly back. "Of course, he's welcome to come to the shelter. That's why we have it. And I'm sure he will make friends. Maybe even meet someone nice like Tim." He shrugged and hoped Steve would move on. He felt sort of bad about his outburst but he also felt his concern was justified. Too many people wanted Steve.

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Clint looked a bit guilty because he was the one who helped feed into the misunderstanding that Steve was cheating with Tish. It was partly his fault Bucky's paranoid jealousy issues got worse.

"We should do some sort of social event there," Steve said. "Make it so that it can be a bunch of people from both in and out of the shelter can get to know each other."

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Tim piped up happily. "Yes! I was sort of hoping you would think so. I was thinking of a gay dating event. Maybe. Get a lot of people in and have three to five-minute mini date things and have snacks and drinks and stuff like that. What do you think? It's your shelter."

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"Dates?" Steve asked. He wasn't sure if he wanted to have dating involved with an event run outside of a church. "Maybe... five-minute friendly conversations, no romantic dating? And if they get a date out of it, then so be it. There are some younger kids there who may want to get to know other people like them, but I wouldn't want them set up on a five-minute date with an older adult."
"Oh, yeah, that's true," Tim said, a little embarrassed he even brought it up. "We can just think of something else. I'll help how I can."

Bucky could tell that Tim felt ashamed. For all his charm and boldness at first, he was also easily shut down and he felt guilty about everything. He had a hard time taking criticism at work. He would just start apologizing for everything and not make eye contact. He was like a puppy.

Steve caught on to the fact that Tim was embarrassed. "I think it was still a good idea," he said. "We just got to modify it to make it more age-appropriate. You should write down more of your ideas when you get them so we can do more future events. You know the best out of everyone what the people in the shelter need and what would make them happy."

Tim nodded awkwardly and Clint clapped him on the back before saying, "I think we have all pretty much finished with dinner. Is it time for cake now, finally? I heard Mrs. Rogers was making the cake and you know how much I love your cake, ma'am."

"I had to make two cakes since there were so many of us," Sarah said happily. She never looked old and tired but Steve noticed she looked a lot younger and livelier ever since she moved in with her big family – today, especially. Steve helped her clean up and she put the cakes on the table. "We have to sing happy birthday to Christopher first. Bucky, you and Steve have to stand next to him so I can take a picture of all three of you."

Bucky obediently and happily got up and stood next to his son, leaning down to give him a kiss and fix his hair. "Steve, Baby, can you hold Ya-Ya so she's in her brother's first birthday pictures, please? I don't want her to be forgotten about."

Steve picked up their daughter and cuddled her close. "We need one with everyone first," Steve insisted. It was a tight squeeze but Sarah took a picture of the whole table, then Becca took a picture of the babies, their parents, and Sarah, and then Sarah took the camera back. When everyone started to sing happy birthday, Sarah May looked at all of them in surprise and Christopher started to squeal, knowing that all eyes were on him.

Bucky spoke softly to his son as everyone sang. He wanted him to know that he was such a good boy and this day was all about him. "Yes, Bean. It's your birthday. Everyone's here for you today, Christopher. Isn't that amazing? And you get cake from Nana and some presents. And Papa is going to sing you some lullabies tonight, Baby."

Christopher smiled brightly up at Bucky and squirmed in his seat. He got this way when he didn't know what to do with all the energy he had. Steve counted to three and tried to get Christopher to
blow out his candle, but in the end, he had Lilly blow it out for him. Sarah then cut the cake and started to dish them out to everyone. "Thank you for being such an amazing parent to our boy," Steve said softly, kissing the curve of Bucky's jaw. Sarah May reached her hand while Steve was distracted to grab a handful of her brother's cake.

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Bucky hummed and leaned into Steve. Then he noticed his daughter and he gasped. "Ya-Ya, Honey," he started and gently took the cake from her hand. "You can't have cake yet, Sweet Pea. This is for your brother. I'm sorry. Soon you can have more solid food. But cake comes much later." He wiped her hand and then kissed her cheek so maybe she wouldn't get too upset with him.

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When Bucky gasped and had a concerned voice instead of his happy voice, her bottom lip jutted out and she started to cry a little. "Aw, look at what you've done," Natasha scolded Bucky teasingly. Sarah May stopped crying within less than a minute because when Bucky kissed her, it was a good enough distraction.

"When can she eat real food?" Lilly asked.

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Bucky sighed and took Sarah May from Steve to hold her so she knew he didn't mean to upset her. "She doesn't have any teeth yet," Bucky said and ran his fingers over her dark hair. "And I don't think sugar this early is a good idea either. I didn't even want Christopher to have sugar when he did but Steve won out on that one."

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Steve smiled guiltily at the mention of sugar. Christopher, meanwhile, was diving headfirst into his piece of cake. "Can she eat mushy things like baby food and applesauce?" Lilly asked. "Cause the other day I didn't want to finish my applesauce and Becca told me I couldn't give her the leftovers."

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Bucky looked over to Lilly and sighed. "Is it sugar-free applesauce?" Lilly shook her head. "Then, no. If you don't want it just save it and I'll finish it." He put Sarah May back into her high chair and sat down to have his own piece of cake. They were just enjoying themselves for a while before the door rang and Sam finally arrived. Bucky internally groaned. He and Sam were still not entirely friendly. He wouldn't dare mention that to Steve, but he still got a little grumpy whenever he was coming over. Which he knew wasn't fair. Sam was so good with Steve and the kids and he cared about them all. But Bucky was good at holding a grudge and this one he had a hard time dropping.

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Steve got up and smiled brightly when Sam arrived. He gave him a big hug and even Diana seemed to like Sam a little more than everyone else. It was probably because Sam always brought over a dog treat. "Hey, how's the birthday boy doing?" Sam asked as he approached Christopher and gave him a pat on his head. "Did you guys do presents yet?"

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"Hello, Sam," Sarah said brightly and stood up to give him a hug. She would never admit it, but Sam
was her favorite of Steve's friends. His life experiences as a trained military medic were similar to hers as a nurse and they liked to swap stories. "No presents yet. We are just now having cake if you would like any?"

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Sam gave her a hug back and took a seat. "Great! I was afraid I was going to be too late. Cake would be terrific," he said.

Natasha smirked because she knew that Bucky wasn't fond of Sam. She didn’t get it either. Everyone else loved him. But she did enjoy watching Bucky try to handle being around him. "So did you guys pick out a birthday for Sarah May?" she asked.

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"Not yet," Bucky said and looked to Steve. "We know she was born around two weeks before Christmas. So we just need to decide on a day around the thirteenth to the sixteenth. But we need to research to see if any of those days are bad choices. Like a ruthless dictator was born then or something."

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"What if you find out her real birthday somehow and it's Stalin's birthday. Would you celebrate her real birthday or the birthday you chose for her?" she asked, mostly joking around.

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Bucky thought for a second and blinked a few times like he hadn't even thought of that. Becca, who seemed to finally be interested to join the discussion, piped up. "Oh, my god. Stalin was born on the eighteenth of December." She looked to Natasha like she wasn't sure if she purposefully said that because she knew or if Natasha was just psychic or something.

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Natasha knew that Stalin had a birthday sometime at the end of the year but she didn't know the exact day. If she didn't know Becca and how big of a bookworm she was, Natasha would've been more concerned why she knew that. "So yeah. What if you find out that Sarah May was born on the eighteenth?"

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"Well, it's not likely that we will ever know Sarah May's actual birthdate or anything else about where she comes from," Bucky said and looked to his daughter who seemed to be getting a little sleepy. "So, I just suppose we won't pick the eighteenth and we will stick to whatever birthday we give her."

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Steve stroked his hand over Sarah May's hair once and kissed her cheek. He would probably have to put her to bed soon. "If one day of Hanukkah last year was between those dates, we should have that be her birthday," Steve suggested.

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"Oh, my god, Steve!" Bucky said with wide worried eyes as realization hit him. "It was her first
Hanukkah and we only celebrated Christmas! Oh, my god, we missed her first Hanukkah.” He looked to his sleepy little girl and watched her big eyes shutting slowly as she looked up at him. Of course, it wasn’t their fault. They hadn’t even had the thought of her being Jewish until they talked to Fred after the New Year anyway. But he still felt awful.

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Clint and Natasha exchanged looks because these guys really were huge goobers when it came to things like celebrating and making memories with their kids. "It's okay, Buck, we didn't know she was Jewish back then. And Hanukkah may have already passed by the time we got her, right?" Steve said and looked to Becca. “Becca, can you look up when it was last year?"

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Becca shrugged and pushed around a bit of cake. "Yeah, I'll check my calendar from last year," she said and gave Steve a nod.

Bucky calmed down a little and ran a hand through his hair. "Okay, yeah. We can check. Baby, do you want to put Ya-Ya to sleep and then we can do presents or do you want her to stay up?"

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"The poor girl is falling asleep where she sits," Steve said. "I'll put her to bed and then we can do presents." He cradled his daughter against his chest and sung to her softly as he carried her to the nursery. She went out like a light and Steve returned barely five minutes later.

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Bucky had all the presents set out on the table by the time Steve came back. Christopher was whining and trying his best to grab a present that was almost in his reach. "Steve, he's really impatient," Bucky said and moved the present further from his reach.

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"Papa!" Christopher complained. He had learned from Christmas that the bright boxes meant fun times were coming.

"Which one should we give him first?" Steve asked.

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"Do we want him to have ours for or let his aunts and uncles go first?" Bucky asked and gestured at the large box that Clint was holding tightly to his chest. He seemed proud of whatever was inside. "I know one of these are from Monty and Evan because they couldn't be here so they dropped it off at the record shop."

---

"Let's let everyone else give him theirs first." Steve was excited for Christopher to get their presents, but he figured it was polite for guests to go first.

Since Clint was still holding onto his present proudly, Sam pushed his towards Christopher. "Whatever Clint has looks like it's better than mine, so I don't want to follow up after his," Sam laughed. Inside the present was a little bear dressed as a policeman.
Christopher pulled the bear out with a little help from Steve and when he got his little hands on it, shook it and yelled loudly. "Dada! Loo!" He shoved the bear up near Steve's face and squeezed it, discovering it made noises.

"Wow!" Steve said, loving how Christopher's reaction to anything interesting was to make his Dad see it too. "That's so nice, Christopher! I love your new bear. Say 'thank you' to your Uncle Sam."

Christopher looked where Steve was pointing and reached a hand out to Sam. He thought for a second and then finally said, "No!" as he smiled and held up the bear.

Sam chuckled and gave Christopher a tiny high five. "No problem, Christopher. I'm glad you like it, little man."

Steve laughed and told his son to be polite but he also knew he had a limited vocabulary and couldn't say much. "Clint, do you want to go next?" Steve asked. Christopher was having a grand old time squeezing the bear to make noises come out of it.

"Yes!" Clint said and set his box down on the table near Christopher. He helped him open it up and toss all the paper aside. He opened it up to reveal a giant rocking elephant that Christopher could sit on and ride around the house.

Christopher tore at the paper as best as his little hands could manage. When he saw the large elephant, he pointed at it and squealed. Steve set the elephant on the floor so he could put Christopher on top of it. "Your uncle Clint is so good to you, Sweetheart! What a great elephant you have!"

Christopher was incredibly confused at first by how he was meant to use the elephant. He just sat on it and stared up at Steve for a long second. Bucky grabbed for a few of the presents that he and Steve got for Christopher and said, "Baby, should we just open the presents that are clothes and things? He isn't going to be interesting in them."

"But the puppy outfit is so nice," Steve said pathetically. Becca and Lilly both rolled their eyes at him. "Maybe he will get a little excited over that at least."

Sarah laid a hand on her son's arm. "Steve, Love, he won't."

Bucky gave his husband a sympathetic little kiss and then started opening up all of the presents that weren't toys. After a while, he nodded to Natasha and Tim. "You two can go ahead and give him
your presents if you want to. He may be a little distracted, though."

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Tim went a little overboard with his present - not as much as Clint - because he was nostalgic of when his kids were babies. He got a bunch of different noisemaking toys and a few more blocks to add to his collection. "This boy is spoiled," Steve laughed as he watched Christopher try and decide which toy he was going to play with.

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"Thanks, Timmy," Bucky said. "He's going to have so much fun with these new toys. I'm hoping he wears himself out soon." He leaned in and lowered his voice so only Tim could hear and Clint could read his lips, "He better wear himself out because I want to jump his daddy's bones at some point tonight."

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Clint smirked and started signing back at Bucky using some of their own coded signs that Steve couldn't understand, 'As if you needed your son's birthday as an excuse to jump his bones.' Steve was too busy playing with their son to notice Clint signing anyway.

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Bucky nodded and signed back, 'No, but let's be honest, he looks so sexy when he is taking care of our child. It's such a turn on to see him being a good father.'

"No, no fair," Tim complained. "No secret signs. I don't know the secret signs! I'm still learning regular signs, you guys."

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Clint turned to Tim and said, "Bucky is going to fuck his husband tonight because he's turned on by him being a good dad." He made sure to speak quietly enough so the girls and Sarah on the other end of the table at least wouldn’t hear.

Tim laughed. "He does have that appeal, Bucky. I bet he thinks the same when you're taking care of them, too."

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Bucky grinned shamelessly and nodded. "I mean, fatherhood is the sexiest thing to happen to Steve and that's saying something because that man is fine as all hell." He looked over at Steve who was currently slumped over trying to get Christopher to play with his new plush toys instead of blocks.

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Steve tickled Christopher and made silly noises at him, totally caught up in how much he loved his son. "I wish Natasha loved kids like that," Clint said since Nat was currently off in the bathroom. "I wouldn't break up with her for it, of course. But I wish we could have kids."

---

Bucky nodded solemnly and reached out to squeeze Clint's shoulder. "I wish you could too. Maybe things will change. Maybe you can adopt at some point. That could be really great. There are tons of
babies who need homes. Maybe she would be willing to do that later.”

"Wait. You mean to tell me that you plan on letting there be kids left over for other couples to adopt?" Clint asked in mock shock, smirking over at Bucky. After adopting three kids in a year, Bucky and Steve had a reputation of being baby magnets.

"Don't be fresh," Bucky sassed back and flicked Clint in the head. "We don't adopt every baby we see. We just adopt most babies we see. There is a distinct difference, I believe." Although, it was pretty likely that they would never pass up an opportunity to adopt a child in need.

"Name one baby you came across that needed a home and you didn't adopt it," Clint defended, shooing away Bucky's hand after he flicked him. "Oh wait, that's right, you can't. Cause you took them all in."

"We are stopping at eighteen at the most. That way we have our baseball teams. Team Daddy against Team Pops," Bucky said and watched Christopher chuck a block across the room like he was already trying out for his spot on the team.

"You're lucky you've got a stay-at-home parent to keep track of your baseball teams," Tim laughed. Sam went over to Christopher and gave him the block again to throw. "So what don't you like about him? He seems nice," Clint asked, nodding at Sam.

Bucky gave Clint a sharp look and then signed, 'It's not that I dislike him. He just rubs me the wrong way. He's always got something to say about how I do things. The first time I met him, he brought up the fact that Steve complained to him about how messy I am.'

‘Rude,’ Clint signed back. ‘Maybe he's one of those well-to-do snobs. Does he come from a rich family or something? Do you know?’ Clint frowned as Sam picked Christopher up and pretended he was an airplane.

Bucky shook his head and signed, 'Not sure. I just don't think he likes me very much. Sometimes I think he believes that I'm not the best person for Steve. But Steve loves being his friend and Natasha thinks he is great, too, so I can't say anything about it to Steve.'

'If he thinks that, then he's an asshole,' Clint signed to Bucky.

Sam came over to them with Christopher in his arms. "Hey, Bud, I think someone needs their diaper
changed." Clint felt like it was almost like he went out of his way to make Bucky handle a shitty diaper so Steve didn't have to.

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Bucky sighed and took his son from Sam. "Alright, Bean, did you shit on your Uncle Sam?" he asked and held him up to check. "Yep, you did. Let's go get you cleaned up so Daddy can talk to his friends. You might even need to go night-night soon."

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Christopher was having way too much fun to go to bed. "No nigh," he said patiently to his pops. "Play." He snuggled close to Bucky and laid his head on his shoulder, trying to win him over.

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When Bucky went up to change Christopher's diaper, Clint and Tim went to Steve. They were Bucky's best friends and they were with him at work all the time. And they were very good at meddling. "Hey," Tim started and he and Clint pulled Steve aside, all serious faces and concern. "You got to talk to Bucky before he starts spiraling again. You know how insecure he is. He thinks Sam doesn't like him. I don't see any issues with him; he seems lovely. But Bucky's got it in his head and you know he's not good at letting things resolve without some help."

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"What?" Steve balked. "Sam thinks he's great. Why would he think-" Steve started to say but then he huffed. Logic usually didn't work with Bucky in these situations, love and attention did. He went to the nursery quickly and came to stand behind his husband and he put his hands on his waist. "Look at you taking care of our son like that," he hummed, kissing the back of his neck. "Have I told you how hot you are?"

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Bucky chuckled and glanced back for a second, pushing against Steve as he finished getting Christopher into a fresh diaper. "Yeah, you have said. But I won't blame you if you want to say it again," he requested and grabbed for Christopher's pants again. "Did you leave all our friends to fend for themselves down there with the girls?"

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Steve slid his hands up Bucky's sides. "They can handle themselves for a few minutes. All I wanted was a little alone time with my perfect husband," Steve said. "We're totally going to celebrate together after everyone goes to bed, right?"

---

Bucky nodded and turned around in Steve's arms, holding Christopher. "Yes, I was planning on it," he said and glanced to Sarah May who was asleep soundly in her crib. "Ya-Ya probably won't wake up and Christopher will be too sleepy here pretty soon after we p-l-a-y some more with him."

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"Good," he said. Steve pet his fingers through Bucky's hair and kissed his cheek. "He's going to have a real good time. He already is. I can't believe how enthusiastic he's getting over all his toys. He's starting to catch on, I guess."
Bucky gave their son a kiss on his cheek and Christopher giggled. "I'm not kidding when I say that he is the smartest little baby I have ever met. Smarter than Becca and Lilly were at his age, definitely smarter than me." He sighed happily and leaned in to give Steve a kiss. "He's our perfect Bean."

"You hear that, Christopher? You're our smart, little peanut." He kissed Christopher's cheek and then put his arm around Bucky's waist. "Let's bring him back down to play with his aunts and uncles. I'm sure Clint wants to hold him some more."

"Clint would gladly take him home for a week," Bucky said and handed their son to Steve so he could double-check that Sarah May was sleeping still. He watched her breathe for a few seconds and then adjusted the plush giraffe she had tucked next to her.

"As if he'd be able to take him past my mom. He's never getting babysitting duty if she has a chance to watch him. She's a bigger baby hog than Clint is," Steve said. Sarah May made soft, sleepy sounds as she laid in her crib. "How's she looking?"

"She looks good," Bucky whispered and pet their daughter's hair. "She looks like she doesn't want us to bug her." He watched her for a few more seconds and then started heading back downstairs where Tim was saying goodbye to everyone, ready to head off.

Steve would've loved to cuddle his daughter but he was in no mood to risk upsetting her and waking her up. He walked over to Tim and gave him a big hug. "Thank you for coming over. It means a lot that you celebrated with us," he said.

Bucky gave Tim a firm hug as well and saw him out, telling him to call once he was home. Pretty soon it was just Sam left and he and Steve were talking as Bucky played with Christopher. The girls and Sarah had started watching a movie together in Sarah's room. Bucky just helped Christopher build block towers and mash them back down with a bright pink ball gripped in one hand.

Sam and Steve chatted amongst each other for a little while, but, ultimately, he gave Steve a hug and headed out as well. "I got to head back, Bud. I'll catch you later." He waved at Bucky and said, "See you later, hippie. Happy birthday, Christopher!"

After Sam left, Steve laid down on the floor next to his two favorite men. "You guys having fun here?"

Bucky watched Sam go and just sort of stared after him for a few seconds before looking over at
Steve and going for a smile. "We are having fun, yes," Bucky said and pet Christopher's hair. "But someone is looking a little bit sleepy now. And he keeps tugging on his toes for some reason."

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"Are your little feet tired, Bean?" Steve asked as he tickled the bottom of Christopher's foot. He let out a tired whine and pulled his foot back from his dad's finger. "Do you think something's wrong?" Steve asked.

---

Bucky knit his brow and carefully grabbed Christopher's ankle. He slipped his sock off and didn't see anything wrong. Then he slipped the other one off and found nothing on that foot either. "Are you just being grumpy about your feet, Baby Boy?" he asked and checked the feet again before getting a loud, angry whine from Christopher again.

---

"Maybe he's in a mood right now. I'll keep an eye on it tomorrow and I'll take him to the doctor if I think anything is up," Steve decided. He leaned over and kissed Bucky's cheek. "Let's sing him his lullabies and get him to sleep before he gets really grumpy."

---

Bucky agreed and picked up their son as he got up slowly. He pushed the toys over with his foot and felt Christopher curl up against him tiredly. "Oh, yeah, this is a sleepy little boy. He can't keep his eyes open at all." He chuckled and kissed his son. "Your first birthday was a big deal, wasn't it?"

---

Steve quickly picked up all of the toys and put them in Christopher's toy chest. Raphael lifted his head when he saw them pack up because this meant that, at long last, there wouldn't be commotion in the house. "He looks so cute cuddling you. Just imagine when he's three or four and he's practically a little monkey clinging onto you."

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Bucky whined and looked to Steve with big eyes. "No, no, don't say that. I don't want him growing up too fast. He's already a year old. That's already one year done, Steve. A whole year done." He held tightly to his son and pouted up at his husband.

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"I want him to stay little forever, too." Smile smiled. "But he's going to be more and more amazing with every day he's here to grow up and learn from us. One day he's going to be helping us at the shelter or helping stock the back of the record shop because you know Clint will totally give him a job there if he wants."

---

Bucky sighed and walked up the stairs with Steve in tow. "Stop it. You're going to make me cry," he said, mostly teasing. "It's hard enough for me that in a few months, Becca will be able to get her first job. I can't think of this little guy working too."
Christopher was already half asleep in Bucky's arms. It was goddamned adorable. "Becca is going to hoard all of her money for college and probably graduate without a single penny of debt to her name," Steve said. "Maybe it'll teach her patience with others after working for a while."

"That would be nice," Bucky mumbled and set Christopher on the changing table. "Will you grab some pajamas for him?" It was a lot easier for him to get Christopher out of his clothes when he was sleepy and wasn't going to put up too much of a fight. Bucky was just grateful that he grew out of his phase of not wanting to sleep in anything but his diaper.

Steve picked out some adorable dinosaur pajamas with little dino prints at the bottom of the feet. "He's so loved, Buck. And not just by us. He's such a lucky little guy." Steve pet Christopher's cheek lightly while Bucky changed him. "Are you ready for your papa to sing you some bedtime songs, Bean?"

Christopher just stared up at them, eyes drooping and his breathing slowing down. Bucky laughed quietly. "I think that's a yes." He let Steve pick up their son and put him in his crib. He was very compliant and let his daddy lay him down and tuck Bourbon the plush dog down next to him. "Okay, Bean, night-night," Bucky said quietly and started singing a lullaby to him.

Christopher was so ready for bed. Sometimes he fought to stay up but nights like these were a godsend for parents. He snuggled with the doggie he'd had since the day he came home and fell asleep within minutes to his papa's singing. Steve watched their son fall asleep and squeezed Bucky's hand. "Happy birthday, son," he said to their boy.

"Happy birthday, Christopher," Bucky repeated and quietly lead Steve out of the nursery. He checked to make sure that both girls were in their rooms and at least close to going to sleep. Then he shut out the hall light and brought Steve to their room, quietly pulling him over to the bed.

Once inside their bedroom, Steve fell onto the bed with his husband and held the sides of his face. "Our family is amazing and you helped bring us all together, Bucky. Thank you for being by my side since the day I met you."

"I love you, Baby," Bucky answered and giggled just a little bit. "You ever find yourself confused as hell as to how this even happened to us? It's like this miracle just appeared and we had to get on board because it wasn't waiting. And now we have a house and three kids and one of them just turned a year old."

"It's because God had a plan for us. He brought us together and not only are we happy, but we're helping other people. There's almost two dozen people at the shelter finding refuge there. Cops at our
precinct are able to come out. You helped get Tim a job and get back on his feet. We were able to help those people because of a little bit of faith and a lot of dedication to each other," Steve said.

---

"I think it's pretty great that other officers can come out now because of you," Bucky said. "But why did it have to be the guy who arrested me and locked me in a cell all day without food or bathroom access? And I had to listen to Clint's whining the entire time. At work, I can tune it out, but, in a cell, it's a little more difficult."

---

"He was an ass, I know," Steve agreed. "I nearly decked him that day." He shrugged. "But we got to stick together, us gay officers. At least enough to be civil to each other." He pressed a few kisses to Bucky's face. "Come on, Love. Let's talk about something nicer."

---

"Okay, you're right. It's in the past. And maybe he was working through stuff at the time," Bucky offered and rolled them so he was on top of Steve. "I wanted to ask if we could talk about something. It's not too serious. I just want to know where we stand."

---

"Well, he was still a jerk, even if he was going through some stuff," Steve said casually. He leaned up and kissed Bucky's cheek once he rolled on top of him. "What do you want to talk about, Sweetheart?" he asked.

---

"You mentioned recently that you bought a sex toy?" Bucky asked as quietly as he thought possible. "And you were considering using it with me? I just want to know what's been going through your head. Because I threw mine out because I didn't think you'd ever change your mind. So I want to know if you did all this because you are interested or if you just felt bad."

---

Steve blushed brightly and nudged Bucky off so he could dig a shoebox out from underneath their bed. Inside it was a dildo that was as close to Phillip as he could remember, a vibrating plug, and a few other small sex toys he didn't know all that much about but the shopkeeper suggested it to him and he was so flustered he just bought them so he could get out quicker. "I felt bad," he admitted. "But, I really want to have an open mind and I know it would make you happy. And I want to make you happy."

---

Bucky sat up and gave Steve a little sympathetic smile. He noticed that the dildo was actually bigger than Phillip and, despite his best attempts to quell the curiosity, he still really wanted to know if he could get all of it in. "Steve, Baby, I didn't mean to make you feel bad. I just didn't want you to think that I was holding on to it as an off-chance that we broke up. I didn't want you to feel like that at all. You're stuck with me for life."

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"I know you didn't mean to make me feel bad. I just... I want to be the sort of husband that does his
best to do what makes you happy and what makes you feel good. Even if that means trying things I otherwise wouldn't have," Steve said. "It's not about why you kept your toys. It's about why you threw them away. And that's on me."

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"Baby," Bucky said softly and reached out to tug Steve close to him. "I love you. And I love that you did this for me. And I would love to have you use those toys on me. But I only want you to if you want to see what it's like. Don't do it because you want to see me happy. I don't want you to be upset later. I want you to do it because you want to know what it's like to pleasure me like that. And I also want you to know that if you do try it and you do end up hating it, then we don't ever do it again. I don't want you to be upset."

---

Steve huffed, getting frustrated with himself. "I don't have any interest in these things, Buck," he complained. "I don't get the appeal. I don't see what makes these better than the actual thing," he ranted. "I bought these for you. If you won't use them with me, then at least use them for when I'm not around and you want to get off."

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"Steve, Baby," Bucky said with surprise and a little hurt in his voice. "Why are you getting mad? I'm trying to explain to you that I recognize your concerns about me using toys - concerns and aversions that you've had since the beginning of our relationship. I just... you know what my concern is? You know what I'm worried about? I'm worried that I'll use them and you'll change your mind and get angry. You'll see it as a form of cheating or something because it's not you inside me like you want. Or I'll just keep them around and you'll be paranoid that I'm using them all the time and you'll be worried that you aren't good enough."

---

"I just wish you'd let me use this stuff with you because I don't want to be the husband that makes his husband throw things out just because I don't like it," Steve said quickly in explanation. He knew it wasn't a good reason to justify experimenting with something that Steve clearly didn't have an interest in but it was the only reason he had. "I don't know how I'm going to feel if you use these or keep them around. But right now, I know I don't feel good being the asshole that made you throw out your own property."

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"Oh, my god," Bucky breathed out in exasperation and stared up at the ceiling for a few seconds. "Honey," he said and looked to Steve. He hadn't yet realized that in married life he had developed a habit of using 'honey' with Steve when he was frustrated. "You are not an asshole. You did not make me throw out my property. You know that right? It was my choice because I wanted you to be happy. And now you're making choices because you want me to be happy. And now I need you to make one more choice. You either decide right now to use one of those toys on me tonight or you decide not to and we will forget it for now. I'll do whichever you decide."

---

Steve had caught on to the 'honey' thing and immediately scowled because he knew he was on thin ice right now. He looked down at the box. He was fucking determined to prove that he wasn't a stuffy husband but he also wasn't ready to use the dildo on Bucky either. So he shoved his hand into
the box and pulled out one of the toys the shopkeeper harangued him into buying. "Let's use whatever these are," he said, placing a set of anal beads between them with a stubborn look.

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Bucky stared at the anal beads for a second then looked up to Steve and nodded. "You got it, Baby," he said and gave a little smile to him for reassurance. "Those are anal beads. You might end up liking how my ass looks when you pull them back out. Looks pretty nice." He hoped Steve would get some enjoyment from this entire venture.

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"Pull them out?" Steve looked down at the things for a moment and then back at Bucky, putting two and two together. "Do I pull it out like I'm trying to start a lawnmower? Or am I supposed to do it slow?" he asked as he put the shoebox away.

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"No, god, please don't yank it out," Bucky said hastily. "You just go one at a time. You can go really slow or moderately quick so long as it's smooth and I'm well lubed up. You just work them in so all of them have disappeared and then you bring them all back out again.

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Steve nodded and then slid his hand up Bucky's shirt to stroke his lower stomach. "I'm sorry I was being difficult, Love," Steve apologized. "Let's start this night over. How's that?" He was still apprehensive and frustrated but he figured he made a decision and making a decision was better than continuing this argument all night. And he didn’t want to end such a good day like this.

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"Yeah, let's start over," Bucky agreed. "It's my fault, Baby. I looked a gift horse in the mouth. I should have just let you do it. I'll let you be in control now. I promise. I'm here. I'm yours. I love you so much. Okay?" He settled back on the bed and lifted his arms up over his head so Steve could easily slip his shirt off.

---

Steve drew Bucky in for a slow kiss and then started to take his husband's clothes off. "I love you too, Baby. You don't have to be sorry for anything." He kissed up his bare stomach and chest before sucking a mark onto his neck.

---

Bucky went quiet and just let Steve touch all over him. He still felt bad for upsetting him but he figured if Steve wanted to try this out even just to please Bucky, he should let him. And Bucky wasn't opposed at all to having some toy play again after so long. He just wished they both were going into it with a mutual interest. But if trying this even once would help Steve felt less bad about Bucky tossing his things.

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"I love you, Buck," Steve said gently as he pressed his hand between Bucky's legs. "I want to make you feel how much I love you. Everything you do excites me and makes me feel so happy, Sweetheart."
Bucky whimpered just slightly and spread his legs for Steve. He loved when Steve praised him or talked about how much he loved him. Luckily for Bucky, Steve was very liberal with his praise and love. He didn't ever go very long without hearing it.

Steve slid Bucky's pants down his hips. "I love how you give it all up to me. I love it when all I got to do is kiss you or say I'm in the mood and you're here for me, ready to make us both feel good." Once he had Bucky naked underneath him, he licked up Bucky's shaft, careful and slow and teasingly.

"Steve, Baby, you know I'm literally always horny for you," Bucky agreed and lifted his legs just a bit. "Sometimes you just have to look at me and I'm ready. Or," he chuckled and looked down at Steve. "Sometimes you just do little things that really get to me for some reason. Like once, you were in the kitchen cooking. And I just happened to walk by when you had a tomato in your hand. You just like looked at it like you were confused as to what it was even for and I thought you looked so damn cute and I wanted to jump you right there."

Steve got the lube and started to pour it on his fingers. "A tomato?" Steve laughed, finding it so fucking perfect that Bucky would still have the hots for him when he was looking at a tomato. "I was confused because I usually don't buy that brand and some different brand was on the sticker," he explained.

"Oh, okay, I see," Bucky said with a giggle and relaxed himself to let Steve's fingers in. "There was also this one time you were picking up Christopher's toys before bed and you stubbed your toe on the couch and swore pretty loud because no one else was around. Kind of wished I could have fucked you on the couch and made it all better. But with my luck, the girls would have come downstairs."

Steve remembered that time too and groaned. "I was so proud that I didn't step on a single block and of course I had to go and slam my dumb foot," he remarked. Steve eased a finger inside his husband as he leaned down to kiss his shoulder. "I had half the mind to jump you at work because your hair was in a messy bun that day and you were in the middle of telling Reggie off for sneaking into the back to smoke again."

Bucky moaned a little at even the one finger. "You know, that might be fun. You could surprise me at work and fuck me in the office. We'd give Clint something to talk about. But we would have to make sure Tim wasn't there because the poor guy embarrasses easy and he would have a heart attack."

"I'd do it," Steve purred, curling his finger inside Bucky. "I'd love to pin you against the wall or over
the desk and fuck you quick. We can give Clint Christopher as a distraction. It'd give us enough time that he won't even know what we're up to," he said.

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"Fuck," Bucky whined and nodded his head enthusiastically. "Yes, please. Let's do that. I want to be pinned over the desk and fucked hard." He reached down and started tugging on his cock. "Maybe Reggie will come back there and he'll be so fucking high he won't have a clue if it's real or not."

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Steve snorted and shook his head. "Keep Reggie out of my fantasy of fucking you at your job, Buck," he said. Rather than inserting another finger, Steve pushed in the first and smallest bead into Bucky's ass.

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Bucky was going to apologize but then he felt the first bead go inside him and his whole body arched off the bed as he gasped and quickly stifled his moaning with a pillow. He hadn't had toys inside him in so long. It almost felt new.

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Steve was shocked by the response. That was definitely new. Just to test how the beads worked, Steve pulled the first one out of Bucky's hole before pushing it back in again. Then he worked to push in a second. "Look at me, Bucky," he said softly. "And tell me how you feel."

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Bucky was so grateful that Steve decided to try the beads out. They felt so good and he couldn't wait to have them all inside and feel Steve pull them one by one from him again. He looked at Steve with wide eyes and opened his mouth, trying to speak but a strained moan was all that came.

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"Very informative," Steve sassed at him, smirking. He kissed Bucky's hip and watched with fascination as he pushed another bead inside. They were starting to get too big to put in without more lube, so he began to pour a little on each bead.

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Bucky stared at Steve and focused on breathing. He tried again to talk and just managed to say, "Feels... so good..." he felt Steve work a larger bead in and he had to relax himself a little more so it was able to slip in with a gentle little pop of his hole that he could feel. "How many are left? How big does it go?"

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"Three more," Steve said. "It's a little bigger than a golf ball. You have to let me know if you want me to stop. Or slow down." Steve kind of assumed that Bucky would have told him to stop by this point if it had been too much. "You look so good like this."

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Bucky's heart skipped a beat. Steve thought he looked good like that. Bucky assumed that had to
mean that Steve thought Bucky looked good with anal beads hanging from him. He wanted to comment on it but he didn't want to ruin it by drawing attention so he just decided to save it for later. He would just get off like this and then have Steve fuck him and then they could talk.

---

Steve was slow and patient and loving as he filled Bucky up with the last three beads. He couldn't believe how much Bucky fit inside him. He leaned down and licked around the stretched rim of Bucky's asshole. "You ready for me to pull them out?" he asked.

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Bucky whined high in his throat and just clenched around the beads several times before answering. "Uh-huh. But I want your cock ready to push in. Once the last one is out, I want you to start pounding me. And I want you to watch every one leave my ass. It'll look so good. Wish I could see."

---

Steve nodded and leaned back a little so he could get a good view of Bucky's ass. He had to admit, Bucky was right. It did look fucking amazing to see Bucky's hole slowly give up the beads, stretching outwards before it popped out. A few times, Steve would only tug it partially out before letting it slip back inside. But when the last one came out, Steve was so ready. He pulled out his cock and pushed it inside his husband right away, immediately thrusting deep as he could go.

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"Ah, fuck!" Bucky yelped and his body contorted once Steve was inside. He felt so goddamn good and he wanted Steve's come so bad. "Fuck me, Baby!" he said desperately and locked eyes with Steve. "Fuck me so I can't walk right tomorrow. Fuck me so I'm sore at work. Mark me up. Show me I'm yours."

---

Steve's hips slammed into his husband's as he fucked Bucky as hard and fast as he could. His hands gripped his hips with bruising strength to keep him from being pushed further up the bed. Steve leaned down and covered Bucky's lips with his own in a searing kiss. "Mine."

---

Bucky's mind short-circuited and it was all he could do to stay in reality with Steve. He just wanted to slip into some unknown space where his husband was fucking hard and deep and fast for all eternity. He wanted to be at a constant brink of orgasm and only allowed to come when Steve said so. He wanted to never let a minute go by with Steve not knowing that Bucky was so ridiculously unfathomably in love with him.

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Bucky was perfect. Steve couldn't help but think of how lucky he was to have met a man who complimented him so amazingly and who was such a goddamn beautiful human being. Steve wanted to give him everything he wanted and then some. Steve didn't know how much time had passed, but when his orgasm came, it was earth-shattering to him and Steve cried out Bucky's name as he fucked Bucky through his orgasm. He was so hazy that he hadn't realized when he came over his stomach several minutes later.

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Steve gasped and moaned and tried to keep his breathing steady but fucking Bucky this hard felt like running a marathon nowadays. “Baby, fuck, Bucky,” he groaned and a little loud as he picked up faster because his orgasm was coming quick. “So close!” he whined and felt a heavy warm jolt go through his body as he came deep and thick inside of Bucky with a shout and eyes squeezed shut.

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Bucky had come a little before Steve and was laying in post-orgasm bliss for a bit. But Steve's yelp and spurts of hot come brought him back and he shot out a hand to cover Steve's mouth. "Don’t wake the house, my love," he said with a giggle and rolled his hips just a bit and clenched down around Steve's cock to get everything from him.

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Steve looked down in confusion when he felt Bucky's hand cover his mouth and he felt his face heat up in embarrassment. He hadn’t noticed how loud he was. He groaned softly at the feeling of Bucky's muscle squeezing around his sensitive dick. "Sorry," he apologized bashfully when Bucky pulled his hand away. "Couldn't help myself. You do things to me."

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Bucky nodded and pulled Steve down on top of him so he could snuggle his husband. "It's okay. I don't think I hear anyone awake," he listened for a second and then kissed Steve's arm and chest and neck. "That was so good. So good. I loved that. You fuck me so well every time."

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Steve took a minute to catch his breath and then he kissed Bucky some more. "I'm glad that even a year later, I still get to tire you out. Hell, I'm ready for a nap," he laughed. Steve bit Bucky’s neck affectionately.

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Bucky hummed happily and let his eyes shut. He needed to shower. If he didn't do it now, he was going to forget to wake up early enough to do it in the morning. "I need to shower," he mumbled and looked to Steve. "And I want to ask how that was for you but I'm not sure if now is the time."

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"Let me join you," Steve said. He got up and offered his hand to his husband. "Let's talk about it another time. Right now, I want to take care of my perfect husband." He was in a loving mood right now and wanted to dote on him as much as Bucky would allow.

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"Okay, another time," Bucky agreed even though he really wanted to know. He let Steve take him to the bathroom and get him in the shower. It felt wonderful to have the cool water rush over him and he contently pressed himself to Steve and took a deep breath.

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Steve dutifully washed his husband, playing with his hair and kissing him every few seconds as he washed him up. "I wouldn't mind doing something like that again," he said. "You look so beautiful when you get all riled up like that."
Bucky whimpered softly and closed his eyes. "Can I please ask about what you liked about it?" He really wanted to discuss it now. He wanted to know if Steve liked seeing his ass around the beads and seeing them come back out. He wanted to know how much Steve got out of it.

"You were practically jumping off the bed when I first started putting them in you," Steve explained. "I like seeing you loving what I'm doing to you. I like knowing that I'm able to pleasure you that much, even if it's not me that's inside you."

"Was it okay for you?" Bucky asked. "Knowing something else was inside me, I mean. You didn't get upset?" He just didn't want Steve to be pushing through for his sake. "Did you at least like seeing my ass taking them? It's hot, isn't it?"

"It was really hot to see," Steve admitted. "I still... prefer doing things the normal way," he said shyly, still a bit disappointed in himself for not finding toys as much fun as Bucky did. "But I wasn't upset by this." He supposed anal beads weren't as much of a threat of being a replacement for his dick like a dildo was.

Bucky grinned happily and pulled Steve in for a kiss. "I love you. Thank you for doing that for me. I'm sorry I caused an argument about it earlier. I really appreciate you and how much you want to do to make me happy. I just need you to know that you and your body are perfect. Nothing could ever be as good as you are. You need to believe that. Hell, I didn't come until you were fucking me. You're still always what I need."

Steve didn't like to admit it but ever since his injury from the fire, he had issues with his confidence. Without being able to work out like he used to, his muscles hadn't stayed as big as what he would have liked. Having Bucky reassure him like this meant the world to him. He leaned in and kissed his cheek. "Thank you," he said softly. "It means a lot to hear that."

Bucky held on to Steve in a close hug as the water poured over them. "My perfect, handsome husband," he murmured and kissed Steve's chest. "I love you so much that sometimes I miss you even when you're sitting right next to me because I know I'll have to go to work or help the girls or the babies or something eventually and I'll have to be away from you for even a moment."

Steve pet his fingers through Bucky's wet hair and smiled at the kisses. "We have the whole night together, Baby. You don't have to miss me tonight." He leaned in and kissed him slowly. "For the rest of our lives, we are going to have each other. And our whole family is going to stay close, too. Everyone."
Bucky was so excited when he got home from work and checked the mail. They had just gotten official documentation that Sarah May's adoption paperwork had gone through. Steve was now officially her father and Bucky was the secondary guardian. They had been waiting so long for this, it seemed.

Bucky had gotten home while Steve and the babies were at the store. And the girls were at school so Bucky was all alone. It was just him sitting on the steps with Diana, staring at the door and waiting for everyone to come home.

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Getting Sarah May's adoption official was harder than with Christopher since she didn't have a birth certificate or any known parents. However, with Father Frank's help, they were able to have the process ameliorated a little. Steve came home that day with his arms full of babies. Christopher's arms were full of flowers Steve had picked up from the store. They got into the door and Steve was surprised to see Bucky sitting on the steps. "Hey," he said worriedly, thinking something was the matter. "What's up?"

---

Bucky got up quickly and came over with the envelope in hand. He kissed Sarah May and then Christopher and then Steve. "We got it," he said and held up the paperwork for Steve to see, Diana whining at his heels for Steve's attention. "She's ours. Look!" He giggled happily and even bounced a little bit. "She's ours."

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Steve gasped and then turned to Sarah May. "Look at that! You're officially part of our family, Sarah May," he said happily to her. Sarah May smiled quickly because all eyes were on her. Christopher seemed a little less enthused about his sister getting all the attention.

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"Can I hold her?" Bucky asked and reached for Sarah May. He hadn't seen his babies all day and he wanted to love on them a little bit. "Ya-Ya, you want to come to Papa? Can Papa hold you, Sweet Pea?"

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Steve was busy snuggling their daughter but he couldn't hog her when Bucky was all excited, too. He passed their baby girl over and immediately she reached up to try to grab at Bucky's hair. Diana sat up on her hind legs and whined louder until Steve reached down to pet her. "Let's celebrate tonight, Buck. Let's all go out to dinner, please? Or we can have their aunts and uncles come over."

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Bucky was so happy to have Sarah May be officially theirs that he didn't care in the slightest that she was pulling his hair. He just wanted to hold her and kiss her and make sure she knew that she was loved. "I think going out is a great idea. Do you want everyone to come? Or just some of them? It may be a bit much if it's all of us and Nat, Clint, Tim, and Sam."
"Papa," Christopher whined.

Steve was quick to grab one of Christopher's favorite toys and traded the flowers for it. "Play with your dinosaur, Love, your papa is playing with your sister right now. You will have your turn soon," he said softly to him. Steve looked over and smiled. "I think just us would be enough if we are going out. We can hang out with our friends another night."

Bucky held Sarah May close and leaned in to kiss his son's head. "I love you, Bean. Don't worry. Papa will give you extra hugs later." He adjusted his daughter and reached to touch Steve's cheek lightly. "Just us then. Let's go someplace other than the diner this time. I know you love it, but we always go there."

Steve pouted when Bucky ruled out the diner. He loved that diner. "What about the Italian place?" he asked. He usually wasn't big into Italian food but he knew the girls liked that place and he wanted them to be excited for a little celebration.

Bucky chuckled and shook his head. "Are you going to eat this time or just keep asking for bread and taking tomatoes from my plate?" he asked, knowing that Steve was, in general, not a fan of most Italian food. He said he didn't like the way spices were used and stuff was too drowned in sauce.

"Bread and tomatoes, unless Italians come up with better food," Steve said. He set their boy down and watched as Christopher tottered over to Diana and hung his arms around her neck. "Should we have the babies nap for a little before we go out?" Steve asked.

Bucky shook his head but knew his husband wasn't going to budge on it. Bucky would just ask for extra tomatoes. "Yeah, let's have them go ahead and nap. Maybe even give Christopher a bath. It looks like he has strawberry jelly in his hair."

"He got into something at the florist," Steve explained. "I don't know what it is but all I know is I had to pay to replace it," he laughed. Steve couldn't get upset at their curious baby boy, but he certainly told him he had to be more careful and not grab at things while Steve was talking to the adults.

Bucky stifled his chuckle and rubbed at the gunk in his son's hair. It was pretty typical of him. And he would probably get worse with having messy influences like Lilly and Bucky around. "What are the flowers for?" he asked curiously and saw an array of roses and baby's breath. He assumed they were for him but he could be wrong.
"I bought them for you," Steve said. "I had a good feeling about today and wanted to make you feel special. Guess my gut feeling was right." He beamed proudly. "I can't wait until we can tell the girls and my mom. She's going to be thrilled."

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Bucky took the flowers in his free hand and headed to the kitchen to put them in a vase. "Christopher, Bean, do you want a snack?" he called so he would follow him to the kitchen. "Steve, you have no idea how happy I was when I saw the letter. Diana and I waited on the steps for an hour. We played a game where she tried to eat my sandwich and I threw bits of ham across the hall for her to pick up."

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Christopher sure as hell knew the word 'snack' by now and did a complete turn around to follow Bucky into the kitchen. Steve followed as well, which meant Diana came too. "Why would you make my perfect princess run to pick up scraps of food?" He knelt down next to his dog and kissed her head. "You deserve better than that," he cooed at her.

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"She was having fun!" Bucky defended. "She was barking and skittering to get the ham bits and then she would come back and stare at me until I tossed another." He huffed half-heartedly and put Sarah May in her high chair before doing the same with Christopher.

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"That's cause she doesn't know any better. Diana deserves to be hand fed," Steve answered with a pout. He picked his large puppy up and held her like a baby. Sarah May heard Christopher talking to Bucky, so she tried to mimic the noises he made even though it came out as unintelligible blabber.

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Bucky watched Steve and shook his head. He loved that big doofy dog so much. "You think you can maybe give her some food in her bowl and then help me feed your children? There is formula made up on the counter if you want to take Sarah May."

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"Sure," Steve said. He kissed Diana again and the dog panted happily as she was set back on her feet. Steve filled up her food and water bowl before going to get the formula. When Bucky moved away to get something, Sarah May started to cry.

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"What?" Bucky gasped and looked to his daughter. "What, Sweet Pea? Papa is trying to get your brother some food. What's the matter?"

Christopher scrunched up his face and reached for his sister saying, "Ya-Ya, no!" And when he couldn't get to her, he started to cry too.

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With two crying babies, Steve had to abandon the formula and instead, pick up his baby girl and pass her to Bucky before picking up Christopher, too. "There, there. Don't worry, Bean, I know you tried."
No need to cry. It’s snack time. Don’t you want your snack?"

---

Christopher calmed down a bit and wiped his eyes with the back of his hand before pointing towards his small pile of grapes and whining. Sarah May took a little longer to stop sniffling and whimpering but eventually, she stopped and just pressed her face to Bucky’s neck. "She's unusually needy today. Has she been like this all day?" Bucky asked.

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"I think she's been missing you," Steve answered. "She hasn't been like this with me, so I'm kind of suspecting she's tired of seeing my dumb face," he said, half joking. Sarah May seemed to notice more than Christopher when Bucky wasn't around.

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Bucky shook his head and kissed Sarah May's hair. "But, Ya-Ya, your daddy has such a handsome face," he said and set her down for a second so he could slip his shirt off and then hold her again. She immediately spread her arms out like a starfish and rested her cheek against Bucky's bare chest. "Is that what you needed, Sweet Pea. You needed some connecting time with Papa?" Bucky felt a tug and looked down to see Christopher was trying to get his shirt from his hand. "Oh, you want my shirt?" he asked and let go of it. "There you go, Bean."

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Steve chuckled at how Sarah May sprawled out on her papa's arms and how Christopher grabbed for his shirt. "Man, these kids are taking everything from you," Steve teased. He leaned in and kissed him. "Look at her, Bucky. She knows she's ours now."

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Bucky giggled happily and held his little girl. "Oh, she was always ours. She just knows that no one can take her now." He looked to Christopher so had bunched the shirt up in his hands and was sucking on the collar, having a merry old time doing so.

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Moments later, Sarah’s arrival was signaled as Diana went bounding over to the door and started to bark. She came through the door with her arms full of groceries and a huff of a sigh. "Yes, Diana, I know. I know. I'm home," she hushed the dog softly. She looked up and saw her boys in the kitchen and smiled. "You two look happy."

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Bucky grinned at his mother-in-law and pushed some things off of the counters so she could put the groceries down. He was a little embarrassed to be shirtless in front of her but he figured she would understand that he was trying to connect with Sarah May. "Steve, Babe, you want to tell her?"

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Sarah had spent a few decades as a nurse and having Bucky shirtless in front of her certainly wasn't the worst thing she'd ever seen. Things like that didn't even phase her as he waited for the news. Steve practically burst out with it. "We got Sarah May's adoption papers in today!"
Sarah yelped excitedly and held her son for a few seconds before coming over to Bucky and Sarah May and hugging them as well. "I'm so happy! My third grandbaby is official now," she said and kissed Sarah May's head gently. She thought for a second and then snapped her fingers. "I should make a cake!"

Steve grinned. He loved how involved his mom was in their lives and it was so typical of her to want to bake. "We're going out to dinner tonight, too, Ma."

Sarah turned back. "Oh, are we going to the diner?"

"No," Bucky said and blinked a few times. "Italian... but we don't have to. I guess if you both really want the diner then we can go to the diner again." He shook his head. "That'll just mean that Steve owes me a really good date at a really fancy restaurant and then some very nice sex afterward."

Steve blushed. "Bucky!" he scolded.

Sarah just laughed and pet Steve's shoulder. "Don't worry, Love. Enjoy the fruits of your sex drive while it lasts," she encouraged, knowing full well that she was thoroughly embarrassing her son.

Bucky chuckled and said, "Baby, you should really be used to this from me by now. Besides, it's no secret to your mom that we have sex." He sort of liked when he could conspire with Sarah to get Steve all embarrassed and red in the face like that.

"We never had sex, what are you talking about? I'm still a virgin," Steve said, messing around a little bit himself.

"Steven," Sarah laughed. She kissed his cheek and then started to pull out the supplies to bake anyway. "I'm still making a cake," she said. Raphael jumped onto the counter, so she gave him a little treat.

"Steve, you keep lying to your mother and I'll have to show her some proof," Bucky threatened with a cheeky grin and took a seat at the table with Sarah May gnawing on his fingers happily. That had been a new development. She had recently started trying to munch on things and Bucky expected her first teeth to pop through in a month or two.

"You wouldn't dare," Steve said in a scandalized tone. Christopher got his attention again by waving Bucky's shirt in the air to show that he was tired of it. Steve took it from him and set it aside. "If you let Ya-Ya do that now, she's going to expect you to still let her do it after she's got teeth," he warned.
Bucky knew he was right but he didn't really mind. "She's our official daughter today, I don't care if she started chewing a hole through my arm. She can do whatever she wants right now." He sighed happily and watched her. "Did you see the new birth certificate? It has the date we chose. It says 'December 15, 1985'." He beamed at Steve happily. They had doubled checked and found that December fifteen had been the last day of Hanukkah so that's the day they picked.

---

Steve gasped. "Really? No way." He rushed over to check and sure enough, it was right there. They had an official birthday for their little girl. "That's amazing!" Christopher started to wiggle so he could get down, so Steve set him back on the floor so he could wander. "I love it. They're going to be able to go to school together in the same grade since they're born the same year."

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"Do you think they will want to do that?" Bucky asked and removed his hand from Sarah May's mouth and replaced it with the bottle. "I mean, I don't know of many kids who aren't twins who want to be in the same grade together."

---

"Why wouldn't they?" Steve asked, watching Christopher closely as he followed his nana around the kitchen. "They're going to be best friends. And they can look out for each other and help each other with their homework."

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Bucky chuckled and heard Christopher whine for his nana to pick her up as he tugged on her pant leg. "Well, we can think about that once they are going into school. You're still wanting to homeschool for a few years, right?"

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Steve nodded in response. "Yeah, I want to teach them good habits and skills and all. So I want to homeschool until they get into middle school, you know? I'll be bringing them to enough playgrounds to have them get social with other kids their age," he said.

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Sarah May finished up her bottle and yawned before clunking her head back against Bucky's chest. "By that time, they may be so sick of being educated together that they will want to be in different classes," he said and grabbed his shirt to gently drape it over his daughter like a blanket.

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Steve pouted. "But what if one of them doesn't feel challenged enough? Just because they're in the same grade doesn't mean they got to be in the same class. Maybe different schools entirely? I don't know. We've got plenty of time," Sarah May closed her eyes, looking so happy to be where she was.

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Bucky shook his head and tucked the shirt a little tighter around his daughter. "We can do the same school, Babe. They may even be fine with the same class. That's a while from now, though. For right now, I think it's family snuggle time because she's already almost asleep. Christopher should be ready for a nap soon too so maybe we can just lay in bed with them for a bit?"
Steve nodded. "Sure." He loved it when they got to snuggle with their babies. Steve took Christopher from Sarah and followed Bucky upstairs.

"Play?" Christopher asked.

Steve laughed and shook his head. "No play, Bean. Sleepy time. Look at your sister, she's ready for naps," he said sweetly to him.

Christopher tried again with a half-hearted, "Play?" but he was just too tired to keep it up and he slowly molded himself against Steve and yawned.

Bucky gently laid down on the bed and pulled a blanket over himself and Sarah May. "Steve," Bucky started and looked over to his husband. "I think I'm going to schedule to have my first injection for my headaches. This medication hasn't been helping. I think it's time to try it."

Steve laid down beside his husband and cuddled Christopher to his chest. He stroked his hand over the baby's little back and marveled at how lucky he was to have them. He looked over at Bucky and gave him a concerned look. "Are you sure? Do you want me to go with you, Baby?"

"Yes, I'm sure," Bucky said with conviction. "I've been thinking about this for about a week now. I need to just do it. I know it hurts but it's supposed to help. And I most definitely need you there. I can't do this by myself. I can't even call a doctor to schedule anything without you being near me just in case."

Steve nodded. "You know I'll spend every second that I'm allowed to at your side. We can give the babies to my mom to watch for the day and we can hide away in the bedroom all day so I can cuddle and take care of you until you're feeling better."

Bucky took a little breath of relief and nodded. "Thank you. I love you," he said and smiled at Steve, albeit a little pained because of his fear about going for the treatment. "There's another thing," he added and scratched his hand through his hair, giving Steve time to respond.

"I love you too," Steve promised. Then he kissed Christopher. "I love you three," he said and then kissed Sarah May. "And I love you four." He smiled and laid his cheek on Bucky's shoulder. "What is it?" he asked quietly so he wouldn't wake their daughter.

Bucky looked at Steve for a few long moments and said slowly, "I am going to try... to quit smoking. I've been thinking about what you said when we were in Seneca. And even though I smoke to help with my need to drink, I think my drinking problems have stemmed off enough that I could work on
cutting back on smoking now."

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"Wow, really?" Steve was surprised and impressed. He reached over to stroke Bucky's jaw gently. "With every day you make me prouder and prouder to be your best friend and husband," Steve said gently. "You're doing so well at everything you put your mind to."

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Bucky tried to smile but he really couldn't. He was scared that it wouldn't work. He was scared that he would quit smoking and it would just make his alcoholism come back with a vengeance. And he also couldn't really smile because he sometimes felt like he did so much to try to be better for his family and Steve didn't. It wasn't that Steve had a billion things he could improve on like Bucky did. But Bucky still thought it would be better for Steve and everyone if Steve saw a therapist or somebody about his sensitivity about his lungs. He snapped at anyone who suggested he take it easy and he almost refused to acknowledge that he wasn't as capable as he had been. But Bucky didn't say any of this, not wanting to ruin a good day. Instead, he just said, "Thank you. I'm going to try."

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Usually, that sort of praise would have Bucky smiling and kissing him or snuggling him in some sort of manner. He could tell that something was on Bucky's mind and his face fell a bit. Typically, if Bucky was keeping something to himself, it was because he knew Steve wouldn't like what he had to say. "What?" he asked, already a little on the defensive side.

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Bucky shook his head and looked to Sarah May sleeping happily on his chest. He didn't want to have an argument on her special day. So, he would just try to bypass the conversation for now. "It's nothing. Well, it's not important right now." He paused a second then added, "You'll have to give me some patience and understanding just like you did with the drinking. I'm going to have to just start slow and maybe only smoke a few times a week. Then down to once a week. Then be done entirely. But I'll probably slip up at times."

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Steve didn't look too convinced but he got distracted by the topic change. "Of course, I'll give you patience, Bucky. The smoking is a heck of a lot smaller of an issue than your drinking was. I can't believe that it's already been almost a year since you started seriously cutting down. And now look at you."

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"Yeah, look at me," Bucky said, letting himself give a bashful little grin. He was proud of himself for being able to get a grip on his alcoholism. Only a year before, he was still coming to terms with being able to accept that he was an alcoholic. And then AA helped so much and so did his family. "I won't lie to you and say that it's easy now. It's still really difficult sometimes. And if someone in my group falls off the wagon, we all want to as well. It's just hard to move past the dependence."

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"I bet you're an inspiration to all of them, though. I'm not saying you were irresponsible or a mess or anything when I met you, but you've grown so much and changed for the better to support your family." Steve cut himself off and got quiet as he realized something. "I haven't grown for my family,
have I?" Was that what Bucky was thinking?

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Bucky was going to joke that Steve was allowed to say Bucky was an irresponsible mess before him because he sort of grew out of it when he met Steve anyway. But then Steve hit the nail on the head and he didn’t know what to say. He just chewed his lip and hoped Steve wouldn’t make him answer.

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Bucky's silence confirmed it and Steve looked hurt and worried. "But I’m a good dad, aren’t I?" Steve asked in a quiet tone, now suddenly afraid that he wasn't good enough for their children. And now he was thinking of all the things that the girls and Bucky complained that Steve had insisted was for the greater good, like slippers in the home and designated spots for backpackers or parenting tactics he refused to waver on even if Bucky opposed them.

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Bucky was quick to console his husband. He reached out and took Steve's hand and squeezed it. "Baby, you are a great dad. You're naturally good at being a caretaker. You have been since I met you. I mean, you're just twenty-four and you've got a husband and a total of five kids to take care of. And you love us so much and you do so much good for us. And we all love you."

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Steve gave Bucky a frown and squeezed his hand back. "I know you all love me. But I haven't made myself any better for you guys. I've just taken over and assumed that everything I did or wanted was right. The backpacks, the matching shirts in our family pictures, the stupid costumes I buy for the babies, insisting we do everything the way my mom does it…"

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"Baby, I don't really know what to tell you," Bucky admitted. "I'll be honest that some of the changes you made when you started living with the girls and I were hard for us to adjust to. But we quickly recognized that it's just who you are. You like to be in control. And that's fine. You're that way with most things. I just think sometimes when you can't be in control, you get a little too angry and you tend to lash out or think it's some sort of personal attack on you." He sighed and scooted closer to Steve, being sure not to wake his daughter. "A lot of what you do is helpful and good and a major improvement to all of our lives. But sometimes it's okay to not take over everything. You remember when we talked about how you are very sexually controlling? You remember how apologetic you were? And you have been working to get better about that. You've been easing up a little and exploring more. And I noticed you don't harp on Lilly about her messes as much as you used to. You've let her take back some of her control of her own things and you only really step in if it's just too big of a mess and it becomes an inconvenience for the family."

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Steve looked a bit ashamed of himself. Here he was, thinking he was being the best he could for his family, but, in reality, Bucky was doing ten times more than Steve ever had. He listened to Bucky and seemed to reluctantly understand that certain things would have to go, even though he believed that those things made the house a better and cleaner place. "What else should I do? Besides easing up on my control issues?" he asked.
Bucky watched his husband's face carefully and kicked himself for bringing any of this up and making Steve feel bad about himself. "I'm not sure, Love," he said after a while. "There's just a lot that I didn't want to do but I did anyway because it was what was best for our family or it was what you wanted." He stopped drinking, he went to AA, he picked up more hours at work after Steve's retirement, he gave up once again on his thoughts of going to school when Christopher came around, he compromised sexually quite a lot, he went to the doctor at Steve's request multiple times, and he was going to work on quitting smoking. He didn't know how to ask Steve again to seek some sort of help for his anger about his lungs and his body image problems without making Steve angry.

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Steve got a little tense and he looked down at Christopher, who was now dozing off on his chest. He must've fallen asleep a few minutes ago. Steve bit his bottom lip and was quiet for a moment before looking back over at his husband. "Can you write things down for me? I guess... I guess I react too strongly when you tell me to my face. Maybe if you write it down and give me time alone to process it, I can react better."

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Bucky was once again quick to acknowledge and validate Steve. "Yes, Steve. I can give that a try. I'll do my best. You know I'm not great with words, especially writing words, but I will do what I can for you. My perfect, sweet husband." He kissed Steve's hand and smiled up at him with sympathetic eyes. "I hope you know that I'm not angry at you. And I hope you know that you are so perfect and nothing is wrong with you. I just want you to be happy. And when I see you getting unhappy, I want to try to do what I can to fix that."

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Steve pet his hand over Christopher's back again and looked between both of their children. They looked so peaceful and comfortable relaxing on their dads' chests. If Steve did things right, he would fix his mistakes before their memory was formed enough to remember them. "I know you're not angry at me. I guess I'm mostly disappointed in myself for not growing as a person like you have."

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Bucky sighed and tried to smile again at Steve. "It's not a contest, Baby," he said. "I wasn't even going to say anything about it. You're just really good at reading me. But it's not like it's always on my mind. Just sometimes. And I was going to try to figure out a calm way to discuss it sometime with you."

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"I know it's not a contest. But when you've done as much as you have while I haven't done anything, that means that there's a problem and I don't want to be that problem," Steve explained. "I want to be the best person I can be for you, your sisters, and our kids."

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Bucky nodded and reached to touch Steve's face gently. He thought Steve was already pretty wonderful and a great guardian and father and husband and son. "Okay. Then I'll help you wherever you want help. How's that? I know you like doing things on your own so if you don't want help then I'll stay out of it. But if anything comes up that you need me for, just ask."

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"Sounds like a plan to me," Steve said soft, sweetly. "I love you, Bucky. Thank you for being patient." He snuggled close to him as best as he could with the kids on them. Steve's heart melted as he watched Sarah May give a big yawn. "She's so beautiful. I wonder what toys she's going to like best. Or if she's going to follow Christopher everywhere as they explore the house."

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Bucky watched his daughter readjust on his chest. "I have a feeling she's going to be looking to him for a lot of things as they grow up. She's already sitting on her own and Christopher is already so attached to her." Bucky yawned as well and checked the clock. The girls would be back soon and they all could go to dinner. But he was so tired already and wouldn't complain about having a short nap himself.

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Steve grinned. "Sometimes I catch Christopher turning around to show Ya-Ya something and he forgets that she's off taking a nap," he said. "If you want to sleep, I'm not tired. I'll stay up and make sure you don't roll over on our girl or something." Bucky probably only had about a half hour or less before the girls got home anyway.

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Bucky let his eyes blink slowly a few times and he yawned once more. "That would be nice. Thank you, Babe. If you need to do things around the room you can put Christopher next to Sarah May and I'll just hold them both."

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Steve stroked his fingers through Bucky's hair and kissed him a few times along his jaw. Once he felt that Bucky was properly loved, he let him go nap. He looked so peaceful finally. It was hard not to watch him and the kids. And it was hard not to worry about what other things he needed to work on for his family.
Chapter Notes

Second half of the day with Sarah May's official adoption.

Not much later, the girls arrived home. But Steve felt like Bucky deserved a little longer to nap so he gave him a few extra minutes before he giving him a gentle nudge. "Love," he said softly. "It's time to wake up."

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Bucky blinked awake and found Sarah May staring at him from her spot on his chest and Christopher sitting next to his head and messing with his hair. "I don't want to wake up, Steve," Bucky complained and smiled weakly at his kids. "But I guess I don't have much choice. These two won't let me sleep any more, I'm sure."

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When her pop woke up, Sarah May grinned and made little pleased baby noises at him. "Hi, Papa," Christopher said, as if he was waiting for the second that Bucky's eyes opened to say it.

"Christopher is going to ask you to p-l-a-y the second you sit up, I bet," Steve said.

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Bucky chuckled and kissed both his kids. "Well, we can't p-l-a-y. We have to go to d-i-n-n-e-r," he said and hoisted himself up from the bed, holding Sarah May close and picking Christopher up with the other arm. "You want food, Bean?"

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Christopher's head snapped up at the question. He said, "Eat?" and had an adorable, curious expression on his face.

"As if you got to ask our big guy twice." Steve stood up and smoothed out his shirt. Christopher kept signing at Bucky even if some of the signs were pure nonsense.

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"He's a little like his Pops and his Aunt Lilly, isn't he? Always ready for more food," Bucky said and handed Sarah May to Steve and set Christopher down. He pulled on a shirt and a sweater and then picked up his son again. The four of them made their way back downstairs to the kitchen where the girls and Sarah were hanging around. "Is everyone ready to go for dinner?"

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Lilly gasped. "We're going to dinner?" Sarah hadn't told the girls about the adoption papers yet since she figured it was news that Bucky and Steve should share. "Did we run out of food here? Why are we going out? Is it because I got a good grade on my math test?"
"Did you get a good grade?" Bucky asked excitedly and looked to Becca to confirm that Lilly wasn't just blowing smoke.

Becca nodded and set her backpack down on the table and said, "Lilly got an eighty-three percent." She smiled at her sister and then to Bucky. She had really been working on being proud of her siblings when the chance arose and not just tearing them down when they weren't like her. She was doing pretty well so far even though it didn’t come naturally to her yet.

Lilly hurried to grab her backpack so she could show it off. "I studied really hard," she said. "I pretended I was a teacher to Sarah May and explained how it all worked. She had no choice but to sit there and listen to me so that's how I studied," she explained.

Steve grabbed a magnet and put Lilly's test on the fridge. "This is great, Lilly, we're so proud of you. Look at that. You got a B on a math test. That's so amazing."

"Yeah, we are so proud," Bucky said and kissed his sister's head. "I guess that means we are celebrating two things tonight. The other being that Ya-Ya's adoption papers went through and we got them today. She's officially Steve's daughter and my fourth dependent. No one can take her now."

Becca smiled but it was Lilly who had the bigger reaction. "Yeah!" she said, punching the air. "That's right. Suck on that, Government!" she yelped.

Sarah May's eyes went wide, startled by the ruckus Lilly was making. Christopher added to it by shouting, "Leeee Leeee!"

Bucky chuckled and held Christopher out for Lilly to take him as he fidgeted relentlessly. "We were thinking about going for Italian food, but what do you two think? Steve isn't big on Italian, so if you want something else, that might be better."

"I got the good grades, I should decide," Lilly said.

Becca looked physically pained to swallow what she was about to say but she somehow managed. "I want Italian," she said.

"You want spaghetti, Christopher? You're going to make a big mess, aren't you?" Lilly asked and kissed his face.

"No. No spaghetti," Bucky said and glowered at his sister. His son made way too big of a mess with spaghetti. "He can have something much less of a disaster to clean and something easier for him to eat." He looked to Steve to back him up on it.
"Yeah, spaghetti is a parent's nightmare," Steve agreed.

Lilly huffed and made a face. "Fine. He can have... tortellini!" she said. "Yeah, Christopher! Italian food!"

Sarah set the cake in the fridge to cool and then washed up her hands. "Are we all ready to go?" she asked.

"Yes, let's go," Bucky agreed and worked to get Christopher into his coat as Lilly held him. "Here pretty soon it'll be springtime and I won't have to wrestle a one-year-old into wearing a damn coat out in the cold."

"But then next winter we'll be wrestling a two-year-old into a coat and it'll be even harder," Steve laughed. Christopher put up such a fight it was ridiculous. Sarah May let her parents dress her warmly without a fuss. Thank goodness. Once they were all ready, Steve led the way out of their home.

Once they got to the restaurant, Bucky settled Christopher into a highchair next to him. Lilly seemed to be starving already as she glared at the pictures in the menu. "Can I get two meals?" she asked and looked up at Bucky and Steve.

"You're not going to finish two meals, Lilly," Steve said patiently. "How about you order one and I order another and then we can split it." Steve didn't plan on eating his anyway but at least Lilly wouldn't feel entitled to two full meals.

Bucky gave Steve a little exasperated look because whatever Lilly didn't eat was going to come to him since Steve wouldn't want it anyway. "Fine, Lil, order two meals. I'll take what you don't finish," Bucky said and glanced back at Steve. "You're trying to get me to put on weight. You miss the little stomach pudge I had while I was drinking."

Steve looked over at his husband. "I can't be the only one gaining weight here. I need you to pack on some winter pounds just like I am," he joked.

Christopher smacked his hands a few times on the high chair to make noise. "Papa. Papa, play?" he asked.

"What winter pounds?" Bucky asked and poked Steve's side. "You haven't gained a single ounce since I met you." He turned to his son and held his hands together so he wouldn't make noise. "No play, Bean. Dinner time. Play later."
"I have," Steve protested. "I lost muscle mass and gained some fat. I may weigh the same but it's not of the same stuff," he complained.

"Well, I haven't noticed a difference. I think you're sexy as all hell regardless," Bucky said absently and gave Steve's back a little rub before checking over the menu.

"I noticed," Steve said pathetically with a little frown.

A waiter came over and forced a smile at the family before him. "Hello, everyone. What can I get you all tonight?"

Lilly was first to order and she went ahead and got two meals like she wanted. Becca got a half plate of spaghetti and Bucky went with chicken fettuccine. Steve didn't order anything but asked for extra bread to be brought to the table. "Sir, do you have any sort of kid's menu for him?" Bucky asked and pet Christopher's hair.

"We don't have a kid's menu, but we offer any of our regular platters in a smaller size for half price," the waiter explained. "Is there a smaller-sized plate you would like for him? Or would some more bread and sauce be appropriate?"

"Oh, um..." Bucky looked at the menu again. "Can you just do noodles and cheese and some bread? I don't think sauce is a good idea," he said and looked to Steve to confirm. He didn't know if that was best or not.

Steve nodded. "What he said," he confirmed. Once the waiter was gone, he kissed Christopher's cheek and pet his hand over his head. "You're eating such big boy food, Bean. Soon you're going to have to share with Ya-Ya." He looked back to Bucky with a happy smile. "It's such a relief that she's legally ours now."

"Steve, I'm so beyond happy that we got those papers," Bucky said and watched Sarah May as she looked around the restaurant and stared at people occasionally. "She's going to be as old as Christopher before we know it."

"It's going to be so amazing watching them grow up together. She's such a perfect, little girl. You think she's going to take after her Aunt Lilly or Aunt Becca more?" he asked, looking over at Bucky's sisters.
"Becca, for sure," Bucky said and nodded once. "She's going to be like Becca and you. Christopher is going to be like me and Lilly. I just know it."

"Well, someone's got to take after me," Becca said. "I mean, Christopher is definitely not it."

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"Christopher can be just as smart," Steve said. "That's like taking after you. Most one-year-olds don't know as many words as he does."

The waiter came back with their dinners and set them down. "Let me know if you need anything else," he said.

---

Becca scoffed and crossed her arms. "I didn't mean he wasn't smart. I meant that he is loud and messy," she said and smiled at Christopher and pet his hair. She was also working on showing her love for her nephew and niece instead of ignoring them and pushing them away like she tended to do.

---

"All babies are messy," Steve said. Just as he said that, Christopher grabbed a handful of his food and practically covered his face with it as he attempted to eat it. "It's the way he shows his love. The bigger mess he makes, the more he loves you. Why do you think he poops so big when you're watching him?"

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"I think it's because you feed him too much before I have babysitting duty," Becca said and glowered at Steve for a second then looked to Bucky. "Also, you still owe me from last time you went to the doctor's and put me in charge."

---

"He loves food. I can't say no to him when he asks for strawberries. Look at that face," Steve said, gesturing to Christopher's messy, cheesy face. He looked at Bucky when Becca accused him of owing her. "Oh? Did you leave Becca with a messy diaper to change?"

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Bucky shook his head. "I left Becca with both babies and Lilly and the dog. Remember? We went to get my medicine while your mom was grocery shopping? Apparently, it didn't go well at the house for the solid forty-five minutes that we were away."

---

"That sounds like hell for Becca. At least we know that she won't be inclined to have babies of her own anytime soon after learning what it's like to put up with ours," Steve offered. "So how do you want to cash in the favor we owe you?" Steve asked.

---

At that comment, Becca glanced from Steve to Lilly and then to Bucky, keeping her head down. It caught Bucky's attention and he stared at her for a second. She was hiding something. But she shook
it off and said, "I wouldn't say no to a bigger bookshelf."

---

Steve was well trained to spot tell signs like that. He didn't want to push at dinner, though. "That's a tall order for 45 minutes," Steve said in a bargaining voice. "However, I have noticed the effort you've put into being more supportive to everyone. So I think we can make that bookshelf happen."

---

"How about," Bucky started. "You help me make the bookshelf? That way it will be as big as you want it to be. And we will have put effort into it. And it'll be a project for just the two of us? What do you think of that?"

---

Steve worried that Becca wouldn't take it but, instead, she nodded. "Can we carve a cool design into it and stain it so it looks dark and old like the shelves in Trinity Library?" she asked, her tone picking up a little bit.

---

Bucky smiled brightly back and nodded. "We can certainly try. I think we should be able to get that to work. We can have Steve help draw it on and then we will carve it." He was so grateful for Becca's recent campaign to be a more understanding member of the family. It felt more like before they lost their parents. He felt like Becca was able to let loose a little bit. She was able to show that she loved them again. It was getting closer to how they used to be together - the best of friends and siblings.

---

Steve was happy to be included in the project as well. He knew it was going to be something special between Bucky and Becca, but it was nice to have a part in it as well. "Sounds like a great plan to me," he said.

"Papa," Christopher said. When Bucky looked at him, he signed for more even though there was plenty of food scattered around his plate.

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"Bean, you can pick them up," Bucky said and brought a noodle to his son's mouth. "There you go. You got it." He looked at Sarah May to make sure she was doing okay as well. "Did she drink her whole bottle or just part of it?"

---

Christopher opened his mouth to eat his noodle and then signed again for more. "She only drank half," Sarah answered. "She will let us know when she wants more," Sarah brushed her thumb over the baby's cheek. "You'll never guess what I found at the store today," she said to strike up a new conversation.

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Bucky stared at Sarah May for a few seconds, wishing she would eat more. But she looked far too distracted by what was happening around her to even remotely care about eating. "What did you
find?" Bucky asked, turning back to Sarah.

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"I found a doctor play set. You know, with a stethoscope and lab coat. But it was directed at girls instead of all the little sets for boys. I wanted to get it for Sarah May but it was ages five and up and hopefully in five years' time, there will be more things like that for her," Sarah said.

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Becca and Lilly nodded and Lilly said, "Yes, oh, my god. Get that for her."

Bucky grinned at his sisters and then his daughter. "That's really good. Teaching girls they can be doctors and other things like that is important. And, heaven knows there isn't enough of that encouragement right now. I want my babies to know they can be anything."

---

"What, I should get it for her and put it in storage for five years?" Sarah asked with a smile. "I mean, it's not like I didn't do that before with Steve when I found a cute shirt he wasn't big enough for yet," she mused. She didn't buy lots of things for her grandkids because she wasn't the material sort but she took them anywhere that she could.

---

Compared to the Rogers side of the family, the Barnes' were hoarders. They kept a lot of stuff that was useless just to have it. They hated throwing out anything with the slightest bit of sentimental value. Now that they were financially stable and didn't have to sell important family things for money, they just didn't get rid of a single thing. "I'm sure they will have something similar when she's old enough," Bucky said.

---

"Yeah, I would hope so. That and more." Sarah turned to Ya-Ya and said sweetly, "you're going to become a doctor and save lives and make so much money that you'll be able to buy whatever house you want." Of course, she wouldn't be disappointed either if Sarah May didn't find an high-paying career. She just hoped her grandkids ended up better off than she and Steve were when he was growing up.

After their dinners were finished, the waiter gave them the check and Steve's mom insisted on paying. Bucky tried to get her to back down so he could pay but it was usually useless to argue with Sarah. Steve definitely got some of his stubbornness from her.

---

Once they were back home, everyone was beat. Lilly took up residence in the middle of the hall as she laid down by Diana and slowly pet her coat. Becca immediately went to her room. And Sarah held her granddaughter until she decided it was time to head off to sleep as well. "Steve," Bucky said quietly and pointed to Christopher who had been building a block tower but was now asleep on the ground surrounded by blocks with Raphael curled up at his feet.

---

Steve gasped at the adorable sight. "Oh, my god." Rather than grabbing his camera, he picked up his
sketchbook and sat on the couch so he could draw it. "Look at our little boy, Buck. Have you ever seen such a perfect little boy? He's so beautiful." Steve glanced up at his husband. "Can you get me a glass of water, Love? I think I'm going to be drawing for a while."

---

Bucky went and got Steve some water then came to sit down next to him. He watched Steve draw for a while and then carefully touched his leg. "You are so talented. I love your art. When are you going to be allowed to start your Mommy and Me art class?"

---

Steve blushed at the compliment. "I can't do it for another few months. But what I've started doing is coming up with lesson plans and class ideas so I'll be ready by the time I'm allowed to start them. I've tested a few out with Christopher."

---

"Oh yeah? I didn't know about that." Bucky asked excitedly and looked to his sleeping son. "How did that go? I'm guessing Sarah May hasn't been able to participate quite as much as Christopher can."

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"No, but she still has fun mushing the baby paints in her hands," Steve said. "I've tried different types of things for Christopher to paint on - canvas, paper, cardboard, old shirts. I'm trying to see what sort of crafts we can make out of all different materials."

---

Bucky nodded and rolled his eyes. "Mushing things in their hands is just about our babies' favorite," he said and watched Steve finish up his drawing. "I think it's time to get our Bean back to the nursery. Ya-Ya is already asleep in her crib."

---

"But he's so cute," Steve complained but he knew the crib was a lot safer for Christopher. He would get up to trouble if left loose in the middle of the night. He set his book aside and gently scooped their son into his arms. Raphael meowed softly and sulked off to curl up on a warm spot of the couch.

---

Bucky went up to the nursery with Steve and hovered over the cribs as he tucked in Christopher. "Maybe they will actually sleep in a little bit so we can sleep in a little bit. What's the odds of that happening?"

---

Steve snorted and looked over at his husband. "Babe, we are on track for a stream of children. We aren't going to get to sleep in until the new millennium," he joked. Steve had always been a morning person anyway, so he didn't mind waking up early for the babies.
"Well, then maybe some of them will be good sleepers for me so those of us who want to wake up at noon can do so and then you all can wake up at five in the morning," Bucky said and took Steve's hand. "Come on, let's let them sleep, Baby."

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"The only baby that is a good sleeper is one that's been given sleeping medicine and we don't want that," he said. Steve took Bucky's hand and led him to their bedroom. Once inside he said, "Thank you for being honest with me today. I know I make it hard to tell me things I don't like to hear."

---

Bucky was quiet for a moment then said, "Yeah, Baby, just a little bit." He tried to be as calm and understanding as he could be as he said it. "I know..." he huffed out a sigh and slipped his hand on to Steve's cheek. "I know you're angry about your lungs and about Grant and about the way we have been treated. And so am I, believe me. But you've got to try to let me in a little more. Remember how much you worked to get me to talk to you about the things I hated talking about? This is like that. I don't try to make you upset when I'm being concerned about you. Please understand that."

---

Steve could feel himself tensing at the mention of his dumb lungs and their deceased child and he knew he was proving Bucky's point exactly. He was far too defensive and didn't handle those topics in a healthy manner. He knew it was only a matter of time before Bucky suggested that he go to a therapist. "I still don't want to talk to a stranger about my personal life," he said. "What alternatives do I have outside of a therapist?"

---

"I don't know," Bucky said softly and leaned into Steve for a hug. He was still frustrated that Steve seemed to think it was okay for his family to go see a therapist but he was too good for it or something. But Bucky didn't want to argue right then. "We can think about some other options. I just think talking to me about it seems to get you too worked up and I don't want to make things worse."

---

Steve kissed Bucky's cheek when Bucky hugged him. "Yeah... I don't mean to get worked up, I just do." He sighed. "What if I talk to Sam about everything? He was my partner and he has a psychology degree," Steve suggested. It seemed like a good compromise in his opinion. "And he volunteers at the VA to help with counseling there when he has free time."

---

Bucky looked into Steve's eyes and tried to hide the hurt in his own. It hurt that Steve felt more comfortable talking to Sam than him. But Bucky was also aware that his problems with Sam were not rational. He and Sam just got off on the wrong foot. Sam was a really amazing man who cared so much for Steve and their kids. And Steve and Natasha both trusted him so much. Bucky's insecurities just made him worried that Steve would complain about him to Sam again. But that wasn't Sam's fault. "Steve, Baby, if that is what you want, then you should try that."

---

Steve could tell that Bucky was upset. "Baby," Steve said. "It's not that I can't talk to you about it. It's just it always ends up in an argument when we do. And that's not your fault. I don't want to argue with you, Bucky. I'm not married to Sam. If we end up arguing, we get to go back home and cool
off. But if me and you argue? I have to see my husband upset and feel rotten because I was the one who upset him."

---

"Yeah, I understand," Bucky said with a sigh. "It's just me being dumb and insecure like I always am. Maybe I need to talk to someone about that, huh? About being more confident. Because I can put up a front of charm and togetherness when I need to but you know the truth. And, in some ways, I'm still the same wreck that you found a year and a half ago."

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"I think you deserve a break from self-improvement so I can catch up a little, Handsome," Steve said. "But if doing that will make you happier, then I won't stop you," he said sweetly. Steve leaned in to give Bucky another kiss. "You're not a wreck. You're the perfect man I fell in love with a year and a half ago."

---

Bucky hummed against the kiss and then lead them to the bed and started to undress Steve. He was a little too sleepy to be intimate but he wanted to be naked with his husband. He loved that. "I just know I need to work on it. Maybe my AA group will have advice."

---

Steve smiled when Bucky started to undress him and he helped by taking off his own pants. "That's a good idea," he said. "I'm glad you're able to find a lot of comfort with them. And I bet you set a great example and make them all proud every week."

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"They are all very good people. They just lost their way. Just like me. And we all have been working so hard for so long. We have really grown close," Bucky said happily and pulled Steve's hands to his hips so he would help undress him now.

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Steve nibbled at Bucky's neck affectionately. "You know they're welcome to the shelter any time. I know that a few people there are struggling with alcohol abuse but they're too afraid to go to AA. Maybe it would be a good outreach to do if anyone felt up to it."

---

"Maybe," Bucky said softly. "They don't know I have a husband. I don't talk about my home life with them. I'm too afraid of them treating me poorly because of it. They know I have kids and that's it." And they all knew about Bucky taking Missy's baby and then her and the child both passing. And they all missed her as well. But Bucky didn't bring that up.

---

"You haven't told them that?" Steve sounded a little surprised even though it wasn't all that shocking. He just assumed that if they were able to accept people who had addiction problems then they'd accept someone who loved another person of the same gender. "Then maybe we won't bring anyone to the shelter yet."
"That's probably best," Bucky said and pulled Steve up on the bed a bit so they could curl up under the covers. "But maybe I can come talk to the people at the shelter with alcohol problems and try to convince them to seek some sort of help."

Steve nodded. He wrapped his arms around him and pressed their naked bodies together. "That may work," he said. "I'm thinking about trying some of Tim's ideas. Do you think I'm wrong for making it not about dating and more about making friends?" he asked.

"No, Baby, I think you should do what you think is best. You know Tim. He gets excited about things so easily and then worries that he fucked up if no one else agrees with his excitement. He will be fine," Bucky said and shut his tired eyes for a second. "Talk to him about some of this other ideas. He has a lot."

Steve pressed his lips to the top of Bucky's head. "Alright. I'll let you get some sleep, Love. We had a busy day today." He closed his own eyes and drifted off to sleep faster than he expected he would.
Steve had planned Bucky's birthday for weeks. While Bucky was out doing a morning shift and the girls were at school, Steve decorated the house from head to toe with streamers, celebratory banners, and love notes all over. He and his mom spent forever baking a cake in the shape of a guitar preparing Bucky's favorite dinner. When Bucky finally got back home, Steve was waiting on the stairs with Diana and the kids – both of whom were wearing shirts that said 'I love my Papa."

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Bucky was pretty bitter about having to work on his birthday. He would have much preferred to be with his family. But Reggie was sick and Tim was out of town and the other two slackers were unhelpful as usual so it was just him and Clint that day. He took the morning shift so he could at least have the afternoon and evening with his family.

After his shift was over, he rushed home quickly. He didn't expect a whole bunch for his birthday this year. The year before had just been he and Steve drinking and fucking until they fell asleep. Neither of them quite remembered his twenty-fifth. So Bucky anticipated a quiet night with some cake and then making love with Steve and moving on. But, instead, he walked into a house that had a birthday explosion all over it.

---

Steve felt bad about not remembering whether or not he gave Bucky a good celebration outside of the booze and sex so he tried to make it up by going twice as hard on the birthday stuff this year. "Happy birthday!" he shouted brightly, standing as Bucky came in.

Christopher let out a big "Paaapaaa!" to try and shout over Steve's voice.

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Bucky gasped and looked around the house and at his family. "What is all this?" he asked and came up to them. "Baby, did you do this for me?" He bent down and picked up Christopher and looked at his shirt. "Where did you find these shirts? They look so cute. I love it."

---

"It's for your birthday, dummy. Of course, I did this for you," Steve sassed. Christopher hugged Bucky and gave him a wet kiss on the cheek. "I had the shirts custom made. I figured they could wear it any day but why not wear it first on one of the best days of the year?"

---

Bucky grinned so wide and looked around. "It's so much. The entire house is in birthday chaos. You didn't have to do all of this." He pulled Steve a little closer and kissed Sarah May who was in Steve's arms and looking up at him. She had grown bigger in the last month. She was getting closer and
closer to making sounds that could pass as some sort of communication. But Bucky got the feeling she wasn't going to speak as fast as Christopher had.

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"I didn't have to, but I wanted to. You should have heard me try and get Sarah May to say 'Papa' all week. I was hoping for a genius baby miracle or something. She's probably sick of me right now," Steve joked. He kissed her cheek and passed her over so Bucky could hold both of their kids. "Just wait until you see your cake."

---

Bucky held his kids in his arms and felt two tiny hands simultaneously reach up to grab his hair. "Steve, hair tie," he requested and turned so Steve could pull his hair up really quickly. "I don't really want to lose any hair on my birthday. I feel old enough already."

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Steve barked out a laugh and pulled his emergency hair tie from his wrist and did Bucky's hair up just before their kids could yank it too bad. Both of them turned to Steve with an offended look. "You're not much older than I am."

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"Yes, but you are young and cute and sexy and virile. And I slept funny on my back last night and made Clint carry boxes around today because it hurt too much," Bucky said and pushed into Steve's space and pouted his lips at him. "Kiss me, Baby."

---

Steve blushed at all the compliments that Bucky gave him and shook his head. "I can give you a back massage, complete with whatever sexual act you can want to top off your birthday," Steve promised. "Come on. I want to show you Christopher and Sarah May's presents to you before the girls get home," he said.

---

"Like you weren't going to give me lots of good sex anyway," Bucky chuckled but followed Steve. "What did the babies get me? Did they take all their money and buy me something nice? Or maybe they made something for me? I mean all they really can make is poop so I hope it's not that."

---

"They both made something for you," Steve said. He showed Bucky to a box on the kitchen table. Inside was an album where Steve preserved all of the paintings Christopher had made so far. Then, beneath it was a scrapbook Steve had kept since they adopted him full of pictures and journal entries Steve wrote with all of his milestones.

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Bucky sat his kids carefully in their high chairs and then sat down in between them. He looked through all the paintings and told Christopher how talented he was. Then he saw the scrapbook and he flicked through the first pages of a very young, very tiny Christopher. "Oh, my god," he whispered and started to tear up as he read a little journal entry about the first time their son had tried a strawberry. "This is so beautiful," he said and looked up to Steve with watery eyes. "Baby, I love
Steve smiled proudly. He knew that Bucky was upset that he had to miss so many days with their son because he was working extra at the record shop, so he wanted to give him something so it wouldn't be as bad. He drew him in for a kiss and smiled. "I'm glad you like it, Love."

---

Bucky gasped and buried his face against Steve's neck and kissed him over and over. "I love it. It's perfect. Did you start one for Sarah May?" he asked and looked up at Steve again. "I have my photo albums all in a box in our closet but I think we will need a bigger box if you plan on doing these for every kid."

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Steve smirked. "Well, you have to open your present from her and see." Inside was little handprint impressions framed in a neat black square from her paint adventures as well as another scrapbook of just her, as Steve had done for Christopher.

---

Bucky bit his lip and tried not to start crying too much. He kissed Sarah May's cheek to which she just babbled some quiet nonsense. "Thank you for all this, Steve. These are the best presents I could have asked for." He pulled Steve in close for another kiss and hugged him securely, just holding him for a while.

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Steve kissed Bucky's temple and smiled warmly. "Don't thank me. Sarah May and Christopher made these for you, remember?" He rubbed his hand along Bucky's back and smiled. "Just wait until you see what I got you, though. That has to wait until later."

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"Oh?" Bucky asked and grinned at his husband. "There's more? This is kind of a whole lot already, Steve," he said and glanced around again. "I mean you went all out this time. Twenty-six isn't a landmark birthday that I'm unaware of, right?"

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"It doesn't matter if it's a landmark or not. It's the day the most amazing man in the world to me was born. That's enough reason to go all out," Steve answered. He kissed him deeply until Christopher swatted his hands at his dad's arm so he would make room for him to get to Bucky better.

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"Looks like you're going to have to compete for my attention today, Baby," Bucky giggled and nuzzled Christopher back. "Are we doing anything special tonight or just being together as a family until it's time to sleep and then I'll get to jump your bones."

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"Christopher!" Steve laughed. "Don't push your daddy." Christopher ignored him and kept acting
cute for Bucky’s attention instead. "I’m making your favorite for dinner and we are going to have a nice night indoors. I won’t promise a quiet night indoors."

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Bucky grinned and picked Christopher out of his high chair so he could hold him. "You have plans for me tonight, Baby?" he asked and gave Steve a suggestive little look. "We fell asleep so fast last night we didn't get to do anything."

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Steve laughed. "I was thinking about a toy possibly making an appearance. Since you liked it so much," he said. "What do you say, Handsome? You want me to do that with you? Or do you want something different?"

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"It's my birthday. I don't want to make decisions. I think you should call the shots, Steve," Bucky said and yawned just a little, trying to hide it so Steve wouldn’t think he was already exhausted. "You know I like when you're in control anyway. That way you can decide if you want to use toys or not."

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"What happened to me being too bossy in bed, huh?" Steve teased fondly. Sarah May tried getting her papa to look at her now by making unintelligible baby noises at him and bouncing a little around. "Oh, she's telling you quite the story," Steve said.

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"Oh, Stevie, you're still bossy. I never said I didn't like it a lot of the time, though," Bucky said and turned to pay attention to his daughter. "Ya-Ya, are you trying to speak? You can't quite do that yet, Sweet Pea. But you are very good at your babbles."

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Sarah May smiled and reached for Bucky's ponytail. "Ah, now I see what she was trying to get all along," Steve laughed. Just then, the girls came home in an explosion of noise from their bickering on about which is a better movie - *Rocky* or *Raging Bull*.

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Bucky knew this argument had to have been going on for a long time given how fired up they both seemed about it. "Hey, girls, how was school today?" he asked in hopes to try to break up their argument before it turned into a boxing match in the living room.

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"It was good. We had an assembly today so we only had classes for half the day,” Lilly said and dumped her bag on the ground.

Both girls came over to him to wrap him up in a hug. "Happy birthday, Bucky," they said together.

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"Thank you," Bucky said happily and grinned at his sisters. "Alright, I have a question for you both.
How come Christopher and Ya-Ya only pull on my hair? You both have longer hair than I do but they never pull yours. How do you do it?"

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"Because I put them down in the corner whenever they grab my hair. Negative reinforcement. I read about it in a book," Becca answered.

Lilly shrugged her shoulders and answered, "I just shout real loud when they do it and it scares them off."

---

"You scare my babies?" Bucky asked Lilly with wide eyes. "No wonder Sarah May likes Becca better. She doesn't do well with loud noises." He kissed his daughter's head and handed her part of a strawberry. She had been working on eating some solids. She didn't have any teeth poking in yet but she could mash small bits of food.

---

"Well, not all the time. It's just when they're doing something they shouldn't. Stops them in their tracks," Lilly said proudly, as if she had personally discovered some sort of cheat code for raising babies.

"I don't think you'd like it if we made a loud noise every time you did something wrong," Steve observed with a furrow in his brow.

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Bucky scoffed. "He's right. You wouldn't. And I prefer calm correction," he said and looked to Steve. Although, he knew he didn't have any room to talk. He had yelled at the girls a lot over the years and was very bad at staying calm sometimes.

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Lilly walked over to Christopher and picked him up so she could bounce him on her hip. Since he was her godson, she favored him more. It worked out since Sarah May liked Becca better anyway. "Whatever. When's dinner?" Lilly asked. "I'm starving already."

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"She's been complaining since we left school," Becca said and gave an annoyed little look to Bucky.

Bucky sighed and handed Lilly a banana. "Eat this and calm down. Steve is making dinner tonight. If you want it to be faster, you can help him out."

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"I'm not hungry enough to help out," Lilly said with such blunt honesty that it made Steve laugh.

"Fair enough. I'm figuring dinner for a little before six. Hopefully, the banana will last you until then," Steve answered.

---
Bucky sent the girls off to work on homework and he made sure the babies were situated in their high chairs with toys in reach. He got up and leaned against the counter so he could see the kids but be close to Steve. "So, you want to hear about the new project we are doing at AA?"

---

Steve reached out to hold Bucky's hand and brought it to his lips to kiss. "Tell me," he said. He was interested in the things Bucky did with his life and he wanted to be extra supportive when it came to do with things from AA.

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"We started volunteering for a half hour every other meeting at the orphanage down the block," Bucky said. "We go in and spend time with the kids and help them with school projects and things like that. There’s this one girl - Steve, you would love her - she will be four next month. And she calls everyone 'Miss'. It doesn't matter if you are a grown ass man. So I'm 'Miss Bubby' because she can't really do sharp consonants that well."

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Steve barked out a laugh. "Oh, man. She sounds sweet. So would I be Miss Steeb?" he asked. He brushed his fingertips over Bucky's arm. "Is she your favorite one there? What's her name?" Bucky was great with kids. Steve bet that they all flocked to him whenever he came by.

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"You probably would be something similar, yes," Bucky said with a big grin. "She is my favorite. As much as I hate to admit picking favorites at an orphanage, she is. Her name is ‘Adriana’ and she is so sweet and loves to play hide and seek Although, there isn’t many places to go so she has to repeat all the hideouts a bunch of times."

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"Oh, my god, she sounds so precious." Steve’s heart melted. His kids weren’t old enough yet for true hide and seek and he was looking forward to that day so much. "Could I come with you guys some time to help out?"

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Bucky thought for a second and wished he could think of an easy way to make that happen. "I'm not sure, Baby. I would have to talk to our group supervisor who set up the program with the orphanage. And I really don't know if I'm ready to have everyone at AA know that I have a husband. Let me think it over."

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"I could just be a well-meaning ex-cop friend of yours who loves kids," Steve said. But then again, he never was good at keeping his hands off of Bucky and had to keep his hands in his pockets often in public. He couldn't keep himself away from his husband when there were kids to play with. It would be too difficult not to act just like themselves at home with their own kids.

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Bucky nodded. "I will think it over. I promise. I would love for you to see all the kids. They are really great. Some of them just need some care and attention. They don't really get too much of that
on a daily basis."

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"Those poor babies. At the very least, let me bake some cookies for them so you can bring them in next time. They deserve something baked at home with love," Steve said. He stole one more kiss and then went to go start dinner.

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Bucky watched Sarah May as she worked to figure out how to make a small plush toy squeak. And he saw Christopher holding a ball close to his mouth and drooling all over it. "You are more than welcome to do that, Baby. I'm sure the kids would love that."

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Steve loved the domesticity he had here - their kids playing in their high chairs, his husband relaxing and having idle chatter while dinner was being made. He could hear Becca and Lilly watching TV in the other room when Lilly definitely should've been doing homework. Sarah came home a little before dinner from her walk around the park and hugged Bucky hello. "Happy birthday, dear."

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"Thank you, Sarah," Bucky said and hugged her back firmly. "Steve said you helped with all this birthday nonsense around the house. Thank you for indulging him."

Christopher and Sarah May both started making noise in their high chairs and reaching out for her as Christopher said, "Nana! Nana!"

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"I have to make my son-in-law feel special on his birthday, right?" she said and gasped at her grandbabies and scooped them both up. "Hello! Are you two excited to see your nana? I'll never get over how cute you are," she cooed.

Dinner was placed on the table and everyone took their regular spots, including Diana beneath Steve's feet to be fed scraps and Raphael by Lilly's feet for the same reason.

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Bucky sat next to Steve and scooted just a little closer to him tonight. He wanted to be right next to his husband all evening. Dinner went over smoothly. The girls gave Bucky their present which was a large blanket that they had made together with Sarah. It was Bucky's favorite colors and it had his name weaved carefully but a little messily on one of the corners.

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After dinner was over, Steve and Bucky headed up to their room while Sarah watched the babies. She even said she would put them to sleep for them that night. Steve excitedly gave Bucky a shoebox. He purposely didn't wrap it so it would confuse Bucky a little bit. Inside were tickets to the Ramones concert in June and a hotel reservation. Even though the concert was local, he was going to make a little getaway out of it. "I've been dying to give this to you all day."
Bucky ran his hand over the box for a moment and then shook it. "These are those light shoes, Steve," he said and then popped the top off. It took him a couple minutes to figure out what the papers inside were telling him but then he understood and his eyes went wide and he couldn't help but grab Steve and mash their lips together.

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Steve watched with excitement as Bucky opened up his present. Once his husband realized what it was, Steve was enveloped in a kiss. The force of it knocked him back a little but then he laughed and returned the kiss happily. "I knew I had to get it as soon as I saw the ad. I called up and told them I needed to get two tickets or else my best friend wouldn't have the best birthday ever."

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"We're really going?" Bucky asked hastily and looked back at the tickets. "Seriously? I'm going to see the Ramones in concert? I can't believe this. Baby, this is amazing. Thank you so much." He was so excited. He wasn't going to be able to think of anything else until the concert. He was too worked up about it already.

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"Yes!" Steve said, beaming. "Those tickets aren't for decoration, you big dope." He pulled Bucky's hair free from the ponytail and ran his fingers through his long mess gently. "I love you, Sweetheart. I can't wait to go to the concert with you and have an incredible time together."

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Bucky nodded and pulled Steve in for another firm, wet kiss as he tugged at the bottom of his shirt. "Sex, now," he demanded lightly. "You know me so well. Those concert tickets make me want you to bad." He stuck Steve's hand to his hip and waited a moment. He had managed to go to the tattoo shop on his way home and had them add in Sarah May's name below their sons' names on his chest and he wanted Steve to see it after he undressed him.

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"Bossy," Steve accused playfully. He loved it, though. He loved knowing that he could still have Bucky be crazy for him. Steve hastily took off Bucky's shirt and was about to start on his pants when he saw his tattoo and gasped. "When did you get that?" He loved the dedication Bucky had to their children and loved seeing their names written together in a row like that.

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"Few hours ago. On my way home," Bucky said and stretched a little to show off his body to Steve to entice him. "I figured now that she is ours and we have her birth certificate, I needed to get her added to the tattoo." He chuckled and pulled Steve a little closer. "Imagine what my chest is going to look like once we have all our kids. I'm going to look like an attendance sheet."

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"You're perfect," Steve sighed happily, kissing his chest a few times. "You're going to have half of the population's worth of kids' names tattooed onto your chest. I hope you're ready," he laughed. Steve took off his own shirt before starting on Bucky's pants. "We are going to have the best family ever."
"We already have the best family ever," Bucky said happily and let himself gently fall back on the bed so he was spread out for Steve. He liked being on display for him like that. And he knew Steve liked it too. "Our kids are perfect and I love them so much. We've done really well for them."

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Seeing Bucky lay back like that sent a wave of arousal right to his dick. He grabbed the lube from their nightstand and started to coat his fingers with it. "We have," he agreed. "They're going to be such amazing people. And I love that I get to raise them with you."

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"I wouldn't pick anyone else to help me father my children. You're the best husband in the world. And you're the greatest daddy. I hope you know that, Steve," Bucky said warmly and extended his legs out so Steve could get to his ass easier. "And you're gonna fuck me really nice on my birthday, aren't you?"

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Steve reached his hand between Bucky's legs and entered him with two fingers at once, knowing Bucky loved that. "Yes, I am. I'm gonna fuck you so good and thorough you'll need me to carry you around tomorrow morning," he purred. "How's that sound?"

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"That a promise?" Bucky grunted as he relaxed himself to take Steve's fingers easier. "You going to call and tell Tim that I'm too fucked out to come in for work? I'm sure that'll make him blush to his toes." He chuckled and reached a hand down to grip at his cock.

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"I'll do it, I don't care. He's a friend and you two probably gossip about everything anyway. He'd find out about it sooner or later be it from my mouth or yours." Steve worked his fingers in and out of Bucky quickly. While still fingering him, Steve reached down to the sex box he had pulled from the closet to under the bed earlier. He pulled out the anal beads and laid them over Bucky's chest. "Put the first one in yourself. I want to watch."

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Bucky glanced down at the beads and then at Steve. He was really just beyond amazed with Steve. He was willing to use the beads again and he even wanted to watch Bucky use them. That was such a difference from when they first started going out. Bucky took the first bead in hand and pulled the toy down to his hole and carefully pushed the first one in alongside Steve's fingers.

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"I didn't mean with my fingers still - fuck, that's hot," Steve groaned. He pressed on the bead inside Bucky with the pads of his fingers and groaned. He withdrew his fingers so he could slowly push in a few more beads instead. "You're a menace."

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Bucky's mouth fell open and he just stared up at the ceiling, letting desperate little moans come out of him. "How am I – ah, fuck - how am I a menace? I was just following orders," he said and pulled his knees up closer to his chest and he tried to watch Steve as he was working in the next bead.
Steve pushed the beads in with one hand while the other massaged his balls, working him over while he filled him up with the toy. "You weren't supposed to do it with my fingers still inside. Are you looking to kill me with arousal, Baby?" he asked with a pout.

Bucky chuckled and shook his head. "I'm just looking to get fucked by my husband and feel his hot come spilling out of me. And if that means getting you a little more worked up than you thought then so be it. You love this ass so you can't complain too much."

"Fucking Christ," Steve groaned. Once he pushed the last bead into him, he sat back to admire his husband's full ass. "How does that feel?" he asked. "You think maybe I should jerk off on my own and make you wait until I can get it up again to fuck you?" Steve asked.

Bucky whined loudly and pouted at Steve. He didn't hate the idea. He wanted to be fucked by Steve but the idea of him leaving Bucky like that with a tight, full ass was also incredibly appealing. And Bucky was always excited when he could get Steve to come more than once in a night. It was like a special treat only for the horniest of evenings. "You promise to fuck me once you are ready again?"

Steve nodded. "I promise," he said. "But I did change my mind a little. I want you to jerk me off instead." He leaned down to kiss Bucky and tugged on his lip on the way back. "I want to sit back and kiss you for a little bit. And it feels so much better when it's your hand on my dick."

Bucky nodded eagerly and moved his legs to accommodate Steve's body pressed against him. He felt the beads moving around inside him and he gasped at the way a big one was rubbing against his prostate. "Kiss me, Baby. I'll take care of you," he said lovingly and gripped Steve's cock in his hand.

Steve kissed his husband deeply and moaned against his lips when Bucky gripped his cock. "I bet it's maddening having those beads all crammed inside of you," he hummed. "Just imagine how it's gonna feel as I pull them out one by one, Baby. I'll even eat you out after if you want."

"You ass," Bucky groaned and sped up as he jerked Steve off. "It is maddening but you don't have to remind me. I'm having such a hard time not just pulling them out myself and then just fucking the big one in and out until I come too." He moaned again and gave Steve a kiss. "You better eat me out and you better let me come. I need to come for you."

Steve rocked his hips into Bucky's hand and kissed along his neck. "Patience is a virtue. Don't be so quick to move them out when I have plans for you," he said breathlessly.
"I'm really not going to be able to go to work tomorrow," Bucky said and thumbed at Steve's head. "If I'm all full of your come and my own balls are empty and my ass is sore, there's no way I'll be able to do anything around that place."

"You're lucky I don't have a set to keep inside of you during work hours." Steve's breathing hitched and his hips stuttered forward. He was pretty close to orgasm. "Regardless, you'll still manage to do more than Reggie."

"That is true," Bucky agreed and rolled his hips up as he kept pumping Steve. "I think Tim would be grateful I'm not walking around work with a toy up my ass. The poor guy would have a heart attack from embarrassment if he found out."

Steve gripped at Bucky's shoulders as he stroked him to orgasm. He let out a low moan, breath stuttering as he came. He looked at Bucky with dark eyes before kissing him deeply. "You're perfect," he whined.

Bucky chuckled into the kiss and wrapped his arms around Steve, feeling Steve's come squish between them. "You're my handsome husband and I love you so much," Bucky whispered and kissed him again. "Now, am I going to get to come or not?"

Steve laughed and kissed down Bucky's neck. "So impatient." He scooted down lower and nudged Bucky's legs apart. He bowed his head and pulled one of the beads out halfway and licked around Bucky's stretched hole.

Bucky moaned and let his head fall back, just feeling the pull and stretch. "How do I look?" he asked, breathless and desperate to have more touch, contact, more of Steve all over him. "You want to take a picture? I'd like to see it and we can put it with our others."

Steve let go and allowed the bead to go back inside. "You look so good. I want to take a bunch of pictures-" he hurried to get their Polaroid and started snapping away, first with Bucky's ass left alone, then with him pulling a bead out, then him eating out Bucky's ass as he pulled another out. "Fuck, you're amazing."

Bucky moaned and moved around a bit as Steve pulled and licked and massaged. He was in so much pleasure he didn't know what to do with himself. "Let me see?" he asked and reached for the photos that Steve was shaking.
Steve pulled back so he could look over the pictures. Once they were developed, he passed them over to his husband. He lazily pulled out another bead as Bucky looked them over. "This is probably one of the better photosets."

Bucky grunted in response and stared at the pictures before setting them on the nightstand. "Are you going to make a photo album of our sexy pictures too?" he asked and sat up so he could see Steve. "And you could go ahead and suck on my cock if you wanted."

"If you want me to. I will have a hard time finding the time to create it with no one else around." Steve set the camera down and kissed down Bucky's stomach. "Hmm... do I want to suck on your cock?" he mused playfully.

Bucky whined and reached his hand down to stroke himself. "I mean, it's your choice. But I might just jerk myself off if you don't do it. And I know you like sucking my cock." He thumbed at the head and clenched down around the beads in his ass.

"You know me too well," Steve sighed dramatically. He licked from the base to the tip of Bucky's cock before swallowing him down easily. He looked up at his husband with hooded eyes, bobbing his head as he slowly pulled the beads out one by one.

Bucky watched Steve with big eyes. He literally never got tired of Steve's mouth around him. Once all the beads were out, he tugged Steve's hair lightly and said, "Fingers, please, need something in me." He was just so desperate to be full and stretched.

Steve obliged and put three fingers in Bucky's ass right away. He fucked his husband like that while he pressed his tongue on the underside of Bucky's cock. He looked so fucking amazing like this, all fucked out and needy.

Bucky took in several sharp breaths and chanted, "Gonna come, gonna come, gonna come," until he was gasping and shooting his load right down Steve's throat. He covered his mouth with his hands as he moaned and felt Steve's fingers still pumping him through it.

Steve sucked Bucky through his orgasm and swallowed his come down dutifully. He pulled back and wiped his mouth and smiled lazily at his husband. "It's been a while since I swallowed your load," he chuckled, voice rough. He pulled his fingers out of Bucky so he could start stroking himself, hoping to rebound fast tonight to get to come again for him.
Bucky nodded and let his tired eyes close. "It's been about a week since we have done anything," he observed and clenched his ass down around nothing. He also hadn't realized Steve was gearing himself up to go again.

Steve leaned down and kissed Bucky's neck softly. He was close to getting it back up but needed a little more time. "I'd like to say I was saving it all up for tonight, but it's hard to make time with two babies keeping us running around all the time," he chuckled. "We didn't have any time as a couple before we had kids to raise. We got to wait until we retire."

Bucky was quiet for a minute or two, just resting a little bit and letting his breathing get back to normal. After a bit, he agreed and wrapped his legs around Steve. "We have to try everything once we are older. Old man sex like no one has ever seen before. And we are going to be able to get it up until the day we die." He may have also been holding out hope that Steve would get kinkier in his old age.

"You're going to be buried with an erection," Steve joked. "They'll have trouble closing the coffin on you," he snickered. Steve knew that the two of them would never stop being attracted to one another. It took a little bit longer but then he was ready for Bucky again and he claimed Bucky's lips in a kiss as he slid his dick in slowly.

Bucky was going to give some sort of snarky response back but then Steve's lips were on his and he hadn't been paying attention so he gasped and groaned at the surprise of having Steve's cock ease inside him. "You got ready again fast," he said and looked down at his own spent cock that probably needed a while still.

Steve pushed in steadily until he bottomed out in Bucky's ass. "God took half my lungs away, he had to let me have something above average to keep me happy," Steve joked. He sucked a mark onto his shoulder and started to steadily rock his hips in and out of him.

Bucky nodded and carded his hand through Steve's hair. "God blessed you with a lot of parts that far exceed average. Your ass, your cock, those beautiful eyes, your mouth, and tongue. And that's just on the outside."

Steve blushed. He kissed him over and over, panting against his lips as he made love to him. "Speak for yourself, Gorgeous. I could stare at your beautiful body all day." He reached a hand between them to stroke Bucky's cock.
"That's what the pictures are for," Bucky said. "You can take those with you. I can't follow you around naked all day." He chuckled but then winced at the overstimulation over his dick. "Too much," he whispered.

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"You can follow me naked all day when we retire," he laughed. Steve pulled his hand back and held Bucky's hip instead. "Sorry, Baby. Want me to keep going slow and steady?"

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"No, you can go ahead," Bucky said. "Do what you want to, Baby. I don't think I'll be able to come again right now. You know this medicine makes it a little difficult for me to get hard again for hours." He smiled at Steve and pulled him in for a kiss.

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"It's alright, Baby. We have all night to ourselves," he promised. Steve tangled his fingers in Bucky's hair and tugged it so Bucky's head tilted back. Steve bit a little mark on his exposed throat. "So beautiful," he sighed happily, staying slow in the hopes that maybe he could help Bucky get it up again before this was over.

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Bucky hummed happily and rocked his hips to try to get Steve further into his ass. "Tell me how much you like making love to me?" he requested and moved to suck at Steve's neck in turn and bite softly at his collarbone. He wanted to mark him up too.

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Steve smiled and angled his hips a little differently so he could push in just a little bit deeper. "I love that I'm the only one that gets to have you like this forever. I love that you bare everything to me and trust me to give you every little bit of love you deserve. Being inside of you feels amazing and it takes everything I have not to try and rush because it feels so good."

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Bucky nodded along as Steve spoke and continued to suck deep red marks on his skin. He was so in love with Steve. He always had been and he always would be. They had been through so much together and he figured that more hardships were going to come. And he was confident that they would be able to get through anything together.

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Steve lifted Bucky's hips a little so he could fuck him nice and slow at an angle he knew Bucky loved. He kissed all over his chest and muttered words of adoration to him. He kept at it and at long last, he finally spilled himself inside his husband with a low moan. He collapsed on top of him, his dick still inside of him.

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Bucky pulled Steve closer and wrapped his arms around him. He kissed Steve's shoulders and neck repeatedly as Steve got his breath back. "I love you, Baby," Bucky said and closed his eyes. He was so tired and so ready to sleep. "Are you going to fall asleep on me like this? Because you make a nice blanket."
Steve laughed. "I do, huh? Well, if you want me to then I guess I may as well," he said. Steve kissed along Bucky's neck. "And just so you know if the babies wake up tonight, I'll take care of them. You deserve a full night's rest on your birthday," Steve promised.

Bucky gave a little smile, already almost asleep. "Thank you, Love. But if they get to be too much, come get me," he said and reached to flick off the lamp on the nightstand. "Sleep well, my handsome husband."

Bucky fell asleep first and Steve kissed his face a few more times before going to bed as well. He nuzzled him affectionately and drifted off. He was interrupted twice by crying babies and after the third time, he decided to stay up and went into the kitchen so he could make everyone breakfast.

Becca was sitting at the kitchen table with a cup of coffee and a large bowl of ice cream covered with chocolate syrup and whipped cream. When she noticed Steve coming in, she wiped her eyes and pulled the hood of her sweatshirt up over her head and stared down into her bowl.

Steve was surprised to see Becca up so early in the morning but it didn't take much to see that she was upset. "Hey, Becs," he said gently, squeezing her shoulder as he walked past to get the milk. "What's the matter?" He didn't want to come on too strong and dissuade her from talking to him.

"Nothing," she mumbled and shoved a big spoonful of ice cream in her mouth. But she wasn't quite done. She swallowed her bite and looked up to Steve with a sad fire in her eyes. "Why are guys such assholes, huh?" she blurted out and sniffled.

At first, Steve thought he wasn't going to get anything out of her but she spoke up much quicker than he anticipated. "Because we… get used to what we wrongly think is the way we are allowed to behave. I guess. There's more to it, but yeah," he answered. "Was some guy a jerk to you?"

Becca looked down and started crying again. She wasn't usually this transparent with anyone but she was so upset. She got up slowly and went over to Steve. She looked up at him for a second then flopped onto him in a hug.

Steve's arms immediately went around her to hug back. He gave her a little squeeze and kissed the top of her head. "Whatever he did to you, you didn't deserve it. And whoever he is, he doesn't deserve you," Steve said firmly.
Becca clung to Steve and gasped through her tears. "It was going so well. We were having fun. He was my first kiss and I was his first kiss. At least that's what he said. But I don't know anymore." She hiccupped a little then kept going. "I was going to tell you guys about him after a while. But then I was at his place and his parents were gone and he wanted to have sex with me." Another hiccup. "And I told him I would think about it. But then the other night he asked again and I told him I didn't want to and he said it was fine. He told me it was fine. But then he leaves me this note in the mailbox yesterday and he broke up with me."

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This was a bit more personal than Steve expected and although he felt like Bucky had a right to be told first, he was thankful that Becca was comfortable enough to open up to him. He tensed when she brought up the boy wanting sex but was glad to hear that she didn't give in what she wanted under his pressure. "You're right. He is an asshole," Steve said sternly. "He's probably some desperate, little kid trying to prove he's cool, but really, he's going to be washed up and ignorant and horrible all his life."

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Becca looked up at Steve and whimpered. "I liked him a lot," she said softly. "We were good together. We had fun." She shook her head. "And I know that even if I had sex with him instead, he would have just left eventually. I know now that he didn't care about me. It's just so unfair!"

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Steve stroked her hair and gave her a sympathetic look. "I'm sorry you're going through this, Becca," he said gently. "You know, it's rare that people stay with their high school sweethearts anyway. So anyone you meet this age has to make you feel super extra special for it to have a chance to last."

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"He was the first guy to show any interest in me," Becca said and detached herself from Steve to go back to her ice cream. She knew it wouldn't have worked out and she may not work it out with anyone at this age. But she had been so excited to have a boyfriend and learn how to kiss. She was thankful she didn't have sex with him but she was just so hurt regardless.

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"He won't be the last," Steve promised. He got out a piece of Bucky's birthday cake from the night before and put it on a plate in front of her. "It's going to hurt for a little while. But you'll be alright," Steve promised. "Me, Bucky, Lilly, and my mom are all here for you. We always will be."

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"Thanks," Becca said and took off some of the icing and ate it by itself. "Don't tell Bucky about all this, okay? He will just get upset and angry. He will want to know who the guy was and want to go beat him up or something. And I don't want him to lecture me about safe, responsible sex again. Coming from him, it's a joke. And I already know about safe sex."

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"What are you talking about? Bucky's always had safe, responsible sex. He's never made any regrettable choices in that area," Steve said, trying to sound serious but then he couldn't keep a straight face. "Don't worry. I won't tell him. But I do think you should tell him about this one day when you're ready."
"When I'm ready," Becca said and tugged her hood farther over her face. "Maybe don't say anything to Lilly either. She's got a big mouth. It was my mistake to tell her about him the first time he asked for sex. She will just be a nightmare now if she knows what happened."

Steve nodded his head and crossed his heart. "I promise," he swore. He turned to go back to making breakfast once more. "You're being a lot more supportive to everyone, Becca. I've noticed that lately," he said. "How's that feel?"

Becca shrugged and drank some of her coffee. "I don't know," she murmured. "Guess things around here feel more like before. You know. More like when Mom and Dad were around and we were all happy." Becca hadn't been happy in a long time. But she was finally letting herself figure out how to get that back.

Steve nodded. "I know me and my mom can never replace what you've lost. But we're doing our best to give you a happy, stable home to live in. You don't have to be the responsible one anymore. Not unless we need you to babysit for an hour," he said with a grin.

Becca sniffled again and got up from the table. "I just miss my parents so much," she said. "But I do love you and your mom and the babies. Even if I get annoyed with them sometimes. And I know Mom and Dad would have loved you too. And they would have been amazing grandparents." She nodded to herself, just thinking about it. "Thanks for talking with me, Steve. I'm going to go lay in bed for a while."

It made Steve feel good to know that Bucky's parents would've liked him. He knew that their kids would've loved to have them as grandparents, too. "Any time, Becca. I'll call you once it's breakfast time. I love you," he said, then went back to focusing on not burning the pancakes.
On the day of the concert, Bucky was beyond hyped up. It was the middle of the summer and the girls were off of school. Sarah May was getting some teeth in and Christopher was doing better with his sign language as the days went on. Steve had booked them a hotel room close to the venue even though they weren't leaving Brooklyn. And they were there now just waiting until they needed to head out for the show. Bucky could hardly keep himself calmed down.

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Sarah had to practically kick Steve out the door because he couldn't keep away from his kids. Even though Steve and Bucky talked about going on date nights, they never spent a whole evening away from both of their kids. But, with some encouragement, Steve got himself ready to go out. He had tried to dress the part of a punk enthusiast by borrowing Bucky's clothes but he still looked like a narc no matter how hard he tried. "Okay. I think I'm ready," he said.

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Bucky giggled and pulled Steve in close to him. He reached up and messed up Steve's perfectly brushed hair. "You got to look more like a dirty hippie. Just pretend you're going as me for Halloween," he said and gave Steve a kiss. He was wearing a pair of tattered jeans that flared nicely over his boots and a black t-shirt that he cut in the middle so it showed his abs and stomach. And then he wore his leather jacket over top. He had stared at albums covers for the Ramones to try to figure out the exact right look to emulate them.

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Every time Steve thought he was becoming less conservative, Bucky's sense of fashion reminded Steve how much of a grandpa he really was. He didn't mind Bucky going out like that but he knew that he could never go out in public the way that Bucky was dressed. "You look like you could pose with them for a magazine cover and no one would be able to tell the difference. You could go on stage and they wouldn't even doubt you belonged there," he chuckled. He stole one more kiss before nudging him out the door.

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Bucky bit his lip and followed Steve. "What's the odds of me actually being pulled on stage?" he asked, letting himself bask in the fantasy for a bit. "I mean I'm not a hot girl so I know it's a low percentage but come on."

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"Maybe one of them is bisexual," Steve said. "Or they see your long flowing hair and are confused just long enough to pull you up," he added. "Just keep your back to the stage. They won't be able to tell," he teased.

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Bucky chuckled and ran a hand through his hair. That was pretty accurate. Bucky could pass off as pretty feminine if no one looked at his shoulders too much and he stood just the right way. "Maybe
everyone will mistake me for a woman and I'll be able to kiss you and hold your hand during the show."

"That would be nice," Steve said. "They'll probably be too busy looking at the band to notice two guys kissing anyway," he added. "Did you want to stop anywhere first? Or did you want to get to the venue early? I've never been to a real concert before so I don't know how this works."

"No, we can just go. It's standing room so I want to be able to get up close," Bucky said. "I want to be able to feel the sweat from the band." He didn't mention that a concert like this could get a little wild. He was worried of course that there would be a lot of drugs around. He just knew he was going to have to be careful. It wasn't like he was going to do anything, but he just needed to be aware of his surroundings.

Steve headed towards the venue. "When was the last time you went to a concert again? It's had to have been a while. At least not since I met you. I wonder what it's going to be like. Probably loud. Do they play all of their popular songs or only the new stuff?" Steve asked.

"It's been since before my parents died," Bucky said. "The last concert I went to was a little one-man band playing in Manhattan. He had a bit of a following and my boyfriend at the time wanted to go." He adjusted his shirt that was riding up even higher. "And, yes, it will be loud. And hot. And they will pretty much play whatever. I feel like they will want to play a little of everything."

In other words, Bucky was long overdue for this concert. Steve felt like his husband really deserved this night out. "Did you have fun at the concert? Did you like the singer too or was it more your boyfriend's thing?" Steve asked. He wished he could've held Bucky's hand as they walked.

Bucky shrugged. "Honestly, I don't remember it much. I was pretty high the entire time. All I remember was that he had a good time and he kept buying me drinks. I blacked out at some point and woke up back at his place in bed with his sweater on."

"Well, let's hope for a more memorable concert this time around," Steve said. When they got to the venue, there was already a line. Steve took his place in it beside Bucky. "What if I put you on my shoulders? You think that could get you on stage?"

Bucky chuckled and nudged Steve's arm. "They would kick me off for sure. Besides, I'd rather be glued to your side the entire time. This is a night for us after all." He really wanted to hold Steve's hand and kiss him but he didn't dare do it out in the open light of day.
Steve smiled. "Well, I would think it would be about you since this is your late-delivered birthday present," he said. He leaned into Bucky's side since that was the most they could do in public.

"Yeah, it's my birthday present but it's still a day for both of us," Bucky said. "I mean, I'm going to have a great time with my husband at a concert for one of my favorite bands. And then tonight, at our hotel room, I'm going to fuck you so nice and deep as a thank you that you'll want to take me out every weekend."

Steve blushed but was very interested in the night they would have at the hotel. When it was their turn to show their tickets, Steve passed them over and gave Bucky an excited smile. The venue was called L'Amour and the doors opened up to let people in. It wasn't anything special on the outside but it started as a disco club and now it played host to bands from all around.

Bucky squeezed Steve's arm and led him into the building. It was a lot bigger than Bucky thought it would be. He was immediately overwhelmed by all the people and he saw large groups of them already congregating up front close to the stage. Bucky put his hand on Steve's lower back to help push him up towards the stage as fast as they could go.

Steve followed Bucky to the crowd and as soon as they got some standing room, people began to fill in and press up against them to get even closer to the stage. "Wow, I'm only used to being the one monitoring these events. Who would have thought I'd be involved with it?"

"You've never been to a concert because you wanted to be there?" Bucky asked. He was able to slip his hand with Steve's and hold it tight because all the people were so squished up against each other that no one was going to notice at all.

Steve shook his head. "There's so many people. I had to arrest a bunch of kids causing trouble and picking fights. I figured I'd watch the footage of the concerts on TV to enjoy them, instead," Steve answered, brushing a thumb over the back of Bucky's hand.

"Are you going to be okay this close?" Bucky asked and looked at Steve with concern. "We can scoot back if you want. It might be less crowded back there once it starts up and everyone pushes up here." He really wanted to be close but he also wanted Steve to enjoy himself.

"Sweetheart, I love the Ramones but I'm going to be just as overwhelmed in the front of the crowd as I will in the back. We may as well be where you want to be and you can pamper me when we get back to the hotel," Steve said, squeezing his hand again.
Bucky nodded and gave Steve a warm smile. "Yeah, I will do that, I promise. But if this gets too much, we don't have to stay for the entire show. I'm anticipating getting a headache at some point. I was just going to push through it but if you want to go later, we might go once I start to have pain."

"Of course. I'm following your lead here," Steve began but the crowd started to cheer when the opening band came on stage. He hadn't really expected the interest in the opener to be that wild but everyone seemed ready for a show.

Bucky was only semi-interested in paying attention to the opener. But he moved along with everyone else and kept his hold on Steve as he did. After a few songs, Bucky looked around the hall to see just how big it was. And then his eye was caught on one of the police officers stationed on the outskirts for the show. His eyes went wide and he shook his head. "Son of a bitch," he murmured and pulled Steve down to his level so he could whisper in his ear. "It's goddamn Richard."

Steve was enjoying himself listening to the music and was confused when he was pulled down and then looked around to where Bucky was pointing. He let out a laugh. "What, afraid he might arrest you again, Babe?" he teased. "You're criminally attractive right now."

Bucky shook his head and glared up at Steve. "I just think the universe thought it was pretty damn funny to schedule him for this concert. I mean it could have been Sam or Nat or someone we don't know but, no, we get Richard." He scoffed and moved Steve's hand to rest on his ass. "And, I'm always going commando when that guy is around. Maybe it's the universe trying to tell me that I need to wear underwear."

"I think it's pretty damn funny, too," Steve said. "But what if I was able to flirt with him a little and have him convince security to let us get in backstage after the concert?" Steve wasn't the type to do something like that but to make his husband happy, he'd bend his morals just a tiny bit.

Bucky's eyes flashed and he looked up at Steve. "You flirt with him and I withhold sex," he said and leaned into Steve's hip a bit so he could feel his body closer to his so he wouldn't want to risk it. "And I am going to be so grateful tonight for this gift that I'll give you so much pleasure, Baby."

Steve laughed and nodded. "Alright, alright. I won't flirt," he swore. He grabbed Bucky's ass stealthily. "I can't risk the amazing time you're going to give me tonight over backstage access to the Ramones. I'd rather you have backstage access to me."

Bucky giggled and bit his lip, wanting to kiss Steve so badly. "How long have you been waiting to use that line?" he asked and wrapped an arm around Steve. Steve did look very nice. Even if he looked a little like he had no idea what he was doing.
"Ever since I said 'backstage access' the first time," Steve laughed. He glanced back over to Richard but he didn't seem to notice they were there. He kind of wanted to say hello after the show. A second opener band got on stage then and Steve focused back on the music even if he really didn't like it as much as the first guys.

Bucky actually got way more into the second band than the first. Although, It might just have been the hype since he knew that the Ramones would be coming on next. He also kept seeing a bunch of people with tour shirts and he wanted one. "You think we can get a tour shirt on our way out?"

"I think we can," Steve said loudly into Bucky's ear. "I've specifically been saving all of my change in a jar and I've put aside a little bit of money every week to help save up for your college. I'm sure you can spare a few dollars for a shirt." They didn't want for anything but Steve had been more frugal than usual over the past few months.

Bucky stopped and looked up at Steve. He hadn't thought about college for months. He was saving up too but he was still not sure he could ever do it. But he didn't know Steve was saying his money too. He shook his head and pulled Steve in for a quick kiss on the lips. He knew no one was paying attention to them and everyone was way too high or drunk to care if they did notice Bucky was actually a man.

Steve smiled at the kiss and gave Bucky a small nudge when he looked surprised. "You don't honestly think I wouldn't do everything I could to help you achieve your dreams, do you?" He was proud that they were so supportive of each other. There was suddenly an explosion of noise as the lead singer of the Ramones got on stage and greeted them all. Steve’s head snapped over to the stage and he cheered with everyone else.

"Oh, my god!" Bucky shouted and reached his hand up towards the stage as everyone else did the same. "That's Joey!" he shouted at Steve and then stared as Johnny, Dee Dee, and Richie all made their way out to the stage and set themselves up.

Steve was thrilled to be so close to the band. Joey went to the front to run by people quickly touching every hand he could - including Bucky's. Steve grimaced at how squished everyone made him. The singer called out an introduction over the microphone and everyone screamed in response.

Bucky immediately freaked out the second he was touched by a Ramone. He felt like he was on another planet and when Richie started doing an intro drum riff, the entire crowd lost their minds. Everyone cheered and screamed and clapping as the drum riff turned in to the beginning of "Eat That Rat". And the show had started.
Steve beamed at his husband. "He high fived you!" he shouted over the crowd. Things got a little wild volume-wise once the music started playing. Steve started getting jostled around and he tried to focus on how much he liked the music to get over how cramped everything was.

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Bucky was on the moon. Sure, he was sweaty and he was pretty sure someone who wasn't Steve kept squeezing his ass and he had a headache already. But he was just so happy to be there and he was singing as loud as he could and swaying with the crowd. It was a perfect birthday present.

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A few times, Steve felt like he couldn't breathe but he didn't want to be the reason they headed out to the back early. Every time he felt overwhelmed, he took a sip of water. When his bottle was empty, he sang along to one of the songs instead. Every so often he would look over to Bucky and smile because his husband looked so happy to be here.

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By the end of the setlist, Bucky was ready to go. His head was hurting worse now and he could tell that Steve was just about done. It was such a good night, though, and he would love having this memory with Steve. When the final song started, "I Don't Wanna Walk Around with You", Bucky started to pull Steve out of the crowd so they could beat the masses on their way out. They stopped to get t-shirts and Bucky got one for Lilly as well before waiting near the door for the song to end and for the band to retreat back off the stage.

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Steve held Bucky's hand through the crowd and was buzzing with excitement to finally be able to take a breath without inhaling sweat from the person in front of him. Once they were out of the venue, Steve let go and slung an arm around Bucky's shoulders. "You looked like you were on cloud nine, Buck."

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Bucky's eyes were still wide and he was shaking his head like he had no idea if he was really there anymore. "That was amazing!" he yelled and looked to Steve excitedly. "Amazing!" He loved every second. "Shit, I don't know how to get back to the hotel." He chuckled and turned out to look at the L'Amour house again and then got his bearings.

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"I know, Buck! I'm so glad I got to go to my first concert for real with you." Steve knew how to get to the hotel easy so he led the way. "What was your favorite part?" he asked.

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"I don't know," Bucky said. "It was all so great." He honestly couldn't tell what part was the best. "I mean, getting touched by Joey was righteous. And Dee Dee looking right at me, man. Right at me!" He looked down at himself as they walked and noticed that he had gotten so sweaty that his cut-off shirt had curled with the moisture and ridden up even further.
Steve grinned. "That was pretty amazing," Steve agreed. "They really knew how to work their crowd." The hotel wasn't far and as soon as they got in, Bucky got a few stares at the state he was in as well as his clothes. Steve had almost told Bucky he needed a shower but, after the way some of the hotel patrons looked at him, Steve decided against it.

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Bucky was oblivious to anything that wasn't Steve or thinking about the Ramones. He followed Steve up to their room happily and gushed even more the second they were up there. "God, and they just did so well. They sound so good live. I mean, some people just don't do well live but they did. Steve, it was so perfect. A perfect present."

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Steve was so happy that Bucky enjoyed his birthday present. He couldn't wait to get Bucky to himself. Once they were in their hotel room, Steve reached down to grab Bucky's ass as he kissed him. "I love you so much, Baby. I'm glad you liked your present."

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Bucky giggled and sucked at Steve's lower lip for a second. "Looks like you're getting ready for your present now that I've had mine," he said and pressed his crotch to Steve's. "You remember how I was so turned on when we saw Top Gun last month with Monty and Evan? Cause it was like porno and I haven't seen porno in so long. I'm gonna fuck you tonight even better than I did that night."

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Steve moaned softly when Bucky pressed himself against him and he looked even happier when he brought up the movie night they had with their friends. That was a good fuck that night. "You going to let me wear your tour shirt while you fuck me tonight?" Steve asked as he started to take Bucky's pants off.

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Bucky gasped and nodded. "Oh, my god. If you want to. That sounds so hot," he said and shucked off his leather jacket. The tour shirt was neatly rolled up and tucked in his back pocket and he turned so Steve could grab it.

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Steve took off his shirt. "How about you put that shirt on me before you take the rest of my clothes off?" he suggested, running a hand down Bucky's chest while looking at him with the biggest bedroom eyes he could muster.

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Bucky whimpered and took in Steve's naked chest and abs. He didn't understand how Steve felt like he wasn't as attractive as he used to be. Bucky was still week in the knees every time he looked at his husband's body. It didn't matter how long they had been together or if Steve happened to have lost some muscle mass. He was the sexiest thing Bucky had ever seen. "Jesus, Baby," he whispered and pulled him close so he could pop the shirt over Steve's head and down around his body. It was a little tight on him since it was Bucky's size.
Steve was still somewhat confident in front of Bucky but he didn't go shirtless as much as he used to. He wouldn't go in public pools anymore either. He did his best not to play with the hem of Bucky's shirt that clung to his belly. "I think I may stretch it, actually... are you sure you want me to wear it?" Steve asked.

"You make it look so good," Bucky assured him and gently nudged Steve on to the bed. He started to go for Steve's pants and leaned in to kiss at his hips as he worked the pants off of him. "Baby, how do you want it? You want to be on your back?"

Steve laid back on the bed and lifted his hips up to help Bucky with taking his pants off. "I want to start on my back and end on my hands and knees. I don't want to risk staining your brand-new shirt," Steve said. He reached up and stroked his fingers through Bucky's messy hair.

Bucky chuckled low his throat and licked a line up Steve's inner thigh. "You got it, Baby," he said and moved to kiss at Steve's balls. Both he and Steve were pretty sweaty from the show but Bucky didn't mind. Steve smelled so good to him and he just wanted to be inside him as soon as he could. "Where's the lube?"

"Duffel bag. Should be by the closet," Steve said. His mom had walked in on him when he was packing and saw the lube. He was embarrassed like usual even though he knew his mom knew he had sex with his husband. He really needed to work on not letting that get to him.

Bucky nodded and quickly scrambled off of Steve to get the lube, shedding the rest of his clothing as he went. He came back hastily and flopped on top of the bed close to Steve's ass. He lifted Steve's legs and tucked them up over his shoulders so he could get to him better. "You ready, Love?"

Steve was so, so ready. He wanted his husband inside him, making love to every inch of him. "Yes. Please, Baby, I want you. Been thinking about you all night," he said. "I was half-tempted to grind against you at the concert."

"Jesus, I wouldn't have minded that a bit," Bucky said and warmed up the lube on his fingers. "We could always go have a night at the club again sometime. You can dance up on me like that. It'll be so much fun. No one is going to care when we kiss. I think that sounds fun."

Steve usually wasn't a club sort of person but, god, he wanted to be somewhere public and not have to worry about keeping his hands to himself. He watched Bucky warm up the lube with hungry eyes. "Yeah, let's do that, Buck. I want to kiss you and let people know that you're mine."
"Okay, as soon as we can get another night to ourselves," Bucky promised and pushed his first finger into Steve's ass slowly. "We will just hope there are no ex-boyfriends waiting to jump me in the bathroom like last time." He added a second finger and started pumping them in and out.

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"Let's not bring up ex-boyfriends as you're fingering me, Love," Steve said sweetly. He breathed out happily as Bucky opened him up with two fingers. Steve scratched his nails slowly up Bucky's back. "One of these days we will be able to do whatever we want in public and not have to worry."

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"One of these days we can be married by law," Bucky added and leaned closer to give Steve a kiss. He slowly worked in a third finger and kept his lips on Steve, moving from his mouth to his neck.

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Steve nodded. He would love that. Their kids could come and see what a real wedding looked like between two people who were made for each other. "Bucky," he said breathlessly. "I'm ready for you. I want you inside me already."

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Bucky hummed softly and pulled his fingers out of Steve. "You're pushier than usual, Baby," he observed lightly and lubed up his cock. "Not that I'm complaining," he added and eased himself on the way into Steve's ass slowly. "You good?"

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"Because I've been waiting for weeks to be able to have my way with you at a hotel with no kids to interrupt us and now it's finally here," he laughed. Steve closed his eyes and arched his back as Bucky entered him. He let out a little moan as he gripped onto Bucky's shoulders. "So good," he answered.

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Bucky nodded and kissed at Steve's neck as he pulled out and gently pushed back in. Steve was right. It was sometimes very difficult to have private time when they had two teenagers and two babies around the house. Not that Bucky would trade his kids for the world. But their previous rampant sex life had definitely dwindled to rushed fucking while they hoped the babies didn't wake up. "You want it hard?"

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Steve nodded. "Please," he said thickly. "I want you to ram me into this mattress, Bucky. And then give me a nice, loving massage after you clean us up." Usually, Steve didn't ask for massages but after spending all evening in the crowd of people, he wanted to have a good way to wind down for the night.

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Bucky hissed out a tight breath and shook his head. Steve hardly ever asked for rough fucks either but, by god, he was going to give it to him. "I love you," he whispered and then pulled back just to slam in again. "I love you, Steve," he repeated and started up a fast and powerful rhythm.
Steve cried out and arched his back off of the bed. "Fuck - yes!" he yelped out. He squeezed his legs around Bucky's hips and pulled in him. "Fuck me, fuck me," he babbled out mindlessly as his nails dug into his shoulders. "Just like that, Bucky."

Bucky's breathing picked up as he went harder and harder on Steve. He gripped his hands on the sheets up by Steve's head and jackhammered down into him. He was sweating within minutes. "Want... on your knees... now," he said through stuttered breaths and pulled out of Steve to wait for him to get where he wanted him.

Steve made a helpless sound when he was suddenly empty and he wanted Bucky's dick back inside of him right now. He shakily turned over, thighs trembling and the lube leaking down as he got on his hands and knees. "Hold my hands behind my back," he said, wanting Bucky to have total control here.

"You sure?" Bucky asked tentatively and kissed Steve's ass and lower back. "That's not really like you," he added. Sure, Steve liked to be tied up sometimes but they didn't usually do a position like this where Bucky was behind Steve and it usually wasn't coupled with Steve having his arms back too.

Steve had thought that giving total control to Bucky would make things feel even better since Steve was usually the one trying to be in control. But he lost his nerve and got a bit embarrassed so he just braced himself on the bed instead. "Never mind," he said shyly. "We don't have to. It was a silly idea."

"No, no, Baby, it's not silly," Bucky assured and kept kissing up Steve's side. "I just wanted to check because I'm not usually being more dominant over you. I wanted to make sure this was what you actually wanted - what you were okay with. If you want it, I want it." He felt bad for making Steve shy away. He just wanted them to be on the same page.

"I want to feel what it's like letting you control me," Steve said softly. "I want to switch my brain off for a few minutes and feel what you do to me." He blushed a bit as he looked back at Bucky. "Is that okay?" He sort of sprung it on Bucky and he knew it wasn't like him to do that.

Bucky leaned forward and pulled Steve in for a soft kiss to his lips. "Yes, my beautiful husband, that's okay. I'll make you feel really good. Just let me know if you need me to ease up or stop," he said and went back behind Steve again. He prodded at his hole a few times with his cockhead as he eased Steve's arms back behind him so he could hold them. Then, without warning, he pushed all the way inside of Steve once more.
Steve felt a little bit better at the reassurance. He moaned softly as Bucky teased him with his dick, wanting more. But all of a sudden, Bucky was inside him all the way. His arms jerked a little in response and he threw his head back. "Shit!" He swore, closing his eyes. "Goddamn, Bucky. Don't stop."

Bucky fucked him hard once again. He kept his hand around Steve's wrists but didn't hold him too tightly. "Baby, shh, don't get us a noise complaint," he warned with a chuckle and then saw his underwear on the edge of the mattress. He grabbed them and brought them to Steve's face. He knew they smelled like his body and he hoped Steve would want to do this but he wouldn't be surprised if he said no. "Bite down on these to keep yourself quiet."

Steve automatically opened his mouth and bit down on it for a few seconds until he realized what it was. "Bucky!" He scolded after spitting them out. He squirmed until Bucky let go of him and then put his hands back down on the mattress. "Go slow," he said, closing his eyes as he tried to get back into it again. Having Bucky's underwear in his mouth killed the mood a little.

"Sorry, sorry, Baby," Bucky responded quickly and eased his movements down to just a rolling pace. More like when they were making love and less like when they fucked. "I'm sorry. Thought I would give it a try. I'm sorry," he had been with Steve long enough to know that he wasn't into a lot of things that Bucky was. But he had been so adventurous lately that Bucky sometimes tried to push his luck. Although, the last time he pushed his luck, he slapped Steve's ass a little too hard and Steve shut the whole thing down for about an hour.

Steve reached down between his legs and started to stroke himself in time with Bucky's movements. "I don't like that," he said. If he wasn't so desperate to have Bucky's dick inside of him he probably would've asked for a break. "Go slow enough so I don't make noise anymore." If Bucky was afraid of a noise complaint then they shouldn't fuck. It would have to wait for another time.

Bucky nodded, feeling like complete shit. He always did this. He always fucked up a good thing when it came to Steve. "Can I at least touch your cock?" he asked and hovered his hand next to Steve's. He wasn't going to do anything without Steve's go-ahead right now. "Or if we need to stop, we can. I'm sorry, Love. I'm sorry."

Steve moved Bucky's hand onto his cock and rocked his hips steadily to meet Bucky's slow, gently little thrusts. "No. Don't stop, I want to come with you." Usually, Steve was on top and he didn't mind by any means, but he also loved the feeling of his husband coming inside of him and he wasn't about to miss the opportunity for it.

"Okay, Baby, I won't stop," Bucky said and carefully jerked Steve as he picked up just a little. "You
want to be on your back again? Or you... you might not want to look at me right now. I don't blame you. But I could go hard again if you would like that and you could bite down on my arm instead?"

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This was just snowballing to nowhere good. When Bucky said that Steve probably didn't want to look at him right now, he felt incredibly hurt by that. "Okay, stop," he said firmly pulled himself away a bit so Bucky's cock slipped out of him. He felt empty without Bucky inside of him but he couldn't continue with Bucky feeling that way about himself. He pulled Bucky down to lay next to him face to face and his eyes were locked with his husband's even though he looked on the brink of tears. "Why would you ever think that I wouldn't want to look at you?" he asked.

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Bucky looked at Steve but pulled a hand up to his face to cover as much of it with his fist as he could, eyes barely peeking out to see Steve. He used to do that a lot as a child when he was in trouble. He would hide behind his fists and pretend he was invisible. He rarely did it with Steve. "Cause I messed up," he mumbled behind his hand but managed to keep his eyes on Steve's.

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"Bucky, Sweetheart..." Steve pulled Bucky's hand from his face and kissed his knuckles gently. "So what?" he asked. "You're more important to me than any plans we had for tonight. Or for any other night." Sure, Steve was disappointed that things didn't go the way he wanted but that didn't mean that he blamed Bucky or that the night was over. "I could never be that upset with you."

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"But, I always do this," Bucky said hastily. "Things are always going so well and then I ruin it. Our first Christmas. The first day of our honeymoon. That night after Lilly's championship game." He didn't even touch upon the Tish debacle. "I mess it up. I always do this. And it's always when you've planned things out and gotten everything ready to go. And I come in like a tornado and destroy it."

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"You don't always mess things up, Baby. And what's it matter if you mess up sometimes? I mess up, too. And you do so many things right. You helped me plan so many great things for us and you took me out on all those dates that you chose and they went just fine," Steve insisted.

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"I mess up more than I should," Bucky said and bit his lower lip. He had improved a lot on his self-confidence over the time of being with Steve. But, sometimes, he still wondered if Steve would be better with someone else. Sometimes, he still thought that Steve was always so much more than him. Steve was a better father, a better husband. He was smarter and more handsome. He was more understanding and kind. And sometimes Bucky just couldn't get those thoughts from his head.

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"You don't, Buck. You really don't," Steve said. He laced Bucky's fingers with his and held his hand to his heart and looked at him desperately. "Would I ever lie to you? I mean it. You're the most thoughtful, amazing person I've ever met in my life. Even if you messed up all the time, I would still love you and I still would want to face you every day, every night, and every time we make love."
Bucky gripped Steve's hand and nodded slowly. "You would never lie to me," he said and touched his forehead to Steve's. He felt a little better but still felt like an idiot and still felt like he could be better for Steve. He could always be better. He could always improve. He could always be more for him. And he wanted to do that in all aspects of his life.

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Steve cupped Bucky's face and drew him in for a slow and tender kiss. He could tell that Bucky was overthinking, so he tried to give him a new directive. "How about tomorrow, you wake me up by fingering me open. And once I'm awake, you fuck the daylights out of me. How's that sound? I think that sounds delightful."

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Bucky nodded again and leaned in for another kiss. "I would love to do that, Baby," he said softly and pressed his face to the side of Steve's neck and kissed him a few times on his shoulder. "I'm sorry, again. For everything."

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Steve cupped the back of Bucky's head and kissed his temple. "Baby, please don't be sorry. I love you so damn much. I'm happy with you and I really did have a good time tonight. It's a memory I'm going to treasure," he promised.

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Bucky let himself smile shyly. "We did get to be at an amazing show tonight. And it was perfect in spite of Richard being there," he joked and pressed himself flush against Steve. "And I know your mom probably had a ball being in charge of all the kids. But, lord save me if I find out she gave Sarah May sugar for the first time."

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Steve wrapped his arms around his husband. "It was almost like Richard was never there. He didn't bother us or notice us," he insisted. "Only I'm allowed to christen our children with the hellishly amazing thing we call sugar. Oh, man, I can't wait to give her ice cream for the first time," he sighed.

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"Not yet," Bucky said firmly. "She hasn't even eaten solid foods besides baby food yet. And she barely has teeth. She's a lot slower to grow than Christopher was. Don't you think? I mean by now he had two little teeth in all the way and he was working on crawling."

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Steve pouted even though he agreed with Bucky. "Christopher is also a bit of a fast-growing baby. I don't know any other baby that knew as many words as he did when they turned one," Steve said. "Maybe we were spoiled a little by how fast he progressed and Sarah May is going at a normal baby's pace."

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"That might be true. The girls were definitely not as advanced as him. And since all of ours will be adopted, some will probably have genes that are faster growers than others. You know?" Bucky said and brushed his thumb over Steve's lips. "Hey, on a different note. You want to hear what Adriana
Steve nodded. He wondered what their future babies would be like. Would any of them need extra help to catch up with other kids their age? Would any excel at one thing but not so much at others? Steve kissed the pad of Bucky's thumb and asked, "What did she do?"

Bucky giggled and said, "Steve, she's the cutest. She came running up to me and said, 'Miss Bubby! I made you a drawling.' And she held it up all proud. It was her holding a balloon and standing next to me holding what looked like a burger but I was told was a turtle. She likes turtles a lot."

Steve smiled, imagining an adorable little girl totally loving Bucky and having him as her favorite visitor. "Oh yeah? When am I going to get to meet her, huh? I got to see my husband's littlest-but-biggest fan."

Bucky grinned and tucked some hair behind his ear. "I'm not sure. I guess I can ask the orphanage if I can come sometime outside of the group. The two of us can go together. Or maybe we can talk to her case manager about spending the day with her. Her case manager is very kind."

Steve gasped when Bucky mentioned spending a day with her. He didn't even consider that and just assumed he would have to go to the orphanage. "We can take her to the aquarium to see the turtles," Steve said excitedly. "She would love that, right?"

"Yeah, she would. She loves turtles. They are her favorite," Bucky said excitedly and gave Steve a kiss. "I'll see what I can do. I'll talk to Karen next time I'm there. A day out for the three of us could be a lot of fun. Of course, Karen will be there too. Her caseworker goes with her any time she leaves the orphanage without orphanage personnel."

"That's fine. Could we bring the babies too or should it be a day for just her? I guess as an orphan she doesn't get to have too much time where she feels special, you know?" Steve wondered out loud.

"I think that could be a little overwhelming. She's out-going but meeting new people can be scary and I think one new person at a time is best," Bucky said softly and nuzzled his nose on Steve's cheek.

"Yeah," Steve agreed. "Let's do that, Baby. I'd love to give her a fun day out." He kissed Bucky's temple gently. "What happened to her parents. Do you know?" he asked. "Was she abandoned or did something happen to them?" He wasn't sure which answer would be worse.
Bucky looked away and then gave a sad little sigh. "Her mother died in childbirth and her father was so upset that he killed himself two weeks later." He closed his eyes and shook his head. He knew how upset he would be if Steve died but he couldn't think of killing himself when he had children to take care of. Granted, he did know the feeling. He tried the exact same thing when his parents died. But now he didn't feel that way at all.

Steve frowned and made an upset little noise. Likewise, he couldn't imagine ever abandoning his kids, even without having Bucky at his side. He loved his babies too much to do that. "Does she know what happened? Or only her caseworker?" Steve asked.

"I don't think she knows. But I don't think she would understand even if she did know. She doesn't quite get that most kids have parents to take care of them. Unlike some of the other kids, she never talks about hoping to be adopted," Bucky said.

On one hand, it was better for her to not be depressed over not having parents. On the other, it was sad that she didn't know that she could have a loving home one day. Steve had that look in his eyes as he was considering asking Bucky if they could foster. "Maybe it's for the best that she doesn't know any better for a little while."

Bucky sniffled and wiped at his eyes. He got a little emotional thinking about Adriana being all alone in the world. He was an orphan too. Of course, he was lucky enough to have known his parents and was lucky enough to have both his sisters still alive. "Yes, it might be for the best," Bucky said after a bit. "And at least she doesn't hate the orphanage like some of the older kids. It's all she has known for four years."

Steve kissed Bucky's cheek swiftly when he saw him wipe at his eyes. "Hey, it's alright, Baby. You make her happy and brighten her day when you're there. Even if she doesn't have the life she deserves, you're doing everything you can to make her life better," he reassured.

Bucky nodded and closed his eyes. He just wanted to help more. But he couldn't. And especially not right that moment. "You think we should head to sleep, Baby? I know I killed the mood so I can just clean your ass up and we can rest."

Steve nodded. "I still had a good night with you, Bucky. Don't worry, please. And we get to enjoy sleeping in and not being woken up by our babies." After they cleaned up, Steve snuggled under the blankets with Bucky with his arms wrapped around him. He muttered a few words of praise and love to him before finally drifting off to sleep after a few minutes.
By the way, the concert in this was the Ramones concert at L'Amour (Rock Capitol of Brooklyn) on June 27th, 1986. Some parts of the concert might not be one-hundred percent accurate because I couldn't get a definitive setlist or member line-up anywhere. Some online sources said Richie was there, some said it was Elvis actually. So, I'm not totally certain. The setlist did include popular hits like 'Teenage Lobotomy', 'Blitzkrieg Pop', 'Rock N Roll High School', 'I Wanna Be Sedated', 'Loudmouth', 'Sheena is a Punk Rocker', 'Surfin' Bird (Trashmen Cover)', and 'Cretin Hop'.
This date - May 30th, 2018 - marks a full year since I started posting this story. Happy Anniversary to this monster of a fic. Thank you all for reading and commenting and showing so much support. You all are so wonderful to me and K and we appreciate you so much! Writing this fic with K has made my life so much better this past year and a half and I'm so glad to be able to share it with you all.

Bucky woke up a lot earlier than Steve and took his time just lounging around for a few minutes before deciding it was time to wake Steve up. He pulled the blankets away enough so he could crawl under them and lay himself down by Steve's ass. There was still some lube but Bucky added some more before prodding gently with his first finger.

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Steve slept easily through the night and looked so damned relaxed on the mattress and fluffy blanket. When Bucky pushed a finger inside of him, Steve didn't wake right away. He groaned softly in his sleep and mumbled something unintelligible.

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Bucky chuckled quietly to himself and kissed Steve's thighs as he worked a second finger in and then soon had a third in. He was surprised Steve wasn't awake yet so he slowly and carefully pumped his fingers as he pushed his tongue in alongside them and felt around Steve's rim.

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Steve started to stir finally. "Mmm, Bucky-" he breathed out quietly, dreaming of him as Bucky opened him up. Steve started to wake up and, for a moment, he was confused if he was still dreaming. "Fuck," he swore quietly. "This is the hottest thing I've ever woken up to." He groaned, his voice still low and grumbly from being half asleep.

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Bucky bit Steve's thigh lightly. "Let me work," he said, although it was muffled from the blanket on top of him. He pushed his tongue in again and stretched his fingers out as far as he could go. He kind of wanted to see how much Steve's ass would take that morning. So he poured more lube over him and stuck in his pinky and started to pump in and out of him a little faster than before.

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Steve's dick was already hard as anything and he gripped onto the blanket as his husband opened him up. It'd been a while since he stretched him out like this. He let out a low moan and arched his back as he felt Bucky push another finger inside. "Don't stop, Baby," he said, spreading his legs. He wished he could see Bucky's face as he worked him open.
Bucky carefully worked the four fingers in and out and watched Steve's ass take them so well. He hadn't ever successfully fisted Steve and he wanted to see if he could. "Stevie, you want to give it a shot? I'm really close to getting my first in you. Remember how far we got last time?"

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The stretch hurt a little, but it was a good ache and the mental image of Bucky under the blankets with his hand almost entirely in his ass was goddamned sexy. "I want to," he said, pressing back onto Bucky's hand. "Please, I want to try, Buck. I'm so goddamn needy for you right now."

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"Okay, Baby, I've got you," Bucky said hastily and kissed Steve's thighs over and over again. "Relax yourself. Relax everything. Let me get my thumb in. Don't worry. If it hurts, tell me to stop and I'll be done. Just work on keeping yourself open."

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Steve's muscles tensed just a little before he took a slow, deep breath and relaxed. He eased his legs further apart to give Bucky more room and he pulled the pillow closer to himself to hug it as Bucky worked his fingers in him. "Just keep talking to me, Buck..."

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Bucky had four fingers and just the tip of his thumb inside Steve. "Of course, Stevie, Baby. I'll talk to you," he said and moved the hand in and out, each time getting the thumb further inside. "You can't possibly know just how handsome you are. I mean, every day I wake up to that gorgeous face and I just want to kiss you so much and thank any god listening that you are mine. And then I get to watch you take off your pajamas nice and slow and tiredly, not even realizing you are giving me a bit of a show. Then you're naked standing there looking for clothes for the day and I want to kiss up your back and your sides and your chest. I want to pin you down and suck marks anywhere I can get to."

---

Steve's body shook a little from the intensity of it all. He was so hard it ached and he wanted this so bad. He wanted Bucky to be able to open him up and have him as vulnerable as ever. Having Bucky talk to him like that helped ground him and any time he almost felt overwhelmed, he was brought back by Bucky's voice. "And how do I look now, Bucky? How are you feeling?" he asked shyly.

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"Oh, Baby, I am feeling wonderful," Bucky said and kissed Steve lower back. "And you look just absolutely... to die for. And your ass is taking my hand so well. I have my thumb in now, Steve. Can you feel that? Feel all of my fingers in you? I'm going to keep working the rest of my hand inside you, okay? Just tell me to stop if you need to. You are so handsome. I love you so much."

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"I can feel it," Steve said, sounding absolutely wrecked in the best way possible. "Am I going to be too loose for you to fuck me? I want it to-" he paused when Bucky's knuckles pressed against his prostate and let out a low moan. "I want it to be good for you, too."
"Steve, this is already so good for me," Bucky promised and gently moved his hand in tiny thrusts. "You look so good. It's so hot. You're taking it so well. I'm almost to my wrist. You're doing so well, Baby. How do you feel? You need me to stop?"

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Steve's ass clenched around Bucky's hand and Steve moaned Bucky's name into the pillow. "Go slow, Love. I don't want to come until you're fucking me," he said. "It feels so good. I want to stay here all day with you, Buck."

---

Bucky went slow and poured some more lube over Steve's hole and his hand. He pushed in as slowly as he could but just kept going and going. Eventually, his hand pushed all the way in and Steve's hole tightened up around his wrist. "God, Baby, that looks so good. This is the first time this has worked."

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"I don't think I'll walk ever again," Steve lamented with a groan. Each movement Bucky's hand made inside of him was earth shattering and it was the perfect way to make Steve's brain short-circuit and let him simply relish in the sheer pleasure. "God, oh, Bucky. Please fuck me now. I want you more than anything, Sweetheart."

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Bucky nodded and looked up at Steve. He wanted to fuck him. His cock was angry and pushing against the mattress wondering why it wasn't inside Steve's ass already. "Okay, Baby, I'm going to pull out my hand. You ready?"

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Steve whined softly, knowing it was going to hurt a little and he would feel so empty afterwards. He moved a little and threw his head back with a soft shout when he shifted Bucky's hand inside of him to press on his prostate firmly again. "Fuck!" he swore again. Steve sucked in a breath and pressed his face into the pillow to muffle any sound he made. "Ready."

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Bucky kissed Steve's thigh gently over and over as he ever so slowly eased his hand back out of Steve. He let it take a good minute before he was completely out. Then he wiped his hand on his discarded shirt from the night before and held open Steve's ass to look at it. "My god, you're so loose and open and wet for me."

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Steve trusted Bucky thoroughly and didn't doubt that he would go easy pulling out of him. When he finally got his hand out, Steve shuddered and winced a little as he pushed himself up properly on his hands and knees for Bucky. He looked back at him with a deep blush. "Do you like it?" he asked bashfully. "You want to take a picture?"

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"Uh-huh," Bucky muttered and just watched Steve for a few seconds. "Did you pack our camera? Which bag?" he asked and glanced around frantically. This was a very important, very hot moment
to capture. Steve took his entire hand this time.

"Duffel bag," Steve said. "I wrapped it in a shirt for protection," he explained. Steve brought his camera everywhere. You could never be too sure when you would need it and Steve didn't regret bringing it this time either.

"Here," Bucky said and touched Steve's hands. "Hold your ass open for me nice and pretty. I'll get the camera and take a few snaps of you open and waiting for my cock. How's that sound? You can watch them develop while I start to fuck you deep and hard."

Steve's face burned a bright red at the suggestion. He swallowed thickly and nodded, dutifully pulling his cheeks apart as wide as they would go for his husband. A year ago, Steve would probably be scandalized at himself for what he was doing, but right now, it was the hottest idea ever. "It's open and ready for your dick, Bucky. It's just waiting for you to make an even bigger mess inside of it."

Bucky whined as he got off the bed to grab the camera. "Baby, keep talking like that. I want to wreck you. See you covered in come and shaking and needing me to clean you up." He snatched the camera up and came back, taking a careful shot of Steve holding open his ass and then placing the photo on Steve's pillow as he posed for a second picture. "I don't think anyone has ever seen anything as beautiful as you are. And I don't think anyone has ever felt as good as you make me feel."

Steve closed his eyes and bit his lower lip nervously as Bucky took his pictures. When he saw the developing picture on his pillow, he felt his heart do flips. "You're just as beautiful, Bucky. I remember how amazing it was when I was able to fit my fist inside of you. I need to do that again, Baby. But right now, I need your cock more."

"You got it, Steve. Of course," Bucky said hurriedly and set the camera down on the nightstand. Steve was still holding himself open and it was all too easy for Bucky to slip right into his hole and immediately start up with a firm and quick pace.

Steve lost his balance a little and fell forward into the pillow but he didn't mind. He wanted to be fucked into the mattress. He held himself open still and moaned Bucky's name desperately as Bucky immediately started a fast pace. "Yes, just like that, Bucky. Let me feel you."

Bucky nodded even though Steve couldn't see him. He held Steve's hips as steady as he could and railed him. He wanted to be rough enough to satisfy Steve's need but he also wanted to be gentle with him so he didn't push Steve too far. He kept his movements fast and deep and kept his hand on
his hips tight. But he also reached his free hand up and carefully and soothingly scratched through Steve's messy hair.

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Steve was already so close from being fingered awake and fisted. He could barely hold himself together and he gripped one hand onto the base of his cock to keep himself from coming too soon. "You're perfect," he gasped. "Best sex imaginable. Love you so damn much," he panted. "Look at my ass while you fuck it."

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Bucky gasped and panted while he fucked into Steve with everything he had. He stared at Steve's ass taking his cock happily. And he could hear the bed creaking beneath the two of them. He really wouldn't last very long either. "Love you, Steve," he answered and trailed his hand from Steve's head down his spine lightly.

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A thin layer of sweat built upon his body and once Bucky started petting his spine, Steve was done. He cried out as he came onto the sheets beneath him. He gripped his pillow tightly, sensitive as all hell after his orgasm but still loving every second of it. The edges of his vision blurred and he begged Bucky to come for him.

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Bucky reached down and felt the puddle of come under Steve and he licked some off his fingers as his movements got more unpredictable. "I'm almost there. I promise. I so close. I'm." He leaned his chest over Steve's back and bit his neck as he came deep inside his husband in long hot spurts for several extended moments.

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Steve arched his back when Bucky bit him and he couldn't stop the low moan that came out. He collapsed onto the bed and dragged Bucky down with him. His body shivered a little and he clung onto his husband tightly. "Holy shit," he breathed out. "That was incredible, Baby."

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Bucky curled up on top of Steve and flung his arms and legs over him protectively like he was worried someone would come in and snatch him up when he was so vulnerable. "Give... give me a minute," he breathed and closed his eyes, feeling like he could fall asleep right on top of his husband.

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Steve loved how protective Bucky was. He needed that security a bit today. He was still recovering from the intensity and was grateful that Bucky made him feel looked after through every step of the way. Steve's eyes were half closed but he still admired his husband as he too was catching his breath. Steve reached up to play with his hair. "Can we stay another night?"

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Bucky peeked one eye open and watched Steve. "I'm not sure. I would say that of course, we should but we have four kids and your dog at home. I know your mom could handle it but I don't know if the babies would let us be gone for another night."
As soon as Bucky brought up their kids, Steve got that look on his face and knew that there was no way he could spend two days away from their son and daughter. "You're right. I miss them already. I don't know how I'm going to face them tonight knowing instead of waking them up with kisses, I was here with your fist in my ass," he snorted.

Bucky scoffed and gave Steve a little kiss. "Well, it's not like you have to confess to them," he said. "Save that for the priest." He chuckled and rolled so he could grab the room service menu. "Breakfast? I'm so hungry."

Steve shook his head. "I'm not telling Father Frank that," he said. God, that would be awful. He was still stiff and sore so Steve had no intention to move from where he was. "Order me everything," he said dramatically. "I could eat a horse right now."

Bucky squinted at the menu and said, "Huh... well they don't have horse. But I can order you a western omelet," he offered and picked up the phone. He ordered their food and then yawned as he rolled back over onto Steve and kissed his neck.

Steve slung an arm lazily around Bucky's shoulders and looked adoringly over at him. "What do you think Christopher and Sarah May are doing right now?" Steve couldn't take his mind off their kids now.

Bucky thought for a moment and looked at the clock. "Well, they probably just woke up and someone is definitely having a crying fit and it's probably Christopher. Because Sarah is probably paying more attention to Ya-Ya and he is very upset about that. But Lilly is probably trying to calm him down and Becca is trying to ignore them all."

Steve smiled fondly. That sounded like a typical morning. "I know my mom loves them both to the ends of the earth but she does such a bad job at hiding that Sarah May is her favorite. Maybe we shouldn't have named her after my Ma so Christopher had a fighting chance," he chuckled. "Should we bring something back for them?"

Bucky chuckled and pet his hand through Steve's hair. "Yeah, but 'Sarah May' is such a good name for her." He looked around and shrugged. "We can always just take those small shampoo bottles with us. Other than that, there isn't much."

"It is a good name for her," Steve agreed. "But I was thinking more of picking up some candy or a little toy on the way home. I know they were taken care of, but I still feel bad for leaving them for a
whole day," he explained. "We can get stuff for your sisters as well."

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"There's a baby store on one of the bus routes. It'll take us a little away from our neighborhood but we can just hop a different route to get us home," Bucky offered. "And we can find something for the girls on our way. I think there are some stores around there where we could find something."

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"Let's do that," Steve decided. "I want to bring home a little surprise." He smiled as he thought of what they could get their kids. There was a knock on their door to signal their breakfast was here. "I'm not getting up," Steve whined softly, nudging Bucky to get their food.

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Bucky chuckled and slipped on a robe quickly. "Can you even get up right now?" he asked and went to open the door, smiling to himself because he loved knowing he wrecked Steve like that.

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"I can't, no," Steve snorted. He wasn't going to attempt for a little while. Every time he shifted he felt a sharp twinge in his lower back telling him to stay where he was. His stomach gave a hungry growl and he looked up at his husband. "What was it like after the first time you got fisted?"

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"Like how my body felt?" Bucky asked and brought Steve's omelet over to him and laid the plate on Steve's stomach. "I was sore for a day or so. I mean, when your ass takes an entire human hand, it's a bit of a strain. It feels so good but you are a little sore afterwards. You feeling sore, Baby?"

---

"A whole day? But I have to play with our kids..." Steve whined and lazily picked up his fork and started cutting up his breakfast. "I'm so sore. I don't know if I could walk right now if I wanted to," he said. "But I don't want to take a cab, either. Hell no."

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"I'll carry you," Bucky said and took a bite of his toast. "Now I feel bad. I should have just fucking you and saved the fisting for some other time. But I had to get overeager again," he mumbled and grumpily shoved some eggs in his mouth. "I'm sorry, Steve."

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"What?" Steve's head snapped over to Bucky with a frown. "Baby, I wanted you to do that to me. Don't feel bad. It's my own fault for being sore," Steve answered. "Please don't feel bad, Love. This isn't your fault at all. I liked it."

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"I'm really sorry, Baby," Bucky said and chewed off some more of his toast. "I could have made this entire stay a lot better for you." He sighed and finished up his eggs quickly and got up to get dressed.
"Bucky, stop," Steve said firmly. "Stop it, I'm not upset. You know how I like to over complain at silly things. This is no different. I'm so glad we got to do that today. It felt amazing, Buck. I'd make the same choice if I had the chance to do it all over again. Don't let my dumb complaining get to your head."

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Bucky rubbed his beard and looked away. "Yeah, I know. And you know how I get insecure about silly things. I'm just worried I'm not being good for you. You know?" He sighed and tugged on his pants. "I know I've been better about not getting so... you know, me, about things. But sometimes I just... still worry."

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Steve sighed as he watched Bucky dress. "I know you worry. But all of those doubts buzzing in your head are wrong, alright? You are so, so good for me. And you make me a better person. If I didn't meet you, I'd probably be reading some boring book all alone in my apartment right now."

---

Bucky's head was trying to tell him that Steve would have probably met someone else who would have been better and Steve would be happier. But Bucky shook it off and tried to get his brain to shut up. Steve loved him. Steve loved him with everything he had. He wouldn't give up Bucky or their family for anything. He nodded and came over to the bed to give Steve a kiss. "Sorry I let the doubts get too loud."

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"It's okay, Bucky. It just hurts to see you do this to yourself. You are the most amazing man I know and I'm so blessed to call myself your husband. Can you think of many couples who have a marriage as great as ours?" Steve reached out and squeezed Bucky's hand. "Not many, right?"

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Bucky sighed in relief and sat down next to him. "Just my parents," he said and gave Steve another kiss. "But I even think we do better for each other than they did. Not that they weren't great for each other. But Dad tended to overlook Mom's bad habits like her drinking and just hope they went away. And Mom liked to shut out my dad a lot when things didn't go her way. They loved each other. But I think we communicate better than they did sometimes."

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Steve smiled when he heard that. Of course, it wasn't like this was a competition, but it made him feel good to know that their relationship was so good that the potentially surpassed Bucky's parents and those two set the bar pretty high. "So, there you go, Love. The proof is in the pudding. You're perfect for me."

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Bucky smiled and rested his head on Steve's stomach. "I love you. And you have no idea how glad I am to be your husband. You're the light of my life. I'll keep working on getting my brain to shut up." He sighed contentedly and then got up again. "Now, finish up your breakfast and let's head out. Our babies will be missing us."
Steve ate his breakfast and didn't leave a single piece on the plate. It took him a while but he finally got out of bed and got dressed in his clothes after he took a shower. "There we go. How do I look? Do I look like a normal person who didn't just get fisted?"

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Bucky looked Steve up and down and smiled. "You look amazing. Just like always. You look a little worse for wear but maybe people will just think you are really tired." He shrugged and looked at himself in the mirror. He looked spry and ready to go.

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Steve swatted Bucky's arm with a smile. "Quit that you're just saying that to make me feel better." Steve walked stiffly but was able to amble on at a decent pace alongside Bucky. "We need to do another date night before school starts," Steve said. "Maybe we can go to the beach together."

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"We are. In about two weeks. Remember? Coney Island on your birthday?" Bucky asked. "We are going have sex under the pier while the fireworks are going off. It's going to be really romantic."

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"Yeah, but I want to go to the beach just because. Not because of my birthday or some other celebration," Steve said. He gave a wave of his hand and eyed the stores that they passed for anything the kids might like. "But I am looking forward to birthday sex."

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"You better be," Bucky said. "I'm planning on wearing something cute that makes my ass look irresistible." He grinned at Steve and pointed to the end of the block where the baby store was. He knew Christopher would like some new toy but Sarah May probably needed a new blanket.

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"Your ass always looks irresistible, Dear," Steve said patiently. He entered the baby store and went right for the bedding section. He gasped when he found a blanket with elephants all over it. "Won't this be good for her? It even comes with matching pajamas." Steve was a sucker for that sort of stuff.

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Bucky looked it over and found a pair that had dinosaurs on it. He was much more fond of dinosaurs. But Steve looked so pleased about the elephants. "It'll go with the plushie that Sam got her," he said and gave Steve a happy grin. "And she desperately needs a new blanket."

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"Yeah. She's puked on hers too many times to count," Steve sighed. "How about you pick out the toy for Christopher since I chose this?"

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Bucky nodded and went to look over at the toys and plushies. Christopher had a lot of plushies so he veered off and looked at the noise-makers. "How about this little drum?" he asked and held it up to Steve. "Or maybe not. It might break."
"I think he would like that one but break it right away. Is there another that's maybe sturdier?" He asked. Sarah May might hate them a little for giving her older brother more ways to make noise in the house, though.

Bucky hummed softly and looked around. There really wasn't anything else. He did see a small colorful object with a crank on the side. He turned the crank and it started to play a song like a music box. "Ooh. This one!" he said excitedly and looked to Steve.

"That great for him. Let's get that," he agreed. Steve headed to the counter and paid for their items. He had Bucky do the carrying since Steve was still a little uncomfortable with walking. "Now for your sisters."

"Becca was talking about some documentary about the migratory patterns of whales," Bucky said and shrugged. "I'm not sure what it's called but we can see if the video store has anything like that."

"Yeah. And while we are there we can find some sports thing for Lilly. Or we can stop somewhere else as well," he said. Steve wanted to get back to their babies as soon as possible but he also didn't want to half-ass Lilly's surprise just to save a trip to somewhere else.

Bucky agreed and lead Steve to the video store. It only took a little bit for him to find a documentary about sea creatures that he figured would be good for Becca. It wasn't the exact one but it was close enough. "You think Lilly would want something about like... oh, god, I don't know."

Steve looked around and pulled a few tapes. "Well this one has a bunch of interviews from the '75 Yankees... this one is a documentary on football... and I found one that's got a bunch of different music videos from the '70's."

Bucky hummed in contemplation and looked them over. "You choose because I'm not sure which is best. Just not the football one. That's the one sport Lilly does not like," he said and read the list of bands in the music video compilation video. There were some ones that Lilly liked a lot so that might work.

"Let's get the music one. It'll go well with the theme of us going to a concert," Steve said with a smile. He had Bucky pay and they headed out. "Alright. I think we're finally ready to see our kids again."
Bucky held the bags and watched Steve walk a ways down the sidewalk for a bit. "You're moving a little funny still," Bucky said. "How do you feel?" He was worried he really hurt Steve and he just didn't want to say anything about it.

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"Of course, I'm moving a little funny, I don't think anyone's ass was meant to fit what you put in it this morning," he said quietly with a little smile. "I'm still really sore. I may guilt you into giving me a massage later," he said. "I feel like once I lay down I won't want to get up."

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Bucky nudged Steve lightly and said, "Baby, of course, I'll massage you. You can just lay on the ground when we get home. The babies will play on top of you. Hopefully, Christopher will figure out his new toy we got."

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"He's a smart boy. He will figure it out," Steve assured him. When they got home, Diana barked excitedly and ran circles around Steve's legs until he reached down to pet her. Christopher looked up from his spot in the living room with his blocks and let out an excited squeal before toddling over to them.

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Bucky gasped and got down on the ground with his arms spread out and waited for his son to collide into his chest. "Hey, Bean. We're home! Are you happy to see us? Daddy and I are happy to see you, sweet boy. Where's Ya-Ya?"

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Christopher ran smack into his papa's chest and hugged him, laughing excitedly at having him back. He babbled up at Bucky to tell him everything that happened while they were gone for what felt like forever. Sarah came over to greet them with Sarah May in her arms. The baby wiggled and smiled, reaching out for her parents.

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"Oh, there's my girl!" Bucky said happily as he grabbed Christopher and stood up. He kissed Sarah May on the cheek and adjusted his son a little better. "Were they okay for you, Sarah?" he asked and handed Steve the bags of gifts.

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Sarah May made baby sounds up at him, clearly trying to form the word 'papa' but all that came out was soft nonsense. "They were little angels," Sarah said. "I got to hog my grandbabies for an entire day. Usually, I have to share them, so it was nice to get to do that."

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"Good. I'm happy you had a good time with them," Bucky said and gestured for them to head to the living room together. "Steve and I have gifts for the kids. Where did the girls get off to?" he asked, not seeing them anywhere. "They can't still be asleep?"
"They're awake," Sarah said. "They could not stop bickering all morning so I told them I'd give them each five dollars if they behaved themselves until you got home. Their solution was to go to their own rooms and mind their own business," she laughed.

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Bucky sighed. "Well, I'm not surprised." He set Christopher back down on the ground and gave Sarah May another kiss. "Steve, if you want to get the babies waiting on the couch, I'll get the girls and we can give out presents."

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"Dada," Christopher said, reaching up for Steve the second his pop set him down. Steve laughed and stiffly bent down to pick him up.

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Bucky went and got the girls and brought them right downstairs. "Okay, present time, you guys. Sit down," he said and noticed Steve's pained looking face. "You okay there, Baby?" he asked and offered the recliner for him to sit down.

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Steve took the recliner and relaxed, insisting to his mom that he slept funny and it bothered his back. Christopher reached his hands out at the bag to try and see what was inside. Lilly would've done the same if she thought she could get away with it. "So what'd you get us? Is it another baby?" Lilly joked.

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"Yes, I have a grow-your-own-baby in here. You just add water and it's a newborn," Bucky joked back and pulled out Lilly's gift first and handed it to her and then grabbed Becca's and gave it to her. "There you, Monster. How's that?"

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Lilly wasn't going to complain when she was getting a gift for no reason. It also just so worked out that she also loved her present. "This is great! I'm going to watch this now!"

Becca snapped her head. "No, you're not. I'm watching mine first!"

---

Bucky shook his head and stopped Lilly from running to get her tape in first. "Lil, I think Becca's would be better for now because I'm sure it'll be a lot quieter than yours." He paused and kissed her head. "And Becca should wait for the babies to get their gifts first anyway."

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The girls both huffed but waited patiently for the babies to get their toys. When Steve gave Christopher the crank toy, he tried to get it to work by shaking it a little and yelling at it. Steve cracked up laughing and then pointed at the crank. "No, baby boy, use that."

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Christopher looked at the crank and then slowly put it in his mouth and gnawed on it. "Oh, Steve,
show him how," Bucky said with a chuckle and pulled out the blanket and outfit for Sarah May. He handed the blanket to his daughter and she just curled up on the couch on top of it, rubbing it on her face.

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"Bean," Steve laughed. He took the toy and started turning it so the music would play. Christopher was upset at first that the toy was taken but when music played he suddenly was pacified again. Steve looked up and melted at the sight of his daughter with her new blanket. "Looks like that's a winner."

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"Yeah," Bucky agreed and scooped up Sarah May from the couch to hold her in her blanket on his chest. "Now let's hope she likes the pajamas too so it'll be all matched up." He turned to his sisters and said, "You guys would have loved the concert. They played all the best songs and it was so much fun."

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Steve was having a blast watching their son play with his new toy. Every time he got it to play more, he would look up and make sure that Steve was watching him. "How close were you to the stage?" Lilly asked. "Did you get any autographs? What about a record? That would be so cool!"

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Bucky shook his head. "No, Lil, we didn't get autographs or anything. We were close enough that Johnny touched my hand and Dee Dee looked right at me. It was surreal. It was amazing. I brought you home a tour shirt too."

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"What? No way! Which hand was it, I want you to high five me with that hand right now!" Lilly said, getting all worked up and holding up her hand for Bucky to high five. She got as excited over this sort of stuff as Bucky did and it had Steve grinning like a doof at the two of them. He wished she could've gone but it was better that she didn't. Bucky deserved a date night.

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Bucky laughed and gave her a crisp high five. He loved that she was as into these bands as he was. Becca loved them too but she was more reserved about it. "God, Lilly, they were all just as cute in person. And I made sure I was dressed as much like them as I could be and I think I did a good job."

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Diana crawled up onto the armchair and tried to sit in Steve's lap next to the baby but she couldn't fit and started to whine when only her top two paws could get up. "Next time they're nearby can I go with you? I'll be old enough by then, won't I?" Lilly asked, pouting at him.

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"Sure, we can do that. We will just keep an eye out during their next tour. Okay?" Bucky agreed.

Becca huffed a sigh and held up her tape. "Can I please play this now? You said after the babies got their presents. Besides, Christopher might like watching some of the ocean life."
"Go ahead," Steve said. "If you can get Christopher to watch a documentary with you, I'd be impressed." Christopher heard his name and waved at Becca for her attention.

"Your kid is going to love this, Steve. Just you wait," Becca said and popped the tape in and started it playing. "I mean, he loves animals so he will love watching them too."

Bucky sighed and settled in, still holding Sarah May. "Maybe he will fall asleep and Steve and I can nap while the babies are napping."

Steve rubbed Christopher's back gently and encouraged him to watch what his aunt Becca was doing. He watched her put the movie in and he absently sucked on his thumb as he watched the screen. Steve wasn't big on having his kids watch tv, but if the family was watching as well he didn't mind. "We slept in how late and you're looking for a nap?" Steve laughed.

"I'm tired," Bucky defended and felt Sarah May reach up and touch his cheek with her little fingers. "We had an eventful night. And you know after they have a snack in a bit, they will want to nap. So, I figure I can too." Sarah May yawned and pressed her face on her Papa's neck. "See? Ya-Ya is already sleepy."

Steve smiled at the way their daughter cuddled with Bucky. He tried to cuddle with Christopher but the baby just squirmed until Steve let him sit on the floor with Diana. He huffed and then agreed, "Fine, I suppose we may as well get sleep while we can."

Bucky yawned and saw Sarah May yawn again after him. "Well, you and Christopher don't have to nap. I think we are going to, though. I've got the early shift tomorrow so I would like to get some extra sleep. And look at your daughter. She looks like she hardly slept with us gone for the night."

Steve stiffly got up so he could stand by Bucky and Sarah May. He rubbed her back gently and nodded. "She missed her papa singing her the lullaby she loves," he said. "Do you want me to keep an eye on you two so you can sleep in the bed with her?"

Bucky smiled tiredly up at Steve. "Sure, Baby, if you don't mind. You know I like having her fall asleep on me." He held her carefully and stood up. "You can cuddle us if you want to. I'm sure she would like that. And Christopher is pretty occupied watching fish."

"Yeah, looks like Becca won this round of 'I told you so','" Steve admitted, watching their son look up at the tv while Becca watched, drinking in the information. Diana would've followed them but
Christopher was holding onto her so she stayed put. Once in their bedroom, Steve pulled the blankets out so Bucky could lay beneath it.

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Bucky got all curled up under the covers with Sarah May lying carefully on his chest. He sighed happily and watched her for a minute, in awe once more at how much he loved his children. "She will be crawling any day now. I know she's not been as fast as Christopher but she should be getting there now."

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"I see her pushing herself up sometimes. She wants to follow her big brother and she'll cry if he goes too far from her." He laid down next to his husband and put an arm around his waist. "I hope she does it when you're home. I know you have to work and all. But I hope she waits for you."

---

Bucky sighed and looked to Steve. "Yeah, so do I. But she will do it when she feels strong enough," he said. Sometimes he got a little jealous that Steve got to be home with the babies all the time. But then he had to remind himself that Steve had been severely injured on the field and that's why he was able to be a stay-at-home dad so soon.

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"Sarah May, you got to wait until your pop comes home to be big and strong, got it?" Steve said to their almost-asleep daughter. He then smiled over at Bucky. "There we go. She didn't argue with me, so I think she agrees that she should wait for you."

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Bucky chuckled and gave Steve a quick little kiss. "Alright, I'll have to take her word for it then," he said and nestled himself against Steve a little better. "For now, though, I want a little nap. Wake me up when she gets up. Or in two hours, whichever is sooner."
When Bucky came home and said that he'd arranged with Adriana's caseworker to take her to the aquarium, Steve was over the moon. The day of the outing, he got into busy-bee mode and made lunches and snacks for everyone and even made his own scavenger hunt for her to help her learn more about the animals there. He had Becca help him with the facts since she knew more about marine life than he did.

He filled a little backpack with pencils and paper for her and carried it as he walked to the orphanage with Bucky. "So, what relation did you tell them I was to you?" he asked.

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Bucky glanced at Steve and then straight ahead again. He cleared his throat and said quietly, "I- I was honest. At least, just with her caseworker. And Karen was really kind and supportive and didn't have a problem at all. She's a good woman. I think you'll like her. She said she will just sort of hang back as we go through the aquarium. She wants Adriana to know that she is there if she needs her but she also wants her to have a good time."

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Steve was pleasantly surprised. He hadn't expected that answer. "Wow, really? And Karen still gave the okay?" He smiled. Today was even better. He had already been happy to give an orphaned kid the day out she deserved but to know that he didn't have to hide who he was to the person in charge of her made him feel even better. "Did you get to tell Adriana that she's going to the aquarium or is it a surprise for her?"

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"No, she knows," Bucky said. "My guess is she's waiting at the door for us right now. She's very excitable. And she wants to see turtles so let's hope there are some there for her to watch for a while. She's never seen a real turtle."

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"I can't wait to see her. Can you imagine what it'll be like once Christopher and Sarah May are old enough to come running to the door when we're taking them on little trips?" When they got to the orphanage, Steve let Bucky lead the way since he was more familiar with this place.

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"I can't wait for them to wait at the windows with their faces pressed to the glass just staring at me when I come home from work," Bucky said. He said hello to some of the kids he knew as they walked to the office. Karen was waiting with the orphanage director who sent an assistant to fetch Adriana.

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"It's going to be adorable. Especially when there's a whole row of kids waiting at the window for you. Plus Diana. Raphael won't let you know that he missed you." When the assistant came back, Adriana came bouncing in and immediately hugged Bucky's leg. "Miss Bubby!"
Bucky gasped excitedly and bent down to hug the little girl. "Adriana! How is my favorite little ballerina today, huh?" he asked and pointed up to Steve. "This is Steve. Can you show Steve the dance move that Kari taught you? I'm sure he will be impressed."

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She giggled at him and shyly hid against his leg when she saw Steve at first. Then she stepped away and did her best hop and turn. Steve clapped excitedly. "Wow, that was so good!" he praised. "Are you a professional dancer?"

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"No," Adriana whispered and glanced up at Bucky then back to Steve. "I just like it. I want to be a ballerina."

Bucky nodded and stood up again. "Yeah, and one of the older girls is naturally good at dancing so she shows her how to do new dances a lot."

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"Well, if you keep dancing like that, you'll be on the stage in no time," Steve said with an encouraging smile. "So, are you ready to go to the aquarium, Kiddo? Bucky tells me that you like turtles. It's possible that we could see one there." Steve had called ahead to make sure that there was still an exhibit open with turtles in it.

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"Yes, I'm ready, Miss Steeb," Adriana said and then gasped. "Wait, I need Lulu!" She ran upstairs and grabbed a plush monkey that doubled as a backpack. Then she came back and grabbed Bucky's hand.

"Are you ready now, Adriana?" Bucky asked and checked to make sure the monkey was secure on her back. He knew she would be devastated if anything happened to it.

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Bucky was right. This kid was too damn cute. Steve loved his daughter as she was but he was even more excited to see her grow up to be around Adriana's age and talking with them and being excited. Once they were ready, he led the way towards the aquarium. "What other animals do you like, Adriana?" he asked.

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Adriana, who was still clutching to Bucky's hand, said, "I like 'turtles' and monkeys and 'dawphins' and sharks and lions and jellies and worms." She smiled proudly up at Steve and nodded.

Bucky chuckled and said, "Adriana, do you remember when we chased those pigeons in the park a few weeks ago?"

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When Adriana said 'turtles', Steve gave Bucky a look to try to convey just how cute this kid was. He then looked back down to Adriana. "I like those animals too. I think dogs are my favorite, though."
Adriana was a bit shy to respond to anything more than a question from Steve, so she answered Bucky instead. "Yeah! Their wings were like this!" Then she flapped her arms real big.

"Yeah, they did that!" Bucky responded happily. "There were a lot of them. Good thing we didn't get pooped on." He squeezed her hand lightly and glanced back to make sure Karen was still with them. "Steve, do you want to tell Adriana about your dog?"

Adriana giggled. She looked over to Steve and waited for him to talk. "Well, we have a big German Shepherd named Diana who loves cuddling and giving kisses. She makes me feel better when I'm sad and she's fun to play with," he explained.

Adriana nodded but looked just a little confused. "I don't know what that dog is," she said, having never seen a German Shepherd before. "How big is your doggie, Miss Steeb?" She seemed to be getting a little more engaged with Steve, being less shy and more comfortable.

"Here, I have a picture of her in my wallet," Steve said. Of course, he would. He took his wallet out and showed her a picture of Diana standing next to Christopher, who was giggling at the camera. "She's almost as tall as me when she stands on her hind legs. She comes up to my chest."

Adriana's eyes got wide and she stared at the dog. "That is a big dog," She said in disbelief and looked up at Steve. "There's a baby too," she added as if trying to ask whose baby it was without seeming like she was being nosy.

"She is a big dog," Steve agreed. "I used to be able to carry her in one hand when she was a puppy." He then pointed at the baby. "That's my son, Christopher. He's a little over a year old now. Almost a year and a half. How old are you, Adriana?"

Adriana shyly held up four fingers. "My birthday was two months ago. Miss Karen got me ice cream and a new coloring book."

They got to the aquarium and Bucky held the door open for everyone as they filed in. Adriana had let go of his hand and excitedly but patiently waited behind Steve in the line to get their tickets.

Once they were inside, Steve handed Adriana the backpack. "There's some activities in there we can do, like a scavenger hunt and coloring. Bucky and I can help you read if you don't know what the words are," he said.

Adriana took the bag and immediately started pulling the contents from it and looking over them. She
seemed disinterested in anything with words on it since she couldn't read yet. She opened up the pack of crayons to make sure every color was there and then she carefully tucked everything back into the bag. "What's a 'scavenger' hunt, Miss Steeb?" she asked and looked to Steve curiously.

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The stuff with text took the most time for Steve to assemble so he was a little bummed to see her completely ignore it. "A scavenger hunt is a list of stuff you have to find to get to a big prize at the end. It's kind of like a treasure hunt," he explained.

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Adriana squinted in thought. "What's the prize?" she asked. "And what do we look for?" She seemed more interested now.

Bucky took the paper with the list on it and looked it over. "It looks like Miss Steve wrote out a lot of different animals to find. And there are turtles on the list. Maybe we can ask Steve to help us read the list."

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"Yeah, you look for animals. Every time you find an animal, we learn something about it and we get a clue for the next one. At the end, I heard that there's a plush turtle toy," Steve said, speaking in a hushed tone as if he was letting her in on a secret. "We don't have to do it if you don't want to, though."

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"What's the first one?" Adriana asked and tugged on Bucky's arm to get to the paper. She looked at it for a second then seemed to remember that she couldn't read so she handed it to Steve. "I used to have a little 'tuttle' but then Joey took it."

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"The first one is a penguin," he sounded out the word again for her as he ran his finger along the page. "They're birds that live by the ocean. They can't fly like other birds, but they can swim just as good as fish." He handed her the paper for her to hold on to. "Why did Joey take your turtle?" he asked.

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"Ping-gwin," Adriana repeated and then shrugged nervously. "He's a meanie. He took it when he was picked up."

Karen stepped forward and put her hand on Adriana's head softly. "What she means is that Joey was adopted and took the turtle with him when he went home with his new parents. It was actually his toy but he let her cuddle with it at night."

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Steve nodded, understanding it now. "Joey sounds like a nice boy to me. Sharing is nice," he said patiently to Adriana. "But I am sorry you don't have a turtle anymore to play with. Maybe we can change that today. What do you say, Kiddo?"
Adriana nodded shyly. She wanted a turtle but she wasn't sure if she was allowed to ask for it. But she just thanked Steve and then took Bucky's hand again as they went to look for the penguins. Once they got there, Adriana slipped away from Bucky to press herself up against the glass and stare at them. Bucky tugged on Steve's elbow and brought him close. "She's so great, isn't she?"

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Even if Adriana didn't want to do the scavenger hunt, Steve would've gotten her the turtle anyway. But he wanted to try and get her to engage with the animals and ask questions as well. He wanted her to have fun and learn. "She is," he agreed, leaning into Bucky a little. "She's such a little sweetheart. I can see why you liked her right away."

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Bucky chuckled and watched the little girl as she gasped and squatted down to see the penguins dive under the water and pop back up again. "She's a little shy at first but she will open up a little more eventually. I didn't know about that Joey thing, though. I wonder if she feels bad because he was adopted and she wasn't? I knew she doesn't really get the concept but she's got to understand when people start leaving."

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"How hasn't she been adopted yet? She's such an adorable kid," Steve said. He knew people typically went for babies but she was a baby when she first went into the system. He smiled when she saw her watching the animals. "I guess it's hard for her to make friends if they keep leaving... poor kid."

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"I think it's very hard to make friends in an orphanage. And I think it just gets harder every year to be adopted. Older kids get ignored more," Bucky said and sighed. "But she's such a good kid. She just wants to be loved. And she's so happy. She just frustrated and sad like anyone else but she still finds things to smile about."

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Steve nodded. Adriana started following some of the penguins along the tank, trying to keep up with their swimming. "We don't really have much room right now," he started. "But maybe we can work the basement into a proper room, if, uh... you were thinking about it..."

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Bucky hesitated for a second and then slowly looked over at Steve and then back at Adriana. He had been thinking about it. He just hadn't been sure how to make it work yet. They had so many people under one roof as it was. Hell, they made half the living room into space for Steve's mom. They were sort of running out of places to put their children. "I have been thinking about it, to tell you the truth - since about the second I met her," Bucky admitted and looked back at Steve. "But I didn't want to ask until I had a plan. But I think you just made my plan for me." He grinned and nodded at his husband. "Becca would probably be more than happy to take a room in the basement if we can finish it off like that. It would be sort of like she was in an apartment. She can stay there until she is old enough to get her own place and wants to go. I think that could be good for her - to let her have some space. I mean, she's sixteen now."
Steve smiled a little when Bucky admitted that he'd been thinking about adopting her. He imagined what it would be like for her going from the orphanage to having a big family. It would be a huge transition for her. "We should probably make the basement available for her regardless. Becca likes her peace and quiet and she has been a lot more understanding lately. She deserves us to try to work with her on that."

"That can be a project for the three of us then. Just like when we did her bookshelf," Bucky said. "She might not want to help with some of the bigger stuff and I might have to even hire some guys to help me finish the ceiling and drywall. I know I'm pretty good but I don't think I could do the ceiling."

"I could try," Steve said. "I'm tall and handy. The babies could hang out with my mom for an hour or so at a time while I try to finish it up." It probably wouldn't be good with the state of his lungs but he wanted to help make their home more habitable for the kids. And Becca would benefit from it as well.

Bucky chuckled and licked his lips as he looked up at Steve. He wanted to kiss him really badly. "Sure, I'll hold the ladder and make sure you don't hurt yourself. If we can't figure it out between the two of us then we will call someone in." He sighed happily and then looked back to Adriana who was now seated on the ground with her head in her hands watching a small penguin do flips. "You do want to adopt her, right?" he asked. "You aren't just saying it to make me feel better? I mean, we could give her a great home, but I know we are a little overpacked right now."

"Of course, I do," Steve said immediately. "You know how much I want to have a bigger family," he said. "And sure, I love babies. But so what if we missed out on Adriana being as small as Christopher or Sarah May? She needs a family. And we can make it work so we can be that family for her. Maybe one day soon she'll like me as much as she likes you," he said. Steve squeezed Bucky's arm and went close to Adriana again. "What do you think of the penguins?" he asked her.

Bucky smiled happily and then looked back at Karen and nodded. They had already discussed this possibility together and he was going to have to let her know that they were both on board and would be ready soon.

Adriana looked up at Steve and then pointed at the little one. "This one's doing flips!" she said with wide eyes so Steve would know just how amazing that was. "And his mommy is over there watching. You see that?"

"Wow, that's so cute!" Steve said, kneeling down so he could see the flipping penguin. "Yeah, I see his mommy watching. I bet she's making sure that he doesn't get hurt." He pet her hair carefully. "I got to pet a penguin once," he said. "What do you think a penguin feels like?"
Adriana thought for a moment and then looked at the penguins. She was confused because they looked like birds but they also swam so maybe it felt like a fish? "Is it like a squishy bird?" she asked and then added, "Sort of like a wet bird?"

"It's kind of like how your hair feels after you take a bath. But also squishy," Steve explained. "That was a very good guess you had, Adriana. You're so smart," he said, nudging her lightly. "Do you want to see some other animals or do you want to watch the penguins a little longer?"

Adriana grinned at the compliment and handed Steve the scavenger hunt paper. "We can go see more animals. Which one is next?" She looked around and seemed to notice Bucky again. "Miss Bubby likes jellyfish. We colored in my book once and he picked the jellyfish."

"Well, it says here that after the penguins, we have to find an underwater animal that also breathes air. Do you know what kind of animal that is? Maybe we can ask one of the workers here for help," Steve suggested. "I don't think a jellyfish breathes air but maybe we will see one along the way. It's thoughtful that you remember that Bucky likes jellyfish."

Adriana got up from the ground and reached up for Steve's hand as she went through her knowledge of underwater creatures. "Polar bears?" she asked and ran her free hand through her hair. "They go underwater, don't they? Oh, but they are bears. I don't know."

Steve looked at Bucky with a big grin when she reached up for his hand. He gave her little hand a squeeze. "That's a very good guess. Polar bears go underwater but I don't think they live underwater. What do you think, Buck? Can you think of an underwater animal that breathes air?"

Bucky's eyes went wide and he shook his head because Steve put him on the spot. "Um... whales?" he asked and hoped it was what Steve was looking for. "Cause they have the holes in their heads to shoot out the water? That's how that works, right?"

Steve gave Bucky an apologetic smile. "Whales do breathe air, yeah," he said. He looked down at Adriana. "You want to find some whales? This place is pretty big, maybe they'll have one." He gave her a little tug. "Have you seen a whale in a picture book before?"

"It was a pink one!" she said excitedly and looked up to Bucky. "Miss Bubby colored it in. But I did the ocean parts." Adriana grinned and walked with Steve as they went to see if there was a whale anywhere.

"Steve, I'm going to hang back and talk to Karen. We will be just behind you two," Bucky said and squeezed his arm.
"You did, huh?" Steve asked. "What's your favorite color?" he asked. Steve gave
Bucky a little smile and a nod. Maybe talking to Karen would be good since they would need to start
the paperwork if they really were going to go for this. "Oh, look," he said, pointing at a tank. "Look
at that, that's a beluga whale. Isn't it cute?"

"His head is funny," Adriana said and placed her hand on the glass. "That's not the kind of whale
that we colored." She looked up at Steve and then back to the whale. "He looks a little lonely. No
one else is with him. Where's his family?"

"That's how all beluga whales are. I wonder if their heads are hard or squishy," he said. Steve didn't
really know how to answer her question. "Maybe he got lost," he offered. "Why do you think he
looks lonely? Is it because there aren't any other whales like him around?"

Adriana just nodded and tilted her head slowly as she looked at the beluga. "The penguin had a
mommy watching him. But the whale doesn't have anyone to love him. He's just swimming around
by himself." She sighed and let go of Steve's hand so she could press her face closer to the glass.

"Just because he doesn't have a mommy doesn't mean he doesn't have people that love him," Steve
said. He pointed to the workers there. "See? Those people work hard every day to bring him food
and make sure his tank is nice and clean. They love him a lot."

Adriana was quiet for a minute and then looked up at Steve. "What's his name?" she asked and
squished a little closer to Steve. "Do whales have names? Can they understand us?" She looked back
to see Bucky and Karen, almost making sure that no one had left her.

"I don't know what his name is, but I bet one of his caretakers can tell you," Steve said. "Whales
don't speak human, but they can tell who's friendly," he explained. "Come on, let's go ask one of the
people what his name is."

Adriana took Steve's hand again and walked with him over to a short kid probably only in high
school who was standing around just so people could ask questions. Adriana hid behind Steve's leg
and clung to his pants as she stared up at the kid. She had definitely warmed up more to Steve
already.

Steve smiled and gently picked her up so that she was sitting on his shoulder, now taller than the kid.
"Go ahead, Adriana. I'm sure this nice worker will be happy to answer your question," he
encouraged. "Go ahead and ask what the whale's name is."
Adriana looked down at Steve and then the now much shorter employee. "Um... Miss Worker... what is the 'begulas' whale's name?" She bit her lip and then rested her chin on the top of Steve's head.

The worker looked up at her and smiled. "Her name is 'Princess'."

Steve gasped. "I almost named my dog that! He convinced me otherwise," Steve said, pointing his finger over at Bucky and then turning his head to give him a pout.

"Princess," Adriana repeated and looked down at Steve. "Can we write 'Princess' in on our scavenger hunt?" she asked, ready to move on to the next animal. She was still pretty sad that Princess was all alone in the tank.

"Sure, we can," Steve promised. "Why don't we wave goodbye to Princess first," he said. He set Adriana down and wrote 'Princess' next to the picture of a whale and waved to the animal. "Do you want to ride on my shoulder or walk on your own?" Steve asked.

Adriana waved to Princess and then sniffled a little. "I can walk," she said and tugged Steve's hand down so she could look at the next clue. "What's the next one?" she asked. "Is it 'turtles'?" She looked up at Steve with curious eyes. "Miss Steeb, what is your favorite animals?"

"I think the turtles are very soon," Steve assured her. "It says here we have to find an animal that has a shell. You think maybe it's a crab?" Steve smiled at her and said, "Dogs are my favorite animal. I've always wanted one and now I have my doggy named Diana."

Adriana thought for a second. "'Turtles' have shells. But crabs do too. But I think starfish do too," she said and scrunched up her face. She also reached up for Steve's hand again and asked, "Can I see your doggy?"

"You're right. Both turtles and crabs do have shells," Steve said. "I don't think starfish do." Steve gave her hand a squeeze. "Maybe if Karen says it's okay we can go on another outing and I'll bring Diana with me so you can play with her," he said.

That seemed to be a good idea to Adriana so she nodded and walked with Steve past some river fish before she found the turtles. She gasped and slipped out of Steve's grasp to run up to the tank and gawk at them. "Look at the 'turtles', Miss Steeb!"
"Woah! Look at how big they are!" Steve said in an over-excited tone. He smiled widely when he saw the little girl rush up to the tank. "How many turtles are there, Adriana? There's so many of them." He looked over at Bucky and gave him a big grin.

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Bucky noticed that Adriana had found the turtles so he paused his discussion with Karen about the home visit they need to set up before he can file to adopt Adriana. He came over to the tank and bent down and picked Adriana up and held her close so she could see the turtles better.

Adriana pointed a finger out and started counting. "Seven, Miss Steeb."

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"Seven. Wow, that's a lot of turtles," he said. Steve looked over to Bucky and asked, "How's chatting with Karen?" Steve didn't want to get too into detail in front of Adriana but he was curious to know if they had a chance in hell to adopt her.

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Bucky nodded softly and smiled. Karen thought it would be plausible. They would just have to have Bucky be the adoptive father and Steve could file for secondary guardianship later. They would just have to pass some checks and the home exam and do some other things before they could have her. And, of course, they would have to talk to Adriana to make sure she even wanted to be their kid.

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Steve beamed when Bucky nodded his head. He couldn't believe the luck that they had. He playfully tugged on Adriana's foot since it was dangling as Bucky held her up. "Which one is your favorite turtle?" he asked. "If you had to name it, what would you call it?"

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Adriana hummed as she looked at all the turtles until she found her favorite. It was a grumpy looking older turtle who moved a little slower than the rest and seemed to have an injured leg. "That one," she said and looked up to Bucky and then Steve. "I would name it 'Puddles'," she said.

---

Steve laughed. "Puddles, huh? That's a good name for a turtle." He pointed over at one of the workers. "Do you want to ask him how old he is? Do you know how long turtles can live for? Some of them can live even longer than humans do."

---

"Yeah, I want to know how old Puddles is," Adriana said and pressed a hand to the glass when Puddles came swimming back around closer to her once again. "Can 'turtles' understand us, Miss Steeb?"

---

"They don't speak human either. But they're able to tell what kind of humans are nice and who isn't nice," he said. Steve walked over to one of the employees and asked her to come over to answer the question for Adriana.
"That turtle is eighty-seven years old," she told her politely. "He was brought here fifty years ago from another aquarium that closed down."

---

Adriana was getting a little annoyed that none of the animals were able to understand 'human', as Steve called it. But she was amazed that the turtle was so old. She couldn't even wrap her young little brain around just how old that was.

Bucky listened to the worker and added, "Well, Adriana named that one 'Puddles' and he is her new favorite turtle. So, we might be coming to visit him a lot."

---

Adriana's head snapped to look at Bucky like a dog having a treat dangled in front of them. "Are we coming back to see the 'tuttles' again?" she asked right away. This was the first proper outing she had that wasn't with the other kids from the orphanage so she had just assumed that it was a once in a lifetime sort of thing.

---

"If you want to," Bucky said and gave her a little smile. "I like coming here and so does Steve so you can come with us." He looked to Steve and then added. "I think it's time for lunch. And I think the cafeteria is close around here. Maybe we can talk about some things while we eat."

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Steve nodded. "Adriana, maybe we should give the turtles a quick rest and we can come back after lunch and see them some more," he suggested to her. "Aren't you hungry?"

---

"Yeah, I am," she admitted, a little sadly. She just wanted to watch the turtles for a little longer. "I only had eggs for breakfast because Marci wanted my toast so she gave me her orange juice for it." She sighed and then let her head flop down into the crook of Bucky's neck as they headed to the cafeteria together.

---

"We'll come back to see the turtles, don't worry," Steve reassured. "You can pick out whatever you want for lunch so long as Karen says it's okay," he said. He smiled and led the way to the cafeteria. There was a special line for kid's meals so Steve headed there first.

---

Once they all got their food, they sat together at a table off in the corner where it was a little quieter. "Adriana, Sweetie, you remember when I told you about my sisters and my kids? We were coloring together out on the picnic tables outside."

---

Adriana was more interested in digging into her chicken nuggets at first. But once she swallowed down some food, she said, "Yeah, your sisters are big girls. They go to school and everything."
"Yeah, that's right," Bucky said and opened her milk for her. "Do you remember me telling you about my babies? Remember I was saying about how I have a little boy and a little girl and I'm their Papa?"

"Uh-huh. You got them cause their mommies and daddies couldn't take care of them." She sipped at her milk and asked, "What were your babies' names again?"

"Christopher and Sarah May," Bucky said with a happy little smile. "Can you say those names, Adriana?" He looked over to Steve and grinned happily. Of course, he knew that Steve knew how great she was already. But he was still excited about the prospect of adopting her as well.

"'Christuffer' and Sarah May," she answered. She paused in thought and she pointed at Steve. "That's your son's name, too!" She realized. "How come they have the same name?"

Bucky nodded to Steve and gave him a reassuring nod. He already knew what to do. "You know how some kids have mommies and daddies? And then some only have a mommy or only have a daddy? Well, some kids have two mommies or two daddies. Christopher and Sarah May have two daddies - me and Miss Steve."

Adriana looked confused. She stared at Bucky for a very long time because she had never heard of anything like that before. "That's allowed?" she asked curiously. She turned to Karen for confirmation. "Oh," Adriana said. She then shrugged her shoulders. "When will I get a mommy or a daddy?"

Bucky looked to Steve and then reached out to squeezed Adriana's hand for a second. "Well, Sweetie, I don't know," Bucky said honestly. He didn't want to get her hopes up just in case this didn't work out. "If two mommies or two daddies would want to be your parents, would that be okay with you?"

Adriana frowned and rested her face in her hands. "I just want to have a family. And my own room. And a 'tuttle'," she said sadly. She didn't seem to care what the makeup of her parents were so long as she had parents. "I like Miss Karen. But she says she can't be my mommy."

Bucky looked to Steve and then wiped his eyes so Adriana wouldn't see him tearing up. "Well, are you okay with having siblings? And other animals with the turtle? Like a cat and a dog?" He really wished he could hold Steve's hand.
Adriana didn't know about the siblings but she heard 'turtle' and 'animals' so she nodded her head. "A 'tuttle' can be my mommy and daddy, Miss Bubby?" she asked. Steve squeezed Bucky's knee under the table because she really was so adorable.

Bucky chuckled and shook his head. "Well, Adriana, the turtle would be your animal. And you would have parents that aren't animals. And some little siblings and some aunts. Does that sound like something you would want?"

Steve smirked. He knew that there was no way they could say no to getting her a turtle but he thought it was funny how Bucky was offering that chip up right away. "I want parents. But parents don't want me," Adriana said and slumped her chin down a little.

Bucky blinked a few times and looked to Steve as his eyes misted up again. "Sweetie, Adriana, someone is going to want you. Someone is going to get you real soon. You'll have a family. Okay?" He glanced over to Karen to make sure he wasn't overstepping. He couldn't just tell Adriana that they were going to adopt her. They had to pass house inspection and all that before telling her.

Adriana didn't look entirely convinced. Steve decided to try and smooth her feelings over. "I don't know if you believe in God, but I do. And I know that he made parents for you. There's a lot of people in this world, but only one you. It's Karen's job to help find the parents God made for you."

Bucky nodded and smiled softly at Adriana. "I know that it doesn't always seem like it, but things will work out. And I know that it's hard to believe that." She had been alone at the orphanage for four years after all. "But Steve is right. You will get the parents you are supposed to have. And they will love you so much."

Adriana sighed. And poked at her mashed potatoes with her fork. "Do you promise that, Miss Bubby? I really want to have a family," she said. "I've been a good girl. Right, Miss Karen?" she asked, looking over at the woman nearby.

Bucky looked to Steve desperately and then covered his face in his hands for a second to compose himself once again. "Adriana, you are so good. You are a very good girl. You haven't done anything wrong. Do you know that?"

Steve's heart broke for her. He held Bucky's hand under the table once Bucky had composed himself. It made him grateful to know that their two babies wouldn't have to suffer the same way that Adriana did. Would it have been possible for them to go so long without being adopted?
"Yes, you have been very good," Karen was quick to praise.

Steve nodded his head. "Yeah," he agreed. "I'm really happy that I got to meet you and spend time with you today."

---

Adriana looked between Steve and Bucky and then back down at her food. "No one has taken me out by myself before. Other kids get to go have fun and then they get to go home with them. I just stay put." She sniffled and looked up at Bucky and just changed the subject. "Can we go back to see Puddles again?"

---

"Well, Bucky and I can take you out again if that would make you happy. It would make me happy and my dog Diana would love to meet you," Steve said. "Let's have one more bite of your potatoes and we can go back to Puddles. I bet he misses you already."

---

Adriana nodded and reluctantly finished off her potatoes before getting up and trotting over to Steve and holding out her hand for him to take.

"I'll throw the trash away," Bucky mumbled quickly and collected their trays, scurrying off so he could have a few moments to keep himself from crying and blurring out to Adriana that he was going to be her Papa if everything worked out.

---

Steve gave Bucky a worried look when he saw him run off to throw everything out. He knew that Bucky had such a big heart and he was probably hurting so much for what Adriana went through. Steve was only keeping his composure because he was certain in his mind that there was no way that Adriana wouldn't come home with them soon, so there wasn't a need to feel too sad when things were going to be okay soon. Steve took Adriana's hand and led her back to the turtles.

---

Bucky came back over to them slowly and just stood back a bit and watched them. Steve was so good with Adriana already and she seemed to like being with him. He gently touched Steve's back as he moved to come stand next to them. "Adriana, are we going to finish the scavenger hunt? Or do you want to finish it next time and we can just watch Puddles and his friends for a while?"

---

"I want to watch Puddles and the others," she said. She pressed her face to the glass again and

Steve smiled fondly at her. He nudged Bucky away a few steps so they could talk. "Are you alright, Baby?" he asked. He saw Bucky get a little emotional before and, in all honesty, he didn't blame him.

---

"Yeah, yeah, I am," Bucky said and squeezed Steve's upper arm. "I just want us to be her parents so badly. And I hate how sad she is that she doesn't have a family yet. I want to tell her that we want her but it would crush her if it didn't work out."
Steve nodded. "I want to be her dad, too. We're going to make this happen, Bucky. I can feel it," he said. "We are going to start having to worry about which kid we are going to call our oldest," he joked, nudging him.

Bucky's lip quivered just a little bit and he nodded, looking away from Steve. "Yeah?" he asked softly. "It's going to work? Right?" He looked over at Adriana again and then to Steve. "I just... I just don't want another kid to be in our lives and then to be taken away. I can't handle that again. I want her to be our daughter."

Steve looked around to make sure no one else was watching and he kissed Bucky's cheek quickly. "She's going to be our daughter and no one will take her from us," he promised. "She's going to be a part of our beautiful family and everything will be perfect," Steve said. "Maybe she will become our little marine biologist."

Bucky nodded again and wiped his eyes. "I'm going to cry. I can't think about this right now. Let's just finish our day with her and then we can talk it out later and get things started with Karen. And we can get the basement started for Becca." Bucky turned back to Adriana and said softly, "Okay, Sweetie, what do you want to do now? Want to see a couple more animals then we can go get you a plushie from the shop and then take you back to your home?"

"I want a plushie," she said right away. "Then we can see more animals. I don't want to go back home today." She was having so much fun, she didn't want to have to go back into the orphanage forever. Steve gave Bucky a quick glance, unsure how to respond.

Bucky sighed and pet Adriana's hair. "Well, Sweetheart, you'll have to go back tonight. But I can visit you tomorrow when I'm done at work. How does that sound? Maybe Miss Steve can come with us." That would work out perfectly because he could sign whatever he needed to sign with Karen to start the process.

Adriana got a little teary-eyed and cried silently even though she was doing her best not to cry about going back home to the orphanage. "O-okay, Miss Bubby," she said quietly, then hid herself against Bucky's side.

Bucky gasped softly and held Adriana close against him. He looked up to Steve and could feel his own eyes glistening with tears. He wanted to tell her that they were going to adopt her. He wanted to so badly. But he couldn't yet. It wasn't a done deal yet. "It's okay, Adriana. You can cry. It's okay. I've got you, Sweetie."
Steve knelt down next to her and gently pet her hair to calm her while Bucky spoke to her. The little girl took a little while to calm down but, finally, she rubbed her hands over her eyes. It wasn't even the sort of breakdown that Christopher threw when he didn't get his way. Steve's heart broke because Adriana genuinely was sad and was doing her best to be good despite that. "Hey, let's see that smile again. You're going to get a turtle plushie, right?"

---

Adriana nodded slowly, lower lip still stuck out in a pout. But she was at least happy to get a plushie. "Yes," she said and looked between the two of them as her lip quivered.

Bucky picked her up again and started heading towards the gift shop so they could get her a turtle. "You and I can pick out your turtle and Miss Steve can talk to Miss Karen about something important while we do, okay?"

---

Steve caught the hint. He and Bucky may have only been married for a relatively short time but he also knew how to communicate with him without needing to say a word. Steve dropped back to walk alongside Karen. "Hey," he said nervously to her. "Do you... do you know when we would be able to set up a house visit? We've adopted kids before, but... never from an orphanage. I don't know the process for this exactly."

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Karen smiled warmly at Steve. "Well, I am Adriana's case manager. All the kids have case managers and all adoption processes go through us and not the orphanage. It's just the way we do it. Not all places are the same. And only one of you will legally be able to adopt her but Bucky tells me you are familiar with that and the process of gaining secondary guardianship."

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Steve nodded. "Yeah... Bucky's going to be the one to be her legal parent. I've already become a legal guardian for Bucky's sisters, so I can do the same for Adriana." He looked over at the two of them. "We'd love to bring her home as soon as possible. Bucky couldn't stop talking about her at home and now I can see why."

---

"Yes, of course, Mr. Rogers-Barnes," Karen said with a pleased little smile. "I'm very happy to hear that the two of you want to be her parents. She has been waiting a long time for a family and I think she had to wait so long because she was waiting for the two of you."

---

Steve smiled happily when she used their married name on him. "Oh yeah?" He looked over to Adriana. "Is she usually more headstrong than this? We've got a little boy at home. Thinks he's the boss of everything." He sighed happily. "She's such a cute kid. I don't get why someone hasn't seen that before."

---

"No," Karen shook her head and watched Adriana as she stared at all the plushies with Bucky. "She's not generally stubborn or headstrong. She's a very polite kid. She doesn't throw too many tantrums. She gets upset and she angry - just like every kid. But she's sort of grown up with so many
other children that she has learned - like many of them do - that acting out won't get them very far."

---

Steve nodded. "When we first got our baby boy, he wouldn't cry or make a sound at all. But now all he does is blabber at us or let us know when he's not happy," Steve said. "Of course, I'd love for her to be as polite as she was today every day... but I also wouldn't be surprised if she got a little bit more comfortable with acting up more when she knows her family situation doesn't depend on how well she behaves."

---

"Hopefully, she will adjust well and not feel as stifled as she does at the orphanage," Karen said. "She's a very fun little girl but she just doesn't get to express herself very much in there." She sighed and looked to Adriana then back to Steve. "Well, Bucky tells me you stay at home with the kids and you should be the one to decide when to do the home visit so it's most convenient for you."

---

"Could you come by tomorrow? Bucky will be at work and his sisters will be at school, but my mom and I will be home. Then we could go to the orphanage together and deal with any paperwork that we have to," Steve said. He was eager to get the ball rolling for her adoption.

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"Tomorrow works," Karen said and wrote it down in her day planner. "How about eleven? It'll only take about an hour maybe an hour and a half. I mostly have to make sure it's a physically safe house and make sure there will be a place for Adriana and make sure that any animals are up to date on vaccines and the like."

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"That's fine. Sarah May will be taking her nap at that point. I take Diana and Raphael - our pets - to the vet periodically to keep them up to date on everything. Also, to get their teeth cleaned. I don't like dog breath," Steve chuckled.

---

Karen marked that there were two pets in the house. Bucky came back over with Adriana on his back. She was holding tightly to a big plush turtle. Bucky looked to Steve and said, "We couldn't decide which was the best one so there are three more turtles in her backpack."

---

Steve turned to Bucky and Adriana when they came walking over. "Wow, that's a big turtle you got there?" It was no surprise that Bucky spoiled her a little. Steve would've done the same. "How many turtles did you get?"

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Adriana held up four fingers and then showed Steve the one she was holding. "This is Puddles!" she said excitedly and kissed its head. "Just like the 'tuttle' in the tank! I haven't named the other ones yet."
She was so goddamned cute. "That was so nice of Miss Bucky to get you four. That's one for every birthday you've had," Steve said. "You want to walk around and look at more animals? Or are you tired out?"

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Adriana shook her head but she was yawning as she went. She was at an age where she still had nap times and she was way past hers. Bucky felt her settle in closer against him and he smiled softly. "How about we head out for now. We can come back a different day."

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Adriana frowned, not wanting to go back but she also was really tired. "You promise that you're going to come back?" she asked, not wanting to say yes until she knew for sure that she was going to have company again.

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Bucky nodded and then looked to Steve. "After work is over tomorrow, Sweetie, I'll come over to see you. You can name your turtles and tell me all about them when I get there, okay?" he assured her and reached in his pocket for a little granola snack for her to munch on as they headed out of the aquarium.

---

Once back at the orphanage, Karen gently prompted Adriana to say thank you. She let out a little sigh because she was not happy that she had to go back inside and go back with all the other kids. "Okay, Miss Bubby. I have to go home now. Thank you for the plushies."

---

Bucky nodded and wiped at his eyes. He didn't want to leave her either. He wanted to take her home now. "Okay, Sweetheart. I'll see you tomorrow. Don't miss me too much, Adriana. Can you say goodbye to Miss Steve too?"

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She tiredly turned to Steve and waved to him. "Bye bye, Miss Steeb. Thank you for the games," she said, playing with the straps of her monkey backpack. She gave each of them a hug. "Don't forget your doggy tomorrow, Miss Steeb."

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Karen came over and took Adriana's hand. "Well, he can't bring the dog here but you can go meet it at their house sometime." She gave her an encouraging look and then thanked Bucky and Steve for the day out with Adriana and took her back inside.

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After Karen and Adriana were inside, Steve turned to his husband. "We have a home visit tomorrow," he said. "Karen and I talked about it, I told her we wanted to adopt her as soon as we could." They would have to make quick work out of finishing the basement.
Bucky sighed with a happy little smile and stared up at Steve. He was going to get too emotional if he kept thinking about it. "Let's head home, okay?" he asked and looked at Steve's lips for a long moment. "I want to hold you."

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"I want to hold you too, Love," Steve said. "And give our kids a big hug." He couldn't imagine where their kids could be right now had they not adopted them. He walked them home. "How're you feeling?"

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Bucky wiped his hands over his face and shook his head. "I'm okay. I've just been seeing her for so long now and it just breaks my heart every time I have to leave her. She's supposed to be our child. I know she is. And it's so hard for me to leave our little girl every time."

---

Bucky was such a good parent. And it took a special kind of loving person to already consider Adriana their child even before the paperwork started. "I know, Baby," he said softly. "That just means we have to work extra hard to bring her home sooner."

---

Bucky nodded and sniffled. He just wanted her home now. He wanted her to meet her new siblings and her new aunts and nana. He wanted her to have her own room for the first time in her life. He wanted her to be able to have all her plushies out on her bed and not be worried that someone would take them. He wanted their new daughter to come home.
When they got home, they were greeted by Diana running up to them, barking excitedly. Christopher came tottering over with his arms stretched out for his daddies, squealing with excitement. "Hey there, Baby Boy!" Steve said. He scooped Christopher up and then leaned into Bucky so he could hold their son too.

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Bucky smiled brightly at Christopher and kissed his head and his cheek. "Hello, Bean! Did you miss us?" he asked and received a sneeze and then some coughing in response. "Oh, Christopher, are you getting sick?"

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Christopher laid his cheek on Steve's shoulder and looked up at his pop with a wide smile. He had a bit of a sniffle when he breathed. "It sounds like he's coming down with a cold. I guess I have to give him some medicine to nip this before it gets worse."

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"It's because he insists on putting everything in his mouth. He's such a germy little kid," Bucky said with a shake of his head. "We better give Sarah May some medicine too, just in case. Because if he's got something, she will have it soon."

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"Alright. Speaking of, where is our little girl?" Steve walked into the house some more and found Sarah May sleeping in her nana's lap while she read a book.

"Hello, boys," Sarah greeted. "Was it a good day out for you two?"

---

Bucky nodded and came over to give Sarah a gentle hug and then carefully pick up his sleeping daughter. "It was a very good day. We had a lot of fun." He saw a sparkly gleam in Sarah May's hair and he looked at it more closely. "How come she has glitter glue dried in her hair?"

---

"Your wonderful son got his hands in the craft bin and had a go at being a hair stylist with her," Sarah snorted. "It took forever to clean up. I must have missed a spot."

Steve looked down at Christopher and gasped dramatically. "Were you a bad boy for nana, Christopher?"

---

Christopher simply giggled and reached up to touch Steve's face. "Dada! Play!" he said happily and mushed his hands on his cheeks a few times.

Bucky sighed and tried picking out the leftover glue from Sarah May's hair. "Baby Bean, you need to be careful with Ya-Ya. She's got all these dark little curly hairs and we don't want to hurt them. They're so cute."
Steve couldn't stay upset at his son when he was so adorable. And it wasn't like he messed up his sister's hair on purpose. "You want to play, Bean? But Dada is tired. Sleepy. Nap," Steve said then faked falling asleep. Christopher looked over to Bucky for help as he swatted Steve's chest lightly to get him to wake up.

"She's going to have such nice curls as she gets older," Sarah said. "I can tell already."

Bucky chuckled at his son and kissed his head. "Oh, I know," Bucky said and sat down with Sarah May in his arms. "Her hair is going to be amazing. She's beautiful. She always will be. All my children will be beautiful and wonderful." He tried to smile again but he ended up having to cover a little whine because he wanted Adriana there too.

When Christopher didn't get any help from Bucky, he mushed Steve's face together and said loudly in his face, "Daaaadaa!" Steve was quick to play along and be awake because he didn't want Christopher waking up Sarah May.

"So, when is my next grandchild coming home?" Sarah asked. She saw the look in Bucky's eyes and she had heard them chattering about an orphanage.

Bucky sniffled and looked up to Steve and then Sarah. "I... well, hopefully soon. She's four. She's so amazing. She's just so energetic and fun and she just needs a home so much. And we can do that for her. We can be her parents. And she would love living here with all of us."

Sarah smiled over at him. "At this rate of the kids you're adopting, Steve will have his baseball team before your fifth anniversary," she teased. "Well, I can't wait to meet her. What's her name?"

"That's sort of what I'm shooting for," Bucky said with a chuckle. "Her name is 'Adriana'. Her mother died in childbirth and her father killed himself not long after out of grief. She's been in the orphanage for her entire life. I can't believe no one has wanted her yet."

"That poor girl," Sarah said, frowning with concern. "When are you going to start-" she started to ask but then Steve interrupted.

"We have a home visit tomorrow from her caseworker. Then we are going to the orphanage after Bucky's done with work."

Bucky nodded and watched Sarah May slowly wake back up again. "We need to talk to the girls first, but we want to make the basement into a space for Becca and put Adriana in Becca's old room. And it'll give Becca some more privacy and she's always looking for more privacy."
"Hello, Sweet Pea," Steve said softly, playing with Sarah May's foot when she woke up.

Becca and Lilly had just come into the living room and Becca overheard the last bit. "Who the hell is Adriana? And am I really getting the basement all to myself?"

Bucky looked up at Steve and took a deep breath. "Baby, do you want to take this one?" he asked calmly and stood a little closer to his husband for support from the potentially aggravating discussion with the girls. This could go many ways depending on how they reacted.

"Um..." Steve adjusted Christopher on his hip nervously.

Becca frowned. "It's not another baby, is it?"

"She's four, actually..." Steve offered.

Becca seemed more amicable to the fact that their next niece wasn't another baby that would cry in the middle of the night and wake them. "But you're going to stop for a while after this, right?" she asked. "The house is barely big enough for us."

"Well," Bucky shrugged and shook his head absently. "I guess we will have to. You're right. We won't have much room." He squeezed Becca's arm for a second. "And we wanted to offer you a new room in the basement. We can finish it up all nice and it'll be like your own little apartment in the house. Rent-free. We can put a mini fridge down there and put shelves mounted to the walls for all your things."

"Hey, why don't I get the basement too? There's enough space for both of us and maybe I want some peace and quiet," Lilly argued.

Becca shot her a look. "The day you want peace and quiet is the day you're being lowered into the grave, Lilly." Becca was warming up to the idea of another kid here only because it benefitted her greatly.

"Alright, alright," Bucky said hurriedly to shut off whatever argument might start between them. "Lil, Becca is sixteen now. She needs some space. And she will be moving out before you do. So, when Becca moves out of the house and has her own place, then you can move into her basement bedroom." He looked to Becca and added, "Of course, Becca will stay here for at least five more years, right? You're not going to leave your emotional big brother too soon, right? Because I won't be able to handle it."

"If you give Becca the basement, she's never going to want to move out," Lilly groaned. Becca smirked because she was definitely getting her way with this and it was awesome. She was already
imagining all of the books she could read in peace and quiet. "I can't promise you five years if I go to an out-of-state college. But if I go somewhere local, then yes."

---

Bucky blinked and thought of all the great schools right in the city. "At least apply to the local colleges first. That'll make me feel better." He moved Sarah May over on his chest a bit and then pulled Becca in for a hug and a kiss to her head. "So? What do you think? You want to help us make the basement into your room?"

---

Sarah May tried to get her papa's attention by raising her little hand up and patting his chest lightly. Becca glanced off in the direction of the basement and said, "Hell yeah, I do. I've been saving up money from the jobs I've been doing around the neighborhood. I can buy some stuff to help decorate."

---

Bucky smiled warmly and gave a little sigh of relief. "You can decorate it however you want to, Becs. It's going to be your space. It shouldn't take long to get it fixed up. We just need to cover the hole beneath the stairs, paint the walls, finish the ceiling, and then we should be able to move you down there."

---

"This is rad," Becca said brightly. Lilly looked a bit sour but she knew that arguing wasn't going to get her anything.

"You guys are going to love Adriana," Steve said. "She loves turtles and coloring and is the cutest four-year-old I've ever met."

---

"She really is," Bucky said and looked between his sisters hopefully. He wanted them to love her as much as he did. "And she needs a home and a family and I think we can be that for her." He wasn't necessarily looking for permission from them but he wanted them to be somewhat on board with the whole thing.

---

"You guys need to lay off the kids and let the other gays have a chance," Lilly said. "But I like that we are getting another girl around here. After you got Christopher I thought it was going to start to be a boy takeover. But now we still get to outnumber you."

---

Bucky shook his head in confusion and held Sarah May up towards Lilly. "Did you forget someone?" he asked and then kissed his daughter's hair. "But, I know what you mean. We might have to cool it for a little bit. It'll be hard to raise two teens, one small kid, and two babies."

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"Sarah May doesn't do anything yet, she doesn't count until she can talk back at you," Lilly answered. She trotted over and took Sarah May from Bucky and cuddled her. "You have to show
Christopher who's boss, little girl," she said affectionately to her niece.

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Bucky scoffed as his sister took his baby from his arms. "Come on. She counts. She's a happy healthy little baby girl. And I would like her back please." He held out his hands for her again. "Besides, Christopher is a good boy. He will be the best big brother. He will be a better brother than I ever was or ever will be."

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Lilly reluctantly let Bucky take Sarah May from her arms and she snorted as she flopped in the armchair that usually was Steve's. Christopher reached for her from where he was and gave her shirt a tug. "Ya-Ya, play," he insisted. Christopher started to whine a little bit and wiggle in Steve's arms. Sarah May just sort of tilted her head towards her brother and then yawned a little and stuck her tongue out of the side of her mouth.

Steve smiled at his son. "Look, Bean, your sister is sticking her tongue out at you." He blew a raspberry at Christopher and kissed his chubby cheek. "Ma, would you mind keeping an eye on them a little longer? Bucky and I would like to lay down for a little while."

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Sarah nodded her head. Bucky thanked her and set Sarah May down by a stack of blocks and plushies. She had been working on crawling lately and she immediately started towards Bucky again, a little upset that he had put her down. "Ya-Ya, stay put with Nana. Your daddy and I want to rest a little."

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Sarah May had the biggest pout on her face and her bottom lip jutted out. Steve felt bad for her but Christopher distracted her as soon as Steve put him down because he went right over to her and waved his blocks. "Play!"

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"Okay, good, they've got each other for a bit," Bucky said quietly and took Steve's hand. "Let's sneak away before they notice we are walking off." He smiled down at his babies playing together and then pulled Steve towards the stairs.

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Steve squeezed Bucky's hand and walked quickly with him. "Sarah May is going to be your little shadow once she's able to walk. She's already crawling after you whenever she can," Steve said. He pulled Bucky into the bedroom and gave his cheek a kiss.

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"I'm perfectly fine with that," Bucky said and slipped his arms around Steve and leaned into him. "So... it's really okay that we adopt Adriana? I know we already talked about this but I want to make sure." He didn't want to say that he was worried about adopting so many kids after losing Grant. It hadn't even been a full year since they lost him and he just didn't want him to think they were forgetting him.
Steve smoothed his hand over Bucky's chest, letting it rest over where his tattoo was. "Of course, it is," Steve said. "I want to give her a home. And you know how much I want a big family." Steve lifted his hand to play with Bucky's hair. "I guess we just have to start on expanding our home sooner than we planned."

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Bucky nodded and gave Steve a slow kiss. "Thank you," he whispered and just stared at his husband for a bit. "I do think we will need to slow down for a while though, just until Becca is moved out. We really will run out of room."

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Steve pouted. "But I love babies..." he said. However, he knew logically that they couldn't adopt anyone else for until they had the space. Besides, they needed to drag it out so they didn't have a million kids going to college at once - assuming, of course, they wanted to go to college.

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"I know you do, Steve. So, do I," Bucky assured him. "But, we already have two babies who fight for attention from us and we are about to have another little kiddo." He smiled softly and looked over to the framed ink print of Grant's feet. "Do you want to go talk to him tomorrow after we get back from the orphanage? I haven't been down there for about a week. He and my parents should know about Adriana."

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Steve followed Bucky's gaze over to the print and he felt his heart clench. He still visited Grant daily, usually early in the mornings before the babies woke or right after Bucky left for work. "Yeah... after," he agreed. "I don't want to go to the orphanage with a heavy heart."

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"I think that's best," Bucky agreed and moved to lay down on their bed with a flop. "I do think it gets just a little easier every time I go, though. It hurts just a little less and I get just a little more excited that I will get to see him again one day."

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Steve sighed sadly and snuggled up against Bucky. "I wonder if he would be crawling after Christopher right now. Or if he would like laying on the couch being cuddled like Sarah May," he mumbled.

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Bucky held Steve close and rubbed his back. He wished he had the answer. He wished he knew what kind of baby their son would have been. "All I know is that he would have loved his big brother and little sister. He would have loved to play with them and be with them. He would have loved to grow up with them."

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Steve felt his eyes get a little wet and he buried his face in Bucky's shoulder. He let out a heavy sigh as he wrapped his arms tightly around his husband. "Yeah..." he murmured softly. "Grant would have been incredible," Steve said. "He still is." He was thankful that their kids wouldn't know him
enough to go through the heartbreak they were going through.

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Bucky let Steve hug around him as he pulled a blanket up over the both of them. "I love you, Baby," he said warmly and flicked out the lamp on the nightstand. "Let's get a little bit of sleep. The babies will want us up pretty soon. And you know Sarah May will be up all night tonight now that she's teething." He sighed and gave Steve a few soft, gentle kisses. "Love you..."
Sarah came into the kitchen where Steve was furiously cleaning the counters. Both babies were sitting in a playpen in the corner and Christopher was trying to get Sarah May to play with him but she was preoccupied with chewing on a teething toy and staring at her daddy as he cleaned up to get ready for a home inspection from Adriana's case manager. "Steve, my sweet son, the house looks perfect. You should sit down for a little bit. Rest up until she gets here."

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Steve turned to his mom. "I need to make sure that there's nothing wrong. I haven't even finished wiping down the walls of the basement yet," Steve said. "I can't mess up Adriana's adoption process because I didn't do a good enough job on the house." He couldn't do that to Bucky.

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Sarah laughed softly and crossed her arms. "Why in the world would you need to wipe down the basement walls?" she asked and moved over to the babies to check on them. "I think you've done everything you need to do."

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"Because if I tell her that we are moving Becca in there and it isn’t presentable, she may think poorly of how we treat the kids here," Steve said. Sarah May reached up for her nana as soon as Sarah came over. "What if she says no?"

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Sarah picked up the baby and gave her a kiss. "You said that she likes you both already, right? I don’t think she will say no. She will see how much you care for your children and for Bucky’s sisters. Steve, I think you need to take a few minutes to calm down. Everything will be okay."

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Sarah May giggled and babbled up at her nana. "But still... it’s on my shoulders to make sure this house visit goes well," Steve insisted. He only sat down on the couch once his mom gave him that look and immediately Diana curled up in his lap.

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“Steven, my boy,” Sarah said softly and reached to pick up Christopher in her other arm. She brought them both over to the couch and sat down with them. "Why did you schedule the house visit while Bucky was at work? You could have made it when you were both available so this wasn’t all on you."

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Steve pulled Christopher over and cuddled him. “I wanted to get the process going as soon as possible,” he said with a pout. “You should’ve seen her, Ma. She wants a family so bad and we can be that family for her. And Bucky loves her so much already.”
“I’m sure you two will be able to adopt her. I’m sure that Karen will have no problems with the home visit and it’ll all go smoothly.” Sarah pulled her son in and gave him a hug. “Don’t worry about it. God has blessed you and your family so much. He knows that you two will be the best parents for Adriana. Just take a few breaths, say a prayer, and listen to your mother.”

---

Steve leaned into her hug and let out a huff. “Alright, Mom...” It was unlikely that Steve would have a breath of relief until the adoption papers were finalized. He tried to lay down but the second he did, Diana hopped off his lap and Christopher smacked his chest lightly.

“Dada, play!” he insisted. Steve smiled and sat on the floor with his son, playing blocks with him until Karen showed up.

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Karen knocked at the door and waited. She heard Diana’s curious bark and heard Christopher’s indignant whining when Steve got up to answer the door. When the door was opened, Karen smiled and took in how Steve looked put-together and respectable but also like he was on edge and anxious. “Hello, Mr. Rogers-Barnes. Nice to see you again.”

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Steve left Christopher with his nana to go open the door. Diana barked once more and wagged her tail hopefully before Steve stepped aside. “Hi, Karen,” he greeted anxiously. “You can come in. Uh... would you like anything to drink?”

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“No, no thank you, Sir. That’s not necessary,” Karen said and smiled at him as they walked into the house. “This must be the dog that Adriana’s so anxious to meet,” she added and bent down to scratch at Diana’s head. “How is she with the children? The dog, I mean.”

---

“Diana is great,” Steve said. “She lets the babies sleep on her all the time. She doesn’t like it when they pull on her tail or ears but she walks away if they won’t leave her alone. They can’t climb stairs yet so she goes up on the second floor for some peace,” he said. “Do you want to meet Christopher and Sarah May?”

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Karen nodded as Steve spoke and jotted some comments down in her book. “Yes, I would love to meet your children. I assume that the older girls are at school? It would be good for me to meet them at some point. I like to interact with every member of a household before anything is decided.”

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Steve looked more nervous as she wrote things down. “Um... yeah. They get home sometime between three and five depending on the day,” he said. He brought Karen to the living room where his mom was looking after the babies. “Karen, this is my mom - Sarah. And these two are Christopher and Sarah May.”

Christopher waggled his block over at Karen. “Who da’?” he asked his dad.
Karen went to Sarah and shook her hand, “Hello, Ma’am, I’m Karen Willick,” she said. “It’s good to meet you.” She then got down on the floor and knelt in front of Christopher. She extended a hand for the block carefully. “Hey, Buddy, are you having fun with your blocks?”

Christopher held the block towards her for a moment but then pulled it away and giggled wildly. Steve smiled proudly. “He likes to play around,” he said. Christopher stood up and walked over to Steve and handed him the block instead. “Thanks, Bean,” Steve said, taking it. “You want me to put it on your tower?” Steve placed it on Christopher’s pile of blocks.

“So, when do I find out if you’re letting me have another grandchild?” Sarah asked.

Karen gave a patient little laugh and stood back up. “Well, ma’am, it could be a few days to a week before the final decision is made. I will need to do a few things like background checks and making sure the orphanage has Adriana up to date on vaccines and any medical needs she has. And then I need to consult with two other case managers in my firm. Essentially, it’s just for a second opinion to make sure others agree that this will be a good home for Adriana.”

Steve looked scared when Karen spoke about a second opinion. He knew Karen didn’t mind them being gay but that wasn’t universal. “Are you going to tell them about... about me and Bucky’s relationship?” he asked. “It doesn’t affect how we parent. Christopher and Sarah May are great kids. We read to them every day and take them on outings.”

Karen thought for a second, understanding Steve’s concern. After a minute, she took a breath and cocked her head a little to the side, “Well, I suppose since Bucky is the only one being the adoptive parent then I don’t see why I need to specify that you two are a couple. I will have to explain it more vaguely, I suppose.”

Christopher noticed that Steve wasn’t playing with him and began to whine. Steve quickly picked him up and bounced him gently on his hip to satisfy him. “What sort of things do you look for in a home visit?” Steve asked. “Does everything look okay? We’re still arranging to get Adriana’s room ready.”

“I’m mostly here to check that there isn’t anything dangerous around the house that needs addressing. I also want to make sure that Adriana will have a place and won’t be going from one home where she was just a number to another.” Karen walked back out to the hall and pointed up the stairs. “Are the bedrooms up there? May I see where Adriana will be?”

"Yeah, sure,” Steve said. He carried Christopher with him over to Becca’s room. “Bucky’s younger sister is in here right now. She’s sixteen, so we are finishing the basement for her so she has more
privacy and Adriana can have her room,” Steve explained. “Becca is the meticulous one. Lilly isn’t as clean.”

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Karen made more notes in her book. “So, Adriana will be here. Becca is in the basement?” She made a note that Adriana would be close to the master bedroom just in case she needed Steve or Bucky. “And this is Lilly’s room and then the nursery is over here?” She peeked into the nursery and saw the two cribs. “Do you and your husband have any trouble waking up if one of the children need you?”

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Steve nodded. “Yeah, that’s the plan. Eventually, we want to build extra rooms for the house but we have time for that. Christopher and Sarah May won’t need their own rooms for a couple more years.”
He kissed Christopher’s cheek gently. “And I don’t believe we have any problem there. I know we’re up at least twice a night. If we ever slept through anything, I’m sure Becca would have something to say about having to listen to babies cry all night,” he joked.

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“That’s good. Adriana might have a rough few nights at first. She might need some extra attention and some help falling asleep or staying asleep,” Karen said and made more notes. “In my experience with children her age, the shock of a new family and a new house can be a lot to handle. Don’t be surprised if she is emotional or tearful for no apparent reason or has some rapid mood changes.”

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Steve nodded. “Of course,” he said. “I understand. I know it’s not the same, but going from living on my own to having Bucky and his two sisters took getting used to. Now I have to amplify that transition by a thousand to understand what Adriana is going through,” he said. He paused and asked, “Has she mentioned to you things that she wants? Like how many plushies for her bed or what color blankets she likes?”

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Karen wasn’t really sure. Adriana was so used to not really getting anything special that she hadn’t mentioned anything to her. “Well, you know that she likes turtles. And she likes monkeys well enough. She will be bringing all her things with her, of course. Some clothes and toys and books. I do know that she tends to be cold most of the time, even sometimes in the summer. So, with the fall finally coming in, you might want to make sure she has enough jackets and coats and blankets.”

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Steve nodded. “Yes, of course,” Steve said. “I guess a nice big quilt would be nice for her to keep her warm. I was thinking about painting turtles on her door to make her feel really at home. I’m pretty good with art so it wouldn’t be very hard. I plan on starting an art class soon for other stay-at-home parents to draw with their kids. I’m excited to get it going. I’ve been playing with ideas with Sarah May and Christopher to see what goes over well with the young ones.”

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“Oh, that’s lovely,” Karen said enthusiastically. “That sounds like a very fun job.” She marked some more things in her book and then looked down the hall to the master bedroom. “If it’s okay with you, I need to see the master bedroom as well. I know it’s yours and Bucky’s private space but I just need
to make sure you don’t keep anything dangerous in areas that the children could get to. No weapons or toxic material anywhere they can reach. I know you were a police officer. Do you still keep any firearms in the house?”

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Steve led her over to their bedroom. "I don’t have a license to carry now that I don’t have my badge anymore. I want to, for safety reasons, but I also am hesitant for the kids’ safety reasons,” Steve said.

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Karen looked around a bit. She opened the drawers that were low enough for children to reach. She checked around the closet and looked in the bathroom as well. “What sort of ‘safety reasons’ do you have that you think warrants a firearm in your home?”

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Steve shifted his feet nervously. “Well, both Bucky and I have been physically attacked for being gay,” he explained. “Never seriously in the home or anything, but if someone were to follow us, I wouldn’t want my kids being at risk because of some person who can’t handle two men who love each other.”

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“That’s understandable to want to be cautious,” Karen said evenly. “But I’ll tell you that it is concerning to me. Have any of your children - the babies and the older girls - been targeted because of you and Bucky’s sexuality?”

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Steve’s face fell a little. “That’s not going to stop us from being allowed to parent Adriana is it?” He asked in an upset tone. “It’s only happened once. But Becca and Lilly took care of it. Lilly had been teased at school once but not anymore. Not that I know of, at least.”

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“May I ask what happened?” Karen said softly and walked back out to the hallway. She didn’t want to linger in the master bedroom too long. She found that prospective parents were often the most uncomfortable having her in their private room.

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Steve crossed his arms defensively. “Lilly got bullied a little. She may have gotten pushed, but that was it. It was mostly verbal. Becca stood up for her and I wrote a strong letter to the principal and that was that. If it got worse I would have paid a visit to the school.”

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“Okay,” Karen nodded but didn’t write anything down. “Thank you.” She went back down the stairs and then headed for the basement door. They did some more inspecting around down there and then back up in the main floor until she had seen every room. “I think that’s everything I need for now. There are more questions, of course. But these would be better handled with Bucky since he is the potential adoptive father. Is he still planning on coming to the orphanage this afternoon to start some preliminary paperwork?”
“It wasn’t a bad visit was it?” Steve immediately worried the worst of the visit even though he and Bucky genuinely were good parents who ran a loving home. “Yeah, Bucky and I want to visit her again and do the paperwork.”

Karen gave a soft little smile and a reassuring touch to Steve’s arm. “No, Sir, it wasn’t a bad visit. I have minimal concerns. I can see that you and your husband are both responsible and very loving to your family. I also like that, while you are a stay-at-home dad, you have your mother here as well. Two babies and a four-year-old can prove to be a bit much and it’s reassuring to me that there are three adults in the house. I also see no immediate threats or dangers in the house itself or with the animals.”

Steve let out a breath of relief when he had her tentative seal of approval with the way that their household was set up. He knew it wasn’t definite but it was a good start. He smiled brightly and nodded as he guided her towards the front door. “That’s great. My mom’s amazing and she’s such a great nana to our kids. Bucky and I will definitely be over today.”

Karen thanked him once again and then left. Sarah came up to Steve, holding her granddaughter on her side. She was quiet for a few seconds and then tilted her head to the side and looked to her son. “Did it go well?”

Steve set his squirming son down next to his blocks and Diana came over so she could nuzzle up against Steve’s legs. “Yeah, I think so,” he said. “She said that she likes that there are three adults around to take care of the kids,” Steve answered. “So, thanks for moving in with us,” he teased lightly.

Sarah laughed and shook her head. “It’s not like you needed me here. But I appreciate that you let me move in. I don’t know what I would be doing if I wasn’t around my grand-babies all the time. It was hard enough not seeing you very often.”

Steve smiled brightly. “I love having you around, Ma. I knew I had to get my own place and be independent but it’s so much better having you here to talk to. And everyone loves you here, too.” He sat down and gave her a hug. “Would you want to come to our next visit?”

“To meet Adriana?” Sarah asked, adjusting Sarah May carefully. The baby was close to falling asleep again even though it hadn’t been long since she had a nap. “I would love to come with you two. If you think that’s a good idea. I don’t want to overwhelm the girl.”
“Going today would be a bit much for her. But I would want her to meet you too. We can introduce her one by one to new members of the family so it’s not such a shock when she moves in,” Steve said. “You’ll love her, Mom. She’s so sweet.”

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Sarah loved how much Steve cared about his family. She was prouder of him every day. She never would have thought she would be so lucky to have a family as big and wonderful as the one that Steve was giving her now. “You’re such a good boy, Steve. You always have been. I couldn’t have asked for a better son.”

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“Who would’ve known that your only child would grow up to be a big, gay mama’s boy,” he chuckled. Steve kissed her cheek before focusing his attention on his sleepy daughter. He rubbed her back gently until she fell asleep. “Sometimes I worry not having a mom around would be a downside for our kids somehow. But with you here, I don’t think I have to be afraid of that.”

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“Oh, Sweetheart,” Sarah said sadly and shook her head. “No. There’s no way. Your children have two great fathers. They aren’t missing out and they aren’t going to be wanting a mother or anything. You were only raised with a mother once your father was gone. And Bucky’s sisters are spending their most difficult adolescent years with their brother to parent them.”

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“But Becca and Lilly had a mom and dad to remember. And, I don’t remember dad much, but at least I knew I had one,” Steve said. “I guess I’m just worried about them. I know we are doing the best we can for our kids but there’s always that nagging doubt, Ma.”

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Sarah was silent for a second. She understood why it worried Steve but she just didn’t think that it would be a problem for the babies to not have a mother. And she knew that Steve must not have discussed this with Bucky. She had gotten to know Bucky pretty well through living at the house and from what Steve told her about him. And she knew that Bucky would just pop in anger and frustration if he knew Steve thought that way. “Do you believe that you and Bucky are good fathers? And that you both are doing everything you can for your children?”

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“I know we are good fathers and do everything we can,” Steve answered. “But sometimes our best isn’t enough. Even when you did your best, we still went to bed hungry some nights.” Steve knew his mom struggled to keep a roof over their heads while Steve was growing up.

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“Steve, my son, that was different,” Sarah said softly. “I was a widowed mother who was underpaid and I had a very sick boy. There were much different circumstances for me then. You and Bucky have built up a strong life together. Bucky has a steady job, you have settlement money and disability pay. You always put your children before yourselves no matter what. Bucky has made such changes in his own life to make sure that the life he gives you and your babies is the best it can be. I think this family is in a very good place.”
Steve didn’t respond at first and it was clear that Steve was thinking and trying to see his mom’s side of things. In the end, he still had his doubts but he at least was reassured by his mom giving them her seal of approval. “Alright, yeah. Thank you, Mom.”

Sarah decided not to push it any more. She kissed her granddaughter’s head and then laid her gently in her rocker by the couch to sleep. “Steve, be a dear and hand me that basket of yarn. I’m going to start on a blanket for Adriana.”

Steve smiled brightly and got up so he could grab some for her. “So, have you caught Sarah May trying to speak at all? I’m trying so hard to get her to say ‘Papa’ so we could surprise Bucky one day when he gets home. But she isn’t much of a talker.”

“No, I haven’t,” Sarah sighed and looked to Ya-Ya in the rocker. “But she has been slower than Christopher. I mean, she’s only just started crawling. And she hardly makes any noise anyway. She has to be really upset before she starts crying and she only babbles if she thinks she hasn’t gotten enough attention.”

Steve tickled Christopher’s feet and smiled as his son let out big belly laughs. “I know she’s going to talk in her own time. I guess Christopher spoiled us by learning so early on so we got to hear more about what he’s thinking than we get to with Sarah May,” he said. “When did I start talking?”

Sarah picked out the colors she wanted to use for Adriana’s blanket and she set to work getting it started. “Oh, you were around fourteen months when you started saying a few words. It was mostly simple things like ‘mama’ and ‘hi’ and ‘no’. But sometimes you tried to say ‘food’. You were also one of the crankiest sleepers. You would get so tired and wear yourself out so much that you would be red-faced and whining pitifully for a solid hour until you finally fell asleep.”

“No fourteen months?” Steve sounded shocked. Christopher was babbling at them before he even turned one. “I must’ve really made sleep hard for you. Sometimes Christopher puts up a fight to go to sleep but it’s because he wants to p-l-a-y a little longer,” Steve answered. “I don’t know how you were able to do it all on your own.”

Sarah nodded and chuckled softly. “You were a bit of a challenge at times. But I learned what it was that you liked the most and ways to get you just a little calmer before sleep. You liked to lay on my chest with your head right next to mine. You would still whine and complain but it was quieter and more like you were just getting it out of your system.”
Steve chuckled. “I was always a mama’s boy, huh?” he asked with a smile. Christopher patted Steve’s chest and then pointed at his sister. “Ya-Ya play?” he asked. Steve shook his head. “Not right now, Bean, she’s sleeping.” He looked back to his mom. “I bet Christopher will love having an older sister to play with.”

“Do you think he will adjust well?” Sarah asked. “He is used to sort of having command over things like your attention and play time.” She knew that it wasn’t that Christopher was aware of the idea of him being the big brother but she knew he was at least aware that he was able to do more - like walk and talk - than Sarah May was. She just worried that he would get territorial when Adriana came.

“I think he will. He loves to play and always asks Sarah May to play blocks with him. He will have Adriana to do his games with. Unless Adriana starts bossing him around, I think all will be well,” Steve said. He looked over to his son, now curious if he would do as well as Steve believed he would.

Sarah, who was busy with her knitting, nodded along as Steve talked. “That’s good then. I think he should be fine eventually. Besides, even if he gets a little cranky about it, he will have to learn eventually that he has to share. You and Bucky are trying to father your very own country. So, he will get the picture sometime.”

“Baseball team, Ma. All I need is my baseball team,” he said with a playful wink. “We got half of one already if Adriana comes in.” He shrugged his shoulders and stood up so he could occupy his son because Christopher looked like he was ready to bother his sister. ”Come on, Baby Bean, let's build something together.”
It took Bucky so much longer than he expected to get back home. And he was beyond tired when he got there. The girls were both doing homework in the kitchen and Sarah May was crying so much because of her teeth. “Steve!” Bucky called out. He was slumped against the front door and holding his pounding head. “Where are you?”

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Steve had been desperately trying to calm down their screaming daughter when Bucky came in. He kept trying to give her teething toys and cold things to eat so she could be soothed but she was beside herself. Steve carefully turned her towards his shoulder to try and muffle her crying. “Buck,” he said, looking worried. “Are you alright? Should I put Sarah May in the nursery for now?”

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Bucky shook his head. He was a little bit on the verge of tears himself. He had made the decision to try the spinal injections months before but his fear and worry had him pushing it back indefinitely. And most days, any kind medicine just didn’t cover it. He was almost considering asking Steve to knock him out and take him to the doctor to get the first injection done while he wasn’t conscious.

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Steve knew having Sarah May screaming next to Bucky wouldn’t help, so he hurried to hand her off to his mom instead and he returned to his husband’s side. He cupped the sides of his face and kissed his forehead. “Baby, I’m so sorry you’re not feeling well,” he said with a frown. He massaged his head. “Maybe you should lay down for a while, Love, you look pale as a sheet.”

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Bucky blinked slowly a few times and looked up at Steve. “No. We have to go to the orphanage,” he said quietly but let himself sort of fumble into Steve’s arms for support. He hated this. He hated that he was so incapacitated by his headaches so often. He remembered his mother spending full days in her room alone because of the pain. He swore to himself that he wasn’t going to let this get so bad that it took time away from his family.

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“Babe, it’s a walk to the orphanage and you’ll worry Adriana if she sees you upset,” Steve said. “Are you sure you want to go out still? I’m sure Karen will understand too, the visit went well in her books today. You can’t get penalized for feeling sick,” Steve said. “We can go again soon.”

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Bucky was crying just a little now and he wiped his eyes, trying to shield them from the light and brush away the tears. “I don’t feel sick. My head just hurts. And Adriana will be so upset if we don’t come see her today. We told her yesterday. I promised. I promised I would be there.”

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Steve took a breath and chewed on his lower lip. “I have some Vicodin left over from when I was shot,” he said. “I can let you have some, just this once, if your head is hurting you that bad.” He knew how some people could get addicted to painkillers and with Bucky’s past, he was hesitant to
introduce something like that.

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Bucky gritted his teeth and thought for a long moment. He couldn’t. He couldn’t risk it. He knew himself. He had done so well for so long but he knew that if he caved a little bit, he was going to collapse right into it. “Just give me a little time to see how it is. Maybe it’ll calm down enough that I can handle going out again.” He really didn’t want to disappoint Adriana.

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Steve nodded and took Bucky by the hand. “Alright. Come on, Baby, let’s go to bed and lay down for a half hour or so. I’ll give you a head rub and we can keep the lights on low so your headache isn’t so bad,” he said.

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Bucky followed Steve quietly up to their room. Once he was there, he stripped off his clothes that were so hot from work and he just curled gently into a ball on his side of the bed. “If I don’t feel better in two hours, you have to go visit her. I can start paperwork a different day but at least one of us needs to go see her today.”

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Steve moved up behind his husband and kissed the backs of his shoulders. He started to work his fingers through Bucky’s hair and massage his scalp. “Of course, I’ll visit her,” Steve promised. “Maybe you can write her a card so she won’t feel upset over anything.”

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Bucky agreed quietly and reached for one of Steve’s hands. He tangled their fingers together and held them over his chest securely. “I’m so sorry,” he whispered after a silent minute. “I said ages ago that I was going to take care of this. It just scares me so much.”

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“It’s okay, Sweetheart,” Steve reassured. He kissed his neck. “It’s a big step. But it’s going to be worth it, Buck, I know it. And I’ll be by your side the entire time,” he promised. “You won’t have to do this alone and you’ll be happier for it.”

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There wasn’t much else to do. He needed to just... do it. “I’ll call tomorrow and schedule an appointment,” Bucky said and rolled so he was facing Steve. He stared into his eyes for a while and then gave him a light kiss. “I need you there. You’ll be there?”

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Steve nodded. “Of course, I’ll be there, Bucky,” he said. He cupped the sides of his face and kissed him slowly. “I promise, Baby. I’ll be there.” He went back to massaging Bucky’s head. “You want me to call out of work for you?”

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“No, no, I’ll be fine,” Bucky said and closed his eyes again. “It’s getting a little better. Has Ya-Ya
been crying all day? She’s been worse about her teeth than Christopher was. I’m worried about her. I don’t like that it hurts her so much.”

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“She has,” Steve said. “I took her to the doctor for it the other day but he says that she doesn’t have any sort of condition. He says that she must be more sensitive to the pain than Christopher was,” he said with a frown. “I was thinking about trying some ice pops to soothe it but I don’t want it to be too sugary.”

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“We can make ice pops with their orange juice,” Bucky offered as he sat up slowly and reached for some Advil. “We can just try to set it in a cup or something with a popsicle stick inside.” He knew Christopher would be mad if he didn’t get one as well so they would have to make several.

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Steve chuckled. “We have to start teaching him that just because his sister gets something doesn’t mean that he does.” An ice pop wasn’t the place to start but Steve didn’t want his son thinking he was entitled to everything.

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“I know,” Bucky said sadly. “But he is going to cry. He loves ice pops.” He was a little better now. He got up from the bed slowly and went to the closet to pull some fresh clothes out. He was going to go see Adriana. His head still hurt but it was better enough that he could just push it away and ignore it.

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“I know, but I’m talking about in general. He was giving me such crocodile tears when I gave Sarah May her formula and had the audacity to not give him baby formula as well,” he chuckled. Steve stood up and helped Bucky by tossing his worn clothes in the hamper.

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Bucky pulled on some pants and a loose T-shirt and one of Steve’s jackets. “Yeah. I guess you’re right then. We will have to start teaching him to share better and know that he can’t just have anything he wants. It’s just difficult when he gets so grumpy about it. He’s also been pretty territorial lately. Have you noticed that?”

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“I’ve noticed,” Steve sighed. “I’ve been trying to get him to share and play nice. I don’t think it’ll be easy to reason with him until his vocabulary has gotten bigger. So, it’s really just becoming me trying to show him what’s right and then telling him ‘no’ when he’s not playing along.”

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Bucky nodded and sighed. He really wished he had a good answer for how to help Christopher learn what was good behavior. “I’m going to talk to Tim. He’s raised children. Maybe he will have some advice or something.
“Good plan,” Steve said. He led Bucky downstairs and thankfully Sarah May had stopped crying so loud and was just whimpering and whining. “We’re going to the orphanage for a bit, Ma,” Steve said. “Want me to pick you up anything on the way back?”

Sarah smirked. “Get a nice present for your mother for babysitting your children a lot more than normal the past few days,” she answered.

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“I’ll buy you anything you want, Sarah,” Bucky said and gave both his kids a kiss. He went to Lilly and brushed a hand through her hair. “Please, please, for the love of all things holy, clean the litter box while we are gone. Raphael is going to start shitting on the floor. And Becca has done it the past seven times.”

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Lilly huffed but nodded her head. “Alright,” she whined, but she knew that Steve already cleaned it this morning so she could take the credit for his work. Diana groused when the two left but didn’t put up her usual fuss because she could sense that Bucky wasn’t feeling well and Steve promised he would be back soon.

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It didn’t take very long for them to get over to the orphanage. Bucky was still in pain but he was happy with himself for being able to come to see Adriana. And she was so happy to see them. “Miss Bubby!” she exclaimed and came bounding over to him. She clung to his legs and stared up at him with big eyes.

“Hey!” Bucky said with a gasp and bent down to pick her up. “How are you, Adriana? You see I brought Miss Steve?”

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Steve smiled wide at how happy she was to see Bucky. “Hey, where’s my hug?” Steve teased, giving her a little nudge.

Adriana reached over from her perch on Bucky to give Steve a little hug too. “Miss Bubby gets his hugs first,” she said in a matter-of-fact tone.

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Bucky giggled and pet her hair. “See? I get hugs first, Stevie,” he said and grinned at his husband. He then looked to Adriana again and said, “Do you mind hanging out with Steve for a few minutes? I need to go talk to the caretaker and Karen for a bit. Is that okay, Adriana?”

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She pouted because she liked Bucky but she supposed that Steve was pretty nice as well. “Okay,” she said. “But you got to come back so we can play!” Adriana allowed herself to be passed over to Steve.

Steve smiled down at the little girl and asked, “Did you name your other turtles yet?”

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“Yeah, you want to see them?” Adriana asked and pointed down the hall towards the room she shared with three other kids.

Bucky watched them go off down the hall and then he turned to head to the office. It didn’t take him very long to get some papers signed and talk to Karen about how the home visit went. She went through her thoughts with him about it and then told him that he should expect to hear from her in a week or so about whether or not he was going to be allowed to adopt Adriana.

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“Of course, Kiddo,” Steve said brightly. He carried her into the room and looked around, feeling a little bad at how small the space was for the kids. He had an urge to adopt them all but Bucky would kill him for that. Not as bad as Becca would, though. He set Adriana down onto her feet. “Let’s see them,” he encouraged.

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Adriana was in the middle of showing Steve how she could stack her turtles on top of each other from biggest to smallest when Bucky came back in. “Hey, you two,” he said and came over to sit on the ground next to Steve. “Have you been having fun?” He looked to Steve and gave him a little nod and a careful smile so he knew that everything was going smoothly so far.

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Steve searched Bucky’s face for any hint of being upset and when he saw that Bucky looked relatively positive, he had a good feeling that the meeting went well. Adriana nodded her head. “I’m telling Miss Steeb about all my ‘tuttles’. Do you wanna see?”

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“Of course, I want to see,” Bucky said enthusiastically and watched her move to grab some other toys from under her bed. “Adriana, do you like to color? Because Steve can draw. Maybe he can draw you some turtles and you can color them.”

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Adriana forgot her toys when she heard that. “You can draw, Miss Steeb?” She hurried to grab a box from under her bed with some old notebooks and half-broken crayons. “Can you draw me a ‘tuttle’?” she asked.

Steve picked up the box. “Of course, Kiddo. What kind of turtle do you want?”

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Adriana considered for a moment and then picked up the smallest little turtle. “Can I have one like this one?” she asked and pet the turtle gently. “He’s got the little spots on him and I like that best.”

Bucky took the turtle from Adriana and held it up for Steve to work on drawing it. “Adriana, do you like making art?”

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“She looked over at Bucky and nodded her head. “Yeah,” she said. “I like drawing flowers and
writing letters. Miss Karen told me how to write the letter ’A’.”

“Oh yeah?” Bucky asked and got another notebook and a crayon “Will you show me? Can you write your name out yet?” He figured it was too early for her to get her entire name but a few letters maybe. Most of the kids in the orphanage learned their basics slower because there wasn’t someone helping each of them one-on-one. “What’s your middle name, Adriana?”

Adriana took the crayon and drew a very squiggly shape that sort of resembled an ’A’. “I don’t know how to spell my name. But I can write an ’A’, see? I did an ’A’, ” she said. “I don’t have a middle name. Maybe you can help me get one?”

“Oh, honey, you don’t have a middle name?” Bucky asked and then looked to Steve with big, sad eyes for a quick moment. “Of course, Adriana, we can give you a middle name. Can you give us a few days to think of it? Is that okay, Sweetheart?”

She shook her head. ”Can you give me one tomorrow? That’s too long of a time.” Steve would’ve laughed at her pressing if he hadn’t been so sad that she didn’t have a full name. Lord knows he and Bucky would think over many options for one.

“Yeah, yes. Definitely. Tomorrow,” Bucky said and gave Steve another look. He knew what they were going to do tonight. He really wanted to tell Adriana about the adoption but it wasn’t time yet. “Steve, are you done with the turtle for Adriana?” he asked, just wanting to talk about something else so it didn’t slip.

“I’m almost done. I just got to make the shell outline,” Steve said.

Adriana stood over Steve as he drew. “Wow! That’s a really good ’tuttle’, Miss Steeb,” she gasped. Steve smiled brightly and passed the paper over to her. “You ready to make it even better and color it in?”

Adriana nodded and took the paper carefully and then grabbed some crayons. She wasn’t great at staying in the lines but she was at least having fun. “Miss Steeb,” she started. “When can I see your doggy?”

Steve gave her a little smile. “If Miss Karen says it’s okay, we can go out to the park to play and I can bring Diana with us so you can see her. She loves it when you throw a ball or a frisbee for her to fetch.”
Adriana was satisfied enough with that option. She gave a little nod and went back to coloring. Bucky squeezed Steve’s arm and added. “And my sister Lilly loves to run around the park, too. She would join you and Diana. Lilly can play catch with you.”

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“How old is Lilly?” Adriana asked. She didn’t take her eyes off of the paper as she colored. Steve smiled fondly and leaned into Bucky’s side a little. “She can’t run faster than me, can she? I want to be the fastest.”

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“Well,” Bucky said and chuckled a little as he looked to Steve. “She’s fourteen now. So, she’s ten years older than you. She is pretty fast. You might have to work hard to be faster than her. But I’m sure she would love to run with you whenever you want.”

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“Mm, I don’t know,” she said. “I kinda don’t wanna run with someone who’s gonna beat me,” she said casually. “I’ll play with Miss Steeb’s dog. Or maybe I can color with your sister. How did you get sisters?”

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Adriana was so cute and a little bit competitive like some of the members of their family could be. “My mommy and daddy gave me sisters,” Bucky said and handed her some more crayons. “They had me and then about ten years later they had my sister Becca and then two years after that they had Lilly.”

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Adriana messily colored in the outside edges of the paper blue once she had the turtle colored in. “How come your mommy and daddy didn’t give you a brother?” she asked. “Were they out of boys?”

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Bucky took Steve’s hand in his and leaned into him a little. “Some mommies and daddies don’t get to choose what babies they get,” he said. He wasn’t sure how to attempt to explain the difference between parents that make their children and ones that adopt.

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Steve squeezed Bucky’s hands. “Yeah. My ma wanted a girl but instead she got me,” he laughed. “But she was happy anyway. I don’t have any brothers or sisters because she believed that she couldn’t make a kid more perfect than me,” he joked.

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“Sure, yeah,” Bucky said with a little smirk and gave Steve a nudge. “So, for Steve and I, we didn’t know who our babies were until we got them. Christopher was a surprise and so was Sarah May. We have another baby who wasn’t so much a surprise but he is in heaven.”

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Adriana finished her drawing and gave it to Bucky out of habit. “Did you get your babies in the mail? Or were they from an orphanage like me?” She asked. At some point, she was told that babies get delivered and she had assumed it was in some sort of package. “Where is heaven? Miss Karen says that’s where my mommy and daddy are, too.”

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Bucky took the drawing and held on to it for her. “Our babies found us. They didn’t come in the mail but they weren’t at the orphanage either. And, yeah, heaven is pretty far away. But we are going to go there eventually and I’ll see my baby boy and my mommy and daddy. And you can see yours too if you want. But that’s a long while until you can go.”

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Steve’s face drooped both because of Grant and because neither Bucky nor Adriana would see their parents for a long time and that was hard to handle. “How far away is it?” she asked. “Why’s it gonna take so long, can’t we go there? In a car or a bus?”

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Bucky wasn’t really sure how to answer. “We can’t drive there. That’s not how you get in. You get in a different way.” He tucked his hair behind his ears and looked to Steve for a second. “A few years ago, I tried to get there. But I didn’t get there. It turns out it wasn’t my turn to go. We have to wait for our turn. And it’s actually a really good thing that we have to wait because that means we get to spend time here waiting with people who love us and we get to have great memories with them. Sometimes we have such a great time that we forget what we are waiting for.”

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Steve’s bottom lip quivered and he turned away so Adriana couldn’t see him getting emotional. He knew that he wouldn’t be able to hide that from Bucky. “I wanna see my mommy and daddy,” she huffed, not satisfied with Bucky’s explanation at all. “It’s not fair.” She climbed up onto her bed and laid down, burying her face into her pillow dramatically.

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Bucky blinked a few times and looked over to Steve who was looking away anyway. He reached a hand out and pet Adriana’s hair gently. “I know you want to see them. I want to see my parents too. But we have to wait. I know you don’t want to but we have to.” He paused for a second and just let the silence filter through the room. “Would it be easier for you to be able to wait to see your parents if you had another set of parents here that will wait with you?”

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Adriana was a little upset but she was being a bit more theatrical than she actually felt right now. She had already had this explained to her by Karen that heaven was a far way away but she never gave specifics. “Nobody wants to get me,” she said, frowning at Bucky. “I’m never going to have parents like the other kids.”

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Bucky took a deep breath. “Adriana, Sweetheart, that’s not true. I have wanted to adopt you from the moment we met,” he said softly, unable to keep it to himself anymore with Adriana so upset. “But I needed to make sure that Steve was okay with that. And yesterday when we went to the aquarium, Steve told me that he wanted to adopt you too. He and I want to be your new parents. And Miss
Karen is working on making that happen.” He paused again. “Would you want Steve and I to be your new daddy and papa?”

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Steve wasn’t sure if they were allowed to be talking about this but, god, he hated hearing Adriana think that she was unadoptable and unwanted. He nodded his head in agreement when Bucky explained that they both wanted to adopt her. Adriana’s head shot up and she sat up on the bed, tearing up a little. “Really?” she asked in a soft, little voice. “You really want to get me?”

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Bucky nodded and let a few tears fall himself. “Yes. We want to be your parents. So much. If you’ll let us. We are working on making you a room all for yourself. It’s right next to Lilly’s room. And it’s down just a little bit from Steve and I’s room.”

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Adriana practically flung herself at Bucky and buried her face into his chest. She nodded her head vehemently but she was still crying because she was overwhelmed and couldn’t believe that she was getting a real family. Steve moved over so he could hug the both of them.

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Bucky laughed and cried at the same time and held Adriana tightly to his chest. He rocked her a little bit. “Steve and I are really happy to have you join our family. And, you know, this means you get two little siblings too. And a Nana and two aunts. And there’s a cat and a doggie at home.”

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It took Adriana a long time to calm down. Even when she stopped crying she was still having a hard time believing that she was actually going to have a home. “What’s a 'nana'?” she asked.

Steve gave her hand a small squeeze. “That’s my mom. A 'nana' is your dad’s mom. She’s kind of like another parent, except even better.”

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Bucky sniffled and wiped at his eyes. He hoped he hadn’t made a mistake by telling her before everything was final. But everything couldn’t be final without Adriana’s approval anyway. “So, sweetie, you do want to be our daughter, right? You like us? You want us to be your parents?”

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Adriana nodded her head again. “Yes. Please, I want you two to be my daddies, Miss Bubby,” she said. “My new 'turtles' can come with me, right? And my crayons?” She wasn’t sure if she had to leave all of her belongings behind or not. “When can I go to your house?”

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“Yes, of course, your turtles and crayons can come with you. All your things can come with you,” Bucky said. “And you’ll get to come home with us soon. A few people have to do a few things first then you can come home with us.”
Steve nodded. “Yeah. We have to get your room all ready for you first. We can’t have you coming home and not have a room, right? Diana can stay in your room for a little while when it’s bedtime so you can have some company,” he said. “You’ll meet her next time.”

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“Diana is the doggy, Miss Steeb?” Adriana asked for clarity.

“Yes, that’s the doggy.” Bucky nodded and said, “Adriana, I also want you to know that you can call Steve and I anything you want to, Okay? You don’t have to call us ‘Daddy’ and ‘Papa’ like the babies do. If you are more comfortable calling us ‘Steve’ and ‘Bucky’ that’s fine. I want you to call us what you want to.”

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Adriana thought for a moment and said, “Well, I don’t want to be different. I want to call you ‘Daddy’ and ‘Papa’,” she said. “Am I going to be a big sister? Mary Beth and Margaret are sisters. They sleep in those beds,” she said as she pointed at two empty beds. “Will I be like them?”

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“Yeah,” Bucky said happily. “You’ll be a big sister just like Mary Beth is. And you’re going to have a lot of little siblings over the years, okay?” He brushed her hair from her eyes and gave her a big smile. “I’m really excited to bring you into our family.”

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Adriana smiled. She kind of was a little jealous that she had to share her new parents with other kids but sharing parents was better than no parents. “How do I be a big sister?” she asked. “Can you teach me how?”

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“Well, I don’t know if you can be taught how to do that,” Bucky said. “You learn how to be a big sister as time goes on. I had to learn how to be a big brother. And I’m still learning.”

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“That’s a lot of learning,” she said flatly.

Steve smiled and patted her back. “You’re going to be a great big sister. Having a family to love is the best. I can’t wait for you to meet the rest of us.”

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Bucky nodded in agreement and touched Steve’s arm lightly. “And we both know that it might be scary at first being in a new place with new people. So, if you need anything at all, you just ask us, okay? Steve is home all the time with our kids so that includes you now. I work but I’m home when I’m not there. And your new nana will be around most of the time too.”

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Adriana nodded. “I’m excited to go home, though,” she said. “And to have a room and my ‘tuttles’.”
Steve chuckled. “Yes, you will,” he agreed. “We’re excited to take you home. We just have to work with Miss Karen a bit longer.”

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“But, we are going to be as fast as we can to get you home, okay?” Bucky said and felt himself tearing up again. “And we can play games and have dinner as a family and you can go on walks with Steve and the dog.”

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“How many wake-ups before I go home,” she asked. She climbed up and stood in Bucky’s lap, now a little more energetic and finding it hard to keep still. “Two wake-ups? Four?”

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“Well, Sweetheart, it could be more wake-ups than that,” Bucky said and held her hands so she was steady. “But, we will come get you as soon as we are allowed to. And Steve and I will have your room all ready for you.” He really needed to make sure they got the basement ready for Becca as soon as possible. He figured it might end up being a couple long nights for him while he fixed the ceiling and painted the walls.

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“You’re going to have such a cool room,” Steve said. “It looks like Bucky and I are going to have to work extra hard to get it ready for you. While you wait, can you do something for us?” he asked. “It would be very special to me if you drew us pictures to put in your room so we can decorate it.”

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“Yes, please do that,” Bucky said enthusiastically and took her crayons off her bed and put them neatly in their container. “That would be great to have your drawings up on the walls. If you need more crayons or paper, we can bring it to you.”

Adriana thought for a second and then nodded. “I can do that. What should I draw?”

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“You can draw anything you want,” Steve said. “I’m sure whatever you draw will be wonderful.” He pulled her back down so he could hug her. “Me and Bucky love you so much. We can’t wait to take you home with us.”

Karen came in a minute or so later and knocked on the open door. “Hey, you guys. It’s time for the kids to have dinner.”

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That meant that Bucky and Steve had to go. Bucky was pretty reluctant to leave but he gave Adriana another hug and then said goodbye. By the time they got home, Bucky was already planning every aspect of Adriana’s room and how to fix up Becca’s new room.

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Steve hugged her goodbye and promised that they’d be back for her as soon as they could. At home, they were greeted by Diana and Lilly whining for dinner in their own way. He turned to Bucky and
said, “Do you want to handle the room situation while I handle dinner?”

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“You always handle dinner,” Bucky observed and waited for Sarah May to crawl her way over to him to be picked up. “I think the only things we really have to do in the basement is finish the ceiling, paint the walls, and put in carpet. So, I’ll get started on figuring out the ceiling. But I do really think I might have to call in some guys to do it.”

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Steve watched proudly as their daughter crawled over to them. He loved how much their kids liked being around them. Christopher must have been really tired to not be toddling over at this point. “Whatever you need, let me know. I’ll do my best to help and maybe I can call in a favor from a few old coworkers.”

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“That might work,” Bucky said as he picked up Sarah May and gave her a kiss. “No Richard,” he added with a look. “And it’s not just because he has a crush on you. He arrested me and I never got an apology.”

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Steve covered his mouth as he hid a dumb smile. It wasn’t nice for Bucky to have been wrongfully arrested and Steve had been pissed at the time but looking back, the situation was a little amusing. “Fair enough.” He kissed Sarah May’s head and then kissed Bucky before going to the kitchen to make food.
With the help of Natasha, Steve managed to get a small group of his buddies from the precinct to come over to help finish up the basement. So, late one afternoon, Bucky found himself covered in grime with his hair pulled up on his head, wearing a shirt that was a little too short, and trying to figure out how to cover up the ceiling.

Natasha decided that she didn’t want to help with the ceiling so, instead, she started painting the walls. And Clint had decided that he should be in charge of playing with the babies instead of helping at all. So, on ceiling duty, it was just Bucky and Sam and - much to Bucky’s frustration - Richard. Steve had made a point to tell them that Bucky didn’t want Richard over but that must have gotten lost in translation. He was just as surprised by the officer showing up with the crew.

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Sam had a fair amount of experience with this sort of thing, so he gave Bucky a nudge. “Hey, pass me the spackle. I can get this ceiling done quick. I just need you to help me move the ladder.”

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Bucky stared at the toolbox for a second and tried to figure out what was the spackle. He was only familiar with the tools that had to do with building furniture. He was good at making and assembling furniture but anything else was a little beyond him. He picked up something that was more like an ice pick offered it to Sam.

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Sam stared at the tool and then broke out into laughter. “Nice joke,” he said, thinking Bucky was trying to be funny instead of genuinely not knowing what it was. He picked up a white bucket full of thick goop. He got a triangular, flat tool and started to use it to spread the spackling paste onto the ceiling and smooth it out. “So how’s the adoption process coming along?” he asked.

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Bucky set his tool back down again with a huff of a sigh and then glanced over at Richard as he went to help Natasha paint. “Well, uh, it’s been okay. It’s all been pretty fast. We’ve just been trying to get this through so we can get her home with us. She’s really excited to have a family. And every day that she is there instead of here, just makes me so sad. You know?”

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“It’s great that you’re not having any hiccups from the orphanage over this,” he said. “Adriana is going to be so happy when she comes here, but don’t take it personally if it takes her a while to adjust. I’ve dealt with a few adopted kids during my line of duty.”

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“I know,” Bucky said with a little tick in his brow. “Her caseworker already talked about it. And Steve and I let Adriana know that she can come to us with any problem. I mean, her room will be just a few feet from ours. But I think she will be fine. She likes us a lot and she wants a family so much.”
Sam worked on the ceiling with ease, finishing all the holes and scars fairly quickly. It probably would’ve taken Bucky at least four times as long to do what Sam just finished. “Becca sure is making out like a bandit with this room. It’s practically an apartment down here,” he said.

“Yeah, it really is,” Bucky murmured and scrutinized the ceiling looking for any mistake that he could point out. But, like usual, there was nothing. He sighed and looked over to Natasha and Richard who had two walls done. “You, uh...” he said quietly and looked to Sam and tried to give him a friendly smile. “Do you want to come upstairs with me to get the carpet?”

“We should probably wait until the walls are done to lay out the carpet. It would suck to get paint on it before Becca steps foot on the thing,” Sam said. “Rookie mistake. I did that the first time I remodeled a room. Won’t let it happen again.” He gave Bucky a friendly smile and helped Natasha and Richard paint the other two walls. Once they were done, he headed upstairs to grab the carpet. However, since Natasha and Richard were already helping Bucky with it, he decided to check on the babies and Clint.

Bucky let Sam go upstairs and he let out a big frustrated groan before flopping down in the corner near Natasha to help get the carpet lined up with the staircase. “Can I ask you something?” he asked and cocked his head to the side, looking at her and hoping that she would get the hint that he needed some attention. Richard was otherwise occupied cleaning out the paintbrushes and rollers.

Natasha looked over at Bucky when he came over all dramatic and upset. “You just asked me something,” she said slyly. But she reached over and gave Bucky’s shoulder a nudge. “What’s on your mind?” she asked.

Bucky gave her a look and then slumped even lower. He really was being dramatic. “I guess... I just... Well...” he sighed and blinked a few times, trying to get his thoughts together. “What are your opinions on Sam?” he asked, trying his best to be vague. He really should have had this conversation with Clint.

Natasha shrugged. “He’s nice,” she said. “Very helpful, kind of cute. He hit on me before he knew I was with Clint and he’s been apologizing ever since,” Natasha explained. “He’s the guy everyone in the precinct calls if they need help and he’s there. Why? What happened?”

Bucky rubbed his eyes. Natasha was no help. He really should have talked to Clint instead. “No... no. That’s just about what I expected,” Bucky mumbled. Sam was great. He really was. There was no legitimate reason for Bucky to dislike him. But he really did. And it was all just pettiness lasting since the first time they had a real conversation. Maybe it was because Bucky felt like Sam was better than him in certain regards. Or he was jealous that Steve had confided in Sam about things
having to do with their marriage. Which, of course, wasn't Sam's fault in the slightest. But Bucky didn't want to admit he was the one who was the asshole now.

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Natasha gave Bucky a look. “What, is he obnoxiously too nice for you?” she asked. “Because that’s what your husband is, too. Sometimes Steve used to drive me up the wall for no good reason, so I understand a little if that's what it is about Sam.”

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“No, that’s not it,” Bucky said and pulled a sour face because that might actually be part of it. “And Steve isn’t obnoxiously nice at all times. And neither is Sam.” He had experienced rude Sam a few times. It was the Sam that pointed out how Steve hated how messy Bucky was and then laughed when he got food in his hair. But at the same time, Sam thought that Bucky knew. So, it wasn’t meant to be rude. He was just having a conversation, not trying to antagonize Bucky. “I don’t know...”

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“Some people can rub other people the wrong way. Doesn’t mean either of you are jerks for it,” Natasha observed.

Sam came running down the stairs just at that moment with Sarah May in his arms, looking excited. “Hey, Bucky!” he said excitedly. He bounced the baby lightly in his arms. “Say it again. Just like you did before,” he encouraged.

Sarah May smiled and reached for Bucky and yelped, “Papa!”

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Bucky’s eyes went wide and he took his baby girl from Sam. “Oh, Ya-Ya, look at you!” he gasped and gave her several kisses as she repeated ‘Papa’ a few more times. “Did Steve hear this?”

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Sam shook his head. “No, I was watching her while Clint went to the bathroom and she started asking for you. At least, that’s what I assume she wanted since she was crawling around mumbling ‘Papa’ to herself.”

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Bucky blinked and looked at Sam. He just stared for a second. Sam had been the first person to hear his daughter’s first word. Which, again, wasn't Sam's fault. But it really just made Bucky mad. He cleared his throat and turned to go upstairs with Sarah May so Steve could hear her talk.

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Steve had been in the middle of helping Becca organize her boxes of things to make the move easier once the room was finished. “Hey, Buck,” he said brightly. “How’s our little girl doing?”

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“Steve,” Bucky said happily and came up to him with Sarah May. “Ya-Ya, who am I?” he asked and pointed to himself. “Who’s this? Papa?”
Sarah May stuck her hands on Bucky’s cheeks and said, “Papa,”

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Steve gasped and smiled brightly at Bucky. “Oh, my god! She said it!” He kissed her cheek. “Oh, you’re so smart, baby girl! You know who your papa is,” he praised and gave her a kiss on her head. “She’s so amazing. This is amazing. I’ve been trying to teach her that for weeks to surprise you.”

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Bucky nodded and pulled Steve in for a kiss. “Has she said ‘Dada’ yet?” he asked hopefully. He knew it was probably a little easier to say ‘Papa’ with the soft sounds but maybe she was getting ‘Dada’ as well.”

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Steve shook his head. “Not yet,” he said. “I’ve been saying ‘Papa’ over and over while we were home alone. I probably looked like a crazy person,” Steve laughed. “Looks like it finally caught on.”

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Bucky felt Sarah May start to squirm around a little in his arms. Now that she was crawling around, she didn’t like to be held as much. “I’m going to take her back down to Clint. We are almost done in the basement. We just have to finish the carpet.”

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Steve looked proudly down at their daughter. “Alright,” he said, wishing that they had time to play more with her. “We are almost done up here, too. The books are going to be the worst to carry down.”

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Bucky looked over to the very tall stack of boxes filled with books. He wasn’t really one to judge, though. His boxes of records took up what was left of their living room and the spare closet in the hall. “We can just have an assembly line down to the basement with those.”

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“That’s a good idea,” Steve agreed. “Can I carry her downstairs? It feels like forever since I got to hold her. Or Christopher for that matter, too,” he said and reached out for her hopefully.

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“Of course, Baby,” Bucky agreed and handed Sarah May off to Steve. “We’ve been pretty busy for the last few days with getting the house ready. We haven’t really had much time with the babies.”

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Steve snuggled his daughter close but Sarah May grunted and wiggled because she wanted to crawl. Steve sighed and walked down the stairs with her and Bucky. “We should have you take a day off from work when this is over so we can have a family day.”
“I can talk to Clint about it. I’m sure he’s fine with that,” Bucky said. “Maybe I can take a few days. I want Adriana to feel settled here and she’s going to meet both my sisters and your mother and the babies all at once. It might be good if the two of us are here for her for a few days.”

“Yeah, you’re right. I’m also not going to complain about you spending more time with the family at home,” he said. Steve smiled happily. “She’s going to love it here.” He set Sarah May down in the baby pen where Christopher was playing with his toys.

“I won’t complain about that either,” Bucky said happily and pulled Steve in for a quick kiss. “You want to come see the basement?” he asked and looked around for Clint and found him with Lilly eating cookies.

“Yeah, let’s have a look. I’m excited to see how far it’s come today. It feels like things were taking forever when it was just us working on it one thing at a time,” Steve said.

“Yeah,” Bucky agreed, a little indignantly. “I still think I could have gotten it. At the very least, Natasha and I could have done it.” Meaning he didn’t think Sam and Richard were necessary. Except that without Sam, the ceiling would have taken forever.

“I already said I was sorry that Richard showed up. I didn't plan that,” Steve countered. “But hey, maybe this is his way of apologizing for arresting you. He just spent all day painting and remodeling our basement. That counts for something, right?”

Bucky gave Steve a little scoff. “Could have something to do with the fact that he thinks you’re sexy,” he said and slipped a possessive arm around Steve for a moment and rested his hands on his ass. “He hasn’t spoken to me once since being here.” He shook his head and nudged Steve towards the stairs.

Steve blushed red and shook his head. “It’s not my fault that he likes me.” When they got down to the basement, they already had the carpet laid out. It didn't cover all the way to the walls. It gave about four inches around the perimeter. But that was mostly what they had wanted.

Bucky looked over the carpet and adjusted one of the corners so it laid flatter. It would probably take a bit for them to settle in. They could just put some boxes of books on the corners to weigh them down for now.

Sam came over to Steve and patted his shoulder as they looked around the room. “This place doesn’t
look so bad anymore, does it?” he asked.

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“It’s looking really good, Sam. Thank you for helping us out,” Steve said. “I bet Becca is never going to want to leave to go to college outside of the city with all this space here,” he added confidently. “What do you think, Buck?”

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“That’s the goal,” Bucky murmured from across the basement. It really was like an apartment down there. “She can stay as long as she wants. And I want her to stay for a while. I don’t want my baby sisters leaving me so fast.”

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Steve knew how much Bucky loved his sisters and for Bucky’s sake, he wanted them to stay around as well. He made his way over to him and wrapped his arms around Bucky’s shoulders and kissed him. “I know, Buck. They are growing up.”

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Bucky whined softly thinking about his sisters getting older. “Yesterday, Becca was ten years old. Now she’s sixteen and thinking about college applications.” He took a deep breath and shook his head. He couldn’t think about it too much. He wasn’t going to cry in front of Sam and Richard - or Natasha for a third time.

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“Alright, you two, do you want us to start bringing everything down?” Natasha asked. “We can probably have everything moved in less than an hour and then Becca can decide where she wants it all.”

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“Sure,” Bucky agreed and detached from Steve. I guess we can just pile up most of it in the middle and push it around once the paint dries. Some of her boxes of books might have to stay upstairs for the time being. She does have a lot. Maybe I can even convince Clint to participate in this.”

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“I’m sure if you promise him more baby time after, he would say yes to just about anything you ask him to do,” Steve chuckled. The trick would be getting Christopher to allow Clint to leave.

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“Just so long as that’s all he wants. Last time I need him to do something for me, he told me he wanted the babies every other weekend,” Bucky said. “Apparently, he wants to take them to meet his mom.”

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Steve laughed. “Who takes his friend’s kids to meet their parents? Is he trying to convince her that they’re his or something?” he asked. He could see Clint pulling some sort of shenanigans like that.
Bucky lowered his voice and said, “It’s all one big ploy to get Natasha to agree to children. I would bet good money on that. Because his mom loves Natasha and I think he’s hoping she will convince her to have babies.”

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Steve sighed and leaned into Bucky’s side. “Natasha really doesn’t want kids,” he said. “You know I love that they’re together but I worry that this is going to be something that splits them apart.”

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Bucky nodded and watched Natasha and Clint come back down the stairs carrying one of Becca’s empty bookshelves. “I know... it’ll devastate him if she leaves him.” He sighed and looked to Steve and gave him a quick but loving kiss. “Thank you for being my perfect match.”

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Steve leaned into the kiss and put his hands on Bucky’s hips. “Thank you for being mine,” he responded with a loving smile. “I’m happy to raise our family together with you.”

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“I love you,” Bucky said and gave Steve one more kiss before letting go. “Let’s get moving. The sooner this is done, the sooner I can get you alone. If you get what I’m saying.” He grinned and raised his eyebrows as if Steve wasn't already on board.
In less than two weeks, Adriana was cleared to go home. Steve made sure that the whole family would be home when they brought Adriana back from the orphanage for good. She clung onto Bucky's hand tightly as they walked and Steve had Diana on her leash to walk with them. “Are you excited to see your room, Adriana?”

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Adriana was skipping a little as they walked and she had the last of her things stuffed in her backpack that was carefully strapped to her back. She was also wearing a hat that had little ears and button eyes so it looked like a raccoon. "Yes! I get a whole room to my own!"

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“You’re going to love it. The whole family worked on it all week just for you.” Steve smiled brighty at her. “Everyone loves you so much, Adriana. I can’t wait for you to see your room,” he said. “Where’d you get that hat? It’s so cute,” he complimented.

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Adriana looked up at Steve and then pointed to Bucky. “Bubby got it for me,” she said matter-of-factly and stopped walking so she could hold her arms out to be picked up. Bucky couldn’t stop grinning because he was bringing his daughter home today. He bent down and picked her up and held her close to his chest.

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“He did, huh? He has good taste,” Steve said. He kissed Bucky’s cheek once they were at the stoop and he opened the door. The girls, his mom, and the babies were all waiting inside and shouted a ‘Welcome Home’ when they walked through the door.

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Adriana gasped in surprise and gripped a little tighter to Bucky’s shirt. Her eyes were wide and she looked like she was going to cry because she finally, finally had a family. “Welcome home, Adriana,” Bucky asked and nuzzled her cheek as tears fell from his own eyes.

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Steve hugged both Adriana and Bucky together for a moment. “I know, Kiddo. It’s a lot,” he said. Diana whined and nudged at Adriana’s feet when she saw that she was crying. Lilly looked to Bucky for direction on what she should do.

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“It’s okay, Sweetheart,” Bucky said and wiped his eyes. “Come on. Let’s get you a snack. I know your nana made cookies. And then you can see your room and we can get you settled, okay?” He gave an encouraging little smile to his sisters and Sarah so they would know it was fine.

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“Dada!” Christopher said, reaching for Steve. “Who da’?” the baby asked, pointing to Adriana.
“That’s your new sister, silly boy,” Steve said sweetly. “Let’s go get her some cookies.” He walked to the kitchen and set up a plate of cookies and a glass of milk for Adriana.

She looked pretty shy about having all this fuss made for her but she also kind of liked the attention. “What kind of cookies are these?” she asked.

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Bucky sat down next to her and helped her off with her coat and her hat. “They are chocolate chip cookies. See those little gooey bits?” He took a cookie for himself and then handed one to Lilly who was hovering over him. “These are my favorite cookies, Adriana. And your Aunt Lilly’s favorite, too.”

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“Oh, good. I was afraid they were raisin,” she giggled. Adriana bit into her cookie happily. Christopher squirmed in Steve’s arms until his dad gave him a cookie as well.

“So, Adriana. Do you like sports or books?” Lilly was already trying to be the favorite aunt.

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Bucky saw Steve give Christopher a cookie and he shot him a look and whispered, “Just one.” He still didn’t like Christopher having too much sugar.

Adriana, who already had some chocolate mess on her cheeks, said, “I like picture books with ‘turtles’ and other things.”

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“Turtles are cool,” Lilly agreed. “I’ll show you my baseball card collection. It’s kind of like a picture book,” she said. Steve smiled fondly and went to get some cut-up fruit for Christopher because his cookie was done with and he was whining for more.

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“Okay,” Adriana said tentatively and looked from Lilly to Bucky.

Bucky nudged Becca’s foot under the table and said, “Your Aunt Becca has some really cool videos about ocean animals. Maybe there is something about turtles in them. I’m sure she would watch with you if you want to sometime.”

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“Yeah. There’s one I have about whales that talked a little about sea turtles,” Becca said. “I’ve got a lot of homework tonight. But we can watch it over the weekend,” she suggested.

Adriana nodded her head shyly. “Yes, please.”

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Bucky kissed her head and then got up from the table. “Steve, should we go show her her room now?” he asked and helped Adriana down from her chair.

Christopher watched Bucky for a second and then shouted “Papa, up!” and held his arms out for him. He wasn’t liking that he wasn’t the center of attention. Sarah May was still asleep in her nana’s
arms so she didn’t mind.

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“Yeah, let’s,” Steve agreed. When Bucky didn’t pick Christopher up right away, he started to cry. Steve held Adriana so Bucky wouldn’t feel like he had to choose between the two of them and he hoisted her up on his shoulders. “See that? You’re not going to get much peace and quiet so long as your brother is awake,” he teased.

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Bucky picked up Christopher and gave him several kisses as he held him to his chest. “Unfortunately, that’s true. But at least your sister is quiet for the most part.” Bucky had discussed with Steve the day before about reinforcing to Adriana that this was her family and that included everyone. “And your brother just learned how to climb stairs,” Bucky added at the top two steps and set him down so he could crawl up the last ones. “It took him a while because he got scared of the height.”

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“Do they know that I’m their sister?” Adriana asked. “Christopher doesn’t know a lot of words,” she pointed out. Steve smiled. “He may not understand yet, but he will. He learned that Sarah May is his sister. He’ll learn that you are too.” Adriana’s door had little block letters hanging on the outside spelling out her name. The inside of the door was painted like an ocean with turtles on it. They made sure it was neat and with plenty of space to put the belongings she would eventually acquire.

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Bucky held open the door for Steve and Adriana and watched as her face lit up and her eyes got wide. She gasped and pointed at the door. “Look at the ‘turtles!’” she said and touched the door gently. “It’s so pretty.” She looked around the rest of the room and went to hop up on the bed that had lots of colorful pillows and blankets. “This is all just my room?”

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“Yeah, Kiddo. This is all yours. Bucky asked Miss Karen about your favorite colors and we made it up just for you.” Steve leaned into Bucky’s side. “Do you like it?” he asked. “Is the bed comfy for you?” He wanted her to be comfortable here.

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Adriana nodded and looked over at her new parents. “I like it,” she agreed and flicked on the lamp on her nightstand and then flicked it off again. “Do I have to sleep with the door closed? Mary Beth liked having it closed but I don’t want it.”

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“You don’t need it closed if you don’t want it to be,” Steve said. “You can sleep with the light on or the light off. It doesn’t matter to us,” he said. Steve sat down on the corner of the bed. “You get to be the boss about little things like that. But if Bucky and I tell you that you have to do something a certain way, it’s because we’re making sure to keep you safe.”

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Adriana scooted closer to Steve and leaned a little against him. “When am I allowed to call you my
parents?” she asked as she looked up at Steve with those big eyes. She still wasn’t sure if she could just start saying ‘Daddy’ and ‘Papa’ immediately.

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Steve’s eyes teared up and he wrapped his arms around her. “You’ve always been allowed,” he said softly. “Because you’ve always been our daughter. It’s just that we didn’t get to take you home until today. But now you’re going to be our daughter forever.”

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Adriana stood up on her bed and gave Steve a hug and nuzzled against his neck. “Thank you for picking me, Daddy,” she said quietly.

Bucky’s heart clenched as he watched the two of them together. Adriana was finally with them. He came over to the bed and bent down by Adriana with Christopher still in his arms. “We love you so much.”

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Steve’s heart soared when she called him that. “I’m so happy Bucky met you and brought us all together.” He wrapped his other arm around Bucky and held them both close. “Thank you for letting us be your new parents.” Christopher reached over for Adriana’s hair once he was in arm’s reach of her.

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Bucky chuckled and set Christopher down on the bed by Adriana. He immediately crawled up next to her and tangled his hand in her hair. “Be careful, Bean, no tug,” Bucky said softly and Christopher looked to him and gave a semi-understanding nod.

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Adriana smiled and carefully held her little brother. “Hi, Christopher,” she said. “I’m Adriana. We seen each there before and now I’m your big sister,” Adriana continued. “This is my room. But you can play in it sometimes, too.”

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Bucky couldn’t help the smile, bright and big on his face as he watched his kids together. “See? Honey, you’re already a good big sister. And see how he’s looking at you. He’s curious about you. He’s trying to learn about you.”

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“He’s curious about me?” she asked. Adriana looked briefly over at Bucky before turning back to Christopher. “What do you want to know? I’m four. When I grow up I want to be a dolphin. I like cookies and jump rope,” she rattled off to Christopher, who was just happy to have someone talking to him.

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Christopher gurgled happily and pat his hand on Adriana’s face. “Hi, hi,” he said excitedly.

“Oh, Bean, what a good boy,” Bucky said. “You’re being very good to your sister.” He touched
Adriana’s arm and said, “If at any point you want some alone time to settle in, just let us know.”

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Adriana scrunched up her nose but laughed. “I think I want to play with Christopher,” she said. “When it’s bedtime, I will be alone. I’ll have my own room myself,” she said with a victorious smile. “Christopher, do you want to play with my animals?”

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“Adriana, he might try to put the turtles in his mouth. So just try to ask him for them back, if he does. If that doesn’t work, I’ll get it from him,” Bucky said and sat down on the floor so there weren’t too many people on Adriana’s bed being overwhelming.

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Adriana grabbed her smallest turtle and showed Christopher. Their son behaved for the most part until he thought it was a fun idea to throw the toy. Adriana gasped and ran to scoop the turtle up. “Christopher, you hurt him!” She frowned. “That’s not nice. He has a boo-boo now.”

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Bucky got up quickly and picked up Adriana and sat her in his lap. “Can I see the turtle?” he asked and waited for her to hand him over. He turned it around in his hands to show her that nothing was broken or ripped. “See, Sweetheart? He’s okay. He’s safe and happy. Nothing is hurt. Christopher didn’t know that it would upset you if he threw your turtle. But we can work on having him play without throwing. Okay? He’s just a little guy and he never meant to hurt him.”

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Christopher babbled innocently at Adriana to plead his case and looked upset that she wasn’t playing with him anymore. Steve picked their son up to cuddle him. “How come he wants to throw it?” Adriana asked, not entirely upset but still sad for her turtle. She took it back from Bucky and pet its shell.

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“I think Christopher is used to throwing things and then having the doggy bring them back,” Bucky said and rocked her back and forth a bit. “Diana plays fetch with him so he probably thought that’s what we were doing.”

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“She does?” Adriana looked interested in playing that with the dog later. She leaned into Bucky’s chest and held onto his shirt. “Can we go downstairs and have more cookies?” she asked. “I’m hungry.”

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Bucky pet her hair and got up with her in his arms. “Well, Sweetheart, if you are hungry then we can get you some food. Let’s save the cookies for a little later. Steve and your nana make delicious food. Would you like a sandwich or something like that?”
Steve scooped Christopher into his arms and tickled his little feet. He couldn’t believe he got to have such a big family already. “Can I have a sandwich and a cookie?” Adriana asked, having her heart set on cookies but not enough to get in trouble over it.

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“Yes. But just one more for now,” Bucky said and followed Steve down the stairs. “You want the cookies to last for a few days, right? So you can have a cookie or two every day as a treat, okay?” He looked to Steve to confirm that he agreed.

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Steve nodded in agreement with Bucky. “Yeah, we don’t want you to get a stomach ache from too many sweets,” he answered. “That would be no fun.” Adriana understood. “What kind of sandwich would you like?” he asked.

Their daughter looked confused as she responded, “I get to pick?” They weren’t treated poorly at the orphanage, of course, but it was rare that they had options.

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“Yes, of course, you can pick,” Bucky said and set her down on a chair at the table. “We can do turkey or ham and cheese. Or peanut butter and jelly. What kind sounds good to you, Sweetheart?” Sarah May was awake again and she was fussing in her nana’s arms. “Papa, Dada,” she mumbled and reached out for them. She had recently gotten a lot better at saying ‘Dada’. That one had taken her a little longer than ‘Papa’.

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Steve’s heart melted when he saw his daughter reaching for them. “Hello, baby girl!” He held her in his other arm so he had a baby in each. He kissed their heads and looked back at Adriana.

“Um... can I have peanut butter and jelly?” Adriana asked, wiggling excitedly in her chair a little.

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Bucky nodded and worked on her sandwich for her. “Adriana, Honey, just so you know, I’ll be here for a few days with you and Steve and the babies and your nana. But then after a few days, I’ll have to go back to work. That means you’ll be home with your siblings and Daddy. Okay? But I’ll always come home at the end of the day. And if you need to call me, you can have Daddy call the record shop and I’ll talk to you.”

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“You mean we can’t be together to play when I wake up?” she asked with a little frown.

Steve sat down with the babies and answered, “Me and your nana will be here. And Bucky will always make sure he plays with you before you go to bed. If your pop doesn’t go to work then we won’t be able to buy food or pay for the house.”

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Adriana moved back and forth a little, just thinking about it for a minute. She didn’t really like the idea. She thought having parents would mean she had them with her all the time. “Why’s he got to work but you stay here?” she asked curiously. “How come it’s not you trade it every day?”
“That’s a very smart idea but that’s not how our jobs work. Usually, people have to work every day except for Saturday and Sunday,” he explained. “I used to be a policeman but I got hurt and now I can’t work anymore. I’m sad about that sometimes, but now I get to spend all my time at home with our kids.”

“So... Bubby has to work every day but two?” Adriana asked and gave a little sigh. “Okay...” she sniffled and bit into her sandwich.

Bucky looked to Steve and gave a weak little smile. It killed him that he didn’t get to spend as much time with his family as Steve did. He wished he could be with them all day and have fun with them and go to the park and play. He just missed so much and he would miss so much more.

Christopher pulled at Steve’s hair but not hard enough for Steve to stop him. He wondered if every now and again he could take a shift for Bucky so he could stay home with the kids instead. It almost was a year since he was let go on disability. He planned on bringing it up once they were alone.

After she finished her sandwich, Adriana went off to play with some of Christopher’s toys and Diana. “How’re you feeling?” Steve asked Bucky.

“Doing good,” Bucky mumbled as he glanced in the living room to see Christopher and Adriana playing with the dog. He nodded to Sarah who was working on the last part of Adriana’s new blanket and watching the kids. Bucky followed Steve back into the kitchen and sat down with him. Bucky was still holding Sarah May since she was being a little needy for her parents. “I think she’s adjusting okay so far.”

Steve played with Sarah May’s feet idly and smiled. “Yeah... I don’t expect it to always be this easy, but at least she’s happy.” He leaned over to kiss Bucky’s cheek. “So, uh... I was thinking. What if you trained me a little on how to work at the record shop? That way if you wanna spend a day home with the kids, we could swap.”

Bucky gave a tired little look to Steve and chuckled softly. “Baby, I’m not going to ask you to do that,” he said and adjusted Sarah May so he could take Steve’s hand in his. “I just get a little sad. You know? Just that... all our babies are here and you are here. And back when it was just me and the girls, I went to work and they went to school and we saw each other when we could. But now that I have all of you here at home during the day, it hurts to go to work sometimes.”

“I know, Buck, but I want you to not feel sad that you’re missing out.” Steve kissed him gently. “Sometimes it’d be good to get out of the house for me, you know? It could benefit us.” Sarah May cooed up at her papa and tugged at his shirt.
Bucky kissed his daughter’s cheek and said, “Baby, you’re going to be starting your art class soon. And I know how much you want to do it. I think that should be your focus. Besides, I don’t want you to have to work there and lift heavy boxes. It’s not going to be good on your lungs. And customers smoke around us all the time. It’s just not a good place for you.”

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Steve looked away, feeling that knee-jerk reaction when Bucky mentioned that it physically wasn’t a good place for him. He swallowed it down because he didn’t want to prove Bucky right that he should talk to a therapist. “Fine,” he mumbled. “It was just a suggestion.”

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Bucky had been with Steve long enough to know what most every little bit of his body language meant. He sighed and shook his head slightly, frustrated with himself for how he put it. “I didn’t mean it like that. It’s not that I think you couldn’t do it. I just don’t think you should. It was a good suggestion. It was. And I’m so grateful that you want to offer to help so I can be home more. But I’m fine. I promise. I’ll try to work something out with Clint.”

---

Steve reached over to put his hand on Bucky’s knee. “I wish I could do more financially to help.” He had a good check coming in from the settlement but a large portion of that went to the shelter. “It’s upsetting to know how much you’re missing out on watching our kids grow up and being able to spend time with your sisters.”

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“Steve...” Bucky sighed and looked into Sarah May’s big brown eyes. She was trying her hardest to get her Papa’s fingers to her mouth so she could chew on them. “Most households have two working adults who both spend all their time at work and then come home in the evening to have maybe three or four hours with their kids before it’s time for bed. We are lucky enough to be able to give you time with our kids all day. And that makes me so happy. Because you wanted to be a stay-at-home dad and you are so good at it and I know our babies love that you are here for them.”

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Steve sighed but nodded. “Alright...” he mumbled. “If you say so.” Steve knew they were lucky enough to not only have a stay-at-home parent, but a grandparent as well. “Look at her,” Steve said with a fond smile at their youngest daughter. “She’s growing so fast. I wonder if the orphanage has any baby pictures of Adriana.”

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“We can always ask,” Bucky said and let Sarah May flop against his chest and grab at his hair. “Ya-Ya, you’re being pretty clingy today. Is something wrong, Sweet Pea?” he asked and looked from her to Steve. “Or did you just get tired of being with your brother for so long?”

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“Papa,” Sarah May responded with a big old smile.

Steve said, “I think she’s glad to be getting some attention. Maybe she’s finally realized what she’s got to do to get you all to herself.” He chuckled.
Bucky nodded and gave his daughter several kisses all over her face so she was giggling wildly. “I guess that’s it. Just wanted some Papa time. When we have too many kids to count, we are going to have to make sure we spend time with each of them. Like take them to their favorite restaurant and out to the zoo or something just us and one of them at a time.”

“Oh no, spending more time with our kids? How ever will we manage?” Steve joked. “I love that idea. And maybe it’ll be nice to start doing that one on one, also. Kind of like you and your dad up in Seneca,” Steve suggested.

Bucky chuckled and pulled Steve in for a kiss. “I don’t think we can manage to have special trips for all the kids. We will really have no money around here.” He did want to take all his kids up to Seneca at times. But it would probably end up being more of a family trip. “I can’t wait to raise all these babies with you. I love the ones we have and I love being a father so much.”

“Ah, sorry, I didn’t mean a trip like that. I meant like you and your dad had something that you did together. Just like each of us can have our special days with our kids with just us. I can stay home with the rest while you go out with one and vice versa,” Steve explained. He smiled happily and leaned forward to kiss his husband. “You’re such a good father, too, Baby. I can’t believe how far we’ve come, Buck.”

“We have come a long way. And we’ve done so much and built this family together,” Bucky agreed. He brushed his fingers over Steve's jaw and smiled.

"And you’ve come farther than I have," Steve said. "I know I haven’t done as much for our family as you have... but I’m trying. I know it’s not the same as having a therapist, but I have been meeting with Sam to talk to him."

Bucky flitted his eyes between Steve and the wall a few times, just thinking. He wasn’t sure how he was supposed to respond because he didn’t want to say the wrong thing and upset Steve. And even though Bucky would much rather Steve talk to a therapist or even him than talk to Sam, at least it was someone. “Is it helping?”

"Not really," Steve sighed. "Cause I know it’s not enough," he admitted with a grimace. He didn't like having to say that but he wasn't going to lie to his husband and pretend that he was getting appropriate help.

Bucky nodded slowly and licked his lips in thought. “Do... do you still want that letter I wrote you?
Remember how you suggested I write it down because it might be better for you to read it instead of have me talk to you about it? I did write it. I just didn’t give it to you because the last time we breached this subject we had a really, really bad fight so I put it away.”

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Steve didn't look too sure that he wanted to know what Bucky wrote to him when they were upset with each other but he also had a duty to his husband and to the rest of their family to be the best version of himself. "Yeah," he answered in a somewhat defeated tone. "I don't exactly look forward to reading it, but I want to be better for you."

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“Oh... uh,” Bucky started and looked away from Steve. “You really don’t have to read it. If it’s just going to make things worse... just...” he sighed and reached a hand up to touch Steve’s face again gently. He just wanted him to feel better. He wanted him to be happy. He wanted him to be able to talk about what happened and talk about his disability. He didn’t want their kids asking Daddy why he couldn’t breathe only to get snapped at like he did to everyone else. He wanted him to be able to cope with this.

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Steve was conflicted. On one hand, he wanted to give Bucky what he was looking for and on the other, he didn't want to touch the issue with a ten-foot pole. "Can you give me the letter when I have time to be alone?” he asked. He figured it'd be better if Bucky was out with the kids or something so Steve could process it on his own time.

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“How about I just give it to you now and then you can read it whenever you decide to... or not read it,” Bucky offered. “Your choice.” Bucky was a little exasperated with the whole thing already. He just got tired of having this conversation over and over. “You know it’s important for us to talk to each other about anything. And even though this isn’t one of our favorite topics, it’s still good that we are talking.”

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Steve could tell he was wearing down Bucky's patience a little. "Sorry," he apologized again anyway. "How about you have a nap and I can make us dinner?" he suggested.

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“If you want some time alone from me, you can ask,” Bucky mumbled quietly. "I can help with dinner if you want. But I can also go take a nap if it's better that you're alone for a bit."

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Steve had assumed that Bucky was the one who would've wanted some space. He pulled Bucky into a tight hug and he kissed his temple gently. "I didn't mean it that way, Buck," he explained. "I always want to spend time with you."

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Bucky wrapped his arms around Steve and rested his head on his shoulders. He just got pretty worn out easily. He had a lot going on and he never really stopped and he never really spent any time just
to himself to think. Maybe he should spend some time alone. “I just want you to be happy again.”

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"You make me happy," Steve said. "So does my family. We have a new daughter we get to love and share our lives with. Our whole family is healthy... that's worth being happy for," Steve answered. "I need to remind myself to count my blessings."

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“Mhmm,” Bucky hummed and looked up at Steve with watery eyes. He took in a deep breath and added, “I know, but it just seems like you’re only temporarily happy. Like you’re just waiting for the moment you feel bad again and the times in between are just like... filler.” He shook his head and got up. “I just want you to be okay again. And I want you to be confident in yourself. And I want you to know that you’re as beautiful as the day I met you and I love you more and more every single moment. And I just worry about you.”

---

It hurt to hear that - that his happiness with taking care of his family was just 'filler'. He knew Bucky was trying to make things better and strengthen their relationship but it didn't make Steve feel immediately any better. "I know, Buck," he sighed. "I love you."

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Bucky nodded and passed Sarah May to him. "I'll be right back." He went upstairs and rummaged in his things for the letter and finally pulled out an envelope with Steve’s name on it. Bucky came back down and gently held the letter out to him. “Here.” He wasn’t sure if Steve was ever going to read it. But at least now he had it. “Come wake me up when dinner is done.”
The next few days went pretty well. The house was a little hectic as they all got used to another person and Bucky and Steve realized all the things they didn't think about buying before having a new four-year-old around. There were a couple late night runs to the store to get something Adriana needed that they hadn't accounted for. But today was quieter. It was a Saturday and the girls were out with Sarah seeing a movie. Adriana and Christopher were both down for naps and Sarah May was the last to get sleepy.

Steve focused on Sarah May and he stroked her curly hair gently. “You want to have a snack and go nap time, Baby Girl? We can get you in your jammies and everything.”

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Bucky gasped excitedly and looked to his daughter. “Oh, Ya-Ya, doesn’t that sound great. You want a snack? Snacks and sleepy times?” he asked and brushed her hair back from her eyes. It was really growing in and curling all around her face. Bucky was trying his best to slowly learn some Jewish words and prayers and things. He wanted to be able to teach her so much about her culture. Just anything he possibly could.

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Sarah May smiled and kicked her legs out excitedly at the tone that Bucky was using on her. “I’ll get her some applesauce,” Steve said, standing up to get some food for their daughter.

“Papa,” she said to Bucky before waving her hand over at Steve as he walked away.

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“What, Sweet Pea, you want Daddy? He’s getting you a snack. But he can hold you while you eat it.” Bucky nuzzled his nose on her cheek and then gave her a big kiss to get a laugh out of her.

“You’re my sweet precious baby girl. Yes, you are! And I love you. And Daddy loves you. And Nana and Lilly and Becs and your siblings love you.”

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Steve came back with a jar of applesauce and a spoon for his daughter. “Look at what a happy girl you are!” he exclaimed softly. “Are you going to eat your snack up? You’re growing to be so big and strong.” He got a spoonful and held it to her lips.

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Sarah May opened her mouth for the spoon and then pouted her lip out. She whined and reached out for Steve, wanting to be held by him now. “Dada, mmm,” she whined and made grabby hands for him.

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“Oh? You like your dada more right now?” Steve passed Bucky the spoon for a moment so he could take their daughter. He held Sarah May in his arm and used his free hand to feed her. “It’s amazing to hear her talking to us now.”
“She’s a little more mumbling than Christopher. Did you notice? She sort of sounds like she isn’t sure that anything she is saying is actually correct,” Bucky observed and held one of Sarah May’s hands as she focused on the spoon.

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“Maybe she’s more careful. Christopher kind of runs into things without much self-consciousness. You think she isn’t sure whether she should copy our talking or her brother’s?” Steve gave her another spoonful and caught some before it fell off her lip.

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“Maybe,” Bucky mused and watched her closely as if he could figure it out somehow. “I mean, it could be as simple as it just being the way she talks. Maybe she is just mumble-y.” He kissed her hand and then let it go so he could get her some juice. “I do know that she isn’t picking up on sign language very well.”

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“Or she’s picking up everything as fast as any normal baby but we’re comparing her to Christopher, who picks things up faster than average,” Steve suggested. Which could be entirely possible. Christopher spoiled them in that aspect.

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Bucky nodded and handed Sarah May her sippy cup of orange juice. “That’s true. He is very quick. My guess is he is going to be very academic like Becca. Like by the time he is seven he will have surpassed all my knowledge of anything.”

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Steve helped Sarah May drink from her cup and once she was done, he set it on the table. He cradled her and rubbed her back to help burp her. “Give yourself some credit. I think he will be eight when that happens,” he teased.

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“Okay, eight,” Bucky corrected. He kissed Steve’s forehead and then Sarah May’s. After the applesauce was all gone, they went upstairs to put their daughter down for a nap.

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“Look, she’s already nodding off. I love it when our babies are like clockwork sometimes,” Steve said as he lowered her into the crib and made sure the corners were tugged down.

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“Just got to give her some food and she’s ready to sleep for hours,” Bucky whispered and brushed Sarah May’s hair back from her face. “And lucky for us, she likes to eat.” He smiled down at her and watched her eyes open less and less frequently until they stopped opening back up altogether. “There we go, my sweet girl.”

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“Christopher likes to eat but he doesn’t sleep like she does after,” he sighed. He stood there watching
her for a little while, simply marveling in how perfect she was. He finally tore himself away so he could lead Bucky silently to their bedroom.

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Bucky followed Steve into the bedroom and closed the door behind them. Now that all the kids were napping, they had the house to themselves for a bit and it was peaceful and quiet and cozy. Once the lights were off except for one of their lamps, Bucky took over. He pulled Steve down on the bed and immediately went for his pants to gingerly unbutton them.

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Steve grinned brightly when Bucky got right to business. They needed to take opportunities like this lately otherwise they would never have any time alone. He was quick to pull Bucky’s shirt off so he could touch his bare chest and shoulders. “Looking good as ever,” he purred. He gave Bucky’s hair a gentle tug. “How are you looking to do this today, Beautiful?”

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Bucky hummed happily and shed Steve’s pants and underwear off all the way before getting his shirt off as well. He took a few long moments just to stare at Steve’s body and slide his hands up his thighs and sides to rest under his arms. “I want to be inside you. I want to see this gorgeous body of yours on top of me as you ride me. I want to see the blaze in your eyes and your hard cock ready for attention.” He sighed happily at the thought and let his eyes close for a moment. “If you want that too, Babe.”

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Steve groaned and blushed a bit as Bucky slid his hands up his bare legs. “Do you want me to give you a show?” he asked. “Make you watch me as I open myself up for you?” He loved how Bucky was looking at him and he wanted to do everything he could to keep Bucky’s undivided attention.

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Bucky nodded quickly and gasped. “Ye-Yeah, yes. I want that if you want that,” he said and touched over Steve’s nipples and then down to his abs. They didn’t usually do things that way. Steve didn’t like Bucky opening himself up and he usually didn’t want to do it to himself either. But Bucky wanted to see him touching himself so badly.

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Steve typically preferred working each other open but today he was desperate to make Bucky look at him like he couldn’t stand to wait a second longer to be inside of him. He spread his legs open and shivered at the way Bucky touched him. “Get the lube for me,” he said breathlessly. “And I’ll give you something worth watching.”

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“Baby, you’re worth watching right now,” Bucky said as he dug in his nightstand for the lube. He misplaced his reading glasses months ago but at least he always knew where he kept lube. “You’re just the most handsome, sexy, beautiful man I’ve ever laid eyes on. Or even imagined. You’re my everything.”

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Steve blushed at the compliments as he uncapped the bottle. “And you’re my everything. And our kids’ everything,” Steve responded. He spread the lube over his fingers and shifted higher on the bed. Arching his back, he lifted his hips off of the bed to give Bucky a good view of him as he pushed a finger inside. His dick was hard and laying over his stomach. “It takes all my willpower not to touch myself when I'm home alone and I miss you and the babies are asleep and I have nothing else to do.”

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Bucky whimpered and felt a rush go down his spine and to his cock. “You know I don’t mind if you do,” he whispered and gently touched Steve’s calf as he watched him intently. “You can just tell me all about it when I’m home. Or even take some pictures to show me.”

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“It’s worth the wait when you come home and I have you touch me once we get to bed,” Steve answered. “Nothing I do to myself can compare to what you do to me.” Steve closed his eyes and let out a steady breath as he pushed a second finger inside of himself.

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Bucky almost reached out to add his own fingers to Steve’s hole but he held himself back. “Baby, do you know how indescribable you look right now? Just absolutely perfect. I want to take you and claim you and mark up your body.”

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Steve looked over at Bucky, smiling when he saw the way that his husband was looking at him. “Soon,” he promised. “All I can think of is how good you’re going to feel when you’re inside me. I love it when it’s like we’re one,” Steve said.

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“Uh-huh,” Bucky said and let his hand slip up Steve’s leg a little more. Steve was propped up on the pillows and Bucky was just sitting in front of him watching. It felt so strange - like they were nervous high schoolers trying to figure out how to do this together. But it also was so hot to see Steve with his fingers inside himself, eyes half-closed and cock bright red for him. This wasn't a sight Bucky got very often – only a handful of times in their relationship.

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Steve worked a third finger inside of himself and by that point he wanted nothing more than his husband inside of him right that moment. He pulled his fingers out and gave Bucky his best bedroom eyes. “Feel how ready I am for you, Baby,” he said low in his throat, guiding Bucky’s fingers to his hole. “I’m ready for you, Buck.”

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Bucky pressed his fingers inside of Steve and groaned a little too loudly at the feeling. He pulled them out again and nodded eagerly. “I want you to ride me. Do you want to ride me?” He laid down on his back and pulled Steve towards him gently but purposefully because he couldn’t wait anymore.

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Steve wasted no time once Bucky laid down. He grabbed Bucky’s cock, lubing it up and holding it
steady as he sank down on top of it. Steve threw his head back and his mouth opened in a silent yelp, managing to cut off the sound and not raise suspicion. “Fuck,” he swore, circling his hips once Bucky was balls deep inside of him. “I fucking love you, Bucky Barnes.”

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Bucky gasped too and let his hands quickly reach out to grab Steve’s hips. “Rogers-Barnes,” Bucky corrected him softly and stared up at Steve sitting so beautifully on his dick. He loved getting to see him like this and watch his cock disappear in his ass over and over. It was one of his favorite things. He loved being inside his husband so much.

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“Rogers-Barnes,” he repeated with a dopey smile. He rocked his hip steadily, drawing out each movement as much as he could and not lifting up so much that he never had less than half of Bucky’s dick inside of him at any given time. He placed his hands on Bucky’s chest to brace himself and he rubbed his thumbs slowly over his husband’s nipples. “You look so good, Love, I wish I could record you right now.”

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Bucky shook his head and massaged his hands over Steve’s thighs. “I was just thinking the same thing about you, Steve. Thinking about how we could get a home video camera and we could make a tape of us together. And hide it away so no one found it but we could watch it sometimes when we are feeling just a little extra kinky that day.”

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“Yes,” Steve said breathlessly, eagerly. “Please, can we do that? I want to make a tape just for you. Something you can watch if I’m ever away for some reason or if you go on a trip and I got to stay home with the kids.” He paused and let out a low moan when Bucky’s dick hit him at just the right angle. "I'll never get tired of this."

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Bucky chuckled deep and fucked up into Steve as he bounced on him a little slower now like he was savoring his time. “Of course, we can do that. Although, I don’t know of any occasion where either of us will ever be away. Unless you’re planning a career as a traveling salesman.”

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Steve threw his head back with a soft cry as Bucky rolled his hips up into him. “I'll be a traveling nanny,” he joked. He rocked his hips desperately, picking up the pace once again, wanting every inch that Bucky had to give him. His muscles clamped down around Bucky’s cock and Steve loved the feeling of being stretched by his husband.

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Bucky grunted and bit his lip, eyes closing for a few seconds before springing back open because he wanted to see his husband. “Yeah, you’d never leave our babies to go feed someone else’s baby.”

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Steve guided one of Bucky’s hands to his dick to try and encourage Bucky to keep touching him. “You’re right. I wouldn’t,” he gasped out. “Still want to record that tape, though. It’ll be hot.”
Steve’s hips moved faster, making the bed creak and groan. He was grateful their walls were thick enough that it was hard to hear any noise coming from their room. They still tried to be pretty quiet just in case, but it took a bit more for any significant sound to get out. They learned that after they had a shouting argument a few months into living in the house and Becca came to inform them it was definitely audible.

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Bucky nodded and gripped Steve’s cock tightly as he pumped him. “Yeah, Yeah, let’s do that,” he said quickly before sitting up a little and wrapping his arm around Steve. “I’m gonna flip us,” he warned and then tossed Steve back firmly so he was on his back. He wasted no time in pounding into Steve’s ass as hard as he could and jerking him just as quick. “I’m close, Babe. You close?”

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Out of habit, Steve covered his mouth with his hand to muffle the noises he was making when Bucky pounded into his ass. “Ooh, Buck!” he cried, body arching off the bed again. Steve buried his face into the side of Bucky’s neck and bit at it. “I’m so close, Bucky, I’m gonna-” before he could finish his sentence his orgasm crashed over him. He came hard over Bucky’s hand and stomach, breathing heavily. His own hands gripped at Bucky’s shoulders; nails digging into his skin lightly.

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Bucky brought his come-covered hand to Steve’s mouth and slipped two fingers over his lower lip, waiting for him to suck it clean. He was still going strong for another long couple minutes until he was finally pressing up into Steve as deep as he could get and coming in quick hot bursts until he was finished. He held Steve for a few seconds just like that and then let himself gingerly collapse on top of him with his cock still inside.

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Steve tilted his head back as he felt Bucky fill him with his cum. Steve needed a minute to catch his breath but, once he did, he had a dopey smile on his face. “I love you,” he giggled as he pet his back. “Always just as magical as our first time.”

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“I love you, too,” Bucky breathed out and gave Steve a wet kiss. “You’re so sexy, Baby. You get me going with just a look. You’re just as cute when you come as you were that first time too. The little surprise in your eyes and your scrunched eyebrows like you couldn’t believe you just had sex.”

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Steve laughed and swatted Bucky’s arm lightly. “I was an innocent, catholic virgin when I met you. I was a standup, straight cop and then you converted me,” Steve teased. “How could you?” He kissed Bucky’s face all over.

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“Oh, Stevie... the way you looked at me when we first met... there was nothing straight about you,” Bucky protested back and held Steve’s face in his hands so he could kiss him some more. He knew he was going to have to pull out and clean them both up eventually but he just wanted to stay put for as long as possible. They probably had another twenty minutes before one of the kids woke up.

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Steve laughed. “I guess I couldn’t help it. Nothing gets me like long-haired hippies with lost sisters,” he said. He lazily kissed his husband and let out a happy sigh. “So much has happened since then.”

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“Well, I’m still a long-haired hippie. A lot has changed but that still stays the same,” Bucky said and brushed Steve’s hair back from his eyes. "And you're still the love of my life, Steve Rogers-Barnes."
Adriana was settling in pretty damned well to her new home. As expected, she did need more attention than the average kid but Steve was happy to give it. Today, Steve had been due to take the kids to the pediatrician for their checkups but when he was about to leave, he got a call from a hospital in Jersey. His mom had been involved in a fender bender and although she was in good health, she had been too shaken to drive and had a concussion, so Steve had to make the trip with all three kids to go to the hospital to pick up his mom. It took longer than Steve hoped for and his stomach sank when he realized the time. He got to a pay phone and dialed home.

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Bucky answered the phone. He was nervous as all hell because, in about a half hour, he was supposed to be at the doctor’s for his first spinal injection for his headaches. He had just gotten home from work and he expected Steve and the kids to be back from their appointments but he was greeted by Lilly and Becca doing homework at the kitchen table alone. When Bucky heard Steve’s voice through the phone, a little bit of his worry melted off of him. “Baby, where are you? I thought you all would be home by now. And I thought your mom would be home from visiting Ruth but she’s not here either.”

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Steve felt awful. "I'm in New Jersey right now, Buck, I'm so sorry," he said. "Mom got in a little car accident... she's okay, but she can't drive home. I missed the kids' doctor's appointment so I could pick her up." He took a deep breath. "I want to be there for you so bad. I didn't realize how long it would take to get here."

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“What? Wait...” Bucky mumbled and looked to the girls to see if they had any idea of what was going on. “Wait a second, what happened to your mom? You’re sure she’s okay?” he asked and saw Becca shake her head, she had no idea about this. “I can reschedule the kids’ appointments so don’t worry about that. Um, and I can just call and cancel my appointment today. Is everyone okay? Your mom, the kids? Are you okay, Baby?”

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"She got a concussion," Steve said. "Not a bad one, but she feels too dizzy to drive. Someone rear-ended her on the turnpike and then her car bumped into the one ahead." Steve glanced over his shoulder to check on his family. Luckily the kids were behaving. "The kids are surprisingly good right now. If you want to reschedule yourself, I understand...but are Becca or Lilly there? Maybe they could go with you this one time. I swear I'll be at the next one."
“No, no,” Bucky said hurriedly into the phone and shook his head. “No, Steve, I can’t do this without you here. I can’t go. I’m scared enough as it is. You were going to have to drag me into that exam room.” He paused and looked at the time. “There’s no way you’ll be back in time?” he asked, already knowing that Steve was too far away to make it home in time.

"Baby, you’re stronger than you think. I’m so sorry this happened. Maybe you can call the doctor and see if we can push it back an hour. I can leave right now and come back home as best I can, but I know I won't make it there as it is right now," Steve said apologetically.

Bucky sighed and rubbed at his already pounding head. “Okay, I’ll see what I can do,” he said and then gave his goodbye to Steve so he could call the doctor. As it turned out, the doctor was full up all day and the next available reschedule was for four months out. Bucky just couldn’t wait four more months. “It looks like I have to go now. But I cannot go alone. Can one of you please come with me?” Bucky asked and squatted down next to his sisters at the table to beg a little bit.

"I’ll go," Becca said immediately. "Lilly, you should stay home in case something happens. Who knows when Steve and Sarah are getting back." She looked over to Bucky. "Why isn’t he here? He knew how important this was.”

Bucky sighed and pulled Becca in for a quick hug and a kiss to the top of her head. “He would have been here but Sarah got in a car accident. He is in New Jersey with her and the kids. She’s fine - just a little concussion. I’m sure they’ll be back soon. But I have to be at the doctor’s even sooner.”

Becca still seemed annoyed that Steve wasn’t around for her brother but as far as excuses went, she supposed that was the most forgivable. "Looks like it's going to be a sibling day," she said, putting on a tiny smile for her brother - she knew how nervous he was. "Let's get this show on the road.”

Bucky was still terrified of going through with this but he was beyond grateful to his little sister for being willing to help him and be his support. “I love you. You know that?” he asked, looking at Becca intently and then giving her another quick hug. He also gave Lilly a goodbye hug and told her to be good.

Becca allowed the hug but then squirmed after a few moments. Although, she did reach out and squeeze his hand as they walked out the door. "If it makes you feel any better, imagine Steve trying to handle two babies and a four-year-old on the train by himself today," she joked.

Bucky chuckled and shook his head. “No, it just makes me wish I was there to help.” He sighed and
tucked his hair behind his ears. “I hope they are all okay. I don’t like the thought of Steve having to watch all three kids and his mother all alone when I can’t easily get to him. He still won’t listen to me about learning the boundaries that his disability puts on him. I just don’t want him to push himself when he has three kids to keep track of and wind up in a bad situation or in more pain. You remember when Christopher ran off into the woods in Seneca. Steve’s body wouldn’t let him keep up at all. And this city is so busy all the time. I just worry about him.”

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Becca had a guilty look on her face when Bucky brought up Seneca because that had been her fault – or, at least, she felt like it was. ”I like Steve and all. But you're doing a lot for him but he's not doing a lot for you,” she complained. "He's getting everything he wants. I mean, sure, he stayed by you when you weren't at your best. But now what?"

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“Becca...” Bucky said in a light chastisement. But he honestly couldn’t tell her she was wrong. He felt similarly. Of course, this feeling was combated by his desire for Steve to have everything he wanted and to be able to do what would make him happy. But that tended to mean a lot of sacrifices on Bucky’s end. “He’s just been really upset this year. You know? I mean, this time last year he was just being let go from the force because of his injury. And then we lost Grant. Steve lost his job - a job he loved - and part of his physical health and then a child all in a few weeks time. He’s... recovering.”

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"Recovering for a whole year?" Becca asked with a look. "Grant... Grant, I understand. But it's not like he lost his legs or whatever. He was talking about quitting being a cop so I don't get why he's being a big baby over getting let go and getting paid for it still," she said. Becca was a bit ruthless about this now.

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"I know. I know it seems like he would be fine since he was eventually going to leave to be a stay-at-home dad. But I think the problem is that the choice was made for him,” Bucky said as they turned the corner. “And not being able to breathe... that’s got to be beyond aggravating and discouraging.” Bucky felt like he was just saying all the things to Becca that he told himself every time he started to feel like the balance between him and Steve was becoming unfair to him. After a while, the words and reasons just started sounding more like noise to him.

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"Still. You had problems and you went to therapy to fix them. What's he done? If he takes care of it now, the kids won't even know what happened. If he doesn't do anything then they'll learn eventually that something’s wrong," she said. Becca sighed.

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“I didn’t do therapy. I did AA,” Bucky corrected, although therapy was a large part of meetings anyway. “And, there is always compromising in a marriage. But, I know what you mean about the kids. I was thinking about that the other day. Steve snaps at me and gets angry whenever I bring up his disability. Even if it’s to make sure he is okay. He hates it. I can see in his eyes how much he wishes I would shut up about the whole thing. I don’t know what I will do if I ever see him give one of our babies that look because they ask their Daddy why he’s not breathing right.”
"Steve waits until he has to change something before he does anything. It's never preventative, you know?" she answered. "If he doesn't do it for you, he's totally going to do nothing until one of the babies are hurt over it. It's a health hazard, too. If they don't know what's wrong and how to help him, he's going to push himself to a breaking point."

Bucky knew Becca was right. This whole thing with Steve was just going to get much worse before it got better at all. “You know... I was about to go back to school before we got Christopher. I’m not saying that I regret any of my babies. It’s just that Steve didn’t even ask me about school when we were discussing him being at home after he was discharged from the force. He used to love telling me how good I would do in school. And now it’s just off the table.”

"You should still go back to school," Becca said. "You're going to want more kids and you've said you're going to take a break now that there's Adriana. Soon would be the best time. You have Steve here, Sarah here, and me and Lilly," she reasoned. "You've got I'm a lot of people around to help."

“I know there’s a lot of people to help but the issue is money,” Bucky sighed. “College costs a lot and if I’m in classes all the time then I won’t be able to work and bring home money to take care of all of you. Besides Steve’s settlement and disability checks, I’m the sole wage earner for the house again and now I have eight people in total to care for and two animals.”

"That money that Steve gets still is a lot. Doesn't he get like... most of his police pay? And that settlement pay was so much. I couldn't believe it," she said. "I'm taking a finance class in school. Maybe I can have a look at your expenses and we can create a budget for you to save some more money so you don't have to work as much."

Bucky glanced at his sister in surprise. He wouldn’t have imagined that his little sister would be helping establish a budget around the house. “Most of the money Steve gets goes to the shelter and the rest into a savings fund. It’s for medical expenses, college tuition for you and Lilly and the babies, home improvement expenses, things like that.”

"Lilly's not going to college. You may as well put that money towards yourself," Becca said. "No offense to her. But I mean, she hates school. She probably will hate having a job, too, but at least you're not paying for her to hate something," she reasoned.

“That’s not the point,” Bucky said softly. “I want you all to have the opportunity to go to school if you choose to. That includes Lilly. I want her to have the option to decide later down the road if she changes her mind. I don’t want her to tell me in a few years that she wants to go to college and I have to tell her that I spent it on something else.”
"Still. Lilly and I will be adults by the time we graduate high school. We should work to get our tuition covered instead of relying on you. I plan on paying rent as soon as I'm 18 and working," she said in a matter-of-fact tone. "Lilly should do her part, too."

“That's not really the point either. I want you to be able to have me as your support system including financial help until you are sure you are ready.” He shook his head and pointed to a building a couple blocks down, indicating where they were headed. “Back to what we were saying before, the point is that I try to give and sacrifice and compromise all the time. And I feel like Steve isn’t always the same.”

Becca headed in the direction of the clinic. "Maybe you should try to put your foot down a little?" she said. "Lilly and I don't always listen but when you get mad and lay down the law, we make sure we do it." But, they were also kids and not Bucky’s husband.

“I’m not going to put my foot down with my husband,” Bucky said sadly and rubbed his face with his hands. “And I know he’s still so upset about a lot of things and especially his lungs. And I just think he should go try to talk to someone for help who isn’t Sam. Even if he doesn’t want to talk about his injury, maybe he can talk to a grief counselor about Grant and then get comfortable with the idea of therapy and then try to open up about what happened with his lungs.”

Becca walked into the office building and held the door open for her brother. "I hope he changes his mind about things. You’ve done too much for him to not do anything to be better," she said. "Maybe you can guilt him a little with the whole ‘missing your appointment’ thing."

Bucky hesitated for a second outside the office, seeming to remember why they had walked all this way. He took a deep breath and led them into the office and waited for Becca to be back at his side. “He had to go help his mom. It's a valid reason for not being here. I just got to keep trying my best to get through to him. He loves us all too much to risk losing us. And I think once he realizes how much this hurts and how much I just want to see him happy, he will at least give it a try.”

Becca kept close to her brother, knowing how much he needed her by his side today. She gave his hand a squeeze and decided to let the conversation drop since she doubted that her brother wanted to talk much more about his husband like this. "So, uh, should I be doing anything else besides stay here with you?"

“Not sure,” Bucky mumbled and went to check in with the receptionist for his appointment. “I think just helping me stay grounded," Bucky added and found two seats for them to wait at. There was no one else in the lobby so he figured they wouldn’t have to sit there for long. “Talk me down when I start to freak out and say that I can’t do this.”
"I can do that," she said. They barely sat down before a doctor came into the waiting room.

"Mr. Barnes?" Bucky was one of the last appointments of the day and the doctor must have been antsy to go home.

"Yeah, yes, Sir," Bucky said nervously and stood up. He hesitated again for a little longer and had to force his feet to just move to the door. He had to do this. And he was going to have to get used to it really fast since these injections were supposed to happen every couple of months for him. He just needed to get past this first one. "I’m so scared," he whispered to Becca as they followed the doctor back to an exam room.

"You can do this," she reassured. "Remember who you're doing this for. You won't miss out playing with Christopher and Sarah May and Adriana because of your headaches," she reminded.

They got inside and the doctor looked over at Becca, not expecting to have an audience. "Is she immediate family?" he asked.

Bucky nodded and pulled Becca a little closer like he was afraid the doctor would take her away. "My baby sister. She’s here to help me. I’m pretty nervous and I need her support.” He looked from the doctor to Becca. “I know it’s supposed to hurt a lot and I just don’t do well with medical things at all really.”

The doctor wasn't entirely approving of it but he, at least, wasn't a jerk about it either. "Alright," he said. "But I need her to keep out of my way. It can be a frightening sight to see and it would do more harm than help if she tried to stop the procedure while I was in the middle of it," he explained.

"Uh-huh," Bucky muttered, eyes wide and face going a little too pale. The doctor’s comments weren’t helping him feel any better about this whole thing. And he was worried that he was going to chicken out or the doctor would talk about him being too much of a wimp or something. And he just wished Steve was there. He was grateful beyond belief to have Becca but he also knew that Steve was good with doctors and Steve always knew what to say.

The doctor went through his usual procedure making sure that Bucky was in good health and ate a good meal today. Once the basics were done, he made a broad gesture with his hand. "I am going to ask you to remove your shirt, Mr. Barnes. I will first give you a very, very low dose of an oral painkiller to help ease you. Then I will apply a local anesthetic before starting the injection."

Bucky’s leg started to shake and he looked to Becca quickly and just stared at her for a second. This was getting real. He was down to the very last wire. He sniffled and slipped his shirt off, handing it
to Becca before taking her hand in his and gripping it tightly. He looked down at the tattoo of the wedding dates and told himself he was doing this for Steve and because his mother never knew how to help her own headaches. He also looked at the names of his children over his heart. He had just recently added Adriana. They had decided to make her middle name ‘Winnifred’ after his mother so her name was now scrawled underneath Sarah May’s with a red glow around it since it was still healing.

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The doctor gave Bucky a pill and some water before setting up the table. It didn't look very comfortable. It was just a hard mat with paper stretched over it and the thinnest of pillows over it. "The actual injection itself won't take more than a few moments. But, there is a process before the steroid to remove any fluid pressure around the base of the skull," he explained. "But, it'll be over before you know it." His bedside manner wasn't the best, but it was to the point.

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Bucky didn’t respond. He just kept his eyes locked to Becca’s and tried his best to keep from crying in front of this doctor. Becca knew Bucky was just getting more worked up so she draped his shirt over his shoulder and took his other hand in hers and held them both together. “Over before you know it,” she repeated. “Then we can go home and I’ll make you some tea.”

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"I know it may seem like a scary thing, but I'm sure you've had plenty of other pains worse than this. You survived those ones just like you will with this one," the doctor said and circled behind them to rub a cold gel over Bucky's neck. He had to move his hair out of the way and even took a small shaver and removed just a tiny square of Bucky’s hair under his skull where the needle needed to go. "So, are those your kids' names? On that tattoo, there?"

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Bucky gasped when the doctor was behind him. He couldn't help that his breathing picked up and his palms started to get sweaty. He wanted to burst into tears when he felt a small patch of his hair being shaved away. But he was grateful for the welcome distraction to talk about his kids. “Yes, those are my kids’ names. We just adopted our fourth.” He took a few quick breaths and blinked away tears forming on his eyelids. Becca squeezed his hand tighter.

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"A fourth? No wonder you have headaches," he joked. He seemed to be taking pity on Bucky after seeing how worked up he was getting over all this. "I have two at home. My wife deals with them more than I do and sometimes I want to shove them back where they came from."

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Bucky wasn’t sure how he was supposed to respond. He loved his children with all his heart. He would never wish that he didn’t have them. But he didn’t want to say anything to the doctor because he didn’t want him to get upset and hurt him. “I work a lot so I’m not with my kids as much as I would like to be. I know raising children is so tough on the stay-at-home parents, though.” He thought that was neutral enough.

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"Well, it’s better that way. Us men are meant to take in the money and the women’s work is at
home." Becca's head snapped over at the doctor and she glared like she wanted to tell him off but was holding back for Bucky's sake. "We fund the future of America and our wives raise them," he chuckled. "Close your eyes. You probably don't want to see the needle."

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“Okay...” Bucky muttered nervously and squeezed his eyes shut. He gripped Becca's hands as tight as he could without hurting her. He didn't agree with this doctor at all on his views of women and parenthood but he wasn't going to argue with a man who was about to shove a very large needle into the top of his spine.

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The doctor gave Bucky a small warning that he was going to start removing the fluid pressure before slowly pushing the needle inside. It was important to get anything out that wasn't supposed to be there before injecting the steroid.

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When the needle entered his skin and he could feel it right on the base of his skull, Bucky squeaked and snapped his eyes open. He made sure not to scream or move but he wasn't able to stop any of the tears that cascaded down his face immediately. Even with whatever pain medicine or numbing stuff or whatever it was the doctor gave him, it still hurt like crazy and it was uncomfortable and it was scary. But in a long two minutes, it was finally over and the doctor was pulling the needle out and then Bucky was pulling Becca to his chest so he could hold her and bury his face in her shoulder.

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Becca immediately hugged her brother close. The doctor wiped up his neck and cleaned the gel away before placing a large bandage over it. He disposed of the needle and patted his shoulder. "Hey, it's all done now. That wasn't so bad, was it?"

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Bucky just held himself to his sister and cried and worked on calming his breathing down. He didn't know if he could do this every few months. This was incredibly stressful to him and the thought of having to do it again was too much for him right now. He just wanted to go home. He gave himself another minute to calm down and then he took his shirt back from Becca and pulled it on, wiping his wet eyes on the sleeves.

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The doctor just sighed, deciding that Bucky would simply come down eventually on his own. Once Bucky took his face out of his sister's shoulder, he gave him a paper to sign. "If you sign this and bring this to my secretary, she can approve you going back home," he said.

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Bucky took the paper and signed it. He shook the doctor's hand and then led Becca back out to the lobby to talk to the secretary. He didn't schedule the next injection yet. If he could find a different doctor to do this, that might be better. He didn't want to have the same conversation with that man about his wife and kids. And Bucky wouldn't want to pretend to agree with him. "Let's go," he mumbled to Becca once they were all set.
As soon as they were out of the office, Becca practically exploded. "What a jerk! If he didn't have a needle going into your brain, I would've given him a piece of my mind. 'Womens’ work’, my ass. For all that education, he sure is a dumb loser," she said.

Bucky was still all worked up from being so afraid and he could feel his himself starting to let the adrenaline of the moment dissipate again. His body felt so weak. His mind was fuzzy. He wanted to tell Becca that he thought that doctor was a loser too but he couldn’t speak. He just had to find the nearest place to sit and plop himself down so he didn’t fall over or pass out.

"I don't know how you were able to stay quiet. Here you are, doing all this for your family and he was talking smack about his," she continued. Becca seemed to notice that Bucky was moments from giving out so she quickly led him over to a bench. "Do you need water or juice or something, Bucky?" she asked with a worried frown.

Bucky shook his head and looked down at his feet. “Don’t need anything. Just give me a minute.” Their place was really close but Bucky was considering hailing a cab to take them back just because he felt so incredibly fatigued all over. “I’m fine, Becs. I’m sorry. And I’m sorry that guy was such an ass. I would never feel that way about my family let alone talk about them that way. Especially about his wife. If that’s how he thinks of women then I’m surprised he managed to get one to marry him.”

Becca rubbed his back as she stood there next to him. "Don't be sorry. I know you'd never treat your family the way he does. You love your kids too much for that. Also, I'd beat you up if you ever were like that," she added with a little smirk. "With Lilly as backup."

“If I ever say anything about women or my family like that guy did, I give you permission to pummel me into next week,” Bucky said and worked on getting himself calmed down some more. After a bit, he felt better and was able to stand back up. “I want to be back home, let’s go.”

Becca took his hand again. "What if Christopher somehow becomes a jerk? Can I beat him up too?" She joked as they continued on back to their home. "Give him a good old one-two then tie him to a chair and read feminist books at him."

“My son won’t be a misogynist jerk. He’s being raised by Steve and me and he has his incredible aunts around to guide him,” Bucky said and kissed Becca’s head. “How’s the basement apartment been working out for you? I noticed you and Lilly like to hide out down there when things upstairs get hectic. I know things are a lot louder and messier now that it’s not the three of us.”
"I love it. It's like having my own place," she said. "Sometimes it's annoying when Lilly tries to make it her space but she's been following the rules I gave her about being in my room, so I don't mind all that much. And it's not like we don't like the babies. We will like them more when they don't shout and cry as much."

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“Yes, well, does that surprise you? Lilly tends to take over everything,” Bucky said and leaned a little more on Becca because he was feeling tired again. “I know you both love the kids. I don’t doubt that. And they love you so much too. But it is a lot. There are a lot of them and they are pretty loud and upset sometimes - mostly Christopher. But they will mellow out. Lilly was the loudest baby I have ever met and even she calmed down as time went on.”

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Becca snorted. "Lilly is still pretty loud. Not as loud as when she was a baby, but still very intense," she said. "Christopher follows me around everywhere. He won't stop trying to get me to play your guitar ever since he saw me try it once."

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“It’s because he loves his Aunt Becca so much. He just wants to spend time with you,” Bucky said as they finally turned the corner to their street. “You used to follow me around everywhere. Of course, that might have been because I was the one who fed you the most.”

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"I purposely don't feed him unless I have to for that reason. I used to be your little shadow,” she said with a smirk. "Whenever he's annoying me I tell him to go find the cat because I know Raphael can run away from him every time and Christopher can't keep up."

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Bucky only ever had to feed Becca that much because their dad was at work a lot and their mom had bad days and then Bucky was in charge of watching the baby. “Becca, you send him on impossibly tasks? My poor Bean. He probably thinks you want him to bring the cat to you.”

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"It's harmless. Christopher gets some exercise and Raphael has a little more excitement in his life," she said.

When they got back to the house, Steve still hadn't gotten back yet but Lilly waved a note in the air that she had written down. "Steve's cab is stuck in traffic. He had time to hop out and call before they moved any further. And Sarah is still too dizzy to walk any."

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Bucky’s stress levels immediately skyrocketed when Lilly handed him the note. There was no way to contact Steve and no way of knowing where they were exactly or how long it was going to take until they got back. And Bucky wanted his husband and his babies safe at home. But he couldn't fix it. “I... I am so tired and in pain still. I’m going to go upstairs and lay down. Wake me up if Steve calls.”

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The whole house was uncharacteristically silent until Steve came home an hour later with Christopher whining in his arms, Sarah May asleep in his mom's, and Adriana crying because she was hungry for her overdue dinner.

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Bucky was still asleep upstairs, unaware that anyone was home. Becca jumped up from her homework and came over to take Christopher from Steve so he could take care of Adriana. “What took so long?” she asked and kissed her nephew a few times in hopes that he would stop his grunting and whining.

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Steve picked up Adriana once Christopher was out of his arms. He apologized to her and promised she could have snacks before dinner tonight to hold her over. "There was another accident on the highway," he said. "It took forever I wish I still had my cruiser so I could've put on the lights and came right home. Where's Bucky? Is he okay?"

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“Pretty sure you’re not supposed to use the lights for that kind of thing, Steve,” Becca mumbled quietly and handed Christopher part of an apple and offered the other part to Adriana.

Lilly spoke up then, “Bucky is upstairs. Has been since they got back. He looks like shit. He’s all pale and sweaty and tired.”

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Steve went through the cabinets and started to get some mac and cheese ready. He preferred cooking better things but tonight he was more concerned with getting food on the table quickly. "Can you keep an eye on the macaroni until I get back down? I want to check on Bucky."

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“No, Steve, just leave him. He’s asleep,” Becca said and set Christopher down next to Diana. “He’s really tired after the appointment. He was stressing out so much that his body just sort of gave out on him when we were done. He’s fine right now.”

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That just made him want to see Bucky more. His husband was stressed and upset and he never slept well when he went to take a nap after being all worked up. But Steve just sighed and went back to stirring the pot. "Do you know anything about the letter Bucky wrote to me?” he asked.

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Becca blinked and shook her head. She didn’t know of any letter in particular but she knew that, at one point, Bucky was working on a letter to Steve but she didn’t know what about. “I sort of know about a letter. Why?”

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"No reason," he said. "Was just wondering what you knew about it, that's all. Did he give you any details?” Diana let out a soft whine when Christopher wouldn't stop tugging on her ears so Steve had to stop to pick him up to give his dog a break.
Diana immediately scampered off to go hide under the couch for some much-needed alone time. “All I know is that I saw him writing a letter one night at like three in the morning when I came up to the kitchen to get some water,” Becca informed.

Steve bounced Christopher on his hip until it was time to drain the pasta. At that point, Steve put him in his high chair so he wouldn’t get near the hot water. "Alright... thank you," he said, slightly disappointed that she didn't know more. He was hoping she could give some insight before he opened it. Maybe he should read that letter tonight. It had been weeks now since he had gotten it.

“Uh-huh,” Becca mumbled and took a snack with her and headed back down to her room, telling Lilly not to follow her. To which Lilly complained that she wanted to have her own basement room too. She would have grumped her way back up to her room but she really wanted some food.

Steve poured everyone a bowl of mac and cheese but wasn't in the mood to eat, so he spent the whole time feeding Christopher and the barely-awake Sarah May. "Did Bucky really look that bad?" he asked Lilly.

“Oh, yeah, pale and gross and his hair was matted down like he’s been messing with it. You know how he does that when he’s all anxious sometimes,” Lilly said as she shoveled food into her mouth. “He could like hardly stand too. Barely got in the door and had to go lay down.”

Steve grimaced. He sighed and stood up once he had both babies finished with their dinners. "Can you do me a favor and not push Becca's buttons tonight? I know you like going into her room but I need as peaceful of an evening as I can get." He was anxious to go see Bucky but he had to take care of their kids and check on his mom. After what felt like an eternity, he had their children in their beds to sleep and finally made it into their bedroom quietly.

Bucky was still asleep. His sleep was light and troubled and he was aware of someone coming into the room but he couldn’t pull himself back to consciousness yet. But he knew Steve was there now, safe and sound. And his whole being relaxed just a little more. His family was home. Steve and his babies were back. He could tell.

Steve carefully brushed the hair from Bucky's face and kissed his forehead gently. "I'm so sorry I wasn't there for you, Baby." He tucked him in and then went to the drawer to pull out the letter. Finally, he sat down at the desk in the corner so he could read it. It was about time that he started pulling his weight.
Bucky stirred slightly a few minutes later. But when he opened his eyes, he saw Steve off by himself
finally reading his letter to him. Bucky kept his mouth shut, not wanting to interrupt him. So, he just
closed his eyes again and snuggled further into his pillow. Hopefully, Steve would read it through all
the way and Bucky’s attempt at explaining his concerns would make sense. He wasn’t the best
writer.

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Steve was quiet for a long time after reading the later. He sat there and reread it a few times, hoping
to interpret it some other way or try and think of some other compromise. He put it away and laid
back down in bed, so caught up in thought that he didn't even notice that Bucky was awake.

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When Steve laid down next to him, Bucky let his eyes open back up and he looked up at his
husband for a few seconds. Steve’s eyes were tired, frustrated. Maybe seeing everything written
down that Bucky had been trying to tell him for so long was just too much. Having to look at it all at
once must have been overwhelming. But Steve couldn’t yell at a letter and storm away. Steve had to
read and listen and finish it. And he did. And that was at least step one completed. “Baby...” Bucky
whispered to get his attention.

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Steve didn't meet Bucky's gaze at first but he did look up when he talked to him. "I'm not going to
snap at our kids," he said quietly but stubbornly. He didn't want to talk about the letter but he also
didn't want to ignore his husband. "How are you feeling? Did the clinic go well?" he asked, reaching
out for Bucky's hand.

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Bucky let Steve take his hand but he didn’t respond to him. He was so incredibly tired. He had such
a rough day and the first thing Steve said was fighting back about something Bucky voiced concern
about in the letter. He knew he should answer him but he just felt this wild rush of anger come over
him and he had to bury his face behind his arm because he didn’t want to look at Steve right now.

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It stung when Bucky looked away. Steve had a shit day, too, although, it wasn't as emotionally
taxing as Bucky's. The last thing he wanted was a fight. "Why would you think I would yell at our
children over it? We fight, Buck, but we're adults." He found himself arguing anyway. "I'm willing
to do something about it, Bucky, but I really don't think therapy is the right choice for me."

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Bucky sighed dramatically and rolled to sit up. His head was swimming a little bit and he could feel
the bandage on the back of his neck pulling at his hair that was still around the little spot. “My
concern wasn’t that you would just yell at them. My concern is that they are going to realize
something is wrong and then ask you about it and you’re going to snap at them like you do to the rest
of us. And I don’t see what us being adults has to do with it. You snap at the girls when they show
concern too and they aren’t adults yet either.”

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"You guys know what's wrong with me. They don't. I won't snap at them for asking about what they
don't understand," Steve said. He huffed and buried his face into the pillow like Bucky had. "I don't
know what else to do, Bucky. There has to be another option other than therapy," he said. "You changed on your own terms. I'll have to, too."

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Bucky shook his head and got up off the bed. He pulled his shirt off and tossed it into the hamper. He needed a shower. He felt so gross. "Okay, so what about when they are older. Maybe in a few years when Adriana is eight. And she knows then that you have a problem breathing. And she sees you pushing yourself too much and says, 'Daddy, you have to go easy on yourself.' If any one of us says something like that to you, you lose it. You yell about being capable or when we were at Seneca and you wanted to fight those guys and you got mad at me and accused me of acting like you were some weak faggot who couldn’t protect anyone anymore. What are you going to say to our babies, huh?" He paused to rip off the bandage from his neck, bringing some of his hair with it. "And, no, I didn’t really change on my own terms. I changed for my family and I did what you wanted me to do."

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Steve clearly didn't want to hear what Bucky was telling him, which was a telltale sign for Steve knowing that Bucky had a point. "I shouldn't have to hear you guys telling me to take it easy," he said. "I don't get what's so hard about just letting me deal with it. Maybe if I keep pushing myself a little bit every day, it will get better. It's like a muscle. It'll get worse if you don't use it."

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"No, Steve, no," Bucky said firmly and crossed his arms. "It’s not like a muscle that needs exercise or whatever. It’s an injury. An injury that will not heal. You know that. You were told that from the beginning. This lung capacity you have right now is the best it’s going to ever be." He hated himself for being so harsh with Steve right now but he was just so fucking tired of this. And he just had an appointment where a giant needle was stuck inside his spine to help with a chronic issue he had too. "And there are plenty of reasons why it’s important for us to not just ‘let you deal’ or whatever."

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"The doctor could be wrong. There were doctors who said that I wouldn't survive when I was sick as a kid. And people didn't believe me when I said I was going to be a cop." Steve was grasping at straws here. "What if I go to physical therapy?" he asked. "That's a kind of therapy. If I can get better, I will. If I can’t get better, I'll at least know my limits under the supervision of a professional."

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“Fine, whatever. Whatever, Steve, I don’t give a fuck,” Bucky said as he angrily kicked his pants off and hovered in the doorway to the bathroom. “I don’t see why it’s better for you to go to Sam instead of a real therapist. But when your family tries to show you that you have limits, you’re only going to listen to a physical therapist after a doctor has already told you what is wrong. Whatever, I’m done.” Bucky waved his hand dismissively. “I had a massive needle in my spine today that hurt really bad and my head still feels awful at the moment and I’m not in the mood for this again. I’m going to shower and then sleep. I’m done with today.”

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Steve glared daggers at his husband. He angrily turned over and went to sleep, too stubborn to be awake to talk to Bucky. He was aware that Bucky made some valid points. And he was aware that he probably could have handled this way better, especially since he hadn’t been there for Bucky
today and didn’t even check in on him about it before he went off about the letter. But he was mad and Bucky was mad and he didn’t want to handle it right now either.
The next few days were pretty tense. Steve and Bucky barely spoke outside of catching each other up on their days and anything that needed to be done for the house. Almost a week later, Bucky came home to Steve taking his jacket off as if he had just gotten back from somewhere, which wasn't his usual schedule at this time.

“Hey,” Bucky mumbled as he locked the door behind him. “AA was terrible today. We have this new guy in our group who-” he turned around then and saw Steve with his jacket partly off. “Oh, are you heading out somewhere?” He asked and gestured to the door. They had hardly talked since their fight and Bucky felt really bad about it. But every time he went to try to apologize, something inside him pulled back and told him to walk the other way. So, he always did. They hadn’t even given each other kisses but a handful of times in the past week and they were more like greeting and goodnight kisses.

“Um... no, I just got back,” he said. Steve hung up his jacket and pet Diana, who came running up to them with her tongue lolling out of the side of her mouth. “What did the new guy in AA do?” he asked. Steve was a little more open than the past few days so something must have happened.

“He just takes over every session and everything always has to be about him,” Bucky grumbled as he slipped off his shoes. “And he’s always got it worse. You know? Someone tries to explain that they had a relapse because their kid is sick in the hospital and then he has to interrupt with, ‘Oh, yeah, my last relapse was way worse. I just got fired and then my girl dumped me and I drank for like two days straight’. It’s just obnoxious.”

"He sounds like a pain in the ass," Steve said. "I guess it's something that he's going to AA, even if he isn't a pleasant person to be around. And it's not like you can turn someone away for being annoying." Christopher came running over to his parents and hugged his arms around Bucky's legs. Moments later, Sarah May could be seen slowly crawling over to them, making excited baby noises.

“Little Bean!” Bucky gasped and picked up his son. He gave him kisses and then noticed how the babies looked at them both like they had been gone for an eternity. “How long were you out? They look like they haven’t seen you all day. I just figured you went to the bodega for something real fast.”

"Papa!" Christopher squealed happily, giggling at the kisses. Steve picked up Sarah May and cuddled her to his chest. "About two and a half hours," he said. "My ma was keeping an eye on them. Adriana is still under the weather and she was sleeping when I left. She's probably still napping now."
“Oh, okay,” Bucky said. He sort of hoped that Steve would volunteer information as to where he had gone. But if he wasn’t saying, then maybe there was a reason he didn’t want to say. “I should go check on her so she knows we are home. I know she gets nervous if we are gone for too long.”

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Steve nodded. "I'm going to make some chicken soup for her. She hasn't had much of an appetite today but she was a trooper about her preschool course today. She's finally starting to get a hang of writing her name out."

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“Oh yeah?” Bucky asked with a pleased grin. “Did she finally stop putting a second ‘n’ in there?” Adriana said that she liked the little swoop up top on ‘n’s so sometimes she wrote out a couple extra just for fun. Lilly had also been trying to teach her how to best color in the lines but she really didn’t like that.

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Steve nodded. "It was getting to the point where I was considering legally changing her name to have two n's," he joked. "But she's got it now."

"Papa," Christopher said, waving at the living room. "Play, Papa."

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“Okay, yes, play time, Bean. Let me just check on your sister, okay?” Bucky asked and set him back down on the ground. “I’ll be right back, Christopher.” He squeezed Steve’s arm and pointed up the stairs. “I’ll be back. I just want to make sure she isn’t awake in bed and can’t yell for us or something.”

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Christopher made pathetic, whining noises and sulked over to his dad to try and get him to play instead. "Go find the kitty-cat, Bean. Kitty-cat wants to play," he said, having taken Becca's idea with that one. Adriana, meanwhile, was upstairs in her bed playing groggly with her turtles.

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Bucky knocked on her door and quietly peeked inside to see Adriana half-way sitting up and surrounded by plushies and blankets. “Hey, Peanut. Daddy said you’re not feeling well,” Bucky came over and sat carefully next to her. “But he also said that you did so well with writing your name today!”

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Adriana laid her head down in Bucky's lap with a tired sigh. "My tummy hurts," she said with a pout. "But, I wrote my name real good. Look," she said, pointing to the wall where Steve tacked the paper that she had written her name correctly on.

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“It looks great, Peanut,” Bucky said and pet her hair. She was a little sweaty like she had a fever coming and going. “Daddy is going to make you some soup. Do you think you can eat some soup?” He grabbed her water bottle from her nightstand and held it out to her. “Also, I want you to drink
some more water, please.”

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She whined quietly and mumbled something about not being hungry or thirsty. However, after a bit of persuading she finally sat up and leaned into Bucky's side so she could sip at her water bottle. "Maybe only a little soup..." she gave in.

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“Okay, Sweetie, just a little soup,” Bucky said and kissed her head. “I’ll let you rest some more and then Daddy or I will be back later to bring you some soup. You try to sleep some more.” He helped tuck her back into her blankets and gave her a fresh cold rag on her head before going back out quietly. He was a little cold so he went to snatch one of Steve’s big sweaters and then go back downstairs. “Steve, Adriana says she will have a little soup. But she seems like she’s sick enough that we might not want to risk much more than a few ounces.”

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Steve was almost done with the soup when Bucky came by. "I need to take her to the doctor. I haven't had the chance to get her checkup done since we had to miss her last appointment," he sighed. "Does she have a temperature?"

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“Yeah, a little bit,” Bucky said and came to stand over by Steve, a little closer than they had been for a past few days. “Everywhere but the urgent care is closed right now but we can call tomorrow morning and schedule something.” He leaned against the counter and tucked his hands in the pockets of Steve’s sweater, sort of hoping that Steve noticed he was wearing it.

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Steve pulled the pot off the stove and turned to Bucky. He gave him a little smile when he saw his husband dressed in his sweater and he leaned over to kiss his cheek. "I'll make sure she sees a doctor within the next day or two," he said. "Regardless if her fever breaks or not.” He turned and poured some soup into a bowl. While his back was turned, he mumbled, "I saw a therapist today."

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Bucky grinned down at his feet when Steve kissed his cheek but the second Steve mentioned the therapist, his head shot back up and he stared at Steve’s back. He didn’t want to get his hopes up though, so he asked cautiously, “Physical... therapist?” That was what Steve had been thinking about doing anyway so he wasn’t sure. Either way, Bucky needed to play this cool.

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"No, a, uh.... therapist-therapist," Steve answered. He felt a little defeated for having gone there and giving in. It was like he stopped believing that he could get better. But he also knew how important it was to Bucky for him to do something about his problems.

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Bucky gasped softly and reached out a gentle hand to grip Steve’s forearm. He turned him around so they were facing each other. He bit his lip and nodded. “Uh... even after I yelled at you so bad? Which, I’m so sorry about that. I am. I’m really sorry. I shouldn’t have been so angry. And I keep
giving myself excuses about it like it was just a rough day and I’ve just been trying to talk about this for too long. But none of that matters because I still shouldn’t have yelled at you like that.”

"No, because you yelled at me so bad," Steve said with a wry laugh. He didn't feel bitter towards Bucky about it. He knew he had a problem. "Today's session didn't really go well," Steve said. "My therapist suggested that my first step to healing was to leave you and find myself a wife," he said with a grimace.

“Okay, so you find a different one,” Bucky said with determination and slipped both his hands with Steve’s. “This is New York. We have enough therapists for the entire Western Hemisphere. We find a new one. And we keep finding a new one until you find one you like. And I’m going to help. Or... only if you want. The people who run the AA meetings know lots of therapists. We are always told to come ask if we are looking for one.”

"And then what? Keep hopping from person to person until I find one that isn't homophobic? How many is that going to be?" Steve said. "I haven't told my mom about it yet," he said. "I want to wait until it feels like it's helping me before I do." His mom, like him, didn't really believe in going to strangers to help with this sort of stuff.

Bucky gripped Steve’s hands a little tighter. “Yeah. Yeah, Baby, you do. You keep going. You keep trying. This... this could be really good for you. I know it could. And I know you won’t talk to me about any of it so you need to find someone else who you are comfortable talking with instead. When my dad was discharged from the army and came home, he was stuck in the hospital for months. They thought for sure he was going to be paralyzed. But they had a veteran’s therapist come in once a week and encourage him and talk to him. They think that’s part of the reason why he was finally able to get out of that bed.”

Steve didn't feel reassured by the story about Bucky's father. In his mind, the situation was apples and oranges. At this point, he wasn't going to therapy because he believed it would help, but because he trusted Bucky's belief that it would help. "I'd rather not talk about this," Steve said. "What's important is that you know I'm doing what you asked."

Bucky didn’t really think that was what was important. To him, what was important was that Steve was getting help. He appreciated that Steve was thinking about him but he didn’t want this to breed any resentment towards him. “Okay...” he sighed and gripped Steve’s hip, pulling him in to hug him. “You know I love you so much, right? And I am sorry I yelled. You had a bad day. I had a bad day. I shouldn’t have added to it.”

"I know you're sorry, Buck. And I won't hold it against you. I know why you yelled at me and you had every reason to," he said. "I love you, too. And I always will." He kissed his temple and leaned into the hug. "Now, I need you to save the rest of this hug for later. I have to bring soup to our sick
daughter."

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“Okay,” Bucky said and pulled away from Steve again. He kind of felt like Steve should apologize for that night too. But he wasn't going to say anything right that second. “But you have to come back for a hug later. Adriana first, of course. Maybe we can have some family time later if she is feeling better. We can watch a Disney movie and cuddle on the couch.”

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"I hope she feels better. She loves family movie time." Steve stole one more kiss and then went upstairs to their daughter. "Hey, Peanut. I got some yummy soup for you. It's just the right temperature for eating," he said gently.

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Adriana sat up in bed and sniffled. “Don’t want it,” she muttered and stuck out her bottom lip. “My tummy hurts real bad.” She had taken another one of her sweaters and pulled it halfway on her body and then draped the blanket that Sarah made around her shoulders loosely. “It’s too cold in my room.”

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Steve put the soup down and climbed into her bed so he could hold her and share their warmth. "We already have the heat up. Do you want me to bring Diana here so she can keep you warm?" he asked, petting her hair gently. "I can bring more blankets, too."

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Adriana thought for a second as she snuggled up against her dad. “Yeah. I want Diana,” she said finally and wiped her eyes. “I want to be not sick anymore. Please.” Her sad little whiny was too much.

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"Oh, Peanut... I know you want to feel better. But your body can't fight what's making your tummy hurt if you don't give it the energy it needs," he said softly. "If you want to feel better, you have to eat something so you can fight it." He turned his head and whistled. Moments later, Diana's paws were scrambling up the stairs and she delicately climbed into bed with them.

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Adriana waited for Diana to flop on top of them and then she wrapped her arms around her and held her close. She sniffled again and looked up to Steve. “Daddy, can I ask something?” she waited a second then said, a little softer, “How come sometimes when Papa gets home, he hides in his room?” She had noticed the days he came home with headaches and needed to be alone for a bit. “Sometimes he's crying. Was I bad?”

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Diana gave Adriana a lick on her cheek and patiently laid down with her. Steve's heart broke when Adriana thought that she’d been bad. "Oh, no, Sweetheart," Steve said. "You haven't been bad at all, peanut. Your papa and I are very proud of you. Sometimes his head hurts so bad that he needs to lay down and be alone. That's not your fault."
Adriana wasn’t entirely convinced. “Why does his head hurt?” she asked, petting down Diana’s back gently. “I never seen his head hurt before I came here.” Bucky had always tried to make sure he went to the orphanage when he was at his best. And to a little kid, it just made sense that now that she was seeing her Papa in pain like that, it had to be because she was here now.

"He has a problem with his spine and his head. That’s the part of your body that pretty much holds everything together. He’s had it all his life but you haven’t seen it because he only went to the orphanage when he was feeling okay," Steve explained patiently. "Your papa loves you so much. You don’t give him headaches."

“Can I fix it?” she asked. “Can we give him a new spine? I don’t know where they come from but we can try. Maybe we can make one.” Adriana was determined to find some sort of solution for this. “I don’t want Papa to hurt.” She didn’t like seeing anyone in her new family crying. Even when it was Sarah May just crying because she was hungry, Adriana would try to distract her so she would feel better.

“You’re so thoughtful," he said with a proud look. "A spine is hard to make. He’s going to a doctor to help fix the spine that he has." Steve sat up a bit more and picked up her bowl. "It will make Papa very happy if you had your soup. And it would make me happy, too. And when you’re feeling better, maybe we can draw a card to make your papa feel better as well."

Adriana sighed but slowly took the spoon and ate some of her soup. It was at delicious so she was glad for that. “Okay, we can draw for him. What animals should we do this time? Last time we ‘drawed’ monkeys.”

"We can draw whatever animal you want, Peanut." Steve kissed the top of her head. "You want to try drawing some doggies?" he asked. "Maybe a bunch of Diana’s?" he suggested. "Does that sound good?"

“Yeah, we can draw doggies,” Adriana decided and sat up again. “Should we go ask The Bean if he wants to draw with us.” Adriana had a hard time with Christopher’s name so she had taken to calling him ‘The Bean’ sometimes.

Steve thought it was so damned adorable how Adriana referred to her brother. "Yeah. He loves drawing. Did you know I’m going to start drawing classes soon? You can draw with me and Bean and a bunch of other parents and their kids."
“Those other kids aren’t staying with us are they?” Adriana asked nervously. She just got her parents and she didn’t feel like sharing them with even more people. She carefully slipped Diana off of her and dropped down off her bed so she could get her sweater fixed and gather up some drawing supplies.

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"No, Peanut. One day, Bucky and I will adopt more kids, but not until you’re a lot older," he said. "You don’t have to worry about sharing us with other kids for a while." Diana huffed softly when she was nudged away. "You feeling better?" Steve asked

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“Guess a little bit,” Adriana mumbled and handed Steve a box of crayons. “But I wanna color with you and Papa and The Bean.” She yawned as she got her notebooks from her art box and held them to her chest. “Can I have some juice too?”

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Steve took the crayons and smiled fondly at his daughter. "Okay. Papa's going to be so happy that you're feeling better. Do you want to watch a movie after we color?" he asked, leading the way downstairs. "You can have all the juice you want."

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“Yeah, we can watch a movie,” Adriana said nonchalantly as if she wasn’t excited for it. They didn’t get to watch a lot of movies because Steve and Bucky liked to limit the amount of TV time the kids had. “What movie are we watching? Last time we watched the one of elephants.”

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"Do you want to watch a Disney movie?" Steve asked. "Like Bambi or something like that?" He scooped her up into his arm and carried her down the stairs. "Or do you want to watch one of Becca’s movies?"

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Adriana clung to her daddy and nestled her face against his neck. "Um... ‘Sleeping Beauty’? The one with the pretty fairy ladies.” She sniffled for the millionth time and wiped her nose on Steve’s sweater. "Or maybe the space one?" She had recently watched the first ‘Star Wars’ and she had a habit of requesting to watch it over and over again.

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Steve hadn’t have thought he would be this used to having his kids use him as a large tissue. "I think everyone will like the space one," he said. "Let’s watch that one." He brought Adriana into the living room. "Buck? Look who’s feeling good enough to draw with us,” he said.

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Bucky was holding Sarah May on his lap and Christopher was standing up next to him and trying his best to pull Bucky’s braid apart. “Hey, Adriana!” he said excitedly to his oldest. “You’re feeling better, Sweetie? Your siblings are trying to make your Papa crazy!” He looked up to Steve and then back at Christopher. “What are we drawing, Peanut?”
"Aah! Na!" Christopher said to Adriana, which was his way of saying her name when he was excited. He giggled as he continued to try and wrestle his papa's braid apart.

"I'm going to draw Diana," she said. "You are going to draws puppies."

"Puppies. That's a great choice." Bucky reached his arm around and pulled Christopher around to his chest. "Okay, babies, I need you both to stop pulling on me," he kissed Christopher and Sarah May and hoped that they both understood.

"Papa!" Sarah May squealed, reaching her hands up to grab at his shirt.

Steve laughed and put the drawing supplies on the table so they could set up their workstation. "You guys can get started. I'm going to get Adriana her juice."

Bucky held open his arms for Adriana and got a hug with all his babies at once. "Okay, Adriana, let's get our things ready. Maybe Daddy will bring me some iced tea, please?" He called out to Steve as he went to the kitchen. "And some carrots!" Diana padded into the living room then and jumped up on the couch where Lilly was curled up on the arm.

Steve ended up bringing back a tray full of snacks for their family and a drink for everyone. "Diana, are we going to be drawing you?" he asked his dog, who's big ears perked up and she let out a little whine in response. "Buck, I'm thinking the kids need to be put to bed early tonight." Which was pretty much Steve-talk for wanting some alone time with his husband.

Bucky helped Sarah May drink some juice from a sippy cup and then set it down next to her on the ground. "Sure, Baby, did they not take naps today?" Bucky asked, a little oblivious as to Steve’s intentions like he could tend to be. "Ya-Ya has been crawling around everywhere in the last half hour so I’m guessing she will be asleep quickly."

"They did, but I still think they should be put down about thirty minutes early," Steve said, a little slower this time. When Bucky still didn't get it, he groaned softly. He couldn't say any innuendo in front of Lilly. "So, we can go to bed early, too" he elaborated and gave him a pleading look to try and get him to understand.

"I mean, I don’t have to go to bed early. I go in tomorrow at-" Bucky started and then he got it. "Oh! Oh, yeah. We should go to bed early. That’s a good point. I didn’t think about that.” He nodded and grabbed a crayon for Christopher and a piece of paper. “After a movie?”
Steve was about to give up but then Bucky finally got it. "Yeah, sounds perfect." Christopher grabbed the crayon from Bucky and he babbled mindlessly at Adriana as he colored. Sarah May whined to get in on the activity too even though she couldn't do much.

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“I want to watch the space movie,” Adriana said. She was patiently waiting for Steve to finish drawing Diana for her to color in. “With the robots and the boy,” she added for clarification in case Bucky wasn’t sure. “Where’s Nana?”

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After Steve finished a rather good drawing of Diana - because he drew his favorite pup all the time - he passed the paper over to his daughter. "Nana is out with one of her friends right now," Steve said. "I promised her once I came home from my meeting, she had the night to herself to have fun with her friends."

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“Oh,” Adriana hummed in disappointment. “When will she be back?

Bucky reached over and squeezed Adriana’s hand lightly. “By the time she gets here, you will be asleep. But you’ll see Nana in the morning.” He touched her forehead to check her fever and then looked to Steve. “I’ll call a doctor in the morning too. So, they all can get check-ups.

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"What's a check-up?” Adriana asked. "Are those like push-ups? I can do lots and lots of those. Lilly 'teached' me how,” she said.

Steve laughed. "What's Lilly teaching you how to do push-ups for?"

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“I’m going to coach her for the soccer team. She has potential,” Lilly murmured from the couch absently.

"Adriana, it's 'taught'. 'Lilly taught me how',” Bucky corrected gently. She was getting the hang of things still and, at the orphanage, she didn't have someone constantly helping her learn what was correct. Bucky glanced back at his sister and squinted. “Soccer? She’s four years old.”

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"Mozart was writing his music stuff at age five. I can see some real potential in my niece. As her aunt, it's my duty to foster that growth into pure ass-kicking potential," Lilly explained.

Adriana nodded. "Aunt Lilly says I can kick asses, Papa."

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Bucky’s eyes were wide and he looked from Steve to Lilly. The was the first time any of their kids had sworn and he knew Steve was going to have something to say about it. “Well, Peanut, you are very strong and can do whatever you want to do when you grow up.”
Steve's jaw dropped and by the way her parents reacted, Adriana could tell she'd done something wrong and her eyes filled up with tears. Lilly knew she was going to be in trouble with Steve at least. Even with Bucky's positive response, she was still nervous. "Are you sure?"

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“Yes, Adriana,” Bucky said and scooted close to her to wrap her up in a hug and kiss her face over and over. “Your Daddy and I want you to be able to follow your dreams. So, if you want to do soccer, you can.” He looked to Steve again and then added, “And your daddy and I love you so much.” He hoped that would help to dispel her tears.

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Steve nodded, deciding to save the language talk for another day. "Yeah," Steve said. "Even if you want one thing now and something else later, that's okay. You're able to do whatever you set your mind to," he encouraged. "Do you want to watch the space movie now, Peanut?"

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“Uh-huh,” Adriana said and looked down, still pouting. She went back to her coloring and Bucky got up to put the tape in the player.

“Lilly, how about you and I go ask Becca if she wants to join?” Bucky asked and gestured to the doorway, hoping Lilly would just follow.

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"Why do both of us have to go?” she complained.

Steve understood the hint Bucky was going for, so he gave her a little look. "Just follow your brother," he said with a small look. He wasn't the happiest with her right now so Lilly figured she was less likely to be scolded by Bucky than by Steve.

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Bucky waited in the hall for Lilly to catch up. He then stared at her for a second and said, “Lil... we can’t swear in front of the kids. We’ve gone over this. I know it’s not how we usually do things but Steve doesn’t want any swearing around the babies. For this reason in particular, Steve doesn’t want them swearing this young.”

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"I didn't think she would repeat what I said," Lilly complained. "Christopher and Sarah May don't. I got used to not having to worry because the babies don't know how to say big words like that yet," she said. "It won't happen again anytime soon. It was just an accident."

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“Well, Christopher can say ‘apple’ so I think he would be able to say ‘ass’,” Bucky said, arms crossed. “I know it’s hard. You know I mess up all the time and swear when I shouldn’t. We just need to work on it. And I suggest apologizing to Steve before he talks to you. Show him that you know it was a mistake. Don’t make him come at you all grumpy and huffy.”

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Lilly sighed. She didn't like apologizing but she liked it even less when Steve was righteous with her or scolded her. "Fine, I guess," she groaned. "Why can't the babies stay small and dumb? I like them that way," she said. Lilly paused and then asked, "Wait, are we actually getting Becca or did you bring me here to scold me?"

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"Did I scold you?" Bucky asked, exasperated. "I'm just asking you to work on it. But, yeah, we do need to go talk to Becs and see if she wants to join us or not." He opened the door to the basement and added, "And don’t call my babies dumb. They are very smart. They just don’t know words."

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Lilly rolled her eyes. "Becca! Movie time!" she called down the stairs. Becca started complaining because Lilly ruined the best moment of the album she was listening to.

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Becca reluctantly made her way back upstairs with her siblings, claiming that she was only staying to have some snacks and then she was going to go back to her room. “Steve, I’m going to get some popcorn and pudding for the girls. You need anything?” Bucky asked and brushed Steve’s hair back a few times.

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As soon as Bucky got close, Sarah May started to reach out to him and whimper to be held. "I'm good, Love," Steve said, smiling at the touches.

Adriana put down her juice and patted Sarah May on the back. "Don't worry, Sarah May. Papa will come back soon."

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"Adriana, what kind of pudding do you want? We have chocolate and vanilla and I think like one butterscotch," Bucky asked and picked up Sarah May so she would stop fussing. “And, Steve, should I let the babies have some? They will just complain if they aren’t getting snacks. Maybe I can split one cup into two for them to share.”

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"Vanilla," Adriana answered.

"Splitting is a good idea, but Christopher is going to be a hog. Maybe put them in two separate cups so he thinks he's having a whole one?" Steve suggested. He pulled Christopher into his lap and tickled his sides.

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"No, Dada!" Christopher grumped at Steve and tried to grab his hands.

Bucky nodded and went to get snacks for everyone with Sarah May propped on his hip. He came back and distributed the pudding cups and popcorn and sat next to Steve. “Here, Baby, this one is for Christopher," he said and handed him a cup that was almost full of pudding. He decided to give his son a little more than Sarah May. She wasn’t going to mind and she was too young to have too much sugary desserts.
When Bucky came back with the snacks, Christopher's eyes went wide and he stood up in Steve's lap to get his cup quicker. "Let Daddy help you eat, Sweetheart," Steve said, helping Christopher with his spoon. "We have the best kids," Steve sighed happily, giving Bucky a smile.

"I know we do," Bucky agreed and helped Adriana peel the top off her pudding cup before feeding Sarah May her bit of dessert. "Halloween is in just three weeks. I was thinking we should trick-or-treat this year since Adriana is with us. She told me she wants to be a turtle scientist."

"Mmm," Sarah May mumbled after she was fed her dessert. Steve gasped when Bucky brought up trick-or-treating. "Bucky, I've been meaning to show you the costumes I've made for Christopher, Diana, and Sarah May," he said. He looked down at Adriana and smiled. "You finally decided on your costume?"

Bucky looked to the dog who was still curled up sleeping on the couch. They were lucky that she loved Steve so much because otherwise that dog probably would have ran off by now with all the clothes or hats Steve liked putting on her. "What did you make them, Baby?" Bucky asked and brushed his fingers gently through Sarah May’s curls.

"I made a mane for Diana to wear so she could be a lion and then I made a bear costume for Sarah May and a tiger costume for Christopher," he said. "They're going to look so adorable. I was afraid I'd only be able to take pictures in here but now that we can go trick-or-treating we can show off how cute our animals and turtle scientists are."

Bucky chuckled and pulled Steve in for a kiss. "I love how excited you get about this stuff. And I love that you’re such a dweeb sometimes. You’re the best father I could have asked for my babies to have." He gave him one more kiss and then went back to helped Sarah May attempt to use crayons. "Are you dressing up too? Or just the kids?"

Steve blushed at the compliments. He really did love spending time with their kids and also doing dorky things like make costumes for Halloween. "Should it?" He looked to Adriana. "Do you think Papa and Daddy should dress up too?"

“Oh, no, no, I said ‘Daddy’ not ‘Daddy and Papa’. Papa will be wearing jeans and a jacket and nothing fancier than that,” Bucky corrected and gave Steve a little look. He would do it if Steve and Adriana really wanted him to but he was going to put up a little fight.

"But if everyone is dressing up, you should too," Steve whined. He knew that Bucky wouldn't be
likely to say yes to him so he lobbied Adriana against him. "Wouldn't Papa look so cool in a costume, Peanut?"

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Adriana looked to Bucky and squinted her eyes like she was scrutinizing his Halloween potential. She looked to Steve then and asked, “I don’t know. He could be a princess or a witch cause of his hair. What are you gonna be, Daddy?”

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"I think your papa will look great as a princess," Steve said with as much sincerity as he could muster. "Should I go as a prince?" he asked, giving Bucky a big old smug look. One thing he was really having fun with lately was poking fun at Bucky through their kids.

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Adriana shrugged and stared at the TV. “Daddy, if you wanna be a prince, you can,” she said absently, wanting to be focused on the movie now.

Bucky leaned over to Steve and bit his shoulder lightly. “Are you going to make me be a princess for Halloween? Going to let Adriana put glitter glue in my hair again? It’ll be on you to wash it out. Remember how annoying it was last time?”

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"Maybe,” Steve said. "But no glitter glue this time. That stuff was on our pillows for ages," he groaned. Christopher whined because Steve wasn't helping him with his pudding, so Steve quickly gave him some more. "Or maybe we can do a cute couple's costume that isn't royalty. We can be Jekyll and Hyde."

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“Jekyll and Hyde?” Bucky asked with a bark of a laugh. “How is that a couples costume? And which one of us gets to be a normal looking doctor and which gets to be a scraggly maniac with a hunchback?"

“You’re the scraggly maniac, Bucky, always,” Becca murmured from the couch and poked him with her toe.

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"Well, we're married, that's as close as being the same person as you can get," Steve said. "We can swap it around. You can put your hair up all nice and I'll be the one hobbling around, spooking all the kids," he joked. "I wonder how the babies will handle us looking different."

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“Uh, well, maybe we should do something a little less scary this first time around just in case,” Bucky offered. “I don’t want Christopher and Ya-Ya crying when they see you like that.”

Adriana jumped up and pointed at the screen when she saw Luke Skywalker. “Papa, you could be Space Boy!” She had a hard time remembering all the names of the characters so Luke was ‘Space Boy’, Han Solo was ‘Gun Man’, Leia was ‘Alien Princess’, and Chewbacca was ‘Big Bear’.
Steve pouted because he wanted to be spooky but it wasn't worth it at the expense of his kids. "Oh, that's a good idea, Peanut." He looked over to Bucky. "How about that one? You can be Luke and I can be Han Solo," he said. "Maybe Lilly can be Leia... or Becca if she goes with us." She was getting a little old to go trick-or-treating with the family.

Bucky could live with that. And if he had to go in a costume, he would much prefer to go as Luke. “Okay. Fine. We can be Luke and Han. Just know that this means I’m finding you a brunette wig.” He leaned back and tossed a pillow at Lilly to get her attention. “Lilly, do you want to be Alien Princess?”

"You can see whether or not you're attracted to me cause you love me or because I'm a cute blond," Steve joked and kissed his cheek.

Lilly considered for a moment before saying, "I kind of wanted to go as a soccer player because I already have a uniform so it's easy, but I guess I can be Alien Princess," she said.

“Well, Monster, you can be whatever you want. Just so long as you’re helping me keep track of the babies, I don’t care what you go as,” Bucky said and looked to Adriana. “Do you think Aunt Lilly should be a soccer player, Peanut?”

Adriana looked over at Lilly and then stood up so she could climb her way over to Lilly's lap. "Auntie Lilly I think you should be Alien Princess!" She said with a big smile. "Look! There she is!" she said, pointing at the screen again.

Lilly pulled Adriana close and snuggled her. She wasn’t necessarily extremely happy about the idea but she conceded. “Fine. I’ll be Leia.”

Bucky looked down and noticed that Sarah May had fallen asleep at some point. “Steve, I’m going to go put her to bed. We might have to finish the movie tomorrow. It’s getting late.”

"Papa," Adriana said with a small pout when she heard that they may finish the movie another night. "Can we watch until the good part is all done?"

Steve looked over and asked, "When is the good part all done?"

Adriana shrugged. "When the letters are all over the TV."

“Sweetheart, that’s the credits. That means it’s over,” Bucky said as he carefully got up with Sarah May held to his chest. “You can have ten more minutes. But the movie still has about an hour left so we can watch the rest tomorrow. I promise.”
"Yeah, the credits," Adriana mimicked. She took Bucky's spot on the couch when he stood up. "How many minutes is an hour? Is it five minutes?"

Steve tickled her side lightly. "I taught you today how many minutes there are in an hour. Do you remember?" he asked.

"Mmm, a hundred?" Adriana asked and scrunched up her face in thought, hoping she was right.

Bucky shook his head. "Try again, Peanut," he said and then gave her a little kiss on her head before going to put the youngest down to sleep.

"That's how many pennies there are in a dollar, but that was a good guess," Steve said, giving her a kiss on the cheek. By the time Bucky came back to the couch, Christopher was sleeping in Steve's arms and Adriana was looking like she was close to falling asleep as well.

Bucky saw his family all curled up together and he quietly went to get their camera and take a picture. "Looks like it's bedtime," he whispered and slowly went to turn off the movie and then scoop Adriana up in his arms.

Steve smiled when Bucky took the picture. He knew that they would fawn over their scrapbook of memories in the years to come. He carefully stood up with Christopher nestled against his chest. Steve pressed his lips to Bucky's. "And none of them put up a fight over it."

"Oh, yes, Baby, but you forget that tomorrow is a new day full of crying and tantrums and diapers and biting," Bucky joked as he followed Steve upstairs to tuck in their kids. "I'll clean up the snacks from the living room before we go to sleep. I don't want your mom to think that when she goes out for the night, I become a total slob."

"You do have a point," Steve agreed. He laid Christopher down a little reluctantly because he loved holding his son. When all the kids were in bed, Steve started to run his hands over Bucky's back. "You do that and then we can have some alone time, yeah?"

Bucky hurriedly cleaned up all their messes and then hustled his way back up to his and Steve’s room. "Baby, I forgot to tell you earlier, I think we should plan a little friend get-together or something. Tim’s ex-wife remarried and is pregnant again. While he doesn’t really miss being with her, he is really upset that this baby won’t be his. You know? It’s his kids’ little brother but it’s not his son. He needs a distraction."
Steve huffed because he hadn't expected them to have a conversation right now but he didn't want to push what he wanted if something was on Bucky's mind. He pulled him down onto the bed and into his arms. "What do you think would take his mind off of it?" he asked. "Would a movie night be good? Or maybe board games. It'll be harder to get his mind back on it if he's got to do something."

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"Yeah, let’s have a board game night," Bucky agreed and snuggled up against Steve’s side. “We can have Clint and Nat and Sam, too. It’ll be fun.” He hummed softly and rolled on to his back and started pulling off his shirt. “But we can plan it out later. You wanted to have sex, right?”

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"That sounds fun. We'll have to figure out a way to keep the kids from wanting in on everything," Maybe they could pay Becca to babysit in the basement. Steve's face lit up a little at the question and then he nodded eagerly. "Ever since that jerk therapist suggested that I leave you, all I could think about was getting you in my arms and loving you even more."

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“Oh, Baby, I’m so sorry you had to deal with that asshole,” Bucky said and crawled on top of Steve and hovered over him. “But, I am so happy and proud and grateful that you gave this one a try. And I can help you find a new one to try. I just love you so much.” He whined a little and brushed his thumb over Steve’s lips and pushed his knee gently against Steve’s crotch. “But for now, let’s show that bastard just how important our marriage is.”

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Steve pressed his hips up into Bucky, moaning softly when Bucky pressed his knee against him. He kissed him deeply and scratched his nails up Bucky's back. "It's like when those sad commercials come on with the dogs in shelters. It makes me want to give Diana a big hug." He nipped at Bucky's lower lip. "Now take my clothes off, Gorgeous."

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Bucky chuckled low in his throat and set to work undressing Steve quickly but deliberately. “Are you calling me an unwanted puppy?” he asked and leaned in to bite Steve’s neck lightly. “I know what you mean, though. Some of the people in AA aren’t allowed to see their kids until they clean up. And it hurts me to know that I was almost at that point and then I just want to make a big hug puddle of all my kids - no matter how much Becca will try to squirm out."

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"Maybe," Steve said with a playful smile. His hands moved to pull off the rest of Bucky's clothes, kind of desperate for the both of them to be entirely naked on each other. "You'll never have to go without seeing your kids, baby. You've done so well for all of us."

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Bucky nodded and finished pulling Steve’s pants and boxers from him. “I'm trying, Baby. I am. And the beginning of next month will be a year sober again," he said and nosed against Steve’s abs and chest as he made his way back up to his lips. He didn’t want to mention why he drank last time. He knew Steve remembered that boy Jason invading their home and beating Bucky up.
"I'm so proud of you," Steve said, grabbing Bucky's ass and pulling their bodies flush together so he could rut up into him. "You're such a perfect dad and husband. I'm such a lucky man," he said in an adoring tone. "You want to ride me tonight, Baby? Or do you want to be inside me?"

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Bucky pushed back against Steve to create friction. “Oh, I don’t mind,” he said and licked the side of Steve’s neck. “You pick because I’m content either way. We haven’t had sex in a week and a half and that’s my fault so you pick.”

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"I want you to ride me," Steve said, as if he'd been imagining it all evening. "It isn't your fault, Baby..." Steve reached for the lube in their drawer and made a show of taking his time to coat his fingers with it. With his dry hand, he pulled Bucky down for a searing kiss. As they kissed, he started to tease his hole without pushing his fingers in just yet.

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Bucky moaned against Steve’s lips and pushed his ass back on Steve’s fingers, desperately trying to get them inside him. “Come on, Baby, more. Push me. Give it to me. I see it in your eyes, Steve. You want to own me tonight. I’m all yours.” He hoped to god that Steve would get the hint and just take him. He sat back a little and brushed his hands over his nipples gently. “It’s been a week and a half. Maybe I forgot just who it is who gets to have my body. Remind me.”

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Steve was all too easily goaded by his husband. He pushed a single finger in and started to move it freely inside of his ass, barely meeting any resistance until he pushed a second finger inside. "We need to make a habit of finding more time for this," Steve said, looking up at Bucky with dark, wanting eyes. "You look so good right now, Baby." He curled his fingers and started to massage Bucky’s prostate.

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Bucky whined and gasped and let his body move and react to Steve’s touches freely. “I know, we do. Maybe we should make a chart. Some sort of schedule?” he joked and leaned in for another quick kiss. “Or you need to just drag me into this bed when you want me so I won’t have to guess. I’ll know exactly what you need.”

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"If you collect enough good behavior stars, you get to be on top," Steve joked. He had started Adriana on a chore chart where she would get rewards if she did enough chores and it was working out pretty well so far. Steve pushed a third finger inside of his husband. "And what do I need right now, Baby?” he asked.

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Growling just slightly down at Steve, Bucky took Steve’s free hand and moved it to rest over his heart. “You need to be in control. You need to take me. I mean really take me. In a way that shows that you will make sure I get what I want while you get what you want. You want to pin me down and fuck me into next week. You need to see me open and ruined by you, leaking your come, and bright red with the effort of it all.”
Steve groaned as Bucky painted the image for him. He abruptly pulled his fingers out and flipped Bucky onto the bed so he could move over him now. "You're like a goddamned mind reader," he said. Steve took one of Bucky's hands and pinned it above his head. He lined his cock up with Bucky's hole and slowly pushed inside of him.

"Just when it comes to sex," Bucky teased and relaxed himself so Steve could push himself all the way inside his ass. "And you happen to show on your face just what kind of sex you are wanting that night. It's true. It's in your eyes, Babe."

Steve let out a soft moan as he felt Bucky's hole stretch to accommodate his dick. He buried his face in Bucky's neck and started to kiss and bite at the skin as he eased into his husband inch by inch until he was balls-deep inside of him. "I want to fuck you so hard you'll have Clint wondering how you're managing to stay on your feet tomorrow."

"Uh-huh," Bucky gasped and turned his head to the side so Steve could get at him better. "Bite me," he added as an after-thought. "I mean, actually hard on my neck. I want to feel it. And I want to see it tomorrow too. I want to have to wear my scarf inside all day because I'm so covered in marks from you, Stevie."

Usually, Steve would have been more reserved about marking his husband in such a way, but he was a little more desperate than usual tonight. As soon as Bucky requested it, Steve's teeth sunk into Bucky's neck and he let out a low, possessive growl. His hips moved in tight circles that shook the bed beneath every movement. He pulled back and soothed the bruise over with his tongue.

The breathy high-pitched gasp of pain and pleasure from the bite had Bucky begging for more. He tangled his hand in Steve's hair and bared the other side of his neck for him. "Please," he requested softly and held his husband close to him as he wrapped his legs up around his middle, pushing up with every thrust from Steve.

Steve was nearly feral at this point. Whatever Bucky wanted, he would get it. He thrust his hips faster and gripped onto Bucky's hand tighter as he bit another mark onto his husband's neck. "All mine," he purred. "Let me hear you say it, Sweetheart. Tell me that you're mine."

"I'm yours, Steve," Bucky whispered and gripped onto his husband's hand as tightly as he could. He brought his other hand up as well and grabbed the headboard. "My body is yours. All of it. Only yours. And my heart and my life are yours. You've got control, Baby. My body is all yours. Fuck me, use me."
Steve gripped Bucky's hip with a bruising hold and just fucking railed him. He grunted and panted against Bucky's neck in effort as wet slaps permeated through the room as Steve fucked him into the mattress. The more Bucky spoke, the harder Steve's hips pounded into him.

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Bucky was quickly reduced to loud gasps and moans. His body writhed and moved with Steve’s and his heart was pounding in his chest. “I love you,” he gasped and noticed how Steve’s breathing was labored and shallow as he fucked him. He wouldn’t say anything unless Steve did, though. He didn’t want to make him feel bad.

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Steve was barely able to keep his breath up with the pace that he was fucking his husband at. Luckily for his lungs, Steve's orgasm came pretty quickly. He wanted to last longer and keep fucking him but he was losing stamina fast. It was only about a few more minutes until the waves of pleasure crashed over him as he spilled himself inside of Bucky. He wheezed as he collapsed on top of Bucky, trying to not breathe too deeply and bother his lungs.

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Bucky’s own breath was knocked out of him as Steve finished inside him and flopped on top of him. He curled his limbs around Steve and breathed heavily in his ear. “God, Baby, you are so good. That was amazing.”

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Steve closed his eyes and snuggled against Bucky. "I love you so much," he said softly. He couldn't talk much for a minute or so longer until he finally caught his breath. He looked up at his husband with a small pout. "You didn't finish, though. Let's do something about that.

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"You can in a minute," Bucky said and held himself tighter around Steve so he wouldn’t go anywhere. "Just hold me like this for a little bit." He sighed happily and closed his eyes. “You know I love having your weight on me and your cock inside me like this. Makes me feel secure.” He would stay just like that for days on end if he could. Steve’s strong body on top of his was all he needed right now. “How do your bite marks look?” he added sleepily and stifled a yawn against Steve’s shoulder.

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Steve did as he was told. He kissed along Bucky's jaw affectionately and kept his arms wrapped around him as strongly as he could. "They look like they're going to be pretty dark tomorrow," he said with a little frown. He always worried himself over nothing. "You're definitely going to need a scarf."

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Bucky hummed happily and gave Steve a kiss. ‘Good. That’s what I want. It felt amazing, by the way. You biting me. I loved it.” He kept his eyes closed and his breathing slowed down as he started to fall asleep. “I love you, Steve. I love my wonderful husband. You’re my life.”

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Steve ran his hand over Bucky's chest and he kissed his husband's cheekbones then his forehead. "I love you too, Baby. You make me a better person and I'm so happy that we were brought together." He smiled. "I love all the things you do for our family and to make me happy. And I love that even when I'm stubborn, you still stand your ground when I'm wrong."

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“I knew what I was getting into when I married you. I learned pretty quickly that the Rogers family was a stubborn one,” Bucky said with a cheeky little grin. “But, I’m used to it. I’ve lived with Becca and Lilly all their lives.” He sighed and moved Steve just slightly. “No matter what we argue about or what we get angry at each other for, I need you to know that I love you and I’m just trying to make sure you have the perfect life that you deserve to have.”

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Steve smiled and cupped the sides of Bucky's face. "I know, Love," he said. "I know you do." There wasn't a second that passed where Steve doubted Bucky's commitment and feelings for him. He kissed him slowly, enjoying the feeling of his husband tucked against his side. "So, am I going to get to put my hands on your dick tonight or what?" he asked with a doofy smile.

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A bubble of laughter popped from Bucky’s lips and he tangled his hand into his hair to pull it out of the way. “If you want to, Baby, you can,” he said with a tired smile. “I’m just about falling asleep as I am. You took it out of me with that rough fucking, Steve. Not that I’m complaining in the slightest.”

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"Well, if you fall asleep before I finish you off, I'll just have to wake you up with a morning blowjob," Steve said. He walked his fingers down Bucky's chest, down his belly, and then he took hold of his cock to stroke it slowly. "How’s that sound?" Steve asked.

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Bucky moved his leg out of the way so Steve had better access to him. He really was sleepy so he figured it might fall asleep. “That sounds fine, Baby. I love when you do that. Maybe we can have some morning sixty-nine before I go to work? That’ll hold you over for the day until I get home, I would think.”

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"I like the sound of that,” he purred. Steve thumbed the head of Bucky's cock and kissed his neck affectionately. "Whatever you want, Love. When you're taking in the dough to support our family, you get whatever you want in the morning."

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Bucky chuckled and gave Steve a face. “Oh, is that how this works? You’re gonna suck me off in the morning so I keep providing for you? Not because you just want to?” he joked. “I’m hurt. I thought you liked having my cock in your mouth.”

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"You jerk," Steve laughed. "I like having your cock in my mouth and you deserve it." He stroked
Bucky a little faster and moved his other hand down to cup his balls. "I like that thick dick of yours on my lips."

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"Uh-huh, I know you do," Bucky said and scratched his fingers on Steve’s shoulders. "That feels nice. Can you stick some of your fingers in my ass while you jerk me off, please? I feel empty without you inside and I can feel your come down there."

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"So needy," Steve joked. He teased Bucky's hole a little bit by tracing the tip of his finger around it before carefully pushing two in at once. "How's that? You want some more, Handsome?" he asked as he slowly moved them in and out of his ass.

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"Yeah, more. I can take it," Bucky murmured and sat up just a little so he could watch Steve. "You make me crazy. In all the best ways, of course. But you do. You make me crazy." He shook his head and reached out to touch Steve’s cheeks and lips gently. "God, I love you so much."

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Steve pushed in a third finger just like Bucky wanted. He looked at him with all the love in the world as he slowly fingerfucked his husband while jerking him off. "I know, Baby. I can see it in your eyes," he said. "You don't even have to say it and I know."

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"I know, but I think it's important to say it," Bucky said, "What about those days when you feel so down and just want to hide away? What if you forget that I love you and I haven’t told you yet that day? So, I got to make sure I’m letting you know as often as I can."

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Bucky was the sweetest man on the planet. Steve couldn't help but kiss him deeply because any moment not used to love on his husband was a moment wasted. "You bring my spirits up every day," he said softly. He pressed his fingers to Bucky's prostate and massaged it as he stroked him faster.

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Bucky gasped and whined and covered his face with his hands for a few seconds. He was getting closer to orgasm, the rough fuck earlier having pushed him really close already. "I’m almost there. I’m close. Fuck, Baby, you feel so good. I love having you on me, in me, just touching me everywhere."

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"I want you to come for me, Buck," Steve purred. "I love seeing your face right before you do, all desperate and needy. It's fucking gorgeous..." Steve gave Bucky's dick a small squeeze. "Come on. I wanna lick you clean after you've made a mess of yourself."
Bucky nodded and thrust his dick up into Steve’s hand. He was silent except for moaning and gasping and then he took a deep breath and held it as he came over Steve’s hand and his stomach for several long moments. “Shit... that like shoved its way out of me.”

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Steve stroked Bucky through his orgasm and licked his hand clean once he was done. He ducked his head down and gave Bucky’s dick little kitten licks until there was nothing left to lick up. ”There we go.” He kissed his husband’s limp cock for good measure.

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Bucky relaxed back on the bed again while Steve licked him clean. He shut his eyes and moved his hair out of his way again. He wanted to say something and thank Steve or just praise him or something. But before he could form any words to speak, he was fast asleep

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Steve stayed awake a little longer because Bucky looked so goddamned peaceful. Steve pet his hair and murmured soft words of love to him for a little while before finally settling down next to him. At long last, feeling happier than he did all week long, he fell asleep with his husband in his arms.
S5: E19

Chapter Summary

Grant's First Birthday and Memorial.

Bucky knew things weren’t going to be easy with Grant’s birthday coming up. The tone of the house was sad and contemplative during the week leading up to his memorial. They were going to go to the cemetery together and visit him and then throw a little dinner back at their place with their family and their close friends. It wasn’t going to be a lot of people, of course, but Bucky still had a lot to do. First on the list was to get Steve out of bed. He was the last one to get up and everyone else was already dressed and having breakfast together. So Bucky, dressed in a nice professional black outfit with his hair pulled into a neat, tightly slicked back bun, went to sit on the edge of the bed next to his husband again. “I know you’re awake.”

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Steve knew he wasn't the only one hurting. He wasn't the only one that lost someone they loved that day and Bucky lost even more than that. Even so, Steve was finding it impossible to get out of bed. Having a dinner to commemorate their second son had seemed like a good way to remember him but now Steve was dreading it. He didn't respond at first when Bucky spoke but when he did, his voice was small. "I don't want today to happen,” he mumbled.

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Bucky couldn’t blame him. He didn’t want today to happen either. If he could, he would poof his son and Missy back into existence and make everything okay again. But he couldn’t do that. So, he had to see this day through. “On the first anniversary of my parents' death,” Bucky started slowly and quietly. “I kept to myself. I stayed in my room and I drank and cried. I ignored my sisters and they had to grieve on their own and fend for themselves. And a few weeks later, once I realized that I shut out my living family to mourn my dead family, I hated myself a little more. I was so angry at myself for not holding my sisters and crying with them and helping to make our pain feel a bit more manageable with us all together like that.” He sighed and took Steve’s hand. “It’s your choice, Steve. If you really want to stay in this bed today, I won’t do anything about it. But I really think you will regret it later if you don’t spend today with all the people who love you and love Grant.”

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Steve didn't want to admit it to Bucky - because he knew how hard it was to break his addiction - but Steve kind of wanted to get drunk and be alone all day. He knew he would later regret ignoring his family like Bucky said, but he also felt entitled to make bad decisions once in a while. "I don't want our kids to see me like this. Or our friends," he groused quietly. "Adriana looks at my feet sometimes and she hasn't asked what the tattoo is but I dread answering her.”

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Bucky nodded and took a deep breath. “So, just to clarify, you’re staying in bed today?” he asked, trying to sound as neutral as he could and not give away that he was disappointed. He had just promised he wouldn’t say anything about it if Steve decided to stay put in bed. He needed to let
Steve make his own choices about this regardless of how he felt.

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"I'm skipping breakfast, at least," he said. Steve didn't want to bow out on the rest of the day officially just yet. But he also didn't have it in him to leave the bed. His bottom lip quivered and he hid the side of his face in the pillow to avoid looking at Bucky because he knew he was making it harder on his husband. "Let me know when you're heading out."

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“Okay,” Bucky said simply and pet his hand over Steve’s hair and his neck. “Love you,” he added in a desperate whisper and then got up and quickly hustled out of the room so he didn’t start crying again. He already started the morning that way when he woke up and he knew it was going to happen again. He just rubbed his face with his hands and made his way back downstairs to the rest of his family who all needed him today in their own ways.

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The babies were making their usual ruckus that morning but everyone else was more reserved. Even Adriana knew something was up. When Sarah saw that Bucky came down alone, she gave an upset frown and excused herself from the table. There was a small, indistinguishable commotion from upstairs that sounded vaguely like Sarah reprimanding Steve and then minutes later, her son was trudging down the stairs with her, dressed but looking like he was barely holding himself together. Sarah wasn't going to let her son have Bucky face today alone.

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Bucky watched Steve trail into the kitchen behind Sarah and he sighed. He really wished she would have just left it. Steve didn't want to get out of bed and, while Bucky was upset about it, it was still his choice. And he just sort of figured things would be worse today if Steve wasn’t allowed to do what he chose to do. But maybe it was more likely that Bucky just didn’t have the strength to do what Sarah did. Regardless, Bucky was wound tightly and feeling anxious about everything. "Steve, there’s some waffles and scrambled eggs left over if you want them.”

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When Christopher saw Steve walk into the kitchen, he reached his arms out. "Dada!" He squirmed in his high chair and when Steve didn't greet him with his usual enthusiasm, his bottom lip jutted out. Steve sighed and picked him out of his chair so he could sit at the table with their son in his lap and feed him. "It's alright, Buck. I'm not hungry," Steve muttered.

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“Okay,” Bucky said and turned away to clean up dishes in the sink. He hated how Steve picked up Christopher and held him like it was a burden. Steve had just sighed and flopped in his chair like spending time with his first son was a nuisance and the last thing he wanted to do.

Bucky heard Christopher humming and then rattling off the colors he had finally learned. He couldn’t pronounce them very well but at least he could distinguish yellow, blue, green, pink, and red fairly easily. He still struggled with telling the difference between yellow and orange and blue and purple.
Adriana looked nervously over at Bucky because she'd never seen Steve like this. He was doing his best to try and be normal, but Steve felt like absolute shit and he didn't even want to be out of bed right now. "Good boy, Christopher," he praised when he went on about colors and pointed to objects in the room even if they weren't the correct color. "Is the spoon blue?"

Becca looked over at Bucky and asked, "Would you rather I babysit while you and Steve go to the cemetery today?"

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"Boo!" Christopher shouted and gripped the spoon. "Boo!" He didn't seem to get that something was wrong with his parents today.

Bucky wasn't really sure what he wanted. He already had everyone dressed and ready to leave once they all finished eating. And he thought it would be important for everyone to visit Grant. But he also didn't like that Steve would hardly make eye contact with anyone, including Christopher. Maybe Steve really should just stay home. He would be less angry if he got to do what he wanted and nothing else. And Bucky wouldn't want to shake him and tell him to at least smile and tell his babies that he loves them all. "Uh... I guess... whoever wants to go, can go. If you don't want to go, then don't feel obligated." It was mostly meant for Steve.

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Christopher's enthusiasm managed to draw the tiniest, tired smile out of Steve for just a moment. "Yes, that's a blue spoon," he said flatly as he rubbed Christopher's back. "You're a smart boy. Do you want more food?" Steve heard Bucky's response but he didn't feel like he had a choice to stay back. Everyone else voiced that they wanted to go, either because they wanted to visit the people buried there, or as emotional support. "I'll go," Steve conceded.

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Bucky took a deep breath and held it for a while. "Okay," he finally muttered in defeat. His whole body felt like it was on edge. His very being, his soul, everything felt like it was being pulled as tightly as it could be pulled today. "Everyone, get your shoes and coats on then we will go. It's pretty cold outside so wear something warm."

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When Steve went to get Christopher dressed, the little boy squirmed and protested. "No, Dada," he insisted, trying to run and play with Diana instead.

"Christopher, please, we need to keep you warm." Steve pleaded. It took longer than usual but he finally wrestled their son into a jacket and Christopher looked very angry for it.

He stomped up to Bucky and put his hands up. "Papa. Off."

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Bucky bent down and picked up Christopher and held him tight to his chest so he wouldn't squirm as much. "Sorry, Bean, you have to wear the jacket until we get back home." Bucky looked around to make sure everyone was all set. Becca was holding Adriana's hand and Lilly was holding Sarah May who was already snuggled down on Lilly's chest to keep warm. "Okay, Adriana, put your hat on your head, not in your pocket, then we can go."

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Adriana sighed and put her hat on. Steve wondered what was wrong with their kids that they were opposed to being reasonably dressed for cold weather. Steve decided to put Diana on her leash because everyone else had his kids and he needed something to keep him distracted. She gave a bark and wagged her tail before leading the way out of the house.

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Bucky took a deep breath again and then corralled all his family out the door. He locked up behind them and stuck Christopher inside his coat and zipped it up so he would be warmer. Steve was leading the way only because Diana wanted to be in front. And Bucky was trailing several feet behind everyone and just working on keeping his tears back for now.

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About halfway to the cemetery, Steve had Diana slow down and he fell in line with his husband. Usually, he was more reserved about affection in public but he could tell that Bucky needed it. He reached over and laced his fingers with Bucky's to give his hand a small quick squeeze. "I'm sorry."

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Bucky glanced down at Steve’s hand in his and he gave it a squeeze back before letting it go. He didn’t want to deal with anyone’s homophobia on his son’s birthday. He looked up at Steve and tried to keep himself from screaming at him that this whole thing wasn’t fair. But he just sniffled and said, “For what?” For not wanting to leave the bed? For coming along just because Sarah told him to? For shutting down once again and putting everything on Bucky?

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Steve looked a bit taken aback when Bucky asked why he was sorry. He looked away with a glower, angry and upset. They shouldn’t even have to be going out here. They should be all home, celebrating their second son’s birthday with a house full of children, including Grant. "I don’t want an argument, Buck," he said tiredly.

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“I’m not looking for an argument,” Bucky said sternly back. “I want to know.” He squared his shoulders as he walked to try to seem more put-together than he was right now. Steve always had the physical advantage with his height and build and weight but Bucky would always try to puff himself out just a little to even things up as much as he could.

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Steve huffed and gave Bucky a look when he leveled up to him in such a bombastic and clearly intentional way. He had very little patience to begin with today and he was trying to save it so he could be more emotionally available to his husband but all he felt was anger. "I'm sorry I'm not supporting you the way you need me to."

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“You could have stayed home. I said it was your choice. I wasn’t going to say a thing about it if you chose to stay in bed,” Bucky responded and held Christopher close to his chest and kissed his head. "You would have been happier.”
"Ma yelled at me, I didn't have much of a choice with her," Steve reminded. "And you wouldn't have been happier having to do this on your own." Christopher snuggled up to his papa's chest and babbled something into his coat.

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Bucky kissed Christopher a few more times and covered his face a little more with his hat. "Your mom doesn’t control what you do. And just doing what she wants you to because she yelled doesn’t make anyone happy.” He paused and wiped at his eyes. "And I don’t know what would have made me happier. I know what I had hoped for today but I didn’t get it. And I wasn’t even hoping for much.” All he was asking was for Steve to make this time be an equal effort on both their parts.

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Christopher was satisfied with the kisses but he moodily pushed the hat back up. Steve felt like he got a punch in the gut when Bucky expressed how disappointed he was. "Can I try again?" Steve asked. "Can I try to make it up to you?" He didn't deal with grief well but he wanted to try for his husband.

---

Bucky sighed and reached out for Steve’s arm and stopped them just outside the cemetery gates. The rest of the family was headed inside but Bucky held him back. He looked up into Steve’s eyes and relaxed his body a little bit in a show of compromise. “Today is about all of us. Okay? You can’t shut down again. I didn’t get to properly mourn our son and my friend last year. I can’t be made to hold all the burdens again this year too.”

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Diana gave a little tug to follow the rest of the family inside but Steve held her back with him and Bucky. He looked back into his husband's eyes and nodded. "Alright... I'm sorry, Bucky. I'll be better this year," he promised. "Want me to carry Christopher?" He was hoping that would be a good starting point.

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“You can be upset. You can be angry. You can scream about how unfair it was that we had to lose our son,” Bucky said and let the tears fall from his eyes. “But you can’t forget that the rest of us feel the exact same way. You can’t forget that our family needs us. You can’t forget that this affects all of us. And you... you can’t forget that I love you and I love our babies and our girls and your mom. I love this family. And I need my family together today.”

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Steve's heart broke when he saw the tears come from Bucky's eyes. He brought his hand up to dry them and Christopher whined a little when he saw his papa cry. His bottom lip jutted out and a few big messy tears came out of him, too. Adriana came running back to Bucky when the rest of the family got too far ahead. "Papa, are you coming?"

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Bucky transferred Christopher over to Steve and then covered his face in his hands. “Yes, Peanut. Give me a few minutes,” he said softly and gestured at a bench a few feet away that had a light dusting of fallen leaves on it. “I need to sit. I’ll come meet up with you all in a few minutes.”
Steve cuddled Christopher close once he was passed over. "I love you, Buck. I'll see you soon," he said. He held Christopher with one arm and handed Bucky Diana’s leash. He walked with Adriana to catch up with the rest of their family. Diana sat down next to Bucky and she laid her head down on his lap while she waited for Bucky to say what to do next.

Bucky curled his arms around Diana and just cried in her fur. She was a little past a year old as well. They got her when she was about three months. He was grateful every day that they decided to get a puppy for Steve. Diana had really been helpful for him and she was so good with the kids too. “You’re a good girl, Diana,” he whispered and sat up to watch Steve and Adriana walk up to the headstones and plop down next to Becca and Lilly.

Steve sat down on the ground and had all three of his children in his arms - Christopher and Sarah May in each one while Adriana sat in his lap. He’d taken them here often, so Adriana knew of this place even though she didn't understand why they were celebrating a birthday when her brother never was here but went right to heaven.

Bucky took a few more minutes and then got up off the bench and let Diana lead him over to the rest of the family. The girls were talking with their parents and updating them on what happened since the last time they had come to visit. Bucky kissed the top of both his sisters’ heads and then squeezed next to Steve and wrapped an arm around him. “Did you explain that it’s his birthday?”

Steve nodded. As soon as Bucky came over, Sarah May reached her little hands out for Bucky. "Papa," she said in her little voice.

"I don't get it," Adriana said to Bucky. "How come it's his birthday if he was always in heaven? Why's he here?" she asked, pointing at the gravestone.

Bucky took Sarah May from Steve and he tucked her inside his jacket and zipped it up like he did with Christopher before. “Well, Adriana, it’s pretty complicated. Are you ready to hear a complicated story?” he asked with a weak little smile and poked her nose.

Sarah May stopped fussing once she was in Bucky's coat. Adriana leaned into Steve for warmth and Steve wrapped his arm around her now that it was free. "Okay," she said, looking up at him. "What's 'complicated' mean?"

“Complicated' means that it could be confusing at first, but if you pay attention, you will understand,” Bucky said and gently rocked side to side to try to get Sarah May to maybe sleep for a little bit. “So, you’ll have to be my big girl and listen really well to Papa.”
Adriana considered for a moment before she nodded her head. "I can be a big girl, Papa," she agreed. Christopher squirmed to get down and Steve watched as he toddled over to the gravestone and looked at it curiously. He had been here plenty of times and recognized it, but still didn’t know what to make of it.

"Okay, Big Girl," Bucky said and smiled at Adriana. "So, you see, Grant is our son, your brother. And even though he isn’t around anymore, that doesn’t mean he stops being our son and your brother. He will always be those things. And Daddy and I want to celebrate his birthday with him and with all of you. We want you to grow up knowing that your brother, even though he isn’t here, loves us and we love him." He paused and wiped his eyes of tears. "And the same thing with your Granny and Papaw. They are still your grandparents even though you never met them and they are in heaven too. And we can come down here and talk to your grandparents and your brother whenever you want to."

Steve reached out and rubbed Bucky's back reassuringly while he spoke. "Grant was born not too long before Sarah May was. He probably would’ve been about her size right now," he explained with a thick voice. "Maybe even smaller. He was really little when he was born."

Adriana looked at the two of them. "But how come he's in heaven already?"

"Um..." Bucky’s lip quivered and he had to turn and shove his face in the crook of Steve’s shoulder as a few breathy sobs escaped him. Sometimes, the images of seeing Missy on the table and Grant cold and still would burn so brightly behind his eyes. He could still feel his son in his arms as he tried to pretend that he was fine. He heard his own shouting and angered roars as he tore the hospital room apart. He knew he would never, ever forget those things. And today was the strongest that those memories had been.

Steve remembered how scary it had been, seeing Bucky holding their lifeless, little boy in the hospital and insisting that he was going to wake up. If only Bucky had been right. "He was very sick when he was growing inside of his mommy's belly," he said. "He wasn't able to live on earth, so God took him up to heaven so he could live there."

Adriana thought about it and reached out to grip Bucky’s hand to comfort him. But she was still confused. "If it’s a good thing that God took him to be in heaven, why is everyone crying about him being there?" No matter how much they tried right now, she wasn’t going to be able to understand this whole thing.

"Because we miss him," Steve explained. "You miss your papa when he goes to work, so it's kind of like that. We wish he could be with us even though we know that he can't be." He somehow managed to hold the tears back as he explained.
Christopher knocked on the headstone like he was knocking on a door. "Hi?"

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“Oh,” Adriana hummed and looked to her brother who now had his ear pressed to the headstone to try to hear something. “So, he isn’t gonna come home? Not like Papa comes home from work?”

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Steve shook his head. "No, Peanut. He isn't," he said quietly. "We have to wait until it's our turn to go to heaven to see him again. But that's going to be a long, long time."

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“Oh...” she said again, seeming to finally understand the gravity of it all just a little better. She leaned back against Steve’s chest again and just watched Christopher for a bit. Bucky tried to decide whether he should stop his son from trying to get an answer from the headstone or if he should just leave him.

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After a few unsuccessful attempts at getting an answer, Christopher went over to Bucky and tugged at his shirt. "Papa." He pointed at the headstone with a confused look. His parents would always talk to it but Christopher never heard it answer back.

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“I know, Bean, I know,” Bucky breathed and pulled Christopher on to his lap next to Sarah May. “He can’t say ‘hi’ back. But Granny and Papaw are watching out for him and giving him a good first birthday. And I’m sure they are loving seeing all of us today.”

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Adriana stood up and gave the headstone a little pat. "Happy birthday, 'Grand'." She said. She wasn't good at T's at the end of words.

Steve grabbed onto Bucky's hand tightly and made a sad noise. "You're such a good sister, Adriana. Do you want to give Granny and Papaw love, too?"

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Adriana nodded and moved over to pat the headstones of her grandparents. “Hey, Peanut,” Bucky said and pointed to his mother’s name. “You see that? It says ‘Winnifred.’ Do you remember that was the name that Daddy and I picked for your middle name?”

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"Winn-I-Fred," she repeated deliberately. Then she giggled. "Papa, I can't read that good. That's a long word," she said, pointing at the headstone.

Steve managed a little smile at that. "But, you're getting better and better at reading every day."

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“It’s okay, Adriana,” Bucky assured her and looked at his mother’s name again. “You’ll get it soon. You’ll be able to read and write a lot of things before you know it. Daddy and I are already so proud
of the words you know.”

Becca knelt down close to Adriana and pulled her in for a hug. “And your papa took way too long to learn his alphabet. You’re already way ahead of him.”

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Steve said, "Yeah, you're a fast learner." Adriana had been a little behind kids her age based on the books he read about it but she was really taking to learning new things and was quickly catching up.

Adriana smiled and hugged her aunt back. "Papa didn't know his alphabet?" She sounded shocked that her papa hadn't always known everything.

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“No, no, he didn’t know his alphabet,” Becca confirmed and gave a cheeky little grin over at Bucky. “He also didn’t know how to tie his shoes. He finally learned to tie them when I was learning how to tie mine. He still does it the 'bunny ears' way.”

Bucky scoffed and shook his head at his sister. “This is defamation, Becca. How rude. Also, the 'bunny ears' way is just easier than the adult way.”

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Adriana giggled, not believing Becca for a second. "No," she said. "Papa is smart." Steve thought it was goddamned adorable that Adriana thought that Bucky was the smart one in the family over Becca. Becca probably didn't hear that one often.

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“I am smart. Thank you, Adriana,” Bucky said. He felt a little lighter - a little better. His family was together and that was everything to him. He wished they weren’t hovering around gravestones, but he couldn’t change that. So, he thought he may as well embrace whatever he could get. He needed this.

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Becca waggled her finger at Bucky. "Enjoy it while it lasts. One day she's going to turn into a snobby teenager just like us.”

Steve said a prayer in front of Grant's grave before doing the same for Bucky's parents. He saw Diana sniffing around like she had to use the bathroom. "I think we should head out. I don't want her going on someone's grave."

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“Okay, Baby, good idea. Let’s go home.” Bucky gathered Sarah May and Christopher into his arms and stood up before passing his daughter off to Lilly again and making sure Becca was holding Adriana’s hand.

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Steve took Diana by the leash and had to pause on the way home to clean up the mess she made on a tree outside the bakery. Steve was feeling a little less heavy-hearted after visiting Grant with the family even though every fiber of his being ached for him to be here with them.
Once they got back to the house, Bucky felt the weight of everything fall right back down on him. Now that they were home again, he figured Steve would go straight to their room and sulk. He knew that the kids would need snacks soon and naps. Then, he also needed to get stuff ready to have their friends over for a memorial dinner. And he and Sarah were going to make food but suddenly Bucky felt like he could just collapse.

Steve wasn’t feeling good by any means but he was at least able to think of someone other than himself now. He saw the way Bucky carried himself and he walked over to him so he could wrap him up in a big hug. He pet his fingers through his hair and nuzzled him gently. "How about you lay down with Diana and the babies and I can take care of snacks and cooking?"

Bucky pressed himself against Steve and squeezed his arms around him. He appreciated the gesture but something in him worried that Steve would shut down in the middle of it and nothing would get done. Bucky shook his head and stood up straight. “It’s okay. I’m okay. I can handle it. I’ve got it,” he sounded as determined as he could in that moment and he might have gotten away with it if his body wasn’t visibly shaking so badly.

Steve wasn’t convinced with Bucky moving the way that he was. "Baby... you're not okay," he said softly. "You're shaking like a leaf." Steve ran a hand up and down Bucky's arm. "Would you prefer it if both of us went upstairs with the babies? I'm sure they wouldn't mind napping on our bed with us."

“What about dinner? Our friends are coming over tonight and we need to have the chicken marinating just about all day. And the girls still have class tomorrow so they need to do homework and I don’t want to make your mom do all the work,” Bucky rambled and looked around wildly as if he was expecting a group of cooks and assistants to appear out of thin air.

"We can order in food," Steve said. "They'll understand if we weren't feeling up to cooking today." He felt bad that Bucky was stressing out over this. "We can order from the diner and bring it all back for everyone," Steve suggested. "We still have the cake we baked, so they'll still have something homemade."

Bucky’s breathing picked up as Steve talked and he could feel his body reacting to anxiety too strongly. He needed something. He needed liquor. But he couldn’t have liquor. Maybe a cigarette. But he was already three months without a cigarette. And he just couldn’t get himself calmed down. His over-active brain immediately assumed he was having a heart attack.

Steve slid his hand down to lace their fingers together. "Baby, breathe," he said gently but firmly, locking his eyes with Bucky with an intensity that silently demanded Bucky to focus on him and
what he was saying. "Take a deep breath in. Okay, now exhale..."

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Bucky whined in the back of his throat but he stared into Steve’s eyes and pulled a shaky breath into his lungs and then pushed it back out. He did this a few more times and squeezed Steve’s hands tightly until he felt like he was calming down again. After a couple minutes, he buried his face in Steve’s chest and just cried. He had just gotten so worked up for a couple seconds and he didn’t know what to do.

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When Bucky started to sob into his chest, Steve held him tighter. "Oh, Bucky..." he said softly, giving him a heartbroken look. "I'm so sorry, Love." He kissed the top of his head and stroked his hair slowly. "I'm here for you, Bucky." Steve closed his eyes to stop any of his own tears from falling. He was going to try to be there for everyone today.

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Bucky just stayed there for a bit and then eventually peeled himself away from Steve to stare up at him. “Okay...we... we will order food. I can call Tim and have him pick it up. It’ll just be a quiet night. It’ll be calm. I can be calm.” He tried his best to smile at Steve but it didn’t really work. “I-I can handle it.”

---

Steve opened his eyes once he felt Bucky pull away from him. "Alright," he said. He kissed Bucky's forehead.

Christopher came over and tugged on Bucky's hand. "Papa," he said with a bit of urgency. Once he had Bucky's attention he began to sign the word 'hungry'.

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“Oh, Bean,” Bucky said and bent down to pick up his son and give him a little smile. “What do you want to eat? Make it a good one because after you have a snack, it’s nap time and Papa really needs you to sleep for a bit.” Adriana came skipping in then too and pulled herself up on to a chair at the table. “Okay, I’m missing my other daughter,” Bucky observed and looked around for Sarah May. “Who has Ya-Ya?”

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"No nap," Christopher said distractedly as he looked over to the jar of cookies on the counter. "Mm," he grunted hungrily, pointing at the jar. Adriana ran back to the living room and led Sarah May into the kitchen by wiggling her pacifier in front of her as Sarah May crawled towards it.

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Bucky set Christopher in his high chair and then watched Sarah May work her way over to him. “Okay... taking her pacifier is a little unconventional, but that’s okay,” Bucky murmured and picked her up to put her in her chair too. “Steve, Baby, can you get juice in their sippy cups. I’m going to make Adriana a sandwich and the babies can have deli meat and tomatoes.”
Steve went to get everyone their juice. "I told Adriana she's not allowed to pick up the babies without an adult watching," he said. Adriana liked to hold her siblings but after Steve had seen her hold Sarah May pretty precariously while trying to climb onto the couch, he had to set some limits.

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Bucky got half a sandwich made up for Adriana and he put it on her favorite green plastic plate. “I just don’t want Ya-Ya to bite her. She’s been doing that lately when she’s upset.” He set the plate down in front of Adriana and then set to work getting bits and pieces of meat and vegetables for the babies.

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"Ya-Ya bit me tomorrow," Adriana said.

"Yesterday, Peanut," Steve corrected patiently. He couldn't help but wonder if Grant would have been a teething terror like Sarah May was right now.

"Papa!" Sarah May whined, getting impatient when she saw the food.

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Bucky eyed both his daughters and then looked to Steve. He guessed if Adriana didn’t make a big deal out of it, then she was okay. He sighed and set food down in front of the babies. “Adriana, are you going to take a nap after your snack? The babies will, but if you’d rather stay down here with Nana, that would be okay.”

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"I think I want a nap," Adriana said. She liked having one-on-one time with her nana but she was also kind of tired. "Can Diana sleep with me?" Adriana could be a dog-hog sometimes but Steve was happy to share his good dog with his kids.

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Bucky gave her a kiss on her forehead and then went to get himself some food. “That’s up to Daddy. But I think Daddy and I are going to have a nap, too, so he probably won’t mind if Diana is with you this time.”

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Steve nodded. "You can have Diana for your nap," he said. "I think she really likes cuddling with you. She tells me you give the best hugs." Steve sat down next to Bucky and leaned into his side a little. After their kids were done with their snacks, Sarah May looked tired but Christopher didn’t look ready to sleep at all.

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“Bean, can you try to sleep?” Bucky asked and squished his son’s face with his hands gently, playfully. “Please. That’s all I want from you today. Just an hour of sleep. An hour, Christopher.” He waited for a response and all he got was two little hands reaching to grab his hair and pull it from the tight bun.

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Christopher giggled wildly. "Papa, play," he insisted.

Steve cleaned up the plates and rubbed Christopher's back. "Sweetheart, you have to take a nap. Aren't you tired? Ya-Ya is having nap time. Don't you want to sleep like Ya-Ya?"

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“Christopher, I'll let you sleep on my tummy. You like that. Daddy and I will let you nap with us in the big bed,” Bucky said, trying his best to convince him. “Nap on Papa, Bean?” He looked over and saw Sarah May was asleep in her high chair and Adriana was already on her way up to her room with Diana in tow.

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Christopher didn't entirely understand what his pop was saying to him but he could tell that it was some sort of compromise in his favor. He raised his arms up so Bucky could pick him up. Steve stood up and very gingerly picked their sleepy daughter up into his arms. "I'll tuck our girls in and you get Christopher?"

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“We will come up to bed in a second. His face is messy,” Bucky said and worked on wiping Christopher’s cheeks and mouth before heading back upstairs to lay curled up in bed. Christopher allowed his papa to put him on his chest and he waited there patiently for Steve to show up again. He really wasn’t in the mood to sleep and he kind of wanted all the attention from his parents right now.

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It was easy to put Sarah May and Adriana to bed. Steve sang them each a lullaby even though Sarah May was already asleep. When he got to their room, Christopher was talking to Bucky and showing no sign of tiredness. "He's giving you one heck of a time right now, isn't he?"

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“He’s not having any of this,” Bucky said and looked up at Steve. “I just need one hour from him. That’s all I want. Help.” He reached out for Steve and Christopher crawled up further on Bucky’s chest to snuggle up under his chin. “I think he’s trying to get more attention than his siblings. He’s getting more stubborn about napping and letting us be anywhere without him.”

---

Steve laid down next to them and reached out so he could pet his hand over Christopher's little back. "I try so much to have each of them get one-on-one attention during the day but it's hard," he said apologetically. "Bean, don't you know you're going to be grumpy if you don't sleep?" he said to him. Steve looked back at Bucky. "Maybe if we sing to him he'll sleep?"

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“I know you do, Baby. He just thinks he deserves more time because he was here first. He’s just not convinced that his siblings are just as important as him,” Bucky said and gently took Steve’s hand. “Maybe singing will help. Or maybe if we fall asleep, he will decide that he wants to sleep too.”

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Steve chuckled. "Yeah, I can imagine he's a little annoyed that he's not the only shining star in our
sky anymore.” He kissed Christopher’s cheek and then Bucky’s. He snuggled closer, draping an arm around his son and his husband and sang a hymn quietly.

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Bucky hummed softly with Steve since he knew this one and brushed a finger down Christopher’s nose. It was something his parents did all to time to make his sisters sleep. It was just a distraction to have the baby watch the finger go down to his nose and his eyes would close every time until they stopped opening again. It only sometimes worked on Christopher.

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Christopher fell into the trap a little and looked like he was about to sleep but he whined and pushed his hand away. He knew what Bucky was trying to do. However, the damage was already done and Bucky had made him sleepy. Christopher ended up reluctantly falling asleep not long after. "Such a stubborn kid,” Steve said fondly. "How are you feeling, Buck?"

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Bucky sighed in relief once his son was asleep on his chest with his hand partly in his mouth. “I’m tired, Steve. I’m so tired. But I’m tired a lot nowadays. Today, in particular, is just really bad. But, of course, it is. This day is always going to be difficult.”

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"Is there anything I can do to lighten the load? You do so much for us and I hate that you don’t get to spend as much time here as you want to,” Steve said. "I know there isn’t anything that can make either of us feel better today. But how can I help you tomorrow?"

---

Bucky didn’t really know how to respond. There wasn’t really anything that Steve was able to do to make things a little better for Bucky. It was all either things Bucky needed to do for himself or things that were out of their hands anyway. He was just quiet for a while and then decided to bypass the question for now. “In four weeks, it’ll be a year since I last drank. I’ll get my one-year sober chip. And that’ll also mark four and a half months without a cigarette.”

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“I know, I’ve been counting,” Steve said, rubbing a hand over Bucky's arm. "I'm so proud of you, Baby. You're going to keep earning more and more as time goes on. I know you can do it.” He kissed his cheek. "Our babies are only going to know their perfect, loving pop. And that's thanks to the work you've done.”

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Bucky sniffled and let some tears build up on his eyes. “God, I hope so. I worry every day that I’ll mess up again. Or I worry that I’ll be like the old guys who are in AA because they quit and were sober for decades and then something happened and they broke down again. I’m worried that I’ll be around people who are drinking and I’ll think that, you know, one beer will be fine. I’ll be fine. And then I’m passed out in the Bronx or Staten Island with no idea how I got there or something. Did you know Clint bought a second fridge for his beer and it’s hidden so I can’t find it? Because he doesn’t want me to even lay eyes on it when I’m at his place.”

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“That's just Clint being a good friend. I know that he knows you're strong enough to resist, but why make that extra work for you?” Steve said. "If you knew Clint had a painkiller addiction, wouldn't you keep your medicine out of sight just in case?” Steve squeezed his hand. "I know your addiction won't get the better of you again.”

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Bucky nodded and brought Steve’s hand up to kiss it a few times. “I'm going to try my hardest not to let it. And if Becca is still living here once she’s old enough to have alcohol, if she decides to drink, I’ll have to just ask her not to bring it in the house or to not tell me if she has it. I doubt she will drink, though, after dealing with me – and our mom, somewhat.”

---

Steve nodded. "See? This is why you're not going to relapse. You're so conscious of it and you have everyone here ready to support you. You have so many friends and family members ready to do anything to help." He kissed him. "And you have four extra reasons not to pick up a drink," he added, nodding at Christopher to show he was talking about their kids.

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“I know. I know I do. I have so many people who need me. And I'll just keep getting more people added to it. I won't relapse. I'm not going to let myself,” Bucky said, slightly more determined now, a little less nervous. “I can do it. I didn’t think I could quit in the first place and I did. I didn’t think I could give up cigarettes but I did. I’m doing this.”

---

Steve smiled encouragingly. "Our kids have such a good role model to look up to. It doesn't matter what you used to do. What matters is that you had the willpower to change.” He kissed him gently. "I admire you so much, Buck. I hope our kids will see how amazing their papa truly is.”

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Bucky let himself cry again because he really needed encouragement today and he was going to take any help Steve gave him. So he cried and stared at his husband and snuggled Christopher and hoped that his parents and Grant were as proud of him as Steve was. “I love you, Steve Rogers-Barnes.”

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"I love you too, my perfect husband." Steve pet his hair. "Get some sleep, Love. You've had a long day already and we have company coming over later." As heavy of a heart Steve had today, he was able to ease the pain by channeling his focus on making Bucky feel better. He could do this.

---

Bucky nodded and gently scooted closer to Steve so he was cuddled up against him and Christopher was cocooned in the crook of their arms together. “Just an hour. I promise. Then you can wake me up and I’ll start getting things ready. Okay?” He was so tired he wasn’t able to wait for Steve’s answer before he was asleep with his hand bunched in Steve’s shirt.

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"Okay," he said. Steve didn't end up sleeping. He stayed up, admiring how perfect his husband and their son looked sleeping cuddled up next to him. After an hour passed, Steve gently pet Bucky's
hair. "Hey, Buck... it's been an hour, love, it's time to get up."

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Bucky slowly woke up and saw that Christopher was still asleep. "Oh, hey!" he whispered excitedly. "Look. He’s still out. Let’s try to get him to his crib without waking him up and then I’ll go clean up downstairs. Becca said she would help me get things all looking more presentable."

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Steve smiled as he looked at their sleeping son again. "Alright," he whispered back. "I'm going to lay down just a little longer. I didn't sleep," he explained. All he needed was a few minutes to close his eyes. And a little bit of alone time before everyone came over would definitely help.

---

Bucky nodded and gave Steve a little kiss before gently getting off the bed so he could go get Christopher to his crib. He left Steve alone for a long while, just letting him rest. And he must have fallen asleep at some point or another because he still hadn’t come down by the time Tim had arrived with food and condolences.

---

Steve only woke up when Adriana and Diana came running into the room at the sound of company coming over. She didn't want to go downstairs to see who it was until she had her papa or daddy with her. Steve woke with a start and felt pretty damned groggy and worn out, but he scooped up his daughter anyway and carried her downstairs.

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Bucky and Tim were in the middle of setting food out in bowls and plates on the counter so everyone would be able to just walk through the line once the rest of their friends got there. "So, how are your kids handling their mom being pregnant again?" Bucky asked.

“They are indifferent, I think,” Tim said and then turned and noticed Steve in the doorway looking grim. “Oh... hey, Buddy.”

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Adriana looked less shy when she recognized Tim. "Hi, Mister Tim," she said, hugging Steve as he carried her. Steve walked over to give Tim a one-armed hug and thanked him for coming. "Do you two need help setting up?" Steve asked, shifting Adriana onto his hip so he could sort of free up his second hand.

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“I've got it handled,” Bucky said and glanced over at Steve. “Tim is going to make coffee and some sort of iced raspberry tea that he likes and then we should be ready.” He was a little bit frazzled, he would admit. “Clint, Nat, and Sam will be here soon if you want to go get the girls from the basement. They have the babies.”

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"Sounds like a plan. That just means I get to play some more with our favorite peanut." Steve tickled Adriana's sides and she squealed with laughter. Steve was hoping that hearing her giggle would lift
Bucky's spirits a little. "You want to help me get your aunts and your siblings from downstairs?" Steve asked her.

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Adriana clung to Steve and pressed her face to his shoulder for a second. “Okay, Daddy. Then we can get Nana. She’s sewing. Lilly ripped her sweater so she’s fixing it for her.” She sighed and looked up at Steve and added quietly, “Nana’s been sad today. Papa too. Everyone’s quiet... and I don’t know why.”

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Steve pet her hair as he walked out of the kitchen and hugged her closer when she spoke. "Peanut, it'll probably be a while before you understand. But everyone is really sad today because we all miss Grant," he explained patiently. "You didn’t get to know your mommy and daddy but you miss them too, don’t you? That's what it's like for us and Grant."

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“No,” Adriana whispered and looked up at Steve. “I don’t miss them. They left me alone. You and Papa are my Mommy and Daddy. You wanted me.” She stuck her bottom lip out in a pout and a few tears fell down her face. “You wanted me.”

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His face fell and he gently put Adriana on her feet so he could crouch down in front of her at eye-level. "Oh, Sweetheart... your mommy and daddy loved you," he said. "I know you're hurt, but your mommy and daddy wanted you, too." He gently dried her tears. "Me and Papa love you so much, too. And we are so lucky that you get to be our daughter."

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“You’re not gonna leave me too?” Adriana asked just to be sure and reached out to touch Steve’s face. “I wanna be a family. I love you. And I love Nana and everyone. And I don’t wanna go back to the orphanage.” She didn’t really think she would ever have to go back to the orphanage but she wanted to double-check.

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Steve hugged her tightly. "No, you're never going to go back there and we aren't going to leave you." Steve picked her up and wrapped both arms around her so she would feel secure. "Everyone here loves you so much," he said. "You make us happy."

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Bucky walked out into the hall to get another chair from the closet and he saw Steve on the ground holding Adriana close. “Oh, hey,” he said softly. “What - what’s going on?” He came over and knelt down with them. “Adriana, Sweetie, are you okay?”

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Steve looked over at Bucky and said quietly, "She doesn't want us to leave her alone like her other parents did. She doesn't want to go back to the orphanage." He gave Adriana a kiss and said, "Go let your papa give you a hug. He's going to say the same thing I did. You don't have to worry about being alone anymore."
“Oh... oh, Peanut,” Bucky pulled her in for a hug and gripped her close. “No, never. You’ll never be alone again. We are your family now and we will always be here for you. Adriana, we love you so much. We love you to the moon and back. You’re our little girl. You’re our precious little girl.”

Adriana sniffled and pressed her face into Bucky's chest. "You promise?" she asked. Even though they’d promised her dozens of times already, she still needed that reassurance. She didn't know how she could handle going back after having a family.

“I promise, promise, promise,” Bucky said and emphasized each word with a kiss to her forehead. “Now, go help your Daddy get the rest of the kids up here so we can be together. Sound good?” Adriana nodded and followed Steve. But now Bucky’s mind was thinking too much. What would they do if the both of them died just like his parents had? Obviously, if Sarah was still around then she would get all the kids. But what if she was gone too? Bucky couldn’t possibly ask Becca to take all their kids - no matter what age Becca was at. And Lilly wasn’t responsible enough to take care of a cat, let alone be solely responsible for all their children. Now he was more stressed, standing in the doorway, watching Tim fold napkins.

Steve wrapped his arms around his little girl and kissed her face a few times before standing up and carrying her towards the basement to round up all the others. Christopher was the loudest, squealing, "Dada!" As he squirmed in Becca's arms.

Tim saw the stressed look on Bucky's face. "What's wrong?"

“Too much...” Bucky admitted quietly and moved closer to Tim so he could speak without being overheard. “Today is hard enough, of course. And I’ve still got college on my mind ever since Becca and I talked about what other options I could have for school. And I’m constantly worried about Steve because he’s still looking for a good therapist. I need to find a new doctor to do my spinal injections. And now... now, I’m thinking about having my will rewritten and who is going to take my kids when I die.”

Tim had a lot of issues on his own, but he also didn't envy Bucky's problems either. They both were up shit creek in their own way and he could empathize with him. However, Bucky's latest worry seemed like a simple fix for him. "If Clint doesn't, I would," he said. He knew Clint loved kids and Natasha might make an exception in this far-fetched case. "What makes you think something’s going to happen before they're old enough, though?"

“Tim, Buddy, you're not going to want to take our baseball team of children,” Bucky said and flopped down in a chair at the table. “You have your own kids and your own life.” He could probably talk to Clint but he wasn’t sure how well it would be received by Natasha if Clint preemptively assuming responsibility of a bunch of kids in the case of their best friends both dying at once. “I’m just worried. My parents were young when they died. I was young when they died. And
then I had two kids. People die unexpectedly all the time. And, Lord knows it would be just my luck for it to happen with me and Steve.”

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"I wouldn't have my kids right now if it weren't for you and Steve making that shelter. I love being a parent. No, I'm not going to pretend that taking care of your army of children would be easy, but it's something I'm willing to do. I won't be offended or anything if you, uh... don't want me to. But I want to give back to you the help you've given me," he said. "I still think you and Steve are going to have a long life and die an old, ripe age."

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Bucky blinked back his tears and stood up to pull Tim into a tight hug. He kissed his cheek and squeezed him a little bit. “You’re a great friend. You’ve helped the both of us with so much. And Clint loves you to death. Maybe I’ll write in that you both get the kids. You two can share them.”

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Tim smiled and gave Bucky a tight hug back. "If we share them, I call Sarah May," he said. He loved all of their kids but Sarah May was his favorite. As if fate was trying to spite Tim for what he just said, Christopher ran over to him, waving his hand up at him. "Hi!" He signed Tim's name and then waved some more.

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“Oh, hey! Looks like you have a little fan, Tim,” Bucky said and watched his son try to scale the side of Tim’s leg to get up to him. The doorbell rang and Becca welcomed the rest of their friends in. They were all dressed nicely in dark shades and Clint brought some extra food with him. Bucky smiled at his friends and went to take Steve’s hand. He decided it was time to celebrate the fact that they were able to be a family and they were able to love Grant and be his parents even though he wasn’t there. He needed to focus on something good today.

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Clint was quick to take Christopher from Tim once he arrived. Steve's mom had Adriana now, which left Sarah May in Becca's arms. Steve wasn't feeling as awful about having people over as he was this morning. He turned to Bucky and said, "I'm still far from feeling okay, but I'm glad we have our friends and family here. And I'm glad we can face this day together."

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“I think I feel worse than I did earlier. Or maybe it was just that I didn’t let myself feel anything earlier and then it all came crashing down,” Bucky said. “But we have our kids and our friends and your mom and the animals and we have food. Let’s just be with people who love us and try to focus on all the really good things we get to have.”
When Halloween finally arrived, Steve was more than ready. The whole house was decked out in spooky decorations that the babies constantly got into mischief with. Adriana bugged Steve hour after hour about when they could go trick-or-treating. He told her she had to wait until most people would be home from work. Besides, they had to wait for Bucky to get home as well.

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Bucky wasn’t great with Halloween. He just got stressed out by all the people running around and the costumes. Also, crime was always up on Halloween. There were lots of parties and drunk people. It was just a lot. And tonight, Becca was going to go to a party with her friends and Bucky was so worried about her. And Lilly decided not to go with them but instead to go to the arcade with her friends. The rest of his kids were going to be with him and Steve out walking around Brooklyn. He was just convinced something was going to go wrong.

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Steve had fashioned a little bag with paint to look like a fish tank so Adriana could cart around her candy through the neighborhood. Diana was miserable at first to have her costume on but soon accepted her fate. When Bucky came home, Steve rushed over to give him a kiss. "Hey, Baby," he said. "We're going to have a good time tonight, yeah? Your sisters are going to be fine."

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Bucky pouted and looked up at his husband who was in such a good mood. Bucky really needed to get happy quick because Steve was so cute and excited and Bucky didn’t want to ruin that. “I told them to call home and check in with Sarah at least three times tonight... Becca told me to fuck off.”

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Since Bucky hadn’t been in much of a festive mood, especially after learning what his sisters were doing, Steve wasn’t going to push for the couple's costume. Steve was now dressed up as a kangaroo.
specifically so he could use a pouch for extra storage for whatever their kids picked up that night. He only looked a little ridiculous. "I don't get what's so hard about calling a few times," Steve said. "Becca's being a teenager, I guess."

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"I just want to make sure they are okay," Bucky agreed and then finally got a good look at Steve as an animal. That’s not what they had planned. And he knew Steve had the Luke and Han Solo costumes in the closet. He saw Steve perfecting them about a week ago but since then they haven’t come up. “Why are you a deer?” he asked and looked to see his kids all dressed and sitting in the living room playing together with Diana watching over them

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"Um... It's a kangaroo, not a deer. It was a bit last minute, but I was afraid you wouldn't be in the mood to dress up so I had to come up with a backup plan," Steve said. Wearing his Star Wars costume without Bucky could've seemed like he was trying to push the matter. "The tail kept ripping so I had to throw it out."

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Bucky laughed and pulled Steve in for a kiss. “Baby, I’m not in the mood to dress up. You’re right. But I’m also very much in the mood to see you happy and having a good time. And I’m a little in the mood to see you in your Han Solo costume and that brown wig.” He grinned and felt around on Steve before he found a zipper. He tugged it down a little and started pushing Steve towards the stairs. “Come on, go take that off. You can be a deer next year.”

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Steve's face lit up when Bucky agreed to do the costume together. "Yes!" he gasped, shaking his hands excitedly and giving Bucky a kiss. He ran up the stairs and tore off his costume so he could change into the Han Solo one he made. "You're the best. You know that? And I'm sorry your sister was a jerk to you."

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“It’s Becca. I’m used to it,” Bucky said with a sigh and worked his clothes off so he could put on the Luke costume. “I’m sure our kids will tell me to fuck off at some point in their lives. I’ll be so ready for them as teenagers since I already have experience.”

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"I don't want our kids to grow up and be bratty teenagers," Steve whined, putting on his wig. "I want them to stay perfect forever. Adriana spent all day yesterday working on writing a letter to me to tell me how much she loves me. I need to show you when we get back. She’s not great with some letters still but she’s trying."

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Bucky nodded and sat down on the ground to pull the boots on. It was a little difficult. “I know, Baby. But they might. Teenagers have so many hormones and stress going on inside them that they will probably be bratty sometimes.” He glanced over at Steve and saw that his Han Solo pants were very tight.
Steve walked over to Bucky and ran his hand over his back. "I think our kids will be different. They're special and I'll pray to God every night for good teenagers," Steve said. "You look good in that costume, by the way."

"It's not fair that you got Han Solo. Your costume is tight and sexy. Mine is loose and flowing." He stood up and spread out the fabric to make himself look tiny. "I feel small." But he also knew that Adriana would love that they both dressed up. And Steve did look really amazing as Han Solo and Bucky never tried to hide the fact that he thought Harrison Ford was sexy as hell. After all, his second date with Steve was at the movies to see Indiana Jones and he fawned over Harrison Ford the entire time.

"You wanted me to be Han Solo deep down because you wouldn't feel bad having a crush on him in the movies if you have the excuse of me wearing a costume as him once," Steve said. "You still look gorgeous anyway, Buck. You really know how to work a Jedi robe." He winked at him. "Come on, let's show our kids how cool their parents are."

Bucky sighed and headed back downstairs. "The wig is a little strange, I got to say. I thought maybe I would like it but you look different with brown hair. Don't look as much like my husband." He supposed that was kind of the point, though. He wasn't supposed to look like Steve Rogers. He was supposed to look like Han Solo.

"Well, I guess that's a compliment to the hard work I put into my outfit," Steve said. When Sarah May saw Bucky standing next to someone that didn't look like her dad anymore, she started to cry and reach for Bucky. Christopher and Adriana looked at her, not knowing what was her deal.

"Oh, hey! It's okay, Sweet Pea." Bucky said hurriedly and picked up Sarah May and held her close to his chest. He reached over and lifted Steve's wig up. "See? Baby, it's still Daddy. See, Ya-Ya? It's just Daddy being silly. Silly Daddy playing dress-up."

"No," Sarah May mumbled as she wiped her hands over his eyes. "Dada!"

Steve kept the wig off in an attempt to keep Sarah May calm. "Look, Sweetheart! It's me, it's Daddy." He leaned down and kissed her cheek. She pulled her hands away from her eyes and Steve gave her a big smile. "Hey, Cutie." She seemed to be less upset now that she could clearly see that Steve was here but she was still crying quietly. "I guess it was a really good call to not do spooky costumes," Steve said to Bucky.

"She just gets scared so easy. Remember when she screamed at Diana's tail sticking out from under the couch?" Bucky asked and let his daughter wipe her nose on his costume and whine softly in his arms. "She's probably okay now. You can put the wig on again if you want. I'll just hold her so she knows she's okay."
"Yeah," Steve said with a little laugh. He didn't mean to laugh at his daughter's expense but it was kind of funny that such a little thing gave her a start. Steve put the wig on again in front of Sarah May and the baby still had a big old jutted lip but she wasn't crying anymore.

"Can we go?" Adriana asked, trying to be patient but was way too antsy to be calm anymore.

“Yes, Adriana,” Bucky agreed and pulled a stroller from the closet. He was in charge of Christopher and Sarah May and Steve had Adriana and the dog. He set Sarah May in the stroller and got her buckled up before grabbing Christopher and doing the same, much to his annoyance. “Adriana, Peanut, you remember what we talked about? Hold Daddy’s hand until we get to a house and then wait for Daddy to let you go up to get candy then come right back to hold his hand. Okay?”

"I remember!” she said, but she also was just saying it so they would get going. Steve took her hand and made their way out of the apartment. Adrianna dragged Steve up to the first stoop they came across. "Do you say 'trick-or-treat', Daddy, or am I supposed to?"

Bucky was a few feet behind them with the stroller and he was watching Adriana and Steve very closely. He wasn’t going to let them out of his sight. “Go ahead, Peanut. Knock on the door and wait for someone then say ‘trick-or-treat’. You’ve got it.”

The woman in the first house recognized her right away and she gave Adriana a little extra candy because of that. Adriana let go of Steve's hand to run up to Bucky and show him her little hoard. "Look! This is so much candy already!"

“I know, I see,” Bucky said and took her hand so she couldn’t walk off again until Steve could come get her back. “Do you want me to put it in my bag for you? Or are you going to carry it?” She did look very cute with her scientist outfit on and she had little turtle stickers that Becca got her all over her arms.

"I'm a big girl. I can carry it," Adriana said. "Aunt Lilly says girls don't need boys’ help."

Steve stifled a laugh because she was so damned adorable. "You're right. You don't need help because you're a girl, but everyone needs help sometimes because we’re human."

“And I’m not just some boy, Sweetheart, I’m your Papa. There’s a difference. And I’m going to want to help you all the time, no matter what. And that’s the same for Ya-Ya who is a girl and Christopher who is a boy,” Bucky said and let go of her hand once Steve had her other one. “Ready to go to the next house?”
Adriana skipped from house to house gathering up more candy. "You think we should surprise Clint?" Steve asked. "I bet he’d love our costumes and would love to see the kids all dressed up," he continued. Really, he wanted to show off their adorable kids to everyone they knew.

"Yeah, I’m guessing he would like to see them," Bucky said as he stopped to give the babies some carrots to snack on. "He and Tim are closing the shop tonight if you want to swing over there to see them. It'll be Adriana’s first time in the record store."

"That would be cool," Steve agreed. Christopher happily munched on the carrots given and kept asking for more. "You want to see where your papa works, Adriana? He works with Uncle Clint and Uncle Tim at the record shop and they sell lots of music."

Adriana was currently squatting down next to the stroller and looking into the haul of candy in her bag. She was excited for it, but it had also gotten too heavy for her. But she was determined to carry it as much as she could. “Where is the store?”

"It's nearby," Steve said. "We can stop at all the houses on the way there."

Adriana was satisfied with that. As they stopped at more houses and gathered more candy, she was having a tougher time carrying her bag. Also, at one point, Christopher insisted on walking up to a few doors with them. "Papa?" Adriana asked as they walked along a stretch that only had shops. "Why do some people look at us funny?"

“Look at us funny?” Bucky asked, confused, and glanced down at his daughter. “What do you mean, Sweetie?” He had hardly been paying any attention to anyone behind the doors. He kept his eyes on his family and made sure that nothing happened to them. There could have been former presidents behind each door and he wouldn’t have noticed.

Adriana finally gave in and put her bag of candy underneath the stroller. "Some ‘peoples’...” she thought of how to describe it. "They look for a really long time. Daddy says it isn't polite to stare. How come they stare?"

Bucky gave a look over to Steve and shook his head. He knew this was going to come up with Adriana eventually. He just hated that it had to be tonight while she was supposed to be having fun. “You’re right, Adriana. It isn’t polite to stare. Peanut, has anyone ever said anything to you about me and Daddy? Has anyone said anything rude to you?"
Steve's heart sank a little. He was afraid of what would happen once the kids would go to school. Sure, Steve could keep it contained better while homeschooling them but that wouldn't last forever. "Nope. Just stares," Adriana said. "Do they like our costumes?"

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"Oh, I’m sure they love your costume, Adriana. You are such a good turtle scientist," Bucky said firmly and leaned down to pull her in for a hug and a kiss to her hair. “We are really close to the record store. How about when we get there, Daddy and I can have a talk with you while Uncle Clint and Uncle Tim watch the babies."

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"Okay," she said, going back to skipping. When they arrived at the record store, she gasped. "They have lots of music just like us!" She said, pointing at the records.

Tim looked up from his spot at the register and beamed. "Hey, you guys. Happy Halloween!"

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Adriana ran off towards a big tower of records and nearly knocked over an entire table of cassettes on her way. “Adriana, please no running, Baby!” Bucky called after her. He knew he would have to fix in the morning whatever she ruined tonight. "Hey, Tim. We wanted to stop by so you and Clint could see the kids’ costumes. Where is he? In the back?"

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"He's in the back, yeah. He's probably aware that you guys are here. Adriana stomps around like a dinosaur for someone so small," Tim laughed.

Clint came out of the stock room just at that moment and beamed happily over at them. "Oh, my god! You guys are so cute!" he said to the kids. "And your parents are big nerds!"

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Bucky flicked Clint in the head and then helped get the babies out of their seats so they could run around too. “Clint, you know you would love to be our Leia right now,” Bucky said. Sarah May, who was doing really well with walking a few feet at a time, started a journey towards Tim the second she was on the ground. Christopher tried to run past Clint to get to a box of records but Clint caught him.

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"My hair isn't long enough. Maybe I could borrow Steve's wig. Or better yet, you be Leia and I'll be Luke. That makes more sense anyway" Clint teased.

"You got any candy here, Clint? Our kids are kind of expecting it," Steve asked with a little grin.

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“Register,” Clint murmured and plopped down on the ground to be with Christopher. “Although, if you could leave the Reese’s that would be great because those are my favorite and I plan on eating a lot of them tonight. Also, steer clear of Reggie’s joints hiding out there.”
"How's business been tonight? Has anyone been causing any trouble?" Steve couldn't help his law enforcement instincts and he was protective over where Bucky worked. And he knew kids could cause trouble and graffiti businesses and Halloween was a big night for that.

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“No, everything has been pretty average around here,” Tim said and brought Sarah May over with him to help Steve get some candy from their bowl. “It’s pretty quiet since everyone is out with their kids or at parties.” He leaned in to whisper to Steve, “Also, I don’t get Adriana’s costume. What is she?”

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Steve hid the Reese's away so his kids wouldn't go after them. Sarah May wasn't a candy-eater yet but she was interested in the bright-colored wrappers. "She's a turtle scientist," he whispered back to him. "If you compliment her on it, you'll make her day."

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“Turtle scientist...” Tim mused and looked back to Adriana who was happily mixing disco in with jazz in no particular order. “Adriana, I think your costume is my favorite. Your daddies look pretty good and the babies are pretty cute. But you are an amazing turtle scientist. You’re the best one I’ve ever seen.”

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Adriana beamed happily up at Tim. "Thank you!" she said excitedly. "I wanna be a ‘tuttle’ scientist when I'm all grown up!"

While everyone as distracted, two men walked into the shop and started to look around. Diana, who had been quietly at Steve's side up until that point, let out a little growl that put Steve on alert.

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Bucky glanced over at the men and then over to Steve. Steve looked tensed. Maybe he knew these guys and not in a good way. Maybe he had arrested them at some point. All Bucky knew was he didn’t like the look on Steve’s face or the growl from Diana. “Steve?”

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Steve glanced back to Bucky. "Get the kids in the back, just in case," he whispered quietly. "I don't know what they're up to, but Diana doesn't like them." Which was enough of a tell-sign for Steve that these men weren't the kind of people he wanted around their kids.

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“Shit,” Bucky whispered and quickly picked up Christopher and signed to Clint to grab Adriana. He paused by Tim and took Sarah May from him. “Tim, stay with Steve. I don’t know what’s going on. Make sure he keeps his head. If there’s some sort of ruckus, he is going to want to over-do it on his lungs.”

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Tim gave Bucky a thumbs up. Clint was confused why they were going in the back but he wasn't going to cause a fuss with a room full of little kids. The two men meandered like normal but then
they took an armful of records and started to walk out of the place without any shame. Steve looked to Tim to make sure he was seeing the same thing. "Hey," he said firmly. "What do you two think you're doing?"

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Tim, Clint, and Bucky had established a set of secret stomps to use as a sort of code in case of emergencies. They just used the Morse code but it worked. Tim stomped out a Morse ‘P’ to alert Clint and Bucky to call the police from the phone in the back.

The men turned and gave Steve a once over and just started to laugh. “This is what I love about Halloween. Jackasses like this you put on a costume and think they can be a hero.”

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"Come on, there's no need to act tough. Besides, it'll make things even more embarrassing when this jackass in a costume gets the better of you," Steve answered. "So how about we pay for those albums or put them back?"

One of the guys pulled out a, comparatively pretty small, knife on Steve and opened his mouth to say something, but Diana lunged at him. Her mouth clamped down on his wrist and she dug her paws into the floor as she tugged. The man dropped the knife in shock and started to shout in pain. The other guy took off like a bat out of hell.

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Tim didn’t really act the part but he was no stranger to physical confrontation. He immediately jumped on the man and brought him down to the ground. He would have gone after the escapee but Bucky told him to stay with Steve. “Got him,” he grunted as he pulled the man’s hands around to his back and dug his knee into his spine. “Police should be headed over.”

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Steve wanted to go after the one that fled but he didn't want to leave when his husband and babies were just a room away. Diana let go of his wrist once Tim was on top of him, but she paced back and forth in front of him anxiously, whining and growling at the man on the floor. When the police came, Steve called her off and helped Tim up. "Thank you, Buddy," he said. "I didn't realize you were able to do that stuff." He gestured vaguely at Tim, suitably impressed by his ability to tackle a bastard.

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Tim pulled Steve in for a quick hug and then let out a low chuckle. “Bucky never told you I used to be a street fighter?” he asked and shook his head. “I spent about a decade fighting in the Bronx in an underground competition. I only stopped when I met my ex-wife. I wasn’t half bad.”

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"If he did, I must've forgotten," Steve said. "Or maybe I was still an officer at the time and I didn't want to know about any illegal activity for my job's sake," he chuckled. He gave him a nod. "Thank you for helping out." Diana rushed into the back once everything was all clear and started to sniff and investigate the kids to make sure that they were well and safe.

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Tim gave Steve a little doubtful look and said, “Steve, Buddy, most of the people Bucky knows have done illegal stuff. Everyone who works here for sure. Reggie and Bucky with drugs, me with fighting, Clint was a petty thief as a teenager. Natasha knows. She fingerprinted him on their first date apparently.”

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"I've gathered as much," Steve said with a long tone of awe because he always knew Bucky made claims like that but he didn’t realize he hadn’t’ meant just some drug use or misdemeanors. He didn’t mind all that stuff, he wasn’t mad. He was still very impressed with Tim right now. "But I'm not a cop anymore so now I don't got to pretend my husband surrounds himself with troublemakers." He gave Tim a little nudge to show that he was kidding. "It doesn't surprise me that Natasha would do that. I'm glad that Clint passed her test." He excused himself to go see how everyone was doing in the back.

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When Diana came to them, Bucky knew it must have calmed down. He was currently down on the ground with her, letting her lick his face and bark softly at the kids in gratitude that they were okay. He looked up and saw Steve and shook his head. “Baby, what happened? We heard Tim stomp and I called the police.”

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Luckily all of the kids didn't seem to know that anything went on. "They tried to steal a bunch of stuff. When I confronted them, one pulled a K-N-I-F-E on me. Diana bit him but the other got away. Tim held him down until the police came." He spelled out the word so Adriana wouldn't get worried. She didn’t know that word’s spelling yet.

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“What!” Bucky gasped and got up from the ground quickly. He pulled Steve to the side and checked him over for any injuries. He lifted his shirt up and felt around his neck, half expecting to find a stab wound somewhere. “Jesus...” he whispered and pulled Steve in close. “Why does this always happen?”

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Christopher walked over to Steve and started to look him over just like Bucky was, wondering if his dad was hiding candy that his papa was looking for. Steve wrapped his arms around Bucky and kissed his cheek. "It's alright, Buck. We live in a city. It happens a lot. I'm just glad we are all safe and unharmed."

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“It happens too much,” Bucky mumbled into Steve’s shoulder and gripped him tight. He still wanted to move out of the city eventually. He figured he would just retire out in Seneca if he could. He was still trying to convince Steve to do that. But maybe being out of the city sooner could be good. They could get a house in the suburbs or something - somewhere safer than Brooklyn.

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Steve held the sides of Bucky's face. "It does... but we are all here and that's what counts. Also, you're going to have to check inventory carefully tomorrow because that other jerk may have gotten out with a few records," Steve sighed. "Come on. We should probably head home soon."
Bucky nodded and looked back at Clint who was still holding Sarah May and Adriana. He quickly signed to him about what happened as Tim was coming to the back room. “Okay, the police took him. They have a couple guys out looking for the other one. They also said that it wasn’t a surprise that Nat’s boyfriend and Rogers were in the middle of this. I have a feeling they are going to let her know all about this little debacle later.”

"At least it wasn't Richard who responded to the call or else he may have arrested the wrong guys again," Steve joked. Steve picked up Christopher and kissed his cheek. The toddler giggled and hugged Steve back. "Do you want us to bring you guys back anything before we head home?" he asked Clint and Tim.

“I hate that guy,” Bucky and Clint mumbled at the same time at the mention of Richard.

Tim shook his head and helped get the babies back into the stroller. “No, we should be okay now. You guys should finish out your Halloween.”

Steve snorted with laughter at the two voicing their dislike for Richard. "Point taken," he said.

Christopher signed goodbye to Clint when he was put into the stroller. Sarah May looked up at Tim and said a quiet "bye-bye". Because they were safe here, Steve decided to give Bucky one more kiss before they headed back outside.

They all headed back out into the dark evening and Bucky held a very tired Adriana while Steve pushed the stroller and held Diana’s leash. “Steve, I know everyone’s tired but we are so close to the precinct. I was wanting to stop by tonight anyway to have the candy checked. I don’t want anything dangerous to be in there. And Natasha is there tonight so we can have her help us out real quick.”

Steve nodded and looked down at Adriana. "You hear that, Peanut? We're going to see Aunt Natasha and she's going to check your candy to make sure it's ready for eating," he said, smiling down at her. "You get to see other police officers too and where your daddy used to work."

“Hopefully not Richard, though,” Bucky murmured and lead them around the corner and towards the precinct. “And then, Adriana, I promise, you can have some candy. But remember, Daddy and I said five pieces of candy tonight and then save the rest. Okay?”

"If I'm a good girl, can I have six?" she asked.

Steve shook his head with a smile. "That's a good try, Sweetheart, but you can only have five or else your belly will ache. We don't want that, right?" When they got to the precinct, they were ushered to
Nat’s office. Diana wagged her tail and tried to prance over to a police dog, but it gave a snappy bark at her to back off and she sulked back to Steve's side.

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Natasha came in a few minutes later with her arms crossed. “Decker told me that there was an attempted robbery at the record shop? Why didn’t you call my direct line?” She dropped a pile of cases on the top of her desk grumpily and stared at Steve and Bucky. “Is Clint okay?”

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"It wasn't a big deal, Nat, it's fine. They didn't have guns on them," Steve reassured. "Clint is okay. He's out of a few copies of The Beatles, I think, but, otherwise, nothing's changed."

Adriana walked up to her shyly. "Aunt Nat? Can you check my candies, please?"

---

Natasha really wanted to add some more colorful sentiments to the discussion but then Adriana was staring up at her and holding her big bag of candy. “Yeah,” she sighed and took the bag. “I’ll be right back.”

Bucky watched her go and then turned to Steve. “That’s weird... Clint always checks in with her. With these new hearing aids, he can use the phone better. He always calls her.”

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"I don't know. You think they're okay?" Steve hoped that they weren't in the middle of some sort of fight. "I assumed she didn't answer because she was on some other call."

Adriana hugged Bucky's leg. "Papa? Is Aunt Nat mad at me?" she asked sadly.

---

Bucky never knew with those two. Natasha was a closed book and Clint sometimes couldn’t even read her. “I don’t know either. Maybe something is up.” He bent down and picked Adriana up again and kissed her cheek. “No, Peanut, she just had a long day. You know when Aunt Becca gets a little short with you after she has a long day? It’s not your fault at all.”

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She leaned her head on Bucky's shoulder. "Okay," she mumbled. Adriana rubbed her eyes, starting to get a little tired but she was determined to stay awake to eat her candy.

Steve wrapped an arm around Bucky's waist. "Maybe you can ask him about it at work tomorrow," Steve suggested.

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“I can try,” Bucky agreed and leaned into Steve’s touch. Both babies were asleep in the stroller and Adriana seemed to be headed that way. “I bet it looked pretty cool facing up to those guys in your Han Solo costume though.”

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Steve chuckled. "If anyone questions the police report, I shot first," he joked. He rubbed his hand
over Bucky's back. "The guy called me a ‘jackass in a costume’. Diana didn't take too kindly to that. God, I'm so glad we have her, Buck. She was the best idea you've had."

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“Ooh, you’ve come a long way with your *Star Wars* knowledge, Baby,” Bucky said and gave him a little kiss. “But I don’t think your dog was my best idea. I mean, deciding to have babies together, agreeing to marry you, letting you take me out for drinks that first time. I’m kind of full of great ideas.”

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“Wait, hold on. I’m pretty sure all of those things were my ideas,” Steve protested with an indignant scrunch to his face. “I proposed to you. And I’m the one who asked you out in the first place. I think it’s thanks to me, really.”

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Bucky squinted at Steve and made a doubtful little noise. “You took a chance asking out a beautiful young college drop-out with zero prospects in life. And it was my terrific idea to let you buy me things and cook for me,” he joked back. They both knew it was an intense mutual attraction from the beginning.

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Steve laughed. "Alright, alright. So, you were totally my type and I couldn't keep my eyes off you." He smiled. "We should tell the kids how we met as a bedtime story. I love thinking back to our first dates together. Going to the movies and trying to figure out if the other was actually gay."

---

“You still wondering?” Bucky asked with a cheeky grin and set his hand on the back of Steve’s neck and whispered in his ear, “Cause I can give you some definitive proof tonight once everyone is asleep.” He thought for a second and then added, “But after we get out of these costumes. I don’t want to have sex dressed like Luke and Han.”

---

Steve blushed and nodded eagerly. "What? You don't want to wear these through the night? I've been told this wig is very flattering on me," Steve said. Adriana walked over to the door to try and peek and see how long it would take for her candy to be ready.

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“I’d rather make love to my husband than Han Solo or anyone else,” Bucky said and took Steve’s hand in his.

Natasha came in a few minutes later and handed the bag of candy back to Adriana. “It’s all fine,” she mumbled and moved to sit on the edge of her desk. “Now, get out of here, you guys, I have a lot of paperwork to do before I can go see Clint.”

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Steve glanced over at Bucky once and then looked back to Natasha. "Is there anything I can do to help your paperwork? I still remember how to fill all of that stuff out," he offered. He could spare a
half hour or so if Bucky didn't mind putting the kids to bed on his own.

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“You don’t work here anymore, Steve. You aren’t allowed to do that,” Natasha said back and propped her hands up on her hips.

Something was definitely up. Bucky would have to talk to Clint about it. There was a problem between them that he and Steve didn’t know about yet. “Okay, Steve, Baby, let’s just head home and get out of Natasha’s hair.”

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Steve frowned and tried not to take it personally. "Oh... alright, okay," he said. "It was good to see you, Nat. Thank you for checking the kids' candy." He turned to their babies and said, "Say bye-bye to Auntie Nat." All three kids waved and Christopher was the one who said goodbye the loudest as they walked out.

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“Something’s up,” Bucky said as the made their way back down the street. “I’ll talk to Clint tomorrow and see if I can’t figure out what happened. I mean, you never know with Clint. He’s not very predictable. He could have done any number of things to piss her off.”

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"You think it has something to do about kids?" Steve asked. "That seems to be one of their biggest points where they butt heads." He hoped that whatever spat they were having would pass soon. The two of them made a good couple together and he wanted them to be happy.

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Bucky shrugged. He honestly couldn’t say for sure. It could be kids or marriage or even something as simple as not replacing used up soap bars. “Could be. Let’s not worry too much right now, though. There’s nothing we can do anyway. Let’s get everyone home and sleeping.”

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"Yeah, I guess you're right," Steve said.

Adriana tugged on Bucky's shirt. "Can I snuggle in your room tonight, Papa?" she asked quietly. Steve looked over at Bucky with pleading eyes, silently begging for Bucky to answer in a way that wouldn’t disappoint their daughter but still allow them to have sex tonight.

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Bucky noticed Steve’s look and he nodded and held up a hand. He’s got this. He was a pro at negotiating Adriana’s snuggle times. “How about I snuggle in your bed until you fall asleep and I’ll also let you have seven candies instead of five? Or, Nana has been saying that she has had a lack of Adriana cuddles so maybe she would want to snuggle tonight.”

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Steve's eyes lit up. Bucky was good. Better than good, actually. Adriana mulled it over. She really wanted candy, but she also didn't want her nana feeling sad. "I can snuggle with Nana tonight. I love
her lots," she ultimately decided.

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“Okay,” Bucky said happily and gave her a kiss to her forehead. “And I’ll even let you have six candies because you have been such a good girl today. How about that?” He glanced over to Steve to make sure he was okay with that. Adriana would still sleep and that way he didn’t feel so badly for not letting her cuddle with them. He would let her sleep in their bed the next night if she wanted to.

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Steve nodded. He was alright with damned near anything if it meant that he got to have sex with Bucky tonight. When they got home, Sarah greeted them all warmly. "I missed you all. The house has been so quiet," she said as she gave each of her grandbabies a kiss. "Did you have fun?"

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Bucky, being the worrying mother hen that he was, immediately glanced around to see if the girls were home. Although, it was still early in the night and they probably wouldn’t be back for a while. “It was... interesting,” Bucky said honestly as he got the babies out of the stroller and started taking Diana’s costume off. The second the costume was off, the dog started running around and rolling on the floor to celebrate her freedom.

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"Oh yeah? That sounds like the sort of interesting I'm afraid to hear about," Sarah said.

Steve nodded. "Yeah, I'll fill you in tomorrow. The good news is that Adriana wants to cuddle with you tonight."

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Adriana nodded tiredly and plopped down on the floor to start picking out her six candies from her bag. “Here, Papa, I picked them,” she said finally and held up the bag for Bucky to take.

“Okay, thank you, Peanut,” Bucky said softly and took the bag back from her. “How about you let Nana help you get your costume off and get a bath then you can pick your pajamas and your blankie and come cuddle. Daddy and I need to get the babies ready for bed.”

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Steve knelt down so he could give his daughter a hug and kiss. "I love you lots, Adriana. I'm so happy we got to have our first Halloween together today." He gave her one more hug before sending her off with his mom. Christopher and Sarah May were both out still, so Steve carefully picked up one baby while Bucky took the other so they could put them to bed.
Chapter Summary

Second Half of Halloween

It was a pretty quick, painless process to get the babies in their cribs that night. They didn’t wake up while they were changed from their costumes into onesies and they only woke up for a few seconds when Bucky accidentally smacked his knee on the dresser too loudly and let out a grumpy swear. But once they were all set, Bucky turned off the light and stealthily pulled Steve back out of the nursery and into the hall.

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Steve kissed both Christopher and Sarah May's foreheads when they were both nestled in. After leaving the room, he rubbed Bucky's back and looked at his knee. "You alright, Love? That was a hard hit your knee took," he said with a worried frown.

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Bucky waved him off as he flicked off the lights in the hall and Adriana’s room. “Oh, it’s fine. Just stings a little,” he assured Steve and headed into their room. “But I am worried about the girls. I know Lilly has two hours before I told her to be home and Becca has four hours but I’m still nervous.”

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Steve closed their door quietly behind them. "I know you are. I can stay up with you to keep you company until they get back. Or, rather... I can keep you up for the next four hours." He gave Bucky a suggestive wink as he ran his hands over Bucky's chest.

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Bucky bit his lip and giggly softly at Steve. “I don’t think we can go for four hours,” he said as he wrapped his arms around Steve’s middle and pulled him closer. He also reached up and took the wig off and brushed his hand through Steve’s hair. “That’s better. You look like my Steve.”

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"If you don't have a little faith in yourself then we certainly won't last four hours," he joked. Steve put his hands on Bucky's hips and leaned in to kiss the tip of his nose. "You still look like Luke. I think I need to take those clothes off you."

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Bucky was already pulling the two of them towards the bed and once the back of his knees hit the edge, he flopped on the mattress and pulled his arms up over his head. “Come on then, Baby. Undress me while I try to think of good jokes about you eating my dick instead of Halloween candy.”
Steve slowly pulled Bucky's shirt over his head and kissed his neck. "But we didn't have Natasha check your dick out to make sure it was safe for consumption," Steve chuckled. He ran his hand over the front of Bucky's pants. "Nice lightsaber you got there, Luke."

"Oh, come on!" Bucky whined and pulled his legs up so Steve couldn’t get to him. “I’ll give you the lightsaber one because that is pretty good. But Natasha? That’s as bad when I complimented your ass and you said your mom gave it to you.”

Steve pouted and knelt in front of Bucky when he pulled his legs up. He laid his cheek on Bucky's unbruised knee. "But it was a funny joke. All of those were," he complained. He tried to nudge Bucky's legs apart but it seemed like Bucky wasn't convinced yet. So, he gently whispered to Bucky's crotch, "Open sesame."

"Oh, my god!" Bucky groaned and rolled his eyes. He tucked his arms around his legs and rolled in a ball over on his side. “I’m gonna put you on sex probation if you don’t stop.” He glanced back at Steve so he knew he was at least half-way serious about this.

Steve threw his head back and cackled. However, he sobered up at the look Bucky gave him. Steve crawled into bed behind Bucky and wrapped his arms around him. "I'll stop, I promise," he said, grinding his hips against Bucky's ass. "I want to make love with my perfect husband and suck his dick dry."

Bucky whined softly and couldn’t help himself from pressing back against Steve. He wanted that too. He couldn’t keep this game up any longer. They only had sex every so often now that they had three kids. Whenever they could get it in, they had to get it in quick. “Fine. But one more bad joke and I’m putting tape over your mouth.”

"Why put tape over my mouth when you can put your cock in it instead?" Steve slowly slid his hands down Bucky's chest and tummy. When he got to Bucky's crotch, he gave a firm squeeze and rubbed up against his ass some more. "I want you so bad, Buck. Can I take your pants off now?"

Steve did have a point. That was usually the best way to get him to stop talking. “Fine. Undress me and suck my cock,” he said with a sort of faux resignation as if it was more of a nuisance to him than anything. “But if you want this to last a while, you might want to take it easy on me. Bring me close and then let it go away. And then finger me back to the edge and then stop altogether. You owe me some good teasing after that nonsense.”
Steve slowly stripped Bucky's pants off and then took his time rubbing Bucky's cock through his underwear before taking that off as well. "How many times do you think I can get you close before you lose it? Three times? Or maybe you're gonna shoot off like some horny teenager on the first attempt anyway."

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"If you keep your mouth running, I just might," Bucky conceded and watched Steve with dark, needy eyes. Tonight also felt like a good night to be just slightly kinkier. It was a rare treat that they used anything from their sex box. Halloween was the day for treats, after all. "Can we mix things up a little bit? Even if it's just a blindfold? Please?"

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Usually, Steve needed more cajoling to use one of their sex toys, but tonight he wanted to take Bucky's mind off worrying about his sisters. "What were you thinking of doing?" Steve asked, running a hand along Bucky's thigh slowly. "I'm open."

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"Uh... um," Bucky hummed in surprise and gazed up at his husband. This was definitely a rarity. But he didn’t want to ask for something too much out of Steve’s element and risk him deciding against the whole thing. "Baby, you... I want you to pick. I want you to like it too. And I’ve been told I’m very cute with my hands tied and my eyes covered with a nice silk blindfold."

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Steve kissed Bucky gently and then got up so he could grab their sex box from the closet. He deliberately laid out the toys they’d accrued since moving in just to drag things out a little. He put aside the cuffs and blindfold by Bucky’s request. After a bit of consideration, he settled on a small, vibrating plug. Steve had gotten it because the thing was so tiny that he knew it couldn't compare to being penetrated by an actual dick.

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Bucky was hot all over. He was excited about Steve using a toy on him and tying him up. And he was more excited that Steve was going to try to edge him a few times before presumably letting him come with Steve’s dick inside him. And that was always the best because it felt amazing, it made Steve feel good, and that particular brand of orgasm face was Steve’s favorite too.

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Steve put the box aside and crawled over his husband so he was straddling his hips. "I'm going to enjoy taking my time with you tonight. There's no way our kids are waking up anytime soon with the amount of trick-or-treating we did to tire them out."

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“Good. Because Papa is long overdue for a night alone getting fucked by Daddy,” Bucky said with a chuckle. So often, they had to have sex quickly because they knew someone was going to need them at some point. And it was all well and good but getting a night of pampering to take their time was always welcome.
Steve peppered kisses over Bucky's chest while he spoke. He ran his hands up Bucky's arms and murmured softly about how beautiful he was. Steve took the handcuffs and secured one link around Bucky's wrist. He hooked it around a notch in the headboard and then cuffed Bucky's other hand. "That's not too tight, is it?"

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“No, it’s good,” Bucky confirmed and stretched his body down the bed so he was showing himself off just a little bit. Since he stopped drinking, he lost weight in his stomach and his hips. He never had too much to begin with, but the little he had when he first met Steve was gone and he liked to showcase his hipbones for Steve. Although, sometimes he missed his pudge. He always liked how his body looked and his rounder, softer tummy was pretty cute. “You know what sounds fun?”

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Steve sat back on his heels as he watched his husband flaunt his body off to him. That was fucking arousing as hell, knowing that Bucky was doing this just for him and only him. Steve had just gotten the blindfold in his hands when Bucky spoke up again. "What?” he asked curiously.

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“I think you should paint me,” Bucky said and trailed one foot up his other leg. “And I don’t mean make a painting of me. Although, that would be really amazing and I would love if you did that. But I mean, you could paint on my body. It would tickle a little bit but I would get over it. And you could make some sort of beautiful piece on me and then take photos to capture it. The art would be the painting and the photography.”

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Steve looked very interested in that. "I still have the body paints," he said. Steve got up and went through his spare supplies box and got the paints out. "Do you want to be blindfolded while I paint on you and I can reveal it when it’s all done?" he asked, already coming up with ideas.

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Bucky nodded and let his mouth hang open just slightly as he turned his hips so his cock was pointing up at Steve. “Yeah, how about you blindfold me, keep me tied, but let me have the vibrator so it’s just a little bit of something else while you’re painting me. Is that okay?”

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"I'll let you have the vibrator if you behave yourself," Steve said with a cheeky smile. He put the paints on the sheets for now and grabbed the blindfold again. He leaned in to give his husband a sweet kiss. "I love you so much, Sweetheart," he said before tying the blindfold on him.

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Bucky relaxed back on the pillows again and let Steve blindfold him. He really did like this. He liked that his husband was just right there and he was going to touch him but Bucky couldn’t know how he was going to touch him until he felt it. “I always behave, Baby,” he said and lifted his knees so his ass was on display for Steve.

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Steve ran his hand over Bucky’s ass and admired the way Bucky looked all tied up and ready for
him. He took a paintbrush and dipped it in one of the colors. "You are full of good ideas, Buck. We should do this more often. I want to have an entire album full of paintings on you."

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Bucky hummed his agreement and just let his body stay so relaxed, regardless of how much he wanted to be touched. “We can do that. We can do whatever you want, Baby,” Bucky agreed. “We hardly get any chance to be so wild. Now that we have all the kids, it’s been pretty different. Not that I’m complaining about our kids, obviously.”

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"Yeah, when Adriana asked to cuddle I felt so bad saying no. I’m glad you figured out a way around that." He kissed Bucky's jaw as he stroked the brush over his chest. "She is being such a good big sister. I want to do something nice for her but I don’t want to spend too much money on it with Christmas coming up."

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Bucky agreed. Adriana was amazing and deserved so much. “I’m letting her sleep in here tomorrow night. I’ll change the sheets before I go to work and then she can snuggle here with us at bedtime.” He also wasn’t sure how the holidays were going to go over. Steve and he hadn’t decided what to do about having Hanukkah and Christmas. Because they knew they wanted to celebrate both in their own ways but he didn’t know how they were going to do it yet. He also had a lot to learn about Jewish history and practices too.

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"She’ll love that," Steve said. "I guess we can just tell her a little extra how proud we are of her and how much we love her." Christopher was going to need extra attention soon after if he caught sight of his big sister snuggling with their parents without him, so they’d have to be stealthy about it. "What do you think I’m painting on you? If you guess sort of right, I'll give you the vibrator."

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Bucky hummed and thought about it for a second. He shook his head and said, “I don’t know. It’s Halloween, so maybe pumpkins and ghosts and stuff? Or maybe you’re being rude and just drawing a bunch of dicks on me. Regardless, I think I should get the vibrator because I’ve been so good so far and I know you want to see me getting red and flustered and desperate to have my cock touched.”

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Steve pouted. "You know me too well," he complained. He'd been painting Diana in a pumpkin patch. He pulled the paintbrush away and grabbed the vibrator. It was small enough that Bucky didn't need to be fingered open for it to fit in. It was just a little thing, hardly bigger than Steve’s pinky. He coated it with lube and pressed it to his hole. He switched it on, letting it vibrate against his ass but he didn't push it in yet. "I love how hard your dick is right now."

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Bucky was about to ask which one was he painting - Halloween or dicks - but then Steve pushed the vibrator up against his ass and let it just tease him. He gasped and grunted and pulled involuntarily at the restraints. “Come on, Steve,” he whined and wiggled his ass a little against the vibe. “Please, Baby. Please. I want it. My dick is so hard because of you and I want to show you how long I can hold off coming no matter how much I want to. I can do it.”
Steve sat back and watched Bucky’s beautiful reaction. He ghosted a fingertip over Bucky’s cock and then pressed the tip of his finger against the slit. "Hmm... I guess you deserve it now. And I know how good you’re going to be for me." He slowly eased the vibe into Bucky’s ass and tapped the base gently once it was in.

Bucky whined grateful when he finally got something inside him. He relaxed again just slightly and whispered his thanks in breathy air. “I’m so hard it hurts just a little too much,” he said and lifted his hips up off the mattress for a second trying to get more of Steve’s touch again.

Steve went back to painting on Bucky’s chest. "If it hurts, do you want me to kiss it better?" he asked, reaching one hand down to pet the insides of Bucky’s thighs delicately. "Because I may know something that can help you out with that."

“Yes, just a little bit,” Bucky whined and opened his legs a little more. “I just don’t want to come without you. I want to come with you inside me, okay? That’s always my favorite. Your hot thick cock fucking up inside me, pushing against my prostate, balls hitting my ass. Baby... fuck... that’s the best.”

"God, keep talking like that," Steve groaned. He massaged the insides of Bucky's thighs with one hand as he worked on the painting. It took another few minutes to finish it but he was happy with how it looked after. "Give me a second, Babe," Steve got up so he could take a few pictures with their Polaroid.

Bucky heard the clicks from the camera and he moved just a little bit every time to sort of put on a show for the photo shoot. But he was getting a little needy. It felt really amazing to have his body painted by Steve. It was just a little ticklish and cold like he thought it would be, but now he wanted to get fucked. And Steve was taking his sweet time. “Babe... my handsome husband... please,” he whined and pulled at the restraints. He moved his head to the side so his neck was bared for Steve. “Please...”

"Soon, Love." Steve really wanted to ravage his husband but he needed to let them drag it out a bit more so Bucky would have less time to worry about his sisters. He pet a hand down Bucky's arm. "First I have to let you see what I painted. And then I have to clean you off. Only after that, can I give you what you want." He kissed Bucky gently and lifted the blindfold to his forehead so Bucky could see the painting.

Bucky groaned, a little grumpy about it, but he looked down at himself and saw the painting all over him. “Is that your dog?” he asked and looked up at Steve. “Can I see one of the photos? It’s hard to see my own body upside down like this.” Steve was always such a great artist that he didn’t doubt it
looked amazing. He just wondered how it looked with the whole ensemble - the art, the blindfold, the restraints, his cock hard and needy, the vibe in his ass.

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Steve nodded. "It's Diana in a pumpkin patch," he said. Steve sat next to Bucky and held up a few of the developed pictures. "Look at how gorgeous you are," he said. "I could stare at these pictures all day." Steve leaned in to nibble affectionately at Bucky's neck.

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Bucky stared at the pictures. He did look really hot, he had to admit. Bucky knew he was attractive - he always had. He also knew that it wasn’t the politest thing to compliment himself. So, he didn’t do it too often but he couldn’t help it this time. “Fuck, I do look good,” he said and then stared over at Steve. “We are the single hottest couple in the world. I’m convinced of it.”

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Steve chuckled. "You really are the sexiest man I've ever laid eyes on, Bucky." He kissed him carefully before setting the pictures back down. He also pulled the blindfold back over Bucky's eyes. Steve grabbed a rag and wet it with some water from a leftover cup on his nightstand and began to clean Bucky up.

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“Steve,” Bucky complained and poked him with his toe. “You’re cleaning me off when you should just be fucking me. Please. I just want to have sex with my husband. I can’t imagine that you’re not hard for me too. I mean you love when I’m like this.” He wasn’t above begging. He would beg Steve to finally touch him if he needed to.

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"I don't want to get paint all over the sheets," Steve complained. To give Bucky something to work with, he reached down to fondle his balls just slightly while he cleaned him up. "I'm hard as anything for you, Baby, but I got to clean you up first.” Once he had Bucky cleaned, he grabbed the lube and poured it into his hand and started to get his dick slick. "Besides, I have to finger you open more first.”

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“Yeah, more would be good,” Bucky said and felt sweat running down his back because he was so desperate. “You're much bigger than the vibe but I do like the stretch so you can just do it a little more and then you can stretch me with your dick, Baby. But maybe hurry up a little bit or I’m gonna bite you.”

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Steve got two fingers slick. "Bite me, huh? Is that supposed to be a punishment?” Steve replaced the vibrator with his fingers and easily worked them inside of Bucky as he leaned forward to give him a searing kiss. "I love how you look right now. You're fucking sexy, tied up and desperate for my dick."

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The fingers were a welcome replacement for the vibe but they just weren’t enough. “Yes, I’m gonna
bite you. Maybe it’ll be the motivation you need to get going.” He squeezed around Steve’s fingers and let his breathing pick up. “I need my ass filled with your come. And I need my gorgeous husband’s beautiful cock now.”

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Steve started to open up Bucky in earnest, scissoring his fingers to spread him wider. "You'll get what you want, Love. I'm gonna give you what you want." Steve fumbled a little as he pulled his fingers to line up his cock with Bucky’s hole. His hands shook a little with how much he wanted him. Steve slowly eased himself inside and let out a low moan at the feeling. "Fuck, yes...

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Bucky wasn’t completely stretched for Steve’s dick so it opened him up and burned just ever so slightly like he liked sometimes. He gasped and pulled harshly at the handcuffs to try to get to Steve. “Fuck, Baby, that feels so good. You feel amazing. I missed your cock. I love your cock. It’s my favorite and I hate that I don’t get it as much anymore. Please don’t make me beg anymore, though. Please fuck me now. Hard.”

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Steve bit at Bucky’s neck to stifle his moans as he steadily rocked in and out of his husband. "Shit, Baby, I know. I shouldn’t have made you wait so long.” Eager to give Bucky what he wanted and desperate to fuck his husband, he gripped Bucky’s hips and pulled him down with every thrust, getting just that much reaper inside of him.

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Bucky moaned loudly and let his body be maneuvered all around on the bed from Steve’s thrusts. “Feels so good. Ah, Steve, I love you. You’re amazing.” He had to stop talking so he could focus on breathing in sharp breaths with every hit to his prostate. He hoped he looked as gorgeous to Steve right now as Steve was making him feel.

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Steve drank in every noise Bucky made and watched him with an intensity that he only had when he was railing his husband into the mattress. Bucky commanded his attention so easily and Steve loved it. He reached a hand up so he could tug at Bucky’s hair, holding his head back so he could bite his neck again while he slammed his hips forward over and over.

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“God, fuck!” Bucky yelped and squeezed his eyes shut. He loved when Steve got going like that. “You’re perfect,” he whispered and wrapped his legs around Steve’s middle. “I need more. Kiss me. Touch my cock. Something, please. I need more of you.”

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Steve moved his hand from Bucky's hip to his cock and jerked him off quickly as he fucked him so hard that the bed creaked quietly under them. "I fucking love you, Bucky. You feel so damned good, Sweetheart, I love being inside you,” he gasped out.

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Bucky nodded and groaned as Steve talked to him. It wasn’t long until he was coming in a harsh
burst over Steve’s fingers and his stomach. It was one of those orgasms that he had to wait so long for that it hurt just a little bit. “Steve,” he muttered and clenched his ass down around the cock deep inside him. “Baby...”

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Steve cried out when Bucky's ass gripped his cock tightly. "Fuck, oh, fuuuck, Bucky," he moaned, arching his back. He saw stars for a few moments and eased up how fast he was going so he wouldn't hurt his husband. "I'm close, Bucky. Please, can I keep going?"

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Bucky nodded once sharply. “Don’t you dare stop,” he commanded and did his best to keep his body tight and engaged with Steve. But he was so tired from the whole experience and his orgasm took the last bit out of him. He was going to fall asleep before Steve even came.

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Steve grabbed onto Bucky's hips and steadily fucked him slow and deep. His eyes were focused entirely on the beautiful man beneath him and just when he came, he leaned down to claim Bucky's lips in a deep, hot kiss.

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Bucky didn’t have a chance to take a breath before Steve kissed him. It made the kiss sloppy and desperate as he parted for just enough air before going back. His body was bent in half as Steve’s cock was as far inside him as it could go and he could feel the hot burst of come coating inside him. He shut his eyes and kissed all over Steve’s mouth and cheeks and panted out exhausted grateful breaths.

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Steve was left gasping for air, as well, when he was done. As soon as he caught his breath, he pushed the blindfold off of his husband and he raked his fingers through his hair heavily, locking eyes with him. "I love you so much. You were amazing. That felt damn good."

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Bucky’s eyes opened slowly and he took in the sight of Steve hovering over him looking pleased and tired and sweaty. And he also saw his own legs pushed up close to his chest since Steve’s body still had him folded up on the headboard with a cock inside him keeping him together. “Love my Steve... gorgeous fucking husband Steve,” he blathered out incoherently.

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Steve chuckled and held the sides of Bucky's face so he could kiss him again. "Thank you for having us spice Halloween up," he said. He took the key and freed Bucky's hands so he could lace their fingers together. "You want me to clean you up so you can sleep, Love?"

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Bucky held tightly to Steve’s hands and let his eyes shut for a few moments. He may have even fallen asleep but then his brain remembered that the girls were still out and he forced his eyelids to keep themselves wide open again. “I can’t sleep, Becca and Lilly aren’t back. And if they don’t get back on time, I’ll have to go look for them. I can’t fall asleep until they’re home and safe.”
Steve had been hoping that Bucky would sleep so he wouldn't worry. He planned on staying up himself until both girls were home. "Okay, Baby," Steve said. "I'll help you stay awake. Do you want me to make another painting on you? You can tell me what to draw."

Bucky shook his head and wiped at the sweat on his body. The air was making him cold and he wanted to be dressed again. "Let's get cleaned up and then we can go downstairs and play a game together or something. We can make some coffee or tea to wake up."

"How about Scrabble?" Steve asked. He slowly got out of bed and offered a hand out to his husband to help him up. "It's been a while since we have played, since we can't play with the babies around." Christopher loved to pluck the letter chips from the board and Sarah May tried to eat them.

"Sure, yeah, let's do Scrabble," Bucky said. "It'll be nice to play without Becca. This time, I won't get a lecture about how Adriana spells better than I do." Bucky got up and went to the bathroom to clean himself of all the sex mess. He was sticky and sweaty and had come all over him. But a few minutes later, he was mostly cleaned up and dressed in Steve's pajamas. He yawned and rubbed his eyes but then immediately shook it off and yanked his hair back into a ponytail and told himself, "Stay awake, Bucky."

Steve dressed in thick, comfy pajamas. It wasn't winter yet, but it was still chilly. "Adriana really is getting smart, though. She may start spelling better than us soon." He put a hand on the small of Bucky's back and guided him down the stairs. Raphael greeted them and started rubbing up against Bucky's legs to be fed.

The cat mewled at them when Bucky picked him up and held him close. "Hey, Raph. Did Lilly forget to fill your bowl?" he asked and went to the kitchen to find that it was empty. "You would think she would know by now." Bucky grumpily got the cat all squared away and pet him as he munched on his dinner. "Alright, Steve, do you want some tea? I'm going to make some for me while you get the game."

"He's getting kind of fat, Bucky, I don't think it's because Lilly didn't feed him. I think it's because he knows if he complains to you, he always gets extra food since you assume Lilly didn't take care of him," Steve said. "I'll have some tea, though, please." He grabbed the game from the closet and brought it into the kitchen to set it up on the table.

Bucky rolled his eyes and started on the tea. He disagreed. Raphael was just a little poofy. He wasn't fat. "You have to admit that, at least two days out of the week, she forgets," Bucky said and looked back to his husband. "She also never gives him any treats. She will give Diana treats all day but the poor kitty doesn't get love."
"She does forget. But we're getting a bit of a chubby cat. I think we need to get him some more toys to have him play more," Steve said. "And Diana always begs for treats more than Raphael does. She loves—" he started but turned his head when Diana came trotting over at the word 'treat'. "See?"

Bucky sighed and reached up on top of the fridge to get Diana a treat. “Here you go, good girl. Sit,” he said and waited for her to patiently sit before opening his hand for her to take the treat. He shook his head and pet down her back before sitting at the table with Steve and their tea. He yawned for the millionth time and glared at Steve. “You fucked the lights of out your husband.”

"I only did it because you asked me to, Handsome," Steve teased. "You looked so good, too. I love it when you're overwhelmed and desperate. It's goddamned gorgeous." He spoke quietly, used to having to keep his voice down.

“I did ask,” Bucky conceded. “You got me there. Next time, though, I get to be the one to tease your orgasm until you’re about to cry.” He helped Steve get their pieces all set for Scrabble. He changed his tone then and said softly, “Adriana got so distracted in the record shop that we didn’t talk to her about the way people were looking at us.”

Steve leaned over the table to kiss his Bucky's cheek. "How do you think we should explain it to her?" he asked. "I want her to understand but I don't want her to be self-conscious about it."

Bucky had no idea how to explain to their daughter that a lot of people didn’t approve of two men or two women together as a couple - even less so, raising a family together. “I... I don’t know, Babe,” he admitted and reached to take Steve’s hand in his for a moment. “Because I don’t want her to be self-conscious either. And I don’t want her to feel like our family is strange or anything. And I definitely don’t want her to worry about our family.”

"She is going to notice that most couples have a woman in it, though," Steve said. "I take them out enough to the playground. She's asked me a few times why there aren't any other daddies at the playground and only the mommies take their kids," he explained.

Bucky wanted to try to convince Steve to make some sort of case to Adriana that maybe some of those mommies have other mommy partners who go to work just like he goes to work while Steve stays home. But he knew that would probably complicate things. And he didn’t want Adriana asking those women where their wives were. “Well, you remember when we got her and she was surprised that parents could be two daddies. But she wasn’t confused for long. She just accepted it. Maybe if we explain that two daddies or two mommies are a rare thing then she will think it’s more like the special prize in her cereal boxes instead of the occasional burnt pieces that taste bad.”
“We can think it over some more later. I don’t have any ideas right now.” Steve placed down a word on the board and gave Bucky a stupid smile. “Thank you for being the prize in my cereal box,” he said sweetly. Diana laid her head down in Bucky’s lap and gave a pathetic whine for another treat. “What should we do for her for Christmas?” he asked. “I want to make it extra special.”

“You dork,” Bucky said under his breath and pet Diana so she knew he wasn’t ignoring her. “Christmas is on you, Daddy. Because Papa has been figuring out how to do Hanukkah.” They hadn’t talked about the holidays yet but he knew they were going to have to coordinate so they were celebrating the Jewish holidays too. They both wanted Sarah May to grow up with that in her life.

“I was wondering how we were going to make Christopher not cry every night in Hanukkah when Sarah May gets something and he doesn’t. And vice versa for Christmas,” Steve mused.

“Well,” Bucky started and thought. “Would it really be that bad to give everyone a Hanukkah gift every night and then give everyone Christmas gifts too? It’ll just be like a spread-out Christmas. And then when Ya-Ya is older, she and I can sing the prayers together for everyone. It’ll be her special thing but the gift part can be for everyone. I just don’t want her to miss out on her heritage.”

"I like that idea," Steve said. "We can decorate for both. I've had Father Frank tell me about some of the rabbis that he's friends with if you wanted to try speaking to them," Steve added. "I think it would be really nice to have her involved in Hebrew school as soon as we can enroll her."

“Hebrew school?” Bucky asked curiously. “Is that a daily thing? Because we’re homeschooling the kids. She’s going to feel left out if she’s the only one going to school. And I’ve been learning. I can teach her what I can. I mean, I’m going to take her to synagogue when she’s a little older. I mean, Adriana’s the only one who goes to church with you right now because Christopher is too rowdy.”

Steve shook his head. "No, it's only an hour or two once a week, kind of like religion classes at churches for Christian kids," he said. "She would learn the language there, too." Steve sipped his tea. "Even though I can teach them all religion, I still plan on taking Christopher and Adriana to classes at the church so they can be with other kids."

“Oh, okay. That sounds fine to me then. Hebrew school,” Bucky agreed and played his next word in Scrabble, hoping it wasn’t misspelled. Bucky was still partially resistant to having religion be such a part of the kids’ lives. He sort of felt like a once-a-week attendance at church and synagogue was good enough. But, he knew this wasn’t something Steve would negotiate. And Bucky wanted to respect how important it was to him. “We can do that. Will you ask Father Frank to get me in contact with someone? Hopefully, a rabbi who is gay-friendly like he is.”
Bucky’s word on the board was indeed misspelled. Steve didn't correct him. "I don't think he would have given me their names if he didn't think that they were open-minded," Steve said. "I love how much you're willing to do for our kids, Bucky. I think you're an amazing parent."

Bucky scoffed and shook his head. “I’m just doing what is best for you and them. Sarah May and any other Jewish babies we might have will need someone to be able to help them with all the things they will learn and I want you to be able to take our non-Jewish babies to your church with you. This is just how families work. We learn how to be the best we can for our kids. Which, in a few years for me, will involve attending a religious gathering on a weekly basis. Who would have thought.”

"And if we get a baby who isn’t Christian or Jewish, we may need to enlist your sisters or my mom to take to Islam or Hinduism to make sure the babies have a chaperone,” he joked. Steve brushed his foot along Bucky's leg gently and jumped when Raphael pounced on his sock under the table.

“I'll just find a third husband to join the mix,” Bucky joked back with a shrug and then gave Steve a little smile at the touch on his leg.

"Hell, no," Steve answered back right away as a knee-jerk reaction even though he knew that Bucky was just messing around.

"But... speaking of school... I need to talk to you about something.” Bucky looked down and played another word. He played an obvious one, an easy one just because he knew he could get it right.

Steve smirked as he took his turn and placed a word on the board where 'J' fell on a triple word score booster. "What about school?" he asked.

Bucky saw the ‘J’ as Steve put it on the board and he grumbled, “Shit. That was a good word.” He looked over his options and saw absolutely nothing worth very much at all. So, he just placed a piece just so he could get something. “I’m going back to school,” he said definitively and looked up at Steve. It wasn’t a question, it was a declaration. It was a decision. Bucky had been on the fence for so long trying to decide and every other day it seemed like he was saying ‘yes’ to school and then right back to ‘no’. But this time, he was sure. He was doing it.

Steve grinned at him. "I think that that's a great idea, Baby," Steve said. He reached out to take Bucky's hand and lace their fingers together. "When do you think you're going to start? I'll help any way I can," he said. The last time they spoke about this, Steve had a good feeling that Bucky would end up coming around to this decision.
“Well, I’ve actually got it all planned,” Bucky said tentatively. “Becca and I got it worked out. She and I are going to go together. It gives us about two years to save up for both of us and we are going to go to the same school. She’s going to try to live on campus, though. It’ll at least make me feel a lot better about her going off to school because I’ll see her a lot even if she’s not living with us. But if I wait until then, the babies will be a little older and I’ll be able to save up more and decide what to get a degree in. At least, that’s our tentative idea for now.”

Steve gave Bucky's hand a tight squeeze. "I think that's perfect," he encouraged. "I can't imagine the two of you laying out a better plan." It also meant that they didn't have to worry about any immediate changes to Bucky's schedule since things were already hectic as it was. They would have time to prepare on all levels.

Bucky let out a relieved little sigh and he got up so he could go squish himself against Steve in a hug and kiss all over his face. “The problem now is figuring out a major. Because the whole reason I’m doing this is to start a path towards a job where I’ll have better pay, set hours during the day and not evenings, and opportunity to advance. I’m doing this so I can spend evenings with my family and bring home more money and take care of all of you.”

Steve wrapped his arms around him and held him tight. "Well, you've got two years to figure it out. Are you still thinking about doing business, Baby?" he asked. "Whatever you end up picking, I know it's going to be the best decision to make for yourself and our family."

“I’m not sure,” Bucky said with a huff. “I just don’t know if I would be able to fit in with the stuffed suits and the cropped hair and ties and wearing underwear every day.” He moved Steve out from the table a bit so he could sit in his lap and wrap his arms around Steve’s neck. “I have a notebook with every option I’ve been thinking about and reasons why each one would be a good pick and reasons it would be a bad pick.”

"I think most jobs require that sort of stuff. You've just been spoiled having an awesome job with a good boss who doesn't care if you wear underwear or not." Steve took his turn behind Bucky's back and then wrapped his arms around him again. "Which other options are you thinking about?" he asked, leaning up to kiss his jaw.

Bucky hummed happily and caught Steve’s lips in a kiss after he settled into him. “There’s a lot. Accountant, some sort of teacher, physical therapist, realtor, investment liaison. I could go into political science or child psychology. I could get a history degree like my dad always wanted and teach at the high school level.” He sighed and rested his head on Steve’s shoulder. “I don’t know. I just know I’m not going to be smart enough for half those things anyway.”
"Hey, what makes you think you're not smart enough for any of that?" Steve said. He slipped a hand up the back of Bucky's shirt and scratched his skin lightly. "I think you'd make a great teacher. You're so good with kids," he said. "And you tell really good stories, so you can turn all of the lessons into something fun."

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Bucky pet his hands gently over Steve’s cheeks and neck. “Yeah, but teachers are supposed to be smart. They are supposed to know how to spell everything correctly and know how to write properly. I’m just so much further behind than I should be. I’ll have to take some basic English classes and probably work on stuff that I should’ve done better in high school. You know? I wasted my schooling by being a degenerate and now when I need those skills and knowledge, I’ve got shit.”

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"You are smart, Bucky," Steve said. "And you'll get better at spelling during college. If you want, I can help you out with that. You've got two years to boost all the little things you didn't learn as well earlier so you'll be super prepared when it's time for you to start," he encouraged.

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Bucky laughed and brushed Steve’s hair back out of his eyes. “Good, so while my husband is teaching our babies the alphabet, he’s going to be teaching me how to spell,” he said. “Adriana and I can just have lessons together.” But he was grateful for all of Steve’s support on this. “Thank you, Steve. I’ll do everything I can to make your life and our kids’ lives better. All I have to do now is decide what I’m going to do.”

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"We can use Scrabble as a way of testing your spelling," Steve said with a wink. "And I bet Adriana would have a lot of fun learning with her papa. We can even let her pretend to be the teacher sometimes. They say that the best way to learn is to teach it to someone else," he said. Diana came over to them and put her front paws up on Bucky's lap and leaned up to lick his cheek, as if to complain that Bucky was sitting in her spot on Steve.

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Bucky pet Diana and let her lick his face a couple more times. “Your dog still doesn’t get that I’m the husband and I take precedence of getting attention from you.” He gave Steve another kiss and then heard the door open. Diana jumped off of them and went to go see who was there.

Lilly came around the corner and saw Steve and Bucky perched together on a chair. “Oh, gross. There’s a reason you guys have a room all to yourselves. Go make out in private.”

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When Lilly came home and complained about their kissing, Steve started giving obnoxiously loud kisses against Bucky's cheek. "Oh, Bucky! I love you so much! I want to kiss you in the kitchen all night!"

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Bucky giggled and grabbed Steve’s face in his hands and kissed him on the lips several times. “Steve, Baby, I love you so much too!” he gasped dramatically and then gave a look to Lilly.
“Stop it, stop it,” she griped and thwacked Bucky over the head. “I should have stayed at the arcade.”

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Steve cackled at Lilly's reaction. Diana whined and jumped up on her, putting her paws on Lilly's shoulders and licking her face too. Steve pulled his hand out from under Bucky's shirt and gave him one soft kiss on his cheek. "How was the arcade?" he asked, waving his hand to tell Diana to come down.

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“It was good,” Lilly said as she gave Diana a reassuring pet to her head so she knew that everything was okay. “Cara and I are really close to beating the top scores on three different games. It’s all the same person too - ‘TNT’ - like a bomb. I asked around and, apparently, it’s someone named Taylor. But we are going to kick Taylor down to third.”

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"That's great, I guess," Steve said. "Which games are those? I can play a mean Pac-Man or Space Invaders." Sometimes when it was just him and Christopher or Adriana he would stop at the arcade briefly so they could each play a game. Christopher loved to mimic the sounds some of the machines made.

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“Donkey Kong, Gauntlet, and Dragon’s Liar,” Lilly said and rummaged in the fridge to get some orange juice. “I’m going to do it, though. I’m getting really good.” She tucked her hair behind her ears and came to give them both a hug. “Alright, I’m going to go shower. When’s Becca getting home?”

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"I'll give you a dollar if you get the top score on all three of those games. I'll give you two dollars if you get the top score on your next test," Steve said slyly. "Becca should be home in an hour. Bucky and I are waiting up for her."

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Lilly scoffed. “Steve, I don’t get out of bed for less than ten,” she said. “Alright, well, don’t count on Becca for at least another two hours. She’s not going to be back before her curfew.”

Bucky’s eyes went wide with worry and he looked to Steve quickly for reassurance. He was already nervous as hell about having Becca at a Halloween party. He knew she wasn’t going to drink or smoke or anything because years of living with Bucky made sure she hated that stuff. But the last big party she went to ended in her lost in an unknown part of the city with a lot of hookers outside a bar.

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Steve was genuinely upset when he heard that, but he also wasn't going to shoot the messenger here. "How do you know that?" he asked calmly. "Did she say something to you?" Steve reached out to squeeze Bucky's hand in reassurance. He knew how worked up his husband got over his sisters and how much he cared about their wellbeing. Being out so late on Halloween was inviting danger.
“She just said that she thought having a curfew was dumb and she didn’t think she should still have that. She’s sixteen and stuff, you know?” Lilly said and then gave them both a nod. She was going to take her leave before this got worse. “Night.”

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Steve almost argued that at sixteen she still deserved a curfew, but that was a conversation for another day. Once Lilly left, he turned to Bucky and huffed. "So, how do you think we should handle this when Becca gets back?" he asked. Steve knew how he wanted to deal with it, but Becca was Bucky’s sister.

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Bucky let out a heavy sigh. He wasn’t sure. He was too tired for scolding. “I think step one is just to wait to see when she decides to show up. If it’s within curfew, then we don’t say anything about it. But if we have to talk about it, maybe we should wait until tomorrow. It’s so late already and I’m so tired. And she will just be angry.”

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Steve nodded. "Alright," he said. He'd follow Bucky's decision on that one. "Well, it looks like we've got possibly two hours to kill. Do you want to watch a movie? Or maybe we can groom Diana and Raphael? That'll take a good amount of time."

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“No. Movie,” Bucky grunted and shook his head. “We can groom the animals tomorrow. Let’s just relax for a bit.” He moved off of Steve’s lap and rubbed his head. Even though his headaches were much less frequent, they weren’t gone completely. Bucky had only gone in for two injections so far and he had another scheduled for the middle of November. He found a different doctor who was a lot better and she didn’t make him as uncomfortable as the first guy. But he sort of wished the headaches would have been a lot better by now.

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“What do you want to watch, Bucky? You want a space movie with the space princess? Or do you want the deer movie?” He tended to refer to movies now by the descriptions that Adriana gave them instead of their actual titles. "Or something else?" He reached his hand up to massage Bucky's head.

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“We watch the kids’ movies all the time," Bucky complained lightly. “Let’s watch something we can’t watch with them. I still have Clint’s copy of The Thing. That might be fun. It’s a little scary. We also have Terminator and Indiana Jones. And you know the second it’s available, I’m getting Top Gun. That movie was a gay man’s dream.”

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"Let’s watch The Thing. I'm fine with having extra excuses to hold you when scary parts come on." Steve smiled and nudged Bucky to get up. "Let's set up a blanket fort. Something that'll make Becca jealous that she missed out on such a good time."

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“I think blanket forts would make Adriana or Lilly jealous. Maybe not Becca so much,” Bucky said
but amended his statement with, “But we can still make one,” when he saw Steve pull a sad face. “Do you want to go sneakily check on the kids while I get the movie set up or do you think they are okay?”

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Steve really just wanted a blanket fort for himself. “I'll check on the kids,” he agreed. He went upstairs and carefully crept into the nursery to check on their two youngest. When he opened the door, Sarah May was already awake and she locked eyes with Steve with a look on her face that promised crying if he dared to walk out without her. To spare Christopher waking up, he carefully pulled her out of her crib and then went downstairs with his pleased daughter in his arms.

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Bucky had started in on the blanket fort and he looked up when Steve came in. “Oh, hey, look who is up,” he whispered. “Is she going to join us?” He got up and came over to nuzzle Sarah May’s face and give her a kiss on her cheek. “Maybe you will fall asleep on Daddy and then you won’t be so tired tomorrow, Ya-Ya.”

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"She was awake when I walked in," he said. Steve smiled as Sarah May reached out to hug Bucky. Steve cuddled her close and kissed the top of her head. "I'll keep her facing me so the movie won't scare her," he said, running a hand along her back.

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“Of course, Baby,” Bucky agreed and gestured for Steve to sit down in the blanket fort. “Just so long as you have room for both of us to snuggle you, please. It’s not often that we get time alone with just Sarah May. It’s nice for them each to be able to have time alone with their daddies. And Christopher and Adriana definitely get more of it than she does.”

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Sarah May looked pleased as punch to be able to snuggle with her dads during some quiet time. Steve tucked himself under Bucky's arm and kissed his cheek. "I'll always have room to snuggle you," he said. "Ya-Ya says thank you for letting her watch the movie with us."

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Bucky chuckled and adjusted himself to Steve. “Anytime, Ya-Ya,” he promised as the movie started playing. “I see she’s favoring you over me tonight. That’s not like her.” Bucky didn’t really mind, though. He loved that his kids were very affectionate with the both of them. He could never be upset with seeing Steve holding their babies in his arms.

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"That's because I'm keeping her up against my chest and she doesn't have object permanence yet. If she doesn't see you, she doesn't realize you're still here," he chuckled. Steve kind of was a little sad that he hardly got to hold Sarah May. Usually, she wanted to be around Bucky or her nana.

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Bucky shook his head and squeezed Steve’s side. “Oh, come on. She knows I’m here. My baby knows I’m here. She can hear me, she can smell me, she can feel my presence. She’s just perfectly
content to be with her daddy tonight. Because she loves you and wants to be with you.” Bucky wondered if maybe part of the reason Sarah May tended to want to be with him more was because when she was a newborn, he had more skin to skin contact with holding her on his chest than Steve did. But Maybe it was simply because Bucky was quieter sometimes. Or she liked his hair.

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"Oh, she can definitely smell you," Steve teased with a snicker. He pet his fingers through her dark curls and stared adoringly at their little girl when she stretched her arms out and yawned. He pecked Bucky's lips innocently before relaxing into his side to watch the movie.

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Bucky sighed and shook his head. “Yeah, Yeah, I know. You married a dirty hippie and I smell,” he chided back. Sarah May fell asleep within the first ten minutes of being snuggled up with her dads. She made quiet little noises while she slept and squeezed her fist in Steve’s shirt repeatedly. They were about an hour and a half into the movie when Becca finally got home, past curfew.

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Steve was so happy to be curled up on Halloween night with his husband and their baby. But when Becca came home, Steve didn't say anything, just watched her come in. He didn't want to risk accidentally saying something that would put her on the defensive. Instead, he just turned his head to Bucky to take his lead.

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Bucky heard Becca come through the door and he gave a little sigh and kissed the side of Steve’s face. “I'll go talk to her. Can you take Sarah May upstairs and then come back? Maybe Becca has a good reason to be late and cause me all this anxiety.”

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"Alright. Love you, Baby." Steve kissed Bucky's cheek and carefully stood up smoothly so he wouldn't jostle the sleeping baby. He carried her up the stairs and gently sung in her ear as he lowered her into her crib. After he tucked her in, Steve left the nursery to wait in their bedroom for a bit.

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Bucky found Becca in the kitchen getting a late-night snack. “Hey,” he said from the doorway, arms crossed but voice gentle. He wanted to give her the benefit of the doubt. Maybe she was out late for a reason. “You’re about an hour late, Becs.”

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Becca looked over to him briefly before turning back to the fridge. "I know," she said. "I lost track of time and it took longer to get home than I thought," she said unapologetically. "You didn't need to worry. I didn't need a curfew to begin with," she answered. "It wasn't like I was drinking."

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Bucky sighed softly. He knew this was going to happen. And he knew it was going to be somewhat about him. She wouldn’t have given a comment about drinking if it wasn’t. “Becca, I’ve been worrying over you since the day you were born,” he said gently, hoping that if he kept his cool then
so would she. “And I know you don’t drink. But I assume other kids at that party were drinking. And the curfews won’t end until you’re eighteen and you’re an adult.”

—I’m more of an adult now than you were at eighteen. It's just a number, Bucky," she said with a roll of her eyes. "I hardly go out this late. I shouldn't be told when to come home just because I happen to be two years younger than what New York State claims is legal adulthood." She pulled out a sandwich and started to munch on it.

—Yeah, eighteen is a number. But it’s an important number. And, I don’t know, I was eleven when the age of majority went down to eighteen. Maybe I thought I still had a whole ten years to be a stupid kid or something. But, whatever. There are things that you can’t do at sixteen. And I’m your guardian, Becca. There’s stuff you have to listen to me about for just another year and a half.” Bucky moved out of the doorway and came to sit next to her at the table. “I have a right to worry about you. Even if it’s nothing you do wrong that gets you in trouble, there are tons of people in this world that could cause trouble for you.”

—Becca huffed and gave Bucky an annoyed look. "Come on, can't you let it go?" she asked. "You've got your own kids to parent now. I don't need you hounding me over coming home an hour late because I was having fun at my friend's house. There are jerks out there twenty-four hours a day. Coming home an hour late won't change that."

—Coming home later than curfew makes me worried that one of those jerks did something bad to you,” Bucky said slowly but firmly. “When we set curfews it’s so I have a timeframe of when I’m allowed to start worrying that you’re in trouble. It’s a timeframe so I know when I can call Natasha or Sam and say that you haven’t gotten home yet. Steve and I agree that after two hours, we call the police. Because I don’t want to waste a second if my sister is out there somewhere hurt or in need.”

—"Well, maybe if you didn't want to worry about what time I was getting home after curfew, you should let me get a beeper," she said stubbornly. Bucky hadn't been against the things, exactly, but he wasn't expediting the matter either. In most situations, the family didn't need them to know what was going on. The first time she had asked, Bucky has dismissed it as just a trend for doctor’s but not something anyone else would actually need. But, Becca had been seeing more people in New York with them who weren’t just doctors. Although, a lot of those people were in business or on Wallstreet, so it made sense for them.

—Bucky rolled his head back and forth and rubbed his eyes. “Fine. Fine, we can get one. I’ll have to find the money in the budget and adjust some things. With Christmas and Hanukkah coming up, everything has already been planned tightly. So, give me a couple days on it, okay?” He was hoping desperately that this compromise would be enough to satisfy her for now even if he thought it was pretty much a useless desire for her to want a beeper.
"I've already started saving up for one. I almost have enough to pay for my own." Becca finished her food and stood up. She was done with this tonight. "Good night, Bucky," she said on her way down the stairs.

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“Yeah, okay... night,” Bucky called back softly as he watched her disappear. He shook his head and laid his head down on the table. He knew Becca was just going to keep having these problems with him - not listening to his rules, throwing his own past shortcomings in his face. He wasn’t sure how he could get it to stop but he wanted it to. He wanted her to love him again. Because he just didn’t think she did. But for now, all he could do was get a cup of water and head back upstairs to his husband and hopefully have a good night’s rest.
Chapter Summary

About two weeks later.

Bucky had barely gotten home from work and greeted his husband and kids when Becca pulled him aside. She had a file full of papers in her hand. "Hey, I've been looking over your finances for a little bit and there's a lot of money not being accounted for," she said.

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"Wow, hey, what the fuck are you doing going through my financial records?" Bucky asked and snatched the folder from her hands. "This is just for me and Steve. Did you rummage in my stuff to get this? I don’t go through your stuff, Becca."

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Becca crossed her arms and glared. "I told you I could help you with your finances to help you save up for college. You seemed to like the idea then, so I just went through with it," she defended. "Don't worry, it's not you that's overspending anyway," she said with a wave of her hand.

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“When was that? I don’t remember that,” Bucky said with knit brows. He kind of thought that he might have agreed to that at some point but he was juggling so much that he probably forgot about it entirely. “What’s, uh, what’s going on? We’re overspending?”

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"You're overspending just a little on toys for the babies, but not so much that it's putting a dent in your budget," she said. "And you eat out too much from that Greek place." She turned to a page that showed Steve's bank statements. "But look at this. There's practically two hundred dollars here that is missing on Steve's side."

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“Steve likes getting them toys and eating there,” Bucky mumbled and looked at the lines Becca pointed to. He only wore his reading glasses sometimes but he could really use them now – the words were so small. But Becca was right. And Bucky wanted Steve to be able to get whatever he wanted but they really did need to stay in the budget. “Okay, so these withdrawals here are two hundred in total that we don’t have a reason for? There’s no receipts or invoices or anything?""  

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"I triple checked the receipts. I understand if it's a few dollars but this is two hundred. I don't know what he's spending it on but if it's a normal thing, that's some over two grand a year lost in your records," Becca said, pretty proud of herself for finding this.
Bucky took another look at the papers, as if he could conjure up the answer by giving it one last try. “Yeah, I can’t afford two thousand missing dollars a year. I mean, I assume he’s using it for something. I’ll just have to ask him once he is done with bath time. He should be on the last kid by now. He might just have forgotten to put the receipts in here.”

"Just figured you'd want to know. Also, for a finder's fee, maybe you can get me that expensive notebook I've been eyeing at the bookstore?" she fished, hoping that Bucky would give it to her. She was going to buy it until Bucky gave the go-ahead for the beeper so now she had to save her money for that.

Bucky tucked all the papers back into the folder and held it against his chest. “How about you put that on your Christmas list? You might get it earlier than that too since this year we start doing Hanukkah. And it’s already November. I’m going to start shopping for you all soon anyway. I’ll need ideas.”

Becca sighed dramatically. "Fine," she said, not putting up more of a fight than that. "I'm going to be doing in the basement if you need me," she said.

Soon after that, Steve carried their freshly-bathed children in with one in each arm. "You want to help me tuck them in, Buck?"

Bucky set the finances folder down and took Christopher from Steve gently. “Oh, look how sleepy they are. Sleepy little babies. Are you going to rest all through the night tonight? Or are you going to wake up Papa at four in the morning and then not go back to bed last you did last night?” He kissed Christopher’s head and watched his eyes slip shut. “Where’s Adriana? With your mom? It’s almost her bedtime too. Is she clean too or not yet?”

It was one of those rare nights where both babies were ready for sleep. Steve had run them ragged with a trip to the park, a little extra playtime, and playing games outside in the tiny backyard. By the time they came inside to a warm bath, they were ready for sleep. "She was washed first. She wanted some time to play with her toys before we tucked her in," Steve said.

“Okay, let’s give her some time to herself then,” Bucky agreed and carried Christopher to the nursery. He heard a very quiet ‘Papa’ followed by a tired whine. “Very sleepy Bean. This never happens with both of them at once.” He slowly lowered his son into his crib and got him all tucked in. Christopher brought his thumb to his mouth and curled his legs up to the side, just about a few seconds from sleep.

Steve always thought their kids were the cutest when they were all sleepy and cuddly with their parents. Although Christopher was easily put down, Sarah May insisted on being rocked to sleep in her daddy’s arms before she was put in her crib. With both babies put to bed with ease, Steve grinned
over at Bucky. "Piece of cake, huh?"

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Bucky nodded and pulled Steve in for a kiss. "Yeah, nice and easy tonight," he agreed and slipped his arms around Steve’s middle. "Let’s go so they don’t wake up again." He pulled Steve out of the nursery and shut the door carefully. “I haven’t had a chance to really talk to you today. How was your day?”

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Steve leaned into Bucky’s arms and turned his head to give him a kiss. He walked into their bedroom so they could sit and chat for a little while before putting their oldest daughter to bed. "It was nice," he said. "I was able to teach Christopher some new animals today. He's still calling deer ‘doggies’, though."

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“That’s okay. He will get it eventually. I mean, Adriana can list off hundreds of different animals and yet sometimes she has to ask me to remind her what her middle name is,” Bucky said with a shrug. “I’m glad it was a good day. The kids all seem to be pretty happy right now. I think Ya-Ya likes the colder weather. She likes to snuggle up in her sweaters.”

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"That girl loves her animals. I'm looking into some summer programs for her that take kids on nature walks, but most of them are for kids a little older than her," Steve said. "I've been thinking about having my mom teach me to knit so I can make Ya-Ya baby sweaters or little slings so she could cuddle with us while we're doing other stuff."

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That was a good idea. She loved being held by them as much as she could be. Maybe a sling for her would be good so then she could nap there with them. “Sure, Baby, I think that’s smart,” he said and then took Steve’s hand in his. “Hey, can I ask you something?” he started and reached for the financial folder he left on the bed. “Becca found a discrepancy in our finances and we are trying to figure out what happened.”

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Steve looked concerned when Bucky used that tone with him - the 'I'm not sure if I should worry yet or not' tone. He looked at the folder with a frown. "Why’s she looking at our finances?" he asked. "It's just another excuse for her to be smug about something if she thinks we're spending our money wrong. What did she find?"

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“Apparently, I agreed to let her help me manage it all,” Bucky said softly and handed Steve a few papers and pointed to the lines that Becca had marked. “We’re missing about two hundred dollars over here on your expenses. We tried to find receipts or something but we couldn’t. And I’m not trying to be like some uptight stingy stooge husband but we did agree that I would be in charge of finances.”
Steve pouted a little when Bucky pointed it out. He considered trying to dance around it but he knew that it would nag at the back of Bucky's mind until he got an answer. He turned and got a shoebox out from underneath his side of the bed. He opened it up and showed Bucky stacks of money stuffed inside of it. "It was a surprise," he said. "For the past few months, I've been putting money away for your college tuition."

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Bucky riffled through the box. There was close to fourteen hundred dollars already there. Steve must have been putting aside any spare change he had left over from shopping days on top of the two hundred that was put aside monthly already. "Steve..." he said quietly and looked up at his husband. He chuckled softly and shook his head. "Baby, you should have figured that you can’t surprise me like that when I’m the one who looks at all our expenses all the time." He reached out and pulled Steve close to him again, kissing his lips and cheek repeatedly. "I love you. And I love that you wanted to do this for me."

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Steve smirked and proudly said, "Well, I was able to hide it from you for half a year. It took your sister being nosy for you to finally catch on." He pressed their lips together. "I know it's going to be tough for you when you go back to school. So, I figured if we save up for tuition and for some safety money since you'll probably have to cut your hours, it'll be helpful."

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"Yeah, it is helpful. Thank you, Baby," Bucky said and moved the folder aside so he could slip his hands on Steve’s neck and kiss him more. He tilted them both so they were laying on their sides on the bed. "You know that sometimes I wake up and see you still asleep next to me and all I can think is, ‘Oh, my god. I get to be married to Steve. I get to have the most kind, loving, handsome, thoughtful, gentle, sexy, passionate husband in the world.’ And then I have to just take a second to look at you because I can’t even believe it."

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Steve blushed deeply at Bucky's professed love for him. "You're such a dope, Babe," he said lovingly. "You're the best husband ever, Bucky. Even better than I am. I can't imagine how crappy my life would've been if I never got to meet you," he said with a little pout. "You're my world, Buck. You and our kids."

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"I know. I know and you’re my world," Bucky assured him and rolled them so he could spread himself out on top of Steve. "And in two years, I’ll be in school again and it’s thanks to you. Then I’ll have some sort of other job and I’ll be able to provide for my family better. It’s going to be great."

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Steve smiled. "You'll be raking in all the dough so we can have the other half of our baseball team," he said with a wink. "And then our kids will be able to see their papa more often because he'll have a steady job with normal hours and vacation days," he said sweetly.

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"That’s what I want," Bucky said with a pleased little smile. "I want to spend time with my family. I never get enough time with you all." He brushed his hands through Steve’s hair and added, "How
about tonight you let me suck you off in the shower and then once we’re done, I’ll take you to bed and fuck you on your hands and knees with that beautiful ass up in the air. Maybe I’ll get another orgasm from you.”

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Steve looked very interested in that. He locked eyes with his husband and gave him a bright smile. "Yes," he said excitedly. "Let's get Adriana tucked in, make sure the animals are fed and walked, and then we can spend the night alone together.”

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“We better get going then,” Bucky said and rolled off of Steve. I’ll get Adriana. You get the animals? We will make quick time of it? I want you as soon as I can have you. I want you now and forever. I want to be inside you and fucking into you so deep and fast.”

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Steve blushed shyly. No matter how much time passed, Bucky would always be the more outgoing one when it came to talking about sex. Raphael demanded attention and Diana took forever to do her business outside but at long last, Steve returned and was ready for an evening with his husband.

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Adriana was so sleepy and she curled up in her bed without any arguments. Bucky read her a bedtime story and then set her night light on and headed to check on his sisters and kiss them goodnight. Once everyone was accounted for, he went back to his and Steve’s room and stripped down. He tidied up just a little bit and then went and waiting naked in the bathroom, sitting on the counter, one foot up on the wall across from him so he was on display, and a towel wrapped up and draped around his neck like he just finished a workout. It was a little ridiculous but Steve would like it.

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Steve walked into the bathroom when he didn't see Bucky in the bedroom and was taken with a pleasant shock when he saw Bucky sitting on the counter on full display for him. He blushed deeply and walked over to his husband so he could run his hands along his thighs. "You're cleaning the counter now that your naked ass has just rubbed itself all over it," he teased fondly before kissing his husband deeply, trailing his fingers along his dick.

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Bucky kissed Steve back, wrapping one leg around him a moment and biting lightly at his bottom lip. “Are you saying that my bare ass is dirty? I’ll have you know that I clean it almost once a week. And sometimes I even use the good soap,” he joked with a little sour expression as if horribly offended by Steve’s insinuation.

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"Yes, I am. I think I'm going to have to lick it clean," he joked. Steve hummed in approval when Bucky bit his lip. "So, are you going to undress your husband or are you going to make him have to do it himself? He's had a long day taking care of all the children you've hounded him into having."
“I hounded?” Bucky asked. “I think that’s a little bit off. I’m pretty sure you’re the one who said we should have as many as possible. And then I’m pretty sure you like taking care of our babies too, by the way. I could be wrong, though,” he slid off the counter and stood in front of Steve, naked and horny and, as always, just a little shorter than him so he had to look up into his warm eyes. “I also was going to help undress you but then you called me dirty. So, maybe I should get in the shower and get a head start on cleaning up while you undress yourself.”

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"Nah, you totally were the child-pusher. I wanted to have a solitary life with just me and my husband but you had to bring in this whole parenting business," Steve said with a dumb smirk. He ran his hands over Bucky's shoulders because he couldn't keep his hands off of him. "How about I apologize for my comment and you undress me."

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“Such bullshit,” Bucky scoffed and brought his hips forward so he was pushing his cock against Steve’s leg. “You apologize and then I’ll consider helping to undress you,” he said, his hands already holding Steve’s ass firmly. There was no way he was going to be able to keep this up. He was going to cave so fast.

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"I’m sorry I called your ass dirty. It is, in fact, the cleanest ass I've ever had the pleasure of touching. It is the ass that you work off every day to provide a comfortable life for me and our family," Steve said, touching Bucky's hip lightly. "It is the ass that is attached to the person I love so, so much."

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Bucky scrunched up his face and chuckled before waving Steve off. “Okay, Okay, I get it. Stop that. It got odd fast. Just give me a kiss and then you’ll be forgiven,” he said. He moved Steve’s shirt collar aside so he could lick a line over his collarbone and then nip gently at the bend in his neck.

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Steve looked ready to compliment Bucky's ass for another few minutes but he grinned when Bucky had enough of it and started to undress him. He pecked his lips affectionately and then tilted his head so Bucky had better access to his neck. "Tell me more about how much you love me," he purred, stroking a single finger over Bucky's dick.

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“Oh, I love you, Baby,” Bucky said, a little impatiently as he slid down Steve’s body and sunk to the floor so he was kneeling in front of him. “I love you more than anything. But do you want to hear it right now or should my mouth show you how I love you?” He looked up at Steve and then pressed his face to his crotch. Steve was wearing jeans with a snap button and a short zipper. It was easy enough to use his teeth and tongue to get them undone. He nosed the open fly aside and kissed Steve’s clothed dick a few times before reaching up to pull pants and underwear from Steve at once.

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Steve threaded his fingers in Bucky's hair when he sunk down in front of him. He loved how sexy Bucky was and how he could do damned near pornographic levels of foreplay with him. "Fuck," he swore, aroused as hell when Bucky used his mouth to get his pants off. He whined and tightened his fingers in Bucky's hair as he continued to tease him. "You're right. I'd rather you show me."
Bucky grinned up at Steve and licked a line up from Steve’s balls to the tip of his cock. He sucked
the head into his mouth for a second just to wet it and then he popped off again. “Shower. Let’s go,”
he grunted softly and stood back up to pull Steve into the shower with him. He turned on the water
and stood under the stream so Steve could see his body get drenched and his hair get matted down
around his face and neck. He knew he liked that.

Steve was already hard and aching, so it felt a little awkward walking into the shower with his dick
waving everywhere. He pressed himself against his husband, once in the shower, and gently fixed
Bucky’s hair so it neatly fell down his back and shoulders. “Your hair is getting pretty long, Baby.”

“Yeah, it is. Do you want me to cut it?” Bucky asked curiously and touched the ends of his wet hair.
It was about three inches longer than he normally kept it. He just hadn’t taken the time to trim it up in
a long while. He was always so busy that he just sort of forgot. And since they didn’t cut the kids’
hair, he hadn’t remembered to cut his own for months.

“No, Baby. I think it looks beautiful.” Steve liked combing his fingers through Bucky’s long hair.
Christopher’s was getting on the long side as well but Steve wouldn’t dare suggest cutting it. He
kissed Bucky’s forehead and smiled warmly. “You can cut it whenever you want. But I like it when
it gets long.”

Bucky nodded and pulled Steve in under the stream of water with him so he could press their lips
together. He held them like that for a few moments and then finally popped off of his husband.
“Want me to suck you off now like I planned? Or do you want to wait until we are in bed?”

Steve considered and said, “Let’s do it here. It’s been a while since we fooled around in the shower.”
He teased one of Bucky’s nipples with his thumb. “I’d love to see my dick on your lips with water
pouring down on you too. You look extra nice with your body all slick and wet...”

Bucky let out a hot sigh of a breath and gave a tick of a grin. “Uh-huh, you got it, Babe,” he agreed
and once again sank down Steve’s body so he was facing his cock head-on. “Tell me what you want
me to do you tonight, okay?” he requested and licked along Steve’s dick. “I want to know
everything you want.” He kissed Steve’s hips and then gently but swiftly took his entire cock down
his throat and held it for a few moments before starting to pull back.

Steve opened his mouth to start telling Bucky what to do but all that came out was a moan. “Oh,
fuck, Sweetheart.” It took him a moment to recover and, when he had the sense to talk again, he said,
“I want you to draw it out. I love seeing you suck me off with your gorgeous lips.”
Bucky hummed along the shaft and pulled himself all the way off until he had just the head sitting nicely cradled in his mouth. He looked up at Steve and held eye contact as he once again slowly took the whole thing down. He felt it hit the back of his throat and he just stayed like that for a bit, hands trailing up to hold Steve’s ass. He pulled back just enough so Steve would have somewhere to go and then he pushed him forward so he got the idea that Bucky wanted him to fuck his mouth.

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Steve cupped the side of Bucky’s face and rubbed his thumb over his cheek. His eyes were focused on his husband and his husband, alone. “God, you’re amazing,” he breathed out. His hips pressed forward just a bit. “Can you tease my ass?” he asked, blushing a bit. “Just one finger. I want to want more.”

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Bucky nodded as much as he could with a cock in his mouth and ran one finger in between Steve’s cheeks to start teasing his hole. He had such a firm ass. It was incredible. And Bucky often forgot since he spent more time being the bottom, it seemed. But, god, when he got his hands on Steve... it was electric. And Bucky could touch and kiss and lick and bite and praise Steve’s body until the day he died and it still wouldn’t be enough for him.

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Steve threw his head back but forgot how close he was to the wall and knocked it a tiny bit. “Fuck,” he swore, rubbing his head with a bashful laugh. “See what you’re doing to me?” He leaned his head back easier this time. “I love you. God, Buck, you’re perfect. A perfect husband who can suck dick perfectly too.”

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Bucky pulled off so he could take a breather and he chuckled and looked up at Steve. “Well, that is all that one has to look for in a husband,” he joked as he eased the tip of his finger more firmly against Steve’s hole. He wanted to watch his face while he did it. Bucky brought his mouth back to Steve’s cock and licked lightly around the head and the slit, tucking his tongue around every dip and hill and every throbbing vein.

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Bucky sucked dick like a goddamned champion and it had Steve writhing in his spot and whimpering Bucky’s name because it felt so good. He was hard, aching, and leaking heavily into Bucky’s mouth as he sucked him off. And when he came, damn, Bucky could bring out the best orgasms ever. Steve gripped Bucky’s hair tightly and held his head steady as his hips jerked forward, spilling himself down his throat.

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Bucky’s mouth was so full of Steve’s cock and his warm come shooting right down his throat felt fucking amazing and made his own hard cock twitch and plead for attention. He liked to keep going after Steve came just to see how much Steve could take before it was too much for him. He kept his mouth on Steve’s cock and licked a line up to the head. Pressing his tongue on the underside, he hummed deeply.

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Steve’s back arched and his thighs shook. “Bucky, Baby,” he moaned helplessly, jerking a little
every time Bucky’s tongue swiped at the head of his dick. It was all too much but he also loved it when Bucky pushed him like this. He finally had to call it quits a few minutes later. Steve pulled back abruptly, his entire body trembling from the work Bucky’s mouth did on him. “Jesus Christ—” he gasped out.

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Steve pulled off of Bucky so quickly that Bucky fumbled forward a little in the shower and had to catch himself before planting into the ground. He sat back on his legs so Steve could see him down on the ground for him under the cascading water. “You taste just as good as the very first time,” he said and reached out to brush his fingers encouragingly on Steve’s thigh.

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“Sorry,” Steve apologized. “It was so much.” He was still catching his breath. He looked down at his husband with an appreciative groan and finally squatted down in front of him. He cupped Bucky’s face and drew him in for a slow and tender kiss. “I love you so fucking much, Baby,” he said. “If you sucked me off like that the first time I think you would’ve made me cry from how good it was. I’m glad you took it easy on me back then,” Steve chuckled.

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Bucky gladly kissed Steve back and hoped he could taste himself on Bucky’s mouth. “I know, Baby. I wanted to build you up to a lot of things. But, some time, I bet I could still bring you to orgasm so well that you will cry. Maybe I’ll fist you again soon and just massage your prostate endlessly until you’re so overwhelmed with pleasure you need a break.”

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Steve leaned heavily against his husband’s chest even though he was the bigger one out of the two of them. He groaned as he kissed Bucky’s cheek. “You trying to make me come again?” He joked. “We should give that a try the next time we have the day to ourselves. There’s no way I’m going to want to do a thing if your fist has been inside of me.”

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Bucky nodded his agreement and slipped his arms around Steve and ushered him to stand up again. They did need to shower, after all. And he had just gotten this special new shampoo that was supposed to help long hair stay soft and brush-able near the ends. He really needed it. The ends of his hair were badly split and severely unmanageable on most mornings.

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Steve stood up right after and grabbed Bucky’s new shampoo. He poured some in his hands and started to massage it into his scalp. He sighed happily. “Have you ever thought about coloring your hair?” he asked. “Even if it’s just temporary. I bet the kids would get a kick out of it if you had blue hair for a day or something.”

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Bucky turned his head to stare at Steve for a second. “Are you kidding? I can’t tell if you’re kidding,” he said quizzically. He loved his hair just the way it was and didn’t know how he would feel about changing the color like that. But maybe he could give it a try if it was really only for a day or so. Maybe the kids would like it. Just so long as he was brunette again very soon after.
“I’m being serious.” Steve laughed. “Imagine what Christopher would do if you showed up one day with silly new hair dye done up in a mohawk or something? You’d look even more like a rock star than you already do.” He smiled adoringly at his husband. “Sarah May might think that you’re weird, though.”

“A mohawk?” Bucky asked incredulously. “Steve, Baby, I’m not a high-schooler or some wannabe new age teen rocker who wants to fight hair bands. I’m a Ramones man. I won’t let the sleek seventies die because kids these days don’t know how good they’ve got it with music right now. Glam is at its peak. And it doesn’t include mohawks.”

Steve playfully held a lock of Bucky’s hair up. “I don’t know, Buck. Looking like a big old peacock may be a good look for you. You won’t know until you try,” he tempted, smiling dumbly at his husband. “Or maybe we can get you a bald cap and pretend you shaved it all off.”

“You’re the worst,” Bucky said with a sigh and gave Steve a little kiss. “You would hate seeing me bald, even if it was fake. And I don’t want to make Sarah May cry like you did on Halloween. And she would cry. The babies love pulling on my hair so they will be very upset if it’s all gone.”

“I didn’t even mean to make her cry,” Steve said. “She’s such a sensitive little soul.” He washed out the shampoo from Bucky’s hair. “Admit it, though. You’d love to have a little break from having your hair pulled. Even though you’ll miss it when they’re older and want nothing to do with their lame parents.”

“Yeah, it would be nice to have a break from the hair-pulling,” Bucky admitted. “But it won’t stop forever because even when Christopher and Sarah May will be teenagers, we will have another baby pulling on my hair anyway.” Their baseball team of children were probably all going to be hair-pullers.

“And once those babies become teenagers, our older ones will be having grandkids.” Steve ran his hands down Bucky’s arms and stopped at his hands. He laced their fingers together. “You like it when I pull your hair, at least,” he said, winking at Bucky.

Bucky chuckled and leaned into Steve’s touch. “Yeah, but that’s different. You pull all the hair at once. You don’t grab a dozen strands and yank them all out. Also, it helps that, usually when you are pulling my hair, your cock is inside me too. It’s a good combination.” He reached over and shut the water off, ringing his hair out as it trickled to a stop. He was ready to give his cock some attention now and he did want inside Steve tonight. He was also fairly confident that he could get him to come again.
When they got out of the shower, Steve grabbed a towel and wrapped it around his husband. He made sure to brush his fingers lightly against his cock as he tied it around Bucky’s waist. He wrapped a towel around himself right after and commented, “nice tent you got there.”

“It’s yours if you want it,” Bucky countered with a grin and went to look in the mirror a second to check his hair. “I was planning on getting you on your knees and fucking you well enough that you can’t walk in the morning. But if that doesn’t appeal to you then I don’t have to do it.”

“Please. It’s been mine for years now,” Steve teased. He toweled off and walked over to their bed and slowly climbed onto it with his legs spread for Bucky. “That sounds like a good plan to me. But first, how about you let me have a taste of it if you think you can last,” he purred, looking back at Bucky.

“Ooh, Baby,” Bucky growled low in his throat and sauntered over to Steve with his cock pointed directly at him, ready to have contact with his husband finally. “I can last. Help me get my cock nice and wet and ready to fuck you.” He grinned and captured Steve’s lips in a long, warm kiss before popping off with a gasped, “I fucking love you.”

Steve loved it when Bucky was like this. He was admittedly pretty overeager to have Bucky inside of him. He held the base of his husband’s cock and looked innocently up at him as he lapped at the tip. After a few little licks, he wrapped his lips around the head and slowly sunk down a few inches with a pleased groan.

Bucky watched Steve intently with his mouth open in an undignified gape and his eyes only able to keep half open. He was so hard and so ready for Steve. “You’re spectacular,” he whispered and watched how smoothly his dick disappeared into Steve’s mouth and then came right back again. He brushed his hand through Steve’s hair and gingerly caressed his temples and his cheeks. “You are the single most beautiful sight in the world.”

Steve’s eyes closed halfway as Bucky praised him and touched him. He dipped further down on Bucky’s cock, moaning low as he bobbed his head on the beautiful dick presented to him. As he pulled back, he dragged the tip of his tongue firmly along the underside while his hand reached up to caress Bucky’s balls. He hummed in appreciation, letting their weight rest in his palm.

“God, Steve,” Bucky breathed, letting himself pay attention to the light fondling from Steve’s fingers and the drag of his tongue. “Fuck, Baby... you’re the greatest man anyone could ever have. You’re the sexiest and the sweetest. I’m so lucky to get to love you, to get to kiss you, fuck you, hold you, talk to you, wake up to you. I want to be inside you now, please. Let me get inside your wonderful ass, Baby. I’ll be so good to you.”
Steve had been enjoying the taste of Bucky’s dick on his lips but he wanted Bucky to make love to him. He wanted to feel Bucky take him apart and put him back together again. He pulled off of Bucky’s dick with a wet pop and sat up to give Bucky a hot, dirty kiss. “I want you,” he said between kisses. “Please, Buck, give me your cock.”

Bucky nodded eagerly and kissed Steve again as he reached to get the lube from the nightstand. He kissed Steve’s forehead and then his cheek and gestured for him to get down on his knees for him. “Ass up, Baby, please,” he requested and waited for Steve to show himself off on all fours. “Gonna give you two fingers to start, okay? You want two fingers, Love?”

Steve turned and got on his hands and knees with his ass up in the air on display for his husband. He was aching for it. “Yes. Yes, that’s perfect, Buck,” he said. “Don’t go too fast. I want to feel everything you do.” Steve closed his eyes, relaxed and ready for his husband to open him up.

Bucky gave Steve a gentle kiss on his ass cheek as an answer as he slowly, carefully pushed two heavily lubed fingers into his husband. “There you go, Steve. That’s it,” he whispered and started to pump in and out of him firmly and steadily but not too fast. “If I go slow with you right now, can I ram you once you’ve got my cock?”

“Ohh,” Steve groaned softly in satisfaction. He dropped his head, relaxing even more despite the penetration. “Yeah, Buck, that’s fine,” he said. “Can you do me from behind when you’re ramming me?” he asked. “I want you all over me. I want to feel like only me and you exist.”

“That was the plan, yes,” Bucky admitted and gave Steve’s ass another few kisses before working in the third finger. “I want to rail you. Have you biting the pillow, and groaning and squeezing my cock as you come all over the bed. Gonna bury my dick up inside you and coat you with my come. Then once I’m done, I’ll trade my dick for fingers and fuck you with my hand until you’re about to pass out from the intensity of pleasure.” Bucky wasn’t usually like this. He was just feeling wild today and wanted to go a little wild on Steve too.

Steve groaned and arched his back when Bucky started to work another finger in. “I’m going to save up every damned penny for your college if this is what that gets me,” he said. He did it because he loved Bucky but having amazing sex was another huge perk to consider. “I’m ready for your dick, Buck. Give me your cock, baby, I want it so bad.”

“Baby, I’ll give this to you whenever you want it. Just give me the signal and I’ll be on you,” Bucky growled and rolled his hips against Steve’s body for a second. He kept two fingers still inside of Steve and lubed up his cock with his free hand. Bucky carefully lined up to his hole and pushed in all the way to his balls, right next to his fingers. “God, fuck, tight.”
Steve hadn’t been expecting Bucky to keep his fingers inside of him. When he felt his husband’s dick bury in right next to his fingers, Steve threw his head back and cried out. “Ohh, fuck!” he swore. “Bucky, oh, baby, don’t stop,” Steve gasped out, gripping the sheets tightly.

“Yeah? This is okay?” Bucky double-checked and leaned his body over him to kiss Steve’s back and shoulders. “I’m going to move now, Baby. And, unless you tell me to stop, I’m going to move fast and hard. Okay? I’m taking you apart tonight. I’m showing you what I can do.” He punctuated his declaration with a sharp thrust of his hips. “Just tell me if it’s too much,” he said and then pulled his cock out to the head and then slammed right back in, bracing his hands on Steve’s hips before setting his immediate brutal pace that had him starting to sweat in seconds.

Steve’s body jerked at the hard thrust and he threw his head back with another moan. “Go ahead, Baby,” he said breathlessly. “Show me what you got.” And Bucky did just that for him. The pace was more than Steve was used to and his mouth hung open in a silent moan as Bucky railed him harder than ever before. He scooped the pillow up towards his face and bit it so he wouldn’t wake the babies up with the noise he was making. Every muscle in his body was tightly wound up like a coil ready to spring and Bucky was already making his dick want to get hard again.

Bucky kept his hard thrusts into Steve but he slowed them down a bit so he could work a third finger back into his ass. Bucky loved stretching Steve like that. And, for a second, he wished he had two dicks so he could get them both inside Steve. But that wasn’t how human anatomy worked. “You are so pretty, Steve,” Bucky said softly and reached his free hand around to clutch on to Steve’s cock. He pulled himself almost all the way out of Steve and then slam back in to pick up his initial pace once again.

Steve whined and writhed beneath Bucky. He had a blush that went all the way down to his chest and his whole body trembled with pleasure. He squeezed his eyes shut and let out a helpless moan into the pillow, crying out Bucky’s name over and over in pleasure as his husband wrecked him in the best way possible. It was clear that Steve wasn’t going to last very long.

The sounds Steve was making was spurring Bucky on more and more and he pumped Steve’s cock in time with his thrusts and even leaned in to give him a few bites to his shoulder and neck. He knew he only had maybe a few moments left in him before he was going to shoot up inside of Steve but he was going to savor those moments until he did. “I love you, Baby. I love you so much. You’re such a good handsome husband and you’re all mine.”

Steve was gasping for air and he felt close to passing out between the way Bucky was fucking him and how it felt like he couldn’t take a full breath into his lungs. When he came again, a little by surprise, he couldn’t see straight and he practically screamed Bucky’s name into the pillow as his ass clenched around his husband’s dick.
Bucky pushed up as far into him as he could get and exploded his come deep inside Steve’s ass. “Fuck!” Bucky yelped. His whole body shook and he pulled his fingers out of him so he could reach his arms around and hold Steve up. “Baby, you okay?” he asked and just stilled them for a moment to give Steve time to breathe and calm back down after his orgasm.

Steve fisted the blanket sheets desperately, wheezing a little as he tried to gulp air thickly into his lungs. His thighs trembled and he looked back at Bucky, barely able to move. “Overwhelmed,” he managed to get out softly. He reached his hand down to place over Bucky’s.

“Okay, I’ve got you. I got you, Baby.” Bucky assured him softly and held him close and securely. “I’m sorry. I think I pushed you too much. Two orgasms in a short time like that and being so rough was probably too much.” He knew Steve more than likely enjoyed himself but Bucky wasn’t typically so wild and harsh when fucking Steve and now he had overwhelmed his husband. “I’ve got you, Baby. I love you.”

Steve slowly turned in Bucky’s arms and buried his face in his husband’s chest. It took a little while for him to talk but at long last, he mumbled, “I liked it.” Steve wasn’t sure how often he’d be able to do something like this but it was more intense than anything they’d done before - even fisting - and Steve was very much in need of being cuddled. “Was it good for you too?”

“Oh, Babe, it was phenomenal for me,” Bucky said emphatically and laid down mostly on top of Steve so he could wrap him in his arms. “That was perfect. You are perfect. Every second was bliss. Trust me.” He kissed Steve’s neck and cheek and lips and then looked into his eyes and gave him a gentle little smile. “You make me feel invincible. You make me feel infinite. It’s cheesy, but it’s true, Steve. And I love you to the moon and back and then back again and again and again.”

Steve soaked up the love and praise that Bucky gave him. He wrapped his arms around his husband and pulled him in even closer, wanting Bucky’s full weight on him. “You wrecked me good,” he said with a breathless laugh. “If the babies wake up in the night, you’re getting up to take care of them.”

Bucky chuckled and squeezed Steve a little tighter. “I will, Love. I’ll take care of all of them. And I’ll take care of you, too. I’ll make you breakfast in bed tomorrow if you want. And I’ll give you a massage. You can sleep in as much as you want because I don’t have to work until late tomorrow.” He sighed contentedly and kissed along Steve’s jaw. “Baby, I can’t stop kissing you and touching you. You’ve got me so hooked. I just want to be attached to you all the time, Love.”

Steve tilted his head to give Bucky more room to kiss his jaw. He kind of wished they were dressed appropriately to have the babies in here because Steve wanted maximum cuddling. He gave Bucky
puppy eyes and reached up to play with his hair. “Call in sick tomorrow?” he asked in an extra pathetic voice to get Bucky to agree with it. “Spend the day with us tomorrow.”

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Bucky was such a sucker for Steve’s begging face and he loved having his hair played with too. He just wanted to make Steve happy all the time and hold him like this forever. “I guess I can ask Tim to do it. I’m only supposed to be in from around two to eight. And Reggie will be there and Tim actually gets along really well with him.”

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Steve beamed and gave Bucky a big kiss on the cheek. “Thank you,” he said happily. “I want to spend all day with you. And Adriana will be so happy to have you around, too.” He scratched his nails lightly up Bucky’s back. “I love you so damn much.”

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“I love you too, Sweetheart,” Bucky said and worked on pulling a blanket up over the two of them. “I did promise Clint I would talk to him tomorrow so I might have to blame you for neglecting him when I see him next. I finally figured out what’s up with him and Nat.”

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Steve relaxed back into the mattress and closed his eyes. “What’s going on between those two?” He was still really worried, and had been. He didn’t want either of them to not be happy in their relationship.

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Bucky sighed and relaxed next to Steve too. “Well,” he started and found Steve’s hand to lace their fingers together. “It kind of turned into this whole big thing. Because Clint decided to ask Natasha to move in with him. And she wasn’t so sure. So, he said that it would be great because his place has an extra bedroom that could be Nat’s office or den space. And then she asked why it was that she would have to move to his place and not the other way around. And then he said that it was because his place was bigger and it was his mom’s and he has the little cellar. And then she said she liked her place better and it is closer to the precinct. Then it kind of snowballed.”

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Steve ended up laughing a little at that. In all honesty, Clint’s place was the better choice but he knew how stubborn Natasha could be and how it would inconvenience her to move further from the precinct. He gave Bucky’s hand a squeeze. “That sounds like something she would put up a fight over,” he sighed. “Where are they at now?”

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“I’m not sure,” Bucky admitted softly. “To be honest, I don’t think Natasha wants to move in with him yet. She knows what his desires in life are - marriage and children. And since that isn’t hers, she doesn’t know what to do. Because she doesn’t want to lose him but she probably won’t change her mind about those things either. I just think they are at a bit of a crossroads and they can’t figure out what to do.”

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“Do you think that he would change his mind about it?” Steve had been worried for a while about that issue as well. He knew how much Clint loved kids and if Bucky had told Steve he didn’t want kids at all, it would have been a tough pill to swallow. But Steve also didn’t want Natasha and Clint’s relationship to end. He loved that they were together.

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Bucky took a few moments to think. He really wasn’t sure how this was going to play out. “I don’t know, Baby. Because Clint really does love her. And she loves him too. But Clint has always wanted to be a father. I guess now he needs to figure out which is more important to him. And that’s not going to be easy. Especially, because what he really wants is to have a life with her and their children but he can’t have both.”

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Steve started to look all sad and emotional over their friends’ relationship being rocky. His lips turned down into a frown and although he really, really wanted Bucky around the house tomorrow, he said, “Do you think Clint needs you around to talk to tomorrow? I don’t want to take you away if he needs you.”

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“Oh, hey, come on,” Bucky muttered and brushed his thumb over Steve’s frown. “Where did my happy man go? It’s okay, Steve. Clint and Natasha are going to have to be the ones to work it out. Clint can talk to me about it all he wants but I’ve already given him the advice I can give. And it’s on him now to really think about this thing. It’ll be okay. And he can spare me for a day. He will have to get used to me not being around all the time once I start college anyway.”

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Steve squeezed Bucky’s hand and he sighed dramatically. “I don’t like this. It’s so sad. I don’t wish I could fix it. Talk to me about something else, Buck. Tell me what we’re going to do tomorrow.”

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“Baby, things happen. You know this. Relationships go through tests like this. Ours has recently gone through its share,” Bucky assured Steve and then gave him a kiss. “Tomorrow we can do whatever you want. It’s getting colder out so the zoo and the parks would probably not be a good idea. The girls have school and your mom is going to Manhattan with some friends. We could do an art day with the kids. Or do some home science experiments. I saw an article about making bouncy balls with baking supplies.”

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Steve considered the options for a little while. “Let’s do art in the morning and then science in the afternoon. Lilly may have fun with the bouncy balls,” he said. Or at least, she would potentially enjoy that more than art so he would save that for later just in case she was interested. “Christopher doesn’t seem to have much of an interest in creating. He just likes to create messes,” he sighed.

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“Maybe that’s his form of creating art,” Bucky offered and shifted a little so Steve was more cradled in his arms than underneath him. “He’s just going to be more of an abstract artist, Babe. He’s not our
Da Vinci. He’s our Picasso.” He smiled and gave Steve a little kiss on the lips. “Sarah May will probably be our Da Vinci. She’s really precise and not so chaotic. The jury is still out on Adriana, though.”

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“That girl has no natural drawing ability, I’m sorry to say. But she does love to color,” Steve chuckled. “So long as she’s enjoying herself, I’m happy.” He kissed Bucky’s cheek. “I’m thinking Adriana’s going to be our little science nerd or maybe she’s going to be good at music. We can get her into piano soon maybe.”

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Bucky nodded and thought about whether Adriana would even want that or not. But maybe Steve had talked to her about it already. “We can try that. But for right now, I’m sleepy and everyone else is asleep and it sounds like we have a big day planned tomorrow. So, give me a kiss and let’s fall asleep together.”
Chapter Summary

First Half of the Day.

The next morning, the two of them were woken up by a knocking on their bedroom door. Adriana was rapping her knuckles on the door over and over with a small sense of urgency. “Daddy, Papa! Wake up! Christopher is doing something he shouldn’t,” she said through the door. “Daaaddy, Paapaaa,” she whined obnoxiously to wake them up.

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Bucky groaned and blinked open his eyes as he rolled off of Steve. They were still naked and sticky but Adriana was insistent. “Steve, clothes,” he muttered and nudged Steve’s leg. Although, he did suspect that Steve was probably pretty sore this morning and he should just take care of this on his own. He yawned and tugged on his pants and a big T-shirt. “Yes, Peanut, what’s wrong?” he asked, as he slipped carefully out of the room in a way so Adriana wouldn’t be able to see inside to Steve.

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Steve groaned and rolled onto his side. He made a motion to make Bucky go take care of things because he was still feeling pretty wrecked. He curled up under the blankets once Bucky left.

Adriana took Bucky by the hand and led him stealthily to the nursery and pointed at the slightly open door. Christopher had climbed out of his crib and was standing at the side of Sarah May’s with his arms up, trying to coax her to escape as well. “Here, Ya-Ya! Here!”

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“What? How did you even do that?” Bucky asked with wide eyes and bent down to scoop Christopher up in his arms. “Christopher, how did you get out?” He looked at the crib and it didn’t look broken or anything. Christopher must have carefully climbed over and slid off. But he didn’t understand how he did that anyway. But Bucky did make sturdy cribs and that probably made for an easy escape without it wobbling at all.

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Christopher didn’t think he had done anything wrong so he simply giggled when he was scooped up because he wanted someone to play with. “Papa, Ya-Ya,” he said, pointing at his little sister for Bucky to take as well. Sarah May hadn’t seemed interested in leaving her crib until Bucky showed up and she started to bounce excitedly.

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“Oh, dear heavens,” Bucky sighed and set Christopher down on the ground by Adriana. He had been working on saying things around the kids that weren’t swear words. “Okay, Sarah May, Papa is here. Up we go!” he said as he hoisted her in the air and then snuggled her close.
Their youngest daughter immediately cuddled close to Bucky when she was picked up, much to Christopher’s jealousy. “Papa! Me,” he said with a low pout he had to have learned from Steve.

Adriana added to the swarm by tugging on Bucky’s shirt lightly. “Papa, can I have a story before you go to work?”

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Blinking a few times tiredly, Bucky looked to all his kids and let out a deep breath he was holding. “Okay, okay... Papa can do this,” he said to himself and picked up Christopher in his other arm. “Adriana, honey, I need to make breakfast. And I’m not working today. So, we can have story time after we eat. Will you help me watch the babies will I cook breakfast?”

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Of course, with Bucky’s luck, Sarah May whined and gave Christopher a little push when he got too close to where she’d been cuddling her papa. “No,” she said to Christopher, who looked taken aback.

Adriana was the only one cooperating. “Yes. I’m a big girl now,” she said, as if that was enough explanation that she could mind her little siblings.

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“Ya-Ya, no push,” Bucky said sternly and moved them apart as best as he could. “Thank you, Peanut. Papa is going to make eggs and waffles. Is that okay?” he asked and gave her a pleading look. He wasn’t sure what time it was or even if the girls were gone for school or not. “Are your aunts still here? Is Nana still here?”

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Sarah May looked offended by the tone Bucky spoke to her in and just whined in response. “I like waffles,” Adriana approved. “Aunt Becca and Aunt Lilly ‘leaved’. Nana is sleeping still,” she reported. “Can I have extra waffles?” she asked as she followed Bucky out and down the stairs to the kitchen only to find Raphael had knocked the bowl of dog treats onto the floor and Diana was cleaning them up by eating them.

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“Your aunts ‘left’,” Bucky corrected softly. He wanted to help her learn when she was saying the wrong things but sometimes he worried he was hurting her feelings by correcting her. She was behind other kids her age so Bucky was making a point to get her caught up.

Bucky groaned when he saw Diana vacuuming up all the treats before anyone could come stop her. He needed Steve. He needed someone. He wasn’t good with taking care of all of this on his own. “Okay, Diana, leave it.” He looked her in the eyes and said it again. He was going to do this without Steve. He could do it. “Diana, sit.”

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Adriana pulled a sad face when Bucky corrected her but she didn’t comment back on it. She climbed up into her usual chair and wiggled in her seat a bit. Once Bucky told Diana to sit, the dog plopped on her ass and looked over at Bucky with big, pathetic eyes because he made her stop eating.
“Diana, go to Steve,” he said and pointed upstairs. “Go to Steve.” He figured that Steve would like some snuggles with his dog anyway and this would be a good way to get her out of Bucky’s hair so he could clean up the mess. “Adriana, Peanut, I’m going to put the babies in their high chairs, can you just watch them for me while I clean this up?”

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Diana slunk up the stairs with her ears pinned and tail low. “Do you want me to clean it?” she offered, getting out of her chair. “I’m a good cleaner. I need two Good Helper stars and then I can get a toy,” she said, pointing to the chart on the wall. Steve used it as an incentive to have Adriana take on little tasks.

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“Peanut, if you help clean this mess for me, I’ll give you two stars and we can tell Daddy later that it’s time for you to have a new toy,” Bucky promised and gave her the trashcan and a broom. “Try to put the leftover treats into the box first. And then we can sweep up the messy bits all over. Thank you for being my big girl and helping me.”

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Adriana was practically tripping over her own feet to clean up the mess the pets made. Steve usually was a bit stricter when it came to dishing out stars, so she was eager to get two at once. “The store has jellyfishes,” she said excitedly as she salvaged any remaining treats. “I want to get the pink one.”

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“Ooh, a pink jellyfish?” Bucky asked as he started pulling out eggs and waffles and bacon. “I think that would be a great choice. What will you name your pink jellyfish, Adriana?” He glanced over at the babies who were sort of quietly playing with the plush animals that Bucky brought downstairs for them. He would be lucky if he got two more distracted minutes out of them before they demanded something else.

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“Peanut Butter,” she answered. She clumsily scooped the crumbs into her hands and dumped out the remaining dog biscuit bits. “All done!” she declared proudly. Sarah May waved at Adriana to get her attention and Adriana dutifully walked over and climbed onto her chair to sit next to her. “When’s Daddy coming down?”

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Bucky looked at the now cleaned up mess and he gave Adriana a big grin. “Wow! Thank you so much! You did so well, Sweetheart. Let me get your stars.” He found the sheet of stickers and peeled two off to put on Adriana’s chart. “There you go, Adriana. Two stars.” He held out his hand for a high five and then went back to making breakfast. “Daddy will come down later. I can go check on him once Nana is awake.”

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Adriana preened at the praise she received from Bucky. She was a bit needier than the other kids when it came to having her parents’ approval. “Thank you, Papa.”

Just as breakfast was put on the table, Sarah came in the kitchen dressed in her pajamas. She kissed each of her grandkids good morning. “I seem to be missing a son. Is he being lazy this morning?”
she asked.

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Bucky gave Sarah a morning hug and handed her a mug of coffee. “Well, he had a tiring night so I’m letting him sleep in and rest for a bit,” he said, knowing he wasn’t discreet enough for Sarah not to understand. “I’m going to take him breakfast in bed if you don’t mind watching the kids for a few minutes?”

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“The poor dear…” Sarah muttered sarcastically under her breath, though she knew that it probably wasn’t the worst way to be tired out. “Of course, I’ll watch these little troublemakers,” Sarah agreed as she stood between Christopher and Sarah May so she could play with their hair. “They all remind me of Steve when he was little. Stubborn, needy, but thoughtful. Although, I suppose most children are that way to some extent.”

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Bucky smiled warmly and watched his kids with their nana. He loved that they got to have her around all the time. “Thank you, Sarah. You should have Adriana tell you about how she just got two new stars. She was a big helper for Papa this morning.” He gave his oldest a kiss on her cheek and then hurried back upstairs with food for Steve. “Baby, I brought you breakfast,” he said quietly once inside the master bedroom.

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When Bucky went into the bedroom, Steve was cuddled up the dog and Diana lifted her head up at the sound of the door. Her tail thumped but she didn’t move from her spot. “Smells good, Love. What was going on before?” he asked.

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“Your son figured out how to climb out of his crib,” Bucky said and came over to gently place Steve’s food on his nightstand. “And then he was trying to get Ya-Ya out of her crib. I’m still not sure how he managed that but I got them all squared away.” He pet Diana’s fur and sat down by them. “And the cat knocked over a box of Diana’s treats and she ate as many as she could before I got to her.”

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“He did what?” Steve was a mix of worried and proud. Christopher was an adventurous, little boy and it was pretty impressive that he was an escape artist but that also posed some safety issues for him. “It sounds like you had a hell of a lot to deal with on your own. How’re you feeling?” Steve asked, carefully sitting up with a grimace so he could eat.

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“It’s okay. I took care of it. Papa handled it. Papa took care of all of it,” Bucky said and let out a heavy sigh. “I don’t know how you do this every morning. The babies, the animals, breakfast. It’s a lot to deal with. Adriana was my saving grace. She was so helpful with the babies and with cleaning up Diana’s treats. I gave her two stars, just so you know.”

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“Two stars just for treats? That’s barely one star’s worth. You must have been really desperate for help this morning,” Steve chuckled. “Adriana is such a good big sister. So long as she’s got something to work towards, it’s so easy to take care of her. The babies are a little more difficult. But it’s the kind of difficult I like to deal with.”

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Bucky sighed and gave Steve an impatient little look. “I don’t know your sticker system, Steve. She needed two more for a toy and she helped with the babies and with the mess. I figured that could be worth two stickers.” He really wasn’t good with doing all of the house stuff by himself. Steve was much more cut out for all of this. He was better with all the kids all at once and all the animals and making food and making sure everyone was okay. He sighed again and rubbed his eyes tiredly. “You’re so much better at this than I am.”

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“It’s okay. It sounds like she was being an angel to you all morning so she probably deserved it anyway.” Steve cut up his food and started to eat it. “I have more practice than you do. If you stayed home and I went out to work, then you’d be better at the baby stuff than I am.”

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“Yeah, I mean, I just feel so bad about not being good at this. I get so overwhelmed and then I feel bad about not being a good dad,” Bucky said and reached to brush Steve’s hair from his face. “I’m just glad that my headaches have been a little better lately. I just know that Adriana is going to start to notice that I’m bad at this.”

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“You’re an amazing dad, Bucky. Adriana adores you and she looks up to you so much,” he said. “This morning, not only did you take care of our kids, but you spoiled your husband with breakfast in bed, too.” He smiled over at him and reached out to hold Bucky’s hand. “And Adriana is always asking when you’re coming home from work when it’s just us here.”

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“I just should be able to do this better but I can’t,” Bucky said and leaned in towards Steve. “But, I know. I did do it this time. And I brought you breakfast instead of making you come do breakfast. Your kids want to know where you are. Your mom also knows that I broke you last night because I’m not good at being discreet. So, I’m sorry about that.”

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Steve blushed brightly. “Bucky,” he groaned. “Why’d you have to tell my mom?” Steve got really embarrassed over stuff like this even though his mom, as a nurse, had dealt with far more embarrassing things. He set aside his empty plate and gave Bucky a pout. “I’ll be down soon. I’m going to have to find a way to face my mom, knowing that she knows that you railed me so hard that I can’t eat breakfast with my kids.”

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Bucky moved Steve a bit and invaded his space, crawling over his legs to give him a kiss. “I didn’t mean to tell your mom. She asked why you were being lazy. And I said that you had a tiring night and she just knew what that meant.” He gave Steve another kiss and nuzzled his neck. “It’s not like your mom doesn’t know we have sex. Your mom has had sex before too. How do you think you got
Diana scrambled onto her feet and started licking Bucky’s face when he moved over Steve. “As far as I need to know, that’s the only time my mom had sex and I don’t want to hear otherwise,” Steve said, putting a hand up to Bucky to show that he didn’t want Bucky to argue.

“Regardless, you can face your mother,” Bucky insisted and tucked his cold hands against Steve’s neck for a second. “I’ll go wait downstairs. You get dressed and then come be with your children. They miss you. And Adriana wants me to read some stories but you know I don’t read out-loud as well as you do.”

Steve scrunched his shoulders up to push Bucky’s cold hands away. “Buck, cold,” he complained. Steve got out of bed slowly and put on pajamas. “You’re good at reading stories. You don’t give yourself enough credit.” He walked out of the room shortly after Bucky and smiled when his kids all greeted him once they realized he was downstairs.

“Daddy!” Adriana gasped and jumped out of her chair to go tackle Steve in a hug. “Look at my stars! Look at them! I have enough for a toy,” she said and tugged him over to her chart. “I did it. I helped Papa real good today.”

Christopher certainly didn’t want to be ignored so he started to bounce in his high chair and yell, “Dada! Hug!”

“I heard all about it, Peanut. I’m so proud of you!” Steve said. He scooped her up in one arm and kissed her cheek. He then turned to Christopher and picked him out of his chair. “You want hugs? Then you’ll get all the hugs you want.” He snuggled them both close, full of energy and cheer for his children. “And where’s my littlest girl? Where’s my Ya-Ya?”

Bucky looked around and didn’t see Ya-Ya or Sarah. “Adriana, where did Nana go?” he asked and looked around into the living room to find Sarah changing Ya-Ya’s diaper. “Steve, they are in here,” he called back and then came over to brush Sarah May’s big curly hair out of her eyes. “Thank you for changing her. I could have gotten it when I came down.”

Steve bounced both kids in his arms and rushed over to his mom so he could kiss both her and his daughter. “There’s my favorite baby girl and my favorite mom.” He would have held all three of them if he could. “I hear you want story time, Adriana? Which book do you want your dad and pop to read you?”

Adriana slipped down from her dad’s arms and ran over to the toy box. It was part of her job to keep
it nice and neat. And she had all the books stacked up on one side and all the toys and blocks on the other. She came back with a book about a lion cub getting lost and having to go on an adventure to get back to its family. “This one, please?”

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“Of course, Peanut. If you let Daddy get the babies ready in their play area, your papa and I will read it to you together.”

She smiled wide. “Can Papa read it and you make the lion noises?” she asked, looking over at Bucky with big eyes as well. Bucky may not have thought that he was a good reader but Adriana hardly ever got to hear stories from him so she wanted him to do it this time.

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Bucky bit his lip and looked from Steve to Adriana. “Can... can Daddy read to you, Sweetie? I can do lion noises really well.” He wouldn’t fight her on it if Adriana insisted but he would at least try.

Sarah helped Steve get the babies all set to play and she said softly, “Steven, my son, you are wincing with every move you make. Do you want me to get you some medicine?”

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“But I want you to read to me,” Adriana said with a sad pout. “Daddy reads all the time. You never get to read to me...”

Steve’s face went a bright red as he placed Christopher down in the playpen with Sarah May to play blocks. “I’m... I’m fine mom, I slept a little funny. That’s all.”

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“Okay, honey, I’ll read to you,” Bucky said eventually and just gently took the book from Adriana and picked her up to go sit on the couch together. “Let’s wait for Daddy.”

Sarah shook her head and said, “Well, would you like medicine for that?” She gave him a little challenging look as if to say that regardless of the reason for his soreness, she knows that medicine will help.

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“I’m fine, Mom,” Steve said tensely when he saw the challenging look in her eyes. “But thank you anyway.” Even when frustrated, Steve had the incapability of losing his temper with his mom, something he had yet to learn with Bucky.

He took a seat on the couch with Bucky and their oldest. “You tell me when I make the lion noises, okay?”

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Adriana snuggled down between her parents and rested her head against Bucky’s side so she could see the book as he read. Bucky was a pretty good reader. But reading out-loud was difficult and it always made him nervous and shaky when he had an audience. He cleared his throat and started as best as he could. “Every day, Layla and her mommy... w-walked down the path to the... watering hole...”
Adriana had been used to Steve reading books and he usually did voices and read with such confidence that it was surprising to hear Bucky stammer. Her head turned around to look at Bucky in confusion. “Is your voice not working, Papa?” she asked, thinking maybe Bucky had a sore throat or something.

“Um, Adriana...” Bucky started and felt an embarrassed blush creep up his neck. “Papa doesn’t really read so well,” he admitted and looked to Steve for help. “I can keep reading to you, Peanut, but it won’t be as good as Daddy reading to you. Is that okay?” He didn’t want to disappoint her but he didn’t know how he would feel if she decided she didn’t want him to read.

“It’s Okay,” Adriana said. “I’m not good at reading, too.” She patted Bucky’s arm gently just like she’d seen Steve do whenever Bucky was sad. “I want you to read,” Adriana said, snuggling closer to her pop. “But you have to do the silly voices for the ‘elephants’,” she said.

Steve tickled her side. “Elephants,” he corrected gently.

Adriana sighed and gave Steve a little side glance. “El-e-phants,” she said slowly and then looked to Bucky to keep going.

“Okay, Baby, I’ll try,” Bucky agreed and started back up again at the elephant’s first line, doing his best to make a bumbling sort of tone to his voice that he hoped would be something she liked.

Steve felt bad for correcting her so he didn’t comment on the bit of attitude she gave him. Adriana enjoyed the combined attention of her parents during their story time. The second Bucky finished reading the first story, she darted off and ran to find another book. “One more, please?”

Bucky thought he was scot-free when the book was done but then Adriana brought over another one. He took it from her and looked at the length. It was a little shorter than the other one. But the first took him so long to begin with. “Sure, Adriana, but just this one, okay?”

Steve almost laughed but, instead, he kissed Bucky’s cheek. “Your kids love you.” He adjusted Adriana and snuggled her. About halfway through the story, Steve had to get up to stop Christopher from trying to escape the playpen and he sat in there with the two babies to keep them behaving.

Bucky finished up the story eventually and then held Adriana close so she couldn’t spring up and find another book. “Okay, Peanut, that’s it for now. Maybe Daddy can do a story tonight before bed. But, how about we do something with the babies now? We wanted to make some art, right, Daddy?”
Adriana looked over at Christopher and Sarah May for a moment and decided, “I think I want to watch TV with Nana.” She had been around for the chaotic morning and she knew how Christopher could get with a paintbrush in his hands.

Steve opened the door to the pen so Christopher could make his way out and Sarah May followed slower after him. “I think they’re just about ready for art time.”

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Bucky nodded and let Adriana go to her Nana saying, “You can watch TV until Nana leaves to see her friends. Then I would like for you to take a TV break please.” They tried to regulate her TV time so she wasn’t always stuck in front of it. She liked the TV a lot and they preferred when she watched nature documentaries but sometimes she wanted to watch cartoons all day.

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Adriana promised she would do just that. Steve had to chase Christopher down, who squealed with laughter when he saw his dad coming after him. Steve scooped him up and held him upside down to kiss his belly. “Dada, no! No!” Christopher said through his laughter.

Steve held him upright and put him in his high chair. “You want to get Ya-Ya?” Steve asked Bucky.

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“Got her,” Bucky said and picked up his giggling baby girl who was doing her best to toddle away from him too. “Her first birthday is in a month, Steve. Just a month. I can’t believe it. Christopher’s second birthday is in three months. And Adriana will be five in the summer. How is this happening so fast?”

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Steve started to break out the art supplies so the babies could finger paint and make the messes he knew they loved to make. “I’m going to be so sad when they aren’t our cuddly, little babies anymore. Sarah May has to stay little forever. Somebody has to,” he said.

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“I will be sad, too. But I’ll also be so happy and proud to watch them grow up,” Bucky said reassuringly as he got Sarah May into her chair. “And we will get more babies. We will have tiny little cuddly bears all the time. And we can have family snuggle puddles with all of us and the girls. Becca will hate it but I don’t care.”

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Steve took off the kids’ shirts so they wouldn’t ruin them with the paint. It was child-safe and washable, but they still left a small stain that Steve would rather avoid. “Dada, blue. Blue please,” Christopher said, reaching for the paint until Steve gave him the blue container.

“I like the sound of snuggle puddles,” Steve approved. “Imagine how big a puddle with seven or eight kids would be. It’d be a lake,” he laughed.

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“I like the thought of seven kids. We already have four. That’s over half-way. But seven still isn’t a baseball team,” Bucky said as he helped set up Sarah May with the orange paint. “Ya-Ya, Orange.
Can you say ‘orange’? Orange.”

Sarah May poked her fingers in the paint and started to brush them over her paper. “Papa,” she said and gave him a smile. She was still trying to get the hang of speaking.

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Steve stood next to Bucky and wrapped an arm around his waist. “She knows which color is blue, but that’s about it. She also doesn’t say it quite right yet, the best I’ve gotten out of her is ‘boo’,” he chuckled. Sarah May wasn’t as much of a talker as Christopher, but she was learning a lot of words because of him.

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“That okay. It’ll click for her eventually,” Bucky said and leaned against Steve for a moment. “I need to go call Tim. He’s going to be just a little angry with me. I’ll have to make it up to him. He’s been pretty upset about things since his ex-wife had her new baby. His kids have been spending more time with her and he’s not allowed to even meet the baby. He’s just really sad.”

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“I feel so bad for Tim. He’s just now been getting close to his kids again. I don’t know what I’d do if I were taken from my family. I think I’d go crazy,” he said. The time Bucky kicked him out of the house was one of the worst lows of his life and it wasn’t even for that long at all. “Do you think that there’s anything we can do to help?”

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Bucky shook his head and gripped Steve a little tighter as he watched their babies paint. “No, I think we need to just be supportive. He has been going on dates and trying to find a partner but I know it’s been difficult. He’s older than all the guys he goes out with, sometimes by twenty years. And most of those guys aren’t looking to settle down with a forty-something who has four kids.”

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“You think he’d like Richard?” Steve asked. “Sure, he’s young. But he’s a cop with a steady job. And I think I remember him mentioning having a family someday and... you know, it’s kind of hard for people like us to have kids. We’ve just been blessed with good fortune.”

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Bucky grumbled and looked at Steve. He sighed and then looked back to the babies. “Yeah... I was hoping you wouldn’t suggest that.” He rolled his eyes and then shoved his hands in his pockets. “It’s a good idea. And I thought about it like a month ago but I just don’t want him to date Richard. But I actually think they would be good together. Tim needs someone like Richard – no-nonsense and self-assured. I’m just mad about it.”

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“I know you don’t like Richard, Baby, but we should think about what would make Tim happy,” Steve offered. “What’s the harm that’ll come from it? The best-case scenario is that you brought some happiness into your friend’s life,” he said. Steve moved behind Bucky and leaned on him in a hug. “Won’t it feel good knowing that you helped them out?”

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Bucky mumbled something indistinguishable under his breath about Richard but nodded his head anyway. “I know. You’re right. It would be good. That way Tim has someone and Richard will stop looking at you whenever we see him.” They really didn’t see him that often but they certainly saw him more than Bucky would like to. “I’m just bummed because I know that it’ll probably work out and then Clint and I will see that guy all the time, Steve. All the time.”

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“I know, he’s a jerk,” Steve said, nuzzling Bucky’s neck gently. He really didn’t think Richard was a bad guy at all. But, it was best to side with Bucky at least somewhat on this. “And I am upset that he never apologized to you and Clint. But, think of it this way: what better payback is there than being even nicer to someone who’s wronged you? Then they’ll feel like an extra jerk for doing something bad when you’re so nice.”

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“Steve, that might work for you but I like the pettiness,” Bucky said and turned in Steve’s arms to give him a kiss. “However, it is more important to me that our friend is happy. And if setting him up with... Richard, of all people, will make him happy, then I’ll do it.” He sighed and pouted his lip out. “I hate that you’re right. I guess, maybe we can have a dinner here soon with everyone and invite Richard.”

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“We have to let Richard know that you don’t plan on poisoning his food. I’m sure he thinks that you still hate him. And he’s right.” Steve pressed their lips together gently. “Also, now you can find something new to be petty about,” he observed. “Maybe you can have a little war with the mailman who keeps crushing the edges of our packages.”

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“He doesn’t do it to anyone else’s on the street! He only does it because your dog peed on him when she was a puppy,” Bucky said grumpily and then refocused on the current matter at hand. “Right, well, you can tell him that I don’t plan on killing him this time but I make no promises for later. Is Sam seeing anyone? He’s welcome to bring someone if he is.”

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“Diana was just a baby. She doesn’t deserve to be held accountable for that,” Steve defended. “Sam’s got a new girlfriend, yeah. She’s really nice from what he’s told me of her but I haven’t met her personally.”

Sarah May picked up her paper and waved it at Bucky and Steve. “Dada! Papa! Loo!”

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Bucky detached from Steve to go back over to their kids. “Well, then tell him to bring her,” he said and gently touched Sarah May’s hair as he looked at the paper which had lots of orange lines and big sweeping marks. “Oh, Ya-Ya! That’s so pretty. Wow, Sweet Pea. You are so good at this. Show it to Daddy.”

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“Dada!” She wagged the paper over in Steve’s direction.
Steve smiled brightly. “Wow! How beautiful! You did such a good job, Ya-Ya,” he praised.

Christopher, like normal, got jealous over the attention his sister got. “Dada. Papa! My paint. Look!”

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Bucky kissed Ya-Ya on the cheek and then moved over to give Christopher attention. “Baby Boy, you really don’t like sharing us, do you?” he asked and sat down next to the high chair. “Oh, Bean! You made beautiful art too!” he gasped, making a big show to appease his son. “You did so well. Come look, Steve, before he gets grumpy.”

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Sarah May looked offended when Christopher stole the spotlight once again. Her bottom lip jutted out and big old tears formed in her eyes as Steve started to praise their son. When he glanced back at Sarah May, he saw that she was upset and carefully picked his messy daughter up. “Oh, Ya-Ya. I’m sorry. Did we hurt your feelings, Love?” He kissed her forehead.

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“Oh, Sarah May, you’re fine. We didn’t forget about you,” Bucky said and tickled her foot. “I thought you two had started to get over the jealousy stuff. Remember? You tried to make a break for it together this morning.” He chuckled and brushed Christopher’s hair out of his eyes. “I’m wondering if I didn’t make the crib walls tall enough.”

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“I think they get on well so long as they’re not competing for our attention,” Steve said. “And I think the walls are plenty high. The problem is that our son is a little extra adventurous. I’m going to have to ask my mom what she thinks. She’s got more experience with babies than we do.”

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Bucky nodded and wiped some paint from Christopher’s cheek. “When the girls were babies, they never tried anything like. I don’t think I did either. Christopher is just already so athletic. He really is going to be our baseball star. Isn’t he?”

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“No, Papa,” Christopher whined. He wiped his hands off on his face with a little cackle as he made more of a mess of himself.

“He could be. He’s really smart, too. Maybe he’ll manage a team once he’s done playing the sport,” Steve mused with a happy smile at their messy boy.

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Bucky gave Christopher a stern look and pulled his sleeve over his hand so he could properly clean off his face. “No more mess, Bean. No mess,” Bucky said firmly. “He can be whatever he wants to be. Just so long as he is happy and safe then I’ll be happy.”

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Christopher grunted and squirmed to try to avoid being cleaned but he couldn’t escape Bucky. “Agreed,” Steve said. He paused and said, “You know, I’m really glad you read to Adriana today. I
know you’re self-conscious about it, but all she wanted was her papa to read to her and you did it. It didn’t matter to her if you stumbled or not.”

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Bucky grunted in response and just shrugged. He wished he read as well as Steve. Steve was so good at the things the kids loved most. Sure, Bucky was better than Steve at a lot of other stuff but things like reading stories to their kids was so important. And Bucky just felt inadequate. “It took me a half hour to get through the first book and it’s only supposed to be about a seven-minute read, it says so on the back.”

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“That means that Adriana got to spend extra time listening to her papa. And it means that you had even more quality time together. Being there for her is so important, Bucky, and you’re doing that,” he said with a loving, soft tone. “What if you turned it into a song and played it for her instead?”

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“What, the lion book as a song?” Bucky asked curiously. He could probably do that. He had been working on some songs for the kids as memory tools to learn with Steve. But turning her stories into songs could be good. “I... I can try that.”

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“Yeah,” Steve encouraged. “I bet she would get a real kick out of it. She’s almost old enough to start trying some sort of musical instrument. How nice would it be to have her papa make up songs just for her so she could sing along with you?” He kissed Bucky’s cheek. “And then you can sing it to Christopher and Sarah May when they’re older.”

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“Yeah. Okay, yeah,” Bucky agreed with a happy little nod. “Yeah, that’s a good idea, Baby. Thank you. I’ll do that. That would be so much easier than reading it. And it can be like a family tradition. Maybe we can make up new stories too.” He let out a content little sigh and leaned in to give Steve a proper kiss. “Steve, you’re clever.”

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“Every now and again, I have a good idea,” Steve agreed. “I’ve got to come up with something good after making you have to set up our friend with a guy you can’t stand.” He cuddled Sarah May in his arms. “You hear that? Your pop is going to make up songs for all of you little ones. You’re so lucky, right? And we are really lucky that Papa is staying home all day today.”
Bucky was absolutely worn out by dinner time. He loved that he got to be with his kids all day today since that rarely happened. But there was just a lot of running and chasing and screaming and giggling. And between three kids, two animals, and a husband, they all really wore Bucky down to his last grasps of energy. “Baby, it’s no wonder you’re so sleepy by bedtime.”

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Steve couldn’t help but be at least a little amused at how tired his poor husband was. “It’s harder than it looks, isn’t it?” he chuckled. “You got to keep the energy high all day or else they won’t have as fun of a time and then they won’t be as sleepy at the end of it.” He pet his fingers through Bucky’s hair. “Do you want a bath and a massage tonight?” he offered.

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Bucky nodded and yawned as Adriana came over to him and started to climb up into his lap. “Oh, hey, Peanut. Are you getting sleepy too?”

Adriana shook her head. “No, I’m not sleepy. Can we go get ice cream? Aunt Lilly said she wants some. I do too.”

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“Isn’t it too cold for ice cream?” Steve asked.

Adriana shook her head again. “No, it’s not,” she said in a determined voice.

He pulled her onto his lap and tickled her sides. “I think your Aunt Lilly needs to stop putting silly ice cream ideas in your head. But if your pop says it’s okay, then it’s okay. If he says no, we have to respect his decision.”

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“Oh, Papa has to decide?” Bucky asked and looked between Steve and Adriana. “How about I send Aunt Lilly and Aunt Becca to the store and they can buy a tub of ice cream and bring it back to share. Is that okay with everyone?” He wasn’t sure if Adriana would go for that because she usually liked getting mountains of sprinkles on her cones. But at least that would mean that he wouldn’t have to bundle up any children to go outside.

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Adriana was ready to compromise but it was Lilly who groaned. “Bucky, but I want the good ice cream,” she said. “I can run to Carvel really quick if you give me money,” she said. “I’ll have my cone and Adriana can have hers in a cup,” she bargained. Adriana turned her head to her papa to see what he would decide.
Bucky looked from Adriana to Lilly and then over to Steve. He sighed and then got up to get some money for Lilly. “Fine. Take Becca. Get whatever you two want and Adriana’s and just one scoop of chocolate for the babies to share.” He handed Lilly some money and tussled her hair.

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Adriana waved at Lilly. “Aunt Lilly I want vanilla with lots and lots of sprinkles. So many sprinkles!”

Steve pulled out his wallet and added a few more dollars. “And can you get something bigger for me and Bucky to share too? Thank you,” he said. Steve was in a mood for ice cream now.

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Jesus, you guys. Becca and I can’t carry all that shit,” Lilly complained but took the money anyway. “Fine. We will be back. Don’t wash my laundry yet I need to put a blanket in there. Raphael threw up on it.”

"Gross. I’ll take care of it,” Bucky said and made sure Becca was following their sister out the door.

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“Was it a hairball Or is he sick-” Steve started to ask, but they were already out the door. He sighed and shrugged up his shoulders. He rubbed his hand over Bucky’s back and asked, “Is there anything I can do for you? You want to lay in my lap and have me give you a head rub?”

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That did sound pretty appealing. Bucky liked sitting in Steve’s lap and he loved having his head rubbed. “I should go get the laundry started. I’ll go find the blanket and clean it up. But later, once everyone is asleep, we can sit on the couch and watch the news and cuddle? And you can massage my head then?”

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“Sounds like a plan,” he said. Steve liked discussing affection with Bucky in front of their kids because he wanted them to grow up in a household where they saw their parents in a healthy relationship. He wished he got to witness his mom and dad in their prime. “Let’s hope there’s something positive on the news tonight.”

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Bucky shrugged and gathered up bits of discarded carrot ends from Sarah May’s high chair. “I’m sure we can find something that won’t bring us down. If not, the Christmas specials have already started so we could watch a bit of something before we get tired.” He went over to Steve and pulled him in for a kiss, lingering for just a few moments. “Okay, I’m going to go find the puke blanket.”

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“Ooh, I really want to watch some of those Christmas specials now,” Steve said as he watched Bucky turn to go.
As it turned out, Bucky didn’t have to worry about the puke blanket because Diana ate it up and the only evidence of it was Diana sitting next to the blanket, licking her lips with a guilty expression. Steve liked to think that she was the smartest dog ever, but sometimes she was still a typical dumb dog.

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“Oh, dammit! Come on, Diana! Gross,” Bucky gasped and shooed her away. He rolled the blanket up and grabbed some of Lilly’s socks off the floor and took them down to the laundry. “Steve! Your dog ate Raphael’s puke,” he called out to him as he shoved the blanket in with all of Lilly’s clothes to be washed.

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“No, she didn’t,” Steve defended right away. His perfect dog could never do anything wrong. Diana slunk away and curled up with Adriana, who wasn’t listening to either of them and let Diana give her kisses on the face. “Raphael probably ate it when he was done puking it up.”

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Bucky shook his head and showed the blanket to Steve. “Diana’s hair everywhere. Look, everywhere,” he said. “She’s pretty disgusting sometimes, Steve. She will eat anything she can find. That’s how dogs do things.” He shoved the blanket into the washer and then headed to the kitchen to wash his hands. “Last time I trimmed my beard she tried to eat the hair in the sink before I could clean it up.”

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“I think you’re over exaggerating. She gets fed all the time, I don’t see why she would jump up to eat your stubby, shaved beard hairs.” Steve rubbed a hand over Bucky’s back. The babies were in the playpen behaving themselves and Adriana was relaxing on the couch, so he didn’t feel like he had to hover over them at the moment.

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“Fine. Don’t believe me,” Bucky muttered and headed back to the laundry room to check on the dryer. “Just watch her next time.” They had way too much laundry to do nowadays. It went from Bucky and the girls doing maybe one load of laundry a week to the household doing at least one load every day. Becca liked to do her laundry separately from everyone else’s, though, so Bucky didn’t bother helping with hers.

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Diana came trotting over to the two of them with Adriana following along. Steve scratched his dog behind her ears and praised her discretely for being a good girl and not deserving to be called gross. “Adriana, you want to help your pop with the laundry? You have to read and see which button says ‘on’,” he said, lifting her up to look at the top of the machine with the controls.

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Adriana looked around at all the buttons over the dashboard of the washer. But then she found a large button with ‘On’ written on one side and then ‘Off’ on the other. “Uh, that one!” she said and pointed to it. “Flip it, Papa.”

Bucky reached to the knob and clicked it over to start the washer. “Good job, Peanut. Can you read
any other words on the machine?"

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Adriana looked over the other buttons. “Um, that one says ‘wash clothes’. That one says ‘dry clothes’. And that one says ‘fold clothes!’” She rattled off, obviously not having a clue what any of the other buttons said but she was having a guess.

Steve turned his head away to hide his smile. He liked her attempt and didn’t want her to think that he was laughing at her. She was just too darn cute all the time.

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Bucky nodded and surveyed the buttons as if he was double checking her answers. “That was really close, Adriana. This machine does wash clothes. But we have to put the clothes into the other machine to dry them. And then Papa has to do all the folding himself. There isn’t a machine to help me with that.” He shrugged and added, “Maybe someone will invent one someday and I won’t have to worry about folding anything. That would be nice.”

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“Why doesn’t Daddy fold the clothes?” she asked.

Steve smiled and kissed her cheek. “Sometimes I do. But sometimes Papa does the housework, too. We share a little bit of everything so neither of us has to do more work than the other. That’s how we make sure things are fair. But since Daddy cooks a lot, Papa tends to clean a lot.”

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Becca and Lilly came through the front door just then and at that point, all Adriana cared about was the ice cream they brought back. “Ice cream! Daddy, let me down, please,” Adriana said, wiggling in Steve’s grasp. “Aunt Lilly, did you get sprinkles for me?”

Bucky intercepted Lilly from giving Adriana her ice cream. “Okay, Peanut. What do you say to Aunt Lilly and Aunt Becca for getting you a treat?”

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Adriana shifted her weight from one foot to the next excitedly as Lilly held the ice cream out for her. “Thank you!” she said hurriedly and reached up for the ice cream again.

“Papa!” Christopher called from his playpen. “Me too! Give me!”

---

Bucky watched Adriana zoom off to the kitchen to get a spoon and sit down with her treat. Christopher was already waiting with his hands on the fence of the playpen, shaking it a little bit. Bucky gathered the babies and brought them to their high chairs as Lilly set out the other ice cream cups and took the lids off. “Okay, Steve. I’ll feed to the babies. And you feed me,” Bucky said with an exasperated little sigh and grabbed spoons and an extra bowl to split the chocolate ice cream for the babies.

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“‘Fank’ you,” Christopher said when he was given some of the ice cream. Steve took his and
Bucky’s and uncovered it. He let Bucky have the first bite of it before having some for himself.

Lilly came over to sit next to them. “Bucky? Can I borrow Sarah May for my home-ec class?” she asked.

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Bucky shook his head in surprise and looked over to his sister. “What? Um... what?” he asked and blinked a few times. “Explain yourself. Why do you want to borrow my daughter?”

“You can borrow me, Aunt Lilly,” Adriana offered, ice cream and sprinkles all over her face and hands.

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“The school wants to give us a creepy mechanic baby doll over the weekend to take care of so we see what it’s like to be a parent or whatever. But the doll creeps me out. So, if you let me take care of Sarah May all weekend, then I don’t have to take the doll home,” she said. “It’s a win-win. I don’t get creeped out and you don’t have to change her diapers or feed her or stop her from crying all weekend.” She turned to Adriana and said, “It’s got to be a baby. You’re too old now, unless you want to pretend to be a baby.”

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“Um... Lil, I don’t know,” Bucky said softly and gave Steve a glance to see how he was reacting to this. “I mean, it’s nice that you want to help out and that you will be learning. But the mechanical doll is supposed to be the practice doll because that means you can’t hurt it or anything. And you’re supposed to take care of the doll all by yourself but you know Steve and I are going to be hovering over you all weekend if you have Sarah May. Plus, she’s going to be crying a lot if she doesn’t get to have her daddies at all.”

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Steve was a bit wary of the situation as well. He trusted Lilly to babysit but not to be responsible all weekend, even with their help. “Yeah, I think you’re going to have to deal with the doll. I don’t think I could go a whole weekend without taking care of our little girl. I’m sorry,” he said, giving Bucky another spoonful of ice cream.

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Bucky nodded in agreement and looked to Sarah May. He gave her a kiss on her cheek and told her that he loved her in Hebrew. He was getting better at memorizing the pronunciation of some phrases. He couldn’t write anything out but if he heard it, he could repeat it after some practice. “Lilly, I had to use one of those dolls in school too. Even though I helped raise you and Becca. They still made me use it. And it’s only for the weekend. You will be okay.”

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Sarah May didn’t understand the words but she heard the tone in Bucky’s voice and smiled at him and said, “Papa,” with her little sticky hand out. Steve’s heart melted at the sight. Bucky really was an amazing parent.

“I hate the dolls, though. It’s going to give me nightmares. Why do I have to take it home anyway?” Lilly started but then got an idea. “You know what? I’m going to write a strongly-worded letter to the principal saying I want out of this project and it’s sexist to force me to mother a doll.”
“Lilly, you know I support your strongly-worded letters to fight the power,” Bucky said, straight-faced and sincere. “But, everyone has to parent the doll for a bit. The boys do it too. It’s not just a mother thing. It’s a parent’s thing. If you want to make your letter about the assumption that everyone is supposed to grow up, get married, and make children, you can do that. You can even throw in some commentary about how women are pressured to be housewives instead of joining the workforce. But it might not get you out of this.”

Lilly ran out of the room to grab her notebook and came back to jot down notes on what Bucky said. Steve didn’t exactly approve of her trying to get out of class responsibility, but he also supposed that writing a letter was good academic practice regardless.

“People don’t have to get married?” Adriana asked curiously. “How else can grown-ups get to be grown-up?”

“Well, Sweetheart, being a grown-up just means that you are old enough to take care of yourself and have your own home and life and things. You can choose things like whether you want to get married or not. Or if you’re going to have kids or not. Or which presidential candidate you want to vote for. And you hope you don’t get stuck with a Reagan... twice.” Bucky shook his head and passed a look to Becca who was nodding in agreement with Bucky’s disdain.

Adriana hummed in thought. “Does that mean Aunt Becca is a grown-up cause she makes food and cleans her room and washes her clothes and gets ice cream?”

Steve laughed and gave Bucky another spoonful. “Close. It means she’s almost an adult. She needs a job and to be a little bit older. I mean, there’s a lot of things that make a grown-up.”

Adriana nodded and looked back at Bucky. “What’s wrong with President Reagan?” she asked. Steve had recently taught her about the president and government a little bit. It wasn’t much but she thought the word ‘president’ was fun to say.

Bucky blinked and shrugged casually like he didn’t have lots of problems with the President. “Papa just doesn’t like President Reagan. It’s like how you don’t like the man at the video store because he doesn’t like turtles.” He hoped that was a valid enough explanation. He sort of forgot that politics wasn’t a field that children were quite aware of at her age.

Adriana threw her hands up in the air. “Who doesn’t like ‘turtles’?” she exclaimed, still fired up over it.

Steve laughed and kissed the top of her head. “I know, Peanut. Turtles are pretty cool,” he soothed. When the babies’ ice cream was all done, they leaned back in their high chairs looking satisfied and sleepy.
Sarah May was already settling herself in to fall asleep in her chair. But Christopher was tugging at the tray trying to get out. “Sleep, Papa,” he mumbled and reached to grip Bucky’s arm.

“Are you a tired boy, Christopher?” Bucky asked and gently slipped him from his chair. “I know, Bean. It’s been a long day. Let’s get you and Ya-Ya upstairs. Adriana, you have about a half hour until bedtime.”

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Steve sent a silent, quick prayer upwards because it was looking like this was another night where both babies went to bed without fuss. He got up so he could pluck Sarah May from her chair since Bucky had Christopher.

“Story?” Christopher asked hopefully up at the two of them. Usually, they sang him something, so he considered lullabies and stories the same thing.

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“Yes, Christopher,” Bucky agreed and snuggled him against his chest and brought him up to the nursery. “Lullabies and then sleepy times.” They made short work of getting the babies into pajamas and then into their cribs. Sarah May immediately curled up on her side and closed her eyes. But Christopher stood up and waited for his lullaby.

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Steve tucked Sarah may in and kissed her cheek before going to grab Bucky’s acoustic guitar because he loved it when Bucky used it to sing to their kids. “Here, Buck. You’ve got two adoring fans waiting to hear your latest hit.”

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“Oh, okay, I suppose I can let them have a free show,” Bucky said with a goofy little grin as he sat down in the rocking chair with his guitar. “It’s close to the holidays. How about a soft Christmas song to get you two sleeping?” He thought for a second and then decided to do ‘Silver Bells’ since it was already pretty calm.

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Christopher flopped onto the bed to listen to his papa sing. Sarah May was already out, but Christopher watched Bucky with big, blue eyes that started to droop the more Bucky played. Finally, he was sleeping soundly in his crib. “You play so well, Papa,” Steve said fondly, kissing Bucky’s temple.

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“Thank you, Baby.” Bucky caught Steve for a proper kiss. “Daddy really should sing with me next time, though. They would love that.” Bucky took his guitar and quietly started to play another Christmas song as he and Steve made their way down the stairs. “Maybe one day I’ll write a real album and be a rock star for a bit. Maybe I’ll be a one-hit-wonder on the radio and our kids can say, ‘Oh, yeah, that’s my father.’ And all the other kids will be amazed that Bucky Barnes is their friend’s dad.”

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“My voice isn’t as good as yours. I love the way you sound when you sing,” Steve said. He kissed
him and carefully stepped around a block one of their kids left on the stairs. “If our kids’ friends have any sense, they’ll be amazed at you either way.”

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“So, what?” Bucky asked, giving Steve a sideways glance. “I don’t read as good as you but I read two whole books this morning because you said my baby girl would like it. And I think you’re singing is perfectly good. And the kids would like having their dads do a duet.”

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Adriana came scampering up to them and gave them a hug, accidentally knocking into Bucky’s guitar a little. “Can you sing me a song, Papa?”

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Bucky lifted his guitar up a bit after Adriana bopped it and he let her hug on to his legs. “Sure, Peanut, I will sing you two Christmas songs and then it’s bedtime for you. Sound like a deal?”

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“Okay!” she said. “Can I take out my ‘tuttles’ and dolls so we can have an audience?” she asked.

Steve ran his fingers through Adriana’s hair and bent down to kiss the top of her head. He thought it was a bit too much of a production but she really had been a good girl today. “Sure, Peanut. That’s fine with me,” Steve said.

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“Okay, wait, Adriana,” Bucky said and stopped her from running up to her room to get her things. “How about you get all ready to sleep and then get your turtles and dolls on your bed with you. That way you are ready to sleep after the songs.” Bucky knew that if she had her toys downstairs and wasn’t ready to sleep, she would try to get them to let her play for longer. “And let Daddy help you brush your teeth, please.”

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Steve picked their daughter up and carried her to the bathroom. He sang her a little song about brushing teeth and why clean teeth were so important as he helped her brush and wash up for the evening. He carried her into her room and helped her into her pajamas before allowing her to set up her toys and dolls.

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Bucky got himself an apple to snack on and said goodnight to the girls and Sarah who were all headed to their rooms for quiet time before they went to sleep. Sarah and Becca both liked to read before going to sleep and Lilly had taken to making mixtapes when the house was quiet. But then Bucky headed back upstairs with his guitar and the bongo drums that Clint got for Lilly. “Okay, Steve, Baby, you’re going to keep my rhythm for me,” he said and showed Steve a simple one-two pattern. “I won’t even make you sing this time. Just hit the drums.”

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Adriana was sitting in her bed with a big smile on her face. Life was so amazing for her now that she had two parents who were more than happy to give her a mini concert before bed. Steve followed
the pattern Bucky gave him and decided to sing along anyway, even though he messed up with the drums a little because it was hard to focus on both at once.

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They sang two Christmas songs for Adriana and then gave her one more song which Bucky had to do by himself because it was a Sinatra song that Steve wasn’t familiar with. Once they were done, Adriana was pretty tired and she let Bucky put her dolls and all but one turtle back in their box and then give her an extra blanket. Now the entire family was either asleep or at least in their respective rooms and Bucky and Steve could have the kitchen and living room to themselves.

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Once they got quietly back downstairs, Steve pulled Bucky onto the couch and started to kiss his face affectionately. “Today really was something special, Buck,” he said. “I can’t remember the last time both of us were able to spend every second of the day caring for our kids.” He kissed Bucky’s cheek once more. “Every day that passes, I’m more and more thankful that you brought Adriana home to us. She’s so happy here because of you.”

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Bucky hummed happily with the kisses Steve gave him and he moved so he was cuddled up to him, legs resting over Steve’s lap. “I loved today too. I hope Clint and Tim aren’t too mad at me for calling off. But maybe they will forgive me since it was for a good reason.” He gave Steve a few kisses on the lips and ran his hands through his hair. “I’m really happy we got her too. She’s so perfect. She’s so bright and enthusiastic and loves to learn and she loves it here, Baby.”

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Steve threaded his fingers in Bucky’s hair and kissed his nose. “I don’t think they can get that mad when you tell them about how awesome of a day you had with your kids. And with your husband whose ass you wrecked the night before.” Diana came trotting over to curl up on the couch with the both of them, sort of taking up some of Bucky space on Steve. “Has she talked to you at all about Christmas yet?”

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“Oh, yeah, I’m sure that Clint will want to know how good I railed you but Tim is shy about sex. He doesn’t like when Clint and I discuss you and Nat,” Bucky said, partially joking but mostly serious. “Who talked to me about Christmas? Adriana?” Bucky asked and reached to pet Diana. “Diana, go curl up with Adriana. Let me have him by myself right now.”

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“No, don’t talk too much about me there. I don’t want them to know what I’m in to,” Steve complained with a pout. Diana rolled onto her back and whined in protest about Bucky trying to shoo her away. Steve laughed and pet her belly. “Go on, good girl. Go get Adriana,” he urged with a pat. Diana barked once just to be moody and whined all the way upstairs. “I was wondering if the orphanage got her anything in past years. Or if they pushed the whole Santa thing.”

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Bucky watched Diana head off and he shook his head. She was such a dramatic dog sometimes. But at least she listened because Bucky just wanted all of Steve’s attention right now. He wanted all of Steve’s affection too. “I don’t really know. I know the kids got a few presents each but I don’t know
if they ever talked about Santa with them. But she’s so young that it won’t matter either way. You’re wanting to do Santa, aren’t you?”

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Steve thought that Diana’s little tantrum was cute and funny. She was a good dog and listened in the end, but she also was a living creature with wants and emotions. Like Bucky, she also wanted cuddle time. But Bucky knew his husband really needed it right now. He was drained. “I do want to do Santa Claus. I figured we can tell Sarah May he still brings stuff for her because, regardless of religion, she was a good girl all year.”

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Bucky nodded and tucked his hair behind his ear. He remembered that they were going to put on a Christmas special so he reached for the remote and flicked through the channels to find something while he talked. “Yeah, Baby, I know. I think we could make it work that way. I mean, Santa isn’t usually a religion-specific thing. I just have my reservations about it. But I know you want to. I can see it in your eyes how much you want to do Santa with the kids. So, I guess we can do it.”

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“There’s just something so magical about it, Bucky. Leaving cookies out for him and his reindeer, getting presents delivered under the tree. Besides, it’s a great tool to nudge the kids into behaving,” Steve said. “I bet you will be thanking me for pushing Santa when you stop Christopher from throwing a tantrum because Santa is watching.”

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“I like the magical things about it,” Bucky caved slightly. “The cookies and the stories and the presents appearing. That’s all good. But I don’t like the behavior thing. I feel like our kids should want to behave because they know what’s right and wrong and they love and respect us and not being a big bearded guy is going to come give them coal if they mess up.” That part of it felt too much like fear-mongering to Bucky – which was another issue he had with religion too. Sometimes, it was a wonder he and Steve could find middle ground on issues like this.

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Steve was with the kids more and although he agreed with Bucky about the respect thing, he also got a little desperate sometimes when it came to child management. “If you can give in on the magic thing, then I can give in on the behavior thing,” Steve said. Because having the magic of waking up to presents under the tree was worth it to him. “I won’t say a word about Santa bringing coal to naughty children. Promise.”

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Bucky nodded. He could handle this bargain. “So, we are doing a ‘Christmas Compromise’, a ‘December Deal’, a ‘Santa Settlement’, a ‘Reindeer Resolution’, a “Kris Kringle Contract’?” Bucky laughed to himself and shook his head. His humor had changed a little since getting Adriana. Her books had a lot of word puns and rhyming and he found himself making terrible jokes now because of them. “Anyway, what’s the Santa plan then, Babe? Because I know it’s important to you.”

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Steve snorted at Bucky’s joke. He loved dumb humor like that, which meant they both had
successfully transitioned into becoming fathers. He leaned in to kiss his husband. “Santa Settlement,” he decided. “Let’s have the kids watch a movie and tell them that Santa is going to do a pre-Christmas visit tomorrow night and to leave cookies out for him. We can eat the cookies and put fake footprints on the floor for them to wake up to. That way they can learn about him a little.”

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Bucky sighed and leaned in to hold Steve a little closer and kiss him a few more times. “You’re going to make me dress up as Santa this year, aren’t you?” It would be easy enough to put some sort of snow in a can spray on his beard and hair. And it definitely seemed like something Steve would want Bucky to do for the kids to keep up the whimsy of Santa.

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“Well, I was thinking of maybe asking Tim to do it,” Steve admitted. “He doesn’t get to spend time with his kids, so I thought he might like having ours fawn over him more than normal for an hour or so. Then he can stay for dinner or something.”

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Bucky immediately nodded in agreement. That was perfect. That meant he didn’t have to do it and Tim would get to do something fun and goofy and that man needed more fun in his life. “Yeah, he will love that. I’ll ask him in the morning. We might even convince Clint to be an elf if we ask super nicely. And... when we talk to Tim about that, we can mention our dinner party with... Richard, of all people.” Bucky was still reluctantly on board with the whole thing.

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Steve made sure to massage Bucky’s head extra nice after he mentioned bringing Richard into their home for Tim’s sake. “If we promise a nice bottle of scotch for Clint in exchange, I think he will do it. I’m sure he’ll be happy to have it to squirrel away for special occasions.” He grinned. “Our kids are going to have the best Christmas ever.”

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“Okay, but don’t buy him like too good of a scotch. Because I’ll get jealous that I don’t get nice scotch,” Bucky said, trying to be light about his continued work on his sobriety which had officially passed a year now. He had a nice shiny chip and he carried it around proudly everywhere he went. But there were still hard days where he wanted to give in.

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“Why would you want scotch when you’ve got Bourbon in Christopher’s crib?” Steve tried to joke. “I’ll make sure I’ll give him a perfectly adequate, slightly-above-average scotch,” Steve promised.

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“Well, if I tried to take that dog, I would have a very angry, very loud, crying Baby Bean on my hands,” Bucky said, slipping his fingers gently up Steve’s shirt. “Just get him Highland Park. It’s above average but it’s not going to be an entire month’s salary or anything.”

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“Christopher loves that dog. It was the first cuddle buddy he had in his crib. Oh, Bucky, remember how small he was the first day we had him? He was such a tiny, quiet thing.” Steve was so thankful
that he was growing up healthy and full of energy. “I miss how little our boy was.”

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Bucky smiled and rested his forehead to Steve’s for a bit. He loved having this quiet, private moments with Steve. They weren’t rushed. They didn’t have anything splitting their attention. It was just them. “He really was small. Sarah May wasn’t even as little as him in her first month as he was at four months. I think all it was is that he needed actual nutrients and love - neither of which he had before coming to us.”

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“I can’t believe his aunt didn’t want him. He’s such a perfect, little boy who loves attention.” Steve understood that she had her own life, but Steve would drop everything to help a family member in need. “I’m so glad he was too young to remember any of that. I just... couldn’t believe that a baby would be brought up in such awful conditions. But I guess that’s what drugs can do to people sometimes.”

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“I’m fine with her not wanting him. It wasn’t something she could do. And besides, that means we got him. And I know you, Steve. I know you fell in love with him the second you laid eyes on him.” Bucky brought his hands up further in Steve’s shirt to massage his fingers over his chest. “You’re right. Drugs have the potential to ruin people. I know it. I’ve lived it for a while. All we can hope is that his biological parents can find help and get sober in prison and come out of there as people they are proud to be.”

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Steve knew he would’ve been heartbroken to have to give up Christopher even though at that point he’d have only known him for a few hours. He was also glad he was able to rename him. ‘Christopher’ was such a good name for him and both he and Bucky hated the name ‘Rocky’ for him. Steve smoothed Bucky’s hair down when a few strands went astray. “I admire you so much,” Steve said. “It’s harder to get out of an addiction than it is to say no in the first place.”

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Bucky sighed and nodded. “Well, yeah, but, I did it the stupid way. I didn’t like give into peer pressure at a party or something. I saw a way to get closer to someone I liked and did what I could be part of his group. That’s dumb. I was very dumb, Steve. I’m still pretty dumb. But that was, I think, my worst decision. I guess I thought I wouldn’t get addicted. But I did.” It wasn’t like this was the first time Steve was hearing this. He knew this story front and back. They had discussed it and other antics of high school Bucky a lot.

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“Hey, it’s not the end of the world, right? And if you’re willing to do something so dumb for some guy you had a crush on in school, that means you’d do anything to make the people you love most as happy as you can make them,” Steve said, trying to put a good spin on this for Bucky right now. “I love you, Buck. Even if you relapsed. All that matters is I have you and we have our family.”

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“Oh, Steve,” Bucky whispered quietly and took his hands out of Steve’s shirt so he could hold his face gently. “Baby, listen to me, because I’m serious,” he started firmly. “If I ever, ever go back to
cocaine or start drinking again, you kick me out of this house. Okay? I’m serious. I don’t want any of our kids to see that. And it’s not fair to you to deal with it. You tell me to get my shit straight before I come home. And you tell Natasha and Sam not to go easy on me if they find me doing something like that. Promise me.”

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Steve frowned at Bucky. “I can’t do that to you,” he said. “Your family is everything to you, Bucky. I can’t force you away from that. And what will the babies and Adriana think when their papa doesn’t come home for a long time? If I kicked you out, I’d worry day and night about you.”

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“Steve, I’m not kidding,” Bucky repeated. “I have thought about this. After Missy...” he paused and took a deep breath. He still blamed himself for Missy’s relapse. And he worried that he would do the same thing one day. And he knew that he couldn’t put his family through that. “I did a lot of thinking after that. I talked to my AA group about it. I decided a while ago that if I ever relapse to either of my addictions, I don’t get to be with you or my sisters or the kids anymore. Not until I get things put back together. The house is in your name, you have secondary guardianship of the girls and Adriana. And Christopher and Sarah May are your adoptive kids. It would be, legally speaking, totally in your right to kick me out. And that’s what I want you to do if, God forbid, I ever relapse.”

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Steve shook his head. “I’m not throwing you away just because I’m legally allowed to,” he said. “You’re important. And kicking you away from everything you love is only going to make you more hurt and depressed. If you relapse, we will find a way to help you together and without hurting our kids.”

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Bucky just stared at Steve for a long while. He really had thought this through. He believed that this was the best thing to do. And it was all hypothetical anyway because he didn’t have any plans to relapse. This was all one big ‘just in case’. But it did mean everything to Bucky that Steve was so adamant about keeping him and helping him if he did ever mess up. He felt the lump form in his throat and his nose tingle with the tell-tale sign that he was going to cry. “I love you, Steve,” he whispered and pulled him tighter into a hug, kissing his neck and just holding him. “I am the luckiest man alive to have found you.”

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Steve wrapped his arms tightly around Bucky’s shoulders. “I mean it, Baby. You’re going to stay right here and have the love and support of everyone in this house.” He knew that Bucky wouldn’t do anything that would hurt their kids and Steve was home all the time anyway, so he wouldn’t let Bucky accidentally neglect them while high or drunk. “I’m luckier to have found you,” he responded with a smile.

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Bucky pressed his lips to Steve’s and then pulled back to look into his eyes again, intently. “And I promise, Baby. This is just in case. I don’t want to relapse. I don’t. I don’t want to do that to you. But I think it would be good to have this plan if that ever did happen. But I swear, Steve, I’m doing really well. I am. I mean, I’m up to a year without alcohol.”
“I know, Babe. I have full faith in you that you’re not going to relapse and I am so, so fucking proud of you being a whole year sober,” Steve said. “I know how proud you are to have that chip. I see you playing with it all the time.” He squeezed Bucky’s hand. “You set such a good example for our kids.”

Bucky nodded, letting a couple tears fall down his face now. He was proud. He never thought he would get this far. And it really was all thanks to Steve. He couldn’t have done this without him. “It’s all because of you, Steve. The house, our kids, my sobriety are all because of you. Also, at this point, if I would have stayed the way I was, I might not even have my sisters anymore. Becca would have filed for early emancipation and then I would have gotten worse and Lilly would have been taken. Everything I have right now is because I have you.”

Steve’s stomach turned at that thought. He knew that Becca would’ve done just that and although he wanted to say that Bucky would’ve powered through, he knew it would’ve been a lie. It would’ve destroyed Bucky to have Becca gone. Steve dried his husband’s tears and kissed his lips. “Fate made sure that you wouldn’t have to suffer that heartbreak,” Steve said. “We were meant to find each other when we did.”

“Yeah, yeah we were,” Bucky said, licking his bottom lip before leaning in to kiss Steve again. “I love you,” he whispered and moved to straddle Steve’s lap. “I love you so much, Baby.” He kissed from Steve’s mouth across his jaw and down his neck, desperate but passionate and so loving. “You’re my everything, Steve. My whole world. I know I say it a lot but I mean it so much.”

Steve slid his hand up the back of Bucky’s shirt and smiled up at him. He closed his eyes and leaned up into the kiss, practically bursting with happiness over having such an amazing marriage with the man in front of him. “I know you mean it. And every time I hear you say it, it makes me a happier man.” He kissed the curve of Bucky’s jaw. “Our kids are so lucky. They’re going to see what it’s like to have a healthy, happy relationship. So, they know not to settle for anything less.”

“Don’t settle for anything less,” Bucky agreed quietly. He knew he wasn’t a good role model for relationships and sexual partners in his life but he was hoping that the fact that Steve hadn’t been promiscuous - and the added benefit of seeing their parents together - would help their kids learn how to traverse romance and sexuality safely. Bucky whined softly and let his hands trail down Steve’s body, just feeling him. “Baby...” He slipped his fingers into the waistband of Steve’s pants and tugged softly.

Steve smiled fondly at his husband. He loved how much Bucky still wanted him, even after being together for so long and spending most of their time tiring themselves out for their kids. “Yes, Dear?” Steve asked innocently. “What do you want?” He pet Bucky’s hair gently. “Are you tired?” He then gave Bucky’s hair a firm tug. “Or do you want me to take you to bed?”
Bucky whined again and rolled his hips against Steve as an answer. He locked eyes with him, all lust and hot need coming through his stare. He wiggled his hand further into Steve’s pants and brushed his hand over his cock. He palmed at his length and gave a couple soft huffs of air against Steve’s neck as he went, getting ahead of himself already. “Take me to bed, Steve.”

Steve loved it when Bucky was all hot and desperate. It sent a wave of arousal right to his dick and all he could think about was giving Bucky exactly what he wanted. Steve groaned softly when Bucky grabbed at his dick. Steve quickly moved so he could grab Bucky’s wrist and pull it away. He then pinned Bucky beneath him on the couch and he gave a slow, deep roll of his hips to slowly grind against Bucky. He kept him pinned there, rolling his hips in slow circles to get Bucky writhing beneath him. “I don’t think I heard you say ‘please’,” he purred in Bucky’s ear before biting it lightly.

“Oh, fuck, Baby, please,” Bucky said quickly, breathlessly. “Please. Please, let me touch you. Let me have your cock, Steve. Please.” He wrapped his legs around Steve and relaxed where Steve was holding him down. He kissed him and massaged Steve’s thighs with his toes, trying to engage their entire bodies and get Steve going so much he couldn’t stand it.

Bucky’s reaction was sinfully beautiful. He couldn’t believe how hot his husband was and it didn’t take Steve long to pull Bucky off the couch and lead him upstairs. As soon as they were in the bedroom, Steve held the sides of Bucky’s face firmly and kissed him deeply and possessively. He held Bucky’s head in place and he moaned against Bucky’s lips. “Take your clothes off.”

“Yes, Sir,” Bucky whispered back and fumbled with his belt for a second before finally getting it tugged off and discarded at his feet. It didn’t take long for him to be naked and hard and waiting in front of Steve. He scratched over his chest and down to his abs, letting his warm hand feel his own body just as a show for his husband. “I’m ready for you, Baby. I’m yours. Take me, Steve.”

Steve watched Bucky undress with dark eyes and licked his lips. Bucky looked so goddamned delectable right now, Steve could barely contain himself. He slowly took off his clothes in front of Bucky, article by article, and once he was completely naked, he eased Bucky back onto the bed and moved over him.

“Baby, you’re fucking gorgeous,” Bucky declared as Steve’s body hovered over him. “I’m reminded every morning when I wake up to you and every day I come home to you. I want to run my tongue all over you, Steve.” He pressed his hands to Steve’s stomach and abs and pushed lightly. “Starting here, then going up and then down your sides and your ass and on your inner thighs and your balls and dick. Let’s start every morning like that.”
Steve felt his face heat up at the admission. “Well, if you quit sleeping in so much, we can make that into a habit.” He grabbed the lube from the nightstand and coated his fingers with it. He wiped a little down Bucky’s abs just because and trailed his finger around his balls and down to his hole. “You’re going to wake me up like that tomorrow, right?”

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Bucky hissed in an excited breath through his teeth when he felt cold lubed fingers on his balls. “Of course, I’ll wake you up that way tomorrow,” he promised, resting his hands under his head. “You know, if I’m ever sleeping in too much and you want me up, you can always wake me up with your mouth on my cock. Or tongue in my ass, fingers all over me. I don’t care, Baby. You can pick. I’ll wake up for sure and I’ll be damn happy to see you.”

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“It’s hard to wake you up when you look so beautiful and peaceful when you’re sleeping,” Steve said. He eased a finger inside of his husband and looked down at him with all the love he possessed. “But I bet it would be equally as hot waking you up with a morning blowjob or fucking you nice and slow with my fingers.”

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“Yes, please,” Bucky whined as the first finger pushed slowly inside. “Please do that sometime - fingerfuck me awake. That would be amazing. I can just imagine how hot it will be to blink back to consciousness and to have your fingers spreading me open.” He sighed happily at the thought. “And just when I’m brushing the sleep from my mind, you can slide your cock in and take me apart.”

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“I’ll do that for you, Beautiful,” he said. Steve worked his finger steadily in and out of his husband. “It’ll feel so good. I’m going to love making sweet, slow love to you as you wake up to the day,” Steve purred. He eased a second finger inside. “I like knowing that it’ll make a great start to both of our days.”

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“Yeah, it will. Waking up to you is always the best start to my days,” Bucky said and moved to wrap his arms around Steve. “More fingers, please,” he whispered, a little impatiently. “I want you now, Steve. Hurry just a little.” He knew he was being demanding but it had been at least a week since he had Steve’s cock inside him. And every time he went more than three days, he got very cranky about it.

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Steve laughed lightly and got more lube on his fingers before easing one more inside. “You know, sometimes even when I want to be inside you, I hold off a day or two because I love how demanding you are when you’re extra desperate for me to fuck you.” He smirked and bit a little mark onto Bucky’s throat. Before Bucky could argue back, he pulled his fingers out and slowly lined his cock up. He bit his neck again sharply and pushed himself all the way inside Bucky’s ass.

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“Steve! You-“ Bucky was going to chastise his husband but then he finally had Steve’s dick inside him and he couldn’t remember what had made him mad. He gasped and threw his head back, hand reaching for his own warm cock. “Good, finally. Steve, you tease. Letting your husband hang for
that long.”

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Steve moaned with pleasure at the feeling of Bucky’s tight, hot ass enveloping his cock. He started to thrust steadily inside of him, making sure to fuck him nice and deep. He brought a hand up and played with Bucky’s nipple as he fucked him. “The longer the tease, the better the sex,” he said.

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“More like, the longer the tease, the grumpier the husband,” Bucky corrected. But Steve was right. It was usually pretty amazing sex when Bucky was so desperate and they hadn’t helped each other come for a while. But he would take Steve’s cock inside him every night and be just as happy. “You got to make it up to me now. Really prove it’s worth all the trouble to keep me waiting.”

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Steve grabbed Bucky’s wrists and pinned them above his head. “Someone’s being pushy. Am I going to have to put you in time out for being fresh, Love?” He claimed Bucky’s lips in a quick, searing kiss, starting to rock his hips faster so that his balls smacked heavily against Bucky’s ass with every thrust.

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“Oh, you love it when I’m a brat,” Bucky said but whined softly when Steve picked up his speed. “I’ll be good now. Promise. You can even come on my face tonight if you want to.” Bucky loved that. He liked watching Steve’s cock spill out over him. And it was usually followed with Steve licking him off and he loved that too.

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Steve’s eyes lit up a little at that. He had a bit of a possessive side and although he loved getting to come on his husband, it was something he only did if Bucky suggested it because he didn’t want Bucky to feel demeaned in any way. “Yes... god yes, please,” Steve groaned, kissing Bucky’s neck messily.

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Bucky chuckled and tilted his head so his neck was bared for Steve. “Am I forgiven for being difficult?” he asked and let out a few strained moans while he got his ass pummeled a little harder by Steve. “Or are you gonna give me my punishment with your come all over me?”

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Steve let go of one of Bucky’s hand so he could stroke his husband’s cock. He snapped his hips roughly, making Bucky’s body scoot a little higher up the bed. “A little bit of both,” he gasped. “God, Baby, I’m so close. Are you going to let me take pictures of you before I lick you clean?”

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“You can always take my picture.” Unlike Steve, Bucky wasn’t very shy about his picture being taken. He loved that they had a large collection of sexy Polaroids of them. They had regular ones as well but the naked shots were always the most fun to photograph.
“Good,” he said softly. Steve didn’t last much longer. When he felt his orgasm approaching, he pulled out of Bucky’s ass and then straddled his stomach. He started to jerk off over his husband. He panted heavily, having difficulty keeping his breath as his hand moved fluidly over the length of his dick. He let out a long moan as he came and spurted thick strands of come onto Bucky’s face.

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Bucky missed Steve’s dick the second it was out of him but he quickly got back on board once Steve was hovering over him. He kept his mouth open and got a bit of Steve’s come on his tongue but most of it landed on his cheeks and neck. He giggled happily and pushed Steve off of him carefully so he could grab his own cock and pump. “Take pictures of me while I jerk off.”

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Steve moaned softly at the sight of his come painting Bucky’s face. He kissed his temple and hurried to get the Polaroid and started to take picture after picture of Bucky at all different angles. “Man, you could’ve been a model or a porno star in another life, Baby,” he said. “You’re so gorgeous.”

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Bucky chuckled as he kept pumping himself with one hand and brought Steve’s come to his mouth with the other. “Maybe that’s what I should do instead of school? There’s good money in either of those jobs. If I have a natural talent, I might as well use it.” He knew that would get a rise out of Steve. He was joking entirely but he still wanted to poke at the beast a little by joking. Besides, Steve hadn’t ever really watched porn.

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Steve turned the camera towards both of them as he swiped his tongue across Bucky’s cheek to lick some off and then took another picture as he pressed a few open-mouthed kisses to Bucky’s face. “Not in this lifetime,” Steve chastised immediately in response.

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Bucky giggled and took the camera to set it down. He rolled them so he was straddled on top of Steve, stroking his cock over him. He shimmied up his chest a little more and rested the head of his cock against Steve’s lips. “Open up, Baby,” he whispered and gasped at the feeling of his orgasm bubbling through him to shoot out into Steve’s mouth and on his lips.

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Steve smiled when Bucky moved over him and he squeezed Bucky’s ass in response. “Mmm, let me taste you, Buck,” he purred softly. When he saw the telltale signs of Bucky about to come, he parted his lips and allowed Bucky to coat his face as well.

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“Ah, fuck, Baby,” Bucky gasped and relaxed his body once he was finished coming. “You’re so gorgeous. I love you, Steve. Goddamn.” He moved off of him again so he could grab the camera and take one picture of Steve before going in to kiss the come from him. “You’re so cute. You look amazing. And you taste so good too. You taste like us.”

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Steve pulled Bucky in tight for more kisses. “I can’t believe all you’ve convinced me to do,
Bucky Rogers-Barnes. You’ve turned me into a little heathen.” He ran his messy hand through Bucky’s hair, not even realizing he was getting lube in it.

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Bucky grinned from ear to ear. He loved that he got the name right this time. Steve so often just said ‘Barnes’ and Bucky always corrected him. “Well, Steve Rogers-Barnes, I think you always were one. You just needed someone like me to show you how good it could be to be a little bad. You know? Just don’t tell Father Frank.” Bucky didn’t like to think that there were whole groups of people out there who thought two men and two women together were going to hell and all that. But he knew Father Frank definitely didn’t think that. Although, he probably didn’t want to know what Steve and Bucky got up to in their own home.

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“Hell. No. There’s no way Father Frank is going to hear a word of this. He may be liberal but he’s still a man of God and I’m not letting him know I like your come on my face.” He swatted Bucky’s ass lightly. “So, how do I look?” he asked, needing a little confidence boost from his husband.

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Bucky nodded in understanding but gave Steve a little smirk anyway. “Oh, my sweet handsome husband, you look absolutely mesmerizing,” he assured him and slipped his hands over Steve’s chest and neck. “You’re beyond breathtaking. I love you so much. You’re my favorite. You’re handsome, Steve. But you’re also cute and sexy and adorable and hot. It’s amazing. You can be this incredible sex magnet for me but also the damned cutest thing I’ve ever seen. God, Baby, not a second goes by that I don’t want to touch you.”

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Steve smiled happily at the praise, even though that praise required just the tiniest bit of fishing. “I love you too, Bucky,” he said. “I love how you make me feel. And I’m so happy that you still think I’m the hottest thing in Brooklyn.” He smiled dumbly and hugged him close. “Come here and sleep with me, Buck. Fucking you wore me out.”

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Bucky snuggled down against Steve and wrapped his arms tightly around him, keeping him secure and close. “No, Baby, you’re not the hottest thing in Brooklyn. You’re the hottest thing in all of New York, and America, and, you know, the universe. All those sexy aliens have nothing on you, Steve.” Bucky worried pretty often about Steve’s self-image problems. He used to be much more confident, but since his injury, it went downhill. He hoped that Steve never once thought that Bucky had eyes for anyone else. Because he didn’t. He was only ever focused on his husband. “Night, Baby.”
Steve had spent the whole day cleaning up the house. But with three kids and two teens hanging around the place, it was like trying to keep water from passing through his fingers. He did his best and managed to cook a delicious Italian recipe that had the whole house smelling great. Diana was stationed at Steve’s side, waiting for scraps of meat Steve would give her on occasion, as usual. Steve had tried to cheer Bucky up by buying him a new gold glittery guitar pick but it did little to brighten his mood about Richard.

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Bucky, to his credit, had done what he could to keep the kids out of Steve’s way. He played with them for a while and read a few books to them to make them sleepy. He had been consistently reading at least one book a day to Adriana to work on his reading out loud. But now they were all on the couch sleeping in a row with Sarah May using Adriana’s tummy as a pillow and Christopher tucked under her arm. Bucky, who was dressed in the outfit Steve had chosen - his nicest black corduroys with a button down and sweater number, was sitting in the rocking chair and lazily playing his guitar, staring out the window like a moody teenager.

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When a knock came at the door, it was a miracle Diana didn’t bark and run to see who was there. But that was only because she was in the middle of gobbling down a meatball. Steve answered the door and smiled when he saw Tim. He ushered the man in and Tim gasped when he saw all three kids cuddled up. “Oh, my god, look at how precious they are!” Tim gushed.

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“Tim! Buddy!” Bucky said excitedly, careful to not be too loud to wake the kids. “How are you?” He set his guitar aside and came to pull him in for a hug. “Adriana asked me earlier if ‘Big Tim’ was coming over. She decided that, since you’re the tallest, that’s what you’re called now.” He grinning and took Tim’s coat from him. Sarah and Becca came upstairs then and went to carefully gather the kids. They had set up a few sleeping bags and cushions in Becca’s basement so all of them could have a movie night with Nana on Becca’s tv. That way it would be just couples’ upstairs.

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Tim gave Bucky a bear hug even though they saw each other pretty regularly. Tim clearly loved how adored he was by Bucky’s kids even though it wasn’t the same as getting to see his own. “I don’t mind being called that. It makes me feel important,” he said. “So, uh... how do I look?” he asked Bucky nervously.

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“Hey, you look great,” Bucky assured him, hand resting on his shoulders. “You look handsome and dignified and older but in a really sexy way. Don’t worry.” Bucky looked over at Steve and said. “Tell him that he looks amazing, Baby. Timmy is all anxious.” Bucky knew how much Tim disliked being called ‘Timmy’. But Bucky and Clint had taken to using it recently as a way to distract him from thinking about his ex-wife and the new baby. Tim had been especially upset when she named the baby ‘Brandon’ even though that was always the name Tim wanted for their next boy but she never liked it until now.
“Yeah, Tim. You look like you’re a real catch and you’ve got the personality to back it up,” Steve assured him. “You’re going to knock his socks off when he meets you.”

Richard arrived a few minutes later dressed in a moderately well-to-do fashion and carrying a bottle of wine. “Hey, guys,” he said in a friendly tone. “Thank you for having me over.”

Bucky was so occupied with keeping Tim from freaking out and leaving that he didn’t notice Richard come in at first. He glanced over and saw the officer standing with Steve and holding a bottle of red wine - and a really good one too. His jaw clenched and he looked from the wine to Steve and then up at Tim. He blinked and tucked his flyaway hair behind his ears. Steve had insisted that he braid it for tonight. He said that a braid looked really nice with the sweater. Bucky didn’t buy it. But Bucky did his best to make nice as he walked over, pressed himself to Steve’s side possessively and shaking Richard’s hand. He was regretting all of this already.

Richard could tell that Bucky was seething under the surface but he pretended not to notice so that they didn’t end up with some sort of blowup. “I brought this. I figured we could have something nice to go along with the dinner you made, Steve,” Richard said, offering the wine out to them.

Steve wrapped an arm around Bucky’s waist in support. “That’s very kind of you, Richard. But, unfortunately, none of us are wine-drinkers. We appreciate the thought, though.”

“Maybe you can give it to someone else to take home or something.” Bucky gave a tight little smile and nodded. He was trying his best to be polite but he was very miffed already. He was going to add something to it but then there was another knock on the door and Clint and Natasha had arrived. The second Clint came in the door, Bucky grabbed his hand and dragged him into the kitchen, out of the way of anyone else to hear them and see him signing to Clint that, “Oh, my god, Clint. I knew this was a bad idea. Richard brought alcohol. Of course, he did. He’s trying to sabotage me. Why did I ever agree to this? You know, he still hasn’t apologized for arresting us.”

Clint scowled at the news and signed back at Bucky. “He probably didn’t know better. But he’s still a fucking asshole for not apologizing.” Clint didn’t know whether or not someone had told Richard about the whole alcoholism thing. “Do you want me to flip out on him for no reason just like he did to us?”

“I’m just mad. Everyone else knows I’m in AA. I mean, Sam and Nat must have told him, right?” Bucky asked, hands angrily signing as he went. He didn’t really need to sign with Clint much anymore with his new hearing aid but he still did most all the time. “I just can’t imagine them not warning him once he was invited.”

“Maybe they told him. I don’t know. I can ask,” Clint signed back. “Maybe he forgot. Maybe it’s a misunderstanding. Or maybe he’s just trying to show off to Tim that he can afford to buy some fancy
wine, which is still a douche move but not done to sabotage you.” He gripped Bucky’s shoulder for a second. “Do you need me to do anything to help you keep the temptation down?”

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Bucky sighed and rubbed at his face. He wasn’t so much worried about drinking. He was more just looking for any and all excuses he could get to still be pissy with Richard. He was fairly certain that Richard didn’t have a crush on Steve anymore. And he did think that he and Tim could be really good together. He just liked to hold on to his grudges. He only recently stopped being sassy to Sam out of dislike. Now he was sassy in a much friendlier way.

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“Come on. We can probably find a petty way to get back at him that’s satisfying. Maybe we can have Diana lick his spoon without him knowing before we give it to him,” Clint suggested. “Or we can talk in sign the whole time and not translate so he can’t join in on any of our conversations.”

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Bucky chuckled at Clint. He was the greatest friend that he could ask for. “Yeah, well, if we sign then Steve, Nat, and Tim - to some extent - will know what we are saying and then will just translate anyway. I don’t know, I’m just going to try to stick to Steve and let Richard interact with Tim. That’s kind of the whole point after all. And, also, Sam is bringing a woman he is seeing too so many I can just get to know her instead of even acknowledging that Richard is here.”

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“Let’s hope that Richard and Tim are distracted with each other,” Clint said. He nudged Bucky and gave him a reassuring smile.

Steve walked over finally and put a hand on the small of Bucky’s back. “Why don’t you have a seat and relax, Baby?”

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“I am relaxed,” Bucky muttered through gritted teeth and glanced up at Steve. He slipped his hand in with Steve’s and held him very close to him. He didn’t really want to be away from Steve at the moment. “Is Sam getting here soon? Is he still bringing his girlfriend?” Regardless of the issues that sometimes cropped up between him and Sam, Bucky did have to admit that Sam was really good at dissolving tension. He was charismatic and humorous and always told the best stories. Bucky hated this too, but he was actually pretty fond of him now.

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“He said he was going to be a little late, but here before dinner.” Steve went back to finishing up the cooking after giving Bucky a sweet kiss on the lips. Raphael hopped into Bucky’s lap the second he sat down and bumped his head against him.

After a few minutes, Richard came over to Bucky. “This is a really nice house you’ve got here. Thank you for inviting me over.”

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Bucky scooped Raphael into his arms and pet him gently so the cat would purr and settle comfortably with him. When Richard came to sit by him, Bucky glanced over at Clint who was
occupied with talking to Tim and Nat. And Steve was still cooking. It was just him and Richard for now. “Yeah, uh, thanks. It was my parents’ place.” He decided to ignore the comment about having invited Richard.

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“That’s got to be cool, living in your childhood home and getting to raise your kids here,” he said. Richard looked around the place. “So, where are your parents living now since you’ve got this place? Did they go to Florida? That’s where my parents went once they retired.” He was utterly clueless but trying to make conversation.

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Bucky looked at Richard for a long moment. He knew that Richard couldn’t possibly know his entire story but he figured that he would have at least known that his parents were gone. Why else would he have his little sisters living with him? He nodded slowly and said, “Uh, yeah, Florida.” He wasn’t really sure why he lied but he did. Maybe it was because he didn’t want to talk about his parents with Richard. Or maybe he just didn’t want this man to know anything about him at all. Whatever the reason, he gave another little smile and then moved the conversation along. “So, did you introduce yourself to Tim?”

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Richard shrugged his shoulders shyly. “Not yet. I don’t really know how to start without something to say to him. I’m not really good at making conversation,” Richard admitted. Judging by how awful this conversation was going, at least he seemed a little self-aware.

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“Well, I don’t know, man,” Bucky said, a little sigh escaping his lips. “I don’t hardly know you either but you came up to talk to me.” Raphael jumped off of Bucky’s lap then, having had his fill of petting. “Tim’s personal hobbies are reading, keeping up with politics, candle-making, and swimming. Start there.”

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“Well, it’s easy to talk to people I’m not attracted to,” Richard said, then he immediately realized how that sounded. “I, uh, mean... not that you’re ugly or anything. You’re not my type. Sorry,” he corrected. Richard got up and slunk off to grab a drink and attempt a better conversation with Tim.

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Bucky rolled his eyes and got up to go find Steve. His husband was still putting the finishing touches on dinner and he had a crease in his forehead like he was focusing way too hard. “Hey,” Bucky said and nudged him gently with his foot. “I think I just found the one gay man in Brooklyn who doesn’t think I’m hot.”

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Steve looked over at Bucky and lightly kissed the tip of his nose. “Oh, yeah? Well, that man certainly isn’t me,” he said. He passed Bucky the spoon to make him stir the pot while he cut up the appetizers. “Did Richard say you were unattractive? Because he’s dead wrong if that’s what came out of his mouth.”

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“No, he just said that he wasn’t attracted to me. Apparently, I’m not his type,” Bucky said, stirring obediently as he went. “So, a tight ass, chiseled features, bright eyes, and perfect hair isn’t his type? I’m everyone’s type, Steve,” he murmured more to himself than to his husband. He wasn’t mad about the fact that Richard didn’t find him attractive. He sure as hell didn’t want to have anything to do with Richard. But Bucky just wanted to have things to be upset about right now, so this was just the next one to complain over.

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Steve laughed and gave his husband a hug. “Sweetheart, you’re fucking adorable when you’re grumpy.” He kissed Bucky’s cheek and pet his hand over Bucky’s arm once before he went to the door to answer the knock. Sam was there with his new girlfriend, who was dressed in an outrageously neon outfit, which was a funny contrast to Sam’s modest colors.

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Bucky followed Steve, glad to have the distraction of their last guests’ arrival. He shook Sam’s hand and then nodded to the woman. “Groovy outfit,” he said and gestured to himself. “I’m Bucky. Steve’s husband. Can I take your coat, Miss...?” He trailed off, waiting for her name. He was also sort of mesmerized by how bouncy her hair was. It seemed to jump up with every little move she made.

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“Thank you!” she said. “It’s my first time wearing such a loud outfit, but I felt like standing out a little today,” she admitted. “I’m Mary, by the way. It’s very nice to meet you.” She went straight for a hug instead of shaking Bucky’s hand and she walked in to greet the rest of the dinner guests.

“She’s an outgoing one, isn’t she?” Sam said proudly, a smile spreading over his face.

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The hug startled Bucky a little but he didn’t mind it. Mary was very friendly and he kind of needed someone like that right now. “Yes, she is. I like her,” Bucky said, nodding to Sam with an impressed reverence. “You keep her.” He turned to Steve and said, “I’m going to go help Sam introduce Mary to anyone she might not know, so Clint and Tim probably, and you just holler for me when you need help bringing dinner in.”

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The only person who didn’t take to Mary right away was Natasha, who didn’t like being hugged by strangers. Steve loved her energy and grabbed Bucky’s arm before he could turn to walk away. “Babe, it’s ready now,” he chuckled. “Help me carry the plates over? Be careful cause they’re a little hot,” he warned.

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Bucky nodded and went to grab a plate. Steve wasn’t kidding it was very hot. “Ow, fuck!” he gasped and set it down again. “Jesus, that was hot, Steve.” He blew on his hand and then tucked his sweater sleeve over it to grab the plates without having to touch his skin. He carefully took the plates over to the table and then got everyone in to sit down. They didn’t have much room to move around and everyone was very intimately cushioned together but it worked for the most part.

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“Baby, I warned you,” Steve said with a worried pout at his husband. He gave Bucky’s hand a kiss after they were all settled in. Diana took her spot next to Steve since he was the one who always gave her table food.

“So, how are the kids doing? Have they been asking about Santa since they last saw him?” Tim asked.

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Bucky tried to shoo Diana off but there was no budging her while Steve had food on his plate so he gave up. He tucked any loose hair behind his ears because he wasn’t about to have another dinner where he was told he had food all over him. “Well, not so much Sarah May and Christopher. They don’t really get what’s going on. But Adriana understands and she’s very excited about Christmas and Hanukkah this year.”

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“Well that makes Adriana my favorite for now,” Tim joked. He had a new favorite after every visit, though, so him changing his opinion was nothing new. “It’s the best when they’re around her age. They’re still practically babies but they’re not old enough to try and logic their way out of everything you want them to do.”

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Richard, who was seated next to Tim, cocked his head to the side just a little and asked, “Do you have kids?” in a gentle and intrigued sort of tone. Natasha was told to give Richard a little bit of a background on Tim before tonight so he already knew he had kids and an ex-wife. Richard had also looked up his record to see if he had been arrested for anything. All he found was a parking violation that was paid in plenty of time. Thankfully, he had never been caught during his underground street fighting days. That would have put a flag up for Richard automatically.

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Tim didn’t know what Richard had been briefed about, so he answered as if Richard didn’t know a thing about him. “Yeah, but they live with my ex, who just had another baby with her new husband,” he said. “I want to be happy for her, but she’s keeping my kids from me.” He awkwardly cut up his food. “I wish I could see them more.”

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“Yeah,” Richard said and nodded, already on Tim’s side about the whole thing. “I’m sorry about that. You should get to see them whenever you want.”

Bucky jumped in so Tim wouldn’t have to keep discussing it. “Well, his partial custody lets him see them every other weekend but his ex-wife’s lawyers are reviewing a possibility to change it to every weekend and every other Monday.”

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“Tim’s a great Dad,” Steve said. “I’m glad that the lawyers are considering giving him more visitation. He didn’t do anything wrong to deserve the divorce in the first place.”

Tim blushed at Steve’s defense. “Too bad my wife doesn’t like anyone like us or else you two would be my character witnesses,” Tim said shyly.
Bucky gave a little sigh and then shot Tim a little smile. “I’ll go to bat for you any day, Buddy.” He ripped a dinner roll in half and gave one side to Steve. He sort of figured that a change in pace for the conversation might be good so he turned to Mary. “So, Mary, what do you do? Or what’re your hobbies and things?”

“I’m a school teacher,” Mary said. “And don’t tell my third graders’ parents, but I also DJ at a nightclub on Saturdays.” She seemed to be well put together and polite but also had a bit of a wild and fun side. “Sam met me when he was at the club, as much as he hates to admit that he still goes to them,” she chuckled.

Bucky laughed too and gave a look to Sam who held up his hands and said, “In my defense, the night we met, I was there because of a birthday party for a friend of mine. So, it wasn’t actually my choice to be there... that night.”

“Okay, so that’s not accounting for the other nights then?” Clint asked, giving a mischievous smile over at Bucky and then to Mary.

“He thinks that nightclubs are for college kids who don’t know responsibility. I mean, he’s not far off. But there are plenty of responsible adults who like to dance the night away too,” Mary said.

Sam waved his hand. “I’m not that uptight about it. All I’m saying is that if I’m looking for fun, I want to be able to talk to people instead of shout over the music.”

Tim gave Bucky a discreet little glance. He had definitely been going to clubs a lot lately even though he was much older in comparison. And he knew Bucky went to clubs basically up until the time he found Steve. “Not to give myself away or anything, but nightclubs can be lots of fun even if you aren’t an irresponsible college kid. I’m with you, Mary.”

Mary raised her hand up to give Tim a high five. “Alright! That’s two of us,” she said with a grin.

Steve smiled. “Don’t worry, Sam. I’m on your side here. Though it can be fun to go to a club if you’re with a good friend. I wouldn’t go on my own or to look to meet new people.” He wrapped an arm around Bucky as he discreetly gave Diana the rest of his bread roll.

Bucky nodded and leaned into Steve a little. “Yeah, well, I think it’s fun. I haven’t gone to a club in almost two years. Our last attempt didn’t turn out too well,” he said and looked to Steve with a little apologetic glance. “We had a run-in with an ex-boyfriend of mine and it wasn’t very pretty.”

Steve grimaced. “Yeah, that night really sucked. More for you than for me, but I still was pretty
scared.” He squeezed Bucky’s hand.

Richard set his fork down. “Tim, you said you like going out to nightclubs?” he asked conversationally.

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“Oh, uh,” Tim started and looked to Richard with a blush over his cheeks. “Not particularly anymore. For a while, I was trying to meet someone at places like that. But I figured out pretty quickly that the guys I was interacting with weren’t looking to settle down with a father-of-four who is at least a decade older than them.”

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“I’ve never been,” Richard admitted. “Mostly because a lot of the people I have arrested either went or had a close buddy who went to nightclubs often and I didn’t want to risk running into someone I pissed off. That’s also why I never want to go to jail.”

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“Oh,” Tim said with wide, amused eyes. “Well, I guess that does make sense. I don’t shop at my old grocery store because I don’t want to run into my ex-wife.”

Bucky gave a look to Clint across the table and quickly signed, ‘Sure, he doesn’t want to go to clubs and piss off people he’s arrested but he will come to the house of one of them and bring alcohol too.’

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Clint snorted and hid his dumb grin behind his drink as he sipped at his glass. Dinner was going pretty well with nice chatter and fun stories from Mary. Eventually, Richard, trying to salvage what little friendship he had with Bucky and Steve, asked, “So, how are your kids doing? I didn’t get to see them today.”

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“They are good. All the kids are downstairs with Steve’s mom watching a movie. We didn’t want to have to try to keep track of all the little ones while we had so many people over,” Bucky said and gave an actual smile to Richard. He was a sucker for people asking about his babies. “Adriana just learned how to braid hair and she is very proud. She braided mine tonight but then Steve redid it so it wasn’t so messy.”

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Richard loved kids and it was just a bonus that it was the only thing he said ever that had Bucky smiling. “Aw, that’s a shame. I mean, Steve did a good job with your braid but it would’ve been nice to see her handiwork,” he said.

Tim shook his head with a laugh. “She’s got a bit of practicing to go before she styles like Steve. It kind of looks like a wild bush when she does Bucky’s hair.”

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“Yeah, it does,” Bucky agreed. “Clint and Tim have seen my hair in lots of different styles and messes from my kids.” He squeezed Steve’s hand and gave him a little smile. Things were okay at the moment. He wasn’t currently ready to rip Richard in half. “Tim, maybe when you come be Santa
again you can bring Adriana glitter glue that won’t stick in my hair. She thinks it makes me look pretty but I think it sticks to all my clothes and my pillow.”

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“If I brought you glitter glue that didn’t stick, it’d just be called glitter,” Tim answered with a smartass grin.

Steve laughed at that. “Which, in my opinion, makes an even bigger mess. Glitter gets everywhere and takes forever to clean up,” he said.

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Bucky huffed and looked at Tim and Steve. They only joked because their hair was short and Adriana didn’t want to make it ‘pretty’ with glitter. He got up and started gathering everyone’s finished plates. “Steve made a dessert. But he has to put some special glaze over it that is chilling. So, if you all want to go hang out in the living room and talk, we will clean up. Natasha, you know where the board games are to pick one. If we don’t have any for eight people, we can play in pairs.”

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Diana followed Steve around the kitchen the whole time, waiting for more scraps. Tim picked out that they all should play charades on teams, which ended up being a lot of fun, especially when Richard got ‘brushing teeth’ and accidentally made it look like giving a really bad blowjob.

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Charades went really well for a while until Clint and Bucky were exposed for using coded sign to cheat. No one would have known either until Tim finally noticed that Bucky’s fingers weren’t just restless but making fast signs that only he and Clint knew. But then there was a light-hearted time out for the cheaters which just lead to them all sitting about and talking again - this time about a case that Sam and Richard were working on involving meth dealers working out of an abandoned public swimming pool of all things.

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When his two friends started talking about police work, Steve wrapped his arm around Bucky and held him tightly, feeling that familiar pang of missing his old job. “Did you have a look at Redford’s files? I remember him working on a case like that in ‘81,” Steve suggested.

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“Yeah, we did,” Richard confirmed with a nod and a look to Sam. “My first thought was some sort of copycat group but after Sam did some re-con it turns out it’s some of the old guys who weren’t caught and convicted the first time. It’ll just be a matter of warrants before we can do something about it.”

Bucky noticed the gleam in Tim’s eyes that gave away how impressed with Richard he was - and how attracted to him. Bucky hated that he and Steve had been right about Richard being a good match for Tim. “Your job sounds dangerous. Are you ever scared?” Tim asked with what could only be equated as words that sounded like honey. He was smitten already.

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Steve was pretty pleased with himself for figuring out a cause for who it was without being in the
force for over a year. He squeezed Bucky’s arm gently and nudged him to see how Tim’s expression was all lit up and fawning over Richard. He knew Bucky didn’t like Richard in the slightest but it was still nice to see their friend so smitten.

“I’m scared sometimes, but more for other people than myself,” Richard said. “There are a lot of kids who get caught up because the wrong people are teaching them and getting them into trouble before they can make decisions on their own.”

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Tim made a soft little hum and gave a little smile to Richard. Bucky was pretty sure that Tim would have started making out with him if they would have been alone. But they were surrounded by other people so Tim just reached to squeeze Richard’s arm for a second and then pull back slowly.

Bucky also noticed how much Richard sounded like Steve when he talked about helping people on the force. That was always Steve’s favorite part. Seeing their similarities helped soften Bucky a little more to Richard. He might actually be able to be indifferent to him pretty soon and then eventually maybe even a friend. “Well, you guys, the night has been very nice. I’m glad you all came over. But if I’m going to open the shop tomorrow, I need to sleep. You all can stay if you want but I’m going to start getting the babies ready for bed.”

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Steve felt a little burst of pride for being able to play matchmaker with Richard and Tim. Sam and Mary bid everyone a good night but the other adults wanted to stick around to say goodnight to the children. Which, of course, led to Christopher and Adriana wanting to play and chatter to everyone. Steve looked at Bucky with a sympathetic smile. “I can put them to bed if you want to go to sleep.”

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Bucky had Sarah May tucked against his chest, sleeping soundly and gripping her hand tightly into his shirt. He would have taken Steve up on that but he didn’t want to put her down yet when she was like this. “Oh, it’s okay. Let’s give them a few more minutes and then we can do it together once everyone leaves. Adriana is only halfway through telling Clint each one of her turtles’ backstories.” Bucky noticed Richard hovering near Tim while he played with Christopher. So, Bucky made his way over and peeled him off from the crowd. He figured he should try to set up some form of a truce with him. “So, Richard...” he started slowly. But he wasn’t sure what to say. “If you offered Tim that nice bottle of wine. He would probably invite you over to his place. You should give it a try.”

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Richard bit his bottom lip nervously. “You think so?” he asked. “I don’t want him to feel obligated to invite me back just because I gave him fancy wine. You think he really wants to hang around me already?”

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Bucky fought back his natural inclination to say something tart back to Richard. He was trying to smooth things over, after all. “Yeah, man. I think he does. I know Tim pretty well now. And he has two modes of flirting. The first is when he’s overly suggestive and blunt about compliments. That’s just for when he finds someone attractive but doesn’t want it to go further than something physical.” Bucky had experienced that Tim first hand back when he first met him. “But when he gets all shy and nervous and does those little glances and touches like he has been doing with you all night, that means he actually wants this to be something important. And Tim has been looking for a while now
for a man to invest in. He’s considering giving that a chance with you.”

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A bit more emboldened by Bucky’s reassurance, Richard nodded. “Okay, thank you, Bucky. I’m really happy I got to meet him here.” He gave him a nervous smile and went to grab the bottle. He was about to offer it to Tim when Christopher laid his eyes on it and made grabby hands.

Tim was distracted by this and laughed as he scooped him up in his arms. “No, Sweetheart. That’s not for babies. I’m sorry.” After Tim gave Steve his son back, Richard successfully managed to get invited back to Tim’s place.

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Clint and Natasha were the last ones left after that. And Adriana wasn’t going to let them leave until she had finished discussing every turtle. But Clint didn’t seem to mind too much. Natasha didn’t either but she did look a little tired. Bucky wanted to know how things were going with them and their fight about moving in but he would just have to ask Clint later. “Steve, Baby, I’m going to go get Ya-Ya and Christopher ready for bed if you want to wait for Adriana to be done,” Bucky said and held out his free arm to transfer their son over to him.

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Steve pouted but gave Christopher a kiss before passing him over to Bucky. After, he headed over to Adriana and knelt down. “Hey, Peanut,” he said softly. “I know you want to tell Aunt Nat and Uncle Clint all about your turtles, but Aunt Nat is pretty tired. We have to be respectful of how she feels and we can tell them more about it another time, Okay?”

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Adriana whined and held up the last turtle. “Daddy, this is the last one. And it’s the littlest one. She won’t take long. Promise!” she pleaded and reached out to Clint and gripped his arm to keep him there. She was a fan of most of her daddies’ friends but Clint was decidedly her favorite. Christopher had picked a new favorite in Natasha for some reason. And Sarah May tended to waddle her way over to Sam the most.

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“Peanut, how about you tell me about your littlest turtle and you can tell them later. It’s their bedtime now, Love, and they need to go home.” Steve kissed her cheek and gave the two of them a nod as if to silently give them permission to leave if they wanted. He loved how patient both were with his kids but he didn’t want to test their patience further at all.

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Adriana gave another soft little whine but collected all her turtles up into her arms. She huffed out a sigh and started walking away from them to head to her room. “Bye-bye, Aunt Nat. Bye-bye, Uncle Clint,” she murmured and then tromped her way up the stairs, dropping a turtle a few times and picking it up again.

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Steve followed her upstairs. “I’m really proud of you for understanding, Adriana. I know you’re upset that you couldn’t finish your story. Do you want me to read you a long story tonight since you were such a good girl about letting your aunt and uncle go home?”
Adriana just shrugged and nudged her door open with her foot. She started putting all her turtles away and getting clothes out for bedtime. “I just wanted to tell them about my ‘tuttles’,” she said solemnly, looking up at her daddy to garner some sympathy points and maybe guilt him a little bit too. “Can you cuddle with me until I fall asleep, please?”

He knew what she was doing to him and it was kind of working. “I know you did, Kiddo. But you got to tell them a lot about all of your other turtles.” He helped her change into her pajamas. “But, yes, I’ll cuddle with you. I love cuddling with my little peanut,” he said sweetly, scooping her up and putting her on her bed.

Adriana was fairly tired and she easily molded against Steve’s side and closed her eyes. “I love you, Daddy,” she said softly and closed her eyes. It didn’t take too long for her to fall asleep.

Bucky came in a few minutes later looking for Steve and he grinned over at the two of them all cuddled up. “Baby, the little ones are asleep. Time to get ourselves ready for bed,” Bucky whispered and gestured for Steve to follow him. “Your mom and I already got the babies settled and cleaned up most of our mess from our dinner.”

When Bucky came in, Steve finally snuck away from the bed. “You guys are the best,” he said quietly. “I’m going to go say goodnight to Mom and then I’ll meet you in the bedroom.” Steve leaned in to kiss him.

Bucky gave Steve’s hand a squeeze and then went to get ready for bed as well. He brushed his teeth and took his hair out of the braid before getting into a set of warm Christmas pajamas with little snowmen on the pants. He snuggled under the covers and waited for Steve to get back, eyes having a hard time staying open for very long.

Steve gave his mom a hug and kiss goodnight and brushed his teeth before finally joining his husband in bed. “Hey there, Beautiful. We had a pretty good day today, didn’t we?” He grinned. “Playing matchmaker, being with our friends. I wonder what kind of night Tim and Richard are having right now.”

Bucky yawned and pressed himself up against Steve for more warmth. “My guess is they had some of that wine and deep discussions on Tim’s couch. Then Tim initiated a make-out session. He probably asked at some point if it bothered Richard that he’s about a decade and a half older and has kids. Just because Tim is so worried that is a big turn off. And then the night was probably pretty respectful and mild. He won’t jump right into sex if he actually sees a future with someone, I don’t think.”
Steve smiled. “I think Richard is a fan of kids, so I think they’re going to get along just fine. He was surprisingly nervous about making a good impression with Tim. I remember him being a really steady kind of cop. Usually, rookies are jumpy and afraid to make calls on stuff but he was the exact opposite.” He drew Bucky closer. “I hope they make each other happy.”

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Bucky hummed and gave Steve a couple tired little kisses. “Yeah, I hope so too. I’m still mad about it and annoyed with him in general. But if he ends up making Tim happy then I’ll have to quit complaining. At least now I know he isn’t going to have a crush on you or anything anymore,” Bucky said with a little shrug and then added, “And not me either because, apparently, I’m not attractive to him. Which is such bullshit because I’m sexy as hell.”

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“It is bullshit,” Steve agreed. “You’re the sexiest, most attractive man I’ve ever laid eyes on. I’m always afraid I’ll have to listen to some guy hit on you any time we go to a gay-friendly place.” Steve played with Bucky’s hair. “Adriana asked me to cuddle her until she fell asleep tonight. She was trying to make me feel guilty since I let Nat and Clint leave before she could finish her story about her turtles. I’m so glad that she still wants to cuddle. I’m afraid of the age that they’ll want to be on their own more.”

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Bucky preened and puffed up a little when Steve acknowledged his sexiness. Steve’s opinion was the only one that Bucky actually cared about after all. “She’s very clever. I think she learned that little guilt trick from Becca. She’s overheard too many conversations with Becca guilting me into letting her stay out later or do what she wants.” He sighed and tangled his fingers in with Steve’s. “I don’t think you should worry about when they grow up like that. They will still be plenty interested in cuddles and hugs and being with their daddy.”

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“Becca needs to stop teaching her such dirty tricks. I can’t have my baby girl trying to guilt trip me so soon.” Steve squeezed their hands together. “I want to have my toddler cuddle pile one day. Sarah May is still too small to safely sleep with all of us.” She probably would hate sharing the bed with her daddies and siblings, though.

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“She is getting bigger. Just give her some time. She’s just a pretty little one,” Bucky said and let his eyes slip closed. “Ya-Ya’s birthday is soon. We have less than two weeks and then our youngest baby will be a year old. Then Christopher will be two in February and Adriana will be five this summer. They really are growing up fast.”

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“She is,” he agreed. “But she’s still our little Sweet Pea who’s the tiniest of the bunch.” Steve kissed the top of Bucky’s head and settled in to go to sleep at long last. “I already have some big plans for her birthday. Let’s talk more about it tomorrow. I’m sure the both of us are just about ready to sleep.”

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Bucky fell asleep very quickly and slept soundly for a few hours until he heard a soft paddle of feet by his bed. They kept their door open half way most nights in case Adriana needed them. He rubbed
his eyes and sat up. “Adriana? Honey, is that you?” he asked and looked down to see Christopher trying his best to hoist himself up near the foot of the bed. “Christopher? Did you escape your crib again?”

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Christopher had big, fat tears rolling down his face and he was whimpering as he scrambled unsuccessfully to get on top of the bed. “Papa!” he wailed, reaching up for him.

Steve woke up almost immediately at that and, still half asleep, naturally reacted to their son and pulled him up into their bed. “What happened?” he slurred sleepily to Bucky.

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“I don’t know, Baby,” Bucky said softly and reached to touch Christopher’s face and wipe his tears away. “I don’t know. He just came in. He must have gotten out of his crib again.” Bucky scooted closer to them and wrapped an arm around Steve and Christopher, cradling them as best as he could. “Bean, are you hurt?” he asked. “Did you fall, Baby?”

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Christopher clung a hand onto each of their shirts and made scared, little noises. “Bad, bad doggy,” he said. Steve looked confusedly over at Diana, who’d been laying in her bed up until Christopher came in. “Doggy eat Ya-Ya,” he said in an absolutely wrecked tone before crying again.

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“Oh, Bean. Oh, Christopher. Did you have a nightmare, Sweetheart?” Bucky asked, pain and sadness just washing over him at his son’s distress. “My poor baby boy. I’m so sorry. You’re okay now. It’s okay. I’ll go get Ya-Ya.” He slipped carefully off the bed and went to scoop Sarah May out of her crib and brought her into their room so Christopher could see. “See? See, Bean? She’s okay. Ya-Ya is just fine.”

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Sarah May was a bit annoyed to be woken from her sleep but when she realized she was having special time with her pop, she eased up. “Ya-Ya!” Christopher gasped when he saw her. He scrambled off of Steve’s lap so he could go hug his sister. Sarah May grunted and squirmed a little.

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Bucky gathered both babies into his arms and let Christopher hold his sister close. She tried getting out but then gave up after a bit. He sat down by Steve again and leaned against him. “I guess he’s starting to remember his dreams now. I don’t think kids usually do that until around two years old so that makes sense.” He sighed and looked to Steve for help. “I need to figure out how to change his crib so he can’t climb out.”

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Steve rubbed Christopher’s back and gave him a sympathetic look. It must have been awful dreaming about his baby sister getting eaten. His heart broke even more when Christopher kissed her cheek and said, “Love, Ya-Ya.” Steve gave Bucky a look because their children were so precious. “At what age is he supposed to get a bed?”

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“Around two and a half or three,” Bucky said as he gently brushed his fingers through Ya-Ya’s dark curls. “And since Adriana is so far used to being in her own room, we can have his bed in the nursery for a little longer. Becca will be moving out in a couple years anyway so he can have Lilly’s room then when she goes downstairs.” Bucky still hated thinking about his sisters and his kids all growing up. But he was getting better about handling it.

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“Maybe we can... I don’t know, put some sort of cage over the top?” Steve asked with a nervous laugh because it sounded so dumb and a little medieval.

Christopher calmed down a lot now that he could see that his little sister was safe. He made himself comfortable in his papa’s arms. But then he turned to Diana and patted the bed. “Doggy, up.” Always ready for cuddles, Diana leaped onto the bed and forced her way between Bucky and Steve to curl up in a spot too small for her.

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Bucky grumbled at Diana but moved away from his husband a little so she could snuggle down by Steve. “Yeah, I will have to figure out something. It just worries me that he could trip down the stairs in the dark or something like that. And I don’t like shutting their door because I can’t hear them as well.”

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“I agree. But we do have the stair blockers to keep them from going up and down the stairs without us. Unless he decides to climb over those too.” He laid down and draped an arm over his family. “Are you causing us trouble, Bean?” Steve asked gently to their son.

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Christopher wasn’t sure what Steve was saying so he just nodded and sniffled and pressed his cheek against Sarah May’s. She wasn’t too happy about being squished in her brother’s arms but she gave a little huff and then left it. “Should we try to get them back to their cribs? Or do you think Christopher isn’t going to let us take them back?”

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“We should at least try to get him back. You think Sarah May would let him share her crib tonight?” He figured that would be a good compromise to get Christopher back to sleep but he also worried about having them sleep together without supervision. “Or maybe I can stay awake and let them cuddle with you while you sleep.”

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“Um, well, I am really tired and I don’t mind having them sleep here on my chest tonight,” Bucky said with a little yawn. “But if you don’t want to stay up for a bit then we can put them back. I just don’t want Christopher to start screaming and crying the second we walk away. And he looks pretty comfortable staying right here. Ya-Ya is almost asleep again too.”

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“You can go to sleep, Buck. I’d be getting up soon anyway, so I can stay up.” Steve pressed his lips to Bucky’s and then kissed his kids and then his dog. “Love you, Baby.” He rubbed his kids’ backs gently to get them to fall asleep.
“I love you too, Steve,” Bucky said quietly and pulled his babies a little closer to him. He checked to make sure they were both securely situated and then he pulled a blanket over their legs and held them safe as they both drifted off. He followed after them shortly and had dreams of Steve getting a second puppy and Lilly bringing home a stray cat.
Sarah May's First Birthday.

The morning of Sarah May’s first birthday on December fifteenth was loud and chaotic and messy - which was Sarah May’s least favorite environment. While Bucky dealt with Christopher crying and yelling because he couldn’t have any of Adriana’s food, Steve dealt with cleaning up the spilled orange juice and pancakes and syrup that were pushed to the ground during the start of Christopher’s tantrum. Adriana, to her credit, tried her best to help Steve mop up the juice with paper towels. And Sarah May sat grumpily in her high chair with her hands over her ears, glaring at the lot of them.

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Usually, Steve was better at the whole damage control thing, but Christopher was an absolute terror today. His mom was out to do some grocery shopping for dinner later, so she wasn’t there to help calm her grandson with nana kisses. “I know, Sweet Pea, I know,” Steve said sympathetically to Sarah May. He picked her out of her chair and cuddled her in one arm while he cleaned with the other. “This isn’t a good start to your birthday, is it?” He looked up at Bucky. “Do you think you could try and calm him down in the nursery?”

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“I can try,” Bucky grunted and glanced over at Steve for a second. Christopher was flailing his arms and screaming and Bucky wasn’t sure he could even get him out of his chair like that. After a few attempts, Bucky got his hands on Christopher’s arms and hoisted him up and close to his chest where the toddler pummeled his fists against him. Thankfully, Becca and Lilly were already at school. Bucky wouldn’t have been able to handle all this and Becca complaining about how annoying the babies could be.

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“Christopher,” Steve said in a disappointed tone when he continued his tantrum and hit Bucky as he was lifted. “You can probably let him have his fit if you put him on the carpet in the nursery. If there’s nothing close by to hit, it’ll subside sooner,” Steve advised over Christopher’s wailing. He threw out the napkins and cuddled Sarah May with both arms. “Don’t worry, baby girl, you’re still going to have a fun birthday,” he promised her softly with a kiss.

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Bucky nodded and quickly went up to the nursery with their son. Once he didn’t have much of an audience anymore, Christopher stopped hitting and trying to get free and just kept up the crying and wailing. Bucky cradled him for a little bit, just letting him cry against his chest and say, “Papa, why?” a couple times through hiccups. After that, he had tired himself out so much he fell asleep in Bucky’s arms.

Bucky put him down in his crib so he could have a little bit more time to sleep. Maybe he just hadn’t gotten enough sleep in the night and that’s why he was so grumpy. “The set of lungs on that boy...”
Bucky mumbled as he came back to the kitchen. “Adriana, Honey, thank you for helping Daddy clean up. Do you need some more breakfast? More juice?”

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Steve had sorted out the kitchen and brightened Sarah May’s mood by bouncing her on his hip and singing some of her favorite nursery rhymes. “Papa!” Sarah May squealed excitedly when Bucky came back and she started reaching for him.

Steve passed her over to Bucky and snuck a kiss onto his cheek. “He gets that screaming thing from you.” Steve winked.

Adriana was sitting diligently in her seat. “Can I have some more pancakes?” she asked hopefully.

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Bucky held Sarah May up close to his face so she could touch his mouth and cheeks. She liked feeling his beard and long hair. It’s what made Papa different from Daddy. “Yeah, Peanut, I think you can have some more pancakes,” Bucky said and brushed a hand through Adriana’s hair as Sarah May grabbed a chunk of his own. “Daddy, can Adriana have some more pancakes?” he asked Steve and pointed to their daughter’s pleading face.

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“You had enough for breakfast but I suppose a little extra treat is fine since you were such a good helper,” Steve said. “I can’t say no to those eyes.” He pulled out the extras he’d made for leftovers so they could heat them up quickly. “Buck, do you think you could keep the kids occupied after lunch today? I’m making a special dinner for our baby girl’s first birthday.”

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Bucky gave Adriana a kiss to the top of her head and sat down with Sarah May so she could cuddle up to him for a bit. “Yeah, I can do that. Do you need us out of the house? Because we can go somewhere for a bit. Maybe we will go to the pet store and get some new toys for the animals. Diana ripped through her Bear you got her and Raphael has lost all his jingle balls.”

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“You don’t have to go out of the house, but I won’t say no to spoiling our other children,” he said. “You know how much I love Raph having his little jingly things,” Steve said. When Diana heard her name, she came trotting up to Bucky, wagging her tail, totally expecting a treat of some sort. “I got Ya-Ya plenty of presents for her birthday but maybe she can pick something else while you’re out.”

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Bucky reached to scratch Diana’s head and brush his thumbs over her soft ears. “Good girl, Diana,” he said and received a happy lick to his hand. “Yeah, we can do that. I’ll take them to the pet store and then the toy store or something. They can each pick something they want. How’s that sound, Adriana? You want a new toy today?” He knew that they were spending too much of their budget on new toys and things but he thought it would be okay today since it was a special occasion.

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Diana’s tongue lolled out of her mouth happily at the attention. Bucky didn’t spoil her as much as Steve did - and Steve set that bar pretty high, so it was tough to beat. Any time she got positive
attention out of Bucky, she loved it.

“I get a new toy even though it’s not my birthday?” Adriana asked excitedly. “Yes, please!”

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“Sure, Baby, you can have a new toy today,” Bucky said and reached to tuck her hair behind her ears so she wouldn’t get it in her syrup. “But then tonight will be Sarah May’s birthday so she is going to get more gifts, okay? But when it’s your birthday you are going to get lots of gifts too. So, don’t be sad when she gets more of them tonight.”

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“That’s okay. Daddy already told me only Sarah May gets presents today.” Adriana said. Steve gave her the pancakes at long last. “What’s Sarah May getting for her birthday?” she asked curiously. “Is she getting ‘turtles’ like mine?”

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“No, Peanut, she’s probably not getting any turtles,” Bucky said as he gently played with Sarah May’s curly hair. She didn’t like when Christopher yanked on her hair to get her attention but she did like when her daddies brushed through it carefully. It was pretty soothing. Bucky could relate. “She’s getting some toys but also some new clothes and some other things. She’s not old enough to really have any ideas of what she wants for presents so we have to just get her what she needs until she can decide on her own.”

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Adriana looked sad that Sarah May wouldn’t have turtles to play with her turtles. “When can she pick out her own birthday stuff?” she asked. “Can I pick out my own birthday stuff? Can we go to the penguin lady again?” Adriana asked hopefully. “And see the ‘turtles’ at the zoo?”

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“You’re old enough to know what you want to ask for, yes,” Bucky said. “When it’s your birthday, you can just give me and Daddy a list of what you want and we will get some of it. And we can go see the turtles at the zoo soon. I promise. But, for right now, after you finish eating, let’s you and me go check out your brother and grab any towels for the laundry.”

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Adriana scrunched her nose up. “But what if Christopher still is loud? I don’t like Christopher when he’s so loud.”

Steve laughed and moved to kiss the top of her head. “We still have to take care of our family even when they annoy us. But I am sorry that he is loud sometimes. He’s still learning and doesn’t know how to act like a big boy if he’s upset.”

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Adriana nodded but still gave a little pout. “Back at the kids’ place, we had to be quiet. Yelling wasn’t okay unless we were outside or it was playtime.”

Bucky looked from Adriana to Steve with a worried glance. She didn’t usually mention the orphanage. She hadn’t brought it up for a long while. This was her home and her family now. He
hoped she wasn’t upset or anything because it was Ya-Ya’s day and she wouldn’t be getting as much attention as her sister.

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Steve leaned down to kiss her forehead. “I understand, Peanut,” he said gently. “Christopher shouldn’t be yelling unless it’s playtime, but we have to help him understand why yelling isn’t appropriate instead of simply knowing that it isn’t allowed. It’s hard for the people at the kid’s place to be able to do that when they have so many kids and babies to look after. And I can promise you that if you do something you shouldn’t do here, we will help you understand instead of getting you in trouble for doing it.”

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Adriana looked up into Steve’s eyes and leaned into his chest for cuddles. “Is Christopher in trouble?” she asked curiously and looked over to Bucky.

“Well, he’s not in big trouble,” Bucky said. “He’s just in a little trouble for making a mess and for hitting me a little bit.” It wasn’t like he was hurt at all but Christopher needed to know he wasn’t allowed to pummel his Papa’s chest when he was angry.

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Steve pulled her in close and kissed her cheek a few times. “Christopher is still a baby, so we have to be patient with him. I’m so proud of you for being such a good girl and helping out. When Christopher gets bigger, he’s going to help you out, too. It’s what family does.”

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Adriana considered it for a moment like she wasn’t sure Christopher could be trusted to help. But then she nodded and leaned more against Steve. “Yeah, I guess so,” she said and reached to take Steve’s hand in hers. “Daddy, are we going to have cake?”

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“Yes, we are,” Steve said with a smile. “Do you want to bake the cake with daddy tonight? I’m making it from scratch so it’s extra special for Sarah May’s birthday,” he said. “I bet she would love it if you helped decorate it,” Steve suggested.

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Adriana’s eyes got wide and she nodded. “Yes, please. I want to help make it!” She wasn’t always enthusiastic about helping her dad make food but when it came to dessert, she was all about it. She and Christopher had strong sweet-tooths. Bucky still wished they would have waited for a bit to give their son sweets.

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Steve grinned and picked her up. “Perfect. I’ll be sure to call you when it’s cake time.” He kissed her cheek before setting her back down. “Why don’t you make a birthday card for your sister? You can write something that you love about her. What do you think, Buck?”

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“Yeah, I like that,” Bucky said with a happy smile to Adriana. “You can write what you can and
maybe have Daddy help with what you don’t know.” He passed Sarah May over to Steve and added, “And, while Daddy stays down here, Papa is going to go try to get Christopher again. Hopefully, he isn’t a menace anymore.”

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Steve cuddled their birthday girl and pet his fingers through her hair. “Good luck, Papa,” Steve said with a little laugh.

When Bucky got up to Christopher’s room, their boy was already awake, escaped from his crib, and was going through the dresser drawers and casually making a mess as he explored what was inside.

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Bucky had hoped that their boy was still asleep and being his peaceful Little Bean once again. But he was not. “Christopher...” Bucky sighed. “Why?” There were baby clothes all over the ground and blankets and plushies peppered around as well. It was official. Christopher was starting his terrible two’s a little early. It took him a second but he eventually wrangled Christopher up from the ground and into his arms. “Steve!” he shouted downstairs. “He’s made a mess of the entire nursery. I’m going to have to figure out a new thing for his crib because he keeps climbing out.”

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“Play,” Christopher said innocently. He started to squirm and whine. “No, Papa. Down. Down!”

Steve came upstairs with Sarah May in his arms and groaned at the amount of clothes and blankets that were on the floor. “No... oh, Christopher,” he groaned in dismay. “Do you want me to watch the kids while you take care of this? Or do you want me to clean up?”

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Bucky sighed and shook his head. “To be perfectly honest, Steve, I kind of just want to leave it for now. I want to try to wear him out as much as possible so he’s not so high strung when I take them to the store. He can nap when we get home and I’ll just clean it up as he’s falling asleep.”

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Christopher stopped squirming so much when he saw his sister in his daddy’s arms. “Ya-Ya!” he said excitedly. “Play, Ya-Ya!” He was trying to talk over Bucky to make sure that he was heard. Sarah May knew that word by now and was getting antsy in Steve’s arms.

“Alright, let’s bring them downstairs and I’ll make sure he doesn’t rip something else apart,” Steve offered.

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Bucky helped Steve get the kids all settled in the living room with things to play with. But his head was hurting now. “I’m going to go get some medicine, Baby. His screaming really got to me earlier. Also, I think he’s going through a phase. He keeps having these tantrums two or three times a week.”

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“Do you think we need to give him time-outs whenever he throws his tantrums? I’m afraid he’s going to feel isolated,” Steve said with a concerned frown. Once the playpen and toys were set up,
Christopher and Sarah May happily started to occupy themselves, thankfully leaving their parents with some peace and quiet.

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Bucky wasn’t really sure. He didn’t want their boy to feel like he was being punished unfairly or anything. He also wasn’t sure he would understand what a time-out really meant. But he also needed to learn he couldn’t act the way he did. “I don’t know. Let’s ask your mom and maybe also Tim.” Those were the only parents he knew. He wished he could ask his parents but he also kind of knew what his parents would have done. Whenever Becca or Lilly had tantrums as babies, they sang to them or played with their hands gently until they got too distracted to be upset anymore. It was effective for Becca but not always for Lilly.

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Steve nodded. “That’s a good idea. I’m going to ask Mom what she thinks once she gets home from the grocery.”

Christopher came running over to the side of the playpen to wave a block at Bucky. “Papa! Look!” he said to get his pop’s attention and once Bucky looked over, he giggled and ran back to his little tower of blocks.

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“I see you, Bean. I see your blocks. That’s a really good tower,” Bucky assured him and gave a little smile. “But I’m still upset that you punched me, Christopher,” he mumbled more to Steve than anyone else. He looked to Steve and shook his head. “I don’t want that to become a trend at all. Once he’s strong enough, that will hurt a lot.”

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Steve nodded. “I want our boy to learn how to express himself in words, not fists... but as smart as he is, maybe he doesn’t know how to tell us why he’s upset so he resorts to acting out. After all, wouldn’t you get frustrated if you were upset but nobody understood you?”

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“Yes, you know I get frustrated when people don’t understand. That happens a lot to me,” Bucky said, a little short because he was remembering all the times he and Steve fought because of their miscommunications or lack of understanding. “Do you think it’s because his biological father was such a fighter that he tends to have physical reactions to his anger?”

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Steve frowned at the thought of Christopher inheriting traits from his father. He was such a sweet and loving boy. There was no way he could have inherited something like that. “I... I don’t think so. I mean, they never spent time with him. How would he know what they were like? Or if it’s in his genes... we can help him learn better.”

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“Yeah, well,” Bucky said softly and leaned into Steve so Adriana wouldn’t hear him say, “Genes can have a lot to do with stuff like this. Even if I hadn’t seen my mother’s drinking problems, I would have still probably gotten there. Tendencies toward addiction can run in families and so can things like favoring physical power to handle things over rational thinking.”
Steve glanced over at Christopher, who was reciting what little of the alphabet he could to his sister for as long as she was willing to listen. “Well, we’ll help him if it comes down to that,” Steve said. “I hope he won’t have to struggle with that, though. For his sake. But, we can teach him and help him.” He didn’t know what he would do if Christopher had an addiction issue too and hurt himself from it. Heaven knows both his parents did. But, he guessed it was good that Bucky understood addiction so he could help if that ever became an issue either.

“Yeah, of course, we will help him,” Bucky promised and gripped his hand on Steve’s arms. “He’s our boy. He always has been and always will be. And we will do what we can to teach him what is right and we will do what we can to help him if any of these problems show up. I’m a good example of how things can get better. We know we can help our babies through anything that might happen in their lives.”

Steve was confident in their ability to support their son. And Bucky really was the best parent to have if they were going to have to help a child with addiction problems. “Okay, I love you, Bucky,” Steve said softly and gave him a quick kiss. Sarah came in through the door then with her arms empty, which confused Steve. “Mom? I thought you went shopping.”

Sarah grinned. “I did and you boys won’t believe what happened. Come outside!” Sarah had won a month’s worth of free shopping – with certain exclusions - and upon realizing that she could get a lot of food, she went a little crazy and had to get a taxi to fit all of what she bought. The poor driver was sitting in the seat with packages of meat spilling forward into his lap.

“Ho-ly fuck,” Bucky said and stared at the taxi driver who looked like he was three seconds from just driving off if they didn’t get all their stuff out soon. “Steve, Sarah, go back in and watch the kids and the animals. I’ll get all the stuff.” He shook his head and headed to the cabby window, holding out some extra cash. “I’ll make quick work of it, man. Thanks for waiting.”

“Papa go bye-bye?” Christopher asked in confusion when he saw Bucky go outside. Steve and Sarah were able to effectively calm the kids down from their little level of excitement. Although, Diana was very curious about what was happening.

“You mother is crazy,” the driver said as he took the money. “The bottom of the car was almost scraping the goddamn road from the weight of the food. Who buys three full hams?”

“Yeah, well, she’s Irish. She’s like to stock up on food when she can. And our meals tend to be really large anyway. This whole car of food will last us about four days.” Bucky gave a little sympathetic smile to the driver. He must have had a tough time dealing with all Sarah’s bags. “I appreciate you driving her home, though. Other cabbies might have passed her by.”

“I would’ve if I’d known how much she was bringing. The old bat waved me down and said she left
‘just a few things’ in the store. Just a few things, my ass.” He was about as annoyed as he was astounded at the sheer amount of food she stuffed in the car. When Bucky finally got everything out, the driver gave him a wave. “Merry Christmas, man.” And then he drove off.

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Bucky stood in the snowy grass with piles of bags surrounding him. He sighed and shook his head and started hauling it all in saying, “Sarah, I hope there’s another fridge in one of these bags because we won’t have any room for all of this stuff in ours right now.”

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“Bucky Rogers-Barnes, It’s December. Our backyard is our new fridge,” Sarah said in a matter-of-fact tone. “And you can expect plenty more where that came from. I plan on using my all-you-can-shop this month to get us enough non-perishables for at least a year and to stock the shelter for just as long.”

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“Okay, well, Sarah Rogers, don’t expect me to help you pull Diana off your backyard hams when she goes out to pee,” Bucky said back. “But I do think stocking up the shelter will be a good idea. I can see about getting them a second fridge too. There might be room in the budget.”

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“That’s what I’ve got Steve around for,” she answered smartly, patting her son’s shoulder.

“Whatever we would’ve spent on food will afford us a pretty good used fridge,” Steve said. “And that way maybe we can separate the living area into two spaces in the future, like older people and younger people or men and women. With two fridges, they can have their own separate spaces.”

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Bucky agreed with a little nod and started putting food into categories of frozen, refrigerated, and cupboard food. “Sarah, do you think you got enough cracker boxes?” Bucky asked, pointing at the pile of close to fifteen different cracker boxes on the table.

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“Give me all the sarcasm you want. You’ll be thanking me when you realize how much you won’t need to spend on groceries for the foreseeable future,” she said as she scooped up Christopher into her arms because he wouldn’t stop calling out for his nana.

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“I am grateful. I promise. I’m just amazed by the amount of crackers you bought. I don’t think we will eat this much before they go bad.” Bucky held up a box of some fancy black pepper garlic cracker. “I mean, who is going to eat this one? I don’t like garlic and you and Steve aren’t big fans of black pepper.”

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“I have a few friends that like those ones, so I’ll be bringing that to them the next time I go over,” she said. “I may be a food-hoarder now but I’m not a food-waster.” Sarah nodded.
Steve shook his head. “You’ll never win with my mom, Buck. I’ve had to learn that the hard way.”

Bucky didn’t consider himself quite as competitive or stubborn as the two Rogers’ but he did like to win sometimes. “Yeah, well, I’ll win one day,” Bucky muttered with a shrug and handed an apple to Adriana to munch on. “So, are we having a feast tonight for Ya-Ya’s birthday dinner?”

“Baby, you can win against me... sometimes,” Steve said with a guilty smirk because he knew he was stubborn. “We definitely are,” he added. “I was going to originally have it be just the family. But if you want to invite Clint and Nat over, since we have all this extra food to spare. Hell, even Tim and Richard. And Sam and Mary. Oh, man, it’s going to snowball - we can’t invite just one couple and not the others.”

“Okay, Steve, Honey,” Bucky said, hands up to stop him for a second. His head was still hurting and, while he was grateful that Sarah brought home so much food, it was kind of adding another stressor to him trying to figure out what to do with all of it. “First of all, I’m not certain if Tim and Richard are an official thing yet. Second, we can’t possibly have the eight of us plus two animals plus the six of them all in the kitchen to eat. That’s going to be way too many. It worked last time when we had the kids all downstairs but I don’t think we could manage fourteen people and Diana all crowded around the table.”

Steve pouted. “I think you’re going to have to make us a nice, big table for when we have friends over. Or when we have more kids.”

Adriana appeared seemingly out of nowhere and tugged on Steve’s pant leg. “Aunt Becca says no more babies right now,” she reminded - also because she wanted to have her parents’ attention as much as possible.

“I know. I’ll work on something, I guess,” Bucky said tiredly and hoisted Sarah May up from the ground and into his arms. “What do you want to do for her birthday? Because for Christopher’s we had our friends over but it was only four of them then. And we only had two babies. But if you really want to, we can maybe just have some people eat in the living room?”

“No, it’s okay... Ya-Ya doesn’t like big fusses so we may as well keep today quiet for her sake. But maybe once we get a bigger table going, we can have bigger dinner parties.” Steve directed his attention to Adriana and kissed her head. “Don’t worry, Peanut, we won’t have any more babies for a while,” he promised.

Bucky nodding and rested his cheek on Sarah May’s head carefully. He loved his babies so much. And he was so happy it was Sarah May’s first birthday. He was just feeling overwhelmed. Whether it was merited to think like this or not, Bucky had sort of subconsciously taken on the role of the head of the house. He was the one who was working and the one who was in charge of the finances.
and he tended to be the one who had to refocus Steve when he had huge ideas he wanted to do that just weren’t going to work. Something inside him knew it wasn’t fair to assume that he was the leader now - especially since Steve did all the work of being a stay-at-home dad and tending to the kids, cooking, and most of the housework - but that’s how he felt.

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Steve noticed that look in Bucky’s eyes but he didn’t understand what was bothering him, so Steve kissed him gently. “Hey, Love. Would you like to have some cuddle time with Sarah May while me and my mom start sorting out dinner?” he suggested. “I’m sure our little girl will love having some special time with her pop.”

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“Uh, yeah, sure,” Bucky mumbled and looked to Steve for a second. “But I still need to take the kids out to the store for a bit. Even if I don’t get anything else that I was thinking about, we did promise Adriana a new toy today. And you needed them out of the house for a little while anyway.”

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“You can still go to the store. There’s plenty of time before dinner. But now I’ve got so many options, I may not go with my original plan. You’ve got at least a good hour to relax before you have to think about going shopping with our beautiful kids.” Sarah May snuggled up against her papa’s chest.

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Bucky kissed his daughter and held her close so she could feel safe and warm. “You can nap if you want to, Ya-Ya,” Bucky said and brushed her curls back from her eyes. “Okay, Baby, I will put on Becca’s ocean tape for the kids and sit with them for a bit.” They really liked the documentaries that Becca had about animals or the earth.

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Sarah May cuddled with her papa and had a peaceful nap until Adriana came in to snuggle too. It woke her up but Sarah May didn’t mind since Adriana was quiet. Sarah into the room after a while and said, “Steve says that he’s going to start cooking soon. Do you want me to help get the little ones dressed to go out?”

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“Yes, thank you,” Bucky said and got up with the birthday girl still clinging to him. “If you will help Adriana, I’ll get the babies. Christopher made a mess of all the clothes and things and I haven’t cleaned it up yet. So, I’ll have to take care of that while I dress them.” He sighed and gave Sarah a pat on the shoulder before heading upstairs.

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“Don’t worry about cleaning up. You get the babies dressed and I’ll clean their nursery while you take them out,” Sarah said back as he walked away. She loved playing an active role in the kids’ lives, even if it meant cleaning up their messes. She took Adriana to her room and picked out a cute outfit for her to wear. She helped her get dressed and then bundled her up warmly for the outing. “You be a good girl for your papa, Okay? I’m sure you will be anyway, but your nana always has to make sure.”
“Nana, I’ll be good,” Adriana promised, moving her arms a little in her big puffy coat, looking like a purple marshmallow. “Papa said I could get a new toy.” She shuffled out of her room and to the nursery with Sarah following behind her. “Papa! Nana got me ready,” she said and then looked up at her. “Would you like a new toy? I can pick you one.”

Sarah smiled lovingly down at her granddaughter. “That’s very sweet of you, but I don’t need any toys. What I would like is for you to show me whichever toy you picked out at the store today, alright? Nana loves hearing about your day.” She kissed Adriana’s cheek and then walked over to Bucky. “Do you have everything handled here? Anything else I can do to help?”

Bucky had managed to get the babies both dressed and sitting in their cribs to wait. He had started to clean up what he could and also found some of Diana’s dog treats in the closet where it looked like she had decided to make a little nest and hoard things. “No, I’m okay. I’m going to take them to the store and then I’ll be back once Steve is done cooking. Are you sure you don’t need anything?”

“No, Papa. ‘Dat’s’ doggy’s,” Christopher corrected from his crib as Bucky cleaned out Diana’s hoard of stuff. Clearly, she had witnesses to her little habit.

Sarah smiled and shook her head. “I’m sure,” she said. “Stay warm. It’s cold out there. And don’t be too late. I don’t want our birthday girl tired out too soon.”

Bucky gathered all his kids and got Sarah May and Christopher in a double stroller with Adriana walking close beside them. They were out for a while, going to a few stores and then briefly to the park so Adriana could feed some old bread to the winter birds. By the time they got back, Adriana was tiredly waddling into the house, clutching to a plush dinosaur that was about three-fourths her size. Christopher was, thankfully, asleep and snuggling his new toy. And Sarah May was happily, quietly babbling to Bucky the best that she could about whatever was on her mind. “Steve, Baby, we’re back,” Bucky said softly once they were inside.

“Perfect timing! I just put the bread in the oven, dinner will be ready in about thirty minutes,” Steve called out from the kitchen. He walked over to greet his family and gasped when he saw Adriana with her new toy. “Wow, Peanut! Your papa really treated you to such a nice toy!”

Adriana was so sleepy from their day that she could only muster a little smile and a nod. Bucky helped her out of her coat and let Steve work on getting the babies out of the stroller. “We had a pretty reasonable day out,” Bucky informed Steve. “They actually behaved really well in the toy store and Christopher didn’t try to get out of the stroller too many times. I was flirted with by a couple ladies at the cafe when I was getting coffee. So, that was interesting.”
“I can see why you were flirted with,” Steve said as he ran a hand over Bucky’s back. “You’re a gorgeous man and it’s always a turn on to see someone being a good parent. What did they say to you?” he asked out of curiosity.

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Bucky chuckled and gave Steve a quick kiss before pulling back again to take off his coat. “They said ‘Oh, your kids are so adorable.’ So, I thanked them and they asked where their mother was. I told them they didn’t have a mother and then I got simultaneous remarks of, ‘Oh?’ with sly grins to match.”

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Steve laughed. “Already jumping into your non-existent wife’s place,” he said with an amused huff. He sidled closer to Bucky and moved to kiss his neck a few times but Sarah May started to whine quietly when her dad was stealing her pop’s attention from her.

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Bucky hummed at the warm, gentle kisses from Steve. But their daughter wanted him and it was her birthday so he pushed Steve back just the slightest bit. “Sorry, Baby. Ya-Ya wants me right now. And it is her birthday. But, tonight, once everyone is asleep, you can pick up from here, okay?”

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Steve pouted but he couldn’t get upset when their baby girl wanted some love. “Papa,” Sarah May said then snuggled against his chest.

“She’s such a little cuddle bug,” Steve said. “I’m going to go check on the bread and set the table.”

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Bucky snuggled his daughter and whispered to her in as much Hebrew as he could manage to tell her how important she was to him. It wasn’t long until dinner was all set on the table and they were ready to eat. Bucky had himself situated between Christopher and Sarah May because Christopher kept trying to push his sister around. He was getting upset that she was getting more attention than him. “Christopher, you need to calm down. You’re not going to get cake if you keep this up.”

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Adriana may have been a little upset over Sarah May getting all the attention, but she had her new dinosaur plushie to distract her. “He’s getting worse with his temper tantrums,” Becca said with a bit of disapproval. “Is he going to grow out of it or is it something he has to be taught to stop?” Christopher threw his spoon on the floor with a big pout when Bucky used his not-happy tone with him.

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Bucky sighed and rubbed his eyes before picking up the spoon and setting it away from his son. “I’m not sure. We are working on it. He’s almost two. The ‘terrible two’s’ isn’t just a joke. You and Lilly both went through it. I’m guessing he is going to just be difficult this year and hopefully, he will even out.”

“Spoon! Papa! Spoon!” Christopher yelled and reached out as far as he could to try to get the spoon.
Sarah May’s lower lip jutted out at the constant yelling and her eyes started to tear up. Steve quickly grabbed the spoon to calm Christopher down before Sarah May would get upset more. “I’ve been trying to get him to be more patient. But asking a toddler for patience is like asking the sun to stop shining. It just won’t happen,” Steve said.

“Even the sun is hidden behind clouds sometimes,” Becca muttered and stared at Christopher for a second.

“Yeah, well, he’s a baby, not a planet. The same rules don’t always apply,” Bucky said back with an exasperated sigh. “Bean, please, just be calm for a couple more hours on your baby sister’s birthday. Please.”

“The sun is a star, not a planet,” Becca corrected under her breath.

Christopher waggled his spoon at his dad as he squirmed in his high chair. “No, Papa, play. Playtime.” Steve looked conflicted on what to do and turned to his mom for help.

“I would give him exactly what he wants. Sit him in his pen and let him play on his own. He’ll realize soon enough that the rest of his family is having a better time than he is,” Sarah said.

Bucky ignored Becca and looked from Sarah to Steve and then nodded to his husband. “Yeah, sure. Let’s try that,” he said and got Christopher out of his high chair. “Steve, you want to take him? Ya-Ya has been trying to get more noodles from me for about five minutes. She’s getting pretty grumpy as it is with Christopher making so much noise.”

“Sure.” Steve felt a little bad about isolating their son but they were only a room away. He stood up and picked up their son so he could carry him into the playpen in the living room. “Alright, Bean. You’re going to have to play on your own over here because you’re being rude,” he said. “When you behave yourself, you can come back and have fun with Ya-Ya and your aunts and your nana.”

Christopher seemed far too distracted by his toys to really care that his dad left to go back to dinner. He would realize soon enough that he was alone and then he would whine to get out but for now he was satisfied. “Okay, Steve,” Bucky started when he came back. “Should we do Sarah May’s presents while Christopher isn’t in here to try to take them from her?”

“Definitely,” Steve said. He had a sad look on his face because Christopher wasn’t with the rest of the family but it was definitely better to not have a screaming, angry toddler around during present time. “Are you ready to open up your presents, Sweet Pea?” he asked his littlest daughter gently. He kissed her cheek. “And then we can have cake!”
“Yay, cake!” Bucky said happily to his daughter so she would get the idea that it was exciting. “Okay, let’s start with some of the fun ones since you aren’t going to really care about the clothes you’re getting.” He grabbed a squishy present and handed it to the baby. “Here we go, Baby. Can you open it?”

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Sarah May grinned happily when her papa used his excited voice with her. She looked curiously at the present on her tray and carefully picked it up. “Who?” she asked. “Papa, who?” She pulled lightly at the paper and gasped when it tore. After a little while, and some help from Bucky, she got the hint and unwrapped the plush doll. She ooh’d and hugged it close.

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“Oh, look! Look, she loves it.” Bucky said, pleasantly surprised about how his normally mild-mannered daughter’s face lit up. “Steve, she likes it.” Sarah May was so enamored with the plushie that she sort of ignored the other presents that her dads were trying to give her. “Maybe we should just open them for her. We can make a pile of her toys so she can see them later.”

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Sarah May smiled at Bucky as she waved the new toy around. She seemed to really like soft things even though she usually ended up playing with blocks because that’s what Christopher wanted. “Can I open up her presents for her?” Adriana asked. “I like opening up stuff.”

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“Yeah, Peanut, of course,” Bucky said and handed her a few that he knew were just clothes. He wanted to open the toys so he could show them to Sarah May. “Adriana, Baby, have we told you how we got Sarah May? It’s a good story. I’m sure your daddy would love to tell you.”

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“Did you get her from the kid’s home like me?” Adriana asked.

Steve shook his head. “Nope. We got Sarah May in a very special way almost a year ago. Your pop and I were still very sad over losing your little brother, Grant. I thought that God didn’t want us to have kids anymore. But, one night, I got a call from Father Frank asking me to come down to the church. As it turns out, a little baby girl was left at the door of the church and he wanted to know if we could open our home to her.” Steve looked to their birthday girl and smiled. “Not only did God want us to have more babies, but he wanted us to have a home of different faiths. One of your Grandpa’s friends helped us find a professor who knew where Sarah May came from. That’s how we know she’s Jewish and that’s why your pop speaks some Hebrew to her.”

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Adriana nodded and looked to Sarah May. She was familiar with the concept of people leaving babies on the doorstep. It had happened a few times while she was at the home and she overheard the adults talking about it. “What’s Jewish mean? Am I Jewish?” she asked and looked down at herself and then to her sister to look for anything glaringly different.

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Steve held back his laughter when he watched Adriana compare herself to her sister. “No, Honey, you’re not Jewish, as far as we know,” he explained. “We know where she comes from, so we want
her to know the culture that her mommy and daddy came from. Culture means what kind of traditions a group of people have and things like that.”

“So, why’s Papa say things to her that I don’t get?” Adriana wondered. She had been working with Steve to learn sign language and they were both improving but she wasn’t sure why she wasn’t learning Hebrew too. “I want her to talk to me too. I want to speak like her,” she said, thinking Sarah May was only learning Hebrew and not English.

“Sarah May can still talk to you, Peanut. She’s going to learn English and sign language just like you and Christopher,” Steve said. “But if you want to learn Hebrew, too, so you can share her culture, then I’m sure your papa won’t mind. I’m okay with that.”

Bucky nodded and reached to give Adriana a kiss on her forehead. “Of course, you can learn it too, Peanut, if you want to. I’m still working on learning, but I can teach you what I know,” Bucky said and looked back to Sarah May. “Or, if you want to learn a different language, you can. We can see about some classes for kids to teach Spanish or French or something.”

“Some of the kids at the home ‘spoke’ Spanish,” Adriana said. “How hard is it to learn Spanish?”

Steve was a bit nervous to get them classes outside of the home but he didn’t think it was a bad idea. Having them get classes outside of school would let them learn how to study with kids other than their siblings. But he really wanted to do homeschooling only for as long as he could.

Bucky gestured with his hand vaguely as he said, “They spoke Spanish, Adriana. Not ‘spaked’.” He knew she got a little upset sometimes when she was corrected but he also wanted to get her to learn the right words so he figured it was better just to do it. “I think learning Spanish would be pretty easy. You are just a kid and still working on English and sign language so I think adding another language wouldn’t be too hard.”

“No, Papa, it’s ‘spaked’. You’re supposed to add ‘E-D’ at the end when you already did it,” Adriana said stubbornly, a little annoyed by the correction. She really was a little extra sensitive to having her grammar corrected. “Maybe I should learn Spanish and not English anymore. Then no one will tell me how to talk,” she added, voice louder and grumpier.

Bucky looked to Steve and then squatted down by Adriana so he was looking up at her in her chair. “Adriana, please don’t raise your voice at me,” he said firmly but not harshly. “It is ‘spoke’. Some words don’t have ‘E-D’ when you already did them. Sometimes it’s different. I only tell you when it’s wrong because I want you to get better at it. And any teacher you might have to learn Spanish will do the same thing.”
Adriana looked a little hurt when Bucky was firm with her. She didn’t like being in trouble but, unlike Christopher, she knew that she was in trouble because of something she did instead of thinking that her parents were unreasonable. She also took any sort of scolding a bit too hard. Adriana got quiet and didn’t say anything for a little while but then asked, “Can I go to my room now?”

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Bucky sighed quietly and brushed Adriana’s hair back from her face. He knew he had made her sad but he also knew she would bounce back quickly. He would just let her have some time and then talk to her later to make sure she knew he wasn’t angry with her. “Yes, Peanut. Tell your sister ‘happy birthday’ and give your Daddy a hug then you can go to your room for a while.”

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Adriana slid out of her chair. “Happy birthday, Ya-Ya,” Adriana said half-heartedly. She went over to give Steve a hug.

Steve kissed the top of her head and whispered, “Your papa and I love you lots. We’ll save some cake for you.” He frowned with concern as Adriana went upstairs.

Once she was out of earshot, Lilly crossed her arms. “She’s so dramatic. She gets that from Steve’s side of the family,” she half-joked.

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“Can it,” Bucky mumbled and shot his sister a look. “You’re not so good on taking correction yourself. Matter-of-fact, I don’t think anyone in this family is. She’s just getting tired of being told she’s saying things wrong.” He was getting pretty frustrated at how the day turned out. It was pretty amazing that Sarah brought home all the food that she did and it was nice that Sarah May was happy with her new toys. But Christopher acting out and Adriana walking off made him pretty upset. He also didn’t think Steve was giving much input on how he was handling their kids and Bucky just didn’t want him to say anything later about how Bucky should have handled it differently.

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Sarah May was starting to get a little bored of her new doll and started wiggling to try and get Bucky’s attention again. Steve could tell that Bucky was getting worked up, so he quickly moved to pick up their youngest and passed her over to Bucky. “She probably wasn’t corrected at the orphanage like that and it can be a little embarrassing for her. She gets upset at me, too,” Steve reassured, giving Bucky a kiss on the cheek. “She’s going to be fine soon enough.”

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Bucky held Sarah May close and rocked her gently. He knew Steve was probably right. The orphanage probably just did their best but having so many kids around would have been difficult for a structured learning environment. He just hoped she realized that he didn’t say it to be mean. It was just to help her. “It’s okay, Steve. Thanks,” Bucky said quietly, trying to dismiss the whole thing so he didn’t dwell on it. “Let’s have cake and then I think it’s bath time for the kids.”

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Sarah got up so she could get the cake out and spare Bucky and Steve from having to juggle yet another task. “It’s also common for kids who didn’t have a stable environment to have low self-confidence,” she said. “She’s only lived here for a few months and she needs time to adjust before
she’s able to handle criticism in a healthy way.”

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“Uh-huh, I understand,” Bucky murmured and rested his head against Sarah May’s. He kissed her curly hair and waited to be handed a small slice of cake and a fork to feed her with. “Okay, Sweet Pea, birthday cake time. But this is all you can have and then it’s bath time.” He looked to Steve as he was helping pass cake to the girls. “Should we let Christopher have cake or no?”

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Steve turned to look at their son, who was standing at the gate of his playpen, watching them from afar to see what they were doing. As soon as Steve locked eyes with their son, Christopher waved. “Daddy,” he called over.

Steve walked over to scoop up their little boy and cradled him on the way over to putting him in his high chair. “Isn’t it so nice to be with your family, Bean?”

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The rest of the evening seemed to go by pretty much without incident. Christopher behaved and ate his cake without getting too messy and all the kids sat through their baths pretty well. Adriana was the only one who was still upset by bedtime. “Steve, I’ve tried everything to get her to be happy again. She’s still so upset with me,” Bucky whispered to his husband a few feet away from Adriana’s door. “Can you please go try?”

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Steve felt bad for Bucky and he nodded his head. “Sure thing, Babe,” he promised. He walked into Adriana’s room and took a seat on the edge of her bed. “Hey, Peanut,” He said gently. “You want to snuggle with your daddy for a bit? We missed you tonight. There’s still some cake for you that you can have tomorrow.”

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Adriana was curled up in her bed with one big turtle under her arm and the side of her face mashed into her pillow. She wore a big pout and seemed to pretend not to hear Steve for a bit. But after a few moments, she sat up and wiggled over to lean against Steve. “Can I have cake for breakfast?”

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Steve worried at first that she was too upset at them but he smiled when she gave in and snuggled. He wrapped an arm around her and kissed her head. “You can’t have cake for breakfast, but you can have cake after breakfast,” he said. “How come you didn’t want to have cake with the family today, Peanut?”

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Mumbling something indiscernible, Adriana burrowed further into Steve’s side and stayed there for a while. She didn’t cry but she did tear up a few times before eventually emerging again to gasp in air softly and whisper, “Papa thinks I’m stupid.” She rubbed her eyes and squeezed her turtle harder and pet her hand down its soft back.
Steve was quick to try to dry her tears. “Oh, Peanut. Papa does not think you’re stupid.” He cuddled her closer and nuzzled the top of her head. “You’re still learning, Kiddo, he was just trying to help. Just because you made a mistake talking doesn’t mean you’re stupid.”

“He yelled at me,” Adriana said with a sniffle and looked up at Steve. Bucky hadn’t really yelled, he wasn’t much of a yeller at all. But to a child, even firm tones could come across as anger. Adriana was used to being in the orphanage and pretty much being ignored unless she did something really bad. Here, however, she had two dads, a nana, and two aunts watching her near constantly. She was still getting used to everything she did having corrections or consequences or something like that.

“He didn’t yell, Peanut, he was only correcting you,” Steve said. He pulled her onto his lap and kissed her cheek. “We’re going to correct you if you make a mistake talking, but that’s so you can get even smarter than you already are. Turtle scientists have to know so much! And it’ll be easier to read and understand if you know how to say all the right words,” he said. “I bet if I called your papa in here right now he’s going to agree that you’re so smart.”

Even though she was doing really well in her new home, it was still somewhat of a transition period for her. She was comfortable in her family and she trusted her dads more than anything. But from time to time, she wanted some peace and quiet and some moments alone. She struggled a little in Steve’s lap to adjust, not wanting to be held so much at the moment. “I want to sleep now, please.”

Steve’s heart sunk a little when he failed to get Adriana to feel better about herself. “Alright, Peanut,” He said. Steve let her go so she could wiggle her way under the blankets. “Do you want me to get Diana to come in here so you can cuddle with her? Or do you want to sleep with just your turtles?” he asked as he stood up.

Adriana thought for a moment and then moved some turtles over to make a place for the dog. “Yes, ‘turtles’ and Diana,” she said and gingerly pulled her blanket up over her shoulders and gave a little sigh. “I love you, Daddy,” she added as a little apologetic afterthought. “Night, night.” She was sorry for leaving family dinner but she also needed some time by herself.

Steve tucked her in and kissed her forehead. “I love you too, Peanut. Hopefully, your papa and I can make tomorrow better.” He called in Diana and got the dog settled before heading out to catch up with Bucky. “She was still down in the dumps, but I think she just needs a little space.”

Bucky had waited out in the hall for Steve. He hadn’t really heard anything they said but he could tell from Steve’s face that it didn’t really go well. “Should I have just let her be?” he asked, his voice heavy and gruff, frustrated at himself for making Adriana so upset on a special day like Sarah May’s birthday.
“Yeah. I think she’s a little overwhelmed. She went from having barely anyone giving her attention to a houseful of people guiding her,” Steve observed. “She feels like you raised your voice at her, but I think she doesn’t know better and is a little sensitive right now. Tomorrow can be a better day.”

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“Should I go... should I go say anything to her?” Bucky asked tentatively. He just wanted her to be okay. He hated when any of his kids were upset at him for something like this. He used to get really mad at himself when he first got guardianship of the girls because he would often do something his parents wouldn’t have to discipline and it would backfire and cause a big scene with his sisters.

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Steve shook his head. “If you want, maybe you can sneak a little ‘I love you’ note under the door. But I think she wants to be alone. She didn’t even want to cuddle with me,” he said. He cupped Bucky’s face and drew him in for a kiss. “Don’t feel too bad, Buck. If she doesn’t learn now, it’s only going to get harder.”

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Bucky nodded and wrapped his arms around Steve. Adriana might not want to cuddle but Bucky certainly did. “Okay, yeah, I might do that before she wakes up,” he said and gripped his hands in Steve’s shirt. “The babies are asleep. The girls are watching a movie and doing a puzzle. And your mom is doing something to prep dinner for tomorrow. Apparently, the roast needs to sit in the crockpot all night.”

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Steve leaned into Bucky’s chest and nuzzled his neck affectionately. “Do you want to talk to my mom at all about Adriana?” he asked. “She’s going to be a while with prepping and she may appreciate the company.” It would be nice to get her perspective on what a good plan to take would be.

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All Bucky really wanted to do was lay in bed and just stare at the ceiling. He didn’t feel good and his head hurt a bit and he was ready to fall asleep. But Steve probably had a good point and Sarah had more experience raising her one son his whole life than Bucky and Steve had yet with their kids. “Yes, sure. Let’s go ask her. You’re right. She might have good advice.”

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Steve took Bucky by the hand and walked him back down to the kitchen. Sarah was in the middle of swearing at the crockpot for giving her trouble and looked a bit embarrassed that they walked in on her in a moment without composure. “Oh... I apologize, I didn’t see you there,” she said primly.

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Bucky’s eyes flashed and he had to hide behind Steve a second so she wouldn’t see his big grin. He never saw her disgruntled or frustrated. She was the definition of decorum, in his eyes. It was pretty humorous to hear her swear. “Sarah, do you want me to help you?” he asked and gestured at the crockpot that used to belong to his mother. It was old but it was still doing its job. It was just a bit difficult to work with.
“Please,” Sarah said in a resigned voice. “I’ve never met anything so stubborn since my son.” She flicked the outside of the pot and stepped aside to give Bucky room to take care of it. Steve leaned his hip against the counter and nodded at Bucky as if to silently tell him to ask his mom a question.

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Bucky concentrated on the crockpot for a second and then looked over at Steve and gave him a look that he should ask Sarah instead. Bucky had a hard time going to her for help, occasionally. He tried to pretend he didn’t, but it just reminded him that he couldn’t ask his own parents. Also, he was focused on the crockpot right now too.

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Steve was mildly offended, but that was a conversation for another time. “Ma, what did you used to do when I was mad at you for something that wasn’t your fault?” he asked.

Sarah looked over and shrugged. “I’d try to make you understand and if it didn’t work, I’d try to not let it get to me too much. But it usually ate away at me until you were happy again.”

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Now that the conversation was opened up, Bucky felt comfortable enough to join in. He got the crockpot started and set the lid securely on top so it would heat all night. “I think I’m going to have a hard time learning to not let it get to me,” Bucky admitted as he turned back to face Sarah again. “Adriana is still sad about earlier. And I know I wasn’t mean to her but it feels like I fucked up.”

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Sarah gave Bucky a sympathetic glance. “Our kids have a magic power that makes us feel invincible but also as awful as you’ve ever felt. Our hearts lie in their care just as much as theirs lie in ours.” She reached out and squeezed Bucky’s shoulder. “You didn’t mess up. What you did was right, but she’s going to feel the way she feels and you have to let her come to her own senses sometimes.”

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Bucky nodded and reached to take Sarah’s other hand in his and give it a grateful squeeze. “I just worry so much. You know? I’ve been helping raise kids since Becca was born but I’ve never felt like I’ve figured out the right way to handle anything. I just feel like I’m going to ruin their lives.” It wasn’t anything he hadn’t said to Steve a thousand times. He was pretty open about his fears with him. He just knew it wasn’t getting any better as time went on.

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“Only a bad parent would think that they hold all the right answers to parenting and raising their children,” she said. “You are doing so well, Bucky. And I’m so proud of the person you’ve become for your family. Your children will see that, even if they don’t always show it.”

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Bucky nodded and tucked his hair behind his ears. He understood that Sarah was right. And he did believe her. It was just that he could do so well for a while and then one misstep or unforeseen outcome could cause him to doubt all of it. He sighed and pulled Sarah in for a hug. “Thank you,” he said and pulled back after a few seconds. “I think I just need reassurance from time to time.”
Sarah hugged her son-in-law back and gave him a kiss on the forehead. “Everyone does,” she said. “I would bother my coworkers all the time since I didn’t have my husband or my parents to talk to. I would write letters to my dad, but it would take weeks to get advice, so that never really gave me the timely solution that I needed.”

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Bucky wasn’t sure what it was but hearing Sarah talk about how alone she was with raising Steve made him well up with tears. He had been in a similar position with his sisters except that they were older than Steve had been when Sarah lost her husband. But Bucky understood the feeling of not having someone to go to for help so immediately. And he wished all the time that he could have his parents around to help him learn how to do this right. He was a young dad and so was Steve. There was so much they needed to know. Bucky sniffled and wiped his eyes, feeling far too emotional to really say anything else except a choked, “I’ll be in bed, Steve...” before he turned to leave.

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Steve frowned when he saw Bucky get upset. “I’ll be there soon, Buck,” he said softly, giving Bucky’s hand a squeeze. He would let him have a bit of space before he went to join him. He lingered in the kitchen with his mom for a bit before heading up to see Bucky “Hey, Babe. You alright?” he asked.

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Bucky’s initial thought when he went upstairs was to pull his photo album out and look at pictures of his parents. But he knew that would just make him more upset. He just wanted to move past it for now and get some sleep. So instead, he just laid down on the bed and stared up at the ceiling, trying to drain any and all thoughts from his head. “I’ll be okay in a bit,” Bucky replied quietly, glancing over at Steve for a fleeting moment.

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Steve stripped down to his boxers and slid into bed with Bucky. He wrapped an arm around his middle and pulled his husband against his chest. “I’m sorry you’re having a rough night tonight, love,” he said gently. “Today was supposed to be a fun day and it kind of got mucked up, didn’t it? We have bad luck sometimes, but we also have been so blessed as well.”

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Bucky was more than happy to mold to Steve the second he got him close. He nestled his head in the crook of Steve’s neck as he took in a shaky breath. “I wish they were here,” he muttered and let real, big tears fall down his face. He just wanted his parents around too so he could ask their thoughts on everything as well as Sarah’s. It wasn’t even that he disagreed with what Sarah suggested, he just wished he could hear what Old George would have had to say about it. He probably would have wanted to try to have a deep discussion with Adriana about Bucky’s intentions in his teaching and inevitably bore her. That was his style.

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Steve held Bucky strongly against his chest and kissed the top of his head. “I know, Sweetheart,” he said. “I’m sorry that your parents aren’t here for you in person. But I know that you’d be making them proud every day. Your dad would have loved taking you and Christopher off to Seneca for the weekend just for some quality time with the boys. And I’m sure your Ma would have been fast friends with my mom. Although, that would be quite a lot of people in own house so I’m sure we
would all bicker from time to time.”

“They would have loved you and all our babies. It would have been perfect,” Bucky said softly, a little gasp on his lips. “They would still be in this house with the girls. But we would probably be at a new place because our apartment was too small anyway. Your mom would still live with us and the kids. It would be a challenge to keep my dad from spending all day at home with you and the babies while I’m at work. He wouldn’t want to be away from his grandchildren for longer than a day at a time.”

“I bet your dad would’ve been able to make Christopher calm even on his most hellish days,” he said. “Your dad seems like such a level-headed and calming person from all the stories you and other people have told me.” Steve pet his fingers through Bucky’s long hair. “Our kids have so many people who love them.”

That was definitely true. Old George never raised his voice and he was always quick to reassure his kids and get them calmed back down. Even after he got injured and had his disability, he was still the first one up out of his chair to go find the crying baby and fix the problem. “You two would have really gotten along. And he knew me so well, too. I think he would have liked being able to pass along his stories and knowledge and advice about me to you. He definitely would have been a big help when you were trying to get me to stop drinking.”

“I would’ve loved to be the new keeper of adorable baby Bucky stories,” he said. “Sometimes I’m a little jealous that you don’t have a secret older sibling to give me those kinds of stories,” he said. “I know how much you miss your parents and you know how much I’d love to have them here, but... you got through your drinking without them. Which means you’ll be able to face whatever challenge you have without them, too.”

Bucky shook his head and gave Steve a little kiss to hush him up. “Steve, I got through my drinking because of you. I wouldn’t have been able to be sober without you helping me and pushing me when I wouldn’t push myself. My dad got me through my cocaine problems and you got me through my alcohol problems. I wouldn’t have been able to kick either of those by myself.”

“I helped, but only you had the power to change,” he said. “I know that you would’ve been able to do it. I have so much faith in you as a person, as a father, as a husband... and you deserve every last ounce of that faith.” Steve drew Bucky in for a slow kiss so his mouth would be too occupied to argue with him.

Bucky would have argued too if it weren’t for how meaningful and warm the kiss was. He hummed against Steve and pushed him over on the bed a little so he could crawl over him just a bit. It was so cold out right now and the house wasn’t much better that Bucky couldn’t really get out from under the warm blankets. But he was going to lay on Steve as best as he could with what he had.
Steve held Bucky close and snuggled his husband until they both fell asleep. He loved him so fucking much and it broke his heart that he had to suffer through parenthood without his own mom or dad to ask for advice. Steve didn’t know what he would’ve done if he didn’t have his mom to go to for support and help. And it was a damned shame that their kids never got to meet them, either.
When it came time for Christmas Eve, Steve had managed to wrestle a collar onto Raphael that had jingle bells on it and Diana was wearing little antlers with a resigned look on her face. Steve had their little babies dressed as elves and Adriana was wearing a cute, red dress with white trim and a black belt to resemble Santa Claus. Dinner was cooking and Steve had a Christmas record playing to really set the mood. “Buck?” he called out from the kitchen. “Can you help me prepare the cookie dough?”

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Bucky had been trying his best to keep the animals and Christopher from taking ornaments off the tree. They specifically put baby-safe ornaments on the bottom half but he was still worried that something would happen and a glass one would shatter and hurt someone. “Becca, watch the tree, please,” Bucky muttered and tossed her the box of fudge as incentive before heading over to Steve. “What kind of cookies are you making?” he asked and looked around the kitchen that was full of food and, frankly, kind of a wreck.

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“Christopher, those aren’t toys!” Becca scolded as she stole back an ornament from her nephew, who went running to his nana instead.

“Sugar cookies,” Steve said. “With extra vanilla flavor. I’d have done it, but this turkey has become a bit of a nightmare to cook. I haven’t cleaned up at all and Tim’s going to be here any minute with Richard.”

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“Okay, Baby, I’ll help with the cookies. Do you want me to ask Lilly to come clean up?” Bucky slid up behind Steve and wrapped his arms around him in a big hug. He kissed his neck and hummed happily. “I love you, Steve. You’re a fantastic cook, too. So, I’m sure all of this will be perfect.” He decided that in light of how stressed Steve seemed about his kitchen - and the fact that it was Christmas Eve - he should probably not complain about how much he wished Richard wouldn’t show up.

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Steve scoffed and stared at the turkey and then his piles of green beans and potatoes that were steaming slowly. “It’s never going to be perfect. God, I need more time. And I really want this to be the best Christmas ever. Adriana hasn’t had a proper Christmas really and this one needs to be special. It’s her first one here with us! What if it’s not good?” Steve was getting more worked up every second. He just needed all his efforts to pay off in the end.

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“Hey, hey, Baby,” Bucky said and held up his hands to try to calm Steve down a bit. “Look at me,
Steve. It’s already perfect. It’s already everything it needs to be. Adriana’s going to be so excited to see Santa again and to have her presents in the morning. Trust me. This is perfect, Steve.” He let go of him and called Lilly in from the living room. “Steve, let Lilly at least start to clean up. She’s capable. Whatever she doesn’t do to your standard, you can fix. And, Lilly, you can pick your reward for helping. Either an extra present to open tonight or you can lick the frosting bowl for the cookies. Something.”

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Steve pouted. He liked Lilly and he trusted her with certain things. But domestic things were not on that list. He looked over to his younger sister-in-law, who scoffed at the look on his face. “I cleaned my room last week. I can clean up a few dirty dishes,” Lilly said with a wave of her hand. “And I’m totally licking the frosting bowl.”

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“See, Steve? She can do the dishes,” Bucky said and nudged her towards the pile in the sink. He then went to the recipe for the cookie dough and started putting it together as he said, “Baby, are you going to be able to enjoy yourself at all today or are you going to be too high-tension? Because I want you to have fun today. And this is the first task you’ve given me. I can handle some more, Steve.”

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Steve would believe that Lilly could do the dishes once he saw her actually complete the task. He started to stuff the turkey now that it was finally out of the oven. “I know you could handle more, but you were having fun with the babies and I didn’t want to take away any quality time from you.”

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“And that’s really nice of you, Steve. Thank you. But I also really want you to have a good time too. And if having my help will make that possible, then please, give me things to do.” Bucky looked up from his mixing bowl and locked eyes with Steve. He wasn’t sure how else he could help him be less stressed today. “Everyone is going to be so happy today. You don’t have to get too worked up about all of it.”

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Steve leaned over and kissed Bucky’s cheek. “Thank you for trying to help,” he whispered. “When you’re done with the cookie mix, could you make sure the floor is swept one more time and then set the table with the Christmas-themed dishes? I bought them last year after they were discounted after the holidays. They should be in the back of the cabinet.”

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“Yes, Baby, of course,” Bucky agreed with a happy little smile, pleased to have gotten Steve to let up a little bit. “I think I know which ones you’re talking about.” He finished up the cookies soon enough and passed them off to Steve to be put in the oven. Then he swept the floor and set the table. It wasn’t a minute too soon, either, because there was a knock on the door then. “Santa is here!” Bucky called out as he opened the door for Tim and Richard.

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This was the first time Adriana beat Diana to the door. “Santa is back? I want to see him!” she said excitedly as she gripped Bucky’s pant leg.


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Richard was dressed in a set of clean navy slacks and a police-issued black sweater with his precinct title on the chest. He looked like a cop trying to fit in - which was sort of how Bucky saw him anyway. “Richard,” Bucky said firmly and mechanically extended his hand to him. “Couldn’t have at least been Santa’s elf or something?” he asked and watched Adriana drag Tim to the living room, his bag of presents slung over his shoulder.

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“I’d rather not invite trouble. Nobody will give Santa trouble, but the elf is a magnet for it.” Richard looked over at Tim as he sat on the couch and pulled Adriana onto his lap to talk to her. “He’s so good with kids,” Richard admired. “I’m so grateful you introduced me to him. I want to be better with kids, but I’m still kind of new to it. Maybe for Easter I’ll have to dress up as the Easter Bunny. Give this whole thing a try, maybe.”

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“Please, god, don’t do that,” Bucky requested as he shoved his hands in his pockets. Steve was still working in the kitchen which meant he had to be at least somewhat amicable with Richard. He already wasn’t doing a great job at it. “Tim is a great guy. And he... he likes you a lot. I don’t know what you plan on this relationship being but I know he’s already really invested.”

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Richard seemed a little embarrassed when Bucky shot down the idea. He was genuinely trying even though his attempts were coming up short. “I want to ask him to move in with me after the holidays,” he admitted. “But I’m afraid he’ll feel like we’re moving too fast. And I don’t want to give his ex any more reasons to make sure his kids don’t visit him.”

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Bucky nodded and reached out to squeeze Richard’s arm as a sign of temporary truce. “Well, she legally has to let him have them every other weekend. He is still working on getting Monday’s added, but I don’t know if he is going to win that. But, I wouldn’t worry so much about it. She’s at a bit of a disadvantage with this new baby. Tim’s lawyer is sighting her split attention between the older kids and the baby as reason to give Tim more time.” He shook his head and leaned against the wall, still watching Adriana and Christopher climbing around Tim. “I think that if you asked him to move in with you, he would do it. He would probably actually be very excited about that.”

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“I know, but I still worry. I know how much his kids mean to him and I don’t want to risk any of that on him.” Richard laughed as Christopher tugged on Tim’s beard, almost causing the ruse to be lost. “I’m going to wait until after Christmas,” he decided. “He’s already worried enough making sure he gives his kids a good one.” Richard glanced towards the kitchen and asked, “Should I go help Steve?”
“If you want to attempt to help him, you can,” Bucky said and gestured towards the kitchen. “He’s a little particular about his kitchen but maybe he can put you to work doing something.” He moved over a bit so Richard could pass and then he grabbed his shoulder for a quick second to stop him. “Try not to stress him out any more than he is already. Got it?” He was joking around but there was a sliver of a threat to his voice as if he wanted to intimate him a little if he could.

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Bucky successfully intimidated Richard out of helping, but he also wasn’t such a pushover that he wasn’t going to stick up for himself. And he got the feeling Bucky was still worried he was going to hit on his husband or something. “Listen, I know we got off on the wrong foot in the beginning, but I don’t know what else to do to make you see me differently.” His feathers were effectively ruffled as he pulled his shoulder away and went to help Tim manage the kids. Despite Richard’s best attempts, Christopher wasn’t really having it.

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It wasn’t like Bucky was blind to how much of an ass he was to Richard. But he had made this bed already and he didn’t want to admit that he didn’t hate him as much as he used to. He didn’t want to admit that he was actually glad that Richard was dating Tim and making him happy. He didn’t want to officially forgive him. But it was Christmas and he really needed to lay off, if only for Tim. He just really liked holding grudges. Bucky sighed and popped back to the kitchen quickly. “Hey, Babe, are you almost done? You should go watch your babies and Santa. They are having so much fun.”

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Bucky happened to come in when Steve had his hand all the way inside the roasted turkey, looking like he was fisting the damned thing. “I lost my wedding ring while stuffing the turkey,” he whined. Everything else looked ready - the table was set and the food was out and waiting to be eaten. The only thing left was the turkey.

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Bucky blinked and stared at the scene in front of him. It would have been comical if it weren’t such a problem. “Oh, Steve...” Bucky mumbled with a sigh and came over to his husband slowly. “Okay, Baby, are you sure it’s not just somewhere else in the kitchen? Maybe it came off when you washed your hands. Maybe it fell and one of the kids picked it up. Are you sure you didn’t take it off when you started cooking?”

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“I never take it off,” Steve said. “My ring is definitely up this turkey's ass.” He pulled his hand out with a grimace and passed Bucky the bird. “Should I just cut it open? I don’t want to ruin the presentation of the food, but I don’t want it at the risk of someone eating my wedding ring.” He went to the sink and washed his hands off. “God, this is a nightmare. It shouldn’t be. But it is. I can’t wait to sit down and eat and relax,” he complained, burying his face in Bucky’s shoulder.

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“First of all,” Bucky started and turned around to face Steve. “Give me a kiss and take a few deep breaths.” He pulled Steve close into a hug and brushed his fingers through his hair before giving him a gentle kiss. “It’s going to be okay. You have an entire bowl of extra stuffing. So, here’s what we are going to do. Let’s cut the turkey up and put it all in a heap on a fancy plate. Then we can scoop out the stuffing with an ice cream scoop and make and circle of stuffing around the turkey. It’ll look
like how they present food at a fancy restaurant.”

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Steve’s look of complete distress was washed away when Bucky laid out the plan, which was a pretty damned good plan. “Right… Yeah, that’s actually perfect. Let’s do that,” he agreed. He drew Bucky in for another kiss and started to slice up the turkey, already looking hopefully inside for his ring.

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Bucky stayed right by Steve the whole time as he did surgery on the turkey. He was watching closely to see if he spotted the ring. “You know, Babe, you should have called me in here before you started feeling inside the turkey. You know I’m better at fisting than you are, I might have been able to find it faster,” he joked and glanced up at Steve to make sure he wasn’t in so much stress that the joke just pissed him off instead.

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“Yeah, but you don’t fist my ass looking for treasure,” Steve snorted, smiling a little. He let out a great noise of relief when he finally found his ring packed deep into the stuffing. “Thank God!” he gasped. Steve crossed himself and sent up a little prayer. “From now on, this ring goes in my pocket when I cook.”

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Bucky chuckled and leaned over to kiss Steve’s cheek, grateful beyond belief that they found the ring quickly. “Get yourself cleaned up. I’ll do the stuffing,” he said and grabbed the ice cream scooper to start making round blobs of stuffing around the turkey. It wasn’t the most attractive looking dish but it would suffice. “How about when you cook, you give your ring to me, Love? You don’t usually let me cook with you so I’ll keep it safe.”

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“Well, we’re supposed to give our rings to each other when we’re mad. I don’t want to confuse being mad with needing to cook,” Steve said. “Don’t worry. I promise I won’t lose my ring in our food ever again.” Steve called everyone in for dinner once it was on the table. Santa had to excuse himself to go visit other houses and Tim came back a few minutes later.

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Bucky played it up when Tim came into the kitchen with a big laugh and, “Hey! Buddy! You made it. You just missed Santa. That’s too bad. Maybe next year, huh?” Adriana seemed to buy it and she said hello to her Uncle Tim without any sign that she had figured it out yet. “Steve spent all day cooking so I’m guessing this is going to be the best Christmas Eve meal any of us have ever had,” he added, trying to build Steve up a little after the ring fiasco.

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“Aw, man! I missed Santa? But I wanted to tell him what I wanted for Christmas,” Tim said in an overexaggerated huff, shaking his head. “Maybe next year,” he agreed. He took a seat and wrapped an arm around Richard.

“My stomach has been growling since I walked in because it all smelled so good,” Richard complimented. Steve blushed at that and settled down next to his husband, finally ready to relax.
Bucky tucked his hair behind his ears and looked around the table to make sure all his kids were present and those who needed high chairs were secured in them safely. “Go ahead and pray, Steve. Lilly and Richard both look like they might disintegrate if they don’t eat soon.” Bucky smiled over at Richard, hoping that his attempts at being friendly were coming across that way.

Steve made sure his prayer was quick so everyone would be able to dig in right away. “Papa,” Adriana said. “Is Santa going to come back later? He didn’t eat any of the cookies we made for him.”

“Well, Peanut, he’s got to go visit some other kids. But while you are asleep tonight, he will come back and eat the cookies and bring more presents,” Bucky said. “He won’t forget to eat the cookies. Don’t worry. He also said that you all get to open one present tonight. Just one. Tomorrow morning you can have the rest.”

Tim smiled fondly at Adriana. “Do you want to tell your dads what you asked Santa for Christmas? I heard it was a good one.” She shook her head shyly. Tim winked at Bucky to let him know that he had a good story to tell him later.

Bucky eyed Tim and then Adriana, wondering what she was so shy about asking for. If it was another dog, Bucky was going to need a lot of convincing first. “Well, Adriana, Santa might be able to get you whatever it was,” he assured her and split a dinner roll into bits for Sarah May to eat. He couldn’t believe that a year ago they got this beautiful baby girl. It felt like he had known all his kids for eons. “Steve, I don’t think Richard knows how we got all our babies, if you want to tell him about it.” He was trying to start a conversation with Richard, sure. But he also really just wanted to reminisce too.

Sarah May waved her hands excitedly as she saw Bucky get her food ready. “Well... first was Christopher. I was on a narco call to do a bust and we bagged these repeat offenders that’d been giving us a hard time for a while. But they left behind a little baby boy that wasn’t even hardly ten pounds and he was a couple months old at that time,” he said. “His next of kin didn’t want the responsibility, so she signed him over to me officially.” He turned to Christopher and playfully ruffled his hair. “Finders keepers.”

Bucky loved that when Steve talked about past cases or anything having to do with his time as an officer, he always spoke the way he would have then. He got to see him slip into that version of himself that was still so raw and familiar to him. He knew Steve missed that life.

Richard listened intently and nodded as Steve spoke. “I think I heard about that from someone. The guy socked Bertinelli in the mouth, right? Broke his nose and his jaw?”
Steve nodded. “That’s the one. He and his girl are serving a life term, so I packed up little Christopher into the police cruiser and took him home. He was quiet as a mouse and so tiny. I was afraid he’d grow up sick and timid, but all that worry was for nothing.” He smiled happily at his son. “Maybe you’ll find yourself a baby one day the same way. Once we got Christopher, we kind of... snowballed. It was nonstop babies after that.”

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“That’s kind of a miracle,” Richard said and looked at each of the kids in turn. He wasn’t going to say it out loud, but he wanted kids of his own. He hadn’t really brought it up with Tim yet. He wasn’t sure how he would feel about it since he already has his own kids. But Tim was ten years older than him and he might not want to do the entire family thing again. “Tim says you guys want a dozen kids. Is that true?”

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“It is,” Steve said. “Grant came next after Christopher and... It’s a bit of a sad story that I don’t want to tell right now. Sarah May came along soon after that. She was a baby left at our church and Father Frank there called us to take her in. That was an easy yes from us.” He tickled Sarah May’s foot. “I wouldn’t say no to a dozen kids, but I’d settle on nine, I think,” he said casually. “I love all of our little people in the house.”

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“Nine kids. That’ll be impressive. You’re going to run out of names.” Richard did know about Grant. He had gotten the low-down on the whole thing from Tim and Natasha both. Adriana, who had been patiently waiting for her daddy to get to her story, looked to him with big, pleading eyes. She wanted to be talked about and for Richard to call her a miracle too.

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“There’s plenty of good names out there. We’ll be fine,” Steve said with a big smile. “And that’s all the stories I have,” he said jokingly but when Adriana squirmed in her chair, he nodded like he just remembered. “I’m just kidding, Peanut. With Adriana, Bucky was volunteering at a kid’s home several months ago. One day he came back to me and says, ‘There’s this kid you have to meet. She’s so sweet and you’ll love her’. So, we took her to the aquarium and I knew he was right. She was the sweetest, smartest girl in the whole home. Her caseworker helped us through the process of adoption and not long after that, we were able to bring Adriana here.”

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Adriana nodded enthusiastically and looked to Richard with her big eyes as she said, “I finally got a family.” She looked over to Sarah who was sitting next to her and she leaned against her for a second before adding, “The other kids got mommies and daddies and I had to wait forever. But then I got two daddies and a nana and aunties and Christopher and Ya-Ya. And my ‘tuttles’.”

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“And Diana and Raphael,” Steve added with a smile. “We all love you so much.”

Lilly nodded her head. “Adriana became my favorite today. She asked Becca why reading was so important and I think Becca had an aneurysm.”

Richard smiled at Steve and Bucky’s family. “You two really are an inspiration. I would’ve never thought people like us could have normal sorts of family lives.”
“Of course,” Bucky said quickly, a little defensively, as if Richard weren’t gay and in the exact same position that he was in before he and Steve were married. He shook his head, softening as he reminded himself that they were very similar and Richard wasn’t a straight man trying to start something. “We can live wonderful, happy lives with our families just like everyone else. And, I know that if I got to have my perfect family - someone as tumultuous as me - then any other gay or lesbian couple can have their perfect family too.” Bucky knew that Richard knew a little bit about him and how he was a bit of a fuck-up for most of his life. So, he hoped the language conveyed that without clueing Adriana in to what he was getting at. He doubted she knew the word ‘tumultuous’. The word definitely went over Adriana’s head but she nodded anyway just so she could stick around in the conversation.

“My parents asked me if I was quitting being a police officer when I told them I was dating a man,” Richard said. “They thought that if I was gay, then I wasn’t able to do ‘masculine’ things anymore.”

Tim reached to grab Richard’s hand in his and he squeezed it tightly. He hadn’t met Richard’s parents yet. But he had gotten pretty upset after Richard told him what they said to him. “It’s not like you’re any different now than you were before you told them. You didn’t suddenly morph into a new person. You’re still Richard,” Tim said, eyes locked to his for a heavy moment. “I know you know that. I’m just still angry.”

Any doubts Bucky might have still been harboring about Richard and Tim’s relationship finally fizzled out of existence when he saw how deeply and intensely his friend looked at the younger man. They had so many differences between them - age, relationship history, family dynamics, job experience. But none of that mattered because the stuff that counted, they shared. Bucky knew this wasn’t going to end. Tim had finally found his match.

Richard, who was a sworn public defender, liked to have a partner that was willing to defend him, too. He looked a bit shy at first but then he smiled and leaned in to give Tim’s cheek a little kiss. Steve turned to Bucky and smiled at the sight of the two of them. “Kind of reminds you of us when we first started dating, doesn’t it?” he asked. “They’re all starry-eyed. I miss it when you used to look at me that way. I haven’t seen that look since about... five minutes ago.”

Bucky was about to be offended because he definitely still looked at Steve that way all the time but then Steve was joking around. He pinched Steve’s arm and leaned in to whisper, “Yeah, Babe, who helped you retrieve your wedding ring and was the calm one in a crisis for once?” He gave him a pointed look before going back at Tim and Richard who were still only really looking at each other. “Tim, Buddy, I know it used to be tradition for your family to go to Vermont for New Year’s to see your ex-wife’s parents. What are you doing now instead?”

“Well, my parents are pleased to hear that I will be spending the holiday with them this year,” Tim said happily. “It’ll Just be them, me, my sister, and her kids. I was going to invite Richard, but someone has to be working a New Year shift and only has a few hours to spend with his own
parents.” Tim wasn’t giving Richard a hard time over his job, but he could give some playful poking about it.

Sarah nodded. “I remember Steve having to work those,” she said. “He’d come home in his uniform and I’d make him wash up quick before he sat down for a meal. He always had some story to tell from it. Police work on the holidays is never normal.”

Richard gave a little grimace and apologized to Tim. They had probably had this conversation before a few times. Tim was very understanding about it but Richard still felt bad. “At least I have Valentine’s Day off,” he offered hopefully. “I have a really nice day planned for us. It’ll make up for the days I missed.”

“I know but we won’t get to celebrate New Year’s together. Who am I kissing at midnight?” Tim said while giving Richard big old sad eyes. “At least we have Valentine’s Day for you to spoil me.”

Adriana looked over to Bucky and asked, “Do all of your friends not like mommies?” She’d never seen Clint and Natasha be exceptionally affectionate since they’ve been in a rocky rift for a little while.

Bucky didn’t understand what Adriana was asking. He thought she meant they didn’t like their moms. “What do you mean, Peanut? Tim likes his mommy. I like my mommy. Daddy likes his mommy.” He eyed a spot of mashed potatoes that had fallen on Adriana’s shirt and he moved to gently clean it up. He wondered if his kids were just abnormally messy eaters or if that was just how all kids were.

Adriana shook her head. “I know you like your mommies. But you like daddies.” Then she pointed at Steve. “You like daddies.” And then she did the same for Tim and Richard. “If you like daddies then can you only be friends with other daddies who like daddies?”

Steve leaned over and whispered in Bucky’s ear, “She means: are all of our friends gay.”

“Oh!” Bucky got it now. He turned to his daughter and said, “Okay. So, Daddy and Papa are gay. Tim and Richard are gay, too. But Uncle Clint, Aunt Nat, and Uncle Sam are not gay,” he said and brushed her hair back from her face. “Gay people don’t have to be friends with only gay people. We just got lucky to know some really amazing friends who happen to be gay too. Does that make sense?”

“Oh,” she said, sitting back in her chair and looking like she was sad her theory was thwarted even though she didn’t personally care if her dads and their friends hung out with men or women. “Am I gay?” she asked innocently. Steve didn’t mind answering these questions but he gave his friends an apologetic look for this coming up during Christmas eve dinner.
Bucky tried his best not to chuckle. He knew this would happen eventually - probably with all of his kids. But it was just so cute now innocent and curious his daughter was. But he also knew she was being serious and laughing at her question might make her upset and he didn’t want that at all. “Well, Baby, it’s one of those things that you will feel. You’ll be able to tell eventually if you are gay. If you grow up and want to hold hands with boys then you are not gay. But if you want to hold hands with girls then you are gay. And if you want to hold hands with boys and girls then that’s bisexual. We can discuss it more later if you want.”

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Adriana considered what her papa said and then she said decidedly, “I’m ‘bisepsual’ because I hold you and daddy’s hand. And I hold Aunt Becca and Aunt Lilly’s and Nana’s hand.” It was a small miracle that nobody at the table, including Lilly, didn’t burst out into laughter.

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Bucky nodded and grinned at Adriana. She was very smart and very kind and just so eager to learn. “That sounds good, Peanut,” Bucky said and touched Adriana’s hair again. He didn’t really want to get into the minutia of what ‘gay’, ‘straight’, and ‘bisexual’ all actually meant. So, he decided to leave it for now. “We want you to be yourself and love yourself. That’s all any of us care about.” He leaned into Steve for a second and beamed up at him, hoping that Steve thought he did a good job handling this with her.

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Steve gave Bucky an affectionate look to let him know that he did a good job. Richard excused himself from the table and when he came back, there was a wrapped box in his hands. “Tim and I got you something as a thank you for all of the dinners you guys host. And, um... Merry Christmas.” He passed it off to Bucky. Inside was an ornate cutlery set - the sort people only used on special occasions.

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Bucky thumbed lightly over the bright green ribbon. He hadn’t really expected to get any gifts from Tim and Richard so he was a little thrown off and frustrated that he didn’t have a gift to give them in return. “Oh, uh, thank you,” he said with a surprised grin as he gently pulled the ribbon free. “Steve, Baby, you want to rip the paper?” he offered and leaned against him as he tore open the wrapping. “Woah...” Bucky mused when he laid eyes on the intricate design of the utensils. “That’s fancy.”

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Steve gasped quietly when he saw what was inside because he was a sucker for any sort of home-related present, especially for the kitchen. “Wow! These are really great, you guys.” He beamed at the two of them and got up so he could hug them both.

Tim smiled but he could tell that Bucky felt a bit off so he said, “you guys spend so much time and money every time you invite everyone over for dinner. It’s the least we can do.”

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“Yeah, but, Tim,” Bucky protested lightly and pulled his friend in for a hug too. “I don’t have a Christmas present for you yet - or Richard. I don’t have any presents yet for any of our friends.” He and Steve were usually very on top of gift-giving with their friends but the holiday seemed to have snuck up on them this time. They did have more on their plate this year with adding Adriana and
doing Hanukkah for the first time but Bucky still felt bad.

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“Buck, it’s fine. You’ve got a million kids to look out for here and it’s your first year celebrating two holidays this time. Presents don’t matter, it’s the company,” Tim reassured.

Steve gave Bucky’s hand a squeeze. “It’s fine, Sweetheart. Tim and Richard aren’t offended.”

Adriana piped up with, “Yeah, and Santa is still bringing them presents.”

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It was in these warm, domestic, pure moments that Bucky had to stop and remind himself that this was his life and this was real and he really was truly this blessed. It surprised him every time that two and a half years changed so much in his life. And it was all because Steve found his way into his life. “Stop it, you guys. I’m going to start crying.” He knew it might have seemed like an overreaction but if being with Steve had taught him anything, it was that taking stock of important moments was invaluable. And if he cried, then he cried.

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“Don’t cry, Papa.” Adriana got out of her chair so she could sit on Bucky’s lap and comfort him. Christopher got a little jealous of that and waved his spoon from his high chair. “Ana, no! My papa.”

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Bucky helped Adriana adjust so she wasn’t sliding off. He sighed and tucked his hair behind his ears for what felt like the millionth time today - his hair was the longest it had been in his life. “Christopher, Bean, I’m Adriana’s papa too. Would it help if Daddy held you for a while?”

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Steve picked up Christopher from his high chair and kissed his cheek. Christopher still had his eyes on Bucky but Steve started to bounce him gently on his knee, which made him giggle and forget that he wanted to sit on Bucky’s lap. “When can we open our one present?” Lilly asked.

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Sarah May, who was usually quiet about her frustrations, decided she wanted to be held too and she whined softly and reached a hand toward Steve desperately. “Dada,” she whispered and sniffled for added effect.

“After our guests leave, Lil. Then we can open the one Christmas Eve gift. Just one,” Bucky promised and gestured to the kitchen counter where there were two pies - apple and chocolate. “We haven’t even had Steve’s dessert yet.”

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Tim smiled when he saw all of Steve’s and Bucky’s kids looking for attention. He got up so he could pick Sarah May up from her chair and hope she didn’t mind not getting to be with her dads just then. “How will you guys manage your dozen kids with only four arms?” he teased them. Sarah got up so she could clear the table from dinner and start setting out the dessert plates.
“I’m guessing that by the time we have any more, these ones will be at least old enough to sit in their own chairs and not necessarily want to be on us all the time,” Bucky offered. “We can’t have another until the girls are independent in their own places. We don’t have enough room.” He looked to Steve for a second and added, “I also once joked to Steve about me getting another husband to have around but he did not find it funny.”

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“We don’t need another person around when we can handle them all on our own.” Steve adjusted Christopher and added, “And with Mom’s help, of course.” They really would be lost without Sarah sometimes. “It’s a good thing we started having kids so young, Buck. By our last kid, we’re going to be almost seniors.”

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“That’s true. Although, I started a lot younger with parenting so I’m already kind of feeling like a senior as it is. Barnes girls aren’t easy to parent,” Bucky said and felt a smack on the back of his head as Becca walked by to help Sarah. “Steve, you might regret your refusal of a second husband once I’m back in school. It might get pretty busy around here while I’m in class.”

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Christopher tried to reach over to Bucky to grab at his hair but Steve quickly leaned away so their boy couldn’t reach. “I’ll manage. I’ve got my mom and two perfectly good sisters-in-law to take advantage of for babysitting,” he said in a teasing tone.

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“One sister-in-law,” Becca corrected and set a plate of pie in front of Lilly. “Remember, Steve, Bucky and I are going to school around the same time. And I’ll probably be in an apartment by then.”

Lilly nodded. “And I’ll be living in the basement which Bucky said is like an apartment for us so maybe I’ll just lock the door,” she said through a bite of chocolate pie.

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Steve feigned a scandalized look. “But what if your little nieces and nephews want you to change their dirty diapers and clean up their messes?” he joked. He kissed his babies’ heads.

“I don’t wear diapers anymore, Daddy,” Adriana said, proud of herself for being well past her diaper age now.

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Bucky chuckled and squeezed Adriana in a hug. She had just conquered toilet-training and graduated out of diapers a few weeks before she was adopted and she was loath to hear her daddy suggest she ever had a dirty diaper around here. “That’s right, Peanut, you’re a big girl. And you’re also working on brushing your teeth yourself too,” Bucky encouraged, although, she still struggled with her teeth most nights.

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“My kids took forever to get out of their diapers. They almost were banned from starting school because they weren’t potty trained yet,” Tim chimed in. “I felt bad for them. I thought that they
would’ve wanted to get out of diapers on their own, but as it turned out, they preferred to go in diapers than to put a pause to play time."

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Adriana grabbed Bucky’s shoulders and pulled herself to stand up on his lap so she was more a part of the conversation. “Miss Newman said I couldn’t play with the upstairs kids if I didn’t learn to go by myself,” she said, once again bringing up anecdotes from the orphanage out of the blue. “But I was only with the upstairs kids for a little because then I came here.”

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“Oh yeah?” Steve wanted to encourage Adriana to talk about her past. The orphanage wasn’t exactly the best upbringing, but she at least was looked after as best as her caretakers could’ve managed. “At least you got to meet new friends, right? That had to be fun.”

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Adriana shrugged and let out a little disappointed sigh. “I guess. They were the old kids and some of them were mean.” The orphanage cut off at age twelve. That’s when they were transferred into the foster system and also moved to a different home outside of the city until they were placed with families. “Susie A and Susie R were both locked in the closet by the big boys. And someone cut off Midge’s hair when she was taking a nap.”

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“That wasn’t very nice of them,” Steve said. “I’m glad you didn’t have to spend too much time with them. But I hope all the mean kids learn to be nicer. Life is better when you’re nice to people.” Christopher pointed at the pie on Steve’s plate and signed ‘please’ to ask if he could have some. Steve nodded and let him take fistfuls of dessert.

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“Steve, oh-” Bucky gasped and reached out a belated hand to try to stop Christopher but it was too late. He sighed and withdrew his hand to just watch his son get covered in cake. “I could have helped make that less messy,” he whispered to Steve as Adriana started up with her next story. “I help Papa and Daddy a lot,” Adriana mused, trying to think about a good instance to talk about. “Sometimes Daddy sleeps in and Papa is with us for breakfast and he has me watch the egg pan while he cuts fruit. And I’m supposed to yell when the eggs bubble up.”

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“Wow, those are very nice things to do, Adriana.” Tim smiled at her. “Your parents must be very proud of you.” Richard reached over and gave his hand a squeeze, loving to watch him interact with kids.

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“We are so proud of her,” Bucky said and kissed Adriana’s head. “Aren’t we, Steve? Our kids are the best and the cutest.” Bucky looked over to Lilly who was pushing around pie crust on her plate and looking way too bored. “Lilly, fine, your sad face is killing me. The Christmas Eve presents are in a bag in my room. Go get them and put them on the coffee table. We can open them in a few minutes.”
Christopher squirmed to get down off of Steve so he could run into the living room and play with his toys. “We can head out if you want to have some family time,” Tim offered. “Richard and I didn’t have any plans on how long we were going to be here.”

Adriana hopped off of Bucky’s lap and followed Lilly to get the Christmas Eve presents. Bucky, now free to move around, got up to get some hot chocolate started. “If you two want to head out, you can. But I don’t have a problem with you staying around if you don’t mind that the kids are going to open a gift and play until they are tired out,” Bucky said. “And I don’t know about Steve, but I plan on sleeping as soon as the babies do because we will be woken up early tomorrow.”

“It’s my ex-wife’s turn to have the kids on Christmas this year, so it’d be nice to at least see someone’s kids get to be in the Christmas spirit,” Tim admitted and passed Sarah May over to Steve. Sarah May couldn’t care less about presents. She was loving that she got her daddy’s full attention now.

Steve smiled as he hugged her with both arms. “Do you mind taking some pictures, Buck?” Steve asked. “Somebody is stealing all of my love right now.”

Most of the family had moved to the living room already and waiting patiently for Steve and Bucky so they could open presents. “Yeah, I’ll get pictures, Baby,” Bucky promised and leaned in to kiss Steve. “Ya-Ya, will you let Daddy get to the living room? I promise you can cuddle him the whole time, Sweet Pea.” He looked up at Tim and Richard and said, “With so many people around here vying for Steve’s love and attention, it’s a wonder if I get to have him to myself for three minutes.” He loved how much the kids loved their daddy, though. He would never trade that.

Sarah May hid her face in Steve’s chest with a silly smile when Bucky started talking to her. It made Steve laugh and tickle her side lightly. He took his usual armchair and kept Sarah May tucked against his chest. Diana seized the opportunity to lay her head in Steve’s lap.

“The biggest one has to be mine. Is it mine, Bucky?” Lilly asked. “All Becca asked for was books.”

“Lilly, that big one is yours,” Bucky confirmed. “But just remember, this round of presents is only your Christmas Eve gift so the best stuff is saved for the morning.” He passed the presents around to the kids, giving Sarah May’s to Steve and Christopher’s to Sarah. “Okay, you can open them now. But one at a time so I can take pictures!” Becca’s was a book, of course, a fictional one this time. Lilly’s big box had a new giant jigsaw puzzle inside. Adriana got a plush turtle that had a blanket attach so she wouldn’t have to bring blankets and turtles downstairs when they watched movies, she could just bring one thing. And the babies both got big soft plush cats - one was orange and one was a black and grey tabby.

Ariana squealed with delight when she saw her present. Christopher wasn’t as excited about his but
he let out an equally loud shout to mimic her. Meanwhile, Sarah May hugged her cat quietly and drooled a little on its head. Tim ended up taking the camera from Bucky to take pictures so he could focus on spending time with his kids. “Wow, Adriana, what do you have there?” he asked.

Lilly shook her puzzle with a grin. “This is gonna take forever to do. I’m totally going to put this together in Becca’s room.”

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Adriana wrapped her blanket around her shoulders and hugged the turtle tightly. “It’s a ‘tuttle’, Uncle Tim, with a ‘blankie’. See?” She rubbed one corner of the soft blanket on Tim’s arm so he could feel the material.

Bucky kissed her head and got up to get another set of presents. “One more round. This one isn’t as fun, though. It’s not toys this time.” He pulled out five new sets of matching Christmas pajamas that Steve and he had picked out when they were trying to get new shoes that Sarah May wouldn’t try to kick off her feet. “There’s one for each of you. Becca, I know you probably hate this but I only request that you wear yours for tonight so we can have Christmas morning with you all matching.”

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Becca groaned when she saw the pajamas but this was one of the highlight of Steve’s Christmas. He loved corny shit like this as if his life depended on it. “I made sure to pick ones that are fashionable. I could’ve gone with the snowman ones, but Bucky convinced me not to,” he answered.

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Bucky nodded and pointed to his sister. “You should be very happy. The snowman ones were horrendous. You would have burned yours immediately.” He knew Steve liked them a lot but these were simpler - pine trees with snow and a couple red bulbs. Simple and lovely. “Steve, do you want to get the babies to sleep or help clean up down here? I’ll do whatever you don’t want to do but I do think it’s bedtime for them.”

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Christopher didn’t want to accept that it was bedtime. He was currently trying to climb up into Richards lap so he could get him to play with the cat doll. Richard awkwardly kept his hands near him to make sure he wouldn’t fall. “You can tuck them in tonight. I know I usually hog them for myself.” Steve kissed his daughter. “Good Night, Sweat Pea. Your papa is going to get you to bed tonight. I love you.” He passed her over to Bucky.

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Once Bucky was gone with Sarah May and a very reluctant Christopher, Richard offered to help Steve clean up the kitchen while Tim played with Adriana for a bit. Richard mostly just wanted to talk to Steve in private for a moment. “Hey, Steve. Can I ask you for some advice? Because, I’m new to having a relationship with a man and I want to do things right by Tim. I want to ask him to move in with me and I intend on spending my life with him if he will let me. But I don’t know where to even start.”

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Steve was thankful for the help. He’d been in the middle of washing up the counter when Richard said that and Steve’s head snapped around with a gasp. “Are you going to ask him to marry you?” he asked in a quiet but excited voice. Steve had a stupid grin on his face. “Well, um... it’s no different
than how you would ask a woman, I think. I never had a real relationship with a woman, so I can’t say for sure. But I imagine it works the same way. Have you guys talked about living together at all?”

Richard flushed a deep red and looked down at the pile of dessert dishes he was holding like they were the most interesting plates he had ever seen. “I don’t know. I haven’t gone that far. And he’s been married before so I’m not sure.” He shrugged it off and scooted closer to Steve so he could talk softer. “We have discussed living together a couple times but always briefly. I think he wants it too. This has just been going so well so far. And I... I love him.” he hadn’t said that out loud yet to anyone - including Tim - but it was the honest truth.

“You should tell him, honest and clear, that you want to live together. Tell him why you want to and how you’d be able to make each other happier that way. Bucky and I moved in and married pretty quickly. I mean, we sort of put our relationship on fast forward and ended up with four kids,” he said. “If it feels right, then you need to follow what your heart is telling you.”

“I don’t think I’m really ready to fast track things the way you guys did,” Richard said. “But I do want to live with him and be with him. He makes me better. And I just think that we should always be in the same bed and wake up to each other every morning and get to have all our days together from now on.” He sighed, a little distracted thinking about Tim. “I know it all sounds dumb and cliche but I haven’t felt this way before and I’m a little blind-sided, Steve.”

Steve thought that this was the most adorable thing to happen to one of his friends. He hugged Richard tightly because he was happy for him and Richard looked like he needed one. “It’s not dumb or cliche. It’s the truth, bud.” He pulled back so he could get a towel and dry off the countertop. “Tim is head over heels for you. I know that you two are going to work out. Just know that if you two move in together, I’m expecting you to host at least one dinner party.”

Richard was definitely grateful for the hug. Steve and Bucky both had been good support systems. Sam also had good input when he asked him so many times at work that he finally got annoyed and sat Richard down to tell him what he thought. “I don’t know about the dinner parties but I can do my best,” Richard agreed. “I just hope he wants what I want. You know?”

“It’s what anyone in your situation would hope for,” Steve said fondly. He began to put the dishes away since they were now already clean and dried. “Ask him tonight,” Steve prompted. “What’s the difference between asking him sooner than waiting a few days and beating yourself up over it every waking moment?”

Richard shrugged and bit his lip, already getting more nervous as the minutes ticked on. “Well, Steve... I don’t know. I’ve never been so nervous in my life. I’ve been at gunpoint and threatened by just about everyone I’ve arrested - including your husband, which I’m still very sorry for, by the way
- but I haven’t been this scared before. I’ve never done this.” He sighed and shoved his hands in his jacket pockets. “But maybe tonight is better - like a Christmas present of sorts. And he’s in a good mood after spending time with your kids so maybe that’ll help.”

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“I know the feeling,” Steve said. “Moving in together wasn’t so much of a scary step for me because... well, I kind of was over Bucky’s place more often than my own at that point,” he admitted. “Proposing had me even more nervous.” Steve squeezed Richard’s shoulder with a reassuring look. “Tell us how it goes. We’re both rooting for you.”

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Richard thanked Steve again for the advice and dinner before collecting Tim and heading out. Bucky got the babies in their new pajamas and in their cribs fairly quickly. It was just the falling asleep which took a bit. And then after that, Bucky was so tired that he fell into a semi-unconscious daze on his bed when he was trying to decide whether he should shower or wait for Steve to come upstairs.

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Steve tucked Adriana in at the end of the night and spent a small amount of time with his mom to plan the next day and then he finally made his way to bed. Steve crawled in next to Bucky and slid his hand beneath his shirt. “Hey there,” he purred. “Somebody is tired. You want a massage to help put you to sleep?”

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Bucky whined quietly at Steve’s gentle touches. He would never get too many touches from him. “That feels nice already. Might fall asleep like this,” he mumbled, eyes closed and hands lazily reaching to find Steve’s shirt to grab on to. “I should get up, though. I don’t want to sleep in these clothes from dinner. That’s not comfortable at all. I’m just so tired.”

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“I’ll undress you,” Steve said in a suggestive tone. “And then I’ll put on the Christmas pajamas.” He kissed along Bucky’s jaw affectionately. “Did you know that Richard wants to ask Tim to move in with him? He came up to talk to me while I was cleaning up the kitchen,” he said in a hushed, excited tone.

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“I did know, yes,” Bucky said just as quietly and lifted his arms up over his head to indicate that Steve could undress him now. “Tim is going to be happy. I know he is. He will be surprised and excited. I think he loves Richard.” Bucky’s eyes flitted open every few seconds so he could pay attention to Steve while they talked. He also felt like he hadn’t had much time alone with him over the past few days and he missed him.

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Steve grabbed the pajamas for Bucky and himself before going back to the bed. He slowly and carefully took his shirt off and kissed over his collarbone affectionately. “Richard definitely loves him,” Steve said. “He was a nervous wreck about it and told me that he wanted to spend the rest of his life with him. It was kind of adorable.”

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“They remind me of us,” Bucky said it like he and Steve were much older and wiser and more experienced. He said it like they hadn’t been in the exact same position a couple years prior. “I miss you, Steve. I don’t get to see you as much lately. And we haven’t really been intimate for a while either. I’m not saying that I need to have sex to feel close to you. I just miss how close it does make us. You know?”

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“We’re the gay elders now, Buck. We’ve graduated from just being the token gay couple.” Steve pulled Bucky’s pants down, pausing so he could run his hands over his legs. “I know,” he said guiltily. “It’s just... being a dad is so awesome. But I miss being your husband, too,” he said. Steve put on the pajama bottoms for Bucky. “Do you think we had too many kids too fast?”

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“No! God, no. I love all our kids so much. I wouldn’t change that,” Bucky assured Steve quickly. “I just miss having time for us. We get it occasionally but just not enough. I want to touch you and hold you and make love to you and talk and laugh and just be us. I don’t know what’s been going on in your head for about two months now. We haven’t stopped to catch up with each other.”

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He breathed out a sigh of relief. Steve stepped back to change into his own pajamas and then snuggled up with his husband again. “I know. It used to be a lot easier in the beginning, coming up with places to go since we didn’t have the responsibilities we do now.” He nuzzled Bucky’s neck. “Tell me about your week.”

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Bucky whined softly and pushed himself as close to Steve as he could. He wanted to be glued to him tonight. “Well, Baby, you were with me a lot this past week doing holiday preparation. But work was really busy. A few days ago, I had to kick out this kid who was trying to steal cassette tapes. He had a backpack and he found a hidden spot that he could duck under and put them in his bag. I figured it out when he walked by me and I heard the clattering of the tapes bouncing together. It really wasn’t the most clever way to try to steal.”

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“Thieves tend to be either really crafty or really dense. There’s no in between,” Steve said. He’s dealt with plenty in his old line of work. He kissed along Bucky’s jaw and said, “Sarah May has been talking to me more when the other kids aren’t around, but it’s still only a couple words here and there.”

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“I worry about her. Do you worry about her?” Bucky asked. He touched his fingers gently in Steve’s hair and brushed it back. It was pretty long for him right now but Steve hadn’t said anything yet about needed to trim it up. Maybe he was wanting a shaggy look for a while. “She’s so quiet. She hasn’t been learning words as fast. She lets herself be squashed by the other two for attention. She’s so shy and nervous a lot of the time. It’s like she’s got toddler anxiety or something.”

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“I do sometimes,” Steve said. “But she’s always given love every day. And even if she doesn’t get the spotlight with the others around, me you and Ma always make special time for just us and her. I
think she’s still too young to understand to stick up for herself. Maybe in a few months.”

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It made sense for her to act the way she did because she had two older siblings with such big, loud personalities. Bucky just worried that she would grow up always being shy and nervous. “Do you think it’s just because she doesn’t have the vocabulary yet to compete with the commanding presence of Adriana and Christopher and even the girls sometimes? Maybe she wants to interject but she can’t yet so that’s why she doesn’t try?”

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“Christopher just made loud noises to interject if he didn’t have words,” Steve observed. “I don’t think it’s a lack of vocabulary... she knows ‘no’ and ‘all done’,” Steve continued. “Maybe if we pretend to stop each other talking politely so we can talk, she can copy us?” he asked. “Sort of like pretend but she doesn’t know we’re pretending?”

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“You mean like between who’s talking we can make a show of switching who has the floor?” Bucky asked. “That might work. We can always try. I just think part of the problem is that she is so quiet and knows she can’t compete with them just with volume. She covers her ears if someone laughs too loud around her. She’s very sensitive and easily overstimulated. One of my cousin’s was like that as a baby. He was very uncomfortable with noises and lights that were loud or unusual.”

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“I did notice that,” Steve said. “Sometimes I want to try and put little earmuffs on her to help muffle incidental noises the other kids make but I don’t want her to miss out on learning new words because of it.” Steve sighed. “What did your cousin’s parents do to help them?” he asked curiously.

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Earmuffs didn’t sound like a terrible idea. They could just muffle sounds a little if she was getting worked up. It might help calm her down before she got so bad she had to cry. “Nothing, really. They took him to the nursery for a nap if it got back enough that he was too upset. Mostly, they just waited for him to grow out of it. They didn’t really know what to do.” He was getting even more tired now as he snuggled with Steve. He wished he could stay up longer to talk but he was fading fast and Christmas morning would come soon and he needed to be up before the kids so he could put the rest of the presents under the tree to create the Santa illusion.

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Steve hoped that Sarah May wouldn’t have an issue with this for too long - not because Steve was unwilling to help, but because he didn’t want her to be uncomfortable. He kissed Bucky gently until he fell asleep and Steve was out soon after that.
Steve woke up very early in the morning. He disentangled himself from his husband to go down and set up the presents so Bucky could sleep a little longer. Diana didn’t help with his goal to be stealthy since she pranced around the room following Steve. Once the presents were all there, Steve snuck into the nursery to steal the sleeping Sarah May from her crib and snuggled back into bed with Bucky, their daughter now resting on his chest.

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Bucky, to his credit, really was planning on getting up and helping Steve. But he was just so tired and that didn’t happen. He even roused from sleep when Steve got up but he fell back asleep before he could even call out his name. He woke up, sometime later, to Steve’s hand gently brushing through his hair and the quiet mumbling of Sarah May near his face. He blinked open his eyes and focused in on his daughter who had a big morning smile for him once she realized he was up. “Oh, hey, Sweet Pea. Did Daddy get you for cuddles or have you learned how to get out of your crib too?”

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“Papapapapapapa...” Sarah May mumbled with mild determination as she crawled over from Steve to Bucky. She snuggled her papa and grabbed a fistful of his hair to hold.

Steve laughed at her little betrayal and turned on his side. “I figured we could give her a little extra attention before the whole house wakes up,” he said.

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“Of course,” Bucky said happily and kissed her cheek. “Just Daddy and Papa and Ya-Ya.” He wrapped his arms carefully around her and let her tug his hair because she was much gentler with it than Christopher was. “I can’t believe the littlest baby is a year old now. And she’s getting bigger now, Steve. Her hands are finally growing into her arms.”

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“She’s growing too fast. I miss how small she was and how she used to tuck right into my arm,” he sighed. “Now she’s a two-handed-hold baby.” He tickled her feet and then smiled over at Bucky. “Ya-Ya, can you tell your papa that you love him? Say ‘I love you!’” he cooed at her.

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Sarah May was getting better at saying some things but all she could really manage this morning was a soft, shy, “Lah, Papa.” She then promptly hid her face against Bucky’s chest and sighed like she was embarrassed with her attempt.

“She is definitely a two-hand baby now,” Bucky agreed and moved her closer up his chest so he
could hold her better. “But she’s still our little girl. She’s our precious Sarah May. Aren’t you, Sweet Pea?” He yawned and reached for Steve’s hand. “I think you should give me a kiss and then we should go make sure everything is ready before we get the others up.”

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Steve smiled proudly at their little girl and leaned over her and kissed Bucky slowly. He brushed his thumb over Bucky’s hand and rolled out of bed. “I can take care of it if you want to snuggle with her more.”

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“Here, I’ll wear the jacket she likes and zip her up against my chest so she’s still snuggling,” Bucky said and gestured at a jacket laid over the dresser. “That’s the one. And then she and I will just follow you around while you get ready. And we can sing Christmas carols at you too.”

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Steve grabbed the jacket for Bucky and passed it over. “I love that idea,” he said. He was a sucker for anything cheesy, especially around the holidays. “Can you sing ‘Silent Night’ for me? It’ll be nice and calming before everyone—” he started to say, but he could already hear noise coming from the nursery of Christopher shouting for his sister.

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Christopher was still going through a phase of anxiety and possessiveness over Sarah May. He didn’t like when he couldn’t see her and he definitely didn’t like waking up to find her gone. He even sometimes wouldn’t let people touch her. He almost bit an old lady in the park who went to touch her curls. “Fuck. Okay. It’s okay, Christopher,” Bucky said hurriedly and skipped his way to the nursery quickly so he could show Sarah May to him. “See? She’s fine, Bean. She’s perfectly safe with Papa.”

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Christopher was halfway out of his crib by the time Bucky got in but he hastily scurried back inside of it to try and prevent from being caught by his pop. The attempt was poorly-executed. He stood up on his feet and waved at his sister. “Ya-Ya!” he yelped, calming down once he saw her.

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“Christopher, you have to stop trying to escape your crib,” Bucky said firmly and lowered Sarah May down into the crib so Christopher could give her a hug. “I mean it, Bean. It’s dangerous and it scares Papa. I’m going to put really high bars on your crib, Baby. And you’re not going to like it.” He sighed and crouched down so he could watch his kids as Christopher hugged his sister and messed with her hair. “Maybe Daddy and I should discuss when you should get a big boy bed.”

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Sarah May whined a little when she was taken out of the jacket but when Christopher hugged her, she calmed down and snuggled with her brother. Christopher looked innocently up at Bucky as he was scolded for another attempted escape. “Play, Papa?” he asked. He let go of Sarah May to grab his new cat plushie and waved it at her. “Play, Ya-Ya? Look! Kitty!”
“No, Bean, Christmas time,” Bucky said and brushed his hand gently over Christopher’s blonde hair. “Your hair is getting long, Christopher. It’s passed your little chin, now.” He chuckled and pulled Christopher out of his crib and set him on the ground before taking Sarah May back into his arms since she was still wanting to be cuddled. “Christopher, let’s go get your Daddy. He’s in our room, Baby. Let’s get him!”

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At Bucky’s prompting, Christopher scampered off to the master bedroom with an excited squeal. Steve was waiting just inside the room and surprised him by scooping him up as soon as he ran into the room. Their son let out a loud shout and started giggling wildly as Steve held him upside down and blew raspberries on his belly. Diana came bounding in and licked Christopher’s face all over.

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Bucky watched his husband and son and smiled over at them as Sarah May whined and pushed her hand against his neck. “Oh, my precious boys,” Bucky sighed contently and adjusted Sarah May in his arms. “You’re very cute but you’re going to wake the whole house with your giggling. And I’m hoping to get another hour of sleep for Becca so she doesn’t destroy all of us.”

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Steve put Christopher down on the bed and smiled as he scrambled onto his feet so he could fling himself at Steve, who caught him. “It’s late enough in the morning for Becca to wake up. It’s eight thirty.” That wasn’t the nicest hour to wake at, but it wasn’t ridiculously early, either. He felt like she could handle it.

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“Yeah, Steve, it’s eight thirty, but it’s also Becca,” Bucky said firmly and stopped Christopher for a second to fix his pants that were falling down a little bit. “How about you get the babies some juice and fruit and I’ll get Adriana and Lilly up. We have a long day ahead of us. But maybe if we do this right, the kids will all be asleep early tonight and the girls will be occupied and I can finally have some private time with my husband.”

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“Fair enough,” Steve said. “I have a good feeling about tonight. I asked Santa for s-e-x with my husband tonight for Christmas.” He carried Christopher downstairs and let him run around the kitchen with the baby gate up so he couldn’t get to the tree. He set out a fruit salad that he’d prepared and poured drinks for everyone while he waited for the rest of the family.

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It took a little while for Bucky to get Adriana up. She was awake but very comfortable in her bed and didn’t yet want to get out. This was her first Christmas in her new home and she wasn’t aware of just how many presents and activities they had for her downstairs. But eventually, Bucky got her and Lilly to the kitchen with Steve and Sarah. “Lilly, will you go get Becca, please? Tell her I’m making her some tea.”

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Lilly complained about having to wake up Becca because she knew that she was going to give her an attitude. But she went to take care of it anyway. Adriana caught a glimpse of the Christmas tree on the way to the kitchen. “Papa, are all those for us?” she gasped in awe. “Or are those for other
“No, Peanut, those are for you and your siblings and your aunts,” Bucky said. “So, a part of those are all for you. And Daddy made sure to help Santa find really good gifts for you. And Santa said that he thinks you are really going to like your Christmas.” Bucky still wasn’t horribly thrilled about doing Santa with the kids. But he was going to do his part, especially because it made Steve so happy.

“That’s still lots of presents just for us,” Adriana said.

Steve picked up their son as he ran past and put him in his high chair. “Come on, Peanut. The sooner you have your breakfast, the sooner you can see what Santa brought you,” he said. Steve was so appreciative that Bucky allowed him to play the Santa game. It was so damn cute he couldn’t resist.

Adriana stared out at the Christmas tree for a couple more seconds but then finally turned and came to sit down with her siblings. “It’s all so pretty,” she mused quietly and looked up at Steve as if she was making sure this was all still real.

Lilly came tromping up the stairs then with arms crossed and an aggravated tick in her face. “Becca isn’t coming upstairs. She says she’s too sick. She said she threw up last night and doesn’t feel good.”

When Lilly came back with news of Becca being sick, Steve shook his head and chewed his lip for a second. “Oh no...” Steve was up in a moment and he made a bowl of fruit and a glass of water. “You sit down and eat, Lil, I’ll go bring this to her and I’ll see if she needs anything.”

Becca, who was prone to being a miserable mess, was even more so that morning. She was huddled in the corner of her bed with all her blankets wrapped around her and a winter hat pulled down over her eyes. She peeled out from under it when she heard Steve coming. “I’m sick,” she mumbled and looked up at him, eyes watery and nose dripping. “I think I have a fever, Steve.”

Steve set the food and water down next to her bed before sitting on the edge of the mattress and pressing his hand to her forehead. “You definitely have a fever,” he agreed. “I’m sorry you’re sick, especially on Christmas. Do you want me to get you anything?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” Becca said and reached a shaky hand out of her blanket pile to grab the cup of water. “I want Christmas, Steve. I know I made a big deal about it being too loud this year because of all the kids, but I love Christmas.” She sniffled and blew her nose on a tissue that seemed to come from nowhere. She had been cradling a box for most of the night. “Is this the flu? It feels worse.”
He brushed back some of her hair that was sticking to her face. “We’ll find a way for you to still have Christmas. Don’t you worry about that,” Steve promised. “I’m going to get my mom down here. She’s a pro with this stuff.” He tucked her back in and hurried upstairs. “Becca’s running a fever, Ma,” he said. “Do you think you could figure out what it is? You’re the nurse.”

Sarah was in the middle of trying to get Ya-Ya to eat some more banana slices - which wasn’t going well - so she was happy to pass off the job to Bucky to go see about Becca. “Let’s go, Steve. Grab the thermometer from the drawer, please.” She and Steve went back downstairs and Sarah took Becca’s temperature which was well into fever range. “Becca, dear, I think you just have a very bad flu,” she concluded after a bit more examining and questioning Becca. “It’s just awful it happened on Christmas, though.”

Steve was disappointed that Becca had the flu but also relieved that it wasn’t anything worse. “How about I bring Diana and Raphael here to keep you company for now? I’d say I’d bring everyone down here to open at least one present with you, but I can’t risk the kids getting sick. Their immune systems aren’t that good yet, I’m sorry.”

“Also, I don’t like everyone in my space. You know this,” Becca whined and pulled her blankets tighter around her. “You guys can have Christmas and then maybe just you and Bucky and Lilly can come down here with my presents. It’s not as fun but at least it’s sort of okay. That way the kids won’t get sick and Bucky and Lilly won’t be sad I wasn’t at Christmas.”

“That Sounds like a good plan, Becs. Bucky, Ma, or I will check in every half hour down here to make sure you’re alright. I hope you feel better soon.” He grabbed an extra blanket for her just in case and draped it over the bed.

Becca thanked them both and flicked off her lamp, ready to try to sleep again. Everyone else waiting upstairs was still at the kitchen table but Christopher and Lilly were both getting particularly antsy to start Christmas. “Papa! Please!” Christopher yelled and pointed out to the tree from his high chair. “Please!” He was a couple seconds away from crying and screaming but then he saw Steve coming upstairs to he directed his efforts at him with a solid, “Dada, Please!”

Eager to avoid a tantrum, Steve plucked their son from his high chair. “Do you want to open presents, Bean?” he asked and kissed his cheek. “Come on, let’s go see what Santa brought.” He moved the baby gate out of the way and found a present for each of their kids so Adriana and Christopher wouldn’t tear away at the first one they came across. “Becca has the flu, Buck,” he said as he set Christopher down near his pen with a present. “We should save some of our presents to open downstairs with her.”

“Damn, a sick Becca isn’t anything anyone wants,” Bucky sighed. “We can save a few, yes. How bad is she? Has she started crying yet or is she sleeping now? She has stages. Sleeping comes before
the crying stage. And the crying stage is not good.”

“No good,” Lilly agreed and she sat down with her first present in hand. “When Becca is this badly sick, it’s a roller coaster for the entire house. She’s like a snotty hurricane.”

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“She’s in the sleeping stage. She turned the lights out as we were heading back up,” Steve said. “I feel bad for her, though... even if she is going to be a bit of a terror later.” Steve hated seeing anyone he cared about feeling less than healthy.

Adriana was patiently waiting for permission to open up her present. Steve sat down next to her and pet his hand over her hair. “You’re allowed, Peanut.”

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“Am I supposed to wait my turn or do we all open together?” Adriana asked and moved to lean back against Steve.

Bucky put himself in charge of Christopher and gave Sarah May to her nana. It was very convenient right now to have an adult per kid. “Adriana, Baby, you can go ahead and open your gift. We will want a picture though. We did grab the camera, right, Daddy?”

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“There’s no turns on Christmas, but your papa is right. We need to have pictures of you opening your first present on Christmas day!” Steve ran to get the camera and, when he came back, he was a little winded. “Okay, Peanut. You can open it now.” By this point, Christopher already tore his open and Sarah May was picking at the corner of hers.

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Adriana nodded and ripped through the front of her present. There was a box underneath that Lilly had to help her open but inside was a policewoman action figure doll. Bucky had been pretty happy with the find. They had talked to her recently about how Steve was a policeman for a long time. He also wanted to get her dolls that ranged from princesses to civil servants. She liked having dolls and action figures but he didn’t want her to think that little girls were only allowed to be princesses and all the boys were the hero dolls. “Adriana, look at her! Wow! She’s a police officer! Just like Daddy.”

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Adriana gasped and held it up once Lilly helped her get it out of the box. “She’s not like Daddy. She’s like Auntie Nat.”

At first, Steve’s heart sunk because he thought that Adriana was saying that it wasn’t like him because he wasn’t a cop anymore, but then he understood because it was a policewoman. “What do you think you’re going to name her?” he asked.

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“I don’t know. Something strong!” Adriana said and held her up for Steve to see. “Like Detective Macy Jones! That’s good, right?”

Bucky tried his best to contain Christopher but he was now very interested in going to get his hands
on Adriana’s new toy. “Bean, that’s your sister’s police officer. You just opened new toy keys. Are you not even slightly intrigued by this?”

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“I like that. That’s a really great name,” he agreed. Steve went over to Christopher and tried to get him interested in the toy keys. “Wow!” he said in the most excited tone he could muster. “What are these, Bean? These are so colorful!” He jiggled the key ring to try and entice Christopher to want his present instead of his sister’s.

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Christopher was not having it. He was almost two years old and was apparently done with baby toys. “Want ‘dat!’” he yelled and pointed to the officer again. “Please!”

“No, Baby, it’s not yours,” Bucky said and grabbed another present from under the tree. “Here, Christopher. Here. This is yours. Maybe this will be better for you.”

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Adriana hugged her doll protectively because she knew how Christopher could get with toys. Christopher started to walk over to her but Steve blocked the way and kissed his head. “Look, Kiddo! Look at what your papa has!” he said brightly. “Does he have another present for you?”

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Christopher looked at the present and then over to the doll again before deciding on the present. He plopped down in front of Bucky and held out his hands for the squishy package. “Good boy, Christopher. We don’t want to take from Adriana. Let’s open this one.” He helped Christopher rip the paper and revealed a shiny, soft, moldable bag filled with little shapes and animals with glitter painted over them. “Look, Baby, each of these glittry animals can go in your water at bath time and they grow with the water.” They were essentially made out of sponges but kids liked them a lot.

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Christopher looked at the animals but he immediately put it on the ground and made grabby hands at his papa. “More!” he said loudly.

Sarah covered her laugh as she got up to grab Sarah May a present and keep her occupied. “Looks like you two underestimated how much he grew this year,” she teased softly. “Steve did that to me a few times.”

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“Oh, Christmas really is going to be long this year, isn’t it?” Bucky asked and pulled his hair back into a ponytail. “Steve, Love, should we just let him have all his presents at once and he can just tear through them? Last year was so much easier, he needed help opening gifts and he wasn’t such a grump.”

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“We should and hopefully he will like one enough to play with it while the rest of us open our presents like civilized folk,” he chuckled, hoarding Christopher’s presents and placing them in front of him before getting another for Adriana. This one was a picture book about all sorts of marine wildlife.
Christopher laughed wildly and surveyed his presents, like a tiny little king. Bucky sat and supervised him just to make sure he didn’t get a paper cut or try to eat the wrapping. All in all, it went pretty well. And eventually, he had all his gifts opened and was more than happy playing with a toy piano. “I’m glad he’s finally satisfied but I’m regretting the toy piano now. It’s so loud,” Bucky said over the noise.

“But look at how cute he is playing it,” Steve said softly. “He’s a little Mozart. I can’t wait until he’s old enough to play music with his dad.”

Adriana snuggled in Steve’s lap as she opened up another present. “Can I play music when I’m grown up?” she asked.

“No, he’s not a little Mozart. Mozart was a prodigy of composition. Christopher sounds like he’s trying to find the perfect sound for his next prog rock album and he just can’t get it,” Bucky said, his head starting to hurt a little. Lilly had already taken Sarah May up to her room with her because she wasn’t having the noise. “Adriana, you can be a musician if you want to. What instrument do you want to play? Papa needs a bassist.”

“Then he is a rock Mozart,” Steve muttered to himself. He felt bad for Sarah May but he knew she was happier off playing with her aunt somewhere quieter.

Adriana was now suddenly very interested in playing music now that Christopher had his toy piano. “What’s a bassist?” she asked. “I’ll be one of those.”

Bucky got up from the floor and went to pick out his bass from his cabinet of guitars. There were only four guitars there but it made him feel like a real rocker because he had them hanging up so nicely. “This is a bass guitar. It’s got only four strings and sounds really deep. This particular one is from the seventies so it’s not very old. It’s just a standard sort of bass. Doesn’t look like much. It’s nothing like that Steinberger Spirit. Man, that’s a wicked looking instrument.” Bucky went on, getting ahead of himself a little bit, “I mean, some people only focus on the sound of the guitar for quality, but I think there is some degree of importance in appearance. There’s a reason that all the best rock gods have photoshoots with their instruments on display.”

Adriana marveled when the instrument was brought over. “But that’s bigger than me, Papa. I can’t play that,” she said sadly. “Do they make little ones like Christopher’s piano?”

“They make smaller instruments, yeah,” Bucky confirmed and put the bass back. “When you’re a little older we can get you a smaller bass to start out with.” He came back over with one of his ukuleles. “Or you can start learning on this first and see if you like it. You’ve heard Papa play on the ukulele.” He started to strum and sway and winked over to Steve.
Adriana danced with Bucky and Steve smiled and walked over so he could kiss his husband’s cheek. “My talented music man,” he said in a loving hum. “I think the ukulele is perfect for you to start with, Peanut,” he said.

“And I have three of them,” Bucky said. “So, you can have this one as a Christmas present, Adriana.” He handed the ukulele to her and bent down to kiss her head. “We can practice sometime together.” He pulled Steve in close to him and gave him a warm kiss. “Tell I’m handsome, Baby?”

Adriana gasped and jumped in excitement. This was probably going to be her most favorite present this year because it was something that used to be her papa’s. Steve’s heart melted and he wrapped his arms around Bucky. “The most handsome, most thoughtful man in the world,” Steve said. “And the best father.” He kissed Bucky’s face a few times, laughing as he heard Adriana start to strum awkwardly as Christopher banged on the piano.

“We’re going to need to soundproof our living room,” Bucky mumbled and leaned more against Steve and swayed them back and forth a little. “I love you, Steve. The holidays are making me lovesick and romantic. I just want to sweep you away for a sexy private weekend somewhere together.”

Steve nuzzled Bucky’s neck affectionately and he kissed over his jaw. “Well, why don’t you wait and see what Santa brought us this year before you get too forlorn about us not having much time together lately,” Steve said. He pulled back a little to smile at his husband.

Bucky was going to comment about how if Santa brought them sex stuff then that was a little strange, given that Santa, in their case, was Tim. But he decided not to be a killjoy. “Fine. I’ll wait,” he grumbled and gave Steve’s side a little pinch. “Do you want to gather Becca’s gifts and go have Christmas with her while the kids are distracted?”

“Let’s do that,” Steve agreed. Sarah said that she would keep an eye on everyone upstairs while they had their mini Christmas with Becca. “Let’s save a few smaller presents for when she’s feeling better so it’ll be a nice surprise, though,” he said. “Nothing big. Just something for her to enjoy when she’s in better spirits.”

“You sure? Don’t you think it would be nicer to have them now? She needs cheering up,” Bucky said and gathered boxes into a laundry basket to take downstairs. “At least, if it were me, that’s what I would want. But maybe you’re right. Ask Lilly what she thinks.” Bucky had definitely not been spending as much time with his sisters lately as he would have liked to. They were each just so busy with school and extracurriculars and he was always at work. Plus, Becca worked at the library two days a week after school for a couple hours so he didn’t see her at all those days. He missed them.
“I’ll ask Lilly. Let me go get her,” Steve said. He wanted to cuddle Sarah May anyway and give Lilly a break from watching her. His daughter reached up for him as soon as she saw him, so he gathered her up in his arms. “Hey, Lilly. Your brother and I are going to open some presents with Becca,” he said. “Do you think we should save a present or two for when she’s feeling better?”

“What do you mean ‘save’?” Lilly questioned from behind the barnyard farm set she and Sarah May had been playing with. “Because if it were me, I would mad if I found out you didn’t let me have all my presents on Christmas. But Becca might like it if you make a big deal out of it. Like maybe give her one every day she’s sick so she knows we aren’t trying to ignore her while she’s like this.”

“I guess we could give her all of her Christmas presents and get her little things every day until she feels better,” Steve said, giving in a bit too easily. “Can you help us bring her stuff downstairs? I’ll bring Sarah May to my mom and then carry the rest of the presents downstairs.”

Lilly nodded and picked up the barn to take to Sarah too. She helped Bucky carry down the first laundry basket of gifts and then got more cold water and some toast for Becca who complained about the type of jam Lilly chose. She also complained about being too hot and too cold at the same time and how she had a terrible headache. But eventually, Steve came down with the last presents and she shut up.

Steve knew that Becca would be huffing and rolling her eyes at anyone who was bellyaching as much as she was right now, which made him all the more eager to help her get better to put her out of this misery. “Are you done complaining now that we have all of Santa’s presents here for you?” he teased fondly as he brought one over to her.

“Santa’s not real, Steve,” Becca said flatly and pulled her first present into her blankets. “And Bucky thinks it’s going to be an issue down the road when your kids find out the truth and think you guys are liars. He’s only playing along because you made a big deal of it.” She was very cavalier as she talked and ripped open the paper to find a fancy new journal with her name monogrammed on the front. “Thanks. It’s lovely,” she mumbled.

“Or our kids will understand that we did it to bring a little magic into their lives and realize that their parents went through all that work to make life a little extra special to them,” Steve said patiently back to her when he got the chance. “You’ve got snot dripping out of your nose, by the way.” Steve passed her and Lilly a present he had bought them. He always got them something matching every year and this year it was a bracelet that had ‘World’s Best Aunt’ engraved on the inside and the birthstones of all of his and Bucky’s kids on it.

Becca grabbed a tissue and wiped her nose furiously. “Of course, I have snot dripping out of my
nose. I’m sick.” She and Lilly opened the bracelets together. Lilly put hers on, but Becca managed to turn the words around so it was just a silver bar with two birthstones on each side. Evidently, she didn’t like the saying.

“Steve, Baby, don’t poke the bear,” Bucky whispered and kissed his cheek. Steve had only seen Becca this sick once before.

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Steve’s shoulders slumped a little when Becca pointedly hid the words. He gave Bucky a look that silently promised a rant about his sister-in-law later. He was going to pass another present to Lilly but he kind of needed to feel better, so he gave Bucky a card instead. Inside the card was a little love note and two tickets to go see David Bowie at Madison Square Garden the following September, which also meant they were probably going to stay overnight in a hotel, too.

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Becca was preoccupied with opening a gift from Lilly so Bucky went ahead and opened his card. “What’s this, Steve?” he asked with a smile and pulled out the tickets. “Oh, my god. Another concert? David Bowie! Fuck, yeah. Thank you!” He pulled Steve in for a kiss and gripped his hand tightly in his hair to keep him close for a second. “You know how much I love Bowie. God, Steve, you’re incredible. I’ll read the letter later, I promise. It looks long and important and if I’m going to cry, I don’t want it to be in front of grumpy ass Becca.”

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Steve knew that Bucky would love the present and he was beyond happy it went over well. He wrapped his arms around Bucky’s shoulders and kissed him deeply. “It’s okay, you don’t have to read it now,” he said. “I know that we don’t get to spend much time together, so a weekend getaway in Manhattan would... you know, solve that a little. Also, it’s David Bowie. How could I pass that up?”

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“I can’t wait for a weekend getaway. It’s been months. The last time we had even twelve hours alone was the Ramones concert in June,” Bucky said and gave Steve another warm, slow kiss. “I love you, Steve Rogers-Barnes.”

Becca made a noise then and got their attention. “Hey, this isn’t make-out time. It’s present time. I didn’t get to have normal Christmas because I’m dying.”

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Steve’s spirits were lifted right back up. “I love you, too, Buck.” He purposely made out with Bucky just a little while longer to annoy Becca. Eventually, as a peace offering, he passed Becca a present. Inside was an acceptance letter to a local college program where she could take a class for college credit while still in high school. “I thought you might want to get one of your prerequisites out of the way so you can fill your schedule with classes you like when you’re going to college for real.”

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Becca, for all her poise and icy bravado, couldn’t keep her emotions about this from showing on her face as she read through the letter. She knew the implications of something like this, she could get through college much faster and probably manage more than one degree at a time. She hadn’t even seriously considered this as an option and she worried about the added cost of those classes. “This
says that the school will cover half my tuition? How did I get a scholarship like that?"

Bucky, who had helped Steve make the application for Becca, said, “Well, Becca, we sent them your grades from the past few years and I wrote a letter about how dedicated you are to your education and just the general need to pursue knowledge.”

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Steve squeezed Bucky’s hand when he saw Becca get excited. Steve hadn’t ever gone to college, so the whole application process was a bit beyond him. Bucky helped a lot in that aspect. “We’re paying for a class so you can take it before you graduate high school. You don’t have to go to this college when it’s time to go, but at least you know that you have a scholarship here if you do choose this one.”

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Bucky nodded and handed Becca another tissue. “Exactly. And if you choose a different school then I’m guessing you can apply for other scholarships too. You’re really smart and you have the proof in your grades. And any college will be lucky to have you attend. They will be dying to say that Rebecca Barnes is their alumnus.”

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Steve laid his head on Bucky’s shoulder with a smile. He knew by now that it was hard to get a positive reaction out of the elder Barnes sister, so he treasured moments like these. He turned to grab a card and he handed it to Lilly. He bought the three of them tickets to the first Yankees home game of the season. He still had to go to a game with Bucky, but the three of them also deserved to have a sibling day together.

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Becca kept blowing her nose and trying to pretend it was just because she was sick and not because she was crying while Lilly attacked Steve in a hug, almost knocking him to the ground. “The Yankees! Oh, my god,” Lilly yelled and clung to Steve. Lilly and Bucky reacted to exciting news quite similarly. “Are these good seats, Steve?”

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Steve got the wind knocked out of him when Lilly hugged him but hugged her back but coughed as soon as he tried to take another breath. “I got you decent seats,” he said. “We kind of have a lot of kids under this roof and I didn’t want to go bankrupt come January,” Steve chuckled. “But they’re not in the back, I promise.”

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“I’ll take anything. I don’t care. I’m actually going to Yankee Stadium,” Lilly said energetically and blew hair out of her eyes. She gasped and looked to Bucky with wide eyes. “I’m gonna see Don Mattingly! With my own eyes! I don’t know if I can handle that.”

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Steve kissed the top of her head before letting her go and grinning at how excited she was. He snuggled up shyly against Bucky because, even now, he still got flustered whenever the girls had a big reaction to something he did. “You’re going to have to take lots of pictures while you’re there, right?”
“Will they let me?” she asked and looked to Becca since she usually knew things. “Don’t I have to be with the newspaper or TV to bring a camera in?”

Bucky thought it was okay but now he wasn’t sure. Some places charged people to take pictures with the players so maybe no cameras were allowed. “Well, even if you can’t, you and Steve will just have to pay close attention to the game. And eat like six hot dogs each.”

Steve looked surprised and pouted a bit. “Oh, Buck, I’m not going to this one. I got these tickets for you and the girls so you can have a nice day together.”

“Uh-uh, no, you’re going,” Bucky said and shook his head. “You bought the tickets, you thought of this. And you’ve been wanting to take Lilly to a baseball game for two years.” He would love to go. He would love to have a siblings’ day together with his sisters. But he also thought it was just as important for Steve to have a day with his sisters-in-law.

“It doesn’t matter that I bought the tickets, Buck. What matters is you spending time with your sisters,” he said, petting Bucky’s chest lightly. “I know how much you want to spend time with them and how you don’t have a lot of time together like you used to.”

Bucky hummed softly and smooshed his face against Steve’s neck for a moment to kiss him there. “I know, Baby. And I’m so grateful that you’re thinking about that. But I want you to go. And Lilly would much rather go with you. You will know more of what’s she’s talking about. Me, I would just be staring at the uniforms. You remember how distracted I was at your NYPD game.” It was partially a joke, but they also both knew it was very true.

Steve’s shoulders slumped a little. Of course, Steve was going to be a little more dramatic than necessary, but that was kind of his thing at this point. Lilly rolled her eyes when she saw him. “Come on, Steve. It’ll be fun! Bucky won’t be any help at the game. All he’s going to do is go new-husband-shopping with his eyes.”

“Listen to Lilly,” Bucky agreed and leaned his head against Steve again. “You three will have fun. And it’ll make me happy to know my husband is having bonding time with his in-laws.”

Becca sniffled and offered quietly, “Besides, you’re the one who always helps Lilly redo her trading cards so it only seems fair that you get to go as a reward.”

“Alright,” Steve finally gave in. He turned to Bucky. “Then that means you’ve got to stay home that day and watch the kids so you get to have a day with them. My mom will probably help, Of course.” She loved her sons and her grandbabies too much to let them run their parents ragged all day.
“I’ll stay home, of course. I love being with the kids. It’ll just be a Papa day. Maybe we will go to the aquarium. That would be nice.” Bucky snuggled himself close against Steve and wrapped his arms around him. Becca kept opening her gifts - most of which were books and a couple VHS tapes of documentaries that Bucky had to mail-in to order. But by the time she was done, she was so tired again and wanted to nap in peace.

“They’ll love being able to spend time with you. Adriana always asks every hour how long before you get back from work,” Steve said. He followed Lilly and Bucky back upstairs once Becca went to sleep again.
Chapter Summary

Second Part of Christmas '86.

Chapter Notes

Also, I don't know if anyone but me noticed (Because I have been waiting for it), but this work is now the longest SteveBucky fic on AO3 (at least currently as of Halloween 2018)! As a footnote, it is the longest SteveBucky ONLY fic. There is one fic, a multi-ship fic, that is much longer - it has SteveBucky in it as well as others that Steve and Bucky are individually part of, so I feel like it holds it's title but this one holds the title for non-multi-ship SteveBucky.

“I think we did well for Christmas this year, don’t you? Everyone got something they really liked,” Steve said. He was happy with how the morning was so far, besides Becca feeling so sick and upset.

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Bucky agreed and pulled Steve aside for a second. “You haven’t gotten your gift from me yet,” he said and pulled Steve’s hands up to hold his against his chest. “It’s not as good as concert tickets. And it wasn’t too expensive. But it was fun to make and the kids helped and I think you’ll like it. It’s just maybe not as good as last year’s gift of all the gardening stuff.”

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Steve smiled and leaned into his husband. “I put that gardening stuff to good use. Did you see the amount of herbs I was able to grow?” he asked proudly. He kissed Bucky’s cheek and added, “it doesn’t matter how expensive it is, Buck. You got it for me, so I know I’m going to love it.”

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“I did see your herbs, yes. The garden was perfect for you,” Bucky agreed and pulled out a large flat wrapped package from the hall closet. “This needs a little backstory. Um, so last time you were at the doctor, your mom was out with friends so it was just me and the kids. I had Adriana watch the babies for a minute so I could go pee and I came back to all three of them in a pile of the clothes I had just folded. Adriana was wearing a sweater of yours, Sarah May had one of my hats on and Christopher was in your light purple button down. According to Adriana, it just happened and she had nothing to do with it. I don’t really believe her. But it gave me the idea to do this.” He handed the package to Steve and indicated that he could open it. It was a framed photo of the kids all together on the couch in Steve’s clothes with Diana wearing a T-shirt and resting her head on Adriana’s lap. It had taken Bucky about twenty minutes to get a picture where they were all looking at the camera. “I made the frame too. I just figured if I can make a frame then why should I buy one? And it gave me some time to do some woodworking which I haven’t done in a while.”
Steve’s eyes welled up with happy tears as he looked at the beautiful picture in his hands with a frame crafted by his most favorite man in the world. His heart soared and he touched the glass gently. “Oh, Bucky, this is so perfect. Look at how beautiful they all are. You even included my furry kid, too.” Because Diana was not-so-secretly his other child. “Thank you... thank you so much for this.”

Bucky let out a little sigh of relief and gently brushed his thumb over Steve’s cheek. “I know it’s not something fancy and it’s not like it’s expensive or took forever to make, but I thought you’d like it. And I thought it would be a good picture to have over our dresser or by the closet or something. We have the wall space.”

“I love it,” he said, hugging it to his chest. “I love you.” Steve leaned into Bucky’s side and kissed his cheek a few times. Diana trotted over to them and leaned against Steve’s legs, which was her usual when she wanted to be pet. Steve chuckled and he reached down to scratch behind her ears. “What would you like to do now, Sweetheart?”

“Are you asking me or Diana?” Bucky joked and carefully took the picture back and held it while Steve paid attention to the dog. “Are we wanting to take the whole family with us to the cemetery today? Or should someone stay here with the kids? I’m just a little worried about how much Christopher has been acting up.”

“Well, I was talking to Diana,” he joked back. “But the whole family should go,” Steve said. “I know that Christopher hasn’t been behaving lately, but he’s not going to learn if we leave him here to get special attention instead of socializing with the rest of his family.”

“I guess...” Bucky sighed and tucked his hair behind his ears. “I just don’t want him to be screaming and trying to run around at the plot. Christmas usually brings a lot of people to that cemetery and I don’t want him to be a nuisance or anything. And I don’t like when he tries to push over the headstones like they are giant blocks. It makes me anxious and tense.”

Steve’s shoulders dropped a little. “Maybe we can feed him before we go so he’s sleepy from eating?” he asked. “I don't know, Bucky. I agree with what you’re saying, but it doesn’t feel right to leave him behind. I feel bad enough that Becca is going to have to stay back.”

“Yeah, she’s not going to be happy about that,” Bucky said forlornly and touched Steve’s chest. “I guess we can try, with Christopher, I mean. Let’s go after lunch so he’ll be less energetic. But let’s leave Diana with Becca. Christopher will think it’s park-time if Diana is there.”
Steve didn’t look too happy to leave Diana behind but he also couldn’t fault Bucky’s logic for it. Besides, if it came between having his son or the dog there, he wanted his son with their family. “Alright,” Steve gave in. “I really do hope he behaves. He’s such a smart boy. I don’t know why he’s resorting to tantrums lately.”

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“It’s a phase,” Bucky assured Steve. “Kids do this around two years old. He will grow out of it just in time for Sarah May to start hers. Apparently, I was pretty horrible during my terrible twos. My dad claims I was worse than Lilly but I can’t believe that.”

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“Sarah May is too sweet to have terrible twos.” Steve had also said that about Christopher, though. “I could see you being a pain in the butt toddler, wanting to play the cool guitar at the store but throwing a fit when your parents said no. Or refusing to have that hair of yours brushed.”

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Bucky shook his head and kept rubbing his hands over Steve’s chest and sides. “No, she will have it. It might just be different from Christopher’s is all. And I definitely, definitely didn’t like brushing my hair. I still don’t most days, you know this.” He gently touched the ends of his hair and grinned. “It’s getting pretty long right now. I really do kind of look like a rocker.”

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Steve leaned into his husband and nuzzled his neck affectionately. “I like your long hair,” he said. “It’s going to be fun to pull later when we get some alone time.”

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Bucky growled quietly and wrapped his arms around Steve. “You’re a tease,” he complained. “But I can’t wait. I miss your strong body on mine, Baby. And I’m going to make sure I’m really awake so we can take our time. I’ll drink some coffee and eat sugary desserts so I’m energetic and maybe needing a little manhandling to calm down.”

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“I’ll keep you pinned under me for as long as you want,” Steve said softly. He pet his fingers through Bucky’s hair and kissed him a few times. He got a look in his eyes like he was about to suggest that they sneak to their room now for a quick something but Adriana came over and tugged on Bucky’s shirt.

“Papa, will you play with me?” she asked and held up her new policewoman.

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Bucky was all ready to drag Steve upstairs with him and at least just suck him off for a bit. But the kids were more important. So, he sighed quietly and squeezed Steve’s arms before turning to Adriana. “Yes, Peanut, let’s play until lunchtime. But then I’ll have to help Daddy make food for everyone, okay, Love?”

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Adriana climbed up Bucky’s leg like a little monkey and hugged him. “Okay,” she said happily.
“Can you use your silly voice for the dolls too?” Steve smiled as he watched the two, so happy that Bucky brought her into their lives. She was so much better off here.

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“Oh, I suppose,” Bucky said with an exaggerated sigh so she would know he was joking around. They played together for about a half hour until Adriana got bored of playing with dolls and decided to have some coloring time instead. Bucky took that as a good time for him to go help Steve make lunch. “Sandwiches today, Baby?”

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Steve spent the afternoon sitting with his mom and chatting about her friends. They spent time together most days, but they mostly talked about the kids instead of what was going on with her life. When it came time for lunch, Steve went to the kitchen to start working. “I was thinking of making soup since Becca isn’t feeling well.”

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“Oh, okay, sure. Soup,” Bucky mumbled and looked down as Christopher came running into the kitchen and waited patiently next to Bucky. “I did promise Christopher he could have a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. He kept saying, ‘Jelly, Papa, jelly.’ And signing ‘sandwich’ at me.”

“Jelly sammy!” Christopher yelped and raised his hands up over his head.

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“Oh.” Steve looked down at Christopher, who was behaving himself even if he was being a little loud. “Did your papa promise you a sandwich? Well, we can’t have you missing out on that, Bean!” Steve turned and kissed Bucky’s cheek. “I’ll make the soup and get out the peanut butter and jelly. Maybe you can take a head count on who wants soup and who wants sandwiches?”

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Bucky went around the house and consulted with everyone as to what they wanted to eat. “Adriana wants a sandwich too and Lilly wants both. Becca said she would try to eat a little soup. Your mom is fine with soup. I’m fine with soup. Sarah May can have a little bowl of soup and maybe a fourth of a sandwich.” He hoisted Christopher up into his high chair and asked him to wait patiently. He also gave him some grapes to hold him over. “I’ll make the sandwiches.”

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“Alright,” Steve said and gave Bucky’s ass a playful swat as he moved around the kitchen. “So, the concert isn’t until a while, so I know it’s not going to be an immediate Christmas present. I was thinking we should have a date night doing something more local in the meantime.”

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“What kind of date night?” Bucky asked as he put peanut butter on a stick of celery to chew on. “I think we’re too much of a pair of fathers to go to the club again. Plus, it’s just not really that intriguing anymore.” He also wasn’t so sure they should rent a hotel because they really needed to budget those expenses.
“No, not the nightclub. We’ll be like grandpas there,” Steve said. “I was thinking more along the lines of a museum or a free show and then having dinner somewhere quiet,” Steve answered. “You know, something to get us out of the house.”

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“We wouldn’t be grandpas. We are still young. I’m only going to be twenty-seven in March,” Bucky said and then shook his head. “Twenty-seven, oh, my god, I am old. Oh, my god, museums and quiet dinners... we are grandpas, Steve. Damn. In a year and a half, Becca is going to be looking to move out. Then Adriana is going to be old enough to buy cigarettes and Christopher is going to be dating and Sarah May will be in college. Oh, my god, Steve, my life is spiraling before my old grandpa eyes.”

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“You’re old, Buck. It’s time to face the music,” Steve said with a playful smile. He poured soup into bowls for everyone. “Adriana isn’t going to ever buy cigarettes,” Steve complained. “She’s going to stay our little princess forever and Christopher will never be potty trained and Sarah May will want to snuggle us every day of the week.”

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“If I have to face the fact that I’m growing older every year, then you have to face the fact that our kids will grow up too,” Bucky sassed back and pressed up behind Steve to wrap his arms around him. “God, you’re warm. And you smell so nice.” He hummed and kissed the back of Steve’s neck. “I want you so bad, Baby. I can’t wait for tonight. I want to bite you right now, I’m so impatient.”

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“I’ll never face that fact,” Steve countered with a little smile. He leaned back into Bucky’s chest and snuggled him. “How about you give me a little bite, then? No one is watching.” Christopher was too busy eating his grapes and everyone else was in the living room. “Make me more impatient for night to come too.”

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Bucky chuckled low in his throat and reached a cold hand up to pull Steve’s shirt back from his neck. “I love you, Baby,” he whispered and licked a line across Steve’s shoulder up to his neck before biting down probably a little too hard for a few seconds.

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Steve had to cover his mouth to stifle the little moan that came out when Bucky bit him. He didn’t even care that Bucky’s hands desperately needed some warming up. He turned in his husband’s arms so he could claim his lips in a deep kiss. “If only you knew the things that are running through my head right now,” he rumbled quietly.

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“I want to know,” Bucky whispered and moved one of Steve’s hands up to tangle in his hair. “It’s Christmas, Steve. Give me a little present. Tell me what you’re thinking. We can always sneak off for a few minutes while everyone is eating and we can make out. I might be able to suck you off real fast.”
Steve pet his fingers through Bucky’s hair nice and slow. “I’m thinking about how beautiful you’re going to look with bite marks and hickeys all over your body,” he purred softly on his ear. “And how nice you’re going to feel underneath me when we’re making love. I’m going to fuck you nice, slow, and deep.”

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Bucky whined quietly and tightened his grip on Steve. He loved his husband. He always had, of course. But sometimes it would hit him again just how amazingly lucky he was to be married to Steve. “I’m so crazy in love with you,” he said and slotted his lips with Steve’s for a wet, passionate kiss that he wished could go on forever.

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Steve closed his eyes and let himself get lost in the kiss. He held the sides of Bucky’s face to keep him there and then his fingers slid back to hold the back of his head as he dipped Bucky down a bit. He finally parted and put a hand on Bucky’s chest to keep him at bay as he caught his breath. He gave Bucky a shy smile once he was able to breathe regularly again. “Come on, Romeo. Let’s feed our family.”

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Bucky slumped forward and reached to give Steve one parting touch to his arm before gathering up the sandwiches and bringing them to the table. Once everyone but Becca was ready for lunch, Bucky cut up Christopher and Sarah May’s sandwiches into bite-sized pieces. “Lilly, Becca won’t be able to go with us to the cemetery today. She’s too sick. It’s entirely your choice if you want to come with us. I thought I would give you a heads-up.”

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Christopher made his usual mess in his high chair before starting to eat his food. Sarah May insisted on having her papa feed her and would whine whenever she finished her current mouthful and Bucky didn’t have another piece of sandwich ready. “I don't know,” Lilly said. “I think I want to stay home today.”

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Bucky knew Sarah May was perfectly capable of eating her own food but he had a hard time getting her to do it herself. She often would hand him food just so he could feed her and would only do it herself if it was clear she wasn’t going to get her way. “That’s fine, Lil. You don’t have to. I kind of thought you might want to stay here with Becca.” They both knew it was better for someone to stay around when Becca was sick. He was going to stay if Lilly had decided to go.

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Steve wasn’t too happy that Lilly wouldn’t be with them either. He wanted his family altogether. “If you’re staying here, then you have to check in on her and actually make sure she’s alright,” he said.

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“Steve, I’ve been helping with sick Becca for much longer than you have. I’ve got it,” Lilly assured him and poured out a bowl of soup to take downstairs for her sister. “She’ll be fine.” She grabbed a bottle of cold medicine and stuck it in her jacket pocket before filling up a glass of water and heading downstairs.
“Sarah, are you coming with us?” Bucky asked as he handed orange slices to each of his kids.

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“I’d love to go with you boys, but I’d feel much more comfortable staying here to make sure Becca is fine. I don’t like the thought of no adult supervision when someone isn’t feeling well,” she said. Steve’s shoulders slumped a little more since half the family wasn’t going now.

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Bucky felt totally fine with leaving the girls alone. He left them alone a lot even before he had Steve in his life. They knew how to take care of themselves. But he didn’t want to stomp on Sarah’s motherly and nursing instincts to take care of Becca. “Steve, Baby, since everyone else is staying here, maybe we should just leave the kids and go by ourselves. If it’s just me and you, we can spend more time talking with Grant than keeping the other kids in check.”

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“Bucky,” Steve said with a frown. “The kids need to see their brother on Christmas. And how do you think he will feel without his whole family there for him?” Steve started to tear up a little even though it was a little silly of him. He knew that the kids would all need looking after and with the two of them outnumbered, it was unlikely that they would get much time talking to their second son.

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“Okay, okay, hey,” Bucky started and reached to hold his hands on Steve’s face. “Okay, I’m sorry. I get it. We can take the kids. It is important for them to be with Grant on Christmas.” He shook his head, hating himself for even suggesting that they could leave the kids. He hated making Steve cry. “I’m sorry, Love.”

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Sarah was a little more practical than her son was, so she gave Bucky an apologetic look because she knew that between their three kids, at least one of them was going to kick up a fuss. Steve leaned into Bucky’s hands and wrapped his arms around his husband. “It’s okay,” he mumbled. “I’m going to get the kids bundled up.”

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“Alright,” Bucky murmured and watched Steve get up and take Sarah May and Christopher with him, Adriana trailing after them. He sighed and rubbed his face before looking over at Sarah. “It’s hard to say no to him. And he always looks so sad, too. I hate that. I hate making him sad.”

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“Try being a poor, single mom and coming home to that face,” she chuckled, though it was obvious she still had her own guilt for not giving Steve everything he deserved as a kid. “It’s not your fault, Bucky. I think the kids should stay home today, too, but I know why it’s so important to him. He still goes there almost every day for a few minutes.”

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“I know,” Bucky sighed again. “You know, it’s interesting to me the similarities and differences in the ways he and I react to loss. When my parents died, I avoided the cemetery, pretended they were still alive, and spiraled into self-destruction and neglect. And he goes to the cemetery every day. He
worries about the kids constantly - even if he hears one of them sneeze, he might think they are ill. He’s putting no attention into his own health and always worries over everyone else.”

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Sarah stood up and gave Bucky a hug. “If you average the two of you out, you would probably make one human being that deals with loss in a healthy way,” she teased fondly. “I’d like to say that it’s just because he’s still a new parent, but we both know he’s going to worry about those kids until the day he dies.” Sarah let go and stepped back. “Steve will be fine. Eventually.”

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Bucky nodded and looked up at Sarah with big pleading eyes for her to help him figure out those parts of Steve that he still couldn’t unlock. “He stopped looking for a therapist. He tried two people and both of them were homophobic so he just... stopped looking. And I know he only gave those two a try because I wanted him to. But I think he needs to try another. I think it’ll help him.”

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Sarah was even more against Steve finding a therapist than Steve originally had been. But with the way Bucky was looking at her and knowing how important it was to him that her son find help, she supposed that she would put a little faith in Bucky. “If that’s what you think, then I’ll look to find someone I think would be a good fit for him.”

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There was a long, soft moment of silence between them as Bucky took in the fact that even Sarah was budging a little on her opinion about this. He hadn’t expected that at all. She tended to think she always knew what was best for Steve, more so than Bucky. And sometimes she was right about what she thought Steve needed and other times Bucky was right. This was important to Bucky and Sarah recognized that. “Thank you,” he whispered and stood up to pull her in for a hug. “Thank you, Sarah. I just want him to feel better.”

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It was still tough for Sarah to let someone else look after her son’s welfare when she was his sole line of support for so long. She hugged Bucky again and gave him a reassuring smile. “I know you do. And so do I.” She looked up when she heard Diana scrambling around the foot of the stairs, which meant Steve had the kids all bundled up now and she was hoping to get in on the walk as well.

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Bucky’s eyes softened and he smiled when he saw his husband and his kids. The babies looked a little annoyed to be in their snow clothes and Christopher had already removed his hat and was dragging it behind him by the pompom on top. “Bean, you have to wear your hat,” Bucky said with a chuckle and bent down to put it on his head.

“No wanna hat!” Christopher grumped back and pulled it off again. “No, Papa.”

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Steve was used to this fight since he tried taking Christopher out the most during his walks to wear him out for nap time. “But if you don’t wear a hat, Bean, the cold will freeze your ears off,” he said. “You want to keep your ears, don’t you?” He shifted Sarah May in his arms and tried to get the hat back on to Christopher’s head.
“Ears?” Christopher asked with wide eyes, his pronunciation sounding more like a ‘w’ than an ‘r’, which always made Bucky grin.

Bucky knelt down on the ground and took the hat from Steve to try it again. He even tied the strings together so maybe Christopher would just give up. But he just pulled it back off his head and let it dangle like a hood. “Oh, Little Bean. Please just cooperate on Christmas.”

Adriana decided it was her turn to help so she pulled off her hat and offered it to her brother. “Here, Christopher, you wanna wear mine? I have a hoodie so I don’t need my hat.”

Steve sighed when Christopher took the hat off again anyway. He also refused Adriana’s hat by hiding behind Bucky when she offered her hat out. “No, Ana! No hat.”

Steve gave her a little hug. “Thank you for trying, Peanut. That was very kind of you.”

Adriana wasn’t done yet. She was determined to get Christopher to at least try her hat. “Christopher, my hat is pretty and purple. And it’s soft. Feel,” she said and carefully moved his hand to touch the hat. “It’s purple,” she added again for emphasis and let go of it once he was holding it.

“Puwlpuwl,” he repeated mindlessly as he looked the hat over. He squeezed the fabric in his hands and tried to put it on but was having trouble with it. Christopher then held the hat up to Bucky for help. “Papa?” he asked. Steve had to contain his excitement so he didn’t scare Christopher out of wearing the hat.

Bucky nodded and adjusted the hat on his son’s head. It was a little too big and he had to roll the front of it up so it wasn’t in his eyes. “Look at you, so adorable in Sissy’s purple hat,” he cooed and gave Christopher a kiss on his cheek. “Can you thank Ana for letting you wear her hat, Bean?”

Christopher toddled up to Adriana and smooshed against her in a hug. She giggled happily and hugged her brother back. “You’re welcome.” She felt very accomplished for being able to help her dads out.

Steve put her hood up and held her hand. “You ready to head out, Peanut?” Diana ran and grabbed her leash from her basket and sat at the front door with it hanging out of her mouth, whining at Steve and Bucky.

Bucky looked down at Diana and then up at Steve. He really didn’t think it was a good idea for her to come along today, especially since now it would be just Steve and Bucky with the kids. And Steve had said he was okay with leaving her home this time. But she also looked really excited about the thought of going out. “Diana, stay. Sorry, girl. You have to stay this time.”
Steve felt bad for her and let go of Adriana’s hand for a moment to pet Diana. “Tomorrow, Diana. I promise.” Diana gave them the most pathetic look before slinking off to the living room once the door was closed.

“Do you know if Grant likes me?” Adriana asked as they walked down the street. “I ‘brought’ him flowers the last time.”

“Brought. ‘I brought him flowers the last time,’” Bucky said carefully. “And, yes, he does like you. He loves you, even. He loves you a lot. So, do your Granny and Papaw. They are all really happy to have you in their family, Baby.”

Sarah May wiggled against Steve’s chest and said, “Papaw,” tentatively, like she was trying out the word to see if she liked it.

Adriana huffed when Bucky corrected her but Steve gave her hand a small squeeze to calm her down. He smiled at Sarah May when she spoke up. “Yes, Papaw,” he praised. “We’re going to see Granny and Papaw today,” Steve said to her. He looked over to Bucky with a happy smile. “Why don’t you tell the kids a story about your dad?”

“Hmm,” Bucky hummed and thought about what story he could tell that wouldn’t come out too sad or confusing for the kids. “Well, Adriana, when I was your Aunt Lilly’s age, and your Aunt Becca was your age, Papaw loved to play games with us when he came home from work. He really liked doing jigsaw puzzles most. And one day he took a small puzzle and hid it somewhere in the house. And he gave Becca pieces of paper with letters on them that spelled out where it was hidden. She worked so hard to put the letters together in the right place, with some help from me on the wrong ones. But after a while we had the word, she sounded it out, and we found the puzzle in a cabinet in the kitchen. He was so proud of Becca for getting it all worked out.”

“Becca wasn’t good at reading?” Adriana assumed that Becca had been born knowing everything already just like she had assumed about her parents. It was an adorable mistake to make. “Can you do a puzzle like that for me?” It sounded like fun and now that she was getting better at reading, she also had more fun with activities like that.

“She had to learn and figure it out just like you do, Peanut,” Bucky said and gave Adriana a smile. “We can definitely do something like that with you. Maybe we can get Aunt Becca to help set it up. Would that be fun?” He figured Becca would be more interested to help with something like that than some of the other stuff that he had asked her to do with the kids before.

“That would be so fun!” Adriana said. Aunt Becca didn’t play with her as much as Aunt Lilly and her nana did, so Adriana was extra excited whenever Becca was involved. Steve loved how much she looked up to her aunts even though he knew that Becca didn’t have the patience sometimes for
all of their kids. “If I do puzzles can I go to college like Becca?”

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They were nearing the cemetery and that gut resistance that he always got when he saw the gate kicked in like usual. He had to take in a breath and clear his mind for a second so he wouldn’t start thinking on all the reasons he used to not come to the cemetery and then want to turn around and leave. “Y-yeah, Baby. You can go to college if you want. You don’t have to do puzzles to do that, though. It’s just your choice. But that’s a long while off from now.”

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Steve let go of Adriana’s hand briefly so he could rub Bucky’s back in encouraging, able to sense that Bucky wasn’t feeling his normal self once inside. Steve understood. Sometimes, he dreaded seeing his son’s name written on the tombstone. “Papa,” Christopher said, wiggling in Bucky’s arms. “Down.”

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Bucky carefully set Christopher down but kept both his hands in his just held over his little head as he walked. He was not in the mood for Christopher to try to run off from him. He nodded towards a corner section of headstones by a big tree. “When my parents were first buried in this cemetery, none of those headstones were there. It was just that tree and there used to be a bench,” Bucky said quietly to Steve. “Makes me sad to think that in six and a half years, something like thirty people have been buried in that section alone.”

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Christopher jumped as he walked, which made walking a bit more cumbersome for Bucky, but Steve slowed down to accommodate their son. “These people could’ve gone of old age after living long, fulfilling lives,” Steve suggested. “There’s going to be a day when we’re better off in heaven than in the physical world. And that’s not something we have to be sad about. Death can be a beautiful part of life when it’s not brought too soon.”

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“Yeah,” Bucky mumbled and took a shaky little breath, already getting worked up about being here. He could feel himself about to cry already. He didn’t mention how the people in his life hadn’t died of old age but were taken from him much too soon. Steve, obviously, already knew that. “Steve,” he whispered when he saw their family come into view just past the tree. For some reason, this was a lot harder today than usual.

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Steve frowned with concern and wrapped an arm around Bucky’s shoulders. Adriana was disappointed that her dad let go of her hand again, but she noticed that her papa was upset so she moved around Christopher so she could hug his leg. “It’s Christmas, Baby,” Steve said gently to Bucky. “It’s going to make them so happy to see you today.”

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“I know, I know,” Bucky said with a little nervous nod. “I know. I’m sorry. It’s just more difficult today than normal. Christmas without them... is just really tough.” He bent down and picked Christopher up again so he could be contained for at least a few minutes. “Sorry, I’m fine. I’m fine. Promise.” He just wanted his parents and his baby boy here with him on Christmas. He wanted his
family complete again.

“Don’t be Sorry, Buck. I miss our son, too. And I know how much you miss your parents,” Steve said. He walked over to the plot and sat down in front of Grant’s headstone. He cuddled Sarah may against his chest and Adriana sat in his lap too.

“Papa, when I’m in heaven, am I going to have my own rock here, too?” she asked.

Bucky looked down at Adriana’s curious little face. She was so young and was already so exposed to loss and death and that just really got to Bucky. He couldn’t think about the fact that all his babies and his sisters and Steve would all be gone one day. It was too much right now. “Um,” he tried to answer but then a gasp of a sob popped out of his mouth and he hid his face behind Christopher for a moment.

Adriana’s face fell immediately because she thought she did something wrong. Her bottom lip quivered and she whimpered as tears started to fall. Steve wished he had more arms to hug everyone but he settled for hugging his daughters in each arm and laying his head against Bucky. “Do you want some time alone with your parents, Buck?” he asked softly.

Bucky felt horrible for making Adriana cry too. She was so sensitive about thinking she had done something wrong and he wished he was better at schooling his own emotions so she wouldn’t have to guess about why Papa was so upset and wonder if it was because of her. “No, Steve, it’s okay. I’m sorry. I’m sorry, Adriana. I’m so sorry, Peanut. Papa is just really sad. It’s not your fault, my sweet girl. It’s not you,” he reached to brush tears from Adriana’s face and hoped to god that she believed him. “I’m sorry, Peanut.”

Adriana hid away in Steve’s chest when Bucky tried to reassure her. She was certain that Bucky was only saying that to try and make her feel better. Steve pet a hand down her back. “Hey, Peanut, your pop is telling the truth. You didn’t do anything wrong.” She still kept her face hidden in his chest but she turned away from their reassuring touches. Steve looked up at Bucky with an apologetic expression. “It’s not your fault, either,” he reminded.

Bucky just cried more. He tried again to get Adriana to look at him but she wouldn’t. He wasn’t sure what to do. “Adriana, Sweetie, I promise it’s not your fault that Papa is upset,” he said again and scooted a little closer to them with Christopher in his arms trying to wiggle out. “Peanut, you want to know why I’m so sad? Here, let me try to explain.” He nudge her side and pointed at the headstones. “You know that your brother is here. And your Granny and Papaw. But Granny and Papaw are my mommy and daddy. Just like Nana is Daddy’s mommy. And sometimes, like on Christmas, it’s really hard for me to think about my son and my mommy and daddy all being here instead of at home with me and you and everyone.”
“Why are you sad? There’s no room for them in the house,” Adriana mumbled. Steve didn’t mean to laugh but he did. Adriana was still a bit mad about being left alone so she wasn’t so sad about her birth parents being dead. She didn’t quite understand how sad Bucky was over his parents and son.

Steve nudged her over gently so she finally hugged Bucky instead. “Peanut, your pop loves everyone here very much. You would be sad if me or Papa went to heaven and couldn’t spend Christmas with you.”

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Bucky clung to Adriana once she hugged him and he kissed her hair gently. He wasn’t sure how long it would take for her to understand, but he hoped it would be soon. He didn’t like having to explain every time what it was like not having his parents and his son anymore. Adriana’s birth parents died before she knew them and then she got new parents to take care of her so it was a different kind of loss. But he decided to focus on a different part of this right now - instead of trying to talk about how young his parents were when they died and how much he wasn’t ready. “Adriana, we wouldn’t be living in that house if Granny and Papaw were alive. We would have a different home.”

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Sarah May wiggled to get put down and since, she usually was a trustworthy baby, Steve let her wander on the ground. “What house would we live in?” Adriana asked. “Would we live in Big Tim’s house?” Sarah May fell on her butt a few steps into walking towards the headstones and chose to sit there looking up at a bird in a tree.

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“Uh, no, Baby, we wouldn’t live with Tim. We would just live in a different house,” Bucky said. “Aunt Lilly and Aunt Becca would live in our home with Granny and Papaw and your siblings and you would live with Daddy and me at a different place - probably with Nana.”

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“But I like living with Lilly and Becca,” she sighed. Adriana looked at the gravestones. “Who are the people buried there?” she asked, pointing at the next plot over. “Do they know it’s Christmas or do they need us to tell them?”

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Bucky followed to where Adriana was pointing and looked down the rows of graves. They weren’t the only family here today. There were four other groups he could see in the cemetery but they were all too far to hear them. “No, Baby, they know. It’s okay. I’m sure the rest of the people here will have family coming today and tomorrow to talk. It’s very nice of you to be concerned about them though. Right, Daddy? Adriana is very thoughtful.”

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Steve nodded. “Yes, you are a very kind and thoughtful person, Peanut.” He was about to ask her to come closer since she had been wandering over towards the other plot, but he got distracted when Sarah May started to make scared little noises. An aunt was crawling around on her pant leg and she couldn’t shake it off.

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Bucky looked over at Sarah May too as she lifted her leg up towards Steve and cried and made nonsensical noises for help. “Ya-Ya, it’s just a little bug,” Bucky said calmly so maybe she would calm down too. But then she noticed more ants coming from a little hole between the gravestone and the snow and she yelped louder about it.

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Steve calmly brushed the bug off and pulled her into his lap. “Hey, it’s okay, Sweet Pea. They’re just little ants. They won’t hurt you, Love.” Christopher saw the onslaught of insects and ran over to stomp and jump on the hole. “Oh, no, Bean, don’t do that-” Steve groaned.

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Apparently, once Steve had removed the little ant and showed Sarah May that they weren’t harmful, she immediately became endeared to them. Because when Christopher stomped on the hole, she screamed and reached both arms out trying to stop him. Bucky was quick to pluck Christopher off the ground and hold him in a ball to his chest. But now Sarah May was crying and pointing at the spot where the ants’ escape was covered up.

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“Oh, no,” Steve said with a concerned frown. “Oh, what a mess we have, little one! I’m sure Your gran and papaw are having a laugh at us right now,” he said to his crying daughter. “It’s okay. Um...” he looked around for an unearthed ant and let it crawl on his finger. “Look, Ya-Ya! Look, it’s okay! See, it’s crawling around just fine.”

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Sarah May’s bottom lip stuck out and she mumbled to herself as tears kept coming down her face. But she watched the little bug crawl around Steve’s finger and it seemed to do the trick somewhat because she was sniffing back her tears and getting quieter.

Bucky sighed in relief and let Christopher down again. But then he noticed Adriana wasn’t with them anymore. “Adriana?” He looked around and couldn’t see her. “Steve, where did she go?”

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Steve’s immediate mode was to internally panic when he couldn’t find one of his kids right away. He hastily put the ant back down and passed Sarah May to Bucky so he could go run and find her. They’d only taken their eyes off her for a few seconds. She couldn’t have gotten that far. Steve moved over the slight curve of a hill and was grateful to find her crouched in front of a headstone, sounding out the name under her breath. “Adriana!” Steve said in a scolding tone. “What were you doing wondering off like that? You scared us.”

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Adriana looked up at her daddy and then back to the headstone. From where she was, the ground bowed just enough that she could still see the top of Bucky’s head. She had thought they could see her too. “I was... just reading. This grave says ‘Jo-Ann Morris’.” She could see the fire of worry in Steve’s eyes and she looked down at her feet, feeling for the second time today that she had really messed up.

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Steve scooped her up and counted to ten in his head so he wouldn’t lose his temper with her. He
took her hand and placed it on his chest so she could feel how fast his heart was beating as he walked her back to Bucky. “I’m proud that you could read that, Peanut, but do you feel how fast my heart is beating? That’s what happens when we can’t find you. When we’re outside, you have to be close enough to hold our hand, always.”

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“I feel it,” Adriana murmured and refused to look directly into Steve’s eyes. “I could see you, Daddy. I could get back.” She was close to crying again but she was determined to keep it in this time.

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“I know you could get back but it’s safest to be close to your dads or your nana, okay? But you’re back with us now and that’s all that matters, so chin up.” Steve kissed the top of her head and hugged her tighter.

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Bucky was waiting with both babies in his arms and he smiled warmly when he saw Steve with Adriana. He hadn’t worried like Steve had. He assumed she was probably around and he would have only started to worry if they couldn’t find her in the cemetery. After all, it was all fenced in, so he figured she hadn’t made it out. “There’s my girl. Where did you go?”

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Steve sighed in relief once they were all reunited again. “She went to go read some of the tombstones,” he said and pet his hand on her head a little more to be reassured she was still there.

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“Oh, yeah? What did you learn, Peanut?” Bucky asked, a little absently as he prevented Christopher from taking off his gloves. “Steve, Baby, should we say what we want to and then head back? The babies are getting a little annoyed at being contained so much. And Christopher might be winding down for a nap.”

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Adriana didn’t answer because she still felt upset over making her dads worry. Steve looked at all three of their kids looking more miserable by the second. “Sure,” he sighed. He knelt in front of Grant’s grave and said a prayer for him, then told him about their day so far and how much he missed him.

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Bucky listened to Steve talk to their son and let him have his time in peace and quiet. Once he was done, Bucky added his piece to it and then gave a much shorter sentiment to his parents than usual since he knew the kids were ready to get out of here. He knew his parents would understand. And he would be back soon enough to talk some more. “Ready, Steve? If you want more time, I can take the kids back. It’s not that far, we will be fine.”

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Steve really did want to spend more time with Grant, but he also didn’t want to have Bucky walk alone with their kids. They should all be together, really. “It’s okay, Buck. But thank you,” he said.
“I should get started on dinner anyway. Do you have any requests? Please, no spaghetti, though. My mom bought so much of it and that’s all she’s making lately.”

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Bucky nodded and headed towards the gate with both babies still in his arms. Christopher was already blinking slowly and resting his head on Bucky’s chest. “We still have salmon. We could cook that and have mashed potatoes and green beans. The kids can have those frozen chicken nuggets instead of fish.”

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“I like the sound of that,” Steve said. Nobody was watching them, so he leaned over to kiss Bucky’s cheek. “I love you,” he said softly.
Chapter Summary

Final Part of Christmas '86.

Their walk home from the cemetery was uneventful. Although, Sarah May made a point to tap Bucky’s shoulder at every dog they saw and go ‘woof’ to make sure he saw the dog too. “Did Christopher teach you that, Ya-Ya?” Bucky asked and kissed her cheek. Her brother was asleep in Bucky’s other arm and breathing heavily against his neck. “Your big brother has always loved to bark at the doggies too.”

The second they were back home, Bucky took the babies upstairs and put them down for a nap before returning to Steve and slowly wrapping his arms around him and letting out a content sigh. “I’m really sorry for being too emotional at the cemetery. I didn’t mean to make Adriana cry too.”

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Steve set Adriana up to play with her new dolls in the living room before waiting in the kitchen for Bucky. “Babe, it’s not your fault. You have every right to be emotional.”

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“I know. But I could have held it in a little. I know how sensitive she is about thinking he’s doing something wrong. I didn’t help that at all,” Bucky said softly and ran a thumb over Steve’s lips. “Christmas is the roughest day to be at the cemetery still. It’s been years without my parents and our second Christmas without Grant but it’s still too much.”

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“No, Baby, you didn’t have to hold it in at all. Adriana has to learn that sometimes she might say something that isn’t bad even if it upsets us, we still love her and it’s not her fault or anything.” They just had to be extra patient when she was in her sensitive moods. “Christmas would be perfect if they were all here,” Steve said sadly. “I bet your dad would love wrangling Christopher and your ma probably would’ve liked Grant or Adriana the most. My Ma already has claim over Sarah May,” he said.

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“Your mom does have claim over Sarah May,” Bucky agreed with a gentle smile. “My mom would have liked Adriana a lot, I think. She’s a lot like I was as a kid - curious and passionate but easily confused and often in tears.” His earliest memory was of being four years old and skinning his knee at the park and his mom used water from a public foundation to clean it out and then she told him that the reason people cry when they are hurt is because tears hold all a person’s strength, so the body is just trying to send some strength down to his hurt knee.

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Their kids already had so many people to look out for them and love them, but they would have been even luckier to have Bucky’s parents around to dote in them. “You still are easily confused,” Steve
accused fondly as he kissed him. “Even though you’re so smart.” Steve pulled Bucky along to follow him as he started up dinner.

“I am still easily confused,” Bucky agreed with a huff and gave Steve another kiss to his cheek. “Good thing I’ve got you to explain to me.” He grinned over at his husband. “Can I help with dinner? Or should I stay away from it like usual?” He was sometimes allowed to help if it was something Steve felt like Bucky couldn’t mess up.

“It’d be nice to cook together tonight,” Steve admitted. It was a rough trip to the cemetery and Steve wanted to have Bucky’s constant company right now. He pulled out the chicken nuggets so Bucky could take care of those. “How were you able to stay calm when Adriana ran off?”

Bucky smiled and nudged Steve’s side with his before taking the bag of chicken nuggets. He really liked when Steve let him help in the kitchen. “Well, I knew she couldn’t have gotten too far,” Bucky said. “The cemetery has a fence all around it and she’s too short to open the gate. It’s also too heavy for her to push. I would have gotten worried if we couldn’t find her in the cemetery anywhere.”

“Yeah, but what if a stranger could’ve taken her or what if she tripped and hurt herself?” Steve asked. “Trouble can happen in seconds. I’ve seen plenty of that happen when I was on patrol,” Steve sighed. He prepped everyone else’s food while the oven heated up.

“Sure, that could happen. But I consider the cemetery to be a fairly safe place. So, that’s not my first thought. It would have been my first thought if you came back without her,” Bucky said. “So, if she and I were at the store and I turn around and she’s gone, then my first thought would be that she was taken. Because I don’t consider the store to be safe.”

Steve nodded. “I understand. I guess it’s harder for me to keep calm like that.” He kissed Bucky’s cheek and started to boil water to make some rice. “She’s trying to read everything nowadays. Soon we won’t be able to spell words to work around saying things we don’t want her to know about.”

“I know you worry. It’s okay to worry. Hell, Steve, you know I’m always worried about everyone. But I think I’m less worried now than before I met you. I think it’s been good for me to have another person I can depend on to help me. You know? Now, when something’s wrong like that I can usually get myself to rule out the most likely answer before I get dizzy with what-ifs. And I struggle sometimes, but I’m a lot better about it now. Now, I can give it a critical look first.” He really did attribute that to Steve being with him. Before they had any kids, Steve was always good at getting Bucky to calm down when he was worried about the girls.

Steve nodded. It made sense, really. If he took a step back and ruled what was possible before
focusing on what was also probable, then he would have an easier time not worrying about the possible-but-improbable. “I’m lucky to have you here,” he said. “I’d go nuts over everything.” Once the food was cooking, he walked behind Bucky and gave him a hug.

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“I know, Baby,” Bucky said as he leaned back against Steve and held the arms that wrapped around him. “But that’s why we’re together. We’re better together. We’re supposed to be together.” He hummed happily and nodded, agreeing with himself as he closed his eyes and just let them sway slightly back and forth. “I want you. The kids’ bedtime needs to be early tonight so I can get to you faster.”

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Steve smiled as they swayed together. He kissed his husband nice and slow with a low purr of approval. “I’ll make sure to tire them out after dinner,” Steve promised. Because nobody was around, he slid a hand down to cup Bucky between his legs. “My mouth will be all over this tonight.”

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Bucky let out a quiet, breathy moan and shook his head. Steve was so sexy all the time. He always knew the right thing to do to him. “Baby, you’re making me blush,” he whispered and just let his weight fall a little bit more on Steve. “Is tonight going to be pretty typical for us or are we going to spice it up a little? We haven’t used the bed ties in a bit.”

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“I know I am,” Steve said with a fond smile, leaning in to nibble Bucky’s jaw as he slipped his hand down the front of Bucky’s pants to fondle him. “How do you feel about using the bed ties and the blindfold?” he asked quietly, just in case his mom or one of the girls was walking by.

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Bucky whined high in his throat at the gentle, warm touches Steve was giving. He knew this was a slippery slope because he was easily aroused and didn’t want to pop a boner in the kitchen but he also loved being held and touched by his husband so he wasn’t going to complain. “Yeah, both is good. Do you want to... never mind.” He shook his head and reached a hand up to touch Steve’s neck.

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Steve smiled brightly because he knew exactly what he was doing to Bucky and he was also loving every second of it. “Talk to me, Sweetheart,” Steve said sweetly as he kissed down Bucky’s throat. “What were you going to ask?” He didn’t want Bucky to feel like he had to hide his wants from him.

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“Um,” Bucky started and had to stop to take in a soft desperate gasp. “You’re amazing,” he mumbled before picking up again. “Well, we have new tapes for the video camera and we haven’t taped ourselves yet even though we’ve brought it up a couple times. Maybe tonight would be a good one. I look pretty cute today and you look perfect like always.”

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Steve paused in thought but it really wasn’t that hard of a decision. “I like the sound of that, Baby.
You really do look cute today. More so than usual, and you’re gorgeous even on the average day.” He smiled at him and pecked his lips innocently. “Get one of the longer tapes. I don’t want to half-ass this one.”

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“Long tape, got it,” Bucky agreed. “Maybe I’ll go get the camera set up right now while we’re waiting for dinner to cook. I need a couple minutes to calm down after the touching.” He gently pulled away from Steve, going slowly so Steve could adjust as they went and let him go. “I’ll be back. If dinner is ready before I’m done, then come get me.”

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Steve washed his hands and finished up making everyone dinner. Thankfully, the kids behaved themselves well enough and Steve was able to get them to bed at a reasonable hour. He had Bucky do one last check on Becca while he helped his mom set her new alarm clock for the morning so she could go meet with some friends.

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Becca was still horribly sick but she was able to take some medicine and fall asleep again. Bucky even gave her permission to use her and Lilly’s walkie-talkies to call for him in the night if she needed it. But then soon enough he was making his way back upstairs and slipping his arms tightly around Steve with a low, sultry, “Hey, Sexy. Come here often?” followed by a giggle that ruined the game just a little.

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Steve looked over to Bucky with a smile, puffing his chest out a little without realizing it when Bucky called him sexy. “I do, actually every night. Sometimes in you, sometimes on you, sometimes in my hand,” he joked. Steve led Bucky over to the bed and gave him a little nudge to push him back onto it.

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“Wow, how cheeky,” Bucky mused and flopped back on the bed, immediately spreading his legs wide as an invitation. “You forgot my mouth. That’s another place you come. And it’s a pretty important one.” He slipped his hand in his shirt and pulled up so he was revealing his tummy and his chest but he didn’t remove it yet. He figured Steve would want to remove his clothes for him. “Camera’s all ready. Just click record.”

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Steve licked his lips when Bucky spread his legs for him. He hurried and pressed record on the camera. “Look at you, so beautiful and adorable at the same time.” He slid a hand up Bucky’s shirt, eyeing his exposed tummy. He pushed it up so he could kiss him there before taking the shirt off entirely. “Would this still be as sexy if I was wearing those Christmas pajamas?” he asked.

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Bucky chuckled and reached out to run a hand over Steve’s arm slowly. “I think I would still think you’re sexy but it wouldn’t make for the best video. We want to watch this later and be turned on because we are just so good at fucking, not laughing because you have Santa and reindeer on your ass.”
Steve kissed up Bucky’s neck affectionately. “But what if I get turned on by Santa on my ass?” Steve’s hands moved to the waistband of Bucky’s pants. “I don’t need a video to get turned on by you. You’re so sexy and amazing and all I want to do is put my hands all over you all the time.” He slowly pulled Bucky’s pants and underwear down, freeing Bucky’s cock.

“Baby, if you’re turned on by Santa, we have different problems,” Bucky joked and maneuvered easily as Steve stripped his bottoms off. “And I know we don’t need a video to be turned on by each other. I just really want to have it. And it’s so hot knowing that we can capture our intimate moments like this. And it sort of feels like we’re being watched and I kind of love that right now too.”

“Well, we kind of are being watched by our future selves at this very moment.” Steve turned to the camera and said, “Love you, Bucky” and then he turned back to the Bucky that was underneath him. He dove right for his neck again, sucking a mark there as he rolled their hips together. Steve worked his own clothes off in no time. “Put your hands over your head, Beautiful.”

Bucky gasped and moved his head back so Steve had better access to him. He obediently moved his arms up and wiggled a little beneath Steve as he did. “I love you, Steve,” he said warmly to his husband and then looked to the camera. “You too, Future Steve. I hope I make you come then like I’m gonna make you come now.”

Steve grabbed their little box of sex supplies and found the blindfold, some lube, and handcuffs that they had acquired recently. “You’re under arrest,” Steve said as he clipped a cuff around one of Bucky’s wrists. “For one count of being too sexy and one count of getting hard in the kitchen.” He cuffed the other wrist after hooking the chain around the bedpost. “How do you plead?”

Bucky’s eyes flashed and he split a huge grin. He liked this. He tugged on the cuffs and moaned to entice Steve. He knew he had to look just perfect like this. He for sure knew that Steve looked delicious as well. He wanted to bite him. “I’ll plead guilty to the account of being too sexy. Anyone with eyes can see that. But you have no case for my kitchen boner. Your evidence won’t stick.”

Steve felt kind of proud of himself for coming up with this little play. Once Bucky’s hands were cuffed, Steve teased Bucky’s nipples. “Well, I have an incident report from a Mr. Steve Rogers-Barnes,” he said in a serious tone. “And he claims that he had tactile confirmation of an erection before dinner.” He leaned down and nipped at Bucky’s throat. “Do you change your plea?”

Bucky growled softly at Steve and raked his eyes down his body. “Fine. Fine, you caught me. I’ll take whatever sentence you feel necessary. Just be merciful, please. I did it out of love.” He blinked his eyes a few times and stuck out a pout. The camera probably wouldn’t see that too well but he knew it would look cute to Steve right now.
Steve cupped the sides of Bucky’s face and kissed him slow and deep. “You are hereby sentenced to one night of sex, followed by a morning of cuddling,” Steve decided, grinning like an idiot because Bucky was so goddamned adorable and this was cheesy as hell but he liked it. He reluctantly pulled back so he could grab the blindfold and start to slip it over Bucky’s eyes.

“Thank you, Sir. I’m more than happy to do my time,” Bucky said with just the slightest giggle as Steve blindfolded him. “I can’t promise I won’t misbehave and need that morning cuddling to turn into giving you a wake-up blowjob and then cuddling.” He hoped the kids slept in a little. He knew it was asking a lot since they went to sleep earlier but he could always hope.

Steve got off the bed to grab the camera off the stand and held it in one hand as he moved between Bucky’s legs. He focused it on Bucky’s waist as he massaged little circles over Bucky’s thighs. He’d tease his dick here and there in passing but didn’t do anything with it yet. “I think that’s a minor offense I can look past.”

“How kind of you,” Bucky mumbled. He couldn’t move himself very much and he couldn’t see, so every moment was so tantalizing. He could feel that Steve was over him and each new touch sent a jolt of desire through him but he couldn’t grab Steve and make out with him. He was totally at Steve’s hands and he loved it. It was the best kind of impatience and he loved to beg for it. “Baby, you keep passing up my cock. It wants you.”

“Are you sure?” he asked as he gave Bucky’s balls a little squeeze. “Because it’s looking like it’s doing just fine without me.” Steve ghosted his fingers over the length of Bucky’s cock before grabbing it at the base. He focused the camera on Bucky’s face as he started to stroke it. “Like this?”

Bucky’s mouth fell slowly open like it was waiting for something to suck on. He moved his head a little to the side to bare his neck more and because his whole body was squirming so much right now with anticipation. He gasped in a small desperate breath and let out a groan that sounded very close to Steve’s name.

“You look so goddamn sexy, Buck.” Steve thumbed at the head of Bucky’s dick. “Keep making noises like that, Baby. The camera loves it and so do I.” He leaned down and kissed up Bucky’s torso and smiled lovingly down at him. “How’re you feeling?”

Bucky whined and moaned more as Steve praised his body with kisses and touched him with his gentle hands. He loved his husband beyond anything and his whole being wanted to show him how much. “I feel like the sun,” Bucky said, a little delirious from arousal already. “Hot and powerful and important. You make me feel like I’m everything.”
Bucky’s response had Steve grinning like an idiot. It was just the sort of nonsensical yet important sentiment he needed to hear. He continued to tease Bucky’s dick with the camera focused in on it but he wanted to get the show on now. He put the camera back on the stand and grabbed the lube to coat his fingers. “You are everything,” he said at long last as he pushed two fingers in slowly at once. “Nothing in this world can compare to you.”

Bucky bit his lip hard. Steve knew how much he loved the stretch of two fingers to start and it made his whole body tighten up for a moment before he worked to relax once again. “I want that good dick of yours, Baby,” he murmured and writhed for him as much as the restraints would allow. “I love having you inside me. I want your come. I want to feel you taking me open, fucking me open. I want to hold my husband’s come inside me all night and sleep soundly cuddled up to him. I want you, Steve. My love.”

Steve learned by this point how to get his husband going. He’d be a shitty partner if he didn’t pick up on those kinds of things. He felt his heart burst with happiness at all of the sweet and dirty things that came out of Bucky’s mouth. “You’re going to get all of that, Baby. I’m going to fuck you nice and deep tonight. Maybe I should try fisting you first, if you think you can wait that long before I give you my dick.”

Bucky groaned a little while he thought it over. He really wanted Steve’s dick. But he also loved being fisted. “That would be good for our video,” he observed. “But I do want your cock. But it’ll feel really overwhelming in a good way if you fuck me after you’ve made me come from your fist.” He murmured his options before nodding. “Your choice, Love.”

Steve worked Bucky’s ass open with steady thrusts of his fingers. “How about we save the fisting for the next video?” Which meant that Steve was totally alright with them being filmed. Only they were going to see it, after all. He kissed the inside of Bucky’s thigh before giving it a little bite. “I think I want to try to be a little rough tonight,” he admitted softly. “If that’s okay.”

“I love rough,” Bucky gasped and reflexively pulled the restraints again. “Do what you want with me, Baby. I trust you. I love you. I want you to be rough with me. Ruin me, please.” He whined and bared his neck for Steve. He sort of wished he could see him but he also loved having no idea what Steve was about to do. He loved this.

Steve sunk his teeth in a little deeper on Bucky’s thigh as he pushed in a third finger. He let out a little possessive growl. As much as Steve was a baby about pushing too much during sex, he also really loved the way it made Bucky react. Seeing Bucky bare himself for him shot hot waves of arousal right to his dick. He kissed up Bucky’s chest and licked a stripe up Bucky’s throat. “I’m going to kiss your neck,” he said softly. “And I want you to tell me when I get to a spot you want me to bite.”
Bucky’s heart was pounding so strongly in his chest and his dick was red and needy and desperate for touch. His body was on fire in all the best ways. “What if I want you to bite everywhere?” Bucky asked as Steve moved up under his jaw for a moment. “God, Baby, I love you, Steve.” He couldn’t see through the blindfold but he knew the lights were on so the camera could see and he hoped they looked as good as he thought they might. And he could smell in the air the intense combination of their arousals and sweat and precum. This was definitely going in their top ten fucks.

Steve pulled his fingers out to get more lube on them. He stealthily slicked up his cock before going back to fingerling his husband. “Then I’ll bite you everywhere, Handsome.” Steve didn’t hold back and he marked up Bucky’s throat with little teeth marks as he bit him methodically inch by inch down his neck. Just as he got to his collarbone, Steve slipped in his dick at the same time he pulled his fingers out and pushed in balls deep.

Every kiss and bite had Bucky squirming and moaning and mumbling little notes of gratitude to Steve. He was a complete mess of a man by now and he was getting ever closer to his release. It came as a surprise to him when Steve stuck him with his cock smoothly and deeply. He gasped and squeezed his hands into fists. “Ah, my god, thank you, Steve,” he said with clear need heavy in his voice. “Fuck me. Now.”

Steve didn’t waste a second. He grabbed Bucky’s hips hard enough to bruise and started to rail him into the bed. He snapped his hips forward, causing his balls to slap against Bucky’s ass with every thrust. Steve leaned forward and bit Bucky’s shoulder with a possessive growl. “Say my name again.”

Bucky whimpered like a wounded animal and let his body move with the power from Steve’s thrusts. “Steve,” he croaked. “Steve, my perfect husband.” He gasped in air and tried not to think about how Steve’s own lungs must be handling such a strenuous pace. But, out of the two of them, Bucky’s body was taking more of a beating. But definitely in a good way, in the way he loved and longed for. Being taken apart by Steve and his dick was always Bucky’s favorite thing.

Bucky was moving up the mattress with every few thrusts and Steve had to tug him back down to get his ass snug up against his hips again. Steve moaned at how great the tight, hot friction was against his cock and, god, Bucky sounded so good. He turned Bucky over just a little onto one side so he could give his ass a sharp smack. “Tell me how you’re going to come from my dick alone.”

“I’m so close already,” Bucky admitted immediately. He hadn’t expected that slap to his ass and it really helped bring him closer. Steve knew how much he loved that and he so rarely did it. Oh, but when he did, Bucky savored every bit of it. “You’re the best, Baby. I’m so lucky to get to be fucked by you. I love you. I love this.” He knew he sounded a little bit like he was buttering Steve up, trying to boost his ego, but he really did feel like Steve was the perfect man and that he got so lucky to be
with him.

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Steve was finding it difficult to breathe but he didn’t want to stop with how much Bucky was reacting to all this. He sounded so good and it felt amazing to be able to fuck his husband into the mattress. He grabbed one of Bucky’s legs and threw it over his shoulder so he could hit Bucky at just the right angle. He gave Bucky’s ass a few more smacks since this new position had it exposed just that much more. “That’s what I like to hear,” he said breathlessly. “Now come for me.”

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With his leg up like that, Bucky’s prostate was much easier for Steve’s cock to get to and every strong thrust had him whimpering and biting into the side of his own arm so he didn’t cry out and wake anyone up. “I love-” he tried his best to talk but nothing was coming out of him after he felt those tantalizing, perfect stings on his ass. He wanted more but he was coming before he could try to stop himself and hold off. He could usually last a little longer but the combination of everything had him right at the edge at the start.

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As soon as he felt Bucky’s ass clenching and spasming around his dick, Steve slowed down. He gasped for air and felt the blood pounding in his ears. His hips slowed and he braced himself against Bucky’s chest as he tried not to pant too heavily and set Bucky’s alerts off. He looked down at his amazing husband, who looked so damn good all tied up with a mess on his stomach. “I love you,” he said. “I’m so close, Bucky.” He wanted to see Bucky’s beautiful eyes, so he reached over to take the blindfold off.

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Bucky’s eyes were only open ever so slightly. He was worn out and it was hard for him to stay alert as Steve slowed down. He tugged his arms out of an instinct to hold Steve but he couldn’t. “Please come in me, please,” he whispered so softly and glanced over at the camera. He had actually forgotten for a few seconds that it was there watching them. And he knew his fucked-out, perfectly used up body was going to look very nice later.

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Steve didn’t have all that much left in him, but it was easy to be aroused more than anything when he had his wonderfully ruined husband underneath him looking at him like that. “Yes,” he murmured. “I will.” He leaned down and kissed the corner of Bucky’s mouth before resting their foreheads together. He looked into Bucky’s eyes as he steadily and slowly circled his hips. His orgasm wasn’t earth-shattering, but it was intimate. His lips parted and he didn’t break eye contact as he felt himself spill into Bucky. Exhausted, he used the last bit of energy he had to uncuff Bucky’s hands.

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Bucky was spent. He was vaguely aware of Steve releasing his arms and he just flopped back on the bed with a thud. Steve was still inside him and his body was draped over him like he loved. He could feel Steve’s come inside him and he smiled tiredly. “Baby, that was fucking amazing,” Bucky said breathlessly. “I love you. God, Steve, I love you. You’re everything.” He brushed his fingers in Steve’s hair and held him close. “You’re so good to me.”

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Steve closed his eyes and snuggled up to Bucky, too exhausted to move or pull out of him. “I love you too, Buck,” he murmured tiredly. He placed a few kisses on his neck. “You’re the best husband I can ever ask for. I’m grateful for every Christmas and every new year I get to spend with you.”

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“The camera,” Bucky mumbled. “We have to stop the recording.” He was so tired now. And he knew Steve was too. But Bucky didn’t want someone to come in with an emergency and see the camera and know they recorded themselves together. He also wanted to go ahead and take the tape out so no one went for the video camera later to record sometime and found their video.

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It was rare that Steve got grumpy over being asked to do something and this was one of those times. His chest ached from breathing too hard and all he wanted to do was sleep. He was so close already to passing out on top of Bucky. He let out a dramatic huff as he got up to shut the camera off and shove it under the bed for now.

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Bucky was awake enough to realize Steve was a little miffed. It wasn’t hard to tell with the way Steve sort of stomped around the bed and clicked the button a little too hard. Once he was back in bed, he prodded his side with his knuckles and whispered, “Hey. What was that?” He wasn’t trying to start anything, he just wanted to make sure Steve wasn’t in pain or mad at him for something.

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“I’m tired,” Steve complained. He plopped into bed right next to Bucky like dead weight and laid his head on his shoulder, eyes closed already. “Just wanna go to sleep,” he murmured, wrapping his arms around Bucky again and stubbornly pulling him against his body.

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Bucky let out a little surprised grunt when Steve pulled him in like a teddy bear to cuddle up with him. He wanted to ask if he was feeling okay and how his lungs felt but he decided he shouldn’t push his luck. So, he let Steve fold him up in his arms and tuck his head under his chin. “Okay, Baby. Sleep well. I love you. Merry Christmas.” He sighed and kissed wherever he could get to on Steve. He felt a little bad that Steve did so much for him that night with the video camera and being rough and tying him up and then it took all Steve’s energy right out of him. “I owe you, Steve,” he promised in a whisper and nuzzled closer to his husband.
A few weeks after Christmas.

The next few weeks for the Rogers-Barnes family were busy but fairly uneventful. Becca was sick through New Year’s Eve but she got better just in time for a head cold to go through each of the little kids. It wasn’t the best way to start 1987 off as a new year but it was over before they knew it.

Steve was finally able to get a start on his painting classes with mom’s and their kids. There weren’t too many people, but it was a start. Christopher sure loved to mash his hands into the paint, too.

Steve had just been in the middle of arranging his notes for the next class when there was a ringing of the doorbell.

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Bucky was working pretty much daily and today was no exception. He still had several hours left and wasn’t at home when a man with two luggage bags came to their door. He rang the bell and waited for someone to answer and was eventually met with Steve. “Oh, hello,” he started. “I’m looking for James Barnes. He goes by ‘Bucky’. He’s got two little sisters. I thought they might have moved but I wasn’t sure. You must be the new resident. Do you happen to have his new address?”

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Steve looked at the man in surprise. He didn’t recognize him. And he also couldn’t help but laugh a little. “Oh, I know Bucky,” he said pleasantly. “They’re all here. What’s your name? I don’t think he was expecting any visitors.”

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“They still live here? That’s nice.” The man nodded and looked around the outside for a second, noting some of the differences since the last time he had visited. “My name is Gregory. I’m his uncle. I would have called or something but we stopped trying to call a long while ago after Bucky just stopped answering us. I figured our Christmas cards had been showing up here for some other family for a few years but maybe he just ignored those too.”

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Adriana and Christopher came scampering over and they hid behind Steve’s legs as they peered to see who was at the door. Steve scooped Christopher up with a smile and stepped aside to let Gregory in. “Well, things have been hard on him over here. I wouldn’t take it personally,” Steve said to defend Bucky a bit. “He has told me about you. It’s good to meet you.”

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“Hello, there, little ones,” Gregory said as he came into the house with a ‘thank you’ to Steve. He held on to his two bags of luggage and looked to his new host. “I’m sorry. How rude of me. I didn’t ask your name. Are you a friend of his or subletting part of the house?” he asked and gave Steve a warm smile. Greg didn’t look much like the Barnes siblings except in the smile. His eyes were darker.
than theirs and he had a balding patch that didn’t hit the line from Old George who had a full head of hair from when he was born until the day he passed.

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“I’m his husband,” Steve said confidently, keeping things friendly but also saying it in a way that made it hard to question. “These are two of our kids. The youngest is in the living room with my mom.” He closed the door just in time to keep Diana from sniffing around on the stoop. “Are you hungry or thirsty? We have plenty of food.”

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“What?” Gregory asked with a snort of a laugh. He thought it was a joke at first. But then why would this Steve be claiming they had children if he was just trying to make a joke. “I ate on the plane, thank you,” he murmured quickly as he tried to get his next words together. “Excuse me, but I don’t understand. That’s impossible.” He gave Steve a once over like he was trying to see if maybe he missed the fact that this was just a very large, very tall, very mannish sort of woman who accidentally called herself a ‘husband’ instead of a ‘wife’. But no, this appeared to be a man.

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Adriana looked up at Steve and then over to Gregory. “It’s not impossible,” she defended. “Daddy and Papa Love each other. Sometimes kids have two daddies like me and Christopher and Sarah May,” she explained patiently.

Steve was impressed with her but was a little worried about her getting upset if Gregory pushed. “Very smart, Peanut,” he praised. “How about you go play with Nana and your sister while Daddy helps Uncle Gregory settle in, Okay?” He kissed her head before ushering her away. Steve sent Christopher off with her too and pretended to chase him for a few steps. The toddler giggled and run away faster.

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Gregory wasn’t the type of man who could be mean to children. He never had been. He smiled politely as she talked, thinking all the while how confused that poor little baby must be. And he waited for the kids to be out of the way before he gave a much icier look to Steve. “You want to explain to me what’s going on here, Buddy? Where’s my nephew? Or the girls?”

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Steve straightened up and stood his ground as Gregory gave him that look. “I already explained what’s going on,” he said with a surprising amount of patience. “I’m married to your nephew and we have a family together. He’s currently at work, Becca is in her room, and Lilly is staying after school for lacrosse.”

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“Son, two men can’t get married. Two men can pretend all they want that what they are doing is fine. But you’ll never actually be married to him. This country isn’t governed by lawless hippies,” Gregory said in a cool, smooth tone. He was saving his yelling for Bucky. “Maybe I should just to talk to Becca then. Until the other two get here.”
“We have God on our side, Greg. I want to get along, I truly do, but I’m not going to tolerate you questioning mine and Bucky’s relationship. You’re a guest and you’re Bucky’s family, so I’m not going to kick you out of here. But I’m a retired police officer and you don’t want to push your luck with me.” He stood even straighter and puffed his chest out. “I’ll take your bags up to Lilly’s room and we can have her sleep in Becca’s so you have a place to stay,” he said, offering a hand out to take his bags.

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Gregory let out a mirthless laugh. He felt like he was keeping himself pretty calm given the circumstances. He also was a generally polite man with strangers so he wasn’t about to attack Steve directly. He would have a talking to with Bucky later but only because he felt like he had authority there as an uncle. “God’s a myth, boy,” he said as he handed his bags to him. “There’s no one to save you. Evolution made men and women together to breed. Two men can’t breed. It doesn’t add up. It’s not natural.” He wasn’t going to fight him but he did feel like he needed to get his piece in there first. Also, he wasn’t threatened in the least by a former cop. In his youth, he had been arrested several times for various minor infractions. Like Bucky always said, every Barnes was a criminal in one way or another.

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Steve knew that reasoning wasn’t going to work with this man, so he did the next best thing. Try to get under his skin, albeit in a way that was unusually petty for him. “I’m sorry, I missed what you said there,” Steve said casually yet exaggerated as he headed up the stairs with the bags. “I was too busy thinking of all the times I’ve seen your nephew naked.” He deposited the bags in Lilly’s room before going downstairs to get Becca. “Becs. Your uncle decided to drop in for a visit and he’s being an ass.”

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Gregory followed after Steve as he went and shook his head. “Oh, I’m the ass. Even though you’re talking to me about your sex with my nephew like he’s some seventeenth-century French whore.”

Becca stood when Steve and her uncle came down to her room. She stared on in surprise and ran her hand through her hair nervously. “Uh. Hi. Uncle Greg, it’s been a few years. Um... Steve?” She looked to Steve in hopes that maybe he could fill her in on what was going on. No one from their family had been to see them for at least four years now.

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“I never talked about sex, only about seeing him naked. I think you owe him an apology for calling him a whore,” Steve responded. He crossed his arms over his chest and gave Becca an apologetic look. “He showed up a few minutes ago. I’m as surprised as you are,” he said.

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Gregory wanted to say something about Steve being the one who made Bucky into a whore. Because he had already decided that this was all Steve’s fault. But he also didn’t want to start in on this in front of Becca. He smiled and gave her a hug, seeming for a second to have forgotten Steve entirely. “Hey, Becca, Sweetheart. I’m sorry we haven’t seen much of you and your sister in a while. I also wish I was here for better reasons.” He paused and squeezed her arm. “Your Uncle Dewey died. Just before Christmas.”
Becca’s face fell at the news. She hadn’t seen Dewey in a while, but they had always got birthday and holiday cards from him and they spoke over the phone once in a while. She was too stubborn to cry but she probably would have her moment in private later. “How did it happen?” she asked with a frown.

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“Apparently, his heart wasn’t the best,” Greg said softly. “He had a heart attack last year and he was doing better lately but then one day he didn’t wake up. And the doctor said his heart must have simply just stopped while he was asleep. Cardiac failure. But at least that means he wasn’t in pain, which is good to know.” He sighed and glanced over at Steve almost like he was challenging him to start something up again now that he knew why he was here. “Anyway, you know how Dewey was a hoarder. And we found a lot of your dad’s things in his house while we were cleaning. I shipped them to post the office. We can pick up the boxes tomorrow.”

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Steve pretended not to notice the glance back at him as he started to pick up all of the empty bottles of water and soda that Becca brought down and always forgot to bring upstairs to throw out.

“What kind of stuff?” she asked. “I dunno if Bucky is going to want to sort through that,” she said. She wanted her dad’s things but was also conscious of how her brother could get. “Maybe me and Steve’s mom should go pick it up instead so you and Steve can keep Bucky busy.”

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“Oh, that’s okay, Sweetie. I’d rather go with you. Lilly can come too. You know, we can have family time. Maybe we can go to lunch first and you can tell me how you’ve been,” Greg suggested with a warm smile. He loved the idea of reconnecting with them. But he also really liked the idea of not spending any unnecessary time with Steve. “There’s some old books. Photographs, a few trinkets, some of your father’s medals from his service. And some stuff of Dewey’s that you all are welcome to if you want it - some journals and stuff.”

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Becca didn’t want to give her uncle any opportunity to talk about Bucky’s relationship behind his back and try to get Becca and Lilly’s support, so she wasn’t in any mood to spend any time with him when she didn’t have Steve or Sarah around to back her up. “No, I think it should be me and Steve’s mom,” she said with polite firmness. “We can have family time at dinner. You can meet our nieces and nephews.”

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Gregory was silent for a moment but then nodded in resignation. “Sure, of course. If that’s what you want, Becca,” he said. “The kids do seem lovely. It’s been a while since there have been young ones around. My youngest is already twelve. Maybe it’ll be a nice change of pace to talk with them.” For all his issues with the context of Steve and Bucky’s marriage and children, he wasn’t going to blame the kids for anything. It wasn’t their fault who was raising them. And if Bucky was their dad then that meant they were his family now too so he might as well get to know them. He just knew for certain he wasn’t going to get to know Steve.

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“Come on. I’ll introduce them to you,” she said. Becca gave Steve a look that silently told him to let
her handle this bit. While Becca showed off her extended family to her uncle, Steve stole away to the telephone so he could call Bucky at work. The least he could do was give him a heads up. When Tim answered, Steve asked if Bucky was around to talk.

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Bucky had been dealing with a much smaller crisis at work but he came to the phone with an exhausted yawn. “Hey, Baby. So whatever sickness everyone is getting must be going around. Reggie threw up earlier. And he didn’t make it to the bathroom so I’ve been scrubbing our carpet for about an hour trying to get the smell out. I’m about three minutes from just taking a knife and cutting out the circle and calling it a day.”

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“You may just want to stay longer at work because cleaning up puke all day may be more appealing than what’s over here,” Steve said with a groan. “Your Uncle Gregory is here and he’s being nice enough to the kids, but he’s being an utter ass about us,” he said. “If he wasn’t your family, I’d deck him.”

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Bucky was quiet for a second, confused and concerned. “Fuck,” he whispered and rubbed his face. “What gives? Did he say why he’s here? We haven’t seen him in so long. The last time I actually communicated with them was about three years ago, maybe four now.” He grumbled and tried to think of something he could say when he got home to make him leave. “Well, Okay. I’ll be home in a couple hours. Try to just not talk to him. He’s good with kids so don’t worry about them just, you know, worry about keeping him from you.”

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“I’ll tell you why he’s here when you get home,” he said. Steve didn’t think he should give news of their dead uncle over the phone even though Becca didn’t seem to be extremely upset over it. “I’ll keep away as much as I can, but I’m spending time with our kids and if he’s around them, then that’s not my fault.”

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“I know, Baby. I get that. You don’t have to ignore them. Just maybe keep Becca talking so you and him can’t talk,” Bucky suggested and checked the time. “I know that’s a lot to ask of Becca. But Lilly should be home in a half hour and she’s nothing but words. Just give her some snacks when she gets there since she’ll be a little tired.”

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“I don’t want to put it all on Becca,” Steve groaned. “She’s going to use it as leverage to get whatever she wants for at least a month.” Steve sighed and looked over in the direction that everyone else was. “I’ll take care of things until you’re back, Baby,” he said. “I love you so much.”

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The shop was pretty busy and, with Reggie out of the picture for the day, Bucky really didn’t want to leave Tim by himself until Clint got there. But the second he could go, he hustled back home. He came stumbling in and went first to find Steve in the kitchen. “Baby, hey,” he whispered and came up next to him quickly. “Is he with the kids?” He noticed Steve was cutting up fruit so he expected the babies got hungry.
Gregory was absolutely insufferable all day and even Steve’s Mom was having a hard time being cordial. While Steve was in the kitchen, she made a point to sit with Becca and the kids with him. “He is,” Steve said. “He makes it sound like he’s ready to yell at you about something,” he warned. “Probably about being with me. And I swear if he does, I’m not keeping quiet, Buck.”

“It’s... it’s fine,” Bucky said, already feeling a headache rearing up. He was mad about that too. His injections had really been improving it but some days it couldn’t be helped. “Yeah, just...” he sighed and smacked his hands on his face lightly. “Let me try to handle it first. He’s my uncle. He’s my nuisance. If I need you to jump in, I’ll let you know.” He pulled Steve in for a kiss and lingered for a bit, holding him close. “Where do you think would be the best place for he and I to talk where the kids won’t be able to hear?”

“You’re my nuisance, so that means he’s our nuisance to share,” Steve said to him. He stroked his fingers through Bucky’s hair and gave him a look. “I don’t want you to be alone with him for long, Buck. I’ll give you five minutes before I check in.” Steve considered and then suggested, “You should probably go to Becca’s room.”

“He’s not going to hurt me, Baby. He’s not a violent man,” Bucky assured him. “I can take care of myself sometimes. I’ve done it before. Let me try to see what I can do.” He was grateful that Steve wanted to be right there with him as much as he could and be protective of him but Bucky felt like he needed an opportunity to try to prove himself, to prove he could handle this. He gave Steve a nod and went to the living room to find his uncle playing with the kids and helping Sarah May build big block towers. “Greg,” Bucky said sharply as a greeting. “Basement. With me. Now.”

When Bucky called for Greg to follow him, Adriana looked up in surprise because she knew that was her papa’s serious voice and nobody was supposed to question the serious voice. Greg gave Sarah May a pat on the head and then got up to go along with Bucky. “Hey, ‘Buckle’,” he greeted. “Not even a ‘hello’ for your uncle?”

“Hello,” Bucky said flatly and gestured down the stairs. “Go on. We have to talk.” He steeled himself and gave a parting look back at Steve before descending the stairs after Greg and flicking on the lights and Becca’s two lamps. “What the hell do you think you’re doing?” he asked immediately. “What kind of shitty game is it to come to my house and be vile to my family?”

Greg frowned at the attitude that Bucky took with him. “Vile?” He said incredulously. “Is it vile to speak the truth when my nephew is clearly delusional about his little game of house? I love you, Bucky, but this illusion has to end. You need to find yourself a wife and settle down with her before it’s too late.”
“I am settled down!” Bucky hissed back and shoved his hand out towards him to show off his ring. “I’m married. To Steve. And he’s the best thing that’s ever happened to me. And, no, it’s not like the government sees it as a real marriage but we do and he believes that his god does and, quite frankly, I could give a shit about what you think.” He paused only so he could take a breath. “Why the fuck are you even here? We haven’t talked for years. No one asked you to come.”

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“Anyone can buy a ring and call themselves whatever they want, it doesn’t make it true. Just cause I can put a crown on my head doesn’t mean I’m Queen Elizabeth,” he said. “It’s one thing to fool yourselves about it, but it’s not fair to drag those poor kids of yours into this mess,” Greg continued in a disappointed tone. He leaned back against the wall and said solemnly, “Dwight passed just before Christmas and we found a lot of your dad’s stuff when cleaning his house.”

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Bucky was charged up with much more to say but hearing about his other uncle dying put a stop in that. “Dewey’s dead?” he asked curiously. “That’s terrible. He’s young. He’s only three years older than Old George. So he’s, what... fifty-six? Damn. What happened?” Bucky was never extremely close to either of the brothers. Dewey played favorites. He preferred George over Gregory and he preferred Becca and Lilly over Bucky. It was just about the one thing that Bucky and Greg had in common.

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Gregory nodded. “Cardiac failure. He’s been having health issues for a little while now and I guess his heart couldn’t keep up anymore.” Greg was a lot closer than Bucky was, so it still stung a little to talk about it. “I was going to pick up your dad’s old things with Becca, but she insists that she goes with the other lady that lives here.”

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“Steve’s mother. Sarah. Don’t call her ‘that lady’,” Bucky warned. He wanted to ask about what things of his dad’s were there but he knew they weren’t done yet. “And don’t you dare talk to my babies about how you feel. They don’t need you coming into their home and spreading your hatred. Those kids are the most special children in the world and I won’t let you fuck them up with your nonsense!”

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“I’m not saying a word to your kids. Whatever brainwashing they get from everyone in this house isn’t going to get undone by me in a few days. But shame on you for letting this all happen. These kids should have a mother and father, not some queer circus, Buck. Did you ever finish college? You should be doing more than working retail for the rest of your life.”

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“Oh my god!” Bucky yelled angrily. “What is this? You’re picking at every part of my life right now? My husband, my kids, my education, my job? Are you going to tell me to get a haircut, next? Work out more? Eat less mayonnaise?” His fists were bunched together and he really wanted to fight him. But Gregory really wasn’t a physically violent person. Bucky could be, but Greg wasn’t. And right now that pissed Bucky off a little more. “And by the way, Greg. I couldn’t finish college because my parents fucking died and I was left in charge of two little girls! Did you forget about that? How can you question my family values when all the help you gave us was coming to the
funeral, giving me a check for two hundred dollars and then going back to California? That’s not in the family spirit, Uncle Greg!”

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“Bucky, I’m sorry, but your parents have been gone for years. How long are you going to let yourself be held down? You should be working your way up the ladder now. The girls aren’t that young anymore. If you need money to get your leg up again, then I’ll give it to you. It’s not my fault I had a family to take care of on the other side of the country,” Greg said, keeping calm despite his nephew yelling at him.

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Bucky shook his head and pointed vaguely up. “We have money. Steve and I do. We have more than enough income right now and we have a plan for my education later. I’m taking care of all of them. I have five children, a husband, and a mother-in-law. And I’ve gotten really good at budgeting. And we don’t need any help. Becca is on track to get into college early and she’s got scholarships already.”

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“Bucky,” Greg said seriously. “I’m glad that you’re in a more financially stable place, but you need to find yourself a wife. Your kids deserve to have a mother. This... this Steve guy and his mom aren’t what you or your kids need. It’s not natural for two men to be together. It’s never been done this way because it’s not right.”

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“First of all, Greg, it has been done this way before. Numerous times. People just want to ignore the successful gay parents,” Bucky snapped back. “And if I married some poor woman, that marriage would be a sham. I love having Steve’s cock up my ass and I love giving him mine up his!” He fumed a little and pulled back his sleeve to show his tattoo of his and Steve’s wedding date along with his parents’. “We’re happy together. We are married and have been for two years now. And Mom and Dad would have loved Steve if they were here!”

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Greg got angry when Bucky got vulgar. “It’s Uncle Greg to you, Bucky,” he reminded. “And a pig is happy as anything when it’s rolling in shit. That doesn’t mean it should drag other things into its shit pile with it. Having your ‘wedding’ date next to your parents’ is an insult to their vows and an insult to their upbringing of you. They maybe would’ve liked Steve just because at least he was only one person you’re sleeping with instead of whatever junkie you happened to get your hands on that weekend.”

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“Fuck you, Greg,” Bucky spit. “Steve makes me a better person. The only reason I’m who I am today is because of him. He helps me, he loves me. He gave me my kids, he helped me get back to my home, he helped me keep my sisters, he loves us like no one else does. He’s there for us! You... you hardly talk to us and then come marching in here like you have any authority over me.”

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“What the hell was I supposed to do when you ignore my calls?” He snarled. “You could’ve written to us any time you wanted. Communication is a two-way street, James, and I took the hint after you
didn’t call anyone back!” He turned to head back upstairs. “George would be ashamed of how you treat your family. If it took bringing a fairy stranger into your home to take care of your sisters, then maybe I should have taken them in the first place. Maybe it is for the best that we keep our lives separate.”

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The door to the basement slammed before Bucky could shout anything back about how ignorant he was and how rude he was being and how he shouldn’t ‘James’ him like he’s a toddler that won’t listen. “Fucking hell,” Bucky whispered as he collapsed slowly into a heap on the floor, tears streaming down his face. He wasn’t sure when he even started crying but he figured it happened at some point during the argument. But he wasn’t thinking of that now. All he could think about was his dad. And how much he missed him. And how much he wished he was here. Old George would have kicked his own brother’s ass for talking to his son that way. He would have comforted Bucky and told him there was nothing wrong with him. But all he had right then was the carpet beneath him and a little ant making its way to the coffee table.

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Steve had heard a bit of raised voices in the basement and waited for Gregory to leave before he rushed in to check in on Bucky. His heart broke at the sight of Bucky curled up on the floor and he hurried over to scoop him into his arms and cuddle him to his chest. “Hey, Hey... Baby, I’m here for you. Whatever your uncle said, he’s dead wrong. I don’t know what he said, but I know for sure that he has no idea about us.”

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Bucky curled against Steve’s chest and shook his head. “I just want my dad back,” he whispered. He wasn’t sure why, but it felt like he was reopening the wound of his parents’ deaths. He knew Greg was wrong about everything he said. He knew that. But it still hurt so much. And he had this overwhelming need for his dad to be there to help. It was his little brother after all. He would have been good at handling him. “He said that George would ashamed of me. And I know my dad would have gone off at Greg for talking to his kids this way. My dad is proud of me, of the both of us, Steve.”

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Steve stroked Bucky’s long hair. “Your dad would have absolutely been proud of you. He would love each one of his grandkids and he would be so proud of how you kept this family together. You did that, Buck, nobody else.” Steve gave Bucky a serious look. “I mean it. What you did was incredible and your uncle is an idiot for not being anything but amazed by you.”

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“I want my dad back,” Bucky pleaded again, hands holding a little too tightly on Steve. He knew he must sound like a child but he just wanted his dad there. “Greg is such an asshole. He kept saying that I needed to get out of this fantasy and find a wife. He couldn’t get past the things he doesn’t agree with to see that I’m better than before. He doesn’t care that I’m a better brother now, or that I’m a good dad, or that I’ve been sober for so long now. He doesn’t care that I have someone who loves me. He just cares that I’m not doing things his way. But what the fuck kind of authority does he have to tell me what to do? My dad wouldn’t have cared that I married a man. My dad would be happy I found someone who cares about me. He’s not my dad. Why does he think he can tell me what to do?”
It hurt to be held as tightly as Bucky was holding him, but Steve didn’t complain because he knew Bucky was hurting more. Steve wished desperately that Bucky didn’t have to suffer this heartbreak. “He doesn’t have any authority over you, but some people think that just because they’re older, they can boss you around.” He sighed. “How about I take care of things for a little while, Buck? I don’t want Greg to keep upsetting you.”

Bucky’s crying slowed down a little and he eased up on Steve, more just letting himself be cradled by him. He nuzzled Steve’s neck and gave him a gentle little kiss. “I love you so much. No matter what he says to you or whatever he tries to do. I love you, Steve. You’re my husband forever. You’re my world. I’m so sorry he’s being so terrible to you.” He sniffled and shakily pulled himself off the floor. “I... I’m just going to go upstairs for a bit. I don’t want you to deal with him alone. Make sure you have Becca with you when I’m not. I don’t want him talking to you.”

Steve helped Bucky onto his feet and put his hands on his hips to keep him steady. “I know you love me, Buck. I could never doubt that... and I know it’s not ideal, but if Greg keeps being awful to you, you can always spend a night with Father Frank at the shelter and be able to vent with other people going through similar problems.”

“No, I don’t want to leave you here,” Bucky said quickly and gave Steve a possessive kiss. “Thank you for offering, but I can’t be away from you.” It occurred to him then that Greg would probably be even more angry if he found out they named their shelter for gay people after his brother George. Bucky didn’t want to deal with that conversation either. He didn’t want to hear again his uncle bringing in his opinions on what his father would think. “Don’t tell him about the shelter. Greg, I mean. That’s more ammunition for him.”

“I won’t tell him, I promise,” Steve swore. “How about I set you up in the nursery with the babies? I’m sure Christopher and Ya-Ya will love to have some alone time with their papa and I can have Adriana help me get dinner ready. I think she’s really enjoying playing chef with me,” he suggested. “And after dinner, me and you can cuddle all evening until we have to put the kids to bed.”

Bucky thought for a moment but he wasn’t sure he could handle taking care of the babies right now. He was too upset and, if he was crying, then Sarah May would start crying. “Um, I... I just want a little alone time. My head is killing me. And I don’t want the kids to be worried.” He nodded slowly and gave Steve another slow, meaningful kiss, complete with his tears dripping on to Steve’s cheeks. He was a mess. “I’ll come down for dinner. I don’t want you to have to do that alone either.”

Steve cupped the sides of Bucky’s face as they kissed and then he desperately tried to dry the tears from Bucky’s cheeks so he would look a little less miserable. “I’m sorry you’re hurting, Baby. You’ve done nothing wrong and maybe Greg will turn around and realize how wrong he was about us.” Steve held Bucky’s hand firmly and led him towards Becca’s bed. “Maybe here is the best place
to rest so you don’t have to walk past him to get to our room.”

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“But, my photo album,” Bucky said pathetically and started to pull back to the stairs. “My pictures of my parents are upstairs. I want to be in our room, Steve.” He knew he would have to run past Gregory on his way, but he didn’t care. He could comment on his crying if he wanted to, call him a sissy. He didn’t care. He wanted his and Steve’s room, he wanted his pictures, he wanted his own safe space. “Besides, he won’t come into our room to try to get to me. He wouldn’t be afraid to come down here, though. But our room is where we are gay together after all.”

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Steve stopped walking towards the bed. When Bucky spoke in a voice like that, how could Steve not listen? He wrapped his arms around Bucky’s shoulders and held him still a moment. “Okay, I’ll walk you to our room. And just so you know, I’m going to make it clear to Greg that you and I have been very, very gay in every room of this house. I want him to be uncomfortable everywhere he goes in here until he gives you an apology.”

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Bucky nodded and wiped the back of his hand across his eyes, mirroring Adriana when she didn’t want them to know she was crying. “Uh-huh, okay,” Bucky said quietly and gripped Steve’s arm. Steve walked him upstairs and, thankfully, Greg didn’t say anything or stop them. He was distracted talking to Lilly who had just gotten back home. Once they were upstairs, Bucky let go of Steve and immediately went to grab his family photo album filled with pictures of his parents and himself and his sisters as kids. He let out a little sigh of relief. He always felt closer to them when he could look through their pictures.

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Steve whistled to get Diana to follow. He knew that she wasn’t as much of Bucky’s favorite as she was Steve’s favorite, but she was still a very comforting companion to have when feeling down. Steve pulled down the sheets and patted the empty spot on the bed to get Bucky to sit. Diana hurried over and curled up where Steve usually slept.

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Bucky sat down on the bed and opened the photo album to a picture of his dad and him in Seneca. He was holding a big fish and his dad was standing behind him with a huge smile. Fred had taken the picture way back when. “I’m okay, Baby. I promise. You don’t have to worry. I just need some time alone up here, away from him. Please tell the kids not to worry. And hug the girls.”

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Diana nuzzled her way closer to Bucky once he sat down and patiently laid her head in his lap and relaxed. “I’ll take care of all that,” Steve promised. “I love you, Buck.” He pressed their lips together and headed out of the room and to the living room with the rest of the family to scope out how things were going.
When Steve got back to the living room, Lilly was crying. She has just been told about Dewey. She didn’t know him too well but he had always been nice to her and she was so sensitive about death - anyone’s death - that this was hurting her the most of the Barnes kids. Becca was holding her and whispering softly, “Hey, but tomorrow we can look through the boxes. That will be good. We can see what things of Dad’s Uncle Dewey kept. And we can look through some of Dewey’s journals. Yeah, Lil?”

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Christopher had been trying to get Lilly’s attention to ask what was wrong but Becca was keeping her too distracted to notice her nephew. Steve scooped his son up in one arm and used his free hand to squeeze her shoulder gently. “I’ll get you some water and an Advil, Lilly. I’m sorry to hear about your uncle.” Steve always got a headache after crying and he assumed Lilly may get the same. He disappeared for a minute but then came back with two pills and a glass of water. Lilly was still crying and she hid her face away in Becca’s shoulder. Steve sighed and put the pills in Becca’s hand. “Can you make sure she takes those? I’m going to make dinner.”

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“Thanks, Steve. Yeah, I’ll get it,” Becca assured him and managed to get Lilly to drink some of the water.

Greg decided to follow Steve into the kitchen and he leaned on the counter next to the fridge as Steve started to gather what he would need. “Okay, Buddy, let me make you an offer. I’ve got money. How much do you want in exchange for leaving my nephew and his family alone?”

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Steve was so floored by the deal Greg tried to strike with him that he was almost certain that he must have heard him wrong... but no, Greg definitely just tried to pay him off to abandon his family. It was so outlandish that Steve was too astonished to get angry. “Whatever you’re willing to offer me, would you be willing to leave your wife and kids if I gave you double?”

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“No, I wouldn’t,” Greg said matter-of-factly. “But I’m a different man than you. I’ve got morals and integrity. I know what’s right. I married a wonderful woman. I didn’t seduce a confused, depressed young man into being with me.” Greg was staunchly in favor of the idea that this was all Steve and Bucky was coaxed into it by brainwashing or something. He knew Bucky’s tendency towards promiscuity, alcohol, and addictions. He just decided that those things were a symptom of his pain and Steve chose to monopolize on Bucky’s vulnerability.

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“Well, if you have morals and integrity, then you know it would be impossible for me to abandon my children, the person I swore to support in all aspects of life for as long as I live, and two amazing girls who I’ve had the honor to watch grow up.” He started to chop up the vegetables after putting Christopher in his chair. “You know, for someone who hates gay guys so much, you sure love having that stick up your behind.”
Gregory scoffed and folded his arms tightly against his chest, building a wall. “You sure have a big mouth. Bucky, too. You both have said some foul and disgusting things today. I can’t believe the way James spoke to me. He was like a rude teenager. I always warned George that not keeping a check on his language around the kids would bite him in the end. And now Bucky talks freely about homosexual sex to his own uncle.”

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Steve put some cut up carrots in a bowl to give Christopher while he entertained himself in his high chair. “You’re both adults. If you feel entitled to be rude to him and belittle him, then he’s more than entitled to talk about something he enjoys,” Steve answered evenly. “You know, the swearing issue is one thing we can agree on. I don’t like cursing around the kids.”

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Greg let out a humorless laugh and mumbled something about their common ground being pretty thin ice. “George and Winnie were always cursing around these kids. Just all the time. They thought it wasn’t good to treat kids any different than adults. Did you know they let Bucky drink alcohol when he was fourteen?” It seemed like Greg was temporarily satisfied to not argue with Steve if he at least got to complain about something.

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“I wouldn’t want my kids drinking that young, but I’d rather them be safe and do it at home than to go out and sneak some behind our backs,” Steve said. “I think Bucky came out just fine, even though he had some bumps along the way. He’s an amazing father and an excellent role model to them.”

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At the mention of Bucky being a father and the insinuation that he was a father alongside Steve, Greg flared up again. He made a discontented noise and said, “I don’t know about that. He has always been a train wreck. He goes through phases of seeming to be okay but he will crash again. And you, boy, are part of that crash. All I can hope for is that when he rights himself again, it’s with a wife to support him and those lovely kids.”

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“I’ve known him for years now, and he’s been perfect. He’s sober, he’s got a stable job… Bucky has been a stellar parent and brother. Even if he hadn’t been, I would still love him and raise our children with him. If he crashes, I’m going to be there for him.” Steve focused on making food to try and calm his nerves. “And I really wouldn’t call me a boy, Gregory.”

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Greg was about to add to that but he stopped. There was the distinct sound of running water coming from above them. Bucky had decided to take a bath. Actually, Bucky found a pack of hidden cigarettes and caved. Even though he hadn’t had a cigarette for several months by then. He had gently pushed Diana out of the bathroom and closed the door so she wouldn’t breathe any of the smoke. Then he curled up on one side of the tub with the water rising slowly around him, a lit cigarette on his lips. He also brought a picture of him and Steve in bed on a lazy morning and a picture of his parents asleep together on their couch with baby Bucky in their arms.

Becca and Lilly came into the kitchen then and distracted the attention of both Steve and Greg.
“Steve, Lilly’s got the hiccups from crying. And she says she wants hot chocolate.”

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Steve glanced up towards the second floor when he heard the bath start to run but then went back to what he was doing. “I’ll make it for her right now.” Steve usually made not chocolate with water so it was healthier, but today, he made it with milk and whipped cream and extra marshmallows. He followed them back to the living room as an excuse to get away from Greg for a moment. “How are you holding up, Lilly?”

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Lilly sniffled and hugged Steve’s middle from her spot on the couch and just buried her face against his stomach for a moment. It wasn’t that she was too horribly upset over Dewey specifically. It was just that death scared her and made her sad and she couldn’t think of Dewey being gone without thinking about her parents being gone, just like Bucky was doing. “Thanks for hot chocolate,” she said through a few hiccups.

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Steve placed his hand on top of her head and stroked her hair. “Any time, you know I love you and I’m sorry that you’re hurting. Did you take your medicine yet?” He sat down next to her and wrapped an arm around her. “Your nephew is worried about you. He kept saying ‘Ann Lee’. Maybe you can give him a hug when you’re feeling better.”

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Lilly squished right up against Steve and hugged him tightly. “I took the medicine,” she said quietly. “Where is Bucky? I haven’t seen him yet. Is he okay?” She looked over at Becca who was standing strong and watching over her. Lilly knew she was hurting inside at least a little. But she was also very good at keeping herself firm for everyone else.

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“He’s upset right now, but you don’t have to worry about him,” Steve reassured. “Worry about yourself feeling better. If you need any help, you know your family is here for you.” Steve wasn’t going to get into Greg being an asshole when she was grieving over the loss of her other uncle. Steve looked back at Becca and asked, “Could you finish chopping up the vegetables for me? I’ll get back to dinner in a few minutes.”

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“Sure, Steve. I’ll take care of it,” Becca promised and gave Lilly another quick hug before heading into the kitchen. She was trying to be as helpful as she could right now.

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“Thank you.” Steve hung around with Lilly for a little while longer before going back to dinner duty. Sarah kept the kids occupied because she could see the concerned look on Adriana’s face. When Steve got back to the kitchen, he gave Gregory a stern glare. “You’re welcome to have dinner with us, but if you’re going to say things that upset me or Bucky, I’m going to have to ask you to eat in a separate room. I can set up a tray in the living room for you.”
“I’m not allowed to eat with my own family?” Gregory asked and looked at Becca. He wanted to put up a fight about the need to say what he believes. But he also didn’t doubt that Steve would try to forcibly remove him either. And he really did want to spend time with his nieces and the kids. “I’ll be quiet,” he said eventually, “I don’t want to argue around the children anyway.”

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“You don’t have to be quiet and you don’t have to eat on your own. What you do need to do is be respectful of what you do say. None of us want to hear about what you think of our marriage, but maybe they’ll want to hear about how their cousins have been doing,” he said. Dinner was almost done, so Steve started to set the table.

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“I can talk about my kids at dinner,” Gregory agreed with some grit to his words. “They haven’t seen each other in a while. It would have been nice to bring them but they have school. And I wasn’t sure I was going to be able to find Bucky anyway. I think it’s rude that he hasn’t even tried to correspond for four years.”

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“Like I said, Bucky had a rough few years and I wouldn’t take it personally that he didn’t correspond.” Steve said. “Maybe he’ll be more open to talking with family if things go over well this visit,” he suggested as a little dig to try and make Gregory act on his best behavior.

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Greg gave Steve a glance, ready to argue again, but he let it be. “It’s just sad. He loses his parents and then won’t even try to talk to his remaining family. I know we weren’t able to be here to help but I couldn’t leave my family to come help him get on his feet. And I couldn’t move my family back to New York. But if he needed help with money or parenting the girls, he could have called or written letters. But he just didn’t.”

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“I don’t blame you for not dropping everything to come here,” Steve said. “Bucky was young. He had a lot of stress to deal with. I’m sure you weren’t as smart as a teen as you are now.” Steve put the food onto the table, kind of proud with how the steamed vegetables came out and the pasta smelled delicious with his mom’s recipe for tomato sauce. “I’m going to get Bucky and the rest of the family.”

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Gregory seemed to have decided to call a temporary truce between himself and Steve. He figured he could be cordial around the rest of the family so as not to upset the children and the girls. So he just nodded and helped Becca pour water and juice.

Bucky was still sitting in the bathtub. It had run cold now and he had goosebumps up his arms and legs. He also went through six cigarettes and sang a few of his dad’s favorite songs as he let himself calm down and stop crying.

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Steve asked his mom to take care of getting the kids at the table. He had a feeling that Bucky would take some time on his own but he wasn’t sure how much convincing Bucky was going to need.
Steve frowned in concern when he saw Bucky in the cold bath and the whole room reeked of cigarettes. “Baby,” he said softly. Steve knelt at the side of the tub and kissed his wet cheek. “Do you want to join us for dinner?”

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Bucky slowly looked up at Steve and sniffled. He wasn’t quite shivering but he was cold and Steve’s warm kiss had felt really nice. “Do I have to, Steve?” he asked quietly and ran a hand through his damp hair. “I don’t want to deal with him right now. I just want him to go away, Baby, please. I can’t listen to him talk anymore. I can’t listen to him talk about you or about what he thinks my dad would think of me.”

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“You don’t have to, Love. But I did get him to agree to only talk about nice things when we’re having dinner.” Steve stroked his fingers along Bucky’s jaw and kissed him again. “It would make me happy to have you with us, but I would rather that you feel comfortable. I can make you a plate, but you have to at least get out of this cold tub.”

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“But I don’t want to get out of the tub,” Bucky said petulantly. He knew he was being unreasonable. But he also knew that if he left the bathroom then he would have to actually face life again. And he did not want to do that. “How are the kids? And the girls? If they need me then I’ll come down for dinner.”

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“Tough. Come on, I’ll wrap you up in a nice, fluffy towel and then we can get you under the blankets so you’ll feel safe and warm,” Steve encouraged. “The kids will be fine, but you should see them before bedtime so they don’t start to worry too much about you.”

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Bucky grumbled quietly but eventually stood up and got out of the tub. Diana trotted over and started to lick his legs as Steve wrapped him in a towel and patted him down. “I’ll talk to the kids before bedtime. Maybe we can have their story in here tonight? You can read and I’ll hold them so they know I’m still here.”

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“Diana, you silly goose,” Steve chided, petting Diana once before shooing her away from Bucky’s legs. Steve wrapped one towel around Bucky’s waist and then draped another over his shoulders. “We can do that. The kids love it when they get to spend time in our room for some reason, anyway.”

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“Yeah, it’ll be nice,” Bucky agreed in a whisper. “And I can talk to the girls too. This is probably bringing old feelings back. And especially if tomorrow we really get some of my dad’s things... that’ll be wonderful but I think maybe make this hurt worse. You know?” He sighed and leaned against Steve’s chest with his ear to his heart to listen to it beating. He knew Steve must have noticed the cigarette smell but he was grateful that he hadn’t so far brought it up.
Steve wrapped an arm around Bucky’s shoulders and stroked his wet hair with his other hand. “I’ll be there for you every step of the way, Baby. Even if it’s the worst kind of heartbreak, at least you’ll have someone there for you - a shoulder to cry on.” He rocked Bucky a little in his arms before nudging him to lay down in bed. “Diana is looking for a cuddle buddy right now,” he said with a smile as Diana sat on the bed watching the two of them.

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“She can cuddle me,” Bucky said and smiled over at the dog. “Come here, girl.” He reached out his hand and scratched her head gently. “Steve, if he says anything else tonight...” he wasn’t sure what he would do. He wasn’t sure he could manage to actually have another argument right now. He could throw some fists but that wasn’t likely to happen anyway. “Just... come get me if things get bad again.”

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Diana laid with her body stretched out right alongside Bucky’s with her head on his chest. “I will, but I don’t think it’ll have to come to that.” Steve didn’t plan on troubling and upsetting Bucky even if Greg did try to start things. “I’ll see you soon, okay? I’m going to serve dinner and then come right up here.”

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“Okay, Baby,” Bucky agreed and pulled Steve in for a kiss. His mouth tasted like cigarettes but he wanted to kiss Steve so much. He wanted to hold Steve. He wanted to tell him to stay put and let Bucky cuddle him until they fell asleep. But the rest of the family needed someone right now. And Bucky was down for the count.

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Steve kissed Bucky slow and steady, not giving a damn about the taste of cigarettes because he loved his husband and he was going to kiss him, damn it. “I’ll see you soon, Buck. I love you.” He closed the door behind him and went downstairs.

Christopher looked around when he saw Steve but no Bucky. “Where Papa?”

Steve walked over to kiss his head. “He’s sleeping, Bean.”

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“No nap, dinner!” Christopher protested and pointed at the table. “Papa have food!” He looked to Sarah and then to Becca like he was just double checking that he was being reasonable that his Papa should eat.

Becca handed Christopher half a bread roll and said, “Christopher, he’s okay. Papa is okay. He just needs sleep. Here, we can eat and then you and Daddy can take Papa food later.”

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Sarah May was a bit of a papa’s girl still and she started to babble nonsense at Steve to back her brother up. Steve gave Becca a grateful look before sitting down. “Aunt Becca is right. Papa will eat later and he will have story time with you later too,” Steve promised. “You like story time, right?” he asked his son. Steve started to pass around the food and then served the youngest kids their portions. People were well into their own meals by the time Steve cut up the food into bite-sized pieces for the babies.
“Is Papa going to read to us?” Adriana asked hopefully. “He never reads. I have to ask a lot for him to do it.”

Lilly, who was still pretty upset but had shifted from sad to mad, was showing it by being a grumpy, angry ball on her seat mumbling, “Yeah, that’s because he can’t read for shit. Even I can read better than him.”

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Steve’s head snapped over to her. “Lilly!” he scolded harshly under his breath.

Adriana was similarly upset. “Nuh-uh! Papa is a good reader and he does the silly voices. You don’t do silly voices, Lilly,” she fired back.

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“Well, it’s hard to do a different voice for every animal. Some of your books have too many animals,” Lilly defended.

She was going to talk some more but Becca squeezed her arm firmly. “Lil, maybe we should eat downstairs. We can watch a movie on my TV. It doesn’t have to be a documentary.” She really was trying to hold things together right now.

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“There’s not too many,” Adriana said, getting a little worked up. “Daddy can do them, too.” Steve was upset that their family dinner was turning into fragments.

Desperate to try and keep them all together, Steve said, “That’s a good suggestion, Becs, but let’s see if we can listen to how your cousins are doing in California.” Maybe Lilly would be done eating by the time Greg finished talking.

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“Oh, uh,” Greg looked up at Steve. He had been trying his best to stay neutral and not involved like he had promised. But he had been given permission to talk about his kids. “Right, yes. Well, we wish we could see you all more often. Your cousins are doing well. Two of them play lacrosse still, Lilly. I know you play.”

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Steve was grateful that Greg wasn’t being an asshole and was actually sticking to the guidelines. Lilly, however, was still in a sour mood and gave an utterly uninterested, ‘That’s nice,’ in response. Steve ran his hands over his face with a groan and then continued, “Lilly has been trying out for a travel team on Long Island, but the competition is pretty tough. How about your kids?”

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Gregory wasn’t too pleased to be talking to Steve more so instead of Lilly, but he sucked it up and said, “My oldest - Miles - is on the varsity team even though he’s just a freshmen. Tina is helping start the girl’s lacrosse team. And Cory, my youngest is just really getting into it now.”
“That’s great,” Steve said. “Becca and Lilly are both into the feminist thing. I bet that they’d have a lot of fun getting to hang out with Tina.” Since Lilly was being a pain, Steve looked over to Becca. “Did you used to be close with Tina back when you guys were younger?”

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“Steve, don’t call it ‘the feminist thing’,” Lilly scolded with her arms crossed. “You sound ignorant.”

Becca shook her head and squeezed Lilly’s arm again. For once, she wasn’t being the one to argue every point out of Steve’s mouth. “I sometimes talked to Tina. But I was a shy kid, I didn’t really talk to many people. And then they moved away when I was about seven anyway.”

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“It doesn’t sound as ignorant as if I called it the ‘bra-burning party’ or the ‘man-hating movement’,” Steve pointed out unhelpfully. Sarah May whined for more food and since she usually didn’t have a big appetite, Steve was quick to give her more. “Do you think you would maybe want to talk to her over the phone?” Steve suggested to Becca.

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“It’s not either of those things,” Lilly murmured grumpily and took a big bite of pasta.

Gregory nodded and looked to Becca. “Tina would love that. She would be happy to talk to you. Even if you did letter-writing. That’s cheaper and it’ll be just as good.” He smiled to her and hoped that he was being helpful enough that Steve was satisfied with his behavior and wouldn’t want to kick him out.

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Becca didn’t like being put on the spot, but she also didn’t want to upset her uncle. “I can do letter writing... I don’t want to run up the phone bill,” she said.

Adriana looked over to Greg and asked, “Can I write letters to Tina? I can spell my own name. And I can write the days of the week. Even Wednesday. And some other things.”

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“Sure, Adriana. I’m betting Tina would love to see your writing - even the days of the week,” Greg said. His initial instincts wanted him to bring up again that he wished that happy little girl and her siblings had a mother. But he glanced over at Steve and then shook his head to keep himself in check. He would argue his case further with Bucky tomorrow.

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Adriana turned to Steve. “Daddy, can I go write my letter now?”

Steve appreciated her eagerness but pointed at her plate. “Finish your dinner first and you can stay up ten extra minutes tonight if you spend time writing your letter,” he said. Lilly finished up her plate and got up without a word so she could drop her it in the sink. Steve would’ve usually argued about the rudeness but he was picking his battles wisely tonight. “I’m sorry,” he apologized to Greg. “She’s upset. Usually, she’s a lot more engaging to talk to.”
“I’m sure this isn’t reminding them of good things,” Greg offered. “It’s only been six years since George passed and now Dwight. It’s a lot to handle for everyone. Even in the past couple of years, Dewey secluded himself more than usual so no one really saw him much. But it’s still painful.” He reached a hand out to Becca and said, “Tomorrow we can go through those boxes together. Maybe it’ll be a good way to heal to discuss your dad and Uncle Dewey.”

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Becca accepted Greg’s hand. “I think I may want to go through them alone with Lilly and Bucky. No offense to you, it’s just... kind of a personal thing,” she said, lowering her gaze to her food.

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“Are you sure, Becca? Bucky doesn’t seem too keen on this and Lilly is very upset,” Gregory said. “I brought the stuff with me because I wanted to see my family again after all this. I’m sorry we haven’t been around but we do care about you. I miss your dad all the time.”

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“We know each other the best. It’s going to be something that’s hard to sort through but we have to do it. We may as well do it just us together,” she said. “We can still hang out after, Uncle Greg. Maybe we can go get ice cream or something.”

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Gregory took a second to think it over but then finally decided if that was what Becca wanted then he couldn’t argue about it. He nodded and sighed. “Okay, we can get ice cream later tomorrow.” He wasn’t sure what he was expected to do while he waited. He sure as hell didn’t want to talk to Steve or really to Sarah. And they were bound to be around the children so he wouldn’t really be able to be around anyone without dealing with them.

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Steve plucked Christopher from his chair and got out a few toys in the living room so he could entertain himself in the playpen. When he got back to the kitchen, he helped Sarah May with the last of her dinner before cleaning her up. “Greg, is there anything that you need while you’re here?”

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“Uh, how do you mean?” Gregory asked as he helped Becca clear the table. Steve was already well aware of what he wanted while he was here. He wanted Bucky to listen to him and get rid of Steve. But that wasn’t really something Steve was going to help with, now was it? “I brought my toothbrush and all that. My wife even packed me a blanket just in case. If that’s what you’re asking.”

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“That’s what I meant,” he said. “Or I could pick up some cereal if you liked a certain brand. Stuff like that.” Once the plates were off the table and leftovers were put in containers, Steve picked up Sarah May to entertain her since his mom volunteered to help clean up the dishes.

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“No, I think I’m quite alright. I won’t be here for long. I’ll leave day after tomorrow,” Greg said and stood awkwardly in the door frame. “Where am I sleeping? I think I’m going to turn in. It’s been a long day.” He mostly just didn’t want to hang around if Becca and Lilly were going to go off by
themselves. He was too tired to give Steve another lecture at the moment.

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“You’ll be in Lilly’s room,” Steve said. “Becca can show you where it is.” Steve would’ve done it himself but he could tell that Greg had less than zero interest in spending any time with him – the feeling was mutual.

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Becca took Greg upstairs and got him set in Lilly’s room. She also grabbed some stuff Lilly would need and took it down to her room. “Long day,” she mumbled as she came back to the kitchen to Steve and Sarah May. “I asked Uncle Greg not to disturb Bucky. Told him his headaches are pretty bad. So, he promised he would keep to Lilly’s room.”

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Steve set Sarah May up in her high chair with some finger paints and a lot of paper. “Thank you, Becca. It really means a lot that you’re helping me out on this. I don’t know what I would do if I didn’t have you in my corner right now. He’s not a bad guy but... he says such horrible things.”

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“Yeah, well, someone needs to help and Bucky’s not here so,” Becca said and plopped down next to Sarah May and pet her hair gently. “I’m sorry Greg has been rude to you. I don’t really know how to help. He’s not going to change his mind just from being here for a few days. And I can’t really think of much more to say to him that you haven’t already.”

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“Hi,” Sarah May said pleasantly to Becca. She used a paint-covered hand to try to pass a sheet of paper over to her.

“I’m not expecting him to change overnight, but I do expect him to stop trying to lecture Bucky and make him feel awful,” Steve said. “Why’s that so hard to do?”

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Becca carefully took the paper from Sarah May and set it down so she wouldn’t get messy. “Thank you, Ya-Ya,” she murmured and gave the baby a small smile. “He’s set in his ideas, Steve. He thinks he knows what is right. And he’s not going to change his mind about it. Even though Bucky is happy with you and clearly couldn’t be with a woman if he tried.” She sighed and shook her head. “I’m not trying to defend the message of his words at all. I just know that he’s stubborn and holds strong beliefs about this. You can understand that, right? You’re one of the most stubborn people I’ve ever met.”

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Sarah May was happy that Becca took it. Steve found that she enjoyed sharing with everyone except Christopher, but that was probably because Christopher had a habit of trying to take her things. “I know you’re not trying to defend him... but I wish he would stop and consider how Bucky feels, you know? It’s the polite thing to do and I’m doing my best to make him feel welcome here.”
“I understand. I’m with you on that, too,” Becca said with a solemn nod. “He’s not thinking that way right now, though. I don’t know why. Maybe it’s a selfish thing. He can’t see past his own beliefs to think about other people. Because it’s not very hard to see that Bucky is a mess right now. But maybe he can’t see what the problem is with how he’s talking to him.”

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“I’m not going to talk to him about it because I know that all he sees me as is a problem that needs eradicating,” Steve said sadly. “All I can do at this point is try to comfort Bucky and hope that Greg doesn’t do any more damage.” He ran his fingers through his hair once and looked at his daughter, who cooed happily at him and lifted his mood a little.

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Becca nodded and looked up at Steve with a sad little smile. “This is really tough,” she whispered. “Dewey dying and Greg causing a mess. I’m mad that he upset Bucky but I’m going to let you focus on that. I need to focus on Lilly, I think. She’s thinking about this too much in the context of our parents being gone too.”

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Steve gave her shoulder a squeeze. “Let me know if there’s anything I can do to help you out with her. I know it’s hard to have so much responsibility on your shoulders.” He gave Sarah May a new set of papers once she thoroughly covered all of her current ones in paint.

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“It’ll be fine. But thank you,” Becca said quietly. “If I keep focused on Lilly then I won’t get upset about all this too. I think we are going to have a hard enough time tomorrow going through the stuff Uncle Greg brought.” She sighed and got up slowly. “I think I’m going to take a shower and see if Lilly wants to watch a movie before we go to sleep. She’s already curled up on my bed anyway.”

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“Alright. And I’m here for you, too. You know that.” Steve gave her a quick hug because he knew that Becca wasn’t really the hugging type that often. It was time to get Sarah May cleaned up anyway, so he laid the papers out to dry and picked up his paint-covered baby. “Are you ready for your bath, Ya-Ya?”

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Sarah May looked at the paint for a second like she wanted to keep going but then she decided against it with a soft “Yis,” and a little nod. Her curly hair was starting to take over her face and she brushed it from her eyes leaving a smudge of blue on her forehead. She snuggled up on Steve and gave a happy smile. With all the rest that was happening that night, it was good that at least someone wasn’t putting up a fuss.

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Steve loved it when Sarah May talked to them since it was usually her older siblings dominating the conversation and she only knew a handful of words. “Okay, Sweet Pea. We’ll get you all cleaned up and ready for sleepy time.” He called for Adriana to let her know she had a half hour before it was bedtime and then took Sarah May for her bath. After she was all clean and dried off, he took her into their bedroom to check on Bucky. “Hey, Baby. It’s almost story time for the kids.”
Bucky had gotten up at one point and found the sweater Steve got him the Christmas before. It was the one that Sarah had sewn all their kids’ names onto the cuff. She added Adriana when Bucky added her name to his tattoo. He tried not to wear the sweater too much because he didn’t want to wear it out too early. He wanted it to last forever. But he needed to wear it tonight. “Hey, Baby...” he said softly and reached out for Sarah May. “Come here, Sarah May. Let Papa hold you.”

Sarah May leaned over towards Bucky and grabbed him as soon as she was in his arms. “Papa, ‘yis’?” she asked, understanding at this point that it was almost time for bed so that meant cuddling. Steve sat down next to Bucky and kissed his temple. “She was such a good girl tonight. She made lots of paintings and didn’t fuss when it was bath time.”

Bucky hummed happily and kissed Sarah May’s hair and whispered in Hebrew that he loved her. “Were you a good girl for Daddy? Didn’t cry during bath time?” His eyes were focused on his daughter but they were a little tired, a little lifeless at the moment. He wanted to be engaged right now as much as he could though. But he knew the second his babies were asleep, he was going to be right back to staring at the wall with Diana slumped over his legs.

Their little girl murmured softly and snuggled Bucky closely. Steve could see how tired Bucky was and he stroked his fingers through his hair. “I’ll go get the rest of the kids and a couple books,” he said. “Then we can all get to bed.” He leaned in to kiss Bucky’s cheek before going down to get Christopher and Adriana, allowing them each to pick out a book.

Bucky waited patiently for Steve to get back. He rocked Sarah May and listened to her softly babble at him. She wasn’t much of a talker still but when she was alone with her parents, she was more likely to take some time to say something. When Steve got back, Adriana jumped up on the bed and wiggled close to Bucky. “Daddy picked out some books, Papa. He got my favorite ones to read.”

Christopher climbed onto the bed with a bit of effort and laid down with his head in Bucky’s lap. Between Diana and the three kids, Bucky was surrounded. Steve felt his heart clench thinking how perfect it would’ve been if Grant was there. “Alright. Now, we are only going to read two books tonight and then it’s bedtime. Do you want the Hungry Caterpillar or Brown Bear first?”

“Bun Bur!” Christopher said quickly and pointed at the books. “Bur, please!” Adriana agreed and pulled Christopher into her lap so he was a little closer to them all. Bucky couldn’t really move too much from all the kids and the dog.

“Baby, will you grab a blanket for us and come cuddle up?” Bucky asked and nodded to their basket of folded blankets near the closet. “Not the blue one, though, Diana likes to chew on that one.”
“Brown Bear, Bean? Okay, we’ll read that.” Steve set the books down and went to grab the blanket. Diana’s ears perked up when Steve grabbed the blue one but then he swapped quickly for the gray one. He draped the blanket over Bucky and all of their kids before sidling up next to them and going under the covers as well. “Okay... ‘brown bear, brown bear, what do you see’?” he read.

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“Red bur,” Christopher said quickly and tried to reach to turn the page for Steve but he couldn’t make it that far. “See red bur.” He looked up at Steve to make sure he was right and then rubbed tiredly at his eyes.

Bucky brushed his hair from his son’s face and leaned back against Steve more, pulling the babies in closer to him. He kissed Steve’s neck and sighed contentedly. This was what he wanted, his husband and their babies all together tonight. He wished the girls were there too but he understood they wanted to be alone as well.

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“That’s right! He sees a Red Bird...” Steve continued through the book, allowing Christopher and Adriana to go through the animals since he read it so often that they remembered the order. He closed up the book and tickled the bottom of Adriana’s foot. “Are you ready for the caterpillar story, Peanut?”

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Adriana nodded. “Yes, please, Daddy,” she said and gripped Steve’s hand for a moment. “Can we read the dolphin one too? After the caterpillar? Please. I’ll be good and go to bed right after,” she pleaded. Christopher agreed and tried again to reach for the book from Steve again.

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“I can read you that one in the morning, Peanut. Your dad and pop are very tired tonight, so we need to get some rest.” He gave her hand a small squeeze. “You’ve been a very good girl today. If we weren’t so tired, I would have been happy to read you an extra book.” He felt bad for saying no, but he could see how exhausted Bucky was.

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Adriana sighed and looked up to Bucky like maybe he could convince Steve to change his mind. But her papa’s eyes were barely open and he looked tired like her daddy had said. So, she left it. “Okay, in the morning, then,” she conceded and carefully poked Bucky’s cheek to see if he was really awake.

“Mmm, hey, sorry,” Bucky mumbled and kissed her head. “I’m listening, Adriana. Go ahead with the caterpillar, Steve.”

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Christopher giggled and poked Bucky’s cheek as well. Sarah May grumbled when her siblings got into her space but didn’t complain more than that. Steve read through the book and had Adriana try a few pages, patiently helping her sound out the words. When the book was done, Adriana looked like she wanted to read more, so Steve offered to let her take the book into bed with her.

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Adriana took the book from Steve happily and headed to her room to wait to be tucked in. Bucky held the babies and followed Steve to the nursery to help get them settled. Once everyone was accounted for and ready to sleep, Bucky slumped his way back to their bed and curled up in a heap on the pillows with a quiet huff. “Come cuddle me,” he murmured and held his arms open for Steve. “Please.”

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Luckily the babies didn’t put up a fuss getting to bed and Adriana was pretty easy once they promised her again that they would read her the dolphin book in the morning. Steve kissed her cheek and pet his fingers through her hair once before following Bucky to their room. He slipped in beside him and wrapped his arms strongly around his middle. “Talk to me.”

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Bucky sniffled and moved closer to Steve to give him a soft, slow kiss. He held his hands tightly in Steve’s shirt and whimpered against his lips. He didn’t want to cry again but he felt like he might. “I hate him for talking to us that way,” he whispered and pressed his forehead to Steve’s for a moment.

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Steve stroked Bucky’s cheek and looked into his eyes with concern. He gave Bucky a kiss back, but he was more worried about Bucky than anything else. “He doesn’t understand,” Steve said. “I hope that one day he does - because he’s your family and I want you to have a relationship with the family you have left.”

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“I don’t want to have a relationship with him,” Bucky said quickly, firmly. “I don’t give a shit. If he can’t care about you and me together then I won’t care about him or his family either.” He shook his head slightly and took in a deep breath. “My dad would have told him off. He would be so angry. He would be furious that his brother is trying to guilt me by claiming my dad would be disappointed.”

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Steve frowned. “I know you’re mad and I don’t blame you for being mad... but what if he does change one day? Do you think you’d be able to forgive him?” He pet his fingers through Bucky’s hair and leaned in to press his lips to the tip of Bucky’s nose. “I wish he didn’t say those awful things.”

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“He won’t change,” Bucky said and wiped his tears on Steve’s shirt. “I don’t care, though. He can stay that way so long as he stays away from us. Once he leaves, that’s it. I don’t want to see him ever again. I don’t want him trying to pry us apart or dropping in for visits again or telling our babies that we shouldn’t be together or trying to get the girls on his side. I don’t want it.”

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Steve nodded his head. “Alright. If that’s what you want, Buck, then I’ll help you see that happen.” He kissed Bucky’s face a few more times. “He won’t be able to win the girls over or pry us apart,” Steve promised. “We have built such an amazing family. I don’t know anyone else as lucky as we are and there’s not a thing in the world that can take that from us.”
“Uh-huh, yeah,” Bucky said and nodded again as more tears came. “I can’t stop crying.” He didn’t even know why. He was angry but it wasn’t the angriest he could be. He was sad but it wasn’t the saddest he had ever been either. Maybe he was just overwhelmed. “I can’t stop thinking about my dad, too. And how much I miss him.”

Steve moved a hand down to lace his fingers with Bucky’s. “I know, Baby, I’m sorry he’s not able to be here for you. But sometimes if you think hard enough, you’ll be able to see him in your dreams. Have you had any dreams with your dad in it lately?”

Bucky shook his head. “No, I haven’t,” he said quietly. “Lilly dreams about Mom and Dad a lot. I don’t so much. I think my brain is keeping me from them for some reason.” He sighed and rubbed his thumb on the back of Steve’s hand. “Remember how she was still having those bad nightmares when we met? I’m glad those are mostly gone. I won’t say completely gone because one crops up occasionally.”

“Do you think you’re not ready for them?” Steve asked. “Maybe your heart is telling your brain that it’ll hurt more than it’ll heal if you see them right now.” He gave Bucky’s hand another squeeze. “I remember the nightmares she had. I don’t know if they went away because she was getting older or because she was feeling safer and more stable.”

“I don’t know, maybe. But it’s been six and a half years since my parents died. It still hurts like crazy but I think I’m ready to handle things like that. Right?” Bucky asked. “I think it had to do with moving back here. They started to come less often once we came home. I think it’s been good for her to be back. And I mean... they started because she found me after I tried to kill myself. So, maybe it’s been better now that I have you and she knows I’m nowhere near that place anymore.”

“You’re such a loving and emotional person - and I mean that in a good way. But unfortunately, that also means that your heart hurts easily, too,” Steve said. “Do you want me to send a prayer asking for your parents to visit you tonight? I can’t promise God will be able to grant that, but at least he will hear it.” He moved closer in towards Bucky. “You’ve come so far.”

Bucky pressed in as close as he could to Steve and nuzzled his face against his neck and kissed his collarbone. “You can try. Thank you,” he said. “But I would kind of prefer if you pray to ask that Gregory shut his fucking mouth. That’s a bigger problem right now.” He sighed. “If I do see my dad tonight, I hope I can ask him if he is proud of me. I hope he can tell me Greg isn’t right and he’s not disappointed.”

Steve couldn’t help but snort a little at Bucky’s remark. He gave him a hug and said, “I know he’s proud of you, Baby. I hope you get to hear that tonight, too.” Steve settled down against the pillow.
“Now get some sleep, Love. It’s late and you’ve had a long day.” He closed his eyes, though still keeping Bucky held protectively against his chest.

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“I love you, Baby,” Bucky whispered again and gave a few lazy, slow kisses to Steve’s neck and shoulder before closing his eyes too. “Sleep well, Steve.” He sniffled again and tucked himself to his husband and didn’t take long in falling asleep. His body seemed so exhausted that he didn’t even dream and he didn’t wake up in the night at all even when Sarah May cried and Steve had to go to her on his own, Bucky just slept.
Bucky woke up with a startled memory. He saw in his head a two-second flash of his parents in their car and then he heard the sounds of crashing that must have been what it was like that night. He wasn’t there, no one was there but the other drivers. But it felt real to him now. It felt like he was seeing them in that last moment. Bucky yelped and pushed his arms out from his body instinctually, shoving Steve in the chest on accident. “Fuck, fuck,” he panted, feeling completely disoriented.

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Steve had gotten up to tend to the babies in the night and was just about to doze off again when he was suddenly pushed. He nearly fell off the bed with how alarmed he was. Steve’s hands shot out to grab Bucky’s to steady him. “Buck- Christ. Bucky, It’s me. It’s Steve...” he said. “What’s going on, did you have a nightmare?” he asked.

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Bucky blinked and his body shuttered as he took panting breaths. He shook his head and looked into Steve’s eyes like he was trying to figure out if Steve was really there for a second. “Steve?” he whispered. “I-I don’t know. Don’t know what that was. It wasn’t a nightmare.” He trying to think of it again but he couldn’t quite conjure up the exact experience again. “It didn’t work... I didn’t have a dream with my dad,” he added in dismay.

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Steve kissed the back of Bucky’s hand and then let go so he could wrap his arms around him. He could tell that Bucky was a little more coherent right now. “I’m sorry you didn’t get to see him. I’ll keep praying,” he said. “Is there anything I can do for you, Baby? Do you want me to get you some water or something small to eat?”

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Bucky pressed himself close to Steve again and inhaled deeply just to smell him. Part of him felt like he was in a bit of a dream still. But he was coming out of that feeling quickly. “Maybe some water and some apples or something?” Bucky asked. He pet Steve’s face and gave him a soft kiss. “Did I push you?” He wondered, getting clarity back about the whole thing. “I was trying... to stop a car.”

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“I’ll get that for you,” Steve said. “You pushed me, but only a little. How about you tell me more about it once I bring up the water and apples, okay?” Steve had a sinking feeling about what Bucky’s nightmare was, but he didn’t want to have Bucky talk about it until he had a little bit of food.

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Bucky nodded and let go of Steve so he could get out of bed. “I’m sorry I pushed you. It wasn’t on purpose, Baby.” He sighed and pulled his hair up in a tight ponytail and rubbed his tired face. He looked at the cuffs of his sweater again and saw all four of his babies’ names all neatly stitched. He smiled a little and calmed himself down some more by thinking of them.
“I know, Buck,” he said. Steve left so he could go get what Bucky wanted.

While he was gone, there were a few hesitant, little footsteps from down the hall. Then, Christopher peered his head into the doorway and then giggled when he saw Bucky. “Morin, Papa!” He hurried inside and struggled to climb up onto the bed.

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“Oh, hey there, Bean!” Bucky said, trying to be excited for his son. “Do you need help up? Want up?” he asked and held out his arms for him. “Did you escape again? Is it almost time for Daddy and Papa to get you a big boy bed? Should that be your birthday present next month, Christopher?”

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Christopher held up his arms so Bucky could help him up. He immediately stood up on the mattress and bounced on it until he fell back with a giggle. “Playtime,” he said. “Hungry time,” Christopher added, rolling around on the bed, clearly needing to let off a bit of energy.

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“How long have you been up? You’ve got too much zoomy energy right now, Love,” Bucky said and tried to get his hands on his son to calm him down but he was too slippery out of his grasp. “We will get breakfast soon, Bean. How’s that? Do you want breakfast? You can have orange juice and waffles.”

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“Waffle,” he answered. Christopher giggled as he continued to evade Bucky.

Steve came back with a glass of water and an apple. “Oh! Did you get him from his room?” Steve asked as he sat on the edge of the bed. “Or did you sneak in here, Christopher?” He passed the apple and glass over so he could hold their son and keep him steady.

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“No, he escaped again,” Bucky said with a relieved sigh. He drank some of the water and reached into his nightstand for his medicine. He didn’t have a headache yet but, given the day before and how that one felt, he decided to prepare for it now. “I think he needs to graduate to a regular kid’s bed. We have to decide if we are moving him in with Adriana or keeping him in the nursery for a bit.”

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Steve thought that it was a bit too soon for him to have a bed, but he escaped from his crib often enough that they may as well give in. “I think he should stay with Sarah May for as long as possible. I don’t want Adriana to have to share a room when she’s finally got some space to herself,” he said.

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“I understand,” Bucky said tiredly and laid back in bed, propped up on the pillows. “We can get him a bed for his birthday and set it up in the nursery for now.” He closed his eyes and took a breath. “I think everyone is probably pretty hungry, Baby. Maybe we should go start breakfast. I can cook eggs.”

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“Let me try to convince him to stay in his crib for a few more minutes so you can tell me more about what you saw in your dream,” Steve bargained. He felt bad and wanted Bucky to be able to get it off his chest if he wanted to. He leaned in to kiss his cheek. “I’ll only take a minute to lay him back down.”

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Bucky let Steve take Christopher back to the nursery and he waited patiently for him. He ate some more of the apple and changed out of his pajama pants into a pair of Steve’s sweatpants. He left the sweater on, though. He also figured he should try to be helpful as much as he could today so he made their bed and then sat back down on the edge.

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Steve was able to convince Christopher to stay by giving him a few stuffed animals from Sarah May’s bed and was only able to get away with it because she was still sleeping. He walked back into their bedroom and took a seat on the edge of the bed. “Hey... sorry, Babe. Do you want to talk a bit now?”

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Bucky took Steve’s hand in his and ran his thumb over the back of it. “I don’t know,” he admitted. “I kind of want to forget it right now. I don’t know why it was there and I don’t really want to think about it.” He knew what it had meant. He knew why it was there. He just couldn’t deal with it right now so he wanted to ignore it completely.

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He pulled Bucky closer and rested his chin on the top of his head. “Alright, Baby. I’m here if you do want to talk. For now, I’m happy to cuddle you until one of our million kids starts demanding our attention,” Steve said. “Christopher is playing with one of Sarah May’s dolls right now and she won’t be pleased when she wakes up.”

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“Oh, good,” Bucky muttered. “She’s going to cry too much and then have the hiccups for the rest of the day.” He massaged his hands up and down Steve’s chest and side slowly. He knew he hadn’t been very useful the day before and he felt bad about that. He was going to try to keep his sanity today if possible. “Hey... I know you know I smoked a few cigarettes yesterday. I just want to tell you I’m really sorry. It was an impulse thing. I found some ones I had hidden that even I forgot about.”

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Steve played with Bucky’s hair and shook his head when Bucky apologized. “It’s okay,” he insisted. “I know you’re not smoking anymore and... well, there’s worse things you could’ve used as a crutch and I’m glad you chose cigarettes out of all of them,” he reassured.

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“I know. It’s better than going to something I’ve had addictions to. I get that. I’m just sorry. I gave up smoking after your lungs got hurt and I promise I’ll get rid of the rest of those. We can throw them out.” Bucky hadn’t wanted to give up cigarettes but it just made no sense after a while, given how Steve’s lungs were and given the fact that the girls and Steve and Sarah all said it was a bad idea. And he didn’t want his sisters or his babies to smoke one day either.
“My lungs won’t collapse because you smoked one time,” Steve answered. “We can throw them out, but I don’t want you to beat yourself up over it, okay? I’m more worried about how you feel than how much you smoked last night.” Steve gave Bucky’s cheek a kiss. “And the kids are too young to know the smell of smoke so they won’t know the difference.”

Steve didn’t seem too upset so Bucky decided to take it for now since that wasn’t always the case when he relapsed in some form or another. “Okay, Steve, thank you. I was worried you would be angry,” he said as he held Steve’s face in his hands and kissed his lips softly. “I don’t know if I’m okay. I can’t really tell. I feel too many things right now. But I’m more present than I was last night. I just don’t know how long that might last.”

Smoking a cigarette once in a blue moon was definitely something Steve could live with. If Bucky had decided to have a drink, that was another story and more cause for caution. “I’d be a jerk if I got mad at you for that,” he said. “Today is a new day. Let’s try and start it off on a good note and if your uncle is an ass, then you can hide away up here again. Do you want to get the kids and make breakfast together now?”

“Yeah, let’s get them some food. Christopher might try to eat Ya-Ya’s doll if we don’t,” Bucky agreed. “I’m hoping today Greg won’t fight us again. It’s going to be hard enough to see what things he’s brought from Dewey’s house. And I want to try to be there for the girls as much as possible. I don’t want him ruining that.”

“I hope so, too. But I’ll be there for you and the girls if he does be rude to you and upset you,” Steve promised. He leaned in and gave him another kiss. “Let’s go get our kids ready for the day. Ya-Ya isn’t crying yet, which means we still have time to take that doll back from Christopher,” he said, giving Bucky a little nudge.

Sarah May wasn’t yet awake when Steve and Bucky got to the nursery. She was curled up carefully and breathing against her tiny fist. “Oh, look at this sweet baby girl, Steve,” Bucky said quietly and touched his daughter’s curls on her head. “Our babies are the best in the world. I love them so much.”

Steve smiled, looking even happier by how in love Bucky looked with their kids. “They are the best,” he agreed. Christopher jumped in his crib, so Steve quickly scooped him up. “It almost makes you not want to wake her up cause she’s so adorable right now. Why don’t you go take a picture?”

Bucky went to get their camera and snapped a quick Polaroid of Sarah May. “Here, Christopher, shake this,” Bucky said and offered the photo to him. “And I’ll trade you for Ya-Ya’s doll.” He carefully took the doll from him and laid it back in the crib. “Should we let her sleep a little more,
Steve? Or should I try to get her out gently?"

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Christopher happily traded and started to wave the photo frantically in the air with a laugh. “You should get her up. She might be grumpy, but she’s going to be happy that she gets to be carried by you for a little while. Maybe you can sing her awake she likes that.”

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Bucky nodded and started to whisper to the baby as he reached in her crib to scoop her up. She whined a little and squirmed until she opened her eyes and saw who it was that was bothering her. “Papa,” she mumbled and closed her eyes again.

“Ya-Ya, up!” Christopher yelped and grabbed her arm. “Wake up!”

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Steve swiftly pried Christopher’s hand from Sarah May’s arm so he wouldn’t bother her too much. “Hey, Bean,” Steve said in a hushed tone. “We have to be quiet for Ya-Ya, shh,” he said. He kissed Christopher’s head. “Let’s be a good boy for your sister. We don’t grab without asking, okay?” Steve hugged him right after.

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“But, Ya-Ya, play!” Christopher tried again and wiggled in Steve’s grip. “Please!” he added, hoping that would get him further.

Bucky leaned over and kissed his son’s head. “Bean, let’s have breakfast and then someone will play with you. Adriana will be up too. Maybe she can play. Okay, Christopher? Let’s let Sarah May sleep a little more.”

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“No! Ya-Ya play!” Christopher began to screech as Steve pulled him away from his sleepy sister. Steve groaned and gave Bucky an apologetic look as he walked away with their boy so he could have his tantrum away from his sister. “Christopher, I’m having none of that,” he said sternly. “You need to behave like a big boy.”

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“Play!” Christopher tried again and let big crocodile tears flow down his cheeks. “Want play,” he said and touched Steve’s face carefully with wet hands. “Please.” He was getting more clever about playing on sympathies to get what he wanted. Bucky was pretty easily swayed but Steve was more immune and Christopher hadn’t figured that part out yet.

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Steve knew this ploy all too well at this point. He kissed Christopher’s cheek. “Why don’t you play with Daddy? We can play blocks. Or we can play choo-choo trains or dolls,” he offered as he walked down the stairs to go set him up in the living room. Even with Christopher carrying on, Steve continued as usual.

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Bucky came down a few minutes later with Sarah May and Adriana. Sarah May was wide awake now with no hopes of going back to sleep. And Adriana was holding Bucky’s hand, blinking awake little by little. “Hey, Baby. I have two more hungry kids for you. Also, I heard Gregory moving around in Lilly’s room so he will probably be down in a bit.”

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Christopher stood at the wall of his pen and waved at his sisters. “Ya-Ya! Ana!”

Steve pet a hand over Christopher’s hair, loving how energetic he was when he saw his siblings. “Do you want to keep an eye on them while I cook?” Steve asked. “He’s stopped carrying on now.”

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“Yes, I’ll watch them,” Bucky agreed and pulled Steve in for a slow kiss. “I think I’m going to grab some gummy vitamins for them really fast. That always keeps Christopher satisfied for a little bit before breakfast.” He held his husband for a moment longer before peeling off to get the bottle of gummies. “Here, kids, you want some gummies?”

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Adriana tugged on the hem of Bucky’s shirt. “I want a gummy, Papa,” she said excitedly. Christopher jumped up and down in his pen, squawking wildly at Bucky to make sure he knew that he wanted one as well. Sarah May whined in response to the noise and pressed her face into Bucky’s chest.

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“Oh, okay,” he said calmly, trying to get his son to be patient. “Here, Adriana, here’s some gummies. Will you give those to your brother, please?” He handed one to Sarah May and gave her a little kiss. “We need to get you tiny earplugs for the mornings when you’re still waking up. You’re like me when I used to get hangovers.”

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Sarah May’s lower lip jutted out and she started to cry. Apparently, today was not her day. “Oh no!” Adriana gasped. She patted Sarah May on her back. “It’s okay, Ya-Ya,” she said. “Don’t cry. Do you want to cuddle together?”

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“Adriana, sit on the couch and you can hold Ya-Ya for a little bit,” Bucky said and got her set up. “Daddy is making breakfast now so we can eat soon. And, today, I’m home from work all day, okay? Papa doesn’t have to go anywhere but right here with you. Does that make you happy, Peanut?”

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Adriana climbed up onto the couch and wrapped her arms around her sister. She stroked her hair just like how she saw her daddies do it and Sarah May ended up calming down after a little while. “Can you read me lots of stories today? That makes me very happy.”

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Bucky couldn’t help but melt at how precious his kids were. He loved that they were all at an age
where they liked each other for the most part and any problems could be pretty easily resolved with some cuddles. “I can read you the dolphin book after breakfast,” Bucky agreed. “But, Papa and Aunt Lilly and Aunt Becca have to do some stuff today too. We have to look through old boxes. They are important boxes so it might take a little while for us to finish.”

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Adriana liked having her time alone with her parents, but Steve had taught her that her siblings were always going to be there for her, so she had to make sure that she was there for them. She kissed the top of Sarah May’s head before nodding. “Can you read before breakfast? You and Daddy didn’t read lots last night. Only a little bit,” she bargained.

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“Baby, Daddy is working really hard right now on breakfast. He will be done soon. And you know that I don’t read as fast as him,” Bucky said gently and adjusted some of her soft fly-away hair. “Daddy is making some really tasty food for us. Aren’t you hungry, Adriana?”

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She pouted. “I like when you read to me,” she insisted. “I don’t want food. I want the dolphin story.” Adriana made sure to look extra sad to try to convince Bucky to read to her. She didn’t think that Bucky read slow and she wasn’t able to tell when he got the words wrong.

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“You’re going to be hungry in a little while if you don’t eat at breakfast,” Bucky tried again. “Those gummies aren’t enough for food, Peanut.” He looked over at the playpen to make sure Christopher was still occupied. Sarah May had fallen asleep on Adriana and she was mumbling a little to herself. “Don’t you want to eat with your family? After we eat, you and I can read your book. Okay? I promise, Sweetheart.”

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Adriana huffed. “Why can’t I eat a little later? You never read to me,” she said, getting a little upset now. Luckily, Adriana was more of a crier than a temper tantrum-thrower, so she didn’t raise her voice. “I’m not hungry. I don’t want breakfast,” she insisted. “I’ve been a good girl.”

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Bucky blinked and took in a worried little breath. “Okay, Adriana, Honey, I know you’ve been a good girl. You are such a good girl. I’m not disagreeing with that.” He saw her starting to tear up already and he was trying to figure out if she was actually upset or just trying to get him to feel bad. “We don’t have to even read with your siblings. It can just be me and you and Daddy.”

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The promise of having both of her parents to herself was enough to make the tears stop. She looked over at Bucky and considered before nodding her head. “Okay... but only if you read. I want you to read,” she said, hugging Sarah May close to her chest and rocking from side to side to comfort both herself and her sister.

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watch your brother and sister for just one minute here so I can go check in on Daddy to see how breakfast is going?” he asked and kissed her forehead. “And I need to see if Becca or Lilly are awake. But I can do that in a little bit,” he added to himself.

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“Okay, Papa,” Adriana sighed. She gave Sarah May a little hug and turned her gaze over to Christopher, who was happily building up a little tower of blocks. He was undoubtedly going to knock them down immediately after.

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Steve almost had their breakfasts all made, but there was a large volume of it since they had so many people in the house right now. Bucky quickly came up behind him and gave a quick kiss to his cheek. “Hey, Baby. Just wanted to check in. I think I heard your mom getting up. When she’s out here, I’m going to have her stay with the kids so I can go see if the girls are going to get up. I told Adriana I would be right back after getting an ETA on breakfast.”

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“I’ll be done in about ten minutes,” Steve said. “If you see my mom first, let her know that Beth called again. She’s been trying to get in touch with my ma for days now.” He went to the fridge to start pulling out drinks. “Are the kids behaving themselves for you? It seems pretty quiet in there.”

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Bucky nodded and pulled his hair from its ponytail to brush it all back again. “Beth called again? Is your mom dodging her or something?” He sighed and helped Steve get cups on the table. “They are fine. Sarah May fell asleep on Adriana. Adriana almost had a little breakdown but she’s fine. And you and I need to read her dolphin story with her after breakfast. And Christopher is playing with block towers like usual. Except, this time he’s been trying to put animals on top first.”

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“She’s just busy and Beth doesn’t know how to wait between calls,” Steve said. “She’s clogging up our answering machine,” Steve complained. “At least the kids are being relatively good, yes? Adriana is such a good big sister. I feel bad having her do so much sometimes.”

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Bucky sighed and rolled his eyes. “Well, if Beth wants to buy us new tapes for the recorder, she can. Otherwise, she will need to just learn how to wait,” he said grumpily. “And I don’t think you should feel bad, Baby. We aren’t having her do everything. She’s just being a big sister and she’s learning responsibility and how to share and be patient.”

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“I know she’s being a good big sister and sharing, but I don’t want her to think that she can’t have stuff for herself sometimes. She did come from a home where she used to have to share everything and hardly had any belongings for herself,” Steve said. “That’s all.” He shrugged his shoulders.

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“She can have things to herself,” Bucky said, protesting against Steve a little bit. “She goes up to her room when she gets overwhelmed. She asks for time alone with us. I promised her we would read
alone with her after breakfast. She knows she doesn’t have to share her turtles with the babies. She’s okay, Steve.”

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“Alright, alright, you win,” Steve said as he waved Bucky off. “Now, go be right somewhere else,” he teased. Steve paused what he was doing so he could press their lips together to show that he had only been messing around with him. “I love you.”

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Bucky was still grumpy about it but he let Steve give him a kiss. “Love you, too,” He sighed and went to go check in on the kids again. Sometimes he worried that he wasn’t being as in-tune with the kids as Steve was because he wasn’t home with them as much. He hated thinking that maybe there were problems he wasn’t aware of. Maybe Adriana was feeling like she wasn’t getting enough individual attention. Maybe she was unhappy helping out with the babies when Bucky asked her to. But he couldn’t deal with those thoughts right now either. There was too much else happening and both Sarah and Greg were headed to the kitchen now for breakfast.

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Adriana smiled happily as her papa walked back into the room. “Look!” she said, pointing at Christopher. “He made a big tower. It’s so good, Papa.” Christopher clapped his hands and grinned as Adriana showed off his work.

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“That’s great, Christopher. It’s a good tower.” Bucky took Sarah May from Adriana and gave her a kiss as she woke up again. “It’s breakfast time, okay, Kids? Let’s go to Daddy.” By the time breakfast was on the table, Sarah called Beth back and Greg had already given Steve a few underhanded comments. Steve didn’t have the most patience right now but he did his best to put a smile on as they all gathered for breakfast. Bucky had Steve get the kids in their chairs as he got the girls up from Becca’s apartment and finally, he was sitting down next to his husband and trying not to make eye contact with his uncle. “Okay, Steve, we’re ready to pray.”

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Steve took his usual seat and held hands with Bucky and his mom, the rest of the table followed suit as Steve said grace. “Thank you, Lord, for blessing us with good health and good food. Thank you for seeing that we all are together and thank you for bringing us one more family member to join us for breakfast today. Amen.” He let go and started to help Bucky cut up the food for their kids. “So, did you hear of the ‘straightedge movement’, Buck? Clint was telling me about it the other day. Apparently, it’s been around for a bit now but I haven’t really heard of it.”

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Bucky could tell that Steve was doing what he could to sort of kill Greg with kindness at the moment. And he hoped it would work. Although there was a scoff from his uncle when Steve began to pray anyway. He wasn’t a religious man. He thought it was all bullshit. “Yeah, is that the thing that kids are doing right now to make sobriety the cool the thing in schools?” he asked tentatively and glanced around the table and landed on his uncle.

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Steve nodded. “Yeah, that. You know, I’ve always mildly liked all of the punk stuff just because you
were into it and the music is nice to listen to. But I think I may get more into it if that’s where the punk movement is starting to gear itself towards,” he said.

Becca laughed and remarked with good-humored, “You’re so lame, Steve.”

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“Can it,” Bucky mumbled and shot her a warning glance. “Yeah, I mean, it’s a good thought. I think it would be great if they got it to work, but I don’t really see that happening. It’s hard to just convince everyone to stop intoxicating themselves and having sex all at once. You know?” He wasn’t sure where Steve was trying to go with this conversation but he wanted to get out ahead of it in case it was going to come back to bite him in the ass.

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“I know,” Steve said. “I just think it’s a nice thought. It’d be cool if I didn’t have to worry about any bad stuff being around at concerts if our kids want to go to one someday. I mean, I’d still worry regardless. But I’d worry a lot less. I guess I’m just trying to make some conversation here.”

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Bucky sighed and squeezed Steve’s thigh under the table. “Well, we can just teach our kids not to want to do that stuff,” he said half-heartedly.

“Yes, because that worked on you,” Greg said flatly but with a challenging tone as he stared down Bucky. “Your dad always told you not to smoke or drink or do drugs. Although, that was hard to take an example from him when your mother drank all her meals.”

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Steve’s head snapped up at Greg. That was seriously uncalled for. He’d expected comments about being gay, but Bucky’s drug abuse shouldn’t have been brought up. Nor his mother’s issues. Before Steve could say anything, Sarah stepped in. “Gregory, that television show you said you liked is on now. You could watch it in the living room. I think you would better enjoy your breakfast there,” she said in a tone that suggested hell if he didn’t get up from the table.

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Bucky felt himself starting to shut down again just like the day before. But when Greg looked to Sarah and decided to concede to her wishes and get up, a new spark exploded in Bucky and he got up too. “No, you know what, stay, Greg. Sit down. Please explain in front of my entire family what you think about me and my mother. Please, go on about the shit you disapprove of, huh? Try to tell me again that my dad would be disappointed in me. Try to tell me again that I’m not a good father to my babies and to the girls!”

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Steve grimaced a little but didn’t dare try to interject. It was hard not to when Bucky swore in front of the kids. Adriana gasped and looked a little uncomfortable since she’d never seen her papa raise his voice like this. Sarah May and Christopher were both too busy eating to notice anything yet.

“You’re being overdramatic,” Gregory dismissed. “Just because you don’t like the truth I’m telling, doesn’t make me the bad guy here.”

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“I’m not being overdramatic at all!” Bucky snapped back. “This is how people react when cranky unwanted relatives show up and try to cause chaos in their lives. You’re the one who’s trying to exploit every mistake I’ve made as a reason that I’m not good enough. But do you even care that I haven’t had any alcohol for over a year now and I go to AA twice a week? Do you even care that after my dad helped me get clean, I didn’t fall back into a coke addiction?”

There was a small gasp from his left from Becca and Lilly. “What coke addiction?” Lilly asked hurriedly. They both knew he had alcohol problems and Becca was aware that he had dabbled in various drugs at different times in his life but they had never had a conversion together about a drug addiction. Becca wasn’t surprised but Lilly was entirely caught off guard.

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By this point, Sarah had gotten up to set up some TV trays downstairs in Becca’s room. She wanted to usher Adriana downstairs to eat with her and keep her occupied. Steve put his fingers over his lips and looked at Becca and Lilly, giving them an expression that promised that he would talk with them about everything later.

“You shouldn’t have had any addiction in the first place. You don’t deserve a pat on the back for not doing what you should’ve done anyway with keeping away from that stuff,” he scolded, keeping an even voice. “None of my kids are ever going to go down that path. I’ve yet to meet an addict who didn’t turn back to their old ways at one point or another. That’s why you need a stable wife to support you instead of a fake marriage so you have a fighting chance to stay clean long enough for your kids to be grown.”

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Bucky couldn’t handle this anymore. He had held himself together for as long as he could right now. He let out an angry, irrational yell and yanked his hands through his hair, pulling out a few small chunks. “Fuck off, Greg! Let’s go outside. Come on! I’ll kick your ass back to California and laugh while doing it. We don’t need you here! My family has been doing just fine before you stuck your ugly nose into everything!”

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Sarah May startled in her high chair and started to cry. Greg scoffed. “You see? This is exactly what I’m talking about. All you need is a small nudge and you go from calm to over the edge. You don’t have any self-control.”

Steve quickly stood up and placed himself in front of Bucky. “Buck, nothing good is going to come from this. How about we both sit down now or we can go upstairs.”

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“He’s insulting me, Steve. And you!” Bucky protested again and tried to push against Steve to get to Greg. “How can you say it takes one nudge to push me over the edge when you’re the one who’s been shoving me to the cliff since the moment you got here!” He huffed and shook his head. “How could you think you’re helping any of us when all you’ve done is drop in on us unexpectedly, brought us bad news, and then decided to torment me every second you are awake!”

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“I know he’s insulting us, Bucky,” Steve tried again firmly. “But our daughter is crying and yelling will only upset her more.” Becca got up from her chair so she could take Sarah May from her high
chair. Lilly got Christopher and they both carried them up to the nursery so they could avoid any
more of the argument.

“I’m not tormenting you every second, Son. I’m being real with you. Somebody has to be honest
with you around here,” Greg pointed out.

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Bucky faltered when he turned to look at his kids and found that everyone was gone except him and
Steve and Greg. He hadn’t even noticed any of them leaving. He was so consumed with being angry
that he didn’t realize it was upsetting his family. “Fuck,” he gasped and staggered backwards a few
steps. “Fuck. Dammit, Greg, can’t you just keep your mouth shut? I just wanted a normal breakfast
with my family! Steve even tried to welcome you in and be polite this morning. Now, look what
happened!”

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“I won’t keep my mouth shut because I’m not going to sit around and watch my nephew make poor
life choices for himself and everyone around him. I give a damn about you and the girls and now
your kids. They need a stable life and he-” Greg pointed at Steve, “Isn’t ever going to give you or
your kids what you all need.”

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“First of all, Uncle Greg,” Bucky sneered, being a little too childish with his response and not
helping his case. “Steve is more for me and my family than I could have ever hoped for. He’s my
world. He’s the only person I want to do this with and I trust him and love him and it’s your issue if
you can’t see that. Secondly, how the fuck do you know what I need? You can’t just show up after
four years and think you know me or my husband or my kids!”

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Greg snorted and rolled his eyes. “You’re so delusional, it’s sickening. I’ve had enough of this.
Becca and I are going to pick up your dad’s shit and I’ll be out of here tonight,” he growled before
heading upstairs, leaving his half-eaten breakfast behind.

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Bucky watched him leave with rage still in his heart. He was relieved for a moment that Greg would
be leaving soon but he also wasn’t sure it would be that simple. He figured this fight wasn’t over.
They still had the entire day and he would be surprised if he heard the last of his uncle once he went
back to California. “What a prick,” Bucky breathed, arms folded across his chest and hair wildly
cocooning his face. “Goddamn asshole thinks he has any authority here. Suck my dick, Greg. This is
my house. This was my father’s house.” He mumbled some more to himself as he picked up his
uncle’s plate and shoved the rest of the food into the trash bin.

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Steve’s smoothed his hands down Bucky’s arms and looked at him seriously. “Bucky. Babe, look at
me.” He sighed when Bucky moved away to toss the food in the garbage. Diana sat patiently at the
table still, hoping to be given somebody’s leftovers. “You have every right to be angry, but yelling
will just give him more satisfaction.”

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“What am I supposed to do right now?” Bucky asked, hands up in the air holding two cups as he worked to clean up the table. “He wasn’t going to stop. He wasn’t going to just let things go. We would still be stuck in an argumentative loop at the table right now if I didn’t fight back like that.”

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“You could’ve let him leave when my mom told him to bug off,” he said. Steve tossed some toast over at Diana and helped clean up. “Maybe you should spend the day with the babies. Me, Mom, and Becca can keep him away for the most part so, hopefully, he won’t pick any fights with you for the rest of the day,” Steve suggested.

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Bucky knew Steve was right. He should have just let it be. But he was still in a fired-up, combative state. “I can’t do that. We are going through my dad’s and Dwight’s things today. I want to be with my sisters for that. It’s hard enough already but I know getting those boxes of Uncle Dewey’s is going to make things far more painful again.”

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“Well, someone has to watch the kids and, out of the two of us, Greg argues with me less. He won’t try to fire me up like he does with you. He likes to pretend that I don’t exist. It’ll be easier if I’m there instead of you. And who says we have to go through it all today? We can wait until he leaves before we take care of it.”

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Bucky thought about it for a few moments while he finished off his orange juice. Steve had a point. It would be better if Bucky wasn’t with Greg all day. And it would do him good to spend the days with his kids. He probably already made Adriana upset again from all his yelling at breakfast. “Shit...” he sighed, thinking about it again. “God, I’m stupid, Steve. I let him get under my skin again so easily.” He shook his head and reached out for Steve to come to him. “You’re right. I’ll just try to avoid him today. I’ll watch the kids and you can be with the girls and Greg. I’m sorry. You’re right.”

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Steve walked over and wrapped his arms around Bucky. “You’re not stupid, Sweetheart. He’s bringing out the worst in your decision-making, but that doesn’t make you stupid and you don’t have to be sorry.” He kissed Bucky’s cheek. “I’m sure Adriana wants to be read to, so let’s get the dolphin book so we can read to her before I go out with the girls.”

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“I’m sure Adriana is angry as hell right now,” Bucky said worriedly and leaned against Steve. He kissed his neck and nuzzled him as well. He was trying to be so calm and gentle and loving right now to try to make up for his outburst before. “Let’s go get her. Let’s hope she isn’t prepared to throw a tantrum at me since I gave a bad example in that too.”

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“You haven’t given her any reason to be angry, Buck. She hasn’t been waiting a long time and she may not have even finished her breakfast yet.” Steve leaned into the affection and ran his hands up Bucky’s back. “I love you,” he reminded. Steve kissed him and then went to grab the dolphin book so they could read to their daughter.
Bucky followed after Steve to Becca’s room to get Adriana from Sarah. Sarah had popped a VHS in Becca’s player to keep Adriana distracted for a while. Their little girl was sitting on the couch, munching idly on her toast, and watching rainforest animals. “Hey, Peanut,” Bucky said cautiously and knelt down beside her. “How are you, my sweet girl?”

Adriana looked over at Bucky and she eyed him carefully to make sure that he wasn’t still upset. Once she deemed that he wasn’t going to blow up on her, she put her toast down and hugged him. “Are you okay, Papa? How come you were sad?”

Bucky let out a soft little sigh of relief and he wrapped her up securely in his arms. He rocked her back and forth slowly and kissed her hair. “That’s my girl. I’m sorry, Adriana. I’m so sorry. Papa got too upset, didn’t he? It was too much.” He shook his head and looked up at Steve, so relieved that she wasn’t angry with him now.

She snuggled Bucky eagerly, just so pleased he wasn’t angry anymore. “Uh-huh,” she agreed. “It was scary. How come Uncle Greg made you mad? Was he being bad? The teachers used to yell at us when we were bad at the home,” she said. Steve ran a hand up and down Bucky’s back to comfort him. He knew that Adriana wouldn’t be mad with Bucky. She wasn’t really like that.

“Well, Peanut, Uncle Greg and Papa were both being bad,” Bucky said. “Uncle Greg shouldn’t have been saying things to me that he was. But I shouldn’t have reacted so angry and scary like I did.” He reached a hand back to pull Steve down to hug the both of them. “I’m sorry for scaring you, Adriana. I really am. Papa never wants to scare you.”

Steve wrapped his arms around his husband and daughter. She felt safe being held by both of her parents like that. “It’s okay,” she said. “Can you read me the dolphin book now? I’ve been waiting forever,” she said dramatically, making Steve laugh a little.

“Uh-huh, yes,” Bucky said firmly and kissed her forehead before lifting her up. “Let’s go read. You have waited so patiently. Is the book upstairs, Daddy? Or in the living room?” he asked Steve and touched his side, not really wanting to be away from him right now at all. He was just going to keep some sort of touch of a tether to Steve as long as he could today.

“I brought it down here,” Steve said. He passed the book over to Bucky and leaned over to kiss his cheek and snuggle up closer so he could give Bucky as much support as possible.

“You have to do the voices,” Adriana reminded.
“I know, Peanut, I will,” Bucky said and adjusted his daughter more comfortably. He had been reading to her more often lately and had gotten a little better with reading out loud. It was still difficult and he definitely took much longer than Steve, though. But by the time they were done with the book, Adriana was calmly snuggled to Bucky and gently playing with his long hair and just loving having alone time with her parents. “That’s the end, Adriana.”

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Even though Bucky was self-conscious about his reading, Steve didn’t think that Bucky did a poor job by any means. Not only that, but having Bucky read was like having a special treat in Adriana’s eyes. It happened less often than Steve reading, so it was extra important to her. “Can you read it again?” she asked.

Steve looked over to Bucky with a smile. “You’re taking my job from me here,” he joked.

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“Again?” Bucky clarified with a tight smile. “Wouldn’t you want Daddy to read something to you now? You can pick another book. Something you really like Daddy to read.” He wouldn’t argue if she asked again but he just got through the book once. He was counting pages as he went while reading it the first time.

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Adriana sat up and leveled Bucky with a look. “How come you don’t like reading?” she asked him point blank. “Daddy never complains about reading. I like reading, but I’m not so good at it. So how come you don’t?” She had clearly noticed how Bucky was always hesitant to read to her.

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“Baby,” Bucky started and brushed her hair back from her eyes. “I’m not very good at it either. I get caught on the words. Even if I know the words, my mouth doesn’t want to say what my eyes see. It’s hard to get past them and then I go slow. It’s embarrassing for me to read, Peanut. Do you understand? Do you know what embarrassment is like?”

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“But you’re very good at it,” she insisted. “You’re lots better than me. Is it cause Aunt Lilly says you’re no good at it?” She stood up in Bucky’s lap so she could talk face to face with him. “Cause Lilly is wrong. You’re the smartest.” Adriana gave a small huff and said, “Yes, I know what ‘embarrassment’ is.”

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“Adriana, Sweetie,” Bucky said with an amused little sigh. “I am so grateful that you think I’m smart and that you want to stand up for me. But being smart doesn’t mean being a good reader. And I just really have a hard time reading. And I know it’s not fair that you don’t get to have me read and it’s not fair to Daddy that he always has to read. But it’s a lot for me to handle. I am trying, though. Just for you.”

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Adriana didn’t look entirely happy with the response but she also was able to tell that she wasn’t going to get her way with Bucky either. She sat back down and snuggled Bucky a little bit. “Then I don’t want reading time. Can we watch a movie?” Steve felt a little insulted that she didn’t want him
to read for her but he kept it to himself.

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“No, Adriana. It’s the morning,” Bucky said and looked up at Steve. “We can’t watch a movie in the morning. And Daddy and I have things we have to handle today. For now, I’m going to have you go with Nana to your room and get on day clothes. Then I’ll wash your pajamas, too.” He wasn’t sure how much of the day he was going to be with the kids, but, regardless, there was stuff to do. And he figured he should try to help with as much as possible until he had to see himself out of the situation and let Steve handle it all.

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Adriana’s shoulders slumped. She sighed and slipped onto the floor in a dramatic heap. “I’m not allowed to watch anything ever,” she complained.

Steve chuckled and picked her up. “Behave for Nana, Peanut. You can watch a movie later. Now go on before Sarah May grows up and starts stealing your clothes.”

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Adriana obeyed but she was decidedly grumpy about it as he stomped her way upstairs. Bucky followed a little bit behind her and got the babies from his sisters and started to get them changed. Lilly and Becca found Steve while he was cleaning up. “Steve,” Lilly said firmly. “What is going on right now?” she asked, trying to be calm even though everything about the morning and the day before was confusing and frustrating her.

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Steve pat Lilly’s shoulder, feeling bad for her because of the morning she had. “We are going to go pick up the things that Greg had mailed to us,” he said. “Then we’re going to wait for him to leave so you, Becca, and Bucky can go through everything in peace.” Steve took a step back and asked, “Are you okay? I know it hasn’t been an easy couple of days.”

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“No, I’m not okay,” Lilly answered sharply. “Greg is fighting with you and Bucky every chance he gets, Bucky can’t hardly keep his head on for more than three minutes, our uncle is dead and we have more stuff to go through, and I still don’t know what they were talking about with Bucky having a coke addiction.”

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“The issue with Greg is going to be solved soon when he leaves and Bucky will be better after that, too,” he reassured. Steve grimaced a little when Lilly brought up Bucky’s addiction. “That was a long time ago, Lil. He’s been sober from cocaine for even longer than he’s been sober from alcohol. You don’t have to worry about that.”

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Lilly stared hard at Steve. She was not satisfied with that answer. “I am worried about it. How come I was never told this? Even Becca knew he had experimented in drugs before. Why do people not tell me things?” she pressured again. “Is it because I’m young? Because I’m almost fifteen now, Steve. I’m not a little kid anymore!”
“At the time, it was because you were young, but it was also a long time ago. I know that you’re older and more mature now,” Steve said. “This was years ago, we’re talking about, even before your parents died. I wouldn’t want Sarah May to know if her older sister had a problem like that if Sarah May was only seven or eight.”

“Wait, when was it?” she asked again, pushing a litter hard. “How long before they died? How bad was it?”

Becca looked over to her sister and reached out a hand to pet her hair. “Lilly, maybe we should leave it for now. It’s a tough morning as it is.”

“Lilly, he hasn’t used drugs for so long now,” Steve said patiently. “But he was using when he was at least in his late teens. It’s in the past now, though. I know it’s stressful to learn that, but it’s all done and over with,” Steve reassured. “Do you want me to make you anything else to eat or drink?”

Lilly felt like Becca and Steve were trying to shut her down right now. She wanted to talk about this and ask more questions. But they both were looking at her like they were so tired they might die if she asked anything else. “Fine,” she grumbled and stormed off to Becca’s room.

Becca waited for a long minute and then sighed and looked up at Steve. “I think I know why this is such a big deal right now to her.”

Steve didn’t mean to make Lilly feel like she couldn’t ask anything, but he genuinely felt like this wasn’t something she had to concern herself with. At the very least, she should worry about feeling better about her uncle first. He looked to Becca and asked, “What do you think?”

“Steve,” Becca started slowly. “She found Bucky when he overdosed on pills. She thinks about that all the time. She still has nightmares even if they aren’t as often.” She sighed and tucked her hair behind her ears, looking a lot like Bucky as she did. “This is entirely new information to her. She knows Bucky had pill problems around our parents’ deaths and had alcohol problems for years. But a coke addiction even before anything went to hell... I mean, that’s too much for her to handle right now.”

“I know she did,” Steve said. “That’s even more reason why I don’t want her worrying about Bucky and drugs,” he remarked. “If she keeps thinking about it, then she’s going to have the nightmares more often.” Steve crossed his arms over his chest and let out a heavy sigh. “I’m just trying to protect her from working herself up too much.”

Becca nodded and gave Steve a weak little smile. “I understand. You’re just trying to keep all of us
sane and safe during this mess. I get it. And I’m trying to help. I am. I know it’s not easy when Bucky gets unmanageable like he was this morning. And when Lilly is added to it, it’s... almost impossible.” She closed her eyes for a second and then shook her head. “It’s fine. Everything is fine. Tell me the plan for the day again and then let’s get going. If we occupy Lilly and Bucky then they won’t have time to get upset again.”

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“You don’t have to worry so much about being an adult here,” Steve said. “I know he’s your brother and you care about him, but I don’t want you to feel like you have to help ‘manage’ him. He’s upset and rightly so. Greg is being incredibly rude,” Steve said. “We’re going to pick up the stuff from the post office and wait for Greg to leave so we can sort through them.”

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“I know Greg is being terrible to you two. But Bucky still needs to try to calm down. He scared Adriana a little bit and he was louder than he usually ever is so Christopher and Sarah May got confused and upset,” Becca said gently. “He’s not used to having someone in his home, his safe place, being so negative about his sexuality and you. It’s invasive for him.”

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“He’s already apologized to Adriana,” he said. “I’m not saying that I approve of his behavior, but I understand and I don’t want to scold him too much over it. So, maybe we should give him a little break, yeah?” He squeezed her arm. “Can you do me a favor and let Greg know that we won’t need him to pick stuff up from the post office?”

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Becca nodded and went off to talk to Greg, leaving Steve to have a few minutes to himself. After a bit, Sarah and Adriana came to find Steve. “Steven, should I take Adriana up to the nursery to spend time with her siblings and her Papa?” Sarah asked as Adriana started to peel the banana she had been holding on to since Sarah took her downstairs.

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“I think that might be best, Ma,” Steve said. “The more kids that are around him, the less likely Greg will try and single Bucky out. Would you mind staying nearby while I’m out with the girls? I don’t want Bucky to have another meltdown and end up upsetting the kids.”

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“Of course, Steve,” Sarah promised and pulled Steve in for a tight hug. “I’m sorry this is difficult for you.” She pulled back enough to hold his face in her hands and squish his cheeks like only mothers do. “It’s always something with our family, isn’t it? But, Dear, let’s count our blessings and thank God through trying times. Right?”

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“Mom-” Steve said, getting embarrassed when she squished his cheeks. He wiggled his way out and stood a little taller as if to try to keep his face out of squishing range. “I know, I know. We are lucky to have a big healthy family that’s all together. I’ll be luckier if you don’t squish my face again.”

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Sarah scoffed and folded her arms. “Steve, don’t you know that it’s good luck when your ma squishes your face?” She gave him a smile and squeezed him in another hug before taking Adriana upstairs.

Becca came back then and huffed a sigh. “Okay, Steve,” she said. “He isn’t happy about it, but I convinced Greg to let me and Lilly handle this on our own. He might think it’s just me and her going out to the post office so he will probably be annoyed when he realizes that you went with us.”

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“I’ve gotten past the point of caring if Greg is annoyed or not,” Steve said. “I’m going to get my shoes and then we can all head out. Thank you for talking to him for me.”

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“No problem,” Becca murmured and went to drag Lilly out of the basement. It took a few minutes but they were both ready to go and waiting with their hands in their pockets. Lilly was still grumpy and not really getting any better and Becca was trying her best to keep up a smile for her. “Steve, should I go tell Bucky we are leaving?”

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“I let him know already what the plans were,” He didn’t want to risk having to walk past Greg if they could help it. Steve clipped a leash onto Diana because he liked taking her on walks at every opportunity. “We’ll be in and out, hopefully. Let’s go.”
S6: E15

They walked to the post office together slowly. Lilly stood a few feet away from Becca and Steve. She was mad at them both. But once they got the boxes that were shipped to them, she softened a little. “Some of Dad’s stuff is in here,” she remarked and hoisted one box into her arms. “Uncle Greg said Dewey had some of Dad’s medals. We can put them on his uniform later.”

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“Do you know anything about the medals?” Steve asked. Bucky had told him plenty about his dad in the past, but Steve didn’t get half as many stories from the girls. He slipped the loop of Diana’s leash onto his wrist and then loaded up one of the heavier boxes in his arms.

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There were four boxes in total and Lilly was able to stack two and carry them on her own. “There’s a medal of valor,” Becca said. “At least, I think that’s what it is. He got it because his command stayed on enemy lines for three weeks in hiding and gathered intel. And I assume his Purple Heart is in there. They gave that to him when he got injured and they honorably discharged him. And we are missing a few bars on his formal uniform so maybe Dewey had those.”

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“Three weeks? That’s incredible. I was scared out of my mind for the five minutes I was in a firefight in my own city. I can’t imagine what was going through his mind the whole three weeks he was there,” Steve said. He shook his head in disbelief. “He seems like such a good guy. Someone with that amount of discipline had to have a lot of patience to raise a rebel like Bucky.”

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Becca nodded enthusiastically in agreement. “You’re telling me,” she said. “Dad was always really calm and patient and clever. He didn’t get upset or raise his voice or freak out. He was so methodical. I’m guessing that, during the war, he was so focused and seemingly unaffected that he was a clear choice to be a leader. Especially given how good he was at calming down our mom or Bucky when they got too worked up. He was probably the best around antsy soldiers.”

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“I bet he was,” Steve agreed. “Has Bucky ever reached out to any of the soldiers your dad knew? Maybe they have some stories that you never knew about him,” he suggested. Steve would be willing to do a bit of digging in order to unearth some new things for Bucky to hold on to.

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Lilly shook her head and shrugged. “I’m guessing not. Dad talked about a few of his buddies but he didn’t usually mention his command by name.”

Becca nodded and added, “Mom used to say that it was hard for him to talk about the guys he led because so many of them didn’t make it and he hated having to think about that. He felt like he failed the ones who died under his orders.”
“I understand,” Steve said. There were plenty of people who were hurt when he was trying to save them and, though it wasn’t as bad as dying, Steve understood that dreadful responsibility. “Who knows. Maybe there’s a journal laying around in one of these boxes and we can find out then.”

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“We can see, yeah,” Becca agreed. “I’ll just be happy to see his medals.” She paused and looked over at Lilly to check on her. “Did Bucky ever tell you why he has Dad’s uniform?” she asked and looked back to Steve. “At least, his formal uniform. We don’t have his fatigues or anything that he actually fought in.”

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Steve shook his head. “I don’t like to ask too much about him. I let Bucky tell me what he wants as he goes,” he answered. Steve never knew what question could dredge up all sorts of bad memories for Bucky and he didn’t want to accidentally ruin his husband’s day with a single question.

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Becca nodded and stopped so she could switch the way she was holding her box before continuing on. “Well, a lot of people are buried in their uniforms. Dad went to a few funerals of people he knew and they were all buried in them. Our grandfather was buried in his uniform,” she said. “It’s pretty common. I’m sure Dewey was too. But we buried Dad in the suit he wore for his wedding. It still fit and everything. Uncle Greg was pretty angry that we did that. He tried to fight us on it. But Mom and Dad always wanted to be buried in their wedding clothes. Mom is in her dress too. Mom said it was because their lives didn’t really start until then and it was only fitting that they be put to rest the same way.” She shook her head and took in a shaky breath. “I wonder sometimes if they knew they were going to die together.”

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Steve had always wanted to be buried in his uniform since he became a cop, but now he was having second thoughts. Their wedding was the happiest day of his life and Steve thought that it would be nice to have his eternal rest reflect that. He would’ve hugged Becca if his arms hadn’t been full. “I know it was hard for you. But maybe that’s the way it was always meant to happen. I hope Bucky and I don’t die for a long time, but I would want to go together, too.”

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“I know what you mean,” Becca agreed quietly. She was feeling pretty sentimental today and it seemed like Bucky’s absence as a mature helpful presence was unlocking that side in Becca that had a hard time showing up. “As I get older, I’m figuring out that there isn’t any way I can get them back and maybe our lives were always supposed to be this way. Because everything would be different if they hadn’t died. Bucky might still have problems sleeping around and drinking and who knows what else. I might’ve alienated my siblings from me even more than I used to. Bucky never would have met you and I wouldn’t be an aunt or know your mom. And as much as I’ve been a pain in the ass sometimes, I do love you all.”

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Steve wished that Bucky and the girls had their parents in their lives and that they still could’ve ended up knowing each other. But chances were that things would’ve gone a lot differently. Steve felt his eyes get wet with tears when Becca told him that she loved their new family. “You really mean it?” He was the sort of idiot who wanted to hear it again.
Becca glanced over at Steve and rolled her eyes. She was used to him by now, though. She knew how emotional he could get. He was a good pair for Bucky in that way. “Yeah, Steve. I mean it. Don’t make it weird,” she said and nudged her elbow against his. “Let’s just get home and hope that no one had any fights while we were away.”

“It’s my job to make it weird,” he said, wiping his eyes on his shoulder. When they got home, he shifted the box into one arm so he could open the door. He had to let go of the leash immediately because Diana went running inside like a bat out of hell. He carried the box into the kitchen and set it on the counter with a relieved huff.

Bucky had almost made it through without any hitches the whole time Steve was gone. But then Adriana and Christopher both wanted some orange juice and he ran into Greg in the kitchen where Greg tried again to talk him into kicking Steve to the curb. He even offered to help pack Steve’s things and to help Bucky find a nice motherly woman to date. So, now Sarah was watching the kids in the living room and Bucky was in his room with the doors locked, acting like a teenager who was told they couldn’t go to the movies because they didn’t bring up their grades or something.

Diana pranced around Steve’s feet and he gave her a dog treat to calm her down. He frowned when he saw his mom with the kids - that meant that something happened with Bucky. Steve sighed and headed up into their bedroom to check on Bucky. It was locked – another bad sign. He knocked on the door and said, “Buck? It’s me. Can you unlock the door?”

There was a pause and a shuffle as Bucky got off the bed and came to unlock the door and open it for Steve. He mumbled an acknowledgment and then crawled back up on the bed. He was shirtless and sitting on an unmade bed with his sweater in his hands. He had a sewing kit and was trying his best to embroider Steve’s name over the chest. The letters were messy and wild and looked nothing like the neat careful embroidery of the kids’ names on the cuffs. But he didn’t care. He wanted Steve’s name over his heart and he was going to wear this sweater forever.

Steve walked back inside and locked the door behind him. He saw what Bucky was doing and his heart clenched. God, he loved this man. He sat down next to Bucky and gently took the sweater and the needle from his hands so he could place it neatly on the nightstand. He laid Bucky back on the bed and started to kiss his neck and chest. “I love you.”

Bucky whined about being interrupted but he laid back and relaxed under Steve anyway. “Baby, I wasn’t done,” he said quietly in protest. “It only says ‘Stev’ right now.” He carded his fingers in Steve’s hair and brushed a thumb over his cheek, trying to relax and feel Steve’s touches on him as well. “Did you get Uncle Dewey’s stuff?”
“You can finish it later, Sweetheart,” Steve said. He brushed his thumb over Bucky’s nipple as he sucked marks onto his skin to make sure Bucky knew who he was married to. “I did. Becca and I had a heart to heart. I was embarrassing, as usual,” he said with a little smile.

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Bucky let out a short moan and draped a leg over Steve’s hip. “You cried, Babe?” he asked, although he already knew he did. Steve was prone to getting emotional especially when Becca gave him anything at all to work with - since she was such a closed book, usually. “Hey, are trying to distract me with hickeys? Come on.”

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“Only a little,” he chuckled. Steve continued to kiss his husband affectionately. “So, what if I am? Is it working?” he asked. Steve pet his hand down Bucky’s side and gave him a loving smile. “I’ve barely gotten to kiss you all day. I’ve got a little pent-up love waiting to be released.”

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Bucky whined again and wrapped both legs around Steve’s middle. It was working to distract him. But he also was such a grump right now and wanted to finish his sweater and go flaunt it around Greg and start another fight. Which, now that he thought about it, was all such a bad, irrational idea. “Fuck,” he mumbled and glanced over at the sweater. He ruined it. He should’ve just asked Sarah to do it if he really wanted it. Instead, he tried to do it himself and now it looked terrible. He shook his head and pushed Steve’s chin up to get him to look at him. “I love you. Come kiss me. I’m sorry I haven’t been with you much and you have pent-up love. Come on, let me touch you. Come here.”

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Steve knew that Bucky was thinking over the sweater again. That glance at it told him all he needed to know. “We can fix the sweater later. My mom is magical with that kind of stuff.” He kissed Bucky a few more times and smiled softly at him. He laid on top of Bucky and cuddled him close. He wanted to make Bucky forget about all the awful things Greg said to him. “Don’t be sorry. We’re busy dads doing busy dad things.”

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Bucky nodded and held Steve close. He was so grateful he had him here to pull him back every time he went drifting too far. “I know. We’re busy dads. But right now, Greg is making me just feel like an angry sixteen-year-old Bucky who couldn’t fight off any of the other people who told me I was disgusting and wrong. I’m not thinking like a dad and a husband and a brother right now. I’m only thinking about myself.”

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Steve nuzzled Bucky affectionately. “You can do it, Buck. You can go out there again. And if Greg gives you a hard time, we can kick him out. We aren’t obligated to host someone who refuses to respect you,” he said. “I’ll just grab his bags, put them out on the stoop, and call him a cab,” Steve reassured.

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“It’s only until tomorrow, right?” Bucky asked. “He did say he only needed to get the boxes to us and now we have them so he should be gone in like twenty-four hours give or take.” He hoped like hell that was accurate. He couldn’t handle much more. “You know, he’s just doing this because he
feels like he’s supposed to parent me now that my dad is gone. And he was always the one who Dad had to protect growing up. Dwight wasn’t very nice to him and he wasn’t as athletic as his brothers. Greg wasn’t in the military either and he’s always been bitter that Dewey and Old George had that shared experience. He had a heart condition as a kid and even the draft didn’t take him. I guess bad hearts run in the family...” Given how Dewey died and Greg’s boyhood condition, Bucky wondered if he should watch out for that. And he also must have hurt his heart with drugs and drinking so that wasn’t good at all. Now, he was worried.

“Tomorrow, the latest. I’m hoping that he’s out by tonight,” Steve said. He ran his hand over Bucky’s chest gently. “You don’t need him to parent you and it’s not your fault that he had trouble growing up. He’s got his own kids he can be a dad to. He could be an uncle to you and our kids if he quit being such an asshole.”

Bucky nodded and nuzzled against Steve. He sighed and squeezed his arms tighter around him. “Let’s not talk about him anymore, okay?” he said quickly and brought his lips close to Steve to give him another kiss. He reached down and stuck his hands down the back of Steve’s pants and gripped his ass. “Let’s just be together right now. Your mom has the kids and Greg was looking at a photo album the last time I saw him.”

“I thought you said not to talk about him anymore,” Steve teased when Bucky said his name again. He groaned softly when Bucky felt his ass and he returned the kiss happily. “I like that plan,” he said. “I’m glad I’m keeping your hands occupied or else you’d still be busy murdering my name on your sweater.”

“Murdering?” Bucky asked with a faux offended key to his voice. “It was romantic. Sort of. It would have been romantic if I was any good at sewing like that,” he corrected and wiggled a finger in between Steve’s ass and poked gently against his hole. “It came across more crazy than romantic, didn’t it?” He sighed. “It’s okay. I’ll just have ‘Stev’ over my heart from now on if your mom doesn’t think she can fix it.”

“It is romantic,” Steve agreed with a little grunt at the touch. “But it would’ve been more romantic if it didn’t look like Christopher did it,” Steve chuckled, giving Bucky a smile to show he didn’t mean it. He genuinely did think that it was sweet of Bucky to do, regardless of how it came out. He gasped softly and then leaned down to nip Bucky’s neck again. “Do you want to ride you?”

“Yes. God, yes, please,” Bucky whispered back quickly and pushed his hips up against Steve to get some more friction. “I love when you do. You always look so handsome. Like an angel hovering over me and pleasuring yourself with my dick. So hot.” He shook his head and pulled his hands away from Steve’s ass so he could unbutton his pants and start to push them off.

Steve reached for the lube from the drawer and pushed it into Bucky’s hand. “I want you to finger
me open,” he purred. “And keep sweet talking to me while you do, because I’m loving it.” Steve ran his hands slowly up Bucky’s chest and gave his nipples a small pinch.

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Bucky nodded and obediently lubed up two fingers heavily and prodded at Steve’s newly exposed ass again. “I’m going on with two,” he warned and then slowly but steadily pushed two fingers all the way inside and watched Steve’s face as he did. “Wow, that’s tight. It’s been a bit since I’ve fucked you, hasn’t it? The last couple times were me on bottom, right? Fuck, I shouldn’t be so selfish that way. You deserve to get fucked in your ass just as much as I do. And I know you love it so much. And I love treating you so good.”

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Steve bit his bottom lip and arched his back when Bucky pushed two fingers in at once. He let out a little whine, his eyebrows knitting together in brief discomfort before the slightly overwhelming intrusion turned into pleasure. He laid his cheek on Bucky’s shoulder and mouthed at his neck. “I love getting to do anything with you,” he said. “So long as our dicks are out, I’m not complaining.” He nipped at Bucky’s neck. “Tell me how you’re going to fuck me next time.”

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Bucky hummed in thought as he fucked his fingers in and out of Steve and spread him open to be able to take a third. “Maybe next time it can be a little more involved,” he offered and brought Steve’s face close to give him a chaste kiss. “I’ll come home from work one day and just whisk you upstairs. Push you back on the bed and rip your clothes off. And I’ll tie your arms down and your knees up to your chest so your ass is open and on display for me. And I’ll eat you out and fist you open until you’re dying to come. And after you’ve had your release, I’ll pound you so hard you’ll feel me for a week.”

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Steve looked at Bucky with dark, needy eyes as he listened to Bucky talk about what he would do. He licked his lips and gave Bucky’s throat another kiss. “Please? Can we make that happen?” He asked in a soft voice. “We can get a hotel for the night and order in breakfast in the morning. We can take our time with it and not have to worry about interruptions.”

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“Yes, we can,” Bucky agreed as he slid a third finger inside Steve. “We can make a hotel reservation and order in their fanciest room service and just hide away together. And I’ll buy you heart-shaped chocolates. It’ll be adorable.” He giggled and bit Steve’s lip lightly for a moment. “And we can pick up some of that non-alcoholic sparkling grape juice so it seems fancy.”

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Steve arched his back when he was spread open by three fingers. He moaned Bucky’s name and clenched down on the intrusion. “Perfect... all of that is perfect, Bucky,” he said. “You pick the place. Pick somewhere nice with a good view.” He leaned down to bite at Bucky’s throat. “I’m ready for your cock, Baby.”
“I’ll plan it all. Don’t worry. It’ll be our little getaway trip,” Bucky promised and slowly eased his fingers from Steve before lubing up his cock for Steve. “Come on, Baby. Come sit down. Feel how happy my dick is to be inside you.” He moaned quietly up at Steve and pulled his hips forward so he would come get on him.

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Steve was eager and desperate for Bucky’s cock. He grabbed the base and held it steady as he positioned the head against his hole. Steve sank down on it slow and steady, giving a satisfied groan when he felt his ass press against Bucky’s hips. He dragged his nails down Bucky’s chest. “I love how your dick feels stretching me open, Buck, Baby.”

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Bucky stuttered out a moan and gripped Steve’s hips firmly. “You feel amazing. So tight and hot,” he said with a loving reverence. “You’re so handsome. So sexy, Baby. God, I could lay like this and look at you all day.” He shook his head and started to move his hips under Steve a little to get some sort of a motion going. “But I can look at you while I fuck you.”

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Steve rocked his hips steadily, circling them teasingly whenever he pulled out almost all the way. He let the tip of Bucky’s cock move at his entrance before dropping back down. “I’ll ride you any day of the week when you talk to me sweet like that,” Steve purred. “God, your dick is so good. I forgot how much I loved it.”

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Buck let out a low chuckle and ran a hand up Steve’s abs and chest to settle on a nipple. “My dick missed you, Steve,” he said and bit his lower lip for a second as he focused only on the sensations and heat around his cock. “You’re the best husband in the world. And the absolute cutest man who’s ever lived. I love you so much. You’re my sweet Steve and I love you.”

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Steve clenched down on Bucky’s cock to reward Bucky for being so sweet on him. He leaned down and nipped at Bucky’s lip too. “I can’t be the cutest because you are,” he said. “You’re also the sexiest with hair that’s perfect to pull on when I’m fucking you from behind.”

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“I do really love that,” Bucky agreed and gave Steve a quick kiss back. “It’s real long now too. My braid goes to my shoulder.” He thrust his hips up in rhythm with Steve and gasped a little when Steve’s ass squeezed him. “Fuck, Baby. God, you’re so hot and tight. Fuck! Wanna do this all day.”

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“I don’t think my ass will agree with us going at it all day,” Steve chuckled. He moved Bucky’s hand to his cock and curled his fingers around it. “Jerk me off. I want to come all over you,” Steve said. He was getting a little breathless and had to slow down a little.

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“You got it, Love,” Bucky agreed eagerly and pumped him quickly and steadily, thumbing at his slit every few seconds. “Come for me, Sexy. Come on me then I’ll come in you.” He smiled happily and
licked his lips. “Want you to have my come all day. Okay? Want you to walk around with my come deep inside your ass, Baby. Sound good?”

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Steve whined needily when Bucky started to stroke his cock. “Yes, just like that,” he said thickly. “Fuck... give it to me. I want to feel your come in me, Buck.” He loved the idea of being full of Bucky’s come, walking around the house, taking care of the kids, while Greg couldn’t say a damn thing at him without someone jumping down his throat. “Almost there- shit!” He moaned as his orgasm coursed through him and he spurted hot streams of onto Bucky’s chest.

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Bucky giggled and pumped Steve through his orgasm until he knew it would be too much stimulation. He then gripped his hips tight with his hands and fucked up into him fast and hard and deep for a minute or two until he was coming as well with a strained, “Steve - fuck!” He gave him a few more slow thrusts and then stopped with a grunt. “God, Baby... thank you so much.”

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Steve’s arched his back when he felt his husband fill him up, showing off for him. He slowly eased himself off of Bucky’s cock and collapsed next to him, panting to catch his breath. His eyes were fixated on his husband until he was finally able to speak again. “I’ll never get tired watching your face when you come.”

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Bucky rolled over on his side to face Steve. He looked down at his stomach when he felt Steve’s come slipped down his skin. “Fucking you is my favorite thing. You’re so good to me, Baby,” Bucky said and scooped up some of Steve’s come and brought his fingers to his lips gently. “You felt amazing. And you cheered me up, so thank you.”

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Steve smiled breathlessly up at his husband. “I’m happy to hear that I lifted your spirits as well as your dick.” He moved over Bucky and licked up his stomach to clean off some of the come. “We should make ourselves decent soon. My mom is currently outnumbered by children downstairs.”

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“I know. But I don’t want to,” Bucky admitted and groaned as he sat up in bed. “How many boxes did you get from the post office?” he asked and used a tissue to wipe off the rest of the come from his skin. Then he reached over gently and pulled Steve legs further apart so he could dab at the lube on his thighs. He probably wasn’t cleaning him much but he wanted to help. “Do the girls want to open them?”

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“Three or four,” he said. “I only carried one.” Steve smiled as Bucky cleaned him up, finding the gesture sweet. “I don’t know. They seemed to not be upset at having to wait until Greg leaves, but I could bring them up here so you could do it today before he notices that you’re opening them without him,” Steve suggested.
Bucky shook his head and got up from the bed. He grabbed his pants to pull on again. “It’s okay. Maybe we should just go see how they are right now. If they want to open the boxes today then we can. And if Greg insists on being part of it then I can just look through the boxes later. It’s okay.” He wanted to go through them with his sisters but he was also too tired right now for another fight. He wasn’t really in an argumentative mood anymore. “I don’t really want any of Dewey’s stuff. I just want Dad’s things. Greg said his medals are in there.” He smiled and pulled on his sweater so the messy letters of ‘Stev’ were haphazardly over his heart. “I want his medals.”

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Steve eased himself up off the bed. He used a few more tissues to gingerly clean himself up before getting dressed. The poor embroidering job brought a smile to his face and he leaned over to steal a kiss. “You look good,” he complimented. “And I know you want the medals. Becca and Lilly were talking about them on the walk home.” He pulled on a different sweater and nudged Bucky to follow him out the door.

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Bucky followed Steve and reached out for his hand and slipped their fingers together. “You look cute, too,” he said and kissed Steve’s neck a few times as they walked.
Sarah was with the kids in the kitchen getting some snacks together for them all. She looked up when they came in and her eyes immediately went to the sweater. “What happened there?” she asked with a humored little laugh as she handed Steve a bowl of carrots and celery to give to the kids.

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Steve was so lucky to have a husband that treated him like gold every day. He let go of Bucky’s hand so he could carry the bowls to their kids. “Bucky tried his hand at embroidery, but forgot how to spell my name,” he answered.

Adriana raised her hand. “I know how to spell your name! It’s D-A-D-Y!”

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“Good job, Adriana,” Bucky said and gave her a little kiss and a hug. “And, no, I didn’t forget how to spell his name. He just didn’t let me finish it. So, for now, he is ‘Stev’.” He sighed and came a little closer to show Sarah the sweater. “I’m going to need your help to fix this. I ruined my favorite sweater. But Steve said you could get the thread out without making it worse.”

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Sarah leaned in to look the sweater over with her eyes squinted. “My son has high regard for me. You did a real number on this sweater... but I know that with a bit of time and patience and a new flower pot, I’ll have it fixed.” She gave him a little smile. “Raphael knocked my last one over and I’d like to avoid going out to the store in the cold.”

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“I will get you a new flower pot,” Bucky agreed and gave her a quick hug. “Was it the one from your windowsill? Because he does really like sitting there. I don’t know if he will stop doing that.” The cat was even then walking along the kitchen counters and just narrowly avoiding making a mess of the row of cereal and bread.

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“It was,” she said. “It’s the third one he’s knocked over and I was hoping to not lose my favorite spot for my flowers to the cat,” Sarah chuckled. “They can be such rude animals, but if that’s the worst complaint I have of him, then I’m fine. It’s not like he’s biting and scratching.”

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Bucky and Steve had the same problem with Raphael for a while where he would come into their room and knock over his pictures of his parents on his nightstand. He decided it had been enough when he knocked the lamp over and bent the shade. Raphael was no longer allowed in the master bedroom. “Maybe you can glue some magnets or metal weights in the bottom of the pot so it’ll be harder for him to move it at all.”

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“I have a feeling he’s going to be stubborn about it,” she said. She reached out to give the cat a pet.
“What does ‘stubborn’ mean?” Adriana asked through a mouthful of carrots. “Everyone uses that word a lot.” Steve couldn’t help but laugh because they really had a bunch of mules in their family who refused to budge.

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Becca glanced over at Adriana and said, “It means that someone isn’t going to change their mind or budge.” She nodded and pointed to Lilly. “Do you remember the other night when Lilly wanted to order pizza and your Daddy said he had plans to make chicken? Remember how Lilly argued about it until your Papa stepped in and just agreed to pizza so she would stop whining? Lilly was being stubborn. She wouldn’t give up.”

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“Oh. Then that means Christopher is stubborn,” she said. Christopher looked up at her and, even though he didn’t have a concept of what it meant, huffed out a ‘no!’

Sarah smiled at her grandbabies and gave each of them a kiss on the cheek. “They certainly are your kids,” she said fondly to the two of them. “Do you boys need help with anything else for now?”

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Bucky shook his head and waved dismissively. “No, thank you, Sarah. We can handle this now. Thanks for watching them.” He felt bad that he had made her be in charge of them for so long but he did feel a lot better right now. “Becs, do you know where Uncle Greg is?” He hadn’t seen him in a while and that could either be a really good thing or be a really bad thing depending on what he was up to.

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Sarah walked out so she could go back to watching her soap operas. Becca had been eyeing one of the boxes from the post office curiously but didn’t move from her spot. “He’s still in Lilly’s room. I haven’t heard him come out for a while. Maybe he’s packing his things up or something,” she answered.

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“Alright, well, I guess we will just leave him be for now.” Bucky figured it was better to let him be by himself for as long as possible instead of seeking him out and then causing more of a problem. “What do you two want to do about the boxes? Are we waiting until he goes back home to open them?” he asked as he leaned a little against Steve and wrapped an arm around his middle, just wanting him close.

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Steve slid his hand up the back of Bucky’s sweater so he could touch his back. “I think we should wait,” Becca said. “I... I really want to open them. But I don’t want to risk the blowup if uncle Greg catches us. He did make the trip all the way out here to do that with us. He might get upset,” she reasoned.

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Bucky nodded and looked to Lilly who hadn’t been talking much. She wasn’t doing too well with any of this. Another death in the family too soon, finding out about Bucky’s past drug problems, dealing with Greg fighting everyone. And she just wanted whatever it was of her dad that was
brought back to them. “Lil, are you in agreement with Becca? We will wait until he leaves?”

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Lilly looked up at her brother and then back at the floor and shrugged. She didn’t want to wait and she didn’t like having to avoid her last uncle. Sure, he was being a dick to everyone else but they didn’t have much family left. She didn’t want to shun what little they had now. However, everyone else in the household seemed to have their mind made up already.

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“Oh-Kay,” Bucky sighed, elongating the word in defeat. He looked over to Becca to see if she knew what was going on in Lilly’s head. “I guess that’s a ‘yes’. We will just wait.” He detached himself from Steve and went to lean over Lilly in her chair and squish her a little bit. “We can watch a movie tonight. It can be your choice so long as the kids can watch it too.”

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Becca had tried speaking to Lilly earlier, but all it got her was a punch in the arm for not leaving her alone. Now, Lilly pushed at Bucky with an unhappy grumble, trying to get him to give her space. “I don’t want to,” she said. “Once Uncle Greg leaves, I want to go to bed. In my own room.”

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Bucky backed off of her but stayed next to her chair for a moment. “Okay, I understand. Do you want me to do the laundry before you do so your sheets and blankets are all cleaned?” He knew he loved having fresh clean bedsheets when he wasn’t feeling good. And after having someone else be in her space for a bit, she might want to clean up everything and make it hers again.

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“That’ll take too long,” she said. “You can do it tomorrow when I’m at school or something.”

Steve gave Bucky a concerned look because it was rare that Lilly got in a mood quite like this. Usually, she got angry if she was upset - not in a depressive, shut-down way like this. “You let me know when you want them cleaned and we’ll have it done for you,” Steve offered.

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This was definitely new behavior for Lilly. He had seen something like it in her before but not really of a scale like it had been right now. He assumed that being in her teenage years had something to do with it too since that was such a difficult and aggravating time anyway. And for a kid who had to deal with so much tragedy early on, it probably just made everything feel so much worse. “Yeah, Lilly. We can get it done for you soon.” Steve glanced up in the direction of Lilly’s room, debating whether or not he should ask Greg to relocate so Lilly could relax.

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Lilly nodded and didn’t say anything else after that. Instead, Christopher was the one to try to get Bucky’s attention. “Papa. Papa, up,” he said, lifting his arms up. “Up?”

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“Sure, Bean, up.” Bucky agreed and hoisted his son in his arms. “Christopher, you are getting heavy. You know that? You’re almost two now.”
Christopher nodded and giggled. “Heavy,” he agreed even though he didn’t really know what that meant. “Down, now.” He was done with snack time. It was playtime again and now both his parents were paying attention to him which is what he wanted anyway. “Dada, play now?”

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Steve ruffled up his son’s hair affectionately. “Yes, Bean, playtime. Go get your toys and Daddy will be right inside.” He gave him a gentle nudge towards the living room. Christopher was happy to scamper off. Steve turned to Bucky and laced his fingers together. “Should we maybe ask Greg to go in Becca’s apartment for a bit so Lilly can go lay down?”

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“Maybe,” Bucky said after a few moments of thinking. “Maybe we can just ask Becca to let Greg have her room tonight and Lilly can have her own back. Becca might be okay sleeping on the couch. Or I can ask my wonderful husband if he would sleep on the couch and Becca and I can have the master tonight. That way, Lilly gets some normalcy back and a place to hide away.”

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“I’ll sleep on the couch,” Steve said immediately. “I don’t want Becca to be put out at all,” he said. He ran a hand over Bucky’s back and then looked over to Becca. “Are you alright with that, Becs?” he asked.

He apparently was also taking too long to get into the living room because Christopher came running back with one of his toy dogs. “Dada! Playtime,” he reminded.

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“Yeah, that’s fine. It’s just tonight,” Becca agreed and grabbed Lilly by the arm to take her upstairs so they could talk to Greg.

“Can we still watch a movie tonight even though Aunt Lilly doesn’t want to?” Adriana asked as she slipped off her chair at the table to go with Steve and Christopher into the living room to play.

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Steve led Bucky with one hand and carried Sarah may in the other as they went to the living room. “Sure, we can, Peanut. But we should let Becca pick the movie if she watches with us because she’s giving her room with Uncle Greg tonight.”

Christopher sat down in the middle of the room with his toy dog. “Ana. Ana, Woof!” Christopher said. He then waved the dog at Bucky. “Papa, Woof!”

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Adriana gave Steve a troubled look but then let out a sigh and nodded. “Okay. Do you think she’s going to pick a good one? The last three movie times have been animal movies and in one there was a lion chasing a deer and I don’t like that.” She usually liked the nature documentaries that Becca watched but the last one was a lot to handle. Bucky promptly removed her from the living room once the lion got close enough to get the deer. He told her that the lion was playing tag and the deer lost but she wasn’t buying it.
“I’ll tell Becca that she’s got to pick a cartoon movie that isn’t Bambi,” he said. Steve had considered trying to explain the food chain to Adriana but Bucky had convinced him out of it with one look since it had been hard enough to keep her from crying at the last documentary.

“Did we watch Bambi before?” Adriana asked.

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“No Bambi!” Christopher yelped and mashed a toy truck into the leg of the coffee table, startling Sarah May who was trying to build a block tower.

“He, Christopher.” Bucky shook his head and tucked Adriana’s hair behind her ears. “It was the one with the rabbits that Papa and Lilly don’t like. You didn’t like it either. And, apparently, neither does Christopher.”

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“Oh, inside voice, Bean,” Steve cautioned gently. He sat next to Christopher and played with his long hair. “We have to be nice to the table, Kiddo. Can I see your truck?” he asked.

Adriana nodded. “Okay. Then no Bambi. Can Becca choose Lady and the Tramp?” she bargained, trying to get her to pick a happy movie.

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Christopher handed the truck off to Steve and picked up the dog again. “Here,” he said quieter now and rubbed the plush dog’s soft fur on Steve’s cheek.

“I think we can probably ask Becca if she might want Lady and the Tramp, sure,” Bucky offered. “But we can’t be angry if she doesn’t want that one. We can find one you both want. Okay, Peanut?”

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“Thank you, Bean.” Steve made truck noises as he rolled the toy on the carpet, trying to show Christopher how to be gentle when playing with toys that weren’t stuffed animals.

“I can be angry if I want to be,” Adriana said. “Daddy says it’s important to talk about how I feel. If I want to feel angry, then I’m gonna be angry.”

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Bucky gave Adriana a blank stare for a few moments and then looked over to Steve. It made sense. He wasn’t mad. He was mostly impressed that she articulated it so well back to him. “Well, Daddy is right. It is very important to talk about how you feel. Did Daddy also tell you how important it is to talk in a calm way about it? And to listen to others feelings too? Because you can be angry if Becca chooses a movie you don’t like. But if you are, let’s you and I try to explain why you are angry.” He knew Adriana was still getting a handle on her new home and sometimes she did get pretty mad at some of the people in her family. It was a normal response. She probably did the same thing in the orphanage with the other kids.

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Steve couldn’t help but be impressed even though she was using his lesson to justify throwing a small fit over not getting to watch the movie she wanted. “He did,” Adriana sighed dramatically.
“But I can’t feel calm if I’m angry!” She waved her hands around as if that would help Bucky understand more. “Angry is when my feelings are too big for my chest,” she continued. “Like when Christopher ruined my book.”

Bucky caught her hands gently and brought them together to give them a kiss. “I know, Sweetheart. Anger is too big for your chest. I know,” he sighed. He really wished this talk had come on any other day and not amongst all the nonsense with Greg. Both himself and Greg were not showing good examples of how to calmly handle conflict through anger. “Papa isn’t very good at keeping calm sometimes, is he?” he asked and pulled her closer to give her a tight hug.

Christopher walked over to Sarah May so he could help her build up her tower, but he was apparently doing it wrong judging by the face she made when her brother started building with her. Steve moved over to help mediate between them.

Adriana leaned into her papa’s hug. “Sometimes,” she agreed. “But your chest is bigger.” Which explained why it was easier for him to control his emotions. Or that’s how Adriana reasoned it.

“Yes, but I need to work on my anger too, Peanut. I do,” Bucky said and scooped her up right to his chest. “I need to be calmer. You don’t deserve to have an angry Papa.” Bucky had been working so hard on his sobriety so his kids would never have to see him drunk. But he didn’t think about how much his kids might see him get angry and that wasn’t any better really.

“Okay,” Adriana agreed. “I’ll try to not be very angry.” If her Papa could try, then she could try, too.

Sarah May walked away unevenly from her blocks and went to Bucky. “Papa,” she whined, pointing at Christopher. “Papa, no,” she added, hoping that he would make Christopher stop. Bucky usually babied her more than Steve did.

“Hey, Sweet Pea, what’s wrong?” Bucky asked and moved Adriana to sit on one of his knees so he could pick up Sarah May and sit her on the other. “Are you done playing with Christopher? He’s just trying to be with you, Ya-Ya. He wants to play with you, Love.” He kissed her forehead and messed with her big curls that were taking over her face now. “What if Adriana and Papa played some blocks with you? Is that better?”

Sarah May leaned into Bucky and looked up at him with big, brown eyes. “Papa, play,” she agreed quietly. “Play ‘blots’.” She couldn’t quite get used to the ‘k’ sound yet.

Christopher looked sad that his sister left, but Steve quickly distracted him by reeling him in to tickle his belly. “It’s a real balancing act, keeping them happy,” he chuckled.
Bucky chuckled and lifted both his daughters up and deposited them back gently on the ground by the blocks. “It is, yes,” he agreed and nudged Steve with his elbows. “I think it’s just because Christopher’s personality can be too much for Sarah May sometimes.” Bucky handed Sarah May one block at a time and watched Adriana help her build a better foundation than she was doing before.

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“All he wants is to love on his little sister but he’s such a bull,” Steve chuckled. He blew a raspberry on Christopher’s stomach as he held him upside down. “Do you not know how to play gentle, silly boy?” He chuckled. Steve laid him down on the floor before holding his arms out for a hug.

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Christopher wiggled on the ground for a second and then mushed up against Steve in a hug. “No,” he giggled and knocked his head into Steve’s chest and giggled again.

Bucky sighed and passed another block over. “Oh, Baby, I don’t want to go to work tomorrow. I want to be here with you all. But I know Clint is going to want me in and Reggie didn’t show up twice last week so I don’t know what’s happening there. And Tim is on vacation with Richard starting tomorrow.”

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Steve kissed Christopher’s head lots of times when he mushed up against him. He couldn’t help but shower his baby boy with love for as long as he would let him. “At least you’re honest,” he chuckled to his son. He lifted him up and had him sit up on his shoulders. “I can always go in for you,” Steve offered. “I feel bad that you don’t get as much time with the kids as I do. I know how much you love them.”

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“Steve, you would hate it there,” Bucky cautioned. “I know you. You wouldn’t be able to deal with the obnoxious customers being unruly and rude. And if Reggie does show up, he will be smoking weed in the back like every half hour. Clint will definitely be moping because he and Natasha are still having a disagreement about moving in together. I don’t think it’ll good. Thank you for offering, though.”

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“Come on. How bad can retail be after having people shoot me and make me chase them down alleyways?” Steve said. “And smoking weed is nothing - my disagreeable coworker had me shot, so I can deal with unhelpful people in the workplace,” he joked. He pet his hand down Christopher’s back. “Look at our son’s face. Don’t you want to see him all day?”

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Bucky looked at Christopher and the toddler stuck his tongue out happily at him. He would love to be home with all his kids instead of work. “You really want to go in tomorrow?” he asked and gave Steve a doubtful look. “If you really want to go in for me, then you can give it a shot, Babe.” He wasn’t sure how it would go over for him but he wouldn’t stand in the way if Steve wanted to try.

Adriana looked up at Bucky and then looked over to Steve with a quizzical look. “What does it mean that you were shot, Daddy?”
He looked over at Adriana. “I’ll tell you when you’re a little older, Peanut. You don’t have to worry about that.” Steve wasn’t ready to share that with her. “I do,” Steve agreed, turning to Bucky. “I want you to be able to spend time with our kids. Whenever you can’t take off from work but need a day home, I can go in for you. It’ll probably be good for me to get out of the house once in a while.” It wasn’t Steve’s ideal job, but he wanted to support Bucky and let him have some time off.

“You have to tell me if you hate it, though,” Bucky said. “Promise. Because I don’t you being miserable over there. Okay?”

Adriana was definitely not satisfied with Steve’s answer and she stared at him with a grumpy face and said, “But I wanna know now!”

Steve set Christopher down and grabbed Adriana’s favorite book from the shelf and came back over to her. “How about we read you a story?” he tempted. Steve didn’t want Adriana to worry about how her dad almost dying before they even met each other.

“What?” Adriana asked and put her hands on her hips. “No. I don’t want to read.” She was getting more aware of when people were trying to redirect her. She was growing up fast. She would be five in just a few months. “What does it mean?” she asked again, looking up at Steve with a stubborn, determined face.

Steve tried not to smile when she put her hands on her hips. He kind of loved it when his kids pushed a little to try and get what they wanted. It was better to reason than to deal with a tantrum. “Would you still want to know what it means, even if knowing it may make you feel sad?” he asked.

Adriana looked down at the ground, thinking on it for a minute or so. She wasn’t sure she wanted to know anymore if it was sad. She didn’t like being sad. But she also was very curious and didn’t like that she didn’t know something that happened to her dad. “What day would I be older?” she asked, trying to get an estimate on when Steve would explain if she didn’t keep asking now.

Steve tapped her on the head very lightly with the book. “You’ll be older when you can drive a car,” he teased softly. But then he knelt down next to her and said, “I’ll let you choose when you’re older, how’s that? When you feel ready to listen to a story about your daddy that may make you sad, that’s when I’ll tell you. But I think right now, it’s best for you to feel happy.”

Adriana scuffed her foot on the ground and glanced over at Bucky. “Papa can’t drive a car yet and he’s old,” she muttered and looked back up at Steve. “I will have to get back to you on it,” she said with a nod, repeating what her Nana said on the phone a lot when she was talking to her friends.
Steve covered his mouth to hide his laughter when she mimicked Sarah. “Of course, Peanut.” Steve went quiet when he heard footsteps coming down the stairs. Greg was finally out of Lilly’s room and had his arms full of things as he carried them down to Becca’s.

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Greg gave them all a fleeting look when he walked past the living room. He just sighed and shook his head and went downstairs. Becca came after him a few seconds later and sat down on the couch. “He’s going to stay in my room tonight. And Lilly is in her room again. We had some old sheets in the closet so I helped her remake her bed with those for the time being. I think she’s a little better now.”

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“Thank you for taking care of that for us, Becca,” Steve said. Christopher tottered over to the couch and grunted softly as he climbed up onto it and laid down across Becca’s lap. He was starting to understand that the only way he could get attention from Becca is by doing something to demand it but not be too obnoxious about it.

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Becca nodded and ran her fingers through Christopher’s soft blonde hair gently. “It’s okay,” she said and looked from Steve to Bucky. “It’ll be good when this is over and we can go back to normal. Uncle Greg isn’t a bad guy, he’s just pushing his opinion too much and it’s grating on us all now. And Lilly’s really... just difficult right now. I’m hoping going through the boxes will help. Maybe if she has something new of Dad’s she will feel a little better.”

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Christopher’s eyelids drooped a little when Becca played with his hair. He sucked on his thumb as he looked across the room at his dads. “I hope she feels better soon, too,” Steve sighed. “I’m just glad she isn’t throwing a fit or acting out. She’s handling this all in a mature way.” They all had their moments when they were at the end of their rope and lashed out a bit.

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“Sort of mature,” Becca corrected. “She has been really grumpy and snarky.” Lilly was nowhere near as bad as Becca had consistently been for years on end. It was only lately that she was mellowing out.

Bucky shook his head. “I think she’s okay. I mean, I know she’s upset. But after a few days, she will be fine. And I also think she’s got as much a right to be grumpy and short-tempered as any of us right now.”

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“I wonder what it’s like to deal with a snarky teenager. It sounds awful,” Steve joked. He moved over to Sarah May so he could play with her curls while she played with her sister. She didn’t even stop to look up from her little tower. “Hopefully, this’ll blow over once Greg leaves. Who knows? Maybe we’ll get surprise good news for a change.”
After a little bit more play time with their parents, the babies were ready to take a nap. Steve took them up to the nursery to get them to sleep and Adriana decided to help sing to them so she went with her Daddy. There wasn’t much going on at the moment so Bucky went to the kitchen and started to update their fridge calendar. Their lives were busier now than ever and they liked to keep track of who was going to be where and when. Bucky was just adding in his next appointment to have another injection done in his spine when Greg came back upstairs.

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Greg waited for his next opportunity to get Bucky alone and, when he heard the kids with Steve in the nursery, he sought Bucky out. He tapped him gently on his arm. “Hey. How’re you holding up, Kiddo?”

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Bucky looked up from the calendar and gestured to the seat next to him as an offering for Greg to sit down. He was wary of being with him but maybe if he kept a calm head then so would Greg and it would be okay. “I don’t know, Greg. I guess I’m fine,” Bucky said with a sigh. “This distraction is helping.” He tapped the next square in the calendar and then wrote in ‘Steve Noon New Therapist’ in green pen. “Next week is going to be busy. Becca has some sort of debate team thing in Manhattan, I have another doctor’s appointment, Sarah May has her one-year check-up, and Steve has therapy. And I’m hoping this new one is a good fit because he’s reluctantly tried four and I can tell he’s about to give up.”

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Greg took a seat and listened to Bucky talk about the goings-on of his family. He was genuinely interested in everyone except Steve. “That sounds pretty big. Is Becca looking at colleges yet?” he asked. “She can always stay with us if she likes one in California,” he offered. He was about to ask about Sarah May when Bucky brought up Steve’s therapy. “Is he going to therapy to stop being a fag?” he asked instead.

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Bucky’s eyes shot over to Greg and his entire body tensed up immediately. But he needed to stay calm. He needed to learn how to not react the way Greg wanted him to. He set his jaw and shook his head. “Yes, Gregory, I’m encouraging my husband to go to conversion therapy to stop being a fag,” he said sarcastically and looked back down at his calendar as he wrote in Tim’s birthday so he would remember to say something.

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“Well, why else would a man need to go to therapy?” he asked. “I’m not being an asshole, I just don’t see any other reason why a man would have to go and talk about his feelings to a stranger? Why don’t you try to go since he’s doing therapy? You can get yourself fixed. I can pay if money is an issue.”

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Bucky set his pens down and turned to face Greg. He wasn’t going to let himself get angry. He wasn’t. But he wasn’t going to just take this either. “First of all, Greg, I can’t believe you would say
that you’re not being an asshole. How is it not completely rude and inappropriate for you to ask me these things? Secondly, conversion therapy doesn’t work. Sorry, man, but you can’t make a fag straight no matter how much you try. And that’s not what Steve’s going for anyway. Not like you care, but both myself and Steve have experienced significant loss in our lives and talking to a professional could really help.”

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“How would you know unless you tried it?” Greg defended. “You’re a great dad, I know how much you love your kids. They need a mom in their life. And sometimes you have to make sacrifices for your children,” Greg said. “I care about you. You’re my nephew. I didn’t abandon you or anything. What else is a guy supposed to do when you don’t return my calls for years?”

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Bucky pulled his hair back into a tight bun, he felt like he might start to pull it out if he didn’t. “No, because making sacrifices for your children means making good, healthy, important sacrifices. Like how I gave up drinking and smoking and I go to AA twice a week. But pretending I’m someone I am not, well, that’s just terrible for my kids.”

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“What’s healthy about having sex with another man? You could get diseases from him and then what? What’ll your kids do if you died from the gay disease? Hell, he could, too. Then the kids will be even more upset. That could be stopped if you just saw a woman, Bucky,” Greg sighed.

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“Oh, my god, you’re so fucking obtuse,” Bucky snapped quickly and then shook it off as he tried to hold himself together. “It’s not a gay disease, there’s no proof that it only affects gay men. Also, Steve’s my only partner and I’m his only partner and neither of us have any diseases so we aren’t going to spread anything to each other. The only time that happens is when I have a cold but Steve kisses me anyway and then he gets the sniffles.”

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“Don’t curse at your uncle,” he scolded. “I’m serious, Bucky. You don’t know for sure that you’re safe from it. But fine. Whatever. You still haven’t told me why he’s in therapy for whatever this loss is and you’re not. Is there something I should be worried about?” he asked, crossing one leg over the other.

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Bucky growled softly and let out a huff of air. “I don’t think you really have any right to be concerned about any of this. Especially since you keep saying that you’re my uncle, my family, but you also, just the other day, said that you didn’t want me calling you ‘Uncle Greg’ so whatever.” He scoffed and got up from the table and put the calendar on the fridge again. “But, no, I don’t think you have anything to be concerned about. It’s about Steve’s and my family, not you.”

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“I don’t like being addressed as ‘uncle’, but I want the respect as one,” Greg said with a frown. “Come on. I promise I won’t say anything about the fag thing for at least an hour. Talk to me, tell me about what’s been going on. I’ve got to talk to the girls and to your kids. Hell, Sarah May has spoken to me more than you have and she barely knows any words.”
“That’s illogical,” Bucky said shortly and crossed his arms. “How am I supposed to respect you when you don’t respect me or my husband? Huh? That’s not very fair, Greg. Also, I don’t think an uncle who is trying to seem like he cares should barter with his nephew about whether he will bully him or not. Especially, because the things that have happened to us are very difficult for me to talk about and I don’t want to be ridiculed while I’m trying to open up to my last remaining uncle.”

“I respect you two as people. Just because I don’t acknowledge your marriage doesn’t mean I don’t respect you,” he said. “Why do you think I’m just pretending to care? Have I lied to you at all? Does a man who flies across the country to make sure your dad’s things get to you sound like a person who doesn’t care? Seriously, Bucky, just because I criticize you for poor choices you’ve made doesn’t mean I’m bullying you.”

“No, I don’t think you respect us, especially not Steve. You’ve not said one positive thing about him while you’ve been here,” Bucky said sharply. “And I don’t feel very loved or cared for and that might tell you that you’re doing some wrong, Uncle Greg,” he emphasized the title and gave him a nasty look. “And while I am grateful that you wanted to bring us some of Dewey and Dad’s things, I don’t think either of them would appreciate you being so rude to me.”

“Becca and Lilly have received me just fine, so something is telling me that the problem between us is your attitude and not mine. At least I was willing to forgive you for ignoring me and my family,” he said.

Steve came down the stairs after putting all the kids down for their naps and he frowned. “What’s going on in here?”

Bucky looked over at Steve and shook his head. “Nothing. It’s fine. I can handle it, Steve,” he said firmly and squared up a little taller. “Becca and Lilly haven’t been having the same conversations with you that I have, Greg. You haven’t ridiculed either of them for who they are. You haven’t told either of them that George would be disappointed in them. You haven’t called them names or suggested conversion therapy or told them they need to pretend to be something they aren’t.”

Steve tried to keep out of it, but when Bucky brought up conversion therapy, he saw red. “You tried to get him to do what?” he snapped.

Greg stiffened and glared at Steve. “Butt out of this. This is between my nephew and me, so bug off.”

Steve glowered at him and squared his shoulders, but didn’t do anything to stop him yet. “You want me to go, Buck?”

Bucky caught Steve’s eye and shook his head. He really needed him right now. He needed someone
to lean on, someone to help him fight, because he was fading fast. “Don’t talk to my husband like he has no right to stand up for me,” Bucky said. “He’s not going anywhere. Not right now, not ever. Years from now, he and I will be at your funeral together, standing over you as you get lowered into the ground!”

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Greg scoffed and let out an incredulous laugh. “Fuck both of you. Seriously,” he said. “That’s assuming you make it long enough to outlive me. Because if you want to be nasty, then I can get nasty back. I’ll be surprised if you don’t relapse and overdose before you’re thirty with this unstable, fake marriage with a fairy who needs therapy whenever his feelings get hurt,” he snarled.

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“Sure, right, I’m the one in a fake marriage,” Bucky snapped, getting a little closer to Greg. “Remind me whose wife it was who spent eight months in ’76 going to the clubs with her twenty-two-year-old secret boyfriend, taking disco biscuits while you were putting the kids to bed like the ignorant cuckold you are!” He shook his head and added, “And you don’t know anything that Steve and I have been through so don’t you dare insult him for being brave enough to try to get help!”

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Greg shoved Bucky back when he got closer. Steve grabbed him by the back of his shirt and yanked him back so he was now situated between Greg and Bucky. “I’ve had enough of you putting him down. Last warning - either you keep your opinions to yourself, you leave, or I’ll make you leave,” he growled angrily.

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When he was pushed, Bucky gasped and readied himself for a fight. He was surprised that Greg pushed him like that since he was generally not physically violent. Bucky must have hit the right sensitive spot to get to him. But just as Bucky was about to attack, Steve was between them forming a wall that Bucky wouldn’t easily be able to get past.

Greg flared red and looked up at Steve with fire in his eyes. “What the hell are you gonna do about it, Faggot? You heard what he said to me. He can’t talk to me like that. I’m his damn uncle.”

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Steve managed to keep his calm only because he thought of how he would want his kids to handle the situation - with words, not violence. “This is our house, not yours. If you can’t behave yourself, then you can leave. And if you don’t leave on your own, then I’ll make you leave. This is an armed house and I’m trained to use it,” he said firmly.

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“Are you threatening to shoot me?” Greg said with a low, angry tone, eyes piercing Steve’s with an unwavering, cold stillness that would have chilled anyone else but Steve. Being a police officer trained him to use a gun, sure. But it also trained him to be fierce and confident and strong in the face of danger or any unsavory incident.

“Steve,” Bucky said softly behind him and gripped his arm. He wasn’t sure if Steve was bluffing or not.
Steve didn’t waver from his spot. He reached back to hold Bucky’s hand with a gentle grip despite his intense stare over at Greg. “I’m threatening to remove any intruders in my home who pose a threat to me or my family,” he said evenly. “It’s up to you to either act like a civilized person here or a threat to any of our emotional or physical wellbeing.”

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Greg scoffed and looked past Steve to Bucky and then back again. “You’ve got my nephew wrapped around your finger so badly, don’t you?” He looked back at Bucky and caught his eye. “Bucky, he’s turned you against your own family. He’s brainwashing you to be this way, Bucky. Come on.”

Bucky could tell that his uncle was getting on his last leaf now. He was trying his last-ditch effort, his last argument, his most conspiracy-theory reasoning to try to get to Bucky - which may have worked back when Bucky was younger and not as certain in himself. “Gregory, you need to listen to him.”

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Steve gave Bucky’s hand a squeeze. “I’m giving you until the count of ten to either pack your things and leave, or to stop bothering my husband,” he said calmly. Steve was bubbling with fury under the surface, but he kept reminding himself that he had to set a good example for their son and daughters. He had to act in a way that wouldn’t scare them. “One...two...three...”

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Bucky could see the gears turning in his uncle’s head. He knew that Greg wanted to be with them - at least Lilly and Becca - for a little longer. He also really wanted to go through the boxes with them. But he wasn’t sure if Greg would be able to just cool it until he left or not.

Steve was up to ‘seven’ when Greg shook his head and looked away. He made his decision. “I’ll be in Becca’s room for now,” he muttered and turned to leave, not giving a backwards glance as he left.

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Steve was thankful that Greg decided to leave the room because he really didn’t want this escalated. Once the two of them were alone again, Steve turned to Bucky and put his hands on his hips. “Are you okay, Buck? Did he say anything else to you?” He leaned in to kiss his forehead. “I’m sorry. I couldn’t have him saying that awful stuff to you.”

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Bucky let out a breath that he had been holding while Steve counted. He wrapped his arms around Steve’s middle and pressed his face against Steve’s neck and just breathed him in for a moment, kissing him a few times gently. “No, I’m... I’m okay,” he whispered. “It’s fine. He was just going on again.”

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Steve circled his arms around Bucky’s shoulders and kissed his face a few times before Bucky ended up putting his face up against his neck. At that point, Steve rested his chin on top of Bucky’s head with a soft sigh. “I’m sorry he said all of that stuff to you. You’re not going to relapse. And even if you do, I have faith that you’ll be able to get yourself out.”
Bucky was quiet for a long moment. He wasn’t so much worried about that, or about anything coming true from what Greg said. He didn’t think he was going to relapse or overdose or that Steve would decide one day to try to be straight. He didn’t believe anything Greg said. But he fell into his traps every time. He tried so hard to keep his cool this time but he still couldn’t. “I shouldn’t have brought up his wife,” Bucky murmured and looked nervously up into Steve’s eyes like he might be disappointed in him for stooping to Greg’s level. “They had a really tough time for a while after Greg found out. My dad always thought he wouldn’t be able to get over it. But they are actually a lot better now. I know that. And I just tried to reopen an old wound that he probably hopes everyone forgot about.”

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“I’m not going to pretend and say that it was the smartest decision to make, but I certainly don’t blame you for it,” Steve said. “Just like threatening to use a gun on him wasn’t smart, but I was upset and it was the tamest thing I could think of,” he admitted. He stroked his fingers through Bucky’s beautiful hair. “Next time you’re mad, just try not to make someone seem like an idiot for taking care of their kids while their spouse is being irresponsible.” He kissed the tip of his nose gently.

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“I didn’t mean he was an idiot for taking care of his kids when she was out,” Bucky said and gave Steve a little frown. “I meant it like he doesn’t know us or our marriage so he shouldn’t comment. Like he has no idea how strong we are as a couple. He didn’t know where she went and with who. She always said she was going to her friend’s house to help her learn how to sew clothes. He had no idea she was sleeping with someone else and getting high at a club. But I still shouldn’t have attacked him for not knowing something like that.”

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“I know, but it came off like he was the idiot who stayed home. It’s a bit emasculating,” he sighed. Steve kissed Bucky’s cheek and led him to go sit down with him on the couch. Diana came over and laid her head in their lap with a heavy, dramatic sigh. “Only another day of this, Buck. You’ve done a good job.”

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Bucky was in a bit of a mood. He wanted to argue right now. He wanted to argue with Steve and talk back. He wanted to grouse that his one emasculating comment didn’t compare to the multiple times Greg had called the two of them fags or fairies or told Bucky to find a wife or said Steve was weak for trying to talk to a therapist. Besides. Bucky thought most men could stand to be taken down a peg or two. But Bucky knew that Steve wasn’t the problem here. And arguing with his husband for no good reason would just make things worse. “One more damn day...”

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Steve was doing his best to ignore and push out every foul thing Greg said about them. He felt like he was doing a good job not letting the therapy comment get to him. “And then we’ll be back to normal. You get your day with the kids, I’ll be a worker bee for a day. It’ll be great, don’t you think?”

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“Mmm,” Bucky grunted noncommittally and messed with the hem of Steve’s shirt. There was a little tear in the seam and he couldn’t help but pull on the loose string a little bit just to have something to
do. Bucky was still wearing his sweater and he looked down at the little sewn ‘Stev’ over his heart. He changed his mind then. He didn’t want Sarah to fix it. He liked it that way. He tried to put Steve’s name there because he wanted it right there. And even though he messed up, it was still important to him why he tried.

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“Bucky,” Steve chuckled, laughing even though he was pissed as hell right now. “Quit messing up my shirt just because yours is silly.” Diana whined when she watched Steve swat Bucky’s hand playfully. He praised her and gave her a pet as well. Barely a minute later, there was an urgent knock at the door that had Diana barking. Steve quickly hushed her so she wouldn’t wake the babies.

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They were both already on alert and Bucky let out an annoyed groan as he got up from the couch muttering, “I swear to God, Steve...” under his breath as he headed for the door. He peeked through the peephole and saw a familiar face standing in full uniform and a worried set to his jaw. “It’s Richard!” Bucky called back to Steve and opened the door. “Hey, Buddy. What’s going on?” he asked and let Richard in. “They’ve got you working the day before your vacation?”

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Richard was in the middle of saying something into his radio when the door opened. Steve came over and stood at Bucky’s side. “Hey, man. Is everything alright?”

Richard put his hands on his hips once inside. “I don’t know, you tell me,” he said. “I just got a call to investigate a domestic here. Something about threatening to shoot someone?”

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“Fucking Greg...” Bucky growled and smacked his hand against the wall in frustration. “Goddamn it, Steve. Now I’m actually gonna kill him,” he said angrily and looked between Steve and Richard. “We’re fine, Richard. It’s fine. We’re fine,” he said quickly, hands out in front of him, trying to calm himself so he didn’t go off again. “Jesus, I have the biggest fucking headache right now. Shit.”

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Richard frowned with concern when Bucky smacked the wall. “Hey, Hey, is there a problem here?” he asked in his helpful officer voice. “If there’s a problem, I’m here to help,” he said.

Greg had poked his head out from the basement door and frowned. “Hey, I’m the victim here. I was threatened, not them.”

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Bucky scoffed and looked back at his uncle. “You’re no victim, Gregory. You’re a damn tattle,” he said, already falling back into a level that he should have been above. “You knew that Steve is a former officer. He told you that. You called the police only to get one of our friends to drop in.” He laughed humorlessly and looked back to Richard. “He’s not in danger. He’s just a dick.”

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“I didn’t expect him to know every cop in the city,” he said. Greg came out the door and crossed his arms. “I’m not being a dick. My nephew thinks he can talk to me however he wants just because I don’t approve of his marriage,” he said, using air quotes on the word ‘marriage’.
Richard gave Bucky and Steve a sympathetic look and then said to Gregory, “So, you wouldn’t approve if I married my boyfriend, either?”

“Excuse me?” Greg said, eyes squinting up as he looked at Richard and then Steve. “Another queer cop? Did Brooklyn run some sort of fag convention since I’ve moved? What the hell is happening to this city?”

Bucky shook his head angrily and stood a little closer to Richard. “You see, Richard? See what Steve and I have been dealing with for days now. He doesn’t have an off switch either.”

Richard was able to keep his cool. Steve could see him going through his training mentally on how to keep a level head. “Us fags have always been here, and we’re here to stay. Sorry, Sir,” Richard said coolly. “You see, I could escort you out of here on the grounds of disturbing the peace. You could even take a nice, cozy ride all shackled up in my big old queer police mobile,” he said as he pointed at his cruiser. “But I imagine you might prefer to spend the evening with your family instead of some fella that thinks you’d make a nice prison wife for a day.”

“Jesus, you’ve got a mouth on you too, I see,” Gregory said and folded his arms and squared up like he wasn’t at least a foot shorter than both Richard and Steve and definitely less fit. “But you can’t take me for disturbing the peace. I’ve not done a thing. It was your friend Steve here who threatened to shoot me. I think that warrants a night or two in his old station.”

“I didn’t hear him make a threat,” Richard said. Steve shook his head and feigned innocence to go along with Richard. “So, it seems to me like you’ve wasted taxpayer dollars and took me off patrol for a false call. I could be helping with actual threats right now. Besides...” he patted Steve’s shoulder. “Everyone knows that gay people don’t know how to use guns. We’re too busy painting our fingernails to use those things.”

Greg just stared at him for a tense silent moment. This wasn’t how he wanted this to go at all. “So, he threatens me, and you’re not going to do shit about it?”

Richard gave a nod and Bucky did the same. “Stop trying, man,” Bucky said. “You’ve got less than twenty-four hours before you head back home. And then I’m guessing we won’t see much of you for a long time. So, you might want to use this time carefully to spend it with your nieces and the kids if you want to. Then you’re done, Greg.”

“I’m sure all of this is a big misunderstanding,” Richard said patiently. “You’re family. Work things out and start acting like family.” Richard stepped back and looked back at Steve and Bucky. “I’ll see you guys later. Call the station if you need me for anything.” He nodded again and headed out.
Welcome back, everyone! I hope you all had pleasant holidays. I have some news. Due to the intense busyness of our schedules and my increasing health issues, K and I have decided to cut the fic shorter than originally planned. We had hopes for doing another season and then an epilogue. However, it'll now end after a small wrap of a few chapters and then an epilogue. This story, like many a long-running TV show will have a some-what spliced together ending season and a conclusion. I apologize for anyone who hoped to see this continue on but it's simply become a bear we can't take care of properly anymore. And neither of us would want this fic to suffer because of trying to continue it and making it less than our best. If anyone has any questions or comments, you can email me at rogers.barnes.stucky@gmail.com -- Thank you all for being with us on this journey and I hope you like the rest of the story and wrap-up.

Season Six will end on Chapter 23, followed by an epilogue.

After Richard left, Greg stared at the door for a bit before crossing his arms. Bucky was about to come after him but then Greg held his hands up in surrender. “I won’t say anything,” he said. “I want to go through the boxes with you and the girls. Can’t we do that at least? I’ll keep quiet otherwise.”

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Bucky considered it for a moment. That was fine with him so long as it didn’t get back around to him and Steve being faggots. “If you promise that our conversations will only be about Dwight and Old George, then, yes, we can do that. If not, though, my sisters and I will go through the boxes on our own time once you leave. And I’m not budging. You don’t have to like it, but you have to behave - at least do it for them.”

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Greg felt like he could probably handle that. He genuinely did want to spend time with the girls and even Bucky so long as they weren’t at each other’s throats. He nodded but then gestured at Steve. “Can it be Barnes family, only?”

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“Greg-” Bucky started shortly and then stopped as he glanced over at Steve. His instinct was to tell Greg ‘no’ and to reinforce that Steve was just as much family as the rest of them. But he also knew that if Greg was giving in a little and agreeing to shut up about anything besides his brothers then Bucky should give in a little to him as well. And this was a Barnes family matter and he was the head of the Barnes side of the family and he could decide what he wanted about this. “Sure. Me, you, Becca, and Lilly. We can go to Becca’s basement.” He hoped Steve would understand.

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Steve was a little upset. He wanted to be around Bucky and he didn’t like being limited in his own house. He looked at Bucky with a little betrayal in his expression but he soon sighed and rubbed a
hand over his face. They needed to keep the peace, he reminded himself. “Okay,” He said. “I’ll keep out of your hair. I guess I’ll call once dinner is ready.”

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Bucky nodded and gave him an apologetic little smile. He tried to convey with his eyes that he was sorry and that he would make it up to him later. He really did owe Steve for taking care of him and standing up for him while Greg was here. Bucky didn’t know how to make it better, but he was going to try. “Thank you. I’ll get the girls.”

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Steve sighed and gave Bucky a small wave of his hand. “I’ll hang around in the nursery and read until the kids wake up from their naps for now,” he said. Steve headed upstairs quietly with Diana.

When Bucky came into Lilly’s room, the two girls were busy organizing baseball cards. Becca looked up and asked, “Is everything okay?”

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“I don’t know. I guess so,” Bucky mumbled and sat down next to Lilly whose face was downcast and her eyes were red from crying. He wrapped his arm around her and pulled her in for a tight hug. “Uncle Greg wants the four of us to go through the boxes together. He promised we would only talk about Dad and Uncle Dewey. He just wants to spend time with you both before he leaves tomorrow morning.”

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Becca wasn’t exactly sure what to think about Greg since he had been pretty shitty to Bucky, but Lilly had been pretty upset over ostracizing him. If Greg really did want to spend time with them, she supposed it wouldn’t hurt to go through the boxes.

“Alright,” Becca said and dusted herself off. “It’ll be nice to have some family time. Right, Lilly?”

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Lilly sniffled and wiped her nose on her shirtsleeve before getting up. “Yeah, okay,” she murmured and pulled a blanket around her shoulders. “Where is he?”

“Becca’s room,” Bucky said and walked behind them as they all headed to the basement. “Should I make some tea for us while you guys get started?”

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“I’m not in the mood for tea...” Lilly said quietly. She was still pretty miserable even though she was handling herself a little bit better now.

Becca, on the other hand, was all for some tea. “Yeah, can you make me a big mug? I have a feeling that the boxes are going to take a while to go through.” she requested.

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Bucky nodded. “Sure, Becs. I’ll grab a soda for you, Lilly, in case you want it,” he said and gave them each a kiss on their foreheads before sending them downstairs to get started. He couldn’t believe how much they both had grown up since their parents’ died. It would be seven years that
summer. And Lilly at age eight was nothing like Lilly at age fourteen right then. And Becca at age ten was vastly different than Becca at age sixteen now. And Bucky himself was different too. Twenty-year-old Bucky was terrified of being a guardian and ruining his sisters’ lives, he was an alcoholic, an addict, he was promiscuous, irresponsible, he tried to kill himself. But now he was none of those things and he was strong enough to think about his mom and dad without having a total breakdown.

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Greg had been pacing nervously in the basement, unsure if Bucky may have changed his mind on their temporary truce. However, when he saw Bucky come in with the drinks, he relaxed and took a seat on the edge of the bed. “There’s some cool stuff in these boxes I thought you’d like,” he said. “You’ve probably wanted the medals, but there’s lots of pictures, too.”

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“I hoped the medals would be in here,” Bucky said and handed his sisters’ their drinks. He even made tea for Greg and he passed it over without ceremony. “Go ahead,” Bucky said and nodded to Lilly who was dying to pull things out of the first box.

The first thing she unearthed was an old book with a brown dirty cover and the words ‘Dwight A. Barnes’ scrawled in the front cover. “It’s a journal,” Lilly said and flipped through it before handing it over to Becca.

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Greg thanked Bucky briskly for the tea and helped Lilly open the box. He smiled at her and gave her hair a little ruffle. “Your uncle loved to document everything. It’s important to remember things as they happened instead of letting the details get blurred. Look at the years that are on there - it’s right around the time Bucky was born - maybe a few years after. There’s got to be something about him and your dad written in there.”

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Becca looked through the journal and the word ‘baby’ caught her eye in the middle of a page. The paper was date marked ‘November 28th, 1959’ with a little dash underneath it before a wall of words. “Jane talked to Winnifred today...” Becca started, reading from the messy handwriting and scanning past superfluous words. “Winnifred said she is expected a baby. So, it looks like she and George are getting married before we leave for the east again. Don’t know when the baby is due but I’m going to bring my brother back so he can be with his kid.”

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Lilly gasped and looked up at Bucky. “Wait. So, mom and dad got pregnant before their wedding?” Becca looked over to Lilly and laughed. “You never did the math? Bucky wasn’t a premature baby,” she said. Lilly huffed at her and reached out for the book. “Give it to me, I want to see,” she said petulantly.

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Lilly read over the entry again just to make sure and she gave Bucky a questioning look. “Yeah, uh,” Bucky started and reached for another book from the box. It was just an old novel so he handed it to Becca since that would be right up her alley. “They got married when Mom was pregnant. And then
Dad came back when I was about a year old or so and then he went away again two more times. But he got injured around when Becca was born and he was done and he came home for good. But they were young when I was born. I think Mom was eighteen.”

“She had just turned eighteen,” Greg said. “I remember being amazed that she was barely out of high school and raising babies while your dad was off fighting wars,” he said. “Your dad was the more responsible one out of the two of them, but apparently not responsible enough to wait until marriage to start having kids. We did tease him a lot for that, but we were genuinely happy for him.”

Bucky’s initial reaction was to want to protest against Greg’s comments about his parents. But he knew his responses would go to a place of criticism against his uncle and they had made a truce to only discuss the other two brothers. “Yeah... they were young then and they were young when they died too,” Bucky said somberly as Lilly pulled out the next item.

It was a small envelope pouch filled with pictures of their dad and Dewey in uniform and with their group in active duty. “Wow,” she gasped and held up a picture of George leaning back against a tree with a smirk on his face. “Bucky, he looks like you there.”

Greg peered over to have a look at the picture that Lilly was pointing at. He missed his brother sorely, and now he was the last one left out of the three of them. It was a lonely feeling. “That’s one of my favorites of him. That was almost a decade into his service. He was around your age, all muscled and trained from the military. I bet you’d look like that if you went off to the army, too.”

Bucky bristled a little at the comment. He wasn’t sure if Greg was just trying to make conversation or if he was trying to suggest he needed to enlist or if he was commenting on the way he looked, but neither made him feel very good. “I still look pretty close to that,” Bucky said and took the picture from Lilly carefully. “He’s taller and more muscular, sure. But it’s not like I’m bad off.” He sighed and mumbled, “And the military would make me cut my hair anyway.”

“We don’t want your hair cut. As much as I hate to admit it, a hippie haircut suits you better than a military buzz,” Gregory said. “Are you thinking about cutting Christopher’s hair at all? It’s getting so long that people might think he’s a girl. But once you cut his hair, it probably won’t curl again like it’s doing now. That kind of hair only comes once.”

“No, I’m not cutting his hair. And I don’t care if people mistake him for a girl,” Bucky confirmed hoping that an argument wasn’t coming - and tugged an old jacket from the box. It looked like it must have been Dewey’s from when he was a teenager because adult Dewey wouldn’t have been able to fit in it. “Here, Lilly, you can have this,” he said and handed her the jacket since it looked like it would fit her if she wanted to wear it.

“It’s not good for him to be mistaken for a girl, though. They might give him dolls and not let him
explore and he likes exploring. I can tell,” Greg said. He seemed more concerned that Christopher wouldn’t be allowed to do the things he wanted because of being perceived as a girl more than he worried about him appearing feminine for the sake of appearing feminine.

Lilly picked up the jacket and made a face. “It smells petty bad. Can we have this washed first?”

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Bucky’s face scrunched up like he just smelled something rotten – and it wasn’t the jacket - and he gave Greg a nasty glare. “Christopher plays with dolls now. He plays with lots of things, all the kids do. They all play with dolls and trucks and blocks and plushies and army men and farm animals. And Christopher and Adriana both love to explore.” He looked away for a moment over to Lilly. “Yeah, I’ll wash it, Lil. No problem.” He looked back to Greg and added, “And we had a deal that we wouldn’t talk about anything besides your brothers.”

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Greg huffed. “I can’t talk about your kids?” He thought he was being fairly open-minded by not pushing Bucky to cut Christopher’s hair and only expressing his concerns. He reached into the box to pull out another album, this one full of pictures of the three of them when they were all kids. “Oh, wow. I wonder if the picture of your dad in the bath is in here.”

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Bucky was going to protest that he thought it was fair of him to not want to discuss his kids when Greg wasn’t being positive but then Becca gasped, drawing his attention as she said, “Bucky! Oh, my god. It’s the photos that went missing.” She pointed to the burgundy leather-bound photo album. “We couldn’t find this thing anywhere when we moved to the apartment. I always thought Grandma had it but Uncle Dewey must have taken it from her place when she died. This one should have Lilly’s newborn pictures we lost.”

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Greg jumped a little when Becca gasped. He looked around at them and then smiled, happy that he was able to solve the case of the missing album. “Well, at least it’s here now. Lilly was a cute baby, I’m sorry you guys missed out on those photos for so long.” He patted the girls’ shoulders. “Dewey loved you guys. Look- the pages of the book are worn, he probably looked at this a lot.”

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Becca looked through the pictures and found some photos of Lilly fresh from the hospital. She was a big baby and she had chubby hands and cheeks and she was asleep in every photo. “I’m so glad you found this, Uncle Greg,” she said. “Bucky and I were starting to think we would never find these again. We can put these with mine and Bucky’s, okay, Lilly? Mom and Dad will like that.”

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“I’m happy that they made their way back to you. Had I known you were looking for them, I would’ve had Dewey send it all back to you ages ago,” he said.

Lilly looked at the pictures of herself. “Woah, I was a really fat baby. I thought you guys were exaggerating,” she said bluntly.
Bucky shook his head. “Nope, not exaggerating. You were giant. Becca was barely anything and you were a chunker.”

Becca slipped the photo out of its sleeve and let Lilly see it better. She flipped through some more pages and came across her dad. “Is this the tub picture you were talking about?” she asked Greg and showed it to him.

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Greg grinned when he saw the picture. “That’s the one,” he said. “He would tell me how he only was able to convince Lilly to bathe by putting on a scuba diving mask and snorkel to entertain her.”

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“I remember that,” Bucky said with a little tired groan. “Up until about age four, you wouldn’t just take a bath. Either Mom had to hold you while she bathed you or Dad had to get in and play and make it fun. And if they weren’t around and I was in charge of bath time, I’d have to sit in the tub and help you wash your hair because you didn’t want to get soap in your eyes.”

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“Listen, I was just a kid who wanted to have fun,” she said innocently. “I bet everyone goes through dumb phases like that. Christopher won’t go to bed unless you read him a story and give him a stuffed toy, and I wouldn’t take a bath unless Dad played dress up. I’m sure Bucky did something dumb, too.”

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Greg barked out a laugh and said, “Boy, did he ever.” He leaned back a little and looked at Lilly and Becca. “When your brother was little and your dad was still in active duty, I came over a lot to help your mom with Bucky. And the most difficult thing was feeding him. He was such a picky eater. And it wasn’t only just what food he was eating but also how it looked was very important. Sandwiches had to have no crust and be cut in two diagonals, he would only eat strawberries that were whole, all pasta had to be curly otherwise it wasn’t worth it to him. And if he decided he didn’t like something, then he just wouldn’t eat anything for hours and hours and he would sulk around the house like it was our faults he was hungry.”

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Becca and Lilly laughed at that, finding it especially amusing because they were currently dealing with Adriana becoming picky. Now that she didn’t have to worry about being in a kid’s home without choices, she was starting to voice her opinion about foods she had no interest in eating. “Now, he’s a garbage disposal,” Lilly said. “Bucky will eat anything that’s on a plate.”

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Bucky sighed and rolled his eyes. It was true, for sure. “Yeah, well, in my defense, I don’t remember being that way as a child so it must have cleared up after a while,” he said. “But, yes, I do love food now. I eat a lot, that’s for sure. And then I finish whatever Steve doesn’t eat because he doesn’t eat half his food since his injury it seems.” He wasn’t really thinking. He shouldn’t have mentioned Steve or Steve’s lungs or his eating habits. That wasn’t a smart move.

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“What injury?” Greg asked. Lilly almost scoffed and asked ‘which injury’ but she kept it to herself.
because it was a small miracle in itself that Bucky and Greg weren’t at each other’s throats again. Greg was careful to keep his tone light so Bucky wouldn’t get defensive. Greg wanted to know what kind of a burden Steve was being on them.

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Bucky realized immediately that he slipped up. He blinked and looked up at Greg for a moment and then away again. “He, uh,” Bucky started, deciding that he could just give the condensed version of this to satisfy the question. “His lungs only fill to half capacity. He went to a house fire on one of his patrols and he went inside to get a kid out of the house and he was in too long and the smoke damage was too much. The kid lived, he has lung problems and some burn scars. Steve had minor burns and they all healed but the lungs can’t.”

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“Oh...” Greg didn’t seem to have something smart lined up to say in response. All he did was a little shrug. “That’s a shame. I guess that’s why he’s not a cop anymore, right? At first, I thought he got fired cause he was a queer, but I guess this city is full of queer cops. Is he like that for the rest of his life?”

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“Greg, please don’t call my husband ‘a queer’,” Bucky said tightly but tried not to snap. “That definitely falls under the category of things we agreed we wouldn’t say right now.” He shook his head and looked into the box as he added, “Yeah, that’s why he isn’t an officer anymore. He’s too injured to be in the field anymore and he would hate just being a desk jockey.”

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Greg huffed and rolled his eyes, but he didn’t argue. There was one thing that was nagging on his mind. “Okay, don’t get mad at me for asking but is there a whole department full of people like him and the cop that showed up? Or are they in with a bunch of regular cops? How does that work?”

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“If you’re asking if the entire precinct is a bunch of fags, then no,” Bucky said sharply and crossed his arms. “Steve was the first to come out, then Susan, then Richard. I don’t know about anyone else, but as far as I know, it’s all straight people besides them. But, keep in mind, we are close to Park Slope and that’s all gay so.”

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Greg shrugged his shoulders. “Must be something in the water.”

Becca didn’t know if he was being serious or not and let out a nervous laugh. “You know what would be cute?” she suggested, trying to get away from the topic by any means necessary. “If we recreate some of these baby pictures with your kids. Steve would really like that. Would Christopher do it?”

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Bucky glared up at Greg and muttered, “Yeah, must be something in the water.” He looked over to Becca with a frown and tried to convey that he was a few seconds away from starting a fight here. But then Becca cut in with a distraction again and that helped. “We can always try to get him to cooperate. We can use treats like Steve does with Diana.”
“Classical conditioning and positive reinforcement. I like the way you think,” Becca said with a determined nod. “He’s still young enough to trick with that kind of stuff.”

Gregory hesitated a little before asking, “If you do that, can you make copies and send them to me? I’d like a few pictures of your kids to put in my house.”

Bucky looked up at his uncle and just stared for a long moment. He knew that Greg was enjoying his time with the girls and with the kids but he didn’t think he would want to be reminded that his nephew was a big queer with a husband raising their kids together. But if he wanted pictures, Bucky thought that maybe that was okay. “I’ll have to check with Steve,” he said simply, not wanting to just agree without his husband knowing about it. They were his kids too.

Greg looked a little bummed and slightly annoyed that Steve had a say in whether or not he could have pictures of his nephew’s kids, but he quickly reminded himself of their truce and opted to not kick up a fuss. He sighed and folded his arms over his chest. “If you say so, Bucky,” he said in a tired voice.

Bucky nodded and moved on to the next thing in the box. It was a metal tin with some wear-and-tear scratches on the sides and the top. He was hoping desperately that this box had his father’s medals so he undid the clasps on each side and popped the lid off. “Oh, my god. They’re all here,” he whispered and picked out one long badge that was hanging off a smooth blue silk with a pin on the end. He pulled out a few more and laughed once sharply, happy to find that all the ones they were missing were in the box. “Becca, Lilly, look. We can put his bars back on his uniform now. And we can display his achievements. We can put Dad’s things together again.” He sniffled and wiped his eyes before passing the tin over to his sisters.

As much as they butted heads, Greg still saw Bucky, in some ways, as the scrappy, little kid he used to be when he would skin his knees after a summer getaway in Seneca with his dad. And seeing him excited over the medals brought all that back. And he missed when things were simpler and his brothers were both alive and the kids were young.

Becca gasped and reached out so she could look at the medals closer. “Holy cow! They’re in such good condition, too. Uncle Dewey must have kept them polished so they wouldn’t tarnish.”

“They’re all here,” Lilly repeated Bucky and looked up at him with watery eyes. Becca and Bucky were tearing up too and Becca had to cover her mouth to stifle a little sob.

Bucky shuffled in between his sisters and pulled them both in against him in a big hug. He let some tears roll down his face and he kissed both their heads. “We have Dad’s medals,” he murmured again. It might not have seemed like such a big deal to anyone else but they had been upset about not having those metals for so long now. It felt like they were getting a piece of their dad back again after all this time. Bucky looked up at his uncle and said, “Thank you, Uncle Greg. For bringing this to us.”
It was rare for Becca to get so emotional, but she even leaned in to hug Bucky and was careful not to accidentally knock the tin into him during the embrace.

Greg put a hand on Bucky’s shoulder and said, “I’m glad it’s back in your hands now. It’s where George would’ve wanted it to go.” They didn’t exactly have a will written since they didn’t expect to die so soon and Dewey, being a fellow vet, took some the medals after George’s passing.

Bucky nodded and gave his uncle a real, genuine smile for once. He was sad, but also grateful. “We miss him so much,” Bucky said softly and ran his fingers through Lilly’s hair. “Sometimes it’s harder to deal with than others. I wish we could have them all back.” He wasn’t sure why he felt compelled now to be able to open up in front of his uncle but this was about his parents and his loss so it felt a little different.

Greg nodded. “It’s not easy having both of my brothers gone. I took them for granted when they were alive.” He nudged Becca and Lilly. “Don’t you three take each other for granted, okay? Us Barnes kids have a thing for being one of three. So, make the most of having all three of you around while you’re all still here.”

Becca and Lilly nodded and Lilly glanced up at Bucky with sad, frustrated eyes. Since Steve talked to her about Bucky’s cocaine problems, she had been thinking a lot about when Bucky tried to kill himself. She couldn’t get it out of her head and she just kept replaying how she found him. She never talked about it, she hated to even acknowledge it. But it was in her mind constantly right now. But she looked away and rubbed at her eyes.

Bucky gave Lilly a squeeze after he saw that look in her eyes and he moved to get up again. “I think maybe we should finish these boxes on a different day. I think today’s been enough.”

Becca was in the most stable emotional state out of the three of them, but having the break was still a good idea. They found the medals and those were the main things that they were hoping to find. “Yeah... another day,” she agreed.

Greg looked a little disappointed that he couldn’t stay to open the rest of the boxes up, but he was happy to have at least done this with his family. “Do you want me to run out and get some ice cream for you guys?”

Bucky sighed and nodded to his uncle. That was probably a good idea too. “Yeah, thank you,” he said calmly. “Becca, Lilly, do one of you want to go with him so you can help pick some out. If you go to the bodega you can get a few tubs and bring them back. You know what Adriana likes. I’ll get you some money so Greg doesn’t have to pay for all of it.”

“I’ll go,” Lilly volunteered before Becca has a chance to say either way.
“Don’t worry about it. I don’t mind paying for things you and your kids get to have,” he said. “I’ll be back soon.”

Bucky gave Lilly some money anyway just in case she asked for more than just ice cream - which seemed likely. But once they were gone, Bucky took the tin of medals up to his and Steve’s room and set it carefully on their bed. He would have the girls in later so they could pin the bars on his uniform together. But, eventually, he found himself back downstairs with Steve and the kids and Becca. “Well, That was easier than I thought it would be.”

Steve wasn’t in much of a talking mood since he was still a little upset over not being able to be with Bucky as they opened the boxes. He wasn’t mad at Bucky, but simply was upset at the situation. He settled on cuddling Sarah May, who was happy to be held in his arms. “What was easier?” Adriana asked.

Bucky was a little surprised that Steve wasn’t right there ready to hug him and hold him and talk to him. Steve was upset, clearly, and now Bucky would have to deal with figuring out what was wrong and he was really too tired to take on another issue right that second. So, he sat down next to Adriana and said, “Your aunts and I were going through some stuff of your Papaw’s.”

Adriana climbed into Bucky’s lap as soon as he sat down. She was such a cuddle bug sometimes. “Is he moving from heaven to stay with us here?” she asked. “Where are we gonna fit him?”

“No, Peanut. He can’t come back from heaven,” Bucky said gently and brushed her hair back from her eyes. “But we can remember him and have his old stuff and keep him around that way. Like how Daddy and I have tattoos for your brother Grant. You remember when Daddy explained the little feet on top of his feet?”

Adriana shook her head. “Daddy won’t tell me about those,” she said. “He said he would tell me when I’m older. Am I old enough now?” She looked over to Steve, who shrunk a little.

Steve shook his head. “Maybe tomorrow, Peanut. Your dad is feeling a little tired tonight.”

Adriana huffed out a sigh and looked up at Bucky. “Can you tell me, Papa?”

Bucky saw the look on Steve’s face and he knew it would be a bad idea to get into it right now. And now, he definitely knew Steve was upset about something - upset enough that he didn’t want to hardly speak or pay attention to anyone but Sarah May messing with his shirt. “Well, Adriana,” he said carefully. “Daddy says he’s tired so maybe we should start to wind down for the day. And Uncle Greg and Aunt Lilly are out getting ice cream for everyone. So, that’s good. And Papa can explain it to you a different day, okay?”
Steve leaned down to kiss Sarah May’s curls and whisper soft words of love to her. She smiled happily at the attention and reached up to him. Adriana sighed and flopped dramatically to lay across Bucky’s lap like dead weight. “Okay,” she said. A few minutes later, Greg and Lilly came back with bags full of ice cream tubs.

Bucky lifted Adriana up and brought her to the kitchen. “Come on, Peanut. Let’s eat some ice cream.” He tickled her tummy and set her down at the table and pulled her hair back into a ponytail so she didn’t get ice cream in it. “Becca, can you watch Adriana and Christopher for me? I’m going to go talk to Steve.” He gave both his kids a kiss on their foreheads and then slipped back to the living room where Steve was still sitting with Sarah May.

Steve looked up when Bucky came back. “Hey,” he said quietly. “Should Ya-Ya have some ice cream, too?”

“I don’t think she should just yet,” Bucky said softly and sat down next to Steve. He ran his fingers gently through Sarah May’s curly hair and gave her a little kiss. She made a happy little grunt noise and flopped back against Steve’s chest. “You’re upset,” Bucky said and looked into Steve’s eyes. “Why are you upset?”

Steve rubbed a hand over their daughter’s back when she flopped onto him. “I’m upset because I can’t be a husband in my own house,” he said, shooting a nasty glare in the direction of the kitchen where Greg was. “I wanted to be there for you and the girls but because your uncle is a homophobic jerk, I had to hide away somewhere else.”

“Oh, Baby...” Bucky sighed and rested back against the couch, already feeling too tired to deal with this. “You can be a husband in your own home. You are a husband and a father and a brother-in-law and a son and everyone’s protector. You are.” He touched his hand on Steve’s thigh. “And I know you wanted to be there for us, but I handled it. It was fine. And I know he’s such an ass. But I knew, if you were with us, he wouldn’t have been able to keep our deal. He barely could as it was. And this wasn’t really about you. This was about us - the Barnes side of the family. It was about my dad and Uncle Dewey.”

“My Mom and I don’t exclude your side of the family so we can do Rogers family things,” Steve said. “I’m not mad at you, Buck. And it’s one thing if you wanted to do this with your sisters cause he was your dad and uncle, but having Greg there but not me really sucked.” Steve sulked a little as he looked at the wall. “I know it was better that I wasn’t there - it’s just frustrating that it’s how it had to work out.”

Bucky squeezed Steve’s leg and tried to get him to look at him again. “Steve, it wasn’t about you,”
he said again. “We weren’t purposefully excluding you. But it was my dad’s stuff. It’s really personal for me and the girls. Even if Gregory wasn’t here, I might have asked you to let us have some time alone. I know how much you support us and have been helping us with handling losing them but somethings I think we just need to let it be us.”

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“If you say so,” Steve said, childishly choosing to be short with Bucky over this. He knew that this wasn’t about him, but he still felt cheated that Greg won and was able to do something with Bucky while excluding Steve. “I guess you’re lucky that I don’t have an uncle that doesn’t want you in my life.”

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Bucky blinked a few times, now more confused than before. He thought it made perfect sense why he asked Steve not to be part of this. But maybe he was being illogical too and he didn’t realize. “Baby...” Bucky said softly and used a gentle hand under Steve’s chin to bring him to look at him. “I’m not defending Gregory in the slightest. He’s still awful. He’s so rude and he can’t just shut up and let things be. He even questioned why I let Christopher’s hair grow out so long. He said that he’s worried people will mistake him for a girl. If it would have been both of us down there, I don’t think he would have been able to keep a lid on anything.”

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Despite how frustrated he was, Steve still leaned into Bucky’s hand. His eyes flashed briefly when Bucky brought up Greg’s criticism of Christopher but he ended up huffing out a sigh of defeat. “I’m sorry, Buck,” he apologized. “I guess I’m so mad at him that I’m not being fair to you.”

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Bucky nodded and carefully picked Sarah May up and held her between them so he could move closer and give Steve a slow, warm kiss. “Listen, Baby, Steve. I’m so sorry. I know this is horrible. He’s horrible. But we can’t fight right now. You know? We’re already fighting with him, Becca and Lilly are upset and emotional and Lilly keeps giving me these weird looks and I don’t know why. And Adriana’s worried something bad is happening in our family and no one is explaining anything to her. We can’t fight right now, please.” He paused and kissed him again, softer this time. “If you want to fight, we can fight once he’s gone. Okay? If you’re just angry and need to argue, that’s fine. We can pick a topic and go at it. But after Gregory is gone.”

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“I don’t want to fight with you, Buck... I just want to fight him,” Steve said miserably. “I want to punch him in his dumb face and kick him out of here.” Steve was a bit needy and put his hands on Bucky’s shoulders to pull him in for another kiss. “I think I’ll sit Adriana down and talk to her about Grant,” he said. “I don’t want her to think that there’s something wrong.”

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Bucky nodded and gave Steve a few more quick kisses. He just wanted Steve to feel loved and important right now. He could tell he was angry and feeling lonely with Greg around causing a mess. “I know, Steve. I want to fight him too. But he will be gone in the morning. He will be headed back home and we will be just us again. And tonight, we can make love together however you want. It’ll be all about you, okay? I can ride you and make out with you and touch all over your chest. Or you can take me from behind and hold against my back. Or I can open you up nice and slow and make
you come and then rock into your ass and talk sweet you. Whatever you want to do, Baby. Anything you want.”

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“Bucky,” Steve gasped in a scandalized tone as he covered Sarah May’s ears. “Not in front of the baby.”

Sarah may whined and pushed at Steve’s hands. “Dada? Why?” She complained. She had a habit of asking ‘why’ instead of saying ‘no’. Steve thought it was goddamned adorable.

He pulled his hands back so he wouldn’t annoy their baby girl. “We can talk more about that in private.”

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“Steve, she’s a one-year-old. She’s got no idea what any of that means,” Bucky promised and leaned in to give Sarah May a few happy little kisses to make her crinkled eyebrows relax again. “You have a minimal vocabulary, don’t you, Sweet Pea?” Bucky asked and pulled some of her curls out of her eyes again. “Everyone else is eating ice cream. Do you want to join them, Baby? I can take Ya-Ya and you can spend some time with Adriana since she’s been feeling out of the loop today.”

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“So? I still don’t like talking about that stuff with the kids around. Especially our innocent Ya-Ya,” Steve countered. Steve gave her cheek a kiss. She turned to her dad and gave him a happy smile before she snuggled up against her papa. “I guess. I was in a real cuddly mood with her, but Adriana deserves some quality time; too.”

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Bucky nodded and sighed. “She definitely needs some quality time with you, Baby. You know she’s just trying to learn and understand what’s happening. And she gets so frustrated when we won’t tell her things when she asks,” Bucky said. “I’ll give Sarah May and Christopher their baths later and you can talk with her, Okay?”

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Steve kissed Bucky’s cheek. “Okay,” he said. “Thank you, Buck, for being patient with me. I love you.” He pet his fingers through Bucky’s hair once before going to the kitchen. He went right to Adriana and tickled her sides gently. “How are you liking the ice cream, Peanut?”

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Adriana looked up at her dad and shrugged. She was feeling a little stubborn at the moment and she wasn’t sure if she was ready to talk to him or not. She was still upset that he didn’t want to talk to her about what was happening. “It’s okay,” she murmured and looked back down at her ice cream bowl. “It’s mint chocolate. It’s not my favorite.”

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Steve felt bad for upsetting Adriana so, but he couldn’t help but think that she was adorable when she was holding a grudge. “I’m sorry it’s not your favorite. But it’s better than nothing, right?” He leaned down and kiss the top of her head. “How about when it’s close to bedtime, I tell you a story instead of reading one of your books?”
Adriana grunted and looked up at Steve again. She considered it for a second and then decided that she would allow it. “Okay, a story is fine,” she agreed. She sighed and grabbed Steve’s hand. “Can we have pancakes for breakfast, Daddy? Papa said he’s staying home tomorrow but you aren’t? Where are you going?”

Steve brushed his hand over the back of her little hand. “Of course. I can make everyone pancakes tomorrow. And Papa is staying home to spend time with you because I’m going to go to work for him. I love spending all day with you, but I have to let Papa have a turn, too. Won’t it be fun getting to play with your papa all day?”

“Can’t you stay too? He was here yesterday and today, Daddy. That means you both can stay tomorrow,” Adriana asked. “And yesterday, he was all mad and today he was with Aunt Lilly and Aunt Becca. So, tomorrow we all can play.” She nodded once like she had come up with the best possible plan.

“I wish I could, Peanut, but we have to work so we can pay for our house and so the lights stay on and the bedrooms are cozy and warm. If we don’t work for a lot of days, then we won’t make any money,” he said. Steve kissed her head. “It was smart of you to try and think of a solution, though.”

“Do we not have money already?” Adriana asked and squinted her eyes. She hadn’t been taught about finances yet and she didn’t know the concept of what money actually did. Becca had tried to explain once by helping her buy candy but once she gave the money over and got her candy, she expected to get the money back again.

“We have some money, but not enough that we stop working,” he said. “If you want, we can play pretend and you can learn how money works a little bit better. You can be the worker and you can do some math, too. Papa and I use lots of math to know how much money we need to keep a roof over our heads.”

“I want to be a pet store,” Adriana said and looked up at him with big eyes. “I can get a ‘turtle’ and food and toys for him! Please!” She had ice cream around her mouth and hopeful twinkles in her eyes.

Becca overheard the conversation and added, “I don’t think turtles can live in houses, Adriana. I think it’s only in zoos and the wild.”

“We can’t have real turtles in the house, but we can have pretend turtles in the house;” Steve said. “And we can get pretend food and pretend toys for him. How does that sound, Peanut?” He played with her hair before bending down to kiss the top of her head. “We can do that after ice cream. Do
“Can Papa help me make toys for them tomorrow?” Adriana asked. “I know you’ll be gone but he can help, right?” She just wanted someone to play with her right now. The past two days was all hectic around the house and she just wanted some attention.

“I’m sure he can. Your papa is so excited to get to be home with everyone tomorrow. It’s going to be a special day. And you and your siblings are going to be good for him, right? Hopefully you three won’t get into too much trouble.”

“I’ll be good,” Adriana agreed and went back to eating her ice cream. “Sarah May doesn’t do anything at all so she will be good. But Christopher might not.” She looked back up at Steve like she was just trying to give him a briefing on how she thought it might go.

“Yeah, Christopher is a bit of a troublemaker. But he’s smart, so if you give him a puzzle to figure out, it’ll keep him occupied,” Steve answered.

Bucky came into the kitchen and sighed. “Becca, Lilly, do you two want to come with me to put Dad’s medals on his uniform? Steve, Baby, you can come too.”

Steve perked up when Bucky invited him this time. “Sure,” he said immediately. He kissed Adriana’s head. “We’ll be right back, Peanut.”
S6: E19

Chapter Notes

REPEAT:

I have some news. Due to the intense business of our schedules and my increasing health issues, K and I have decided to cut the fic shorter than originally planned. We had hopes in doing another season and then an epilogue. However, it'll now end after a small wrap of a few chapters and then an epilogue. This story, like many a long-running TV shows will have a some-what spliced together ending season and a conclusion. I apologize for anyone who hoped to see this continue on but it's simply become a bear we can't take care of properly anymore. And neither of us would want this fic to suffer because of trying to continue it and making it less than our best. If anyone has an questions or comments, you can email me at rogers.barnes.stucky@gmail.com -- Thank you all for being with us on this journey and I hope you like the rest of the story and wrap-up.

Season Six will end on Chapter 23, followed by an epilogue.

Bucky led his sisters upstairs and gripped Steve’s hand in his. He was trying to include him in this in hopes that Steve didn’t feel left out anymore. And this was important and he wanted Steve here. “Lilly, Becca, the tin is on the bed. I’ll get his uniform from the closet,” he said and let go of Steve’s hand so he could go reach into the back of the closet to get the smooth crisp navy uniform out from its hiding place.

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“So, could you explain what each of the medals mean?” Steve asked. He knew already, but he wanted to hear it from them.

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Bucky laid the uniform out on the bed and smoothed out the section of fabric where there were two bars missing. “This shows his rank,” he said and moved over so Lilly could pin the missing bars back on.

“His badge he got after the stealth coup goes here,” Becca added and slipped the pin over the heart of the jacket. “He was the first to volunteer to lead a troop right into the belly of the enemy territory for reconnaissance. Uncle Dewey was his second in command there. Dewey was older but Dad rose through the ranks much faster.”

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Steve smiled as he watched them reunite the medals to the uniform in their appropriate places. He walked over to Bucky to put a hand on his back and give him a kiss. “He must’ve made his troop and superior officers proud,” Steve said. “That sort of commitment is really valued in the police force, so I can imagine how much it meant in the army.”
Bucky was misty-eyed and he could see Becca and Lilly were crying a little as well. He leaned back against Steve and sighed. “I’m sure they were. It was hard not to love my dad,” Bucky said warmly and watched Lilly touching the uniform gently.

She breathed in a heavy sigh and looked up at Becca. “I miss them,” Lilly said. It was really quiet in the room. Everyone just thinking and trying to okay as best as they could. Bucky was tired. This whole thing made him tired.

“They raised three great people,” Steve said, looking between all of them. “I may not have gotten to meet them in person, but each of you carries a part of them. So, they’re always here.” He gave Bucky’s hand a squeeze. “Do you want me to take care of the kids tonight so you can get some early sleeping time in?” He could tell how exhausted Bucky was.

Bucky shook his head and leaned in to give Steve a kiss on his cheek. “No, Baby. Thank you. I want to help. And I want to have some quiet time with you tonight before we sleep.” He was definitely tired but he thought it was important for him to have a bit of time with Steve, especially after how left-out Steve expressed he was feeling today. “We can do that together. Maybe we should give the girls a few minutes alone with Dad. Let’s go.”

Steve wasn’t about to argue over it. Whatever Bucky wanted, he could roll with it. “Alright,” he agreed. Steve walked out of the room and closed the door quietly behind the two of them so Becca and Lilly could have their privacy together. “Adriana doesn’t quite grasp the concept of money still,” he said, filling Bucky in with what they had talked about. “She wants to have a pretend turtle shop with you tomorrow.”

“Oh, so I’m teaching her about money tomorrow?” Bucky asked and slipped his hand in Steve’s. “That sounds fun. I can do that. Am I supposed to be selling turtles? What’s the game?” He wanted to make sure he was doing what Adriana was anticipating. He wasn’t home with the kids during the day and wasn’t usually the one teaching them things so he didn’t want to mess this up at all.

“I don’t know, we didn’t get that far. I think she just wants to have all the turtles so maybe you can convince her to sell something else in her shop,” Steve laughed. “She was trying to get both of us to stay home more often because you’ve been here for a few days now.” He reached his hand up to play with Bucky’s hair. “I’m so glad you get to be with them tomorrow.”

Bucky chuckled because Adriana had such a one-track mind for turtles and it was adorable. “I suppose I can do that for her,” he said warmly. “And I wish we both could be here tomorrow and every day. But that’s just impossible. I’m already worried you’re going to have a horrible day tomorrow. I don’t know how cut-out for retail you are, Baby. And you’re going to have to deal with a lot of stoned people. And a stoned Reggie. Possibly a stoned Clint, depending on how he’s doing.”
“You say that like I didn’t have to deal with a bunch of stoned people at my old job,” Steve said. “I’m sure they’ll be a lot more pleasant with me because I’m not obligated to arrest them now,” he said with a little wave of his hand. “I’ve been shot at, people have tried to stab me and take punches... I’m pretty sure I can handle some stoners and people trying to haggle.”

Bucky whined and stopped them in the hall so he could pull Steve close by his shirt and kiss him firmly and warmly. “I love you. I know you’ve had worse. I was there through it, Baby.” He chuckled lightly and slipped his arms around him. “You’ll do good tomorrow. I’m sorry for doubting you. And if Clint wants to talk about his and our sex lives like he usually does, just distract him with snacks.”

He smiled but then pouted when Bucky brought up Clint. “Why does your boss want to know so much about our sex lives?” Steve wrapped his arms around his perfect husband. “And don’t be sorry. I know it’s been a while since I’ve worked a proper job. So far, my only audience throughout the day are toddlers.”

“First of all, Clint was my best friend long before he was my boss,” Bucky said. “And it’s not like it’s a one-way street. We talk about his and Natasha’s sex life too.” He smirked at Steve, knowing he would definitely not want to know about that either. “We don’t talk about Tim and Richard’s though. Tim is a flirt but he’s a prude when it comes to talking about sex. He gets all red and huffy.”

“I still can’t believe you tell all your friends about what we do in bed,” he complained. Steve didn’t like it, exactly, but he didn’t dislike it so much that he would try to make Bucky stop. “You better say only good things about me, or else I’m going to make stuff up to keep a good reputation tomorrow.”

Bucky shook his head and squeezed Steve’s upper arm lightly. “It’s just Clint really. And he and I talk about more than just sex also. Don’t worry. I know what to not share. He doesn’t need to know every detail about every time. It’s more like a highlight reel.” He knew that still probably didn’t sound great to Steve but he and Clint had been close for years and this sort of stuff wasn’t new at all.

“Highlight reel? You didn’t tell him about the time we...” he got quiet and made a fist to show that he was hoping Clint didn’t know about them fisting each other. It was a small miracle that Bucky got Steve to stop being such a vanilla catholic boy, but he wasn’t sure if he’d be able to look Clint in the eye again.

Bucky stared at the fist for a second and then looked back up to Steve and made an attempt at a smile that mostly looked like a grimace, totally giving him away. “Come on, Baby. Let’s go get the kids so I can get their baths,” Bucky said softly, hoping Steve wasn’t too mad. “I think the babies should go
to sleep early tonight. Adriana can be up until her bedtime, though.”

Steve’s face blushed deeply. “You didn’t!” He gasped. “Bucky!” He was more scandalized than mad and he swatted at Bucky’s back as he walked to get their kids. He stopped hitting him when they got into eyesight and he attempted to compose himself so no one would suspect anything. “Ya-Ya, Christopher, are you ready to have bath time?”

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Greg was on the ground with Christopher playing with blocks. And Sarah May was sitting a few feet away with some plushies and looking very sleepy. She reached her arms up when she saw her dads and whined softly. She was ready for a bath and sleep. Christopher, however, shook his head and clanged two blocks together. “No, bath, Dada!”

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Steve plucked up Sarah May and gave her a kiss before passing her to Bucky. He was used to dealing with toddler temper tantrums so he would spare Bucky from having to take care of the more difficult child. “No bath?” Steve gasped as he picked Christopher up. “But you’re going to get smelly. Ya-Ya won’t play with you if you’re smelly.”

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“No bath!” Christopher yelped and tried to wriggle out of Steve’s grasp. “Dada, no bath, ‘peas’!” He had recently gotten good at understanding ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ but he wasn’t the best at saying them sometimes.

Bucky held Sarah May and kissed her sleepy face. “Christopher, Bean, your sister is sleepy. Don’t you want to sleep when she does? You can wake up tomorrow and play together. That’s good.”

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Steve kept a sturdy grip on his son. “Oh, Sweetheart, I know you don’t want to have a bath, but we have to give you a bath so you’re clean and healthy,” he said sympathetically. “Why don’t you want a bath, Precious Boy?” he asked, trying to soothe him by petting his hair.

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Christopher frowned and pointed down at the blocks and Greg. “Play,” he said. “Playtime.” He whimpered and tried to reach for the toys.

Bucky sighed and looked at his uncle. The kids did like him. It wasn’t very surprising, though. As much as he seemed to dislike Steve, he loved their children plenty. Gregory was always good with kids. “Maybe Christopher can have ten more minutes. I’ll get Sarah May started in her bath.”

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Steve looked between Greg and Bucky before sighing. “Alright,” he said. He gave Christopher a hug and said, “Bean, you can play for ten more minutes, Okay? Ten minutes. Then it’s bath time and I expect you to be a good boy.” He set him down on his feet and nudged him gently towards his uncle. “Bath time soon,” he reminded.

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Bucky thanked Steve and pulled him with him into the hall really quick. “Christopher likes Uncle Greg. And he will be gone tomorrow morning so I figure a little bit longer will be okay,” he said and gave Steve a quick kiss. “If you want to stay and watch him, you can. Or you can come with me and Ya-Ya.”

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“I know,” Steve sighed. He leaned over to give Bucky’s cheek a kiss. “I’m not going to keep him from Greg, it’s just that he typically puts up a fight whenever it’s bath and bedtime,” Steve said. “I’d rather go with you and Sarah May... I don’t want to be alone with your uncle.”

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Bucky nodded and grabbed Steve’s hand. He led him back upstairs to the bathroom. “Maybe I shouldn’t have let him play for longer. Because it’s giving in to his fighting back about a bath,” he mused, setting Sarah May down on the ground so he could start up the bath. The second she was on her feet, she turned to Steve and raised her arms up, wanting to be held right now so badly. “I’m sorry, Steve. I made the wrong move. That’s on me.”

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“Usually, I’d agree with you, but Greg is family and if Christopher wants to spend extra time playing with him, we should allow it, I guess,” he said. Steve bent down to pick up their daughter and cuddle her close. “Don’t worry about it, Love. If he gets his way one time out of a dozen when it comes to extra playtime, it’s not setting us back at all.”

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That made sense to him. It wasn’t that big of a deal if it was only a rare thing. But it also probably would have been better to do that differently. At least, maybe when Greg wasn’t around or after talking with Steve about it first. Because what Bucky did was just undermine what Steve said to Christopher right in front of his uncle who already didn’t like Steve. That was a bad move. “I’m sorry, Baby. I get what you’re saying but it was a mistake.”

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“Hey, you don’t have to keep apologizing, Sweetheart. It happens,” Steve reassured, giving Bucky a kiss. He rubbed Sarah May’s back and gave her a kiss to the top of her head. “None of us are perfect. Except for our youngest daughter.” He winked and gave him a nudge with his elbow. “Let’s get her cleaned.”

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The two of them gave Sarah May her bath and then retrieved Christopher to do the same. Eventually, they had their two youngest to sleep and Adriana was on her way. “Steve, Baby, do you want me there when you talk to her about Grant?” Bucky asked softly and touched Steve’s chest and his arm. “I can join you or I can leave you two alone and I’ll wait in our room. Whichever you want.”

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Steve heard Adriana coming up the steps and nodded in response to Bucky’s question. He didn’t want to do this alone. “Hey, Peanut,” he said gently. “Are you ready for your story?”

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Adriana handed her favorite blanket to Bucky and nodded slowly, already feeling sleep coming up. “Nana brushed my teeth,” she said in response and tromped her way into her room and to her bed.

Bucky helped her get all tucked in and laid her favorite blanket up around her head like a halo. “There we go, Sweetheart. All ready for bed after Daddy tells a story.”

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Steve sat on the edge of Adriana’s bed and gently stroked her hair. “So, um...” he started weakly. “There was a lady that your papa used to know who was going to have a baby, but she wasn’t ready to give her baby a home yet. So, Papa and I decided we could give her baby a home. We were very excited to be dads again and your papa had a beautiful crib all ready for him and we were ready to give him a good life, but something...” he took a breath. “Something very sad happened.”

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Bucky stood as a backboard behind Steve. He gave him something to lean back on and feel support. He knew how much having to explain this story to a young child hurt. And he was grateful Steve was keeping fairly calm so far.

“What sad thing happened?” Adriana asked curiously and tilted her head to the side. If it were any other circumstance, Bucky would have giggled with how adorable she looked. But now wasn’t time for laughing.

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“Well...” Steve had to word it in a way that Adriana would understand. “Missy was sick. That was her name. And before she could have the baby, she went to heaven and so did the baby.” His eyes were a little wet but Steve managed to keep the tears from falling. He didn’t want to explain the concept of a stillborn baby to his toddler. “Papa and I were so, so ready to bring him home and love him for all his life. We wanted to keep him close to us, even though he was far away in heaven. So that’s why I have his feet on my feet and that’s why your Papa has his name on his heart.”

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Bucky moved out from behind Steve just slightly so he could show Adriana his tattoo. She had seen both tattoos before but maybe now she could understand this one more. “See, right here, that’s your name,” Bucky said and pointed to the one at the bottom of the tattoo. “And above you is Sarah May then Grant right there under Christopher.”

Adriana looked at the words as Bucky’s pointed them out but she still wasn’t sure what exactly happened. “How come she had to go to heaven with the baby?” she asked and looked back at Steve. “If she was sick, why did she take the baby too?”

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“Well, babies need their mommies to live until they’re born. His mommy got sick, so he got sick, too,” Steve explained. “She didn’t mean to. It was an accident. But it happened, and your papa and I were very hurt for a long time.” He pet his fingers through her hair. “I thought that we wouldn’t have any more children... but then you know what happened? Father Frank called us to see if we could give baby Sarah May a home. And then, after that, Papa found you.”

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“So, Ya-Ya came instead of Grant?” Adriana asked and squeezed her biggest turtle plushie closer to
her chest for comfort. “Who was Ya-Ya’s mommy?” she added as an afterthought. She was still confused a bit about all this. But at least she was happy that they were finally telling her something about it. She also got confused a lot about how motherhood worked. Her dads had explained that some kids have two dads or two moms or one of each. But they also said that every kid has a mommy even if she doesn’t end up living with them. It was all a little convoluted for her young mind to understand.

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“Kind of. Ya-Ya would’ve come regardless of Grant. Then we would’ve had even more kids and you’d have another brother just like Christopher.” Steve grabbed another turtle to pass over to her. “We don’t know who is Sarah May’s mommy. They left her at the church because they knew that they couldn’t give her a home so they wanted to let someone else take care of her so she can be happy.”

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Bucky chimed in as well and touched his hand to the back of Steve’s neck. “But the important thing, Adriana, is that Daddy and I love every one of you so much. And that includes Grant. He is your baby brother and always will be. Just like your other mommy and daddy are still yours but so are me and Daddy. Do you understand, Peanut?”

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Adriana pouted a little as she mulled the information over and then nodded her head. “I understand.” She paused and then focused on Bucky. “Papa, when we dream, do our brains go to heaven?” she asked. “Because sometimes I think I see my mommy and daddy when I sleep. Can I see Grant, too?”

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“I don’t think our brains go to heaven, Baby. But I think heaven lets our family come back to us for a little bit,” Bucky said softly. “Because I know I see my mommy and daddy when I dream sometimes too. And I see Grant and his mommy just as much. And I think that Grant would be happy to come see you in your dreams, Peanut.” He looked to Steve and said quietly, “Should we show her his hospital picture?” He wanted Steve’s take on that because he knew that the picture might be a little distressing to a child who hadn’t seen a stillborn before.

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Steve shook his head right away. Steve couldn’t bear to look at his son right now and he was even less ready to field the questions that Adriana surely would have after being shown the picture. Not only that, but he didn’t feel right showing her a picture of someone who wasn’t alive in the picture. “I think we should let Adriana get some rest now.”

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Bucky saw that look in Steve’s eyes and he knew there was no questioning him right now. He nodded and kissed Steve’s head and then Adriana’s. “Okay, bedtime, Peanut,” he said and helped tuck her in better. “Daddy will sing you one song, just one, while Papa goes to check on Uncle Greg.” He looked to Steve and added, “To see if he needs any help packing.”

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Steve tensed a little when Bucky brought up Greg, but he didn’t make any comments. He leaned
down to kiss their daughter’s head and started to sing. He tucked the blankets around her one last time before retiring to their bedroom to wait for Bucky.

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As it turned out, Greg had just started packing and Bucky actually did end up helping him finish up. It took about an hour because of the arguing and snide quips from each other. But eventually, he was trailing back into the master bedroom and coming to flop down on the bed next to Steve. “Hey...” he said tiredly. “He’s all ready to leave in the morning. I gave him money for the cab to the airport. He said he didn’t want it but I told him it was in exchange for bringing the boxes here.”

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Steve was already showered, dressed, and ready to fall asleep with his husband. It had been a long couple of days and he was eager to get some rest. “I can’t wait until it’s just us again,” Steve mumbled. “Come here...” he pulled Bucky into a hug and nuzzled his neck affectionately. “How’re you feeling?”

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“Exhausted,” Bucky whispered and held Steve’s head in his hands. “But I’m a little better now that we are alone.” He sighed and kissed the top of Steve’s head a few times and rested his cheek on his hair. “I love you, Steve,” he added. “I love you more than anything else in the world. I love our family. I love you all so much. And this is almost over. Then we don’t have to see him ever again. We don’t.”

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Steve looked over at his husband with a happy smile. He felt loads better now that he was able to soak up Bucky’s undivided attention. It was rare that he got this needy about it. “I love you too, Bucky. I can’t wait to make you breakfast in the morning and kiss you whenever I feel like it without having to worry about someone holding back a rude comment about us.”

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“I’ll kiss you every ten seconds to make up for it,” Bucky promised and gave him another long kiss as if it was a deposit on the plan. “Maybe I should make breakfast tomorrow since you’re going into the record shop for me. It doesn’t seem fair to make you do both.” Another long kiss. “I can do French toast. I’m pretty good at French toast.”

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Steve leaned into the kiss with a happy smile. “I like the sound of that. All of that,” he agreed. “You can spoil me with breakfast in bed before I go work with the stoners. Do you think I should join in on smoking just to fit in?” he joked. Steve had no interest in weed.

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Bucky made an annoyed little grunt in answer. He knew it was a joke but he didn’t think it was in good taste considering Steve’s lung condition and Bucky’s own former smoking habits. “You’re a funny guy, Steve,” he said flatly and pushed Steve on the bed so he could move over him. He caged his arms and legs around him and hovered over the bed with his hair flopping down around him like a messy, crazy angel. “You need to occupy that mouth some other way right now, Baby,” he whispered and leaned down closer to give him a pecking kiss.
Steve watched with interest as Bucky moved over him. “And how do you suggest I occupy this mouth?” he asked. “You got something to put in it?”

Bucky growled lightly and bit Steve’s neck a little harsher than he normally would have. He knew Steve was feeling really left out and definitely a little needy for love and attention. So, he figured being a little bit more possessive and firm on him than he usually got would be okay. “Got something if you want it, Steve. Just have to ask me nicely.”

Steve let out a little moan when Bucky bit him like that. He stroked a hand down his chest and looked up at him with dark, needy eyes. “Please?” he asked softly, rubbing circles over Bucky’s nipple with his thumb. “I want you to kiss me and jerk me off and then I want your cock in my mouth.”

“You got it, Baby,” Bucky agreed with a heavy, low tone before stealing a soft little kiss. “Slip your pants off and sit up for me. I want you in my lap while I jerk you off.” He moved off of him and propped himself up on the pillows and waited patiently for Steve to get on him.

Steve nodded and didn’t need telling twice. His hands were already working his pants and underwear off of his body. He sat up and got into Bucky’s lap right away. “Tell me how much you love me,” Steve said shyly. “I want to hear it over and over again tonight.”

“Oh, Baby,” Bucky said warmly, hands sliding slowly up Steve’s thighs. “Steve, Baby, my sweet husband. I love you more than I can explain. I wish I was better with my words so I could get you to understand how much you truly mean to me.” He gripped one hand lightly on Steve’s cock and started to move up and down on it. “Waking up to you every morning feels like I get to wake up the sun. You’re my warmth and my light and my everything. And without you, I would be cold and sad and shriveled and nothing, absolutely nothing.”

Steve purred when Bucky slid his hands over his thighs. He cupped Bucky’s face and kissed his forehead and then his nose, letting Bucky sing his praises and words of love. “You have such a way with words, love,” he murmured. Steve let out a little moan when Bucky started to stroke his cock. “I don’t know why you think you don’t give your feelings justice.”

“Because they aren’t enough for you,” Bucky said quietly and gave Steve a pushy kiss. “I don’t think I could ever find the perfect way to explain all my feelings. And I know that sounds cheesy. But you can’t be described with a handful of words, Babe. You’re more than any of that.” He gripped a little tighter on him and worked faster. “Loving you is a gift and an honor.”
Bucky knew just what to say. He always did. And Steve found Bucky talking to him like this just as much of a turn on as dirty talk. He rocked his hips into Bucky’s hand as he kissed along Bucky’s neck and jaw. “We’ve come so far,” he said. “You’ve turned me into a better person. You brighten my world.”

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“I’m sorry these past few days have been really rough,” Bucky said quietly and hastened his hand on Steve’s cock. “But now, at least, it’ll be over in the morning. And once you get home tomorrow, everything is all about you, okay? I promise. It’ll be great, Baby.” He kissed Steve again and opened his mouth for him so they could get a little sloppy with their making out. He wanted Steve to feel so good all the time and he was going to give him anything and everything to make that happen.

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Steve parted his lips and accepted the kiss readily. He was on edge and he was starting to make desperate, little noises as he rocked his hips into Bucky’s hand more. “You don’t got to make it all about me,” Steve said. “Just… just keep loving me.” He gripped Bucky’s hair tightly in his hands. “Almost there, Buck, please…”

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Bucky whispered softly, “Come for me. Please, Baby. Come for me. I want to see that handsome face when you orgasm. I love that face. You always look so good.” He chuckled and leaned in to bite on Steve’s neck again firmly.

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Steve moved his hips desperately, having little rhythm to them as he felt his orgasm start crashing down on him. When he came, he kissed Bucky to stifle the sounds that were coming out of his mouth. “Bucky,” he moaned, raking his fingers through his hair. “Love you.”

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Bucky giggled happily and licked a long stripe up Steve’s neck. He kept pumping him for a few seconds and then brought his come covered fingers to his mouth and licked it clean. “You taste so good,” he said warmly and slipped his mouth over Steve’s again and held him close, tongue moving inside his mouth and carefully moving them both so Steve was under him on the bed.

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Steve was in a mood to be claimed by Bucky and Bucky was doing all the right things to make him feel wanted. He pressed his body against Bucky’s as he was shifted and he worked his hands over his husband’s back to touch him affectionately. “I want to taste you, Buck. I want your cock.”

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“I know you do, Baby,” Bucky said warmly and kissed Steve’s jaw a few more times. “Where do you want me?” He moaned softly and pressed his cock to Steve’s leg and moved just enough to get some much-needed friction. He wanted Steve on him so badly. He wanted to be on Steve some more. He knew how much they both needed to be tangled up together tonight.

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“I want you on the edge of the bed so I can get down on my knees in front of you. I want you to sit
up so you can watch me. I don’t care so long as you feel good,” Steve said. He reached down so he
could rub Bucky’s cock to give him some relief. “I love your dick so damned much. It’s so thick and
perfect.”

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“I love you, Baby. All of you. Every inch,” Bucky promised and moved away a bit so he could get
into position for Steve and wait. “And I love your laugh. And seeing those bright happy eyes when I
come home from work. It makes absolutely every moment of my life amazing and worth it. And you
have no idea how grateful I am that I managed to find you and get you to marry me.”

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Steve wasted no time climbing off the bed so he could kneel in front of Bucky on the ground. He
kissed along the inside of Bucky’s thighs as his husband praised him. He stroked Bucky’s balls as
he licked his way up his exposed dick. “I’d marry you a thousand times.” He licked a stripe from
shaft to tip before slowly taking his cock into his mouth.

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Bucky moaned low in his throat and his hand shot to Steve’s hair to grip tight. He loved getting his
dick sucked by Steve. It was always perfect and Steve’s mouth was so hot and wet and he had gotten
so good at this. “Okay, Steve. Let’s do it again,” Bucky said softly. “It’s been two years. We had
four kids in that time. And we had a lot of struggles too.” He gasped a little as Steve pressed his
tongue against his cockhead sharply. “Let’s have a vow renewal. We can invite our friends and
Father Frank to the house and do a little renewal ceremony.”

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Steve pressed noisy kisses to the head of Bucky’s dick and happily swallowed him down. He
moaned at the feeling of Bucky’s perfect cock on his tongue. He pulled back to breathe. “Let’s
do that,” he said. “We weren’t parents back then. We’ve changed so much since getting
married.” Steve began to massage Bucky’s balls when he went back to sucking him off.

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“Yeah, that’s what I’m - fuck!” Bucky yelped and had to muffle his hand over his mouth quickly. He
couldn’t talk anymore just yet. Steve was driving him wild right now and he needed to focus on that
and not letting himself wake up the house. But he wanted so badly to have a wedding renewal with
Steve. He knew their marriage wasn’t legal by the typical standpoints and if it ever became legal they
would have themselves a proper wedding. But he really thought this could be good for them. They
were parents now, and including their babies in this would be important. And they survived together
as a couple through so much since their wedding - Tish, AA meetings, the fire, losing Grant and
Missy, countless arguments and disagreements about any number of things, and now Greg’s
unexpected visit. They could use this.

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Steve basked in the pleasure he was able to give his husband. He wanted to make him incapable of
thinking of anything except how good Steve’s mouth felt on his dick and how great Steve’s hand felt
on his balls. He took all of Bucky’s dick into his mouth and moaned around it. He loved it. He
stroked his tongue firmly on the underside of Bucky’s cock, running it up the long vein there.
“Ah, fuck, I love you,” Bucky whined and moved his arms up under his head so he was completely relaxed back. He couldn’t help the string of hums and moans that escaped him as Steve kept working him over and it really did transport him. All he was thinking about was how much he loved sex with Steve and how stupid hot Steve’s body was and how he wanted to bite and lick all over him. “Baby, I’m getting there.”

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Steve glanced up at Bucky and felt better seeing how relaxed his husband was. He worked up a steady rhythm fucking his mouth on Bucky’s dick. His hand slipped underneath Bucky so he could tease his hole without penetrating him. He didn’t speed up his ministrations - Steve kept that relaxed, steady tempo to draw it out just a little longer. Usually, Steve wanted to be mindful of others in the house, but he hoped Greg would overhear somehow and be unable to do a damned thing about it.

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The flow and rhythm of Steve on his dick combined with the gentle prodding around his hole, pushed Bucky ever closer to the edge and fast. His breathing picked up and he was mostly just panting Steve’s name and moving his body around a little with every jolt to his system. It didn’t take that much longer until he could feel the warm pit in his stomach that proved he was about to come. “Baby, fuck, fuck, I’m gonna come. I’m gonna - Steve!” He yelped again followed with a low growl of a moan before he covered his face with a pillow to stifle himself as he burst into the back of Steve’s throat. After a minute, he slowly moved the pillow from his face and looked down to Steve’s head resting on his thigh. He worked on bringing his breathing back to normal. “Jesus, Steve...” he muttered and reached down to touch Steve’s hair. “I was too loud. I’m sorry,” he said and wiped his thumb down Steve’s cheek and over his lips. “You felt incredible. You’re so good. I’m exhausted from that.”

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“No, you weren’t. You were perfect,” Steve answered. His breathing was short and quick as he caught up with it. Steve kissed Bucky’s thumb and then climbed up to snuggle him. He wrapped his arms around him and looked happily into his eyes. “You’re exhausted from a blowjob?” he laughed.

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Bucky formed to Steve immediately and tangled up their legs together. “Yes, I’m exhausted. You really got me going. That orgasm really punched its way out of me fast.” He shook his head and tucked up closer to Steve to kiss on his jaw and neck. “I was already tired after today but now I’m about to pass out, Baby.”

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“Well, I’m glad that it got you properly exhausted. You’ll need to rest up if you want to have the energy for our three, little animals tomorrow.” He nuzzled his face against Bucky’s neck. “I love you. Good night, Bucky, and I’ll see you in the morning, Okay?”

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“I love you too, Baby,” Bucky promised and moved a little closer up on Steve so he was half blanketed over him. “If the babies cry tonight, I’ll get up and get them. You should get a night off too since you’ll be going into my job tomorrow.”
S6: E20

Chapter Notes

REPEAT:

I have some news. Due to the intense business of our schedules and my increasing health issues, K and I have decided to cut the fic shorter than originally planned. We had hopes in doing another season and then an epilogue. However, it'll now end after a small wrap of a few chapters and then an epilogue. This story, like many a long-running TV shows will have a some-what spliced together ending season and a conclusion. I apologize for anyone who hoped to see this continue on but it's simply become a bear we can't take care of properly anymore. And neither of us would want this fic to suffer because of trying to continue it and making it less than our best. If anyone has any questions or comments, you can email me at rogers.barnes.stucky@gmail.com -- Thank you all for being with us on this journey and I hope you like the rest of the story and wrap-up.

Season Six will end on Chapter 23, followed by an epilogue.

At some point when Bucky was cooking breakfast for everyone, Christopher appeared behind him. He’d managed to not only escape his bed, but get out of his room and down the stairs. “Hi, Papa!” He chirped. “Food?”

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Bucky jumped about a foot off the ground when he heard Christopher’s little voice behind him. He had just been listening to an album quietly coming from the living room and he hadn’t heard him coming in at all. He turned around and saw him and quickly picked him up. “Jesus, Bean. How did you do that? Was the nursery door not closed all the way?” He wondered and brushed his fingers through his son’s hair. “Or did Daddy get you? Is Daddy downstairs now?”

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Christopher burst into laughter when his papa had a big reaction to seeing him. He hugged him and rested his head on Bucky’s shoulders. “No Daddy,” he said. He had tried to get Steve’s attention but his dad was sound asleep. “I open,” he explained.

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“What, how?” Bucky asked. “Did you stand on something?” He was dumbfounded. Christopher would have had to stand on something to get to the doorknob. And if that was the case, Christopher might just actually be the smartest kid Bucky had ever encountered in his life. “Did you just want to come downstairs for breakfast?”

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“Play blocks,” Christopher said. He’d stacked a few of his things just like he did when playing blocks so he could get up to the doorknob. “I want Papa,” he said. Christopher had heard one of his
parents walking around the house and he wanted in on the fun.

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Bucky nodded and stared at his son. He would have to go see what Christopher was talking about in the nursery to see how he made his great escape. “Huh. Okay. Well, you’re here now, Bean. Do you want some strawberries while Papa finishes making breakfast?” he asked and gave him a few kisses before sitting him in his high chair. “Strawberries, Bean?”

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“Yiss,” Christopher answered in an excited whisper. He smiled when his papa kissed him. As he waited for his strawberries, he looked around the house. Nobody else was awake and it was a lot quieter than he was used to. “Where Greg?”

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Bucky quickly put some strawberries into a little bowl and set it down for Christopher. “Uncle Greg left already, Buddy,” he said. Greg had come downstairs about a half hour earlier and gave Bucky a five-minute speech about his opinions once again before finally leaving for the airport. It took everything Bucky had to just not fight back on it and just let it be. He figured it was better to just let him finish and go instead of having another fight that might have extended his stay a little.

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Christopher’s shoulders dropped a little and a disappointed look crossed his face. He ate a few strawberries in peace before he asked, “When Greg back?” As much as Bucky and Steve had been waiting for Greg to get out of here, the kids had a lot of fun with him.

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“I don’t know, Bean,” Bucky said softly and touched Christopher’s hair carefully a little bit again. He still couldn’t stop thinking about Greg’s comment about his son’s hair. It wasn’t fair of him to tell Bucky what to do about his own son’s appearance. He loved Christopher’s hair just the way it was. And if anyone made a decision to cut it, it was going to be Christopher himself. “He lives in California. It’s far away, Love.”

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“No,” Christopher whined, slumping a little in his chair. Thankfully, he didn’t throw a fit over it but he definitely wasn’t in as cheerful of a mood anymore. He miserably ate his berries while Bucky stroked his hair. “Why?” he asked quietly.

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“How come he had to leave?” Bucky asked to clarify. “He has a family, Baby. He is a daddy too. He had to go back to his own family. He went home.” He hoped Christopher understood and wasn’t too upset about Greg leaving. It was nice to know they got along well but Bucky and Steve wouldn’t have lasted another day with him.

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Christopher sighed and rested his chin dramatically in his palm. He got that from Steve. “Okay,” he huffed. Christopher finished up his berries just as Diana came over to beg. “Papa. Diana food,” he informed.
Bucky let out a little sigh of relief and went to get Diana’s food to fill up her bowl. “Okay, Christopher. Breakfast is ready. Do you want to come with me to get Daddy awake?” he asked and held out his arms as an offering. “I’m betting Daddy will be so happy to see you this morning, Baby.”

“Yiss,” he answered. Christopher reached up to get picked up by his papa. “Daddy happy,” he parroted, smiling over at Bucky. He had a look in his eye that promised many mornings of nursery escape if it resulted in extra attention from his parents.

Bucky had gotten well used to Christopher’s evil eye and he could tell he was enjoying the fruits of his labor this morning. “Oh, boy...” he sighed and picked up his son. He was going to have to think of a better way to prevent this now. He took Christopher upstairs again, Diana on their heals, and said to him, “Baby Bean, you are going to be the end of me, aren’t you?”

Christopher nodded his head enthusiastically. He didn’t understand all the words his papa used, but he assumed it was something good. He hugged Bucky’s neck and snuggled him happily. When they went into the bedroom, Christopher made an excited sound before squealing, “Dada! Get up!”

Bucky giggled and set Christopher down on the ground for a second before pulling the blanket around Steve’s middle tighter to cover his nudity. He then picked Christopher up again and set him on the bed so he could attack Steve however he pleased today. “Baby, someone wants to say ‘good morning’.”

Steve woke up with a start when Christopher shouted. When he saw his son crawling on top of him, huffing and puffing determinedly as he stood up on top of his chest, he couldn’t help but laugh. “Hello!” he answered excitedly, bringing him in for a hug. “Good morning, Bean! Did you help Papa with breakfast?”

“Not really,” Bucky said with a huff and watched his boys together. “He escaped from the nursery and got downstairs to me. Apparently, he stood up on something and opened the door. Nearly scared the shit out of me when he got to the kitchen.”

“What?” Steve sounded equal parts shocked and impressed. He looked over to Christopher and played with his hands. “Bean, are you getting too smart for us? You little wonder baby. You scared your papa!” he said in a bright voice.

Bucky shook his head and shrugged. “I have no idea how he did it but he did,” he said and sat down
on the bed with them both. “He is so smart. All our kids are.” He chuckled and picked Christopher up again. “Come on, Bean. Let’s get Ya-Ya and Adriana so Daddy can put on some pants so he’s not a nakey daddy anymore. Let’s go.”

“Nakey Daddy,” Christopher repeated with a giggle.

Steve blushed and gave Bucky a small swat. “Don’t say that, he didn’t have to know,” he whispered in an embarrassed tone. Christopher didn’t seem to care.

“Come on, Steve. He doesn’t know why you’re naked,” Bucky said with a big grin. “He’s naked all the time when we give him a bath and you know how much he loves running around in his diaper so we can’t get him dressed.” Christopher probably just thought Steve had a bath and that’s why he was a nakey daddy. “I’ll get the kids and meet you downstairs, Love.”

“He does love being a little, naked boy.” He opened his mouth to say something else, but Sarah May began to cry in the nursery. She never liked waking up without her brother in the room with her. Today was no exception. “Our daughter calls for you,” Steve said.

Bucky set Christopher down and he padded down the hall to the nursery to get to Sarah May quickly. After a few minutes, Bucky had all three kids downstairs and seated around the table, waiting for Steve. Sarah was up and making coffee and the girls were tiredly making their way to breakfast as well.

Steve came down and immediately gave all of his kids kisses, hugged the dog, and then hugged his mom. Sarah slyly said, “Oh, so the dog gets a hello before your own mother?”

Lilly looked up and answered, “At least you got a hello.”

Steve put his hands on his hips. “Last time I tried to hug you in the morning, you nearly bit my head off.”

Lilly just gave him a little glare. It was true, though. But she was having a rough time lately. Even before Greg came and threw her out of balance with bad news and emotions. She was going through a puberty phase that was making her irritable. At least, that’s what Bucky assumed. Because she wouldn’t normally be so caustic and short with people and not having as much fun as she usually did.

“Here, Steve, sit down,” Bucky said and pushed him to his seat. He wanted to make sure Steve was just having a good relaxed morning. “Do you want coffee?”

Steve didn’t push any more buttons since he wasn’t in the mood to start a fight over breakfast. He
chuckled when Bucky pushed him into a chair and Diana came bolting over so she could rest her head in his lap. “Hello, princess,” he greeted happily. Steve looked back up to Bucky. “I’ll have some coffee. Can you also put some in a travel mug for me to take?”

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“Of course, Baby. Travel mug of coffee,” Bucky agreed and set a cup of coffee out for him and poured another into a mug. “You’ll be with Clint and Tim this morning, Steve. Then Clint will leave at noon today and Reggie will come in and Tim will close today. He’s pulling an all-day shift. But you’ll be done at four, Okay?” Bucky gave him the rundown for the schedule and touched his hair like he was fixing it for him. “There’s a new shipment coming in today. Several boxes of vinyl and cassette. Please, don’t over-exert yourself with carrying them. Tim can handle it.”

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Steve smiled as he got the rundown for the day. It felt nice going out to work for once. Of course, he loved staying home with the kids and it genuinely was a fulfilling life to lead being able to be there all the time to help them grow. But a part of him missed being able to do an honest day’s work for a paycheck. “Only until four? That’s an early enough shift where I can probably still cook dinner tonight.”

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“Sure, I guess. But I want to cook dinner, Steve,” Bucky said and touched his cheeks and neck. “I want to make dinner for everyone tonight. And you’ll be so tired when you get back. Trust me. I can do it.” He leaned down and gave Steve a kiss before going off again to get the bowl of fruit for the table. “I’ve got a lunch ready for you to take with you but if you would rather get something out, that’s fine too.”

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“You’re spoiling me, Sweetheart,” Steve said fondly. He leaned into Bucky’s hands and smiled over at him. “I don’t think I’ll be as tired as you think I’ll be, but I’ll not complain about coming home to a dinner cooked by my perfect husband. And I’d rather have lunch made by you than by some sweaty teenager.”

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Bucky chuckled and grabbed the lunch bag for him. “Here you go, Babe. There’s extra chips in there in case Clint finds it and takes some from you,” he said. “Call me at lunch to let me know how it’s going?” he cocked his head to the side and gave Steve a grateful smile. “Thank you for doing this.”

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Steve sipped at his coffee and finished up his breakfast quickly since he had to get going soon. “Will do, love,” he said. Steve sat up and kissed his cheek. “Thank you for taking care of the babies. They’re going to love spending time with their papa,” he said.

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“I love you so much, Babe,” Bucky said and followed Steve to the door after he kissed the kids’ goodbye. “Have a great day. Don’t sit on the blue chair, it’s horrible.” He handed him a few dollar bills and said, “This is in case Reggie left his wallet somewhere and needs money for lunch.”
Diana rushed up and nudged her way between the two of them. She wasn’t used to Steve being the one leaving at this time and started to whine. “No blue chair. Money for Reggie. Got it.” He leaned down to pet Diana before straightening up to kiss Bucky’s lips. “I’ll see you later. Love you.”

Tim and Clint were both already at the record shop by the time Steve got there. They were unpacking shipment boxes and checking the inventory slip to make sure they had what they ordered. When Clint noticed Steve he crossed his arms and grinned wide. “Hey, Blondie! Good to see you this side of town. How’s it feel coming to the underbelly to work today?”

Steve hung up his coat on the rack and put his lunch bag in the fridge before walking over to Clint to give him a hug. “It feels good,” he said. “Bucky’s convinced that I’m going to be tired when I get back, so I’m going to need you to spray me with water if I start looking sluggish. I can’t let him be right.”

“Can’t let Bucky be right,” Clint repeated with a nod. “That’s how we operate too. You’ll fit in here.” He chuckled and handed Steve a stack of vinyl. “Tim will handle the register, so if anyone is ready to buy, just yell for him. You’re not really trained on anything like that. So, for now, take this list and check off that all the items are accounted for in your stack.”

“Sounds easy enough to me,” Steve said. He was excited to be put to work and he set up camp on an empty spot of the countertop. “Once I finish this pile, should I come get you or do I bother Tim?” They were the only two reasonably responsible people here.

“Either or,” Clint said with a nod. “Each box has a list with it and they are all basically separated out now.” He hoisted a box of cassettes up on the counter and added, “and we finally got these in. For some reason, our order got messed up and they are just now getting here two months late.” He held up a cassette copy of Kansas’ new album called ‘Power’.

“Alright. I’ll get on it,” he said. Steve picked up the cassette from Clint’s hand and looked at it. “Cool.” He got right to work with checking inventory. Steve was pretty good with this stuff, so he didn’t take long checking things over. However, when a customer came in reeking of weed, Steve’s cop radar went on and he looked over at Tim.

Tim saw Steve jump to attention like a dog getting a whiff of frying bacon. He chuckled and watched one of their regulars milling in around the stacks. “It’s okay, Steve. He’s harmless. Not a nuisance. You can unclench.” He took one of the new Kansas tapes and slid it into their player and the first track started up. “Here, you’re Bucky today. So that means you’ve got to listen to the new music and give your opinions.”
Steve couldn’t help his knee-jerk reaction to the smell. He never enjoyed making arrests over weed, but he usually only arrested people who reeked of it when they gave him other reasons to do so, such as being belligerent or vandalizing something. “I bet you can’t bring Richard around here much. He’s more uptight than I am,” he said. “Also, are you sure I’m qualified to give my opinion? Bucky’s a bigger connoisseur than I am.”

Tim nodded, eyes wide as he said, “Yeah, you’re not kidding. He only came here once and almost arrested Reggie so he doesn’t come around anymore.” Richard was very high brow. He was a great fit for Tim but it could be a lot sometimes. “The first time he met my kids, he showed them pictures of what happens to the body of heroin addicts. They were terrified.”

Clint pushed into the conversation a little more again to add, “I’m sure you can give us something to work with, Steve. I can’t hear everything in the song and Tim only ever says that he likes it or doesn’t like it and that’s it.”

“Oh, my god.” It was a very Richard thing to mean well but end up putting his foot in his mouth like that. “And I’m sure you know well enough about the time he got Clint and Bucky in prison. Bucky’s still mad,” he said. Steve glanced over to the tape deck and walked over so he could have a listen. “This has a good beat to it.” He started dancing a little just to be embarrassing.

“Clint’s still mad too,” Clint offered too and glanced to Tim like he was little miffed that he was dating that guy even if he was so good with him. He watched Steve a second and shook his head. “Well, Bucky certainly doesn’t do that,” he spat out with a chuckle. “You and Tim are both useless with this stuff. Take home a tape and have Bucky listen to it.” The song ended and it started up on the next track. “Although, from what I hear so far, Bucky is going to hate it anyway. He will think it’s too boring.”

“He apologized,” Tim mumbled softly in defense. Steve eyed him and almost argued back but he decided to let it go. Tim was a bit of a soft-spoken guy when trying to avoid confrontation. Steve didn’t want to make things awkward so early in the shift.

“How can he think this is boring?” Steve said. “I bet you that Bucky is going to like this well enough. Christopher would like it too. He tries to sing Bucky’s songs.”

Clint shrugged and signed off on the bottom of the list he was working on before grabbing a new one and starting with a new stack. “Christopher might like it, sure. But Bucky’s a punk. This is way too current and popular and normal to be important to him. He’s going to say it’s got nice rhythm but lacks any passion or intrigue.”

“All I have to do is say that this is my new favorite album convincingly enough and he’s going to
like it just because I do,” Steve answered back, as if he had just pulled out some sort of trump card.  
“Christopher got out of the nursery today,” he said.  “Climbed down the stairs and scared the crap out of Bucky while he was making breakfast.”

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“That’s because Bucky’s a big sap when it comes to you. You could convince him to buy you a helicopter and he would save up because you want it,” Clint said with a nod of finality.

Tim took a box cutter and sliced open the next box quickly. No one was really around so he figured he would keep helping for a while. “How did he get out? Have you guys transitioned him into a big kid bed yet?”

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“He stacked up a few things to reach the doorknob, I guess. I’m not sure. We haven’t gotten him a big kid bed yet... I don’t have the heart to take him out of the crib Bucky made for him. He’s growing up too fast,” Steve said, pouting. “He knows that we don’t like it when he climbs out, but he still does it sometimes.”

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“He’ll be two next month, right?” Tim asked. “He is growing up. I remember meeting him as a little guy at the shelter opening. He was tiny.” He sighed and gave Steve a sad little look. “I miss when my kids were that young. My youngest just started on the basketball team and I can’t help but think that babies can’t play basketball but then I remember he’s not a baby anymore.”

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Steve said. “He loved you from the start. Out of everyone at the shelter, he recognized you and toddled right on over every time.” Steve sighed and got a sad look on his face too because his boy wasn’t a room away from him like he was used to. “Do they ever stop growing so fast?”

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“No, it doesn’t stop. And it doesn’t get any easier. And you’re proud to watch them grow but you also just want them to stay your little babies forever,” Tim said and sighed. “And I know Richard wants to have a kid. He would love to be a father. But I’ve got kids that are already growing up and stuff. And I’m ten years older than Richard. I... I don’t know if it’s such a good idea or not that I be involved.”

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Steve went back to organizing the records that customers pulled out and failed to put back in the correct spot. “I think you guys can make it work,” Steve said. “Bucky and I are going to have kids years down the road. Doesn’t mean we love our older kids any less. Besides, don’t you think it’ll be great to raise a baby with someone you love deeply?”

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Tim sighed but nodded anyway. He had been thinking about this for a while now. “Yes, and I adore Richard. But I also loved my ex-wife for a really long time. Not in the same ways but I did. And now she doesn’t even talk to me, she got remarried and had another baby, she - without my permission - stole the name we were going to use if we had another kid together, and she spends too much time trying to convince my kids that I’m some scummy asshole. When I never wanted to leave
her. I was prepared to die with her. I wouldn’t have been as happy as I am now with Richard. But I
never wanted to split up the family and hurt the kids that way. She kicked me out.” He took in a
shaky breath and covered his face. Tim got so easily worked up. And he really hadn’t handled his
issues with his ex-wife yet. They still cropped up all the time.

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“I know it’s easy for me to stand here and say this because it hasn’t happened to me, really. But why
would you let her take anything more from you when she’s already taken so much? You could have
a happy life raising a beautiful child with Richard. If what your ex did to you is holding you back
from potentially letting it happen again, it’s just another level of control she has over you.”

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Tim nodded and looked away for a second. He had been told something similar from Bucky and
Clint too. But it was hard to let it not affect him anymore. “I understand. Thank you for your advice,
Steve. I’m just so worried. I don’t want to disappoint Richard or anything. I just need to figure out if
it’s even a good idea for me to raise another kid. You know?” He sighed and pulled out a picture
from his wallet of him and Richard at the beach together and showed it to Steve. “He makes me so
happy. Thank you for setting me up with him. I just hope I don’t ruin it.”

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“There’s no way in the world you could disappoint Richard. You’re a good guy, you’re caring,
you’re a great friend... you’re the whole package, Tim,” Steve encouraged. He felt awful to see his
confidence tanked from his wife casting him out over something so petty. “You’re not going to ruin
it, bud. I’ve got faith in you.”

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Tim nodded solemnly and gave Steve a small smile. He had heard that before from Bucky and Clint
too. It just was hard for him to believe after his marriage took such a horrible turn. “Thanks, Steve. I
appreciate the encouragement.”

Clint shook his head and added, “Tim, my man, how many times have we done this now? Bucky
and I tell you the same stuff. And we say the same to Bucky when he’s worried he’s not good
even for Steve. And you guys tell me the same when I worry about Natasha.” He looked to Steve
and nodded. “It’s true. We do this all the time.”

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“You know we’re here for you,” Steve said. “And we would be honest if we didn’t think something
was a good idea.” He scribbled down a few more notes on his inventory sheet before his head
snapped over to Clint like he just realized what he said. “Wait... Bucky still doubts that he’s good
enough for me?” he asked with a concerned frown. Steve had thought that those misconceptions
weren’t so bad anymore for his husband.

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Clint nodded, not even slightly nonplussed since to him it was so regular. “I mean, it’s nowhere near
as bad as it used to be. He’s not constantly worried about that,” he said to Steve. “I used to get
concerned that he was going to work himself up into getting an ulcer or something. But nowadays it
just every so often something will happen or he’s having a bad day and his insecurities come
worrying their way in again. You know?”
Steve was determined to put in extra effort every day so there wouldn’t be a second that they were together that Bucky doubted whether or not he was good enough for Steve. “It’s a shame,” Steve said. “Bucky’s done so much for me. You should’ve seen my place before I met him. It looked like it was never lived in. Now, I have a whole home and family.”

“I know, Buddy,” Clint said with a warm smile. “You two really make each other better. Always have.” He was grateful that Bucky had Steve now. He had been worried about him never getting better and never getting anywhere and always being sad and stuck. But Steve completed him. “So, I hear the visit from Bucky’s uncle didn’t go well. Tim told me that Richard had to respond to a call at your house.”

Steve groaned at the mention of Bucky’s uncle. “Ugh. He’s the worst. And Christopher won’t stop asking for him,” Steve complained. “Any time he had the chance, he would talk Bucky’s ear off about how to get rid of me and how our kids need to be raised with a woman around and how Christopher’s hair is too long.”

“You’ve got your mom there. That’s a woman in the house,” Clint countered with a shrug. “Was that not good enough for him? He does sound like an ass. And Christopher is perfect exactly how he is. He’s going to look like a little blonde Bucky if he keeps his long hair.” He shook his head and nudged Steve a little to pass over another set of papers. “Even if she wasn’t there, it shouldn’t matter,” Steve said. “And Christopher already is like a little, blonde Bucky. He tries to head-bang whenever rock music comes on and if Bucky so much as strums his guitar, Christopher is doing his damnedest to sing with him. I swear, I’m getting that kid music lessons the second he’s old enough.”

Tim finished off his box and started to set the stacks on the back table to be sorted as he said, “It’ll probably be easy for him to pick up on an instrument since Bucky’s always being musical. Don’t you think? He’s got a lot of positive musical influence.” “How do you think Sarah May will do with people playing instruments all around her all the time?” Clint asked.

“Yeah. Bucky’s so talented with that stuff. I wish I could lay there and listen to him play all day long,” Steve sighed dreamily. He could be such a dope with Bucky’s music sometimes. “Sarah May will probably wish she had your hearing when she’s in the house. I feel bad for her - she’s like Becca, wanting to have peace and quiet, but without Becca’s attitude.”

“She’s welcome to come stay with me. I’ll be her third dad. No problem,” Clint offered and shot
Steve a pleading look. He loved all of the kids so much. And he wished he was a dad too. He and Natasha still hadn’t come to any definitive conclusions about that yet and he was getting discouraged.

“I can’t let our baby girl spend that much time without me or Bucky. She’ll think that we abandoned her,” Steve said. “But I know she loves you because you don’t make a lot of noise and she likes signing. Christopher and her talk sometimes like that to each other.” He checked off a few boxes on the paper. “How’s the baby discussion going with Nat?”

Clint shrugged and kind of did a non-committal little dance in his chair. “Not great. We just keep circling the same issues. Bottom line is that I want kids, she doesn’t want kids. But I don’t want to give her up and she doesn’t want to give me up. So, we are still just... in a loop.” He forced a little smile and added, “I love her. And I don’t want to break up with her. So, it’s hard to decide what to do.”

“Is adoption out of the question too?” he asked. “Nat never struck me as someone who wanted to be around kids full-time. She’s good enough with them to do her job, but... I don’t know. I don’t blame her for not wanting to be pregnant. And you see how many diapers we go through. I’m tempted to try cloth ones because I feel bad throwing so many out. It’s a mess.”

“Yeah, I don’t think it’s so much that she dislikes the thought of being pregnant. Because even if we adopted, she would still be a parent. And that’s the block there,” Clint said as he stood up from his seat and shook himself off. “Man, we got to find something more fun to talk about. This is just sad now.”

Steve didn’t know what he would’ve done if Bucky didn’t want kids. It wasn’t something he had to worry about. “How about we talk about when Tim and Richard are finally going to tie the knot? Father Frank has been itching for another hitching,” Steve teased.

Tim blushed red and bit his lip in a grin. “We haven’t really talked about that yet. You know Richard. He’s not in a church, he didn’t grow up in a church. I don’t know if it would mean the same thing to him as it did to you. But I do plan on spending as much of my life with him as I can. I hope that’s a long, long while.”

“Church or not, it feels good to see the ring on his finger,” Steve countered, wiggling his hand for Tim to see. “Or maybe we can have Clint do the ceremony here. It’s a real classy place to get married, don’t you know?” He gave Clint a playful wink.

“Oh, yeah!” Clint jumped back into the conversation. “We can put an arch over there by the window
and have some potted plants brought in. You can walk down the aisle to The Rolling Stones and Bucky will play guitar through the ceremony!” He was mostly joking but it kind of excited him now and he didn’t think it would be half bad.

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“Sarah May will be able to carry a basket by that point, so you can choose if you want her or Adriana to be the flower girl,” Steve elaborated, grinning at Tim. “I’m sure Richard will love getting married in Stoner Central.”

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Tim chuckled and ran a hand through his hair and adjusted his glasses. “Right, yes. My uptight boyfriend will love getting married here where the pot smell is caked into the carpets and the walls.” He did think it would be a little amazing though to be married to Richard. But he needed to discuss that with him before making any plans at all. “Are you two going to be the official wedding planners?” he asked and glanced between Steve and Clint.

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Steve nodded right away. “Yep. I will say that all weddings that I planned have been a success.” The only one he planned had been his own, but that didn’t change the truth in his declaration. “And I’ll only charge the price of one night’s worth of babysitting from you in exchange for my services.”

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“And I will charge you several pizzas,” Clint added. “Speaking of which, I’m hungry already. Steve, did Bucky make you lunch?” he asked and put his papers away so he could go snoop on what food Steve and Tim might have brought with them that he could leech a little bit from.

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“He did,” Steve said. “And he gave me money in case Reggie needed lunch,” he added. He trotted over to his fridge and pulled out the lunch his husband made for him. Steve had a proud look on his face, as if he was showing off how awesome Bucky was for packing it for him.

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Clint hummed and gave Steve a big pair of begging eyes and asked, “Anything in there you aren’t going to eat that I could have as a pre-lunch snack?” He was used to Bucky usually bringing something extra that he could give to him. They also usually kept lots of snacks in the back but sometimes they didn’t stick around long if Reggie or one of the others got the munchies.

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Steve had quite an appetite and would have easily been able to wolf all of this down, but he also was a big sap who couldn’t let Clint down. He didn’t make a scene or huff as he unwrapped his sandwich so he could give half of it to Clint. “I wonder what Bucky’s up to right now. I hope the kids are behaving for him.”

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“Aw, yes, score! I’ll bring Chinese food to you and Bucky tomorrow night. Promise.” Clint chirped happily. “What do you usually do this early with the kids? Adriana isn’t in school yet, right?”
“I’m usually doing schooling with Adriana while Sarah May naps and Christopher does his finger painting. She’s a little behind for her age but I wanted to homeschool our kids until they’re older anyway. I want them to develop good studying and cognitive habits.”

“Oh, okay. Well, maybe Bucky’s teaching them today. Or he’s just giving them a free-for-all, no Daddy day where they can run around in their underwear and make a mess of everything. You know, Bucky stuff.” Clint laughed because he knew how different Steve and Bucky were with cleanliness and organization. Bucky was a little bit of a slob.

“I already told the kids that today was going to be a different day and they get to do a new routine just this once,” Steve said. He grimaced at the thought of coming home to a mess. “I really hope that it’s not a zoo when I get back. Bucky barely cleans up when he doesn’t have three kids keeping him busy.”

Tim hummed in contemplation for a moment and said, “That’s so strange. Because he’s always picking up around here. He keeps this place really clean and in order. I mean, I know he’s a bit of an unkempt sort of person and his home would probably get a different treatment than work, but it just surprises me a little to know that.”

“You’d be even more surprised to see how bad it can get at home,” Steve said with a little groan. “Sometimes it’s a total sty. God, I hope today was okay for him.”
S6: E21

Chapter Notes

REPEAT:

I have some news. Due to the intense business of our schedules and my increasing health issues, K and I have decided to cut the fic shorter than originally planned. We had hopes in doing another season and then an epilogue. However, it'll now end after a small wrap of a few chapters and then an epilogue. This story, like many a long-running TV shows will have a some-what spliced together ending season and a conclusion. I apologize for anyone who hoped to see this continue on but it's simply become a bear we can't take care of properly anymore. And neither of us would want this fic to suffer because of trying to continue it and making it less than our best. If anyone has an questions or comments, you can email me at rogers.barnes.stucky@gmail.com -- Thank you all for being with us on this journey and I hope you like the rest of the story and wrap-up.

Season Six will end on Chapter 23, followed by an epilogue.

(UPDATE: There might be a delay on Chapter 23 and the epilogue - once again because of the hectic schedules that were mentioned above. But those chapters will be posted as soon as possible even if it's not in the immediate weeks that they should have been.)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Once the day was over and he was back home, Steve went to find Bucky and worked his hands over his head in a little massage. He figured Bucky had a headache from the day anyway.

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Bucky let out a low groan, both from his frustration and exhaustion from the day and because Steve’s hands on his head felt so nice. He did have a little headache. “You think we should trim the ends of my hair? We haven’t touched it in so long. I think it’s getting a little raggedy.”

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“If you want me to, I can trim it. But if you like the length, I bet I can find some sort of fancy shampoo or conditioner to make it look nicer. I won’t buy my cookies so we can have the extra couple of dollars to spend on nicer hair product for you,” Steve offered.

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Bucky shrugged and moved to get Steve in his arms for a moment. He needed some hugs and cuddles tonight. “No, that’s okay. We can just trim it. We just won’t take that much off. Just enough so the ends aren’t splitting all over the place.”

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Steve snuggled closer to Bucky and kissed his temple. “I can trim it after we get the kids to bed. I’ll
“get upset if I’m interrupted halfway through and I don’t want to be annoyed when I’m trimming your hair,” he said.

“Okay, good idea,” Bucky agreed and held Steve close to him. He wanted to just poof all their bad feelings away right now. He wanted to make Adriana not be sick anymore, and the babies to be calm, and the girls happy. “I think cereal for dinner tonight is a good idea. It’s easy and you won’t have to make anything and there’s minimal cleanup.”

“I don’t know, Buck. I want to take the easy route, too, but I don’t want our kids to have bad nutrition just because we’re tired. I bet some grilled cheese and carrots will go a long way with them. That’s easy enough to make and it’s a warm meal,” Steve said.

“Cereal isn’t bad nutrition,” Bucky countered flatly but didn’t protest against the grilled cheeses. He moved over on the bed a bit and grabbed his photo album from the nightstand. He had recently added extra pages in the back with a few of the new photos that they had gotten from Dewey’s stuff. He and his sisters divided the photos up for now. He opened the album to the back to a picture of his dad in his uniform standing with his mom. She was pregnant with Bucky at the time but wasn’t showing yet.

Steve kissed Bucky’s cheek and looked over at the pictures Bucky was thumbing through. “You look so much like your mom in some ways... even in the photos, I can see a resemblance.” He gave a light tug on a lock of Bucky’s hair before standing. “I’m going to make up dinner quick.”

Bucky sighed and took Steve’s hand. He gave it a quick kiss and then let him go. He kind of wanted a few minutes to himself anyway. He wanted to talk to his parents for a bit. And it was nice to see these younger pictures of them. His mother, at nineteen, did look a look like him at nineteen. And he definitely had her hair. He had his mother’s hair and eyes, and his father’s build and face. He spoke and moved more like his mom but he tried so far to be like his dad more every day. He flicked to the picture of his father at their camp in the war. He was leaning against a tree with his arms folded and his eyes tired. Bucky moved to the next photo, a more official ceremony photo of his father in his formal uniform - the one they still had. He was about twenty-eight in the photograph and looked almost exactly like Bucky did now, just with his hat covering his short hair.

Steve snuck downstairs and tried to get dinner started before the babies noticed that he was around, but he didn’t get too far before they were begging for their dad to play with them. He let them play with their toys in the kitchen so he could talk with them while dinner was being made. “Christopher, can you go get your papa? Where’s Papa?”

Christopher looked up at his Daddy and took a guess, “Up ‘dere’?” He pointed to the hall and added, “With ‘Adinana’?” He still had a very hard time saying his sister’s name.
“Yes, he is upstairs,” Steve praised. “He’s not with Adriana, though. He’s in Papa and Daddy’s room,” he corrected. Steve set up all the plates full of food at everyone’s spots and he reached down to take his son and daughter by the hand. “Shall we go get Papa for dinner?” he asked them.

Up in the master bedroom, Bucky had taken his dad’s uniform from the closet again. He usually never messed with it at all. But since getting his medals and pictures back, Bucky had been looking at it a lot more. This time though, he stripped down out of his own clothes and carefully worked the uniform on himself, taking every precaution not to hurt it. He had never done this before.

He got every button in place and made sure all the medals and pins were resting the way they should be. He looked at himself in the mirror, with his father’s dress uniform fitting him almost perfectly. The pants were just slightly short and his shoulders weren’t as broad as they needed to be to fill out the top.

Bucky felt like he was back as a little seven-year-old putting on his dad’s sweater and pants to see if they would fit. He did that a lot when he was off on a tour and Bucky was missing him too much.

The only thing was his hair. It was long and messy and cascading down the shoulders and back of the uniform. It made him look too foreign in the outfit. So, he tugged his hair up tight in a ponytail and shoved it all up on the top of his head before putting on his father’s cap. And Bucky didn’t stop the silent tears that then fell down his face as he stared at his father in the mirror looking back at him with his mother’s eyes.

Steve hoisted Sarah May up but then had to bend down to scoop up his son as well. He gave them each a kiss before heading up the stairs. He was admittedly a bit surprised when he saw Bucky standing in their bedroom dressed in his father’s uniform.

The kids were more confused. Sarah May clutched onto Steve’s shirt and whined softly at the sight of what she thought was a stranger. Christopher batted Steve’s chest lightly and asked, “Papa?” in quiet confusion.

Bucky was pulled out of his little trance when he heard Christopher’s confused voice. He looked over at them with eyes filled with tears and hands shaking. “Oh, hey...” he noticed Sarah May was cowering into Steve so he lifted the hat from his head and let his hair back down. “It’s just me, Babies. It’s just Papa.”

Steve would’ve hugged Bucky if his arms weren’t full of kids. He did walk over and kiss the tears off of his cheeks. “Hey, Baby, it’s alright,” he said softly. Sarah May looked up at Bucky with big, brown eyes as she put together what happened. She reached her hands out to try and make Bucky hold her. “That fits you well,” Steve said.

Bucky shook his head and started to unbutton the top again. “No. It... I shouldn’t have put it on. This is really stupid. I’m not even sure I’m allowed to put on a military uniform since I’m a civilian. I
might have just broken etiquette here. I just... I have that new picture from when he was close to my age and I thought I looked so much like him...”

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“There’s no harm in putting it on in your own bedroom, Love,” Steve said sweetly. “Let me have a good look at that picture,” he said.

Sarah May’s bottom lip trembled when Bucky didn’t immediately hold her. “Papa,” she said softly, trying to get his attention. “Papa!”

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Bucky took the photo album and brought it to Steve. He held it up for him to see and kept it out of reach of the kids. “Ya-Ya, Sweet Pea, I have to get out of Papaw’s uniform but then I’ll hold you.” He didn’t want her to accidentally harm the uniform or the medals in any way. And the pins would be dangerous if she managed to pull something out, she could get herself pricked with one.

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Christopher pointed at the picture of Bucky’s Dad. “Papa, ‘dat’ you?” he asked. Steve let out a laugh. “Bean, that’s not Papa. That’s your Papaw- your pop’s daddy,” he explained. “Don’t they look so alike?” Christopher looked between the picture and Bucky, still not convinced that it was two different people.

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Bucky shook his head and started to cry again. He took the photo album back and put it away quickly. He shouldn’t have put on his dad’s uniform. He was too upset now. He just wanted to feel close to him again but this was a bad idea. “I’m sorry, Steve. I’m sorry, Dad,” he said and took the uniform off gently and put it back into the garment bag and zipped it up. He stood there in his underwear and a tight white shirt just staring at his family and feeling so small and unstable.

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Steve hastily but gently set their children down on the bed and he led Bucky to the mattress to sit down. He sat down beside his husband and held him tightly. “Sweetheart, you don’t have to be sorry. It’s alright.” Christopher and Sarah May started crawling over so they could wiggle their way between Steve and Bucky.

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Bucky opened his arms for his kids and finally held them close to him as they stood on his legs. “It wasn’t a good idea,” he murmured and stroked Christopher’s hair and gave Sarah May a kiss. “It’s not mine, it’s his. And he wasn’t just my dad, and I didn’t even ask the girls if that was okay. I just thought I could look more like him and I did. But now I feel worse than before.”

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They didn’t know why their papa was crying, but they wanted to try to comfort him when they could see he was feeling down. Steve was incredibly proud of their kids. He reached out to rub Bucky’s back. “Why do you feel worse?” he asked. “He’d be proud of the person you’ve become.”

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“I just feel worse because I miss him,” Bucky answered softly and leaned into Steve. “And seeing how similar we looked when he was around my age, just made that feeling worse. When he was twenty-nine, I was ten. When I’ll be twenty-nine, Adriana will be six or seven.” He stopped. He didn’t want to mention that he worried all the time that something would happen to him and Steve and his baby girl would have to start taking care of her siblings without her parents to help.

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Steve continued to pet Bucky’s hair and kiss his face while their children snuggled their papa. “I wish there was something I could do to ease that pain, Sweetheart. But I know that you’re always going to miss him,” he said. “Maybe we can set up something nice on the dresser? Something that’s special so you can talk to them without having to make a trip to the cemetery or getting out a picture album.”

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Bucky sniffled and glanced up at the dresser. Right now, there was a pair of socks, a baby toy, Bucky’s wallet, and a hairbrush sitting on top. “Yeah... yeah, maybe we could do that. Like a little shrine or something?” he asked. He was so tired. And all he wanted was to get to sleep and wrap his arms around Steve all night. He needed his husband close against him.

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Steve nodded. “Yeah, like a shrine. I’ve got my rosary beads to use when I can’t go to church to pray, so you can have your way of talking to your parents.” Christopher looked up at Bucky and started to sign that he was hungry. Their dinner was probably starting to get cold at this point.

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“Okay, Bean. Let’s go eat.” Bucky moved both kids on to the bed and got up to put on some pants and a sweater. “I’d really like that, Steve. Thank you,” Bucky said and pulled him in for a long kiss that was only interrupted because Christopher and Sarah May both pulled on their arms for attention again.

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“Anything for you, Baby,” he said. Steve was ready to give Bucky a lingering kiss, but their kids had other plans. He pulled back with a laugh and pet Sarah May’s hair. “What’s the matter, Ya-Ya? Are we not giving you enough love?” He kissed her cheek. “Let’s go have dinner, Sweet Pea.”

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Bucky took Christopher in his arms and went downstairs. The girls were waiting for them in the kitchen and Lilly had already started eating. “Lil, you couldn’t have waited?” Bucky asked as he settled Christopher in his chair and got him some juice. He wasn’t sure if Adriana would want to come down to eat but he could get her in a second.

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“Dude, it’s almost seven. I’m starving,” Lilly defended. It was pretty late, but Steve and Bucky always waited up for everyone to be home before they ate. “It’s Just grilled cheese anyway, it’s not like it’s special dinner,” she added.

Steve frowned. “I cut the crusts off for you. That’s special.”
Becca was mostly waiting for everyone else. She hadn’t started on her sandwich but she was eating some celery. “Bucky, were you just crying?” she said gently and gestured to his red face.

Lilly shook her head. “Steve, you always cut the crusts off. And Bucky is always crying.”

“I cut the crusts off because it tastes better that way,” Steve said. Once the rest of his family was settled down, Steve kissed Bucky’s temple. “I’ll see if Adriana will come down.” He trotted up the stairs and knocked on the eldest’s door. “Adriana, Sweetie... Are you awake?”

Adriana turned to look at Steve with watery eyes and a runny nose. She was feeling so itchy and sick and unhappy and she just had to cry because of the discomfort. “Daddy,” she whispered and reached an arm out for him. “I don’t like this.”

“Oh, Peanut...” Steve said softly. His heart ached for her. He hurried over to snuggle her and he laid down under the covers with her. “I know it’s tough right now, Baby Girl, but it’ll pass. It’s only going to be like this for a little while and then you’ll be all better soon.”

Adriana cuddled up next to Steve and gave a little nod in answer. She wasn’t sure it would go away fast enough. “I’m hungry,” she said and touched Steve’s face with her little hand. “Can I have noodles and cheese? No red sauce.”

Steve kissed her face a few times. “I made everybody grilled cheese,” he said. “If you’re too hungry to wait for noodles and cheese, you can have that. But if you can wait, I’ll make you noodles and cheese without any red sauce on it,” he said sweetly to her.

“I can wait,” she agreed and rubbed her eyes to get the tears away. She was already feeling better being with her dad and not being all alone in her room. “Can I come play? I want to make clay animals with Play-Doh.”

“Alright. I’ll make a special meal just for you so you can feel better soon,” Steve said. He cuddled her to his chest some more. “You can play a little bit, but you can’t play with Ya-Ya because you might get her sick. I bet Nana will love to make animals with you while I make you dinner.”

Adriana nodded and slowly crawled out of bed. She pulled her hair into a little ponytail and grabbed her biggest turtle to come with her downstairs. Bucky had already told her that he would have to wash all her plushies once she wasn’t sick anymore. She wasn’t happy about it at all. “Okay, I’ll play with Nana.”
“That’s a pretty ponytail you did there,” he complimented. Steve picked her up and carried her downstairs. “Mom? Would you mind keeping an eye on Adriana in the playroom? She wants something different for dinner and she’s going to play with some clay while she waits.”

Sarah got up and took Adriana from Steve and went to play with her. Bucky was helping the babies finish their sandwiches and eat some grapes. “Babe, is Adriana not eating?” he asked and glanced up at him. “She needs something.”

“She wants noodles and cheese,” Steve answered, giving Bucky an apologetic look. He knew that Bucky wanted to go to bed soon but Steve didn’t have the heart to not make Adriana what she wanted to eat when she was feeling so shitty

Bucky sighed but didn’t argue. He would rather be inconvenienced a little bit so his daughter could eat. And he figured she was allowed to be picky tonight since she was still so uncomfortable. “You’re about to have two little kids and Lilly very upset with you that you didn’t make noodles for them,” he said flatly as a heads-up. Lilly would take pasta over anything else anyway - except pizza.

“I’ll just tell the kids that it’s special pasta only for sick kids and Lilly will have to suck it up. There’ll be enough for leftovers tomorrow,” Steve answered as he returned to the kitchen after Adriana was set up to play. Steve’s patience was wearing thin today and he figured that things didn’t have to be fair all the time. He was allowed to not give everyone everything at least once in a while.

“You think I should try to get the babies to sleep early?” Bucky asked as he trailed after Steve. “I can get their baths done while you cook and then we can tuck them in together. They might go for it. Maybe if I use the good bubbles they will be more willing to have bath time.”

“That’s a great idea,” Steve said. “You’re the best, Buck. That’s why you’re the smart one,” he said with a loving smile. He blocked the food he was cooking so he could keep everything out of the babies’ sight. Steve didn’t want to risk anything. “How close are they to finishing their food?”

Bucky looked back to the table to check on the kids. Sarah May was a mess of crumbs and sticky grapes. And Christopher had taken his sister’s other sandwich half that she wasn’t eating. “I think they are winding down now,” he said and looked back up at Steve, leaning on the counter and touching his hip gently.

“That’s a relief,” Steve sighed. He turned his head to give Bucky a light kiss on the lips. “The night is almost over, Baby, we can relax soon,” he murmured. “And Adriana will be so happy to be able to
have something she wants to eat. She’s barely had anything since she got sick.”

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Bucky was quiet for a second, still thinking of his parents right now. “I’ll take the babies upstairs for a bath,” he muttered absently and pulled away from the counter to get the kids. “Make sure Adriana doesn’t have orange juice. It keeps giving her acid reflux when she goes to sleep.”

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“Alright,” Steve sighed. He let Bucky go upstairs and he brought Adriana her pasta and a glass of milk. “Here you go, Peanut,” He said softly to her. “Do you want Daddy to get you anything else?” If she was in the mood to eat, Steve would make her damned near anything.

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Adriana took the bowl and shoved handfuls of food in her mouth as fast as she could. She was getting to feeling better now. “Do we have broccoli?” she asked through a big bite of noodles. “Where’s Papa?”

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“I can steam some in the microwave for you, Adriana. Give me a few minutes, Alright? Your papa is taking care of your baby brother and sister right now. He’s very tired tonight, but he can still tuck you in before you go to sleep. He’s been worried about you,” he explained.

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“Can you snuggle tonight?” Adriana pleaded and squeezed her tiny hand on Steve’s and gave him big puppy eyes. “Just until I fall asleep, please?” It was hard on her being so isolated for the past few days and she was wanting some more family time.

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Steve held her hand gingerly. “Of course, I’ll snuggle you.” He kissed the top of her head. “Let me get your broccoli done. Then we can snuggle all you want. I promise.”

After Adriana finished her dinner, Steve took her to the bathroom to wash up and then spent almost a half hour reading to her and snuggling until she fell asleep at last.

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By the time all the kids were asleep, Bucky was too tired and grumpy to function. His head hurt and he was cold and sort of felt like he had a fever himself. He took a fast shower while he waited for Steve and was now spread out on the bed in his pajamas just waiting to fall asleep or for Steve to come in.

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Steve made his way into the bedroom tiredly and slipped into bed so he could wrap his arms around Bucky. “I’m sorry that took so long, Love. Adriana wanted me to stay until she was asleep,” he apologized. He knew Bucky wouldn’t be angry at him for taking care of their sick kid, but he still felt bad for his husband.
Bucky nodded wordlessly. He grazed his fingers up along Steve’s arm and sighed. The day had been too overwhelming and it still felt that way. “It’s okay,” he muttered. There wasn’t much emotion left in him. And he knew tomorrow would be another early morning for him. But all he could do was think about how much he looked like his dad when he put on his uniform.

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Steve pet his fingers through Bucky’s hair and he looked at him earnestly. He knew that Bucky was feeling pretty shitty, but he also wasn’t sure if he was in a mood for Steve to try and cheer him up. “I’m thinking tomorrow is going to be a better day,” Steve said. “What about you?”

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“I don’t know,” Bucky said flatly, eyes still closed. “Things have been tough lately. I don’t think it’s going away soon.” He was being too pessimistic and he knew that. But he didn’t have the energy to try to be positive. “At least Ya-Ya is mostly sleeping through the night now. Maybe we won’t have to get up for anyone for a while now.”

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Steve shook his head. “No. It’s going to go away soon because you’re resilient, I’m stubborn, and there isn’t a damn thing in this world that we can’t do when we work together.” He pressed a kiss firmly to his husband’s lips. “Here’s to hoping that our youngest doesn’t wake us up tonight. Or her brother.”

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“Or any of the other endless options of things that could keep us from sleep,” Bucky added and gently pushed Steve’s side to get him to turn over. “Roll, Babe. I want to be big spoon now. I need to hold you for a while, please.” He yawned and added, “We should have a day away soon. Something just for us.”

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Steve smiled warmly and rolled over when Bucky pushed him. He liked it when he was blunt with what he wanted. Steve hummed with approval and pulled Bucky’s arms around him. “What are you thinking? Do you want to do another hotel weekend? Or something different this time?” he asked.

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“I think that’s too much money out of our budget at the moment,” Bucky said as he nestled himself up against Steve’s back. “We can think of something else. Besides, Valentine’s Day is right around the corner. So, an opportunity might present itself.” He kissed lazily along Steve’s neck and gave a small bite when he was done. “Richard and Tim are going to Vermont for Valentine’s Day. Richard has a friend up there. They are going wine-tasting too.”

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“We can try calling up the radio station. They give tickets away in all sorts of contests,” Steve suggested. He squirmed a little and smiled at the bite. “Sounds like they have a good Valentine’s day planned. Maybe we can do another upstate trip? We can fuck around in a cabin and not get caught this time.”
Bucky shrugged and let out a tired grunt. “That sounds nice but could we really manage a three-day weekend up there leaving all the kids we have now to your mom?” he asked. He knew he was being kind of a contrarian right now. Every suggestion Steve gave, he knocked right away again. But nothing struck him yet as the perfect idea.

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Steve initially wanted to give Bucky a snippy comment for being unsupportive of his ideas, but he bit it back. He sighed and brushed his fingers over the back of Bucky’s hand. “Alright... then what’s something you think would work out, given the amount of kids we have?” he asked.

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“I don’t know,” Bucky sighed. And he knew that was unhelpful too because at least Steve was putting forth some options for them. “I guess I’ll have to think about it. I have some time anyway. Maybe I’ll figure out what Clint and Nat are doing. If they are doing anything. Who knows what’s up with those two.”

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Steve was glad that he was facing the other way and Bucky couldn’t see the little scowl that came on his face when Bucky didn’t offer any alternative. “Are they okay? It kind of feels like they’re at a stalemate in their relationship and it’s been like that for a little while.”

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“Yeah, that’s exactly what it is. It’s been about a year of them pretending this issue isn’t going to come between them,” Bucky said. “It’s been a year of Clint ignoring that Natasha isn’t going to change her mind about kids and just doing anything he can to keep her because he doesn’t want this to be over. And Natasha has been doing what she can to keep Clint happy in other ways because she feels bad and doesn’t want to lose him either. They both are putting in so much effort for a relationship that won’t be able to last much longer. They might be better just being friends.”

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Steve frowned. He knew that Bucky was right, but he loved Clint and Nat. He also loved that they were together and had the ability to make each other happy. It was just a damned shame that this one issue was too big to ignore. “I don’t want them to break up, though. They’re both great people,” he sighed.

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“Yeah, well, we can’t really control that,” Bucky said, a little noticeable tick of annoyance to his tone. “We just have to wait to see what they decide and then be supportive friends about whatever it is. And if just being friends with each other and finding romantic partners better suited to their goals is what they need, then we will have to be okay with that.”

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Steve huffed when Bucky used that tone of voice on him. “I know,” he sighed. “That doesn’t mean that I can’t be sad that they’re probably not going to work out.” He gave Bucky’s hand a little squeeze. “Let’s go to sleep, Buck. I don’t think either of us is in a patient mood tonight.”

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At Steve’s comment, Bucky wanted to snap at him and ask what that was supposed to mean, proving Steve’s statement precisely. But he bit his tongue before he could mess that up. “Yeah...” he mumbled and just pressed closer up behind Steve in a little attempt as an apology. “Night, Baby...”

Chapter End Notes

This is a work in progress and is updated at least once a week.
(UPDATE: There might be a delay on Chapter 23 and the epilogue - once again because of the hectic schedules that were mentioned above. But those chapters will be posted as soon as possible even if it's not in the immediate weeks that they should have been.) --- I will see you all soon! Hopefully, not too long after this.

REPEAT:

I have some news. Due to the intense business of our schedules and my increasing health issues, K and I have decided to cut the fic shorter than originally planned. We had hopes in doing another season and then an epilogue. However, it'll now end after a small wrap of a few chapters and then an epilogue. This story, like many a long-running TV shows will have a some-what spliced together ending season and a conclusion. I apologize for anyone who hoped to see this continue on but it's simply become a bear we can't take care of properly anymore. And neither of us would want this fic to suffer because of trying to continue it and making it less than our best. If anyone has any questions or comments, you can email me at rogers.barnes.stucky@gmail.com -- Thank you all for being with us on this journey and I hope you like the rest of the story and wrap-up.

Season Six will end on Chapter 23, followed by an epilogue.

It was a bit of a crazy plan, but it was the only one Bucky agreed to, so Steve wasn’t going to complain. Becca was sitting in the living room, watching Steve check over their bags like a chicken without a head. He had to make sure everything was there.

“Camping? In winter? I bet one of you is going to get sick,” she said matter-of-factly.

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Bucky was in the middle of trying to get the kids all squared away. Christopher wasn’t really understanding why his dads were leaving without them all. “Papa, where?” he asked several times, trying to get Bucky to hold him instead of making Adriana’s bed with the clean sheets he just got from the laundry.

“Bean, how about you go find Nana? She’s with Daddy. Go get Nana, Christopher,” Bucky said, nudging him gently to the door. He had gotten really good at going down the stairs now with someone there to watch. He had just turned two on Monday and he was starting to get the feeling he was a big kid now.

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Christopher gave Bucky an annoyed look for being brushed off. He stared Bucky down for a moment before making his way down the stairs. Maybe Nana would give him answers. He climbed
down the stairs under Bucky’s supervision and then sought her out. “Nana! Nana!” He ran over and tugged at her shirt. “Where Papa go?”

Steve smiled fondly at his little boy as his Mom scooped him into her arms. “Oh, Love. Papa is going out. Nana is taking care of you tonight.”

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Sarah May was laying on her tummy on the carpet. Diana was next to her and just watching carefully in case she was needed for anything. But Sarah May looked up when her nana said that her dads were leaving. She might not have understood entirely but she read the tone. “No,” she yipped as she pushed herself up to stand again and trot to Steve. “Dada! Up!”

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Steve looked over and gave an apologetic smile. “Hey, Baby Girl. Don’t worry, Ya-Ya,” he said sweetly. He picked her up and rocked her in his arms. “Your Papa and I will be back,” he promised. “We are going to go camping. One day, we can take you camping, too. But this is a special camping trip for your dads.”

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“Dada,” she whined, pushing her hand on his chest lightly to make sure he would still pay attention. Bucky came downstairs then with Adriana trailing after him happily. She was looking forward to a weekend with her nana and aunts and siblings. Not that she didn’t love her parents, but Bucky had explained it like she and her little brother and sister would be getting a special treat of just having fun with Nana and playing games and watching movies for two days. “Adriana’s bed is made up now with the clean sheets,” Bucky informed Steve when he popped in the doorway. “No more icky chicken pox sheets.”

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Steve walked her over to Bucky and gave both him and Adriana a high five. “Alright. It looks like you’re all set to have a weekend with Nana. You’ve got the new book she can read to you, right?”

Steve rubbed Sarah May’s back and cuddled her. “If only Ya-Ya understood she’s going to have a fun time playing with Nana too.”

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Adriana nodded. “Yes, my new book is upstairs on my bed. And Papa already helped me pick out PJs,” she said. She was kind of ready for them to leave so she could have the parents-free lawless sugar-and-television fest that she assumed this would be.

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“Perfect.” Steve was glad that Adriana was taking it well even though it made him a little sad that she was totally fine with not seeing them for a few days. Steve was going to miss them all sorely. Steve gave Sarah May over to his mom so, hopefully, she would be decently distracted. “Is there anything else we need before we go?”

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“I think we’re good,” Bucky said with a happy little grin up at Steve. He was more than pleased to
get to go out with Steve on a Valentine’s weekend getaway. “Did you fill Diana’s food bowl? Becca already agreed to take her out to pee when she needs it.”

“Oh! I forgot about Diana!” He ran over to his dog and kissed her face a few times, apologizing for forgetting to feed her. The dog soaked up the attention and snuggled Steve until he broke away to put extra food in her bowl with a treat on top. “Alright. Ready to go,” he said. Steve gave each of their kids a kiss on the cheek goodbye, promising to come back and play extra with them when they returned.

Bucky did the same and made sure to give both of his sisters long hugs even though neither of them were bothered by him leaving for a little under forty-eight hours. Bucky just still had a hard time not being anxious about leaving them, his kids included. “Okay, Baby, let’s go. I want to get a good spot at the campsite in some trees. That’ll be warmer.” They had a bunch of blankets and an insulated tent, but he still wanted to be sure.

“I don’t think there’ll be too many people looking to camp in February. But it gives me more of an excuse to cuddle to keep you warm.” Steve gave Bucky’s ass a playful swat before trotting off. Diana gave him the usual sad look she gave whenever Steve didn’t take her out with him. “You want me to do the driving?”

“Yeah, yeah. I can’t do it still,” Bucky said and took Steve’s bag from him. He had been trying to do some driving practice when he could. But it was kind of stressful to him and it wasn’t going that well. “At least it isn’t snowing right now. And I watched the weather earlier and it didn’t seem like we are getting snow until Tuesday.”

“That’s good.” Steve loaded their things into the car and paused to run his hand through Bucky’s hair. “It’ll be nice. Just the two of us for once. Who knows when we’ll have this sort of privacy again.”

Bucky hummed happily and squeezed Steve’s arm. A weekend alone in a tent with Steve was all he needed right now. “I don’t know. I think we’re busier than ever right now. We need to make the most of this in case we don’t get another for a long while.”

Steve got into the car and turned it on, eager to get the heat up to warm them both. He rubbed his hands together to shake off the cold. “I packed your acoustic so you can serenade me all weekend long,” he said.

“Oh, did you?” Bucky mused and put his hand on Steve’s thigh. “Because all that cold will mean tuning the guitar pretty much between each song, Babe.” He chuckled to himself and sighed. “I love
“It’s probably to do with therapy. None of the therapists I’ve been trying have been working out. And I know you’re not the biggest fan of him, but I figured it was better than nothing.” Steve placed his hand over Bucky’s. “I wonder if he’s going to do one of those cheesy Valentine’s Day proposals.”

Bucky sighed and looked out the window for a second and then back to Steve. “It wouldn’t be a cheesy proposal, that actually sounds like a really amazing date. If he is proposing, he chose well,” he said first and then entwined his fingers with Steve’s. “It’s not that I don’t like him. I think we got off on the wrong foot. But I also think he and I are just like... not compatible as friends or something. It’s literally nothing wrong with him or anything he does. I don’t know, maybe I’m jealous. Because it feels like he knows a lot more about some of your deep thoughts and feelings than I do. And I get it if you don’t want to necessarily make your husband into your therapist, but it just sort of hurts that I can’t be that but your close friend can. You know?”

Steve sunk back in his seat a bit. “I don’t like over-analyzing things. I don’t want to feel like you’re analyzing my feelings or how you might interpret things I do. I’d rather not talk to anyone at all, to be honest. But you want me to do therapy.”

Bucky really didn’t think it was healthy for Steve to never want to talk about this to anyone at all. But it was Valentine’s weekend and they were headed to camp out together, so he decided not to engage in this anymore. It would only lead to a bigger argument like it always did and they could do that some other time. “Okay, Yeah. I understand. Just because I do something my way, doesn’t mean I should try to get you to do it the same way. You know what you need.”

Steve sighed and looked out the side window. He knew Bucky was only saying that to avoid a fight. “Do you genuinely think Sam might be proposing tonight? I kind of said it as a joke, but they have been pretty close and they’ve been dating for longer than we did before we got engaged.”

“He might, yeah,” Bucky replied, hoping that Steve wasn’t wise to the fact that he was hoping to redirect them. But he knew Steve knew him too well. “From what I can tell, they fit together nicely. They are both really intelligent and accomplished. And I feel like Sam needs someone who he can relax and laugh with and have deep discussions with too. You know, unlike Clint who is just a goof and sassy and needs someone who is chill and sometimes a little wild like him.”

Steve gave a dramatic sigh when Bucky brought up Clint. “Which is why Natasha would’ve been so perfect for him if it weren’t for the whole kids thing. I don’t know what I would’ve done if you didn’t
want kids. I’m pretty sure I still would’ve married you. But I would’ve been sad about not being a dad.”

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Bucky knew that was probably really true. For one thing, when they were first together, they weren’t sure they would ever be allowed to have kids. It was more miracles from Steve’s god or perfect timing from the universe that gave them the kids they had now. And even if they never had babies of their own, his sisters were young enough when Steve came around that they probably felt enough like stepchildren to him or something. “I understand. I think it’s just different from couple to couple. And I know Clint. I’ve known him for a long time. He’s not good with compromising sometimes. And with something like this, it’s pretty big. It’s not like giving up half a sandwich to me because I forgot my lunch that day. It’s... being a dad or not.”

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“It is a big thing,” Steve agreed. That didn’t mean that he wasn’t still sad about the unavoidable end to their friends’ relationship. They got about halfway to the campground before it started to snow and Steve groaned. “I always hated the snow when I was an officer. I’m a careful driver, but I always would worry about getting into a chase during bad weather.”

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Bucky glared out the window at the snow and grumbled. He was hoping it would hold off for a bit. But the day was still pretty young. They might get lucky and have the sun show up again. “Do you think we should teach the kids to drive? And by ‘we’, I mean you because I don’t have a handle on it yet. It might be good for them, especially if anyone goes off to college somewhere else that they will need a car. I think Becca is staying in the city so, she doesn’t need her license yet. But we might get a jump on things with Lilly now.”

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“I think we should,” Steve said. “Becca should learn how to drive, even if she’s staying in the city. It’s an important skill to have. And, not to be morbid, but if some sort of attack happens, she should be able to know a way out of here other than public transport because that would be a madhouse.” He shrugged his shoulders. “I’d be happy to teach all of them.”

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Bucky looked over to Steve with a spike of anxiety through him. He had already had a hard enough time agreeing to try to learn to drive himself. After his parents’ deaths, cars still never felt entirely safe. And he figured convincing his sisters to learn to drive would take some time too but now he was worried about not only car wrecks but some other disaster. “Okay... yeah. Sure...” he said, hoping he didn’t seem too nervous.

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Steve saw the expression on Bucky’s face and heard it in his voice. “I’m sorry,” he apologized. “On the force, we’re kind of trained to assume the worst and prepare for it objectively. Even if there is some sort of attack, the chances of us being directly affected by it are still pretty low.”

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“Mm-hmm,” Bucky hummed in answer. That didn’t really take into consideration all the other things that could happen. There could be a disaster and then on their way out of the city, they could get into
a car wreck or fall into a ditch. Or they could just have a car wreck any day just like his parents had. It wasn’t recklessness or a crisis. It was just another day coming home at night. The car suddenly felt very tiny and fragile and Bucky couldn’t help but worry, like he had so many times, that he and Steve would die the same way his parents had. They would go and leave behind his sisters again and all three of their children.

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Steve blindly found Bucky’s hand again to lace their fingers together. “I know you’re worried, Babe. But everything is going to be okay. I’ll make sure of it. Our family is going to be safe and well-prepared. I understand why you’re nervous and I’m not asking you to stop being nervous. But I do want you to know is that I’m going to make sure that everything will be okay.”

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Bucky closed his eyes and just paid attention to his breathing so he wouldn’t start to cry or panic. He didn’t want to do that on their Valentine’s weekend. “I know. I trust you...” he whispered and squeezed Steve’s hand. “I trust you. I know. It’ll all be okay. Nothing is going to happen to us or our babies.”

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Steve brought Bucky’s hand up so he could kiss the back of it. “We are going to grow old together and our kids will, too. Becca will get mostly old but then die a slightly too young at the age of seventy because she had a heart attack over someone bending the pages of a library book,” he joked.

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“Oh, god. That’s probably going to happen,” Bucky agreed with an exaggerated huff. “And Lilly will outlive us all because that kid has resistance to everything, it seems.” He shook his head and laughed softly. “Sorry I got worked up. I just got thinking about it all too much at once. I’m okay.”

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“She’s going to be a hundred-years-old,” he chuckled. Steve gave Bucky’s hand an affectionate squeeze. “I’m glad you’re okay. I was starting to get worried there. If you were still worked up, I’d have to give you a blow job and it’s so cold that I don't know if I’d turn into the Christmas Story kid who got his tongue stuck to the pole.”

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“Oh, my god,” Bucky giggled. “For once, my dick isn’t cold. Giving me a blowjob might actually warm you up. I think it’s just about the warmest part of my body right now.” He took his hand away from Steve’s for a moment to pull his hair from its ponytail. “When was the last time I got a blowjob? Like seven years now?” He was joking, of course. It was more like seven days.

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“Please. Your dick and my mouth have a date together at least once a week,” Steve said with a dismissive wave. “I blow you more than any of your coworkers get head, that’s for sure.” he pulled into the parking lot of the campgrounds and made a little pout as he realized he was going to have to go from the warm car into the cold air.

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Steve was probably spot on with that. Considering he knew for a fact that Richard wasn’t much of a fan of sucking cock even though he really liked when Tim did it for him. And Reggie didn’t like getting head because mouths freaked him out. And Natasha and Clint were always trading off their balance of who was doing what. And Bucky and Steve just happen to be lucky enough that they both loved giving and receiving. “If your mouth wants my dick after we set up the tent, it can have it.”

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“Please. We’re going to be camping all weekend and we won’t have our radio and television. We’re going to need all the distractions we can get, including your dick in my mouth,” Steve said smartly. He shivered as he opened the door and hurried to get the tent out of the back. “Holy smokes, it’s really cold! Let’s get this tent up as soon as possible.”

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Bucky helped pull their stuff from the car and tugged the tent out of the bag. It didn’t take much time for him to get the tent up. He was well practiced in that by now. And he even let Steve help regardless of the fact that he would have to fix Steve’s stakes when he wasn’t looking because he never grounded them right.

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Steve stood proudly at the entrance of the tent with his hands on his hips as he stared at their work. “I’m pretty sure this is the best I’ve done,” he said. “I didn’t leave any stakes too high in the ground this time.” Steve was utterly oblivious to Bucky fixing his errors. “Let’s get everything inside.”

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“Of course, Baby. You did great,” Bucky said, giving him a quick kiss on his cheek because they were the only ones at the campground as far as they could see. “Get in. I’ll pass stuff inside.” He waited for Steve to shuffled into the tent and then he grabbed their big sleeping bag and handed it to him first.

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Steve shuddered at the sudden change in temperature now that he didn’t have to deal with snow and wind. He was quick to organize everything as Bucky passed it in. “This weekend is going to be great, Buck. When was the last time we got some peace and quiet?”

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“I don’t know. But it was definitely sometime early in 1986. Because I don’t think we’ve really had time to ourselves since my birthday. With the concert and everything,” he said, finally scooting into the tent with the bag of snacks they brought.

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“How bad is it that we don’t say ‘last week’ or ‘yesterday’ but we say it’s a year in which we last had quiet time,” Steve laughed. He tugged Bucky over by his hand and reeled him in for a proper kiss. “So, what snacks did you bring for us, Gorgeous? Did you pack the crackers that I like?” he asked.
Bucky unzipped the bag and rummaged around for Steve’s crackers. It had taken him so long to figure out which box to buy and which not to buy. The brand just didn’t make enough changes to the boxes per flavor. “Here, Baby. Like I would forget these.”

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Steve happily took them and opened them up. “You’re the best,” he said. He nibbled on one of them and gave Bucky absolute doe eyes. “I thought I’d be sad about being away from the babies. And I am, but I’m actually pretty fucking excited to have it be just the two of us.”

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“We can have a weekend away from our kids and still absolutely miss them and love them,” Bucky agreed. He pushed Steve’s arm up so he could wiggle underneath and rest his head on his Steve’s chest. He wrapped his arms around him and sighed contentedly. “Even just getting some peace and quiet to cuddle you for a while without worrying someone will come interrupt is nice.”

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Steve grinned as Bucky snuggled underneath his arm and he leaned down to give him a kiss. “Yeah,” he said. “Are you warm enough in here, Baby? Or do you want me to turn on the space heater?” he asked. He rubbed a hand up and down Bucky’s back.

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“I’m good for now. I think we should wait until it’s dark to turn it on for a bit. Besides, we have blankets we haven’t gotten out yet and your body is definitely warm. And if I fuck you tonight before we sleep, that’ll get us all sweaty too,” Bucky said, grinning up at him at the mention of sex.

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Steve blushed but looked very interested in the promised activities later. He hummed with approval and nodded his head. “Sounds like a plan, Buck. You’re the one with the camping experience.” He winked. “We got to turn the lights off, though, or else we will cast a shadow.”

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“You don’t want our shadows showing how good I can ruin you tonight?” Bucky asked, giggling a little. “Wanna get you on your knees, ass up for me. And I’ll fuck you so nice and deep and kiss all along your shoulders. How’s that sound, Love? Want your ass full of my come tonight? I can eat you out after, if you want. I got to make the most of our alone time.”

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“Quit that. I don’t want to risk anyone seeing if they happen to pass by,” Steve chuckled, swatting Bucky’s arm. “I want everything else you’re talking about. I’d be a fool if I wasn’t on board for having you balls deep in my ass.” He put aside his crackers. “So, what are we going to do until then, Buck? You got any plans to get me in the mood?”

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Bucky hummed and kissed Steve’s neck. “It’s not quite like we can do the same things we have at hotels. We don’t have a hot tub or room service. What I wouldn’t give for a warm bath right now...” he loved camping but winter camping had fewer options for them.
“Don’t you go talking about hot tubs when we are five minutes into our weekend of camping in freezing weather,” he scolded. Steve nudged Bucky to lay back and he moved over him so he could kiss along his jaw. “I can keep you warmer than any hot tub.”

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Bucky chuckled and pulled his arms up over his head, just watching Steve. “Gonna keep me warm, huh? Is this that aforementioned blow job you wanted to give me?” He knew he sounded a little self-important and annoying but he just loved Steve’s mouth on his cock.

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“That’s the plan, Champ,” he said. Steve’s hand moved down Bucky’s chest and he gave a possessive growl as he nipped Bucky’s lower lip. “I’m doing this thing called ‘foreplay’. It’s meant to get you in the mood or something like that,” he joked.

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“Oh, oh. I’m sorry, that’s what you’re doing. Go ahead with your foreplay.” Bucky teased back and played with the ends of his hair. “Kind of forgot what ‘foreplay’ even was. Every time we’ve had sex the past few months has just been a ‘get-in, get-out before anyone knocks on the door’ sort of situation.”

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“I know. The best foreplay I got all month was ‘wanna get one in quick before the kids wake up?’,” he chuckled. Steve slid his hand lower and lower until it got to Bucky’s belt. He undid it and started to work on his zipper. “It can be just like when we first started dating. We have all the time in the world.”

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Bucky moaned quietly as Steve undid the front of his pants. His cock was already waking up for Steve and waiting patiently to get out in the open. “To be fair, though, that morning I did suck a hickey on your thigh before we got started. That counts, right?”

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Steve didn’t push Bucky’s pants off yet. Instead, he pushed his hand down past his waistband and started to Palm at his husband’s cock. “You did,” he agreed. “My point still stands.” Steve grinned down at Bucky with a loving smile before he brought their lips together for a deep kiss.

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The kiss helped but the light touches didn’t. Bucky wanted more and he whined against Steve’s lips. He couldn’t quite stop himself from pushing his hips up to press closer to Steve and grind slowly. “Baby, come on...” he whispered. “We have time for teasing later.”

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“We have time for teasing now,” Steve pointed out, giving a few more kisses as he massaged his palm against Bucky’s dick. “And we have time later. And tomorrow. And tomorrow evening...” He did end up giving Bucky some relief as he started to undress him slowly.
Bucky exhaled softly and moved his hips up a little so Steve could get his pants tugged down a little. “I know. But I just love having you on me. And I’m feeling a little impatient.” He reached down and brushed his thumb across Steve’s cheek. “You’re so handsome.”

Steve removed Bucky’s shoes so he could pull his pants off all the way. He also grabbed the blanket to throw over the both of them so he wouldn’t get cold. “I’m not as handsome as you are,” he said. Steve shimmed down lower and pulled Bucky’s boxers down so he could give little licks to the length of Bucky’s cock.

Bucky was going to protest that Steve was saying some nonsense. But then his tongue was on him and he forgot whatever it was he was going to say about it. “Wow, yes, thank you, Steve,” Bucky whispered, hand going to Steve’s hair to grip on. “More please?”

Steve obliged and he slowly took Bucky’s cock into his mouth, steadily sinking lower and lower until he was swallowing it down all the way. He moaned when Bucky’s dick rubbed against the back of his throat. He stayed there for a few moments before hollowing his cheeks and starting an unrushed rhythm.

Bucky gave an embarrassing moan that sounded too desperate to be dignified. But he knew Steve wouldn’t mind at all. He also felt a rush of heat go down his body and the cold winter didn’t feel so bad anymore. “Fuck... Baby...” he whispered. His eyes fluttered and his mouth just hung open. Steve always made him speechless.

Steve loved the sounds that were coming out of his husband’s mouth. He reached up to tease one of Bucky’s nipples, rolling it between his thumb and index finger as his head bobbed on Bucky’s dick. He loved the taste of Bucky’s dick. It was nice and thick on his tongue.

If Bucky could memorize an image and keep it forever, it would be this. His perfect, amazing, loving, sexy husband laying down by his legs, sucking dick like he wanted to do nothing else, and a hand up Bucky’s shirt to tease him where he knows it gets him the most. “You are so good to me,” he said, even though he knew he had said it countless times before and probably would a million times more in his life.

Steve was proud of how far he had come along with sex with Bucky. It felt pretty perfect that Bucky was the only one he had ever been so intimate with, so everything he learned was thanks to this man. And he learned all of his preferences and the little things that made his toes curl. He let out a possessive growl as he let the flat of his tongue drag along the underside of Bucky’s dick.
Bucky shook his head and reached down to grip Steve’s arm. He couldn’t explain just how much he loved it when Steve growled like that. And it didn’t come around that often so he had to savor it. “I’m much closer than I would like to be,” he warned gently. He would have preferred to keep going for a bit longer but it was hard when he kept looking down and seeing Steve like that and hearing him too.

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Steve dragged his nails down Steve’s front and he cupped Bucky’s balls. They had all weekend to enjoy each other even if Bucky was quick this time. Steve moaned and looked up at Bucky through his lashes, trying to look as seductive as possible as he worked his mouth hungrily over Bucky’s dick.

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Bucky hissed in a tight gasp through his teeth and tried to settle himself down before he came, but it was no use. His hands clenched in their blanket as he shot hot, quick streams of come down in Steve’s mouth without much warning. “Fuck, Steve, Steve, Babe...” he mumbled, eyes rolling closed and head thumping back.

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Steve swallowed Bucky down eagerly, almost choking at the first spurt, but quickly recovering and taking the rest. As he pulled back, panting, he wiped his lips and gave Bucky a satisfied smile. “You look so good like that.”

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“Get up here and kiss me,” Bucky demanded lightly. He reached out for Steve and pulled him in close and tight to him. “Very good start to Valentine’s, I think. You are my favorite man, Steve. You’re so beautiful and lovable and you’re mine.”

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Steve happily moved over Bucky and laid a few kisses on him. “I better be your favorite man. I just sucked your dick good. What other dude will suck your dick any day, any time?” he said with a silly grin. “Nobody but me.”

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“Nobody but you,” Bucky agreed with a chuckle. “You have no idea what a blessing is it to be your husband.” He scratched his fingers over Steve’s hair again and smiled. “Baby, your god really knew what he was doing to put us together, didn’t he?” Bucky had gotten a lot better about acknowledging Steve’s spirituality. Around the start of their first Hanukkah with Sarah May and the others, Bucky had a talk with Father Frank about helping him find a synagogue. And he stressed the importance, especially in a two-faith household, of Bucky being mindful of showing he was paying attention to the spiritualities of everyone.

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Steve snuggled up to Bucky and latched on to him like a bear. He absently kissed along his jaw, taking his time in loving every inch of his husband. “I know he made us for each other,” he said. “And he made us wait so long to meet so we would appreciate each other and how much we would lose if we didn’t take care of one another. Because we lived too long without knowing what each of us could have.”
“I’m so grateful for you,” Bucky answered warmly, looking down at Steve and sighing happily. “And I would marry you again right now. And one day, when we can marry each other by law, I’m dragging your cute butt up the aisle.” He wondered when that would be. He hoped it would be soon.

“I really hope we can marry each other legally one day. I want to have our kids see us walk down the aisle together and not have to worry about some ass raining on our parade,” he said. “I wonder how much longer it’ll take for us to be able to do that.”

Bucky touched Steve’s lips again and then gave him a little kiss. “It’ll be sooner than we think,” he assured him, even though he didn’t know. “And by then, we might have four more kids. And Sarah May might be in college. Or it could be next year. Who knows. We will get there. You, me, and our family.”

“I don’t want our kids to be that old when it happens,” he pouted. Steve nipped at Bucky’s fingertip playfully. “I want Mom to be there and she may not make it all the way until they’re in college.” Steve nuzzled Bucky’s neck lovingly. “Make it happen tomorrow, Buck.”

“Steve, Baby, your mom is a tough bird. She’s going to outlive the sun,” Bucky joked back, but he kind of wondered if it was true. “Maybe Becca will become a politician or something. And she can be in Congress and make everything better. She would be good at that job. And she can be terrifying so all the dumb old men would have to listen to her, right?”

“I hope she does. I want my mom to be around us forever.” Having her move in was probably the best thing for Steve. And for her. The two of them really had a great relationship, even though Steve still was pathetically a mama’s boy. “Has Becca picked a major yet? Is it too late for us to bully her into picking politics?”

“I don’t think bullying someone into politics is quite the right way to do it, Babe,” Bucky giggled. “But I’m sure she’s already thinking about a major. The problem is, she likes so many things. She could do English, history, science, politics, ethics, anything really.”

“She can do anything, but what she’s going to do is politics. Because I said so, and we all know that if Becca is going to do anything, it’s going to be what a man tells her to do,” Steve snickered. “They’ve both grown up so much. Well, Becca more than Lilly.”

“Yes, and not just any man, her brother-in-law. That’s exactly who Becca wants telling her what to
do with her life.” Becca would sooner push Steve off a cliff. “Lilly has grown up in some ways. I think she’s getting better at school. She’s learning that she needs to balance academics and sports a bit better. You know? That’s improvement. And she’s been sharing better.”

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“Lilly is still a doofus, though. Sometimes I wonder how she hasn’t burned the house down. Now that I think about it, I’m not sure if it’s such a great idea to teach her how to drive,” Steve joked.

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Bucky grunted and flicked Steve’s arm. “That’s not a good joke, Steven,” he said seriously but with an uptick to his voice so Steve knew he wasn’t angry but he thought his comedy could use some work. And Bucky hardly ever pulled out a ‘Steven’ and never when he was actually upset with him, more good-naturedly exasperated. “Besides, I think Lilly would be the best at driving out of the three of us. She can concentrate and not get nervous on the field so I would think she could apply that to driving too.”

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“She is pretty determined. Out of all of us, she’s the only one who’s still in competitive sports, so she’s used to having to make plenty of decisions on the fly.” He shrugged his shoulders. “She’s still pretty hell-bent on that camp, by the way.”

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“I don’t think we can pay for it, Baby. What do you think? She’s really good at other sports already, she doesn’t need that camp. She can just play some softball with her friends here.” Bucky really wasn’t sure they could manage that camp right now.

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“I don’t think we can, either. But she’s really trying to guilt me into changing my mind.” Steve typically was the bigger pushover with these kinds of things. “I’ve been trying to find jobs for her so she could have the opportunity to make the money to pay for it.”

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Bucky scoffed. “Yeah, sure. And how much of her money do you think would actually go to something like that? She would spend it at the arcade or on snacks we won’t buy. Or more baseball cards or something.”

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“Well, it’s worth a shot,” Steve said with a shrug. “She’s got to learn skills with her money at some point.” He gave Bucky’s hair a little tug. “Hopefully sooner than later.” But even if she blew all of her money away on junk, at least it was less for them to hear her begging them to buy.

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Steve did have a point. Bucky just figured it would take years for Lilly to get responsible about money. Hell, it took himself until he was suddenly a guardian to get real with his money. And now that felt like ages ago. This summer, it would be seven years since his parents died. “You have a point, Baby. I’m sorry. We should help her find a job.”
“I always have a point,” he teased, puffing out his chest. “I mean, we don’t have to find a job for her. But I don’t see the harm in looking whenever we have a couple minutes to spare. If Lilly won’t pick up the job, then maybe Becca would and we know that the money would get put to good use on that end.”

Bucky kissed Steve’s head again. “You’re the best brother-in-law-guardian they could ever ask for. And you are the cutest, sexiest, funniest, kindest husband I could ever ask for. And with that in mind, I want us to go back to us things now. It’s our weekend. A romantic weekend. We can complain about Lilly’s spending habits when we get home.”

Steve laughed and gave Bucky a big hug. “You’re right. I definitely don’t want to be talking about your sisters in between the bouts of sex we’re having.” He gave Bucky a flirty wink. “Do you want to play strip poker? You’ll probably win, but at least it’s something fun we can do.”

“Can you really play poker, strip or otherwise, with two people?” Bucky asked quizzically. He sat up and grabbed their deck of cards. “We can play strip Go Fish or something?” he asked, nudging Steve’s leg with his leg with a happy little smile.

“I have no clue. I don’t play gambling games,” Steve said with a wave of his hand. He kissed Bucky’s cheek and said, “We can play strip Go Fish. I don’t care what card game it is so long as at least one of us ends up naked,” he remarked.

Bucky chuckled and opened their food bag again to get sandwiches. “We will end up naked one way or another,” Bucky assured him. “You want the ham and cheese or the turkey and avocado? There’s mayonnaise and tomato on both and your mom made me pack mustard even though I don’t think either of us like mustard on sandwiches?”

“Can I have the avocado?” he asked. Steve shook his head with a smile. “My Dad used to like mustard on his sandwiches. Somehow I’ve managed to keep up for nearly thirty years that I like it too because she said once that it reminded her of when she made lunches for him.”

Steve was a very dedicated guy when it came to keeping up something that made his family happy. He did a few things like that with his mom and a couple times he kept his true feelings hidden so no one got upset. It was admirable even if Bucky would have preferred the transparent route about things. But he was still impressed. “She hardly talks about him. I think I’ve heard a handful of stories about your dad from her. But most of them had to do with you as a child too.”
Steve shrugged. “I don’t really know all that much about him. She gets so wistful whenever he’s brought up that I’ve always been hesitant to ask. She only seems okay talking about him when she’s the one bringing him up in conversation,” he said. “I used to sneak into her keepsake boxes to try and find stuff out about him.”

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“What did you learn from the boxes?” Bucky asked softly, touching Steve’s thigh reassuringly and then tearing into his sandwich. “I’d like to know more about both of your parents. You know a lot about mine, but Sarah is so closed off. It like she thinks it’s protecting everyone else if she doesn’t talk about herself and her own pain that much.”

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“I found a few love letters they wrote to each other when they first met,” Steve said. “He was stationed in her town and she was training as a nurse at the base since it was an easy way for her to get experience at the time.” He smiled. “His family was from Northern Ireland. Caused lots of trouble and my mom’s family didn’t like them or him that much because of it.” He ate some more of his sandwich. “Me and my mom are alike. We don’t like talking about things that upset us.”

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Already, that was so much more about Steve’s parents as a couple than Bucky felt he knew about them before. He wanted to keep talking about it but he knew Steve was right. Rogers’ didn’t like to discuss anything potentially painful - even if Barnes’ did. “We don’t have to talk about your parents if you don’t want to. We can just finish our sandwiches and play our card game? I don’t want you getting quiet and bummed with me on our Valentine’s.”

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“I mean... it doesn’t bother me that much. I don’t really have any memories of him because I was so young when he passed. The only thing that bothers me is that I never got to know him, but it’s not like I... miss him, I guess. I don’t have any memories to miss,” he explained. It was his mom that hurt more. “We can play in a little bit. I feel weird stripping right after talking about my dad.”

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Bucky chuckled, just letting them both move on from a heavy discussion to having more fun instead. “Okay, yeah, I understand that entirely. I was with this guy once - we were probably just eighteen or so. And we were drunk and I had some coke in my system already. And he had the guts to tell me, as I was taking off my underwear, that he thought my dad was sexy. Why would someone do that? And I was too messed up to think it through logically so I slapped him and then cried. Because that’s how you handle things as an intoxicated teenager.”

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Steve made a face because he couldn’t imagine talking about someone’s dad if he were about to have sex with them. “What an ass,” he said. “Well, rest assured, that I only find you attractive,” he promised.

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“Thank you, Baby. I appreciate it,” Bucky said with a little smirk and a nudge to his leg again. “Love you so much. And I guess it’s a good thing I ended up looking so much like my dad after getting through my early twenties. Early twenties Bucky just looked sick and sad for a long time.
Probably not the most handsome thing in the world."

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Steve finished up his sandwich before returning to cuddling Bucky with both arms. “I still would have loved every inch of you,” he swore. And he meant it. Steve had been through some rough times with Bucky and he was confident that he would’ve been able to stick with Bucky even during his worst moments.

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Bucky kissed Steve’s hair and finished his sandwich as well. He thought Steve was probably right. They had stuck together through a lot already in their almost three years of being a couple. Steve probably would have been able to handle Bucky at worse times too. But Bucky was so glad Steve didn’t have to. Dealing with his alcoholism was enough. Bucky didn’t want to think what sort of emotional toll it would have taken for Steve to see him through his cocaine addiction too. “Sandwich is done. Game time. Get ready to get naked, Stevie.”

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“I’m not going to get naked yet. We’re playing Go Fish. That’s a game of luck more than poker is, so I don’t have to worry about my face giving things away,” he said. Steve made himself comfortable and crossed his legs as he waited like a damned prince for Bucky to get the deck of cards open.

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Bucky hummed in response. “Well, you could be a good sport and lose on purpose so I get you naked faster. I think that sounds fun.” He shuffled the deck and divided out the piles. “I brought lots of chocolate, too. And a sparkling grape juice thing. So, we can have a little romantic toast later.”

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“Nah. You’re going to have to work for it, Babe. It’s rare that I win any card games and I’ll be damned if I don’t give you a run for your money on this one.” He reached out and gave a lock of Bucky’s hair a playful tug. “And look at you planning ahead and making us fancy. Nothing like a romantic toast in the middle of the woods.”

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Bucky chuckled and leaned forward to kiss Steve. “Nothing like a toast in the woods,” he agreed. “Okay, Love, focus up. Prepare to lose miserably at Go Fish. I know when to hold ‘em and fold ‘em. And I do realize that song is about poker, but I like to think Kenny Rogers plays Go Fish on occasion. So, I think it applies.”

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“Now that’s in my head,” Steve complained and hummed The Gambler. He sang it any time Bucky asked for a card that he didn’t have, and despite him talking the big talk, he still managed to be the one stripped down to almost nothing a few minutes later.

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Bucky watched as Steve removed his last undershirt layer so he was just in underwear and socks now. “Huh... didn’t you say this game was more chance than strategy? I wonder what kind of bad
luck you’ve had tonight to get this far with only taking two pairs and getting just my jacket.”

“Yeah, the luck is in your favor, you jerk,” Steve complained, pouting at his husband. He put his cards down and pounced on Bucky suddenly to pin him down. “I think it’s time that I start tipping the scale in my favor. I need to check and make sure you don’t have any cards hidden up your sleeves.”

Bucky yelped in surprise but made room to let Steve cover over him. “Steve, Babe, this is most certainly cheating. I have no cards hidden anywhere. You can check. I just think the Go Fish fairy knew I needed this one.” He giggled and kissed Steve when his face was close. He was so enamored by this big goofball of a husband. He was so cute. Sometimes Bucky forgot how downright adorable Steve was. But he was always reminded eventually.

“It’s not cheating. This is ensuring that we’re having a fair game.” Steve didn’t genuinely think Bucky was cheating, but that didn’t stop him from playfully shoving his hands up the sleeves of Bucky’s shirt so he could tickle under his arms. “Let’s see, do we have any cards under here.”

Bucky giggled wildly and his body tried to curl up in itself under Steve. He was so ticklish and Steve had been employing that tactic since the beginning of their relationship. “Fuck, Steve, no!” Bucky gasped between laughing and trying to grab Steve’s hands. Steve wasn’t ticklish like him and he really thought this was a dirty move on Steve’s part. “Baby, no tickling.” He giggled sharply again and scrunched his eyes shut.

Steve didn’t like exploiting Bucky’s tickle spots too much but once in a blue moon, he had to be at least a little bit of a prick. He leaned in to kiss Bucky deeply, smiling against his lips as he let Bucky move his hands away. “Yes, tickling,” he said. “It’s the only way I can keep you honest. Without the threat of tickling, you can be cheating at games all day.”

Bucky took a second to catch his breath after the gasping and giggling. “You... are an ass,” he panted as he pulled Steve down close again for another hot slow kiss. “I wasn’t cheating,” he added between more kisses and moving his hand around to cup Steve’s ass in his underwear.

“Let me be the judge of that. I used to be an officer of the law, you see.” He gave Bucky a pat down that was interrupted by another kiss. He moaned against his lips and calmed down his silliness as Bucky held his ass. “It seems your story checks out,” Steve confirmed. “You’re free to go.”

Bucky squeezed Steve’s ass and whined. “But I don’t want to go yet. You’re too sexy to let out of my grasp.” He kissed Steve’s neck and then bit down on him too. He really liked biting Steve lately. He always did it a little but, for the past few weeks, he was biting him a lot more. Not harshly
every time. Sometimes he could just come up behind him when he was making dinner and give a tiny nip on his neck as a greeting. It was probably a little ridiculous.

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Steve jumped a little at the bite and felt his face flush. He would’ve gotten annoyed at the more frequent biting if he didn’t enjoy it so much, but he was also a little embarrassed how much he liked Bucky doing it. He pressed his body flush against Bucky’s, a little needy at this point for attention. “Well, with what you’re doing to me, you’re more than welcome to stay.”

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There was a little rush of wind that rattled the fabric of the tent and sent a shiver over Bucky’s skin. He had a feeling that, once they were asleep, he was really going to regret this idea to go to the campground in February. “Baby, I love you so much,” Bucky whispered and gingerly touched Steve’s lower back for a moment before slipping his hands in Steve’s underwear and pulling them down. “But now I really, really need to be inside you,” he added, with a lower, more desperate tone. “I want to fuck you so well. Want you on your knees and want to be buried in your ass. Showing you how much I need you. Giving you whatever you want.”

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Steve bit his bottom lip in anticipation. It was so sexy when Bucky was open and needy. He loved it when Bucky told him exactly what he wanted, especially if it was sex. “I want that too,” he said. “I want it rough tonight, Bucky,” he said, dragging his nails down his chest. “And then I want you to take care of me after. Cuddle me and be extra sweet on me.”

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“I can give you all of that,” Bucky readily agreed. He massaged his hands over Steve’s asscheeks and looked up at him with a soft smile. “After we fuck, we can have our sparkling grape juice and then chocolate and we can fall asleep together. How’s that sound?” He reached one hand over to his bag and he rummaged around for lube before successfully finding the bottle he brought.

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Steve moaned with approval. “Yes. All of that,” he said eagerly. He rolled his hips forward, making sure that Bucky could feel how hard he was already and how much he wanted Bucky to follow through with each promise for the evening. He kissed Bucky deeply, ending it with a harsh bite to his bottom lip. “You want me to stay like this?”

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Bucky growled softly at the bite and nipped Steve’s neck again in return. “I want you like this for now. I’m going to watch your face while I finger you, okay?” He poured some lube out on one finger and poked at Steve’s hole. “Want you to try to talk to me. Tell me how much you love me. Tell me how cute I am or something. Something romantic and gross.”

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Steve nodded and made a needy sound when he felt Bucky’s finger press at his hole. “I love every goddamned thing about you, Babe. Sometimes I get so overwhelmed by all of the responsibilities of owning a home and being a dad, but, god, the fact that we can still run away for a weekend and fuck like rabbits because we can - it makes me so happy to know we’re not grumpy old men yet.”
Bucky giggled and pushed one lubed finger inside Steve slowly. “We will be grumpy old men eventually. And you’ll miss how young and hot I am right now.” He hummed as he started to fuck his finger in and out of Steve as smoothly as possible from this angle.

“You’ll still be young and hot. You haven’t aged a day since I met you.” Steve rutted slowly up against Bucky’s body. “You’re going to be this gorgeous forever. I can see it now,” he murmured.

“I feel younger with you. I mean, I’ve matured a lot over our relationship. But I also feel so much more youthful energy now that I’m focused on you and our family and not self-medicating or drinking,” Bucky kissed the side of Steve’s face and gave him another finger. “You’re the reason I don’t get older.”

“Mentally, you’re an old man now. Physically, you’re even more gorgeous than the day I met you. And god, were you amazing back then.” He kissed Bucky’s neck messily. “Back in the old apartment, daring to invite me out on a date before I knew for sure that it was a date.”

“I miss that apartment sometimes,” Bucky mused. “Not because it’s better than being in our house now. But it was a good home for us for a long time. My sisters and I grieved our parents and grandmother in that apartment. We did a lot of growing up. Becca threw things against the walls of that apartment. Lilly almost broke the ceiling fan trying to string Christmas lights from it. Christopher took his first steps there. You proposed to me there.”

Steve felt his heart ache a little. He missed it, too. He missed the small living room and the room he hid Christopher in until Bucky came home. He missed having to hide Raphael from their crappy neighbor who kept trying to get them evicted. They had a good start to their new life together there. Steve kissed Bucky gently. “Let’s lighten the mood when you’ve got your fingers in my ass, Love.”

“Right. Of course. Sorry, Baby,” Bucky chuckled. “Do me a favor and crawl off of me. I need to get behind you.” He nuzzled Steve’s neck for a moment and then removed his fingers from him so they could get in a better position for him to really open him up and fuck him.

Steve whined when he felt Bucky’s fingers leave him, making him feel even needier than before. He moved off of him and turned so he could lay his head in his arms with his ass in the air for Bucky. “How’s that?”

“Perfect, Baby,” Bucky groaned quietly. He shifted in the small space of the tent and pushed two fingers back into Steve, and then got more lube ready to get his cock slick as he opened his fingers
and stretched him more. “Tell me when you want me inside you.”

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“I wanted your cock inside of me ten minutes ago,” Steve complained. He spread his legs more and arched his back. “Can I have it? Please?” Steve was a little extra desperate tonight. It was rare they got to relax and enjoy one another like this.

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Bucky pulled his fingers out and lubed up his cock fairly heavily. He took a little breath and leaned over Steve. “I love you so much,” he whispered before carefully slipping inside of Steve’s tight ass. “Fuck... so nice. Steve, you’re amazing.”

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Steve let out a loud whine. “Fuck, oh... Babe, that feels so good.” He pushed back on Bucky’s cock, taking more into his ass. He was still pretty tight but, despite the slight burn of being stretched, his whole body was relaxed as Bucky’s cock pushed deeper inside of him.

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“How much do you love me, Steve?” Bucky whispered softly into Steve’s ear. “Because I love you so goddamn much. And you’re so beautiful in every sense of the word. In every way.” He gently pulled back, slowly dragging his dick out of Steve before sinking back in just as carefully.

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“I, oh, I love you more than anything, Buck. You are my everything. I can’t imagine going a day without you. Fuck - you’re my world,” Steve praised. “Bite my neck. I want you to claim me tonight. I wanna see bruises in the morning.”

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Bucky gave Steve exactly what he wanted so quickly. He moved in and out of him a little bit faster. And hovered over his shoulder and bit lightly a few times. It was just a tease. And he moved up to his neck and bit down much harder. “Fuck,” he gasped lightly and bit him again, licking the spot afterwards. “You’re so perfect. Smell good too.” He felt really possessive over Steve right then.

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Steve whined softly, enjoying the bites at his shoulder, but it wasn’t enough. However, when Bucky sunk his teeth down harder on his neck, Steve cried out his name and gripped on tighter to the blanket under him. “Oh, just like that...” he groaned. “What do I smell like, Buck? I feel like I smell like wet snow and cars.”

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“But you also smell like our home and your nighttime sweater and arousal,” Bucky added with a low undertone to his voice and then a growl before he bit him again. “Fuck. You’re mine. How did that happen?” He pushed in far as he could go and just gave a few short rolling sorts of thrusts. He wanted to be tight and close with him for a second. Then he pulled out almost all the way to start back to a firm, fast, slightly erratic fuck.
Steve closed his eyes, focusing on the feeling of his husband’s body over his, claiming him in every way imaginable and making him feel on top of the goddamn world. He whimpered as Bucky started to fuck him hard and fast, desperate for release. “So good. Oh, Buck. Make me come. Please, Baby. I need you.”

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Something about Valentine’s Day always made Bucky incredibly possessive. And sometimes a little rough. He gripped Steve’s cock in his hand firmly and pumped him fast. He also sped up his thrusts more and put some heavy strength behind each one. He wanted to wreck Steve in the best way. But he also knew to be mindful of his lungs so Bucky listened carefully to Steve’s breathing to make sure he wasn’t over-exerting him. “Come for me, Baby. Come in my hand. I want it.”

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Steve threw his head back and moaned Bucky’s name in an almost pathetically needy tone as Bucky fucked him and stroked his cock. He nearly blacked out from pleasure and he saw stars in front of his eyes as Bucky brought him to a sudden and hard orgasm that had his muscles gripping tight around Bucky’s cock. He made a mess of Bucky’s hand and the blanket below them.

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Bucky himself whimpered at how nice it felt to have Steve clench around him and to have Steve come so hard for him. He kept hammering into him for about a minute more, then he was shooting into Steve’s ass with an impressive force. “Steve! Oh, my god!” he gasped.

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Steve took what Bucky gave him, feeling overwhelmed in the best way possible as his husband rammed into his already-sensitive ass so he could reach his own orgasm. Steve wanted to be held, but a part of him also knew that Bucky liked to be dirty sometimes. So, before he let Bucky cuddle him, he reached back to give Bucky’s hair a little tug. “Lick my ass clean, Love.”

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Bucky moaned again and gave Steve a heated stare. “Yes, yeah, you got it.” he said, moving down Steve’s body again. “God, you’re so fucking cute.” He grunted before licking his tongue over Steve’s hole. He tasted like Bucky’s come and that was wonderful. He wasn’t sure how sensitive Steve was feeling so he didn’t tongue-fuck him like he would normally, he just went gentle and slow, really pampering him.

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Steve’s back arched again and his hole tensed just a little before relaxing as Bucky’s tongue gently laved over him, cleaning up his mess while soothing it from being fucked so thoroughly. “So, are you - doing whatever I ask you to do. It’s almost like I’m the boss of this relationship,” he teased. Steve would likewise do anything for Bucky.

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Bucky moved back up Steve’s body, kissing him every few inches as he went. “You can be the boss right now, if you want,” he said softly. “We can trade off. But I’ll do whatever you say.” And he would like doing it too. He did enjoy when Steve was taking control or vocalizing exactly what he wanted. It was always so good.
“Mmm, keep kissing me everywhere. I like it when you pamper me, Buck,” Steve said, looking back at Bucky with all the love in the world. “I feel so lucky I get the whole weekend with just you. Tomorrow I’m eating your ass for breakfast and then making love to you nice and slow.”

Bucky pressed more careful kisses to Steve’s shoulder and back. “I would love that. I really want your dick, Babe,” he said and kept kissing him for a few more seconds before pulling away. “Here, let me get the chocolate and juice.” He rummaged in the food bag and produced a big plastic zipper pouch filled with chocolates and a bottle of non-alcoholic sparkling grape juice. “I know it’s not necessarily very fancy. But we can have our little Valentine’s toast now.”

“You always want my dick,” Steve said proudly. He turned around and sat up so he could enjoy the treats that Bucky brought for him. “It’s still fancier than the instant meals I’ve been making all week because we were too busy packing and getting everything together,” he said. “Maybe we should put those in some bowl or something instead of the plastic bags, though.”

“I don’t think I brought a bowl...” Bucky mumbled to himself and looked through the stuff. He didn’t really think they would need a bowl in the tent. “I... also didn’t bring cups. So, this toast will be a sharing sort of thing.” He shook his head and rolled his eyes. “Wow, I know how to throw a Valentine’s Date, huh?”

“Hey, it’s okay. I’m having an amazing time and I’m going to enjoy all of this stuff just as much,” Steve said. “Come here and give me a sip of that juice and a kiss,” he encouraged, holding out his arms to welcome Bucky back to him.

Bucky moved back to Steve and leaned into him. He opened the bottle and held it out. “I love you, Steve Rogers-Barnes. And I am beyond grateful to get to be with you. I love our family and the moments we have with our children and my sisters and your wonderful mother. You make my life brighter and happier and healthier. You are the exact right man for me and I think we are the hottest couple ever.” He finished his little speech for the toast and gave Steve a warm, pleased little kiss.

Steve smiled proudly, leaning into the kiss. “We are always going to be the hottest couple ever. Who else is as cute as we are with an amazing family of kids who are going to grow into kickass people? Nobody. That’s who,” he said stubbornly. “Actually, I lied. My mom is a cute couple all by herself.”

“Your mom is pretty special. I’ve got to say,” Bucky said with a little chuckle and stole another warm kiss from Steve. He grabbed the bottle of sparkling juice and took a drink. It wasn’t half bad - little sweet - but he didn’t mind it. “To our third Valentine’s Day together. Me and you.”
“And to many more,” Steve said and wiped his mouth dry. “I’m going to have to come up with something good for your birthday. I always get into this situation every year because I try to break out the big guns for Valentine’s Day, but a month later, it’s your birthday anyway.”

“Well, Baby, we don’t have to make my birthday a ‘big guns’ sort of thing this year,” Bucky said and set the bottle aside for now. He turned around and leaned back against Steve so he was nestled against his chest. “We can have a quiet birthday, if that’s better.”

“Yes, we do. It’s your birthday. It’s got to be big guns,” Steve said, wrapping his arms around Bucky firmly. “We have to celebrate the day you were forced out of your mom’s womb in a slimy, crying mess until the doctors held you upside down and wiped you off,” he teased. “You deserve big guns birthdays every year.”

“Oh, Jesus fuck, Steve. That’s so gross. Why do you always do that?” Bucky groused and wiggled in his grasp to try to escape Steve. He always knew what to say to make Bucky’s skin crawl and melt in on itself. “Now I feel like we shouldn’t celebrate my birthday. Maybe ever again.”

Steve let out a laugh. It was kind of a fun habit for him - not so much for Bucky - to gross him out while also being somewhat sweet on him. “Oh, don’t be dramatic, Bucky. You’re just jealous that I was a c-section,” he joked with a wink. “But seriously, what sort of thing would make you really happy this year for your birthday?”

“What would make me really happy is if we don’t discuss the differences in our births,” Bucky grumbled. He closed his eyes and shuddered. He was totally fine with the miracle of birth and all that, until he had to think about it in the context of his own life. “I think what would make me happy for my birthday... is... a nice morning out together as a family. Maybe at a little breakfast place. And then a visit to my parents and Grant. Then we can have our friends over for dinner and cake and then you and I can have the rest of the evening alone and naked. Maybe take a bath and then make love and just have a peaceful sort of day. I think we need peaceful.”

Steve had a little pout on because he liked making a big deal of Bucky’s birthday, but it was Bucky’s day to choose what they did with it, so he couldn’t push it. “Well, if that’s what you want, that’s what you’re going to get,” he said. “Though, I think it’s going to be hard to have ‘peaceful’ with three small kids. We aren’t going to have any sense of that for, what? Fifteen years, about?”

“Fifteen years at least,” Bucky agreed. “Unless we have any more kids then we may never have peace.” He ran a gentle hand through Steve’s hair and gave him a little kiss. “But even with our little kids, we can have a fairly reasonable birthday. Especially if Clint or Tim come over for dinner then they will keep all the kids occupied. You know Clint loves being with them.”
“Yeah, I know it’s something I hope never happens, but if something bad were to happen to the both of us, at least we’ve got enough friends who love our kids and would make sure they never went without having a family,” Steve said. “It’s a true blessing.” He played with Bucky’s hair idly. “How is Clint doing?”

Bucky sighed softly and let his eyes shut as Steve played with his hair. “I don’t know. I think he’s just pretty upset and confused. He wants a lot of things he doesn’t know if he can get. And I think he’s letting himself get worked up about too many things. And you know how he is, he doesn’t like being worked up. He’s a relaxed sort of guy.”

“I think I can count on one hand how many times I’ve seen him riled up,” Steve admitted. “Maybe he should take Reggie’s approach for a little while and come to work baked.” He chuckled because he used to loathe how Reggie treated his job, and now he was trying to make light of it all. “What do you think I’d be like if I got high?”

Bucky glanced up at Steve and thought about what to say for a second. “Baby, Clint gets high still. He and I used to smoke together. He does it way less now. Like maybe once a month or something.” He wondered if Steve was messing around or he really didn’t realize that. “He’s still pretty calm when he’s high. But he says deep shit more often.”

“What? No way. But he always seems... the same.” Clint was so laid back on an average day that Steve couldn’t tell the difference. He assumed Clint didn’t smoke since he was dating a police officer. “What sort of stuff does he say when he’s high? Is it fake deep stuff or actually really deep stuff?”

Bucky wasn’t sure sometimes how to differentiate ‘fake deep shit’ from ‘real deep shit’. “I don’t know. Maybe a little of both. Like one time we were laying on the ground in his living room and he asked me if I thought whales could still hear above water.”

“They probably can, just not as well because their echolocation or whatever. I think.” Steve rubbed the side of his face. “It’s been so long since biology. I’m sure Becca would have the answer for that,” he said confidently. Of course, she would roll her eyes if they used her as an encyclopedia again.

Bucky blinked and looked up at Steve. That was way more knowledge about whales then he knew. “Wow, damn. Are you a little of a nerd today, Steve?” he asked and gave him a warm kiss. “Clint also once told me that he thinks we can’t see the dark side of the moon because the moon doesn’t want us to. Like the moon thinks that side is ugly so, we aren’t allowed to see it.”
“I think that’s fake deep, though. Clint definitely wouldn’t have thought that if he was sober,” Steve
decided with a wave of his hand.

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Bucky chuckled and pulled Steve to lay down with him. “I’ll give you that one. It’s kind of fake
deep,” he said. “Let’s get a little sleep. I’m pretty beat and you know I’ll want to fuck you again once
we are awake. Make the most of this weekend.” He kissed Steve again for a long moment and
Would you look at that! It's finally updated! Here is the last chapter of season six! K and I have been really busy and somewhat frantic lately so this took us a lot longer than we had hoped. But here is the last little slice of life chapter for this season. Hopefully, you still like it! I'm so sorry it has taken a hot minute here. :( (Also, I will finally finally finally get to comment replies now that this is up. I have been the worst person ever and been neglecting and forgetting to actually respond like a human being. So, I will get to those!)

We are also currently working on the epilogue right now. I'm guessing it won't be too horribly long and we might be able to get it wrapped up relatively quickly now that it is summertime. But I can't promise anything. I'm so sorry. But it will be up eventually and then this big old bear of a fic will be officially all finished and our little literary TV show will be concluded.

It has been so much fun working on this story for the past TWO and a half freaking years! Oh, my god. We started it January 2nd 2017 and then started posting May 30th 2017. I would really like to post the epilogue on May 30th 2019 if we have it finished by then. It'll be a nice solid two-year posting dates and I would really like that.

In case you were not aware of this show/series/fic/monster coming to an end, here is a repeat of the message we posted about it:

REPEAT:

I have some news. Due to the intense business of our schedules and my increasing health issues, K and I have decided to cut the fic shorter than originally planned. We had hopes in doing another season and then an epilogue. However, it'll now end after a small wrap of a few chapters and then an epilogue. This story, like many a long-running TV shows will have a some-what spliced together ending season and a conclusion. I apologize for anyone who hoped to see this continue on but it's simply become a bear we can't take care of properly anymore. And neither of us would want this fic to suffer because of trying to continue it and making it less than our best. If anyone has any questions or comments, you can email me at rogers.barnes.stucky@gmail.com -- Thank you all for being with us on this journey and I hope you like the rest of the story and wrap-up.

Their weekend away from home was too long and too short all at once. Steve wanted more time with his husband on their own, but he also missed their babies dearly. He spent a good portion of the next few days cuddling with them in a big blanket fort and watching TV, utterly ignoring any typical schooling he did with them.

Come the springtime, they were well in the swing of a usual routine. Lilly was back in lacrosse and now Adriana was joining a little cheerleading squad because she liked seeing the girls run around at the football games that played on the field across from Lilly’s games.
Steve was in the middle of early dinner prep when he heard Lilly come in, followed by another set of footsteps going up the stairs with her.

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Bucky was home from work already and he had the rare luxury of getting to sit at the table and read the paper for once. He had his reading glasses on and his hair pulled loosely back into a ponytail. He looked more like his dad right then than he realized. But when Lilly came home without even greeting them, and she clearly had someone with her, Bucky sat up and set the newspaper down. “Who was that?” he asked and looked to Steve as if he had an answer.

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Steve loved it when Bucky wore his glasses. It made him look like the wise, old dad he knew Bucky was even though he was still plenty young at heart. Steve smiled at him and shrugged. “I was hoping you caught a glance,” he admitted. He held out his hand towards him. “Rock-paper-scissors to see who goes in to check?”

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Steve was busy making dinner and Bucky had really been hoping for a calm hour while the kids all napped. “Gah, Fine,” Bucky groaned and held out his hand too. He gave Steve a little pinch and then said, “Rock-paper-scissors,” before flipping out two fingers for scissors quickly.

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Steve put out paper and swore under his breath. “Dammit. Alright, I’ll go check on them.” He leaned down to peck Bucky’s lips before heading upstairs to knock on Lilly’s door. “Hey, Lil, it’s me. Can you open up the door for a second?”

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There was a scuffle of noise for a minute and then Lilly opened the door just enough so her head was popping out. “What?” she asked plainly, eyeing Steve like she had no clue what he could possibly want right now.

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Now Steve definitely knew something was up. He put a hand on his hip and gave her a level look. “Well, I came up here because I heard four feet making their way up the stairs. And while I know you’re getting more into science nowadays, I know you didn’t grow yourself an extra pair of legs in a petri dish.”

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“What if I did? How rude of you to doubt my science skills and to make fun of my second set of feet from my experiment gone wrong,” Lilly countered. She was also wearing her hair down and it was teased a little so it wasn’t so flat. And she had what looked like a little bit of eyeshadow and lip gloss on - deviating greatly from the messy ponytail and bare face she usually wore.

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Steve nudged the door a little to see if she was going to budge at all. He was already privy to what was going on now that he noticed her dolled upstate. “You’re right, I’m silly to doubt you. I like what you did to your hair, by the way. I’m glad that you’re making an effort to be presentable for
family dinner.” He raised his voice a little as he asked her, “Did you make sure to take your dirty clothes of the washing machine today?”

“Stop it! God, Steve,” Lilly snapped and tried to shove him a little bit out of her door. “Shh, please.” She looked up at him with wide eyes but did let the door open to reveal a boy sitting on her bed. He had on a denim jacket that was so big it was probably an older brother’s or his dad’s. And he had his hair coifed perfectly to one side. He also had on a bold green shirt that seemed too bright to be indoors.

Steve gave a satisfied smirk when he successfully embarrassed her, but he sobered up when she opened the door for him. He was a little annoyed at her sneaking a boy in, but he also knew that giving them a reason to hide would only cause them to make mischief elsewhere. He would at least attempt to be welcoming. He walked in and offered his hand out to the boy. “Hey, I’m Steve. And you are?”

“Oh, uh,” the boy stood up and shook Steve’s hand. “I’m Scotty.” Once he was up, he was barely shorter than Steve, although he was pretty scrawny. He smiled at him and nodded. “I go to school with Lilly. You’re the brother?” he asked.

Steve was doing his best not to do the overprotective thing. Lilly could look out for herself, but he also had a hard time not stepping over the line, especially when he knew they needed his help sometimes. “No, you’re talking about my husband,” he said casually, testing to see what his reaction would be. Steve gave his hand a firm shake before letting go. “I’m Lilly’s brother-in-law.”

“Oh, oh! Right,” Scotty said with a nervous chuckle and looked to Lilly for a second. “Yeah. She told me. Sorry. So, you’re the husband.” He nodded again and shoved his hands into his jacket pockets awkwardly.

Lilly crossed her arms and glared up at Steve. “Okay, this was a great talk, Steve. Can you leave us alone now?”

Steve decided that it was good enough. He shrugged casually in response to Lilly’s glare. “Give all the attitude you want, but you don’t pay the bills, so, I have a right to know who’s under my roof.” He pointed to the both of them. “So, no canoodling, you two. I’ll have none of that nonsense in my house,” he joked, genuinely trying to be funny but falling short. He let himself out of the room before Lilly got more upset at him. Steve made his way downstairs and sat down at the table excitedly, ready to gossip.

Bucky had gone back to reading the paper and he looked up briefly over his glasses to see Steve’s over-eager face. He went back to reading, pretending he didn’t want to know what had him all riled up. “Who was it?” he asked casually and finally folded the paper neatly back on the table.
“Okay, don’t get mad and go up there,” he said, placing his hand on Bucky’s arm. “But she’s got a boy in her room,” he whispered. “She’s put make-up on and everything, Buck. It’s like she’s everything she’s complained about and made fun of at some point.”

“What?” Bucky gasped sharply. “No way!” His face contorted into disbelief and surprise and he just got stuck like that for a long moment. “No way, Steve.” He couldn’t say anything else hardly. This was Lilly, after all. And she was only fifteen. And she had never really been one to be interested in anyone romantically, boy or girl. This just seemed unreal.

Steve nodded eagerly. “Yes, way! His name is ‘Scotty’. I shook his hand and everything,” he said. “I mean… she didn’t say he was her boyfriend, exactly, but all the clues are there, Babe. They’re totally flirting with each other, at least. She likes this boy, I know it.”

Bucky shook his head again and stood up from the table. “No way,” he said once more. “I’m going up there.” He took off his reading glasses and his sweater so he was just wearing his Queen tour shirt that he had cut the sleeves off of years ago. It didn’t do much to make him look intimidating, but he hoped it looked less fatherly than his cardigan and glasses. “Come on, Steve.”

Steve caught Bucky’s hand and held it. “She’s just going to get mad if you go up there, Buck,” he said. “Give her a little space and then once Scotty goes home, we can grill the shit out of her on who this kid is. I already embarrassed her to get her to open the door.”

“Babe, don’t you think she will get just as mad, if not more so, if we ‘grill her’ on this crush of hers?” Bucky asked and squeezed Steve’s hand. “Besides, I don’t want them up there unsupervised and making out or something. I got to go do the big brother and guardian thing. Come on.”

“At least she won’t be embarrassed in front of the kid,” Steve said. He grimaced when Bucky still insisted on going upstairs. He didn’t entirely disagree with Bucky, but he was trying to be the ‘cool brother-in-law’ right now. Looks like that was going out the window. Steve followed Bucky upstairs, sulking a little to try to guilt Bucky out of it last-minute.

Bucky thoroughly ignored Steve and tromped his way upstairs to Lilly’s door. He didn’t even knock. He just tried to open it and grumbled when it was locked. “Lilly, open the door,” he said firmly but not sharply. “You can’t have a boy in your room without permission, Lilly,” he added, totally throwing Steve under the bus as the one who told him what was going on.

There was an annoyed sound on the other side. “Steve, you snitch!” She made her way over to the
door and unlocked it, but didn’t open it. She stood ready to receive her brother, arms crossed and looking at him with a glare that usually was reserved for when Becca was being overbearing. “You never said no boys in the house.”

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“Well, so far, there’s never been any attempt at having boys in the house,” Bucky defended. Lord knows Becca never brought any boys home like this. “Besides, Lilly, last time you brought someone into our home unexpectedly was with that kid on our fire escape at the old apartment. Remember?”

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“Well, if we had a fire escape, I would’ve used it so I would’ve gotten away with Scotty being here,” she huffed. “What’s the big deal? You’ve done a lot worse. It’s not like we’re doing anything we shouldn’t. And Scotty’s parents let us hang out in his room without being babies about it.”

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Bucky huffed and crossed his arms. “Becca used to try to pull that same argument against me all the time. And you used to be the one who told Becca to lay off about the mistakes I’ve made. Seems pretty unfair for you to bring that to the table as your argument right now.” Bucky pointed at Scotty. “Lilly, you and your friend can hang out in the living room or on the back patio. Just don’t mess with Steve’s plants.”

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“That was because I was madder at Becca then than I was at you,” Lilly grumbled. She eyed Bucky with a challenging glint in her eye before making her way over to Scotty, who was pretty quiet. She grabbed his hand and made him put his arm around her waist. “Let’s go to the patio so my square brother stops bugging us.”

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Bucky watched them head down the stairs and he was none too pleased to see a boy’s arm around his sister like that. But at least she was going someplace he would be able to keep an eye on them. “Fucking hell, Steve,” he complained and turned to his husband. “She’s so damn grumpy lately. And I don’t care if Scotty’s parents do let them hang out in his room alone. They aren’t doing that here!”

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Steve wrapped his arms around Bucky to comfort him and keep the both of them from getting too annoyed. “She’s a teenager. Becca was a lot worse and we survived.” He kissed along Bucky’s shoulder. “And remember. No matter how grumpy she gets, we have the power to embarrass her more than she could piss us off.”

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Bucky was powerless to stay too upset when Steve started kissing on him. He just melted into him and held his hands on Steve’s hips. “Yeah, But I think if you embarrass her any further, she will just get groucher and more annoyed and harder to handle. Remember how much it riled Becca up when you would try to counter her with anything at all? They both, like, feed off of opposition.”

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“I know they do,” Steve sighed. “But... still. I still maintain that we have more ways to make her
embarrassed than she does to make us mad,” he said. He played with the ends of Bucky’s hair. “You look so smart like this,” he complimented as a quick aside. “Do you think our little girls will be stubborn like Lilly is?”

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Bucky shrugged and pushed his glasses back up his nose. “I don’t really know. Maybe. I mean, I think it’s hard to live in this family and not grow somewhat stubborn,” he said. “I just can’t believe Lilly is into some guy. That’s just ridiculous to me right now. And did you see his hair? It was like one big poofy wave on his head.”

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Steve chuckled. “Better to have a poofy wave on his head than tattoos on his knuckles and piercings everywhere,” he teased. “He looks harmless, Buck. Lilly will probably scare him off before he tries to pull anything. He’s nice enough, though. Didn’t seem to care that we’re married.”

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Bucky shook his head and tugged on Steve’s shirt just to have something to do with his hands. “Steve, I know plenty of tattooed, pierced punks who are plenty nice. But I have also encountered a lot of snot-nosed teens who think they are all that. Who do you think is usually trying to steal from the record shop? Entitled teenage boys.” He huffed again and looked off at the wall forlornly. He just didn’t want his little sister to be growing up and dating now and stuff. But it was reassuring to know he wasn’t homophobic at least.

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Steve gave Bucky a sympathetic look. He knew that it was tough for Bucky to watch his baby sisters grow up. And in a way, it was tough for Steve, too. Lilly wasn’t even a teenager when he first met her and now she was off chasing boys. “Just trust me on this. Most first boyfriends don’t last anyway.”

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“Steve, my mom’s first boyfriend was my dad. And you know what he did? He got her pregnant before their marriage!” Bucky hissed quietly and then huffed to himself, getting worked up still. He didn’t have any ill feelings towards his parents or how their lives played out. It was exactly what was perfect for them. Marriage and kids were always the plan, and the sooner the better. But Bucky wasn’t hoping for that with his sisters.

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“Okay, and I’m not your first boyfriend. Everyone is different and Lilly isn’t going to get pregnant before she graduates high school. You think she wants a baby to ruin her lacrosse career?” he joked with a chuckle. “And if she does, it’ll be fine. We can’t control every moment of their lives, Bucky. You know that probably better than anyone.”

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Bucky pouted and pushed Steve’s chest gently with his hand as a small form of protest. “But, Steve,” he whined again and damn near almost stamped his foot on the ground like a toddler. He sighed and tucked his face in Steve’s neck for a moment before pulling back. “You are going to have to help restrain me around that boy. I want to toss him out of this house.”
Steve laughed and hugged him tight, kissing his neck affectionately. “Baby, it’s going to be fine,” he reassured. “It’s better that they’re here where we can monitor things than out somewhere that we can’t control,” he reminded.

“Yeah, that’s a lot better, I guess,” Bucky agreed quietly. He wasn’t sure how he was going to handle all of his kids and sisters starting to date and move on. It was too much for him. “Should... we have him stay for dinner?” he asked like he was trying to be polite, but really, he wanted to ask him a lot of questions.

Steve gave Bucky another squeeze. “Invite him for dinner. That way Lilly doesn’t have a leg to stand on if she wants to call us unaccommodating to them and you get to spend time questioning him like I’m sure you want to do,” he said sweetly, playing with the end of Bucky’s ponytail.

“I do want to question him,” Bucky admitted. “Please teach me some police interrogation techniques.” He pulled Steve towards the back door to their tiny yard and glanced out at Lilly and Scotty sitting on the ground and talking together. “Steve, you ask,” Bucky prompted and poked him softly in the side.

“I wasn’t the interrogation man, I was a street cop,” Steve reminded. “Natasha interrogated.” He kissed Bucky’s temple and rubbed his back before heading to the door. He knocked on it so they knew he was coming out and he opened it so he could poke his head outside. “Hey, Lilly. We were wondering if Scotty would like to stay for dinner.”

Lilly immediately looked at Scotty and said, “You don’t have to. They’re just being weird,” before looking back up at Steve and then Bucky through the glass.

Scotty shook his head. “No, yeah, I’ll stay,” he said and touching Lilly’s knee softly once. “Can I help with anything? Setting the table?”

“We’re not being weird, we’re being hospitable,” Steve said with a childish roll of his eyes at her. He gave Scotty a small wave. “Don’t worry about it, but thank you. You two have fun out here and someone will come get you when it’s time to eat,” he said pleasantly, putting on his best behavior with Scotty so Lilly wouldn’t get upset at them.

Even Bucky had to admit he was pleased that Scotty had asked if he could help. That was at least a good sign probably. Lilly certainly never asked to help with dinner. “Thanks, Baby,” Bucky said, pulling Steve into another hug. “God, I just love you so much. You don’t mind that I’m like a little bit crazy. Thank you for that.”
Steve happily walked into Bucky’s arms and gave him a proud smile. “Bucky, you’re not a little bit crazy. You’re a lot crazy. And I love you,” he said sweetly. He pecked his lips gently. “And the good news is that your sister is the pain in the ass so far and Scotty’s the angel.”

“I am not a lot crazy,” Bucky protested but he definitely knew Steve was right. “I will give him one point for asking to help with dinner. But he already got negative five for touching Lilly’s knee. So, right now he is at... negative sixteen. He got some negative points earlier too.”

“Oh yeah?” Steve asked in an amused voice. “Why did he get negative points earlier? Was it for the mere act of dating your sister?” he asked. “Or was it sneaking up the stairs with her?” He ran his hand down Bucky’s back and played with the hem of his shirt.

“Steve!” Bucky gasped and smacked his chest. “They are not dating!” He didn’t want it to be true at all and the longer Scotty stayed, the more it seemed to be the case. “And yes, he got negative points for all of that. And for even coming into my house. And having that hair.”

Steve cackled. “Oh, be nice, Babe. What score do you think my Ma would’ve given you the first day I took you home?” he challenged. “In fact, we could go ask her right now,” he teased, pinching Bucky’s ass lightly.

Bucky squirmed slightly at being pinched. “No, she loves me. She always has. I would have gotten fifty points just for showing up. And then another twenty for being polite. But maybe like minus a few after she found I suck your dick or something.”

“She loves you, but you were wild and smelly and a hippie,” Steve joked. “And you’re still a jerk. She would have taken more than a few points off because you were sucking the straight right out of me,” he joked. “But you’d have a million points from her by today.”

Bucky’s mouth fell open and he looked at Steve with sharp eyes. “I am not smelly and I am not a jerk,” he said, folding his arms and cocking his head to the side like he wasn’t going to yield until Steve made it up to him. “And you were never straight a day in your life.”

Steve giggled at Bucky’s defiance. “You are smelly. Especially after a concert where you dress in those cute shorts you have,” he purred. “And you’re right. I’ve never been straight but if I was, you would’ve sucked it out of me. I’m right about that,” he asserted.
Bucky wasn’t super happy with that answer. He knew Steve was messing with him but he could mess right back too. “Well, fine. Sounds like you’re going to be waiting a long time to see me in shorts or to get yourself sucked off by me again,” he said in a tone that could have been falsely offended or genuinely so.

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Steve frowned at Bucky’s comment. “Hey, hey, I’m just messing around, Love...” he said gently. “You don’t have to get upset. You know I love you and think you’re Gorgeous and smell nice.” He reached out to lace his fingers with Bucky’s.

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Bucky tugged Steve’s hand up and kissed his knuckles. “I know you do,” he conceded and gave him a little smile. “Besides, my shampoo makes me smell like strawberries and you love strawberries.” He sighed again and glanced out the window to Lilly and Scotty. “Alright, I guess we should start on dinner then.”

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“You know me too well,” he chuckled. Steve kissed his cheek and pulled him towards the kitchen. “I was getting food started when the two goofs thought that they could pull one over on us,” he said. “You want to help me get the table set?”

---

“Yeah, I’ll help you set the table,” Bucky said warmly and got the plates. He was still really uncertain about Scotty but he was going to try to get it out of his head for the moment. “So, Baby, did you see that Adriana’s reading her books all by herself now?” He knew he had. Steve was the one who was always around the kids anyway. “She’s growing up.”

---

Steve nodded his head quickly. “She’s getting so much better at reading. And I’ve been working on her speech, too. Her little mistakes were so adorable, but... I don't know, I wouldn’t want to encourage bad habits,” he said. “I’m trying to find more books she’s interested in that are easy but not too childish so she will feel more confident reading on her own.”

---

Bucky agreed entirely. He had always been correcting Adriana’s speech issues and incorrect words. But he and Becca were the only ones for a while so they ended up being the bad guys about it. “Yeah, she just needs to learn. And it’s not that it’s a problem but if she can learn it then that’s good.” He set down the last fork and came to stand close to Steve again. “How about we go to the bookstore sometime this week and we can find something. Becca can come too and help and I’ll buy her a new book.”

---

Steve had considered letting the speech issues slide so Adriana wouldn’t feel self-conscious about it, but he figured he could build up her confidence in other ways and this would avoid some forms of bullying in the future. “I like that idea,” he said. “We’re going to have to get something small for the other kids so they don’t feel left out,” he said.
“Okay, but it’ll have to seem equal but actually be a lot cheaper. We already went over-budget last month and I really don’t want to again,” Bucky said in both a stern but pleading voice. He never would have thought that he would one day be stressing over budgets so much with his husband. Or that it would cause some arguments like it had a few times already.

---

Steve gave Bucky an apologetic glance. Surprisingly, he had been the one responsible for that since he bought some extra toys for the kids. “Alright. We can see if the store has any good toys in it that are just a dollar or two,” he said. “Sarah May definitely won’t know the difference. I doubt Christopher would.”

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“Yeah, I think they won’t mind. Thank you, Love,” Bucky said gently, running his hand down Steve’s arm. “Although, Lilly might. And I assume she can’t be the only one without something too?” He folded his arms and shrugged. “Maybe we can find something relatively affordable for her somewhere. Maybe some makeup. Considering she’s apparently doing that now.” He grumbled the last part. He was not happy about Lilly and this boy.

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“We can get that for her,” he said. This happened all the time. Steve didn’t have the heart to leave any of the kids or older kids out when he went somewhere. “You think they have boyfriend-repellant somewhere, too?” he joked.

---

Bucky groaned again and sat down at the table. He had temporarily forgotten the plan at hand and was back on Lilly and Scotty again. “What should I do? Should I tell her she can’t see him? Or is that not fair because I’m not Dad? Or is that not the point because I am her guardian? But I also was dating at her age but in a worse way? God, Steve, I hate this.”

---

“Don’t Do that. You’re only going to succeed in pissing her off and pushing her away. How would you feel if they pushed me away from the get-go?” Steve asked. “They were wary of me, sure. But it wasn’t like your sisters were refusing to let you see me, even though you had a history of less than savory boyfriends.”

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“Sure, Babe, But I was also twenty-four and not a child still and dating my first boyfriend,” Bucky said and gestured vaguely with his hands. “I should at least talk to her and make sure she understands she can’t have her door locked when a boy is here.”

---

“Talk to her after he leaves, Bucky. I know you don’t like any of it, but be patient. You’ve got an ex-officer for a husband and he can sniff trouble from a mile away. Right now, Scotty isn’t causing any,” Steve reassured. “How about you go pick us a nice record and get the babies up for dinner.”

---

Bucky grunted but got up to get some music playing – something calm today: Dean Martin. And
then he got all the kids to the kitchen. Adriana hoisted herself up in her chair and Bucky got Christopher on his and Sarah May in her high chair. “Babe, watch them a second and I’ll go get your mom.”

---

“Of course,” Steve said. Christopher was entertaining himself by hitting his hands on the tray to the beat of the song. Steve had been working a lot with music with the kids because he knew how much Bucky loved it. Sarah May didn’t quite get it, but Christopher was catching on fast.

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Bucky came back with Sarah and she made sure to kiss every one of her kids and grandkids but stopped when she saw Scotty. “Oh, who’s our new guest?” she asked warmly.

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“Scotty...” Bucky informed with a long, drawn-out way of saying his name. “He’s Lilly’s special friend.” He was still not happy.

Scotty stood from the table and extended a hand to Sarah politely. “I’m Scotty, Ma’am. I was told I could stay for dinner.”

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“A special friend, huh?” Sarah gave Bucky a knowing smirk, understanding immediately what was going on. She looked back to the boy and shook his hand. “I’m Sarah Rogers, Steve’s mother. It’s nice to meet you,” she said pleasantly.

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Christopher started wiggling for his grandma’s attention. “Nana!” Christopher yelped and then so did Sarah May. Adriana shook her head and grabbed Sarah’s shirt so she would pay attention to her first.

“How about Steve prays before the kids fight over Nana?” Bucky said and gestured to him. “Steve, Babe?”

---

Sarah loved her grandchildren even when they were all fussing for her at once. She sat down between Christopher and Sarah May and pulled Adriana onto her lap so all of them could get some love.

“Of course,” Steve said. “Dear, Lord... please let our children give my mother some peace. Also, thank you for the food. Amen.”

---

Bucky shook his head and gave Steve a kiss on his cheek. “You’re the sassiest churchman I’ve ever met, Steve,” he said and turned to help get food on the kids’ plates.

Scotty, so far being more outgoing than expected, looked to Steve. “What church do you go to?” he asked and gestured to himself. “I’m Buddhist now. But all spirituality is important, isn’t it?”
Steve was pleased with how conversational Scotty was being. He smiled and reached over to hold Bucky’s hand. “Well, I go to a church a little while from here,” he said. “You say Buddhist ‘now’? So, I imagine your family must be different and you converted?” He gestured to Sarah May. “Our daughter is Jewish,” he said. “And Bucky is atheist. All spirituality and even no spirituality is important.”

---

“Oh, right on,” Scotty said and nodded to Sarah May like she understood what he meant anyway. “Yeah, actually my whole family is Buddhist now. My parents grew up in the Christian church but when I was about ten they started to branch out and now we feel like Buddhism is where our souls fit in better.” He smiled and nodded.

Bucky interjected before Steve could respond to Scotty. “For the record,” he said, mainly focused on Steve and not Scotty. “I wouldn’t say I’m atheist. Maybe I used to be. But I think I understand some higher power stuff better now. I might not be about to jump on the Jesus train, but you know.” Whatever change he might have had was all because of how much he could see that faith was important to Steve.

---

“Well, if you don’t jump on the ‘Jesus train’, jump on the Jewish train,” he said fondly. “Which is still Jesus, but different.” He winked and looked back to Scotty. “I’m glad your family has found a place that works for you. I think that so long as people are good to each other, it doesn’t matter how they worship.”

---

Bucky blinked a few times and tilted his head in confusion. He was pretty sure Jewish people didn’t think Jesus was a real god or whatever. And he was also pretty sure Steve shouldn’t be engaging with Scotty so much. It was Lilly’s secret boyfriend after all.

Scotty nodded and swallowed his bite of food before answering. “I entirely agree. Being kind and loving is better than anything else.”

---

“Absolutely,” Steve agreed, clearly taking a liking to this kid even though a part of him knew he should be a bit tougher on him since Bucky was so adamant about not liking Scotty simply because Lilly dared to take interest in him. “We need more love in this world. That’s what this whole family is built on. There’s a lot of moving parts here that make us far from the traditional family, but love is what makes us unbreakable.”

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Bucky grunted in response. He didn’t disagree, obviously. But he wasn’t entirely sold on Scotty like Steve seemed to be. Lilly, also, could tell exactly what Bucky was thinking and she wasn’t going to just let him go unbothered. “Yeah, free love. That’s our thing. Bucky would tell you that too. But he’s having an aneurysm over there. His love thing didn’t include his sisters growing up.”

---

Steve put an arm around Bucky and turned his head to kiss his cheek. “If it’s any consolation, Becca might be single forever,” he joked, giving Becca a wink to show he didn’t mean anything by it. “At least you’ll have one sister you won’t have to worry about. And our daughters definitely won’t date
before college. Right, Adriana?”

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Adriana looked up from her plate and shrugged. “Aunt Lilly says that dating boys is fun,” she said softly and shoved some food in her mouth.

Bucky blinked and looked up at Steve. He wanted to convey that he was not pleased about this at all. But instead, he said, “Well, I guess I’ll be worried about Adriana now, too.”

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“Dating boys is not fun,” Steve said to his daughter with a wag of his finger. “Dating your fiancé is fun, because by then, you don’t have to worry about the other person not working out or hiding stuff. By then you’d have shared everything with one another.” He patted Bucky’s back. “It’s Okay. She’ll realize after her first boyfriend how they’re not all they’re cracked up to be.”

---

Bucky took in a stuttering breath and shook his head. He was so close to losing his mind. Lilly was dating. Becca was getting ready for college. Sarah May was talking more. Christopher was climbing up on chairs by himself. And now Adriana was getting a dating talk from her Daddy. It was all way too much. He felt time slipping through his fingers and he hated it. “How about you all stop trying to give me a stroke and we discuss something other than dating boys,” Bucky said, only sort of joking.

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“We can talk about how perfect of a dog Diana is,” Steve said, understanding that he needed to redirect this conversation very quickly. She perked her head up when she heard her name and gave a wag of her tail. “She’s the furry daughter I never had. Don’t worry, Adriana, you’re my not-furry daughter. It’d be silly if you had fur like a dog. You’d look like Chewbacca.”

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“I don’t want to be Chewie. I want to be Leia,” Adriana protested. “Christopher can be Chewie.” Christopher just grinned in response even if he wasn’t sure what was going on so much. He was also covered in food. There really was no hope for him to be a clean eater. He was too much his Papa’s son.

“Becca, can you clean him up?” Bucky asked and gestured to his messy son by his sister. “Steve, that boy can’t find his mouth.”

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Steve looked at their son with a small grimace. “Christopher, who taught you those manners? Certainly not your nana.” He grabbed a napkin and went around the table to clean him up. It was a lost cause, but Steve was determined to make sure their little boy would be a polite eater.

Becca was just glad that she didn’t have to wipe up her messy nephew. “If my baby ever ate like that, I’d send him to another family,” she said.

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“If your baby eats like that, just sent them to me. It’ll fit in with me and Christopher,” Bucky said and smiled over at his messy baby boy.
After dinner was over, Bucky called a cab to take Scotty home. He didn’t much like the idea of Lilly walking him home, despite all her protests that she would be fine. But eventually, Bucky and Steve were finally winding down in bed together. “Steve, do you really think Scotty is okay enough for Lilly?”

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By the time Steve had them all the kids tucked in, he was more than ready to cuddle in bed with his husband. He played with Bucky’s long hair and gave him a little smile. “I think he’s harmless and any boy willing to date a firecracker like Lilly is worth giving a chance.”

---

Bucky sighed and draped an arm across Steve’s chest. “Yeah, I suppose you’re right. I just worry about her. I always will. She’s my baby sister.” He seemed to just get more worried every year that went by. He wanted to do right by his family. “I’m a little annoyed at you for being so nice to him. You could have been only a little nice.”

---

Steve laughed and kissed Bucky’s cheek. “Give me a break, Bucky. If she doesn’t marry someone eventually, she’d just end up living here forever and I don’t want to be washing her dirty socks when she’s fifty,” he teased. “Although, I’m sure you wouldn’t mind being able to look after her forever.” Steve poked Bucky’s chest lightly. “How about I be a little mean to him next time to make up for me being too nice today?”

---

Steve was probably right. Bucky would let his sisters live with them forever if they needed to. He was going to miss Becca so much once she finally got a real apartment and moved out. “Okay, I’d like that. Just a little mean to him,” Bucky agreed and tugged Steve’s pajama shirt lightly. “But I think you should make it up to me now too. A little bit.”

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“Allright. I’ll bully a teenager just to please my adult husband, who is totally a mature adult,” he snickered. Steve kissed Bucky’s neck innocently. He ran his hand up Bucky’s side and asked, “Are you sure? Because I think I have a pretty solid plan for next time.”

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“I am mature,” Bucky protested as he slipped his hand up Steve’s shirt. “And, yes, you still need to do a little extra to make me not annoyed anymore.” He kissed Steve’s jaw and then his cheek then his lips slowly. “Make love to me, Baby. My sweet husband. It’s the first night in a week that all the kids got to sleep on time. That’s not let it go by us.”

---

Steve loved hearing Bucky ask for him. And Bucky was right. It was a small miracle that all the kids were in bed at a reasonable time. “Well, when you put it that way...” Steve moved over Bucky and held the sides of his face so he could kiss him slowly and tenderly. “As if I could ever resist you asking.”

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“You just love me too much for that,” Bucky agreed and slipped his hands down the back of Steve’s pajama pants and pulled down so his ass popped out. “Do you want me like this? Under you?” Last time he bottomed, he rode Steve into next week with everything he had. It exhausted the both of them and they ended up sleeping in an hour and a half.

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“I’m not letting you make me feel like a tired, old man again,” Steve teased. “I’m making sure we stay awake to cuddle after this time. So, your ass is staying right here where I can keep an eye on it.” Steve was still mildly embarrassed that he was knocked right to sleep after the last time they had sex. He slid Bucky’s shirt off of him so he could kiss down his chest.

---

Bucky chuckled and lifted his arms for Steve. “Yes, but that was some of the hardest we have ever come,” Bucky reminded him and kept his legs together so Steve could more easily remove his pants. “You loved it when I was on you. Please tell me you did.”

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“Of course, I loved it,” he answered. Steve casually removed the rest of Bucky’s clothes while they conversed, undressing him with confidence but also care and love. He made sure to kiss wherever his lips could reach. “You’re always goddamned sexy when you ride me like that,” he purred. “You’re sexy all the time.” Steve reached into the nightstand to grab lube.

---

Bucky’s body moved with Steve and he felt like he could just melt under his touches. Sex with Steve had never once been boring. He loved every time he got to be touched by him. “I love you, Baby,” he whispered and lifted his legs so his ass was easier for Steve to get to. “Take me apart tonight. Slowly.”

---

Steve moved between Bucky’s legs and kissed down his belly. He moved his mouth along the shaft of Bucky’s dick, moaning his name softly because he couldn’t wait to have sex with his husband. “Do I have to do it slowly?” he whined, already coating his fingers. “What if I’m eager, Baby?”

---

Bucky moaned too and changed his mind. “Fine. You can be eager. You can be faster. But you better hold me close all night, Steve. Even if you get hot and sweaty.” Bucky needed Steve right on him tonight. “You can take me how you want to take me. Fuck me how you want.”

---

Steve teased Bucky’s ass with his finger before easing it inside steadily. “If I’m hot and sweaty, I’m either letting go or turning the fan on,” he insisted. “Your hair sticks to me.” To stop Bucky from protesting, he sunk down on his cock, taking him inch by inch into his mouth while he worked on opening Bucky up for him.

---

Bucky wanted to tell him that wasn’t fair because his hair had a mind of its own. But then Steve was sucking him down his throat and Bucky couldn’t say a thing except, “Fuck, Love...” he groaned
softly as his hand shot to hold the back of Steve’s head. He felt beyond incredible with a finger in his
ass and Steve on his dick. He still couldn’t believe he managed to get himself a husband - and the
best damn husband anyone could ever want.

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Over the time they spent together, Steve learned the ins and outs of making Bucky ache for more.
And, of course, Steve would always give it to him. His fingers moved just slowly enough for Bucky
to truly feel the stretch as Steve got him ready for his dick while his tongue never stopped working
along the length of Bucky’s cock as it rested in his throat.

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Bucky moaned and whined and wiggled on the bed. He couldn’t resist the slow, deep,
determined way Steve was fingering him or the drag of his tongue over his cock. He wanted to
scream from the rooftops of New York that he loved this man. And he got to fuck him often as
possible. “Steve, you’re incredible...” he whispered and pulled his legs up a little. “You’re a damn
angel. I swear.”

---

Steve pulled off of Bucky’s cock so he could bite at the inside of his thigh. “Speak for yourself,
gorgeous. How lucky am I that I married the whole package?” he hummed. “Good looks, good
personality, the perfect dad, and fucks like a champion,” he said with a little, giddy laugh. “You
ready?”

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Bucky nodded. “Yeah, let’s see if I’m still a champion,” he said and spread his legs wide for him.
“You want me like this? On my back?” He didn’t care at all how they did it. He wanted Steve’s dick
already. “I can ride you if you want?”

---

“You’ll always be a champion.” Steve pulled his fingers out and started to coat his dick with lube.
“We’ll start with you underneath and finish with you riding me.” With his lungs, he found this easier.
Some days were better than others, but he didn’t want to give Bucky any reason to worry.

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“Anything you want,” Bucky agreed, unaware that Steve tended to plan their position by how well
he was breathing that day. “Fuck me good, Baby. I want to feel it all week. Be the boss of me
tonight.” He gripped his cock in hand and just held it. He was waiting for Steve to get inside him
before he jerked himself off.

---

Steve gripped Bucky’s hip and eased his cock inside of him in a single, fluid motion. He ducked
down to sink his teeth into the side of Bucky’s neck with a little growl. “I’m always the boss of you.”
His fingers pressed into Bucky’s skin as he rocked his hips steadily in and out, making the mattress
creak under them.

---

Bucky sucked in a fast gasp and gripped Steve’s forearm for stability. Steve was right. He was
always the boss of him. He wasn’t arguing that at all. “Need a quieter bed...” he mumbled and felt
the hot, slick, intense thrusts in and out of his open hole. He parted his lips and stuck his tongue out
just a peek so Steve would get the idea to put something in his mouth to suck.

---

“If we - ah - had a quiet bed, how else would my ma know not to come upstairs?” He smiled
fondly when Bucky’s tongue poked out as he moved his hand to cup the side of Bucky’s face. He
gave him a hot and dirty kiss as he fucked him. Once he pulled back to breathe, he traced his thumb
over Bucky’s lips slowly.

---

“Ah, fuck, Jesus...” Bucky sputtered quickly but shut up again with the thumb on his lips. He opened
his mouth wider as an invitation for Steve to give him his fingers. He liked sucking on them when
they fucked. He liked the feeling of having two holes filled. Bucky finally started to stroke his hand
up and down his cock just a little. He wasn’t about to overdo it and come too fast.

---

Steve pushed his thumb past Bucky’s lips once he got the invitation. He licked up Bucky’s throat
possessively and started to roll his hips up with each thrust to get just a bit deeper into his husband.
Steve grunted softly from the effort as his movements pushed Bucky just a little further up the bed
each time.

---

Taking Steve’s thumb into his mouth, Bucky licked and sucked around it and tried to keep eye
contact with Steve as best as possible. He moaned low in his throat as he wrapped his legs around
Steve’s middle to feel him pushing deeper inside. There was a thin layer of sweat on Steve’s back
and it was a little hard to keep his legs secure on him but he did his best.

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Steve whimpered as he watched Bucky suck on his finger. He looked down at his husband with dark
eyes as he rocked into his body. Steve was able to keep a steady rhythm for a little while, but he
could feel his breathing start to get a little irregular. He pulled his hand from Bucky’s mouth and
grabbed his shoulders to swap their positions, still keeping his dick buried in Bucky’s ass. “Ride
me,” he demanded breathlessly.

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Bucky stumbled a little when he was hoisted around and his ass clenched down on Steve’s dick as
an attempt to steady himself. “Fuck, yeah, Baby, I’ll ride you,” he agreed. He positioned his legs on
either side of Steve and arched his back so his hands were on his thighs. He knew Steve loved seeing
him all stretched out over him like this. He grinned and picked himself off Steve’s dick and then
dropped back down, setting a strong pace. “I love you, Stevie.”

---

Steve looked up at Bucky as he moved, wondering what he had done right to deserve such a perfect
husband and family. He put one hand on Bucky’s hip to hold him secure while his other hand
pumped Bucky’s cock. “Love you too, Buck. God, you’re so beautiful. Nobody should be allowed
to look as good as you do.”
“You look beautiful too, Baby,” Bucky said softly. “We’re a good pair.” He tried his best to match the way he bounced on Steve and fucked up into his hand. He wanted to come so badly. And he knew they didn’t have a bunch of time really. Everyone was asleep but they couldn’t be up for much longer otherwise Bucky would never wake up in the morning. “Your cock feels so perfect in my ass. Jesus, you’re so big and you use it so well.”

“We’re the best pair.” Steve couldn’t be convinced that there was another couple that could beat the two of them at having the best kind of relationship. “I want to feel you come,” he groaned. “I know you’re close.” Bucky always started making restless, little expressions when he was close to coming.

“Uh-Huh, fuck, uh-huh...” Bucky muttered, unable to really get anything else out. “Fuck me, Steve. Fuck me...” his mouth fell open and he knew he probably looked and sounded absolutely ridiculous. But he couldn’t help it. He was always pretty needy on Steve’s cock. He wanted to try to hold out for a few more minutes but that didn’t happen. He barely got out a word of warning before he was shooting come into his husband’s hand and over his stomach quickly.

Steve’s hands gripped Bucky’s hips tightly, holding him firmly in place as he fucked Bucky through his orgasm, gasping as his hips rolled up into Bucky’s ass. It took a few thrusts after that to fill Bucky’s ass with his cum. His orgasm ripped through him, leaving him laying almost boneless and utterly breathless on the bed. His half-closed eyes looked up at his husband and he gave a tired smile. “That’s a good look for you.” He gave Bucky’s ass a playful swat.

Bucky whined as he lowered himself down to lay on Steve’s chest. He ran his fingers over Steve’s neck and face. “You are my light, Steve,” he whispered softly, kissing him tiredly but with so much love. “And nothing ever felt near as good in my life until you came along.” He chuckled to himself and sighed. “You’re like my own personal miracle.”

Steve’s hands roamed over Bucky’s back, tracing down his spine and then back up to round over his shoulders. “You speak too highly of me,” he chuckled. “You’re the one who gave me a family, even before we had our kids. I didn’t realize how lonely I was before you came along. Also didn’t realize how gay I was either,” he laughed.

“I don’t speak highly enough. Shh, Steve”, Bucky protested gently. “I love you so, hush.” He bit Steve’s neck once to punctuate his point. “You’re so cute and I’m very glad you are gay. So, thanks for that.” Carefully, he rolled off of Steve and flopped onto the bed, tired as fuck. “I’m going to clean up and then I think I’m ready to sleep. What about you?”

Steve still was panting heavily, unable to catch his breath, but having Bucky laying next to him helped him take it slow. “I think I’m already halfway asleep. You better clean up quickly so I’m
not out when you get back,” he teased, although he knew he would wait for Bucky if he took longer.

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Bucky nodded and slipped out of bed. He returned quickly to put on pajamas and cuddle right up next to Steve. “Everyone is asleep, the girls don’t have school tomorrow, what do you say we sleep in a little bit? I’m sure Adriana will come get us once she’s decided we have been away for long enough.”

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“I think that sounds perfect, Love. But I need a kiss to seal the deal,” Steve said as he wrapped an arm around Bucky’s shoulders. He knew as well as Bucky did that they weren’t going to get much more time to sleep in than normal.

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“Oh, wow, such a burden,” Bucky joked as he squished as close to Steve as possible. He slotted their lips together gently and hummed into the kiss before pulling back. “I love you, Baby.” He nudged his forehead on Steve’s and then went back in for another kiss. His husband was simply irresistible every damn night. He couldn’t think of a better place to be right now than in Steve’s loving arms.

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