Left Behind

by emma98

Summary

Darcy Lewis went missing in June of 2014, taken by Hydra, and no one even noticed that she was missing. She suffered five hundred and fifty days of pain, torture, experimentation and icy cold sleep before a metal armed Angel of Death became her unlikely rescuer.

Now the only thing that Darcy wants is revenge. James just wants to keep her safe while keeping a handle on the covetous, dangerous Soldier living in his head, and recovering the pieces of Bucky he can.

The problem is, their road trip of retribution has a time limit, a nine month time limit. And that's only if they can stay one step ahead of Steve and the rest of the Avengers.
Metal Armed Angel of Death

Chapter Notes

Please mind the tags!! This is the most serious thing that I've ever written. I tried to be all encompassing on the tags, but please note that there may be more added at a later date. I will try to put warnings at the beginning of most chapters as well.

A very special thank you to phoenix_173 and DntPanic42 for their amazing work as betas and cheerleaders. And also phoenix_173 for providing me with the smutty gif that was supposed to be a simple gif smut that I post to my tumblr. The gif smut needed backstory, and when I started writing it, I got 50k in before I could even get to the smut. so here we are...

Chapter One: Metal Armed Angel of Death

No one even noticed Darcy Lewis was gone until she was found again.

Looking back, Steve would blame himself; he always did. Tony would blame Fury. Fury would blame Asgard. Asgard would blame Hydra. There was blame everywhere, but blame wouldn’t get her five hundred and seventy-two days of her life back. It wouldn't turn back the clock and it wouldn't undo what had been done to her.

On the first day of the New Year in 2014, Jane Foster had hopped merrily into a portal with Thor, shortly after receiving Darcy's official resignation as her ever lasting intern. It had been a long time coming, she could only do so much for Jane, physics-wise, and it wasn't known how long Thor would be keeping Jane off of Midgard's surface.

The split between the two brunettes had been amicable enough, but both seemed to feel abandoned by the other. Still, Jane had Thor to comfort her, and Darcy had very nearly nothing, besides a non-disclosure agreement a mile long, and an opportunity to meet Pepper Potts with the hope that maybe, just maybe Stark Industries had a place for her so she wouldn't have to resort to joining SHIELD just in order to have a job and an opportunity to put a roof over her head.

Pepper had been unavailable, and it had been Tony that had greeted her with a squint and a grumble, ushering her up to the penthouse and shoving her towards Steve, who had been quietly conversing with Natasha at the bar.
"This is---uhm---Great rack," Tony said in his distracted, anxious way, waving his hand full of whiskey towards Darcy. "Here to interview to be your right hand gal."

"Tony," Steve sighed. "I'm sure she has a name."

"Darcy Lewis," Natasha answered, staring Darcy down in an assessing way. "Twenty-four years old, Baltimore native, no known living family, Culver University drop out---"

"Harsh," Darcy muttered, her shoulders hunching in and hands fiddling with her glasses. She had thought she was here at Avenger's Tower to interview for an entry level position down in some dark, cave-like office. This was the first she had heard of Captain America needing an assistant. If she ever got to see Thor again, she was going to have a meaningful conversation with him about appropriate interview preparations.

She felt very, very small as both Natasha and Steve gave her a once over. She knew that the business suit she had on was probably about a size too small (perhaps even two sizes too small), She knew that her shoes were scuffed and not stilettos and not red-soled. She looked ill prepared and unqualified for most jobs at Stark Industries, but especially inept for being the assistant to Steve Rogers.

"She's refused to join up with SHIELD twenty-three times in the last two years, despite having a level three clearance and already signing all eighty-three NDA's," Natasha continued to talk about her as if she wasn't even there. "It's not so easy to find a job in this market anyway, but add that baggage to it and the huge two year hole in your resume, I suppose job hunting isn't easy."

"Nice to meet you too. Next time want to take me to dinner first before getting to third base with my background check?" Darcy snapped at the Black Widow, essentially throwing the middle finger at her own, very limited, self preservation instincts.

Natasha smiled at that, and her eyes slid to Steve, surveying his reaction. He'd been getting better at hiding things on his face, but he couldn't hide the blush at the tips of his ears.

"She'd be good for you, Rogers, she'd keep you on top of that inbox you blatantly refuse to look at," Natasha shrugged before going back to making her martini.

"I didn't know that this was a job interview for---for this," Darcy blurted, looking up at Steve warily. "I thought it was human resources."
"He's human, he's a resource," Tony checked his phone again for a call from Pepper's doctors.  "Assist all over him, Little Miss Great Rack."

"Stark!" Steve clipped out angrily.

"This is so far beyond my capabilities," Darcy said quietly, taking a step backwards from Steve, who took one step closer to her in turn, his eyes doing a once over of her again, from the top of her head to the bottom of her scuffed pumps and back up again to settle on her eyes.

"You managed Doctor Jane Foster for three years, and Doctor Erik Selvig for one," Natasha reminded her.  "You were good enough for Coulson to attempt to recruit."

"That's not an option," Darcy waved that accolade off easily.  "SHIELD never interested me.  They're kind of full of snakes and liars, no offense."

"None taken," Steve was the one to answer.  "But Miss Lewis, if you were to take this job on, you would have to work with SHIELD, as that's where my contract is."

"Well, then, not going to happen I guess," Darcy took another two steps backwards, and this time Steve didn't follow.  She nodded and turned to Tony, "Yo, People Magazine's Fifty Most Penicillin Resistant Bachelors?"

"You rang?" Tony smirked again, looking away from his phone and surveying the girl who Thor had told them felled him in one shot.

"Need someone to push paper in your offices at all?" Darcy asked hopefully.

"Leave a card, I'll hand it over to Pepper when she's recovered," Tony nodded.

"Right---card," Darcy let out a little sigh.  "I'll leave it at the front desk."

"Miss Lewis," Steve called out as she made a quick getaway.  His smile was small, and felt foreign
on his face as she turned to look at him, a little peach blush spreading across the bridge of her nose to her cheeks. "If you change your mind, I could use a level three clearance assistant to help me deal with the SHIELD bureaucracy. And the snakes and liars.”

"Right, yeah, I'll think about it," Darcy nodded before making a quick getaway to an elevator.

She loved Thor, she really did, but he was a royal idiot for thinking that she was in any way qualified enough to be a secretary to Steve Rogers.

A month after that meeting at Avenger's Tower found her living off the very last of her savings as she traveled the country, winding up in Missouri of all places right when something very interesting happened.

If she didn't know any better, the black, glittery goop coming out of the ground behind the Dairy Queen might have counted as her third alien invasion. She didn't wait around to find out, after having touched some of it with her toe, she caught sight of a SHIELD agent and made a run for it.

She really hadn't wanted to sign another forty-one non-disclosure agreements.

She had made it to New Mexico when SHIELD fell in 2014. She was two or three towns away from Puente Antiguo, at a Holiday Inn Express, watching the news in horror as Steve Rogers was named an enemy of the state and the murderer of Nick Fury.

And she knew for sure that that was a damned lie.

She'd been halfway back to Thor's first landing site, ready to yell up to the sky for help if she needed to when her pitiful little clunker of a car was run off of the road.

When Darcy had woken up, it had been in chains.

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They never explained why they wanted her. It might have originally been her connection to Thor and Jane, who were still off planet and would remain off planet until 2015. But it was exceedingly clear that you couldn't ransom people who weren't in the same solar system as the kidnapped. And as far as the Avengers, even Hydra knew better than to think that they should bring attention to a missing young woman who had only met with half of the Avengers once.

SHIELD was in such a state of upheaval after Natasha Romanoff dumped the Hydra bucket all over the internet, that no one took notice of a missing former intern. Darcy had no family. No close friends that expected her to check in regularly.

In the end, her Asgardian connections were dwarfed by the fact that she was essentially a free and easy guinea pig.

She didn't remember much, thankfully. Five hundred and fifty days passed before something really stuck in her mind as memorable. There was pain, but that was to be expected. Of course there were the vials and vials of nefarious serums that they injected her with, seeing how one serum reacted with another.

She'd been in a floating state of consciousness when one of the scientists, in a heavy European accent that Darcy couldn't quite place, let out a celebratory cheer after one of the serums seemed to have stuck.

"If we only could bring her to the sceptre...."

"The sceptre is compromised, we no longer have access to it."

"Fine---then she will be ready to accept the samples in six months time."

Darcy's mind rarely seemed to work during her time with Hydra. But she remembered the conversation about the sceptre. Thor had said he would have to return to Earth eventually and get it back from SHIELD, after their experiments were finished with it. He hadn't wanted to leave the sceptre behind at all, but Erik Selvig had been the one to coax him into leaving it, claiming that the Midgardian scientists needed to know how it worked in order to know how to never allow it to affect human minds again.

Darcy had sluggishly realized that being close to the sceptre would have probably meant some kind of rescue from her current hellish existence. If she was with the sceptre, someone would have to
rescue her if they rescued the glowing stick of mind control.

She hazily wondered what samples she would have to receive, but was soon placed into the cold sleep they had so often put her in since one of the original serums seemed to have stuck as well. She had no idea how long she had been in Hydra's clutches, because the cold, painful sleep left her without any idea for the passage of time.

Her waking life revolved around pain, her once sharp mind dulled into complacency by drugs, and experimentation.

The rest was cold sleep that made her muscles pinch and tingle in the most uncomfortable of ways.

Five hundred and fifty days after she had been taken, she woke up and felt warm. Comfortable. She was as comfortable as she could be given that she was strapped to a gurney, her legs spread in stirrups as people in lab coats organized trays of little instruments that didn't look quite as bad as they usually did.

Darcy didn't know whether to be thankful for the drugs that kept her complacent or to hate them. She was stuck watching everything from afar, as they injected her arm with god knows what. In the beginning, before the drugs started to be pumped through her system, she'd been a smart mouthed piece of shit, screaming and yelling and practically begging to have her face rearranged.

One of the guards she had spit on so long ago when there was fight left in her, now stood on the opposite side of a two way mirror, in shackles, looking underfed and even more abused than she was at that point.

*Good* .

Was the only thing she could bring herself to think.

A soft, feminine voice sounded behind her, too far away for Darcy to even try and turn to glimpse her face. The voice was surprisingly sweet, sounding a little like a sorority girl that Darcy used to know back during the time when she was a normal college girl, and not Lab Rat #1342.

"Pay attention, Miss Lewis. After today we will be unable to keep you on the psychotropic relaxants that keep you compliant."
Well that would suck. Those mind fuckers were the only thing keeping Darcy relatively sane. She definitely didn't want to be here if she couldn't have them.

She wondered if it was an option to tell Sorority Sister Scientist that, but her mouth wasn't quite up to it. It was working up to it, Darcy managed to make a noise, and she was fairly certain she hadn't been able to make a noise in quite some time. Her eyes darted to the IV that had been placed and she blinked, realizing that they were flushing her system of the drugs. Very, very rapidly.

She watched as the guard on the opposite side of the two way mirror was led to a large black chair, with a nefarious looking circular bit of metal and electrodes held by a mechanical arm hovering over it. The guard was pushed into the chair and strapped in, and a mouthpiece was shoved into his mouth.

"If you are not compliant without the drugs, Miss Lewis," Sorority Torturer said with perky optimism, "you will be put in that chair and we will find a frequency that will make you compliant."

Darcy drew in a slow breath through her nose as the man who she would have gladly fried herself two years ago screamed and writhed in pain when the metal ring was brought down over his head. The torture lasted for a short ten seconds before the guard was bleeding from his ears and nose and slumped in his chair.

A living breathing vegetable puddle in a matter of ten seconds.

"We can keep you alive, but we don't necessarily need that brain of yours to be working...we think," Sorority Sally Sunshine chirped in her ear. "But let's not risk it, okay? Just---stay calm, and accept your fate."

"As---" Darcy's voice hadn't been used in at least a year, "--what?"

"Hydra's last great hope."

The drugs had been pushed out of her veins quickly, and a new alertness came over her. She was acutely aware of a surprisingly gentle gynecological exam being done, the excitement in the other
doctors and scientists palpable. She was spoon fed soup afterwards and found that with the warm food in her stomach, she quickly succumbed to sleep, real sleep, for the first time in a very long time.

When she woke up, it might have been half an hour later, or it might have been days later. She was off of the gurney and strapped to a bed this time, more comfortable than she could ever remember being. She was fed for a few days after that, and she could tell that she was getting stronger and healthier, but for what reason she still didn't know.

"We just have to run a few tests," Super Smiley Sicko Lady grinned down at her before she had maniacally taken the bedpan that Darcy had peed in and rushing for the door in excitement.

"I hate you," Darcy whispered, loud enough to be heard.

"Oh, honey, I know. That's okay," Perky McPsycho had the audacity to wink at her. "I doesn't bother me one bit."

Darcy felt her blood pressure surge and the intercom in her spartan room clicked on, an accented voice filling all the empty space.

"Tell her to calm or we will find a way to calm her."

"Not exactly helpful," Darcy rolled her eyes. "Calm your tits or we'll cut your tits off. What? Did Hydra never give classes on how to soothe their captives?"

"I can't wait until we can turn you into a vegetable," Sunshine Murderbitch smiled at her.

"Fuck y----"

The intercom was still broadcasting into Darcy's room, and the sound of a quick scuffle came over, along with three gunshots, and then two pained yelps along with five bodies falling to the floor.

Darcy felt her heart leap into her throat at the suddenly panicked look on Rainbow Bright Killer's face.
She was rescued.

She was getting out.

It was over. It was finally over.

The observation glass on the wall opposite her shattered and before Little Miss Asswipe could react more than dropping the bedpan of piss on the ground, she had a hand wrapped around her throat.

A metal hand.

"Don't---don't," she struggled.

"Kill her---kill her please," Darcy whispered to herself. She didn't know who this brute was. He was impossibly muscled, dressed all in black, a muzzle over the bottom half of his face, his brown hair wild and tangled as it lay long against his face, hiding most of his angry, gray eyes.

Darcy didn't even care if the metal armed man killed HER next, she only wanted to see the person who seemed to be responsible for most of her torture was dead. It's the only thing she wanted, and she would follow that bitch to hell happily after everything and spend the rest of eternity pushing her into the brunt of the flames.

A human neck doesn't snap all that easily, but this one did, and the look of terror was frozen on Strawberry Short-torture's face as she was dropped onto the ground in a puddle of Darcy's pee.

The man with a metal arm, who Darcy was seriously considering naming an honest to god Angel of Death looked to her next, restrained on a bed, covered in a thin, flimsy hospital gown. He pulled off his muzzle to reveal an absolutely unfair face and nodded once at her, short and tight.

"I will make sure someone finds you soon," the gravel voiced angel promised her before turning away.
"No, there's---no one will come to get me," Darcy said desperately. "Please---please, help me. Please, don't leave me here."

He turned to look at her again, his eyes going up and down her body from the top of her greasy brown hair to the tips of her woefully unmanicured and overgrown toenails and then back up again, his glance reminding her of something from a million years ago.

"I'll drop you at a hospital," he said softly as he approached her bed and shredded the restraints that they had tied her down with easily. "You're the only living prisoner. Except for the wiped vegetable next door."

"Oh---oh, can I go and unplug him?" Darcy wondered, her voice hopeful and sounding impossibly foreign to her ears. The Darcy who had been crashed into in New Mexico would have never thought to do such a thing. It was funny what two years with Hydra would do to a person.

"You sure you want to do that?" came the low, dulcet voice, sounding a little wry and irreverent.

"Do I want to watch the man who tried to rape me repeatedly when I got here slowly die in a shell of what used to be his body?" Darcy questioned angrily, and to her rescuer's credit, his jaw twitched in anger at her revelation. "yes---absolutely."

"It might be more torturous to leave him be, stuck in his body with his brain all mush until the power runs out someday."

Darcy looked up at her savior as he helped her to her feet and she smiled very slowly.

"That sounds way better actually."

"I have to clear the computers and get the data," he carefully walked her out of the room, a flesh hand on the small of her back as he guided her around the dead body and puddle of piss.

"Okay---can I go and put something scratchy underneath the vegetable's nose?" Darcy wondered hopefully.
The sound of his chuckle was the most beautiful thing Darcy had ever heard.
Chapter Notes

This chapter is loooooooong. But I feel that it's satisfying. As always, thanks to phoenix_174 and dntpanic42 for the amazing beta reading.

And PSA for violence and random nameless Hydra goon deaths.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Two: A New Pet

Bucky Barnes knew who he was.

Well, he knew who he was supposed to be.

The name Bucky seemed ridiculous to him, actually. That cold, cynical dagger of a man that took up hind quarters in his brain and constantly threatened to take over at every moment of the day certainly thought that Bucky was a ridiculous name. And even though he was no longer the Asset, no longer a machine to be programmed for the despicable and nefarious intentions of Hydra, he wasn't quite Bucky either. He had decided to just refer to himself as James, as that seemed newer and so much more safe.

Which was why it felt odd to have the girl following him doggedly around the Hydra facility. Her legs hadn't been the most faithful of appendages after getting up. She'd gripped onto the back of his shirt as he slowly walked back towards the command center where the answers would be. He felt a moment of puffed up pride as her grip tightened every time they came upon another body he had felled.

It was a foreign kind of feeling for him, something old and forcibly forgotten, that feeling of being able to provide protection for someone small who desperately needed the protection. It was something he used to do, but was no longer suitable for. He knew he didn't deserve that rush of accomplishment at providing comfort to someone who needed it. It had used to be a feeling he chased, he was sure of it, but he wasn't deserving of it anymore. So now, he ran from the one he used to protect, as fast as he could.

But this slip of a girl had been through hell. He knew what kind of hell Hydra could inflict on a
strong body and mind. He'd been poked and prodded and injected even before he had been rescued by Steve during World War II. He needed to know what was done to the girl shuffling slowly behind him as she tried to use legs that were unused to the physical activity.

She made a humorous sound of exertion as she pushed a dead body out of a plush office chair and climbed up in it herself, taking a break as James immediately went about shoving USB sticks into ports and starting programs to download material. The girl watched him carefully and he had a moment of indecision, knowing that she was about to ask questions. Her blue eyes were impossibly huge, made to look bigger due to the fact that she was seriously underweight.

"That's me," she pointed to a screen that James had brought up, showing a picture of her that had been taken when Thor had first come down to Earth.

James looked to the screen and nodded. Darcy Lewis, he pounded on a few keys and her entire file went onto one of his usb drives to be read later. He did glimpse a few things very quickly as the files copied and he managed a dry swallow at the highlights of what had been done to her.

"How're you feeling?" his voice was a soft thing he wasn't used to. He'd done nothing but whisper or shout the past two years. Polite mumbles made to people he had to interact with for necessities. Angry, guttural growling shouts made to the people he'd been avidly trying to destroy for two years.

"Better," Darcy admitted. Her face twisted with sudden annoyance, "I probably shouldn't be feeling so good already, should I?"

"The file says you received a serum," James said as gently as he could. He remembered another girl realizing that she had been gifted with something she had never wanted before, the eyes from the hazy past were green instead of blue though, but there had been forced bravery stewing in front of fear then and now. James remembered a glimpse of his own realization of what had been done to him.

Standing by the side of someone suddenly too big.

Staring at a man peeling off skin to reveal a red face.

Suddenly realizing that he had been made a monster too, and he couldn't even tell Steve about it, the one person he trusted with everything else but the worst of him.
"Am I gonna be able to benchpress a motorcycle full of hot ladies too?" Darcy asked, glib humor brandished as a shield in front of the fear.

"Not quite," James could feel the smile tugging at his lips but it didn't quite make it a full smile. "Hydra doesn't believe women should be that powerful."

"Assholes," Darcy's eyes slid back and forth between the four dead bodies in the room.

"You ever hear of the Black Widow?" James asked, surprised at the hint of his accent seeping out unbidden.

"I snapped at her once upon a time," Darcy laughed.

"You were given the same serum, but in a smaller dosage," James relayed to her. "Enough to make you resilient."

"Resilient enough to torture," Darcy took a piece of paper off of a desk, crumpled it into a ball and threw it at one of the dead bodies. A computer made a noise on the desk beside her and she slowly managed to roll the desk chair closer, pressing a few buttons experimentally. Computer skills seemed to be like riding a bike though, and before she knew it she was typing rapidly, pulling up the window that showed that the warning system had been tripped and overrides would need to be entered. "Uhm...we have twenty minutes to get out of here, I think?"

"Done," James nodded, pulling the USB drives out one by one and placing them in a bulletproof pocket on the side of his black jacket. He got up and looked down at the small woman dressed in a spartan hospital gown, sitting with her legs pulled up against her chest, her hand on the keyboard to the computer.

She was impossibly small, and he was sure that her collarbone was not supposed to be jutting out in such a way. James felt that nostalgic pull on his brain again as he thought of ways to get her fed and healthy once more.

He'd need to find her clothing, and he hoped to find something in the base before leaving, opening
doors in hopes that they were some fool's living quarters to grab her something to cover up before taking her out into the cold. He doubted her immune system would be able to fight off much of anything at this point, serum or not.

One more locking system met its demise by way of his metal hand, and when he kicked the door in, he stopped short, staring inside at what the room contained. He felt Darcy's hand grip the back of his shirt tighter and heard a little intake of breath, but that was it.

When he came back to himself, it was to see her holding onto the door frame, looking at him in true and utter concern, not a sign of fear on her face. He looked down at his hands and he held a warped and twisted piece of metal. He was standing amongst the ruined shambles of one of the chairs, one that had probably been used for him some time in the past. He swallowed and looked back up at Darcy, who had had enough sense to cower from whatever destruction he had unleashed in the last few minutes, but still was not backing away from him entirely.

"I take it you know what that thing was for," Darcy said quietly. "You feel better now?"

"Did they use this on you?" James demanded.

"No---they just threatened, recently threatened," Darcy assured him. "And made me watch the vegetable get fried. You're made of stronger stuff than him if you survived it."

"Yeah. I survived it," James said softly, dropping the metal and making his way back to her at the door where she readily grabbed onto him again as he led her down the hallway.

"Can we destroy this whole place?" Darcy asked suddenly, very hopeful, the hint of youthful eagerness and joy in her voice. "Like, boom, explosion?"

James furrowed his brow. He didn't usually do that. He'd spent six months after the fall of the Triskellion figuring out who the hell he was supposed to be. James Buchanan Barnes, war hero on one hand and the Winter Soldier, deadly cyborg assassin on the other hand. He'd then spent every single waking moment using the gifts that Hydra had stuffed into him. He used the unwanted skill set to dismantle them piece by piece by piece, while staying one step ahead of Steve Rogers and any other person that would want to bring him back in.

Because it hadn't been just Steve Rogers and the Avengers. It hadn't just been the bird-man and the Widow. It hadn't only been Hydra either.
He had dismantled a rogue faction of the KGB who had come after him less than a year after the Triskellion. He'd destroyed an assemblage of Special Forces from what remained of the World Security Council. He'd even made sure the new SHIELD faction couldn't rope him back into unwanted service.

He'd just unearthed every Hydra facility he could, killing every last minion he could and leaving a trail of stolen information and blood in his wake. Steve and his team probably hadn't even been able to get to every one of the facilities, big and small that he'd hit in the Southern Hemisphere.

"Burning it down would bring it to the attention of the Avengers," James muttered, more to himself than to Darcy.

"Fuck the Avengers," Darcy scoffed, bitterness clear in her voice. She shook it off quickly though and her words were genuinely sweet and wheedling, "But what you're saying is that you're totally capable of burning this place to the ground, right? I mean---you seem like a man capable of something like that. Like a metal-armed angel of pain and retribution and pretty eyes."

James stopped short once more and found himself almost laughing out loud again, for the second time in less than an hour. He turned and saw that her face matched the sweet begging in her voice, looking vulnerable and beautifully needy. James already knew far too much about Darcy Lewis, and that was without perusing through the file he would have to un-encrypt later. She was a sarcastic, genuine and funny little thing, and resilient as hell if she was still able to access such qualities after what she'd been through.

Memories of going to picture shows came unbidden into his brain, a black and white movie with a fast talking dame whose brain was quicker than a cheetah and sharper than a tack and she traded barbs and insults with a man so hopelessly gone for her for the whole movie. And in the back row were two young men, one big and one small, staring up at the screen in wonder and sharing a bag full of peanuts later saying that if they could only find a girl so smart mouthed, then life would be pretty damned perfect.

"Let me get you to the car, it'll be faster if I can rig it on my own."

Darcy decided she kind of liked the way the metal-armed Angel of Death and Destruction smelled. He had put her in an old, dark colored SUV, reached into a bag and popped a black henley over her head, carefully putting too thin arms into the arm holes, before reaching in and grabbing a pair of
pants that had no hope of staying up on her hips. She had put them on anyway, because anything was better than freezing to death so shortly after having a second lease on life.

It was cold, wherever they were. There was snow drifts as far as the eye could see, and Darcy wagered they were up a little high, too.

She snuggled deeper into her rescuer's shirt and sniffed indulgently. The stale smell of smoke, mentholated smoke at that, mingled with the scent of something old fashioned, like barbasol cream or something, along with ivory soap. And something unique, which Darcy had the grace to know was probably sweat.

She'd read once that a study had been done to have women smelling shirts that men had sweat in excessively. Women were repulsed by the smell of men that were related to them, but those that were genetically viable smelled good and actually got motors running.

Sweaty shirts.

Darcy didn't know how genetically viable a man with a metal arm was, and she doubted Hydra had left her lady bits completely intact to even have children someday, but she had no problem admitting that he smelled good. And he was an attractive sort of murder man. And he hadn't murdered or tortured her or left her behind, so that automatically scored some brownie points.

She saw a shadow in the darkness of night, which was---new and strange. Darcy realized for the first time that she was seeing clearly without the aid of glasses or contacts.

"Thanks Hydra asscanoes," she mumbled, snuggling deeper into the shirt and the comfortable bench seat of the car.

The most beautiful thing she'd ever seen suddenly came to life before her very eyes. Far more exquisite than the lights of the bi-frost. More elegantly wonderful than any stars she had glimpsed around the world with Jane Foster. Even better than the patriotic jawline of Captain America.

She saw flames light up the night sky, followed by a large explosion.

And she laughed.
The man who rescued her was back in less than thirty seconds after the explosion went off, and he actually smiled down at her as she laughed as uproariously as her current energy would allow. He eased himself into the car and continued to watch her laugh and point as a few new explosions went off, bigger and brighter than the first.

"You got your fill?" he asked quietly. "We should be going before someone comes to see why this happened."

"Yes, this was---I can't even tell you what it means," Darcy wiped the tears from her cheeks, her face hurting from smiling after so long a period without mirth or laughter. She scooted on the bench seat and put her head against a non-metal bicep and sighed. "Thank you for doing it."

She was asleep within minutes, her hands clutching around his elbow, her head against his bicep. She seemed to have no idea of personal space. And she definitely didn't have an ounce of care to her own self preservation. He'd just killed about twenty people. Granted, they were the people responsible for her torture and captivity.

But still, a normal person would have been just a little skittish. They definitely wouldn't have cuddled up to the big scary murderer like a tiny, adorable kitten.

The muddled consciousnesses in his brain were in turn sneering at her weakness and also marveling about how such a dame might have made the tips of Steve's ears turn red before the idiot chased after her all day, shadowing her every move with a dopey, dreamy smile on his face.

The two diametrically opposed views warred and nothing won out. James began driving hard into the night, thinking of all the things he would need to see to her comfort and care and finally came up with one course of action.

He had to get her to Steve.

When Darcy next woke, it was in a bed so much more warm and comfortable than her last bed, in that she was covered in at least one warm blanket and could actually move her limbs, should she so choose. Also, the smell of ivory soap mingled with the hint of cool smoke and lay just under the smell of warmed brown sugar.
"Coffee?" she mumbled.

"Can't have stimulants," her metal-armed Angel said gruffly from his place on the end of the bed where he was staring down at a very old laptop that appeared to be fire and bullet proof in its brick like density.

"Pfft, I'm not pregnant, I can have whatever I want," Darcy scoffed.

"It might react badly with what they were dosing you with, you can have it in about two weeks, when it’s flushed from your system," he said calmly.

"Tyrant!" Darcy accused, easily sitting up in the bed, her joints a little achy from rest, but certainly feeling so much better than she should at the moment. "Whatcha workin' on Angel?"

"Angel?" he gave her a raised eyebrow and a frown.

"I don't actually know your name."

"It's---it's complicated," he admitted with a huff of exasperated air. "For now---James will do."

"I like Angel," Darcy shrugged.

"Hungry?" James pushed a styrofoam container her way, and the source of the brown sugar and buttery smell was revealed to be a stack of the most sinful french toast Darcy had ever lain eyes on. It seemed to be made out of huge sliced cinnamon buns, battered and fried on a griddle then covered in chocolate drizzles and nuts.

"Oh my god is that bacon crumbles?" Darcy gasped dipping a finger into the heart disease laden diabetes inducing dessert that was masquerading as breakfast. She put her whole finger into her mouth and let her eyes roll into the back of her head.

' Take her now. Make her our pet '.'

James’ jaw ticked in annoyance at the sound of the murder puppet that was always trying to take up more and more space in his brain. His hated alter ego had been silent during the takedown of the base, far too pleased with executing people to take a look at the girl that James had managed to
pick up. But it had been sixteen hours between the driving and the obtaining a seedy motel room and watching her sleep.

The assassin he used to be was bored, and had been eyeing up the freed Hydra captive as if she was a particularly delicious morsel meant to be eaten. The Soldier argued that they had been gifted pets before, certainly none so unbreakable as this one that seemed to be gifted with and SURVIVED the administration of a serum that had killed far more women in the Red Room than was necessary. She had been rescued from a horrendous fate, the Soldier wagered she would be grateful to be made his pet.

The other women had been grateful as well, happy to serve Hydra in such a way, never knowing they'd be dispatched with when they couldn't obtain the end results that the handlers wanted.

James was very happy he had found her when he did. A year earlier and he would not have been able to push down the warped part of him that would have pulled over to the side of an abandoned road and used her body cruelly to satisfy his base urges. The thoughts that his other half was having were making his stomach turn unpleasantly.

He'd read through her file while he waited for her to wake up. The girl had been through enough.

"Oh God, so good," Darcy moaned out, having quickly demolished a third of the breakfast before pushing the container away, licking her fingertips lazily.

"You finished already?" James questioned.

"Haven't had much more than soup lately, and before that---nothing that they couldn't put in an IV," Darcy lay back down on the bed, her limbs stretched and askance. She saw that the television was on mute across the dark room and sighed, catching some of the closed captioning about the Avengers press release regarding an exposed Hydra base in the wilds of Canada exploding the day prior.

Twenty-three casualties. No known survivors.

"So, we're in Canada?" Darcy questioned. James nodded. She looked to the corner of the television and saw the date scrolling across the screen. Her mind calculated the amount of time she'd been gone and she actively fought against the panic creeping in on the edges of her vision. She took a shaky breath and shrugged before blurring, "Explains the maple syrup coated bacon bits. Delicious."

James' gaze over her face was assessing in a way he hadn't meant to display, the rest of his face emotionless and blank. He'd read her file. He knew what she'd been through, things that she had no way of knowing due to being knocked out most of the time. He knew their plans for her.

He hoped like hell they hadn't succeeded.

"I honestly thought I was going to be waking up to the smell of antiseptic," Darcy admitted as she stretched out her limbs experimentally, like a little kitten getting ready to wake up from a nap, and move to wherever the sunbeams lived and go for another nap.

She looked around at the burgundy themed motel room. She hadn't known burgundy could be a theme, but far be it from her to try and dictate interior design to whomever had set up this ridiculous room. The walls were a hideous purple red, probably the best color to hide blood stains. The queen sized bed she was on had a burgundy comforter that looked like it would be itchy. She had to be thankful for James at that moment, because he had placed a large fleece blanket down
before putting her on the bed, so her skin wasn't actually in contact with a plethora of venereal
diseases.

Even the furniture was stained to look a little burgundy. Along with the 'artwork' which Darcy was
pretty sure was supposed to be a counterfeit Monet in a tin frame spray painted gold. The picture
seemed to be printed out on regular old eight and a half by eleven copy paper, four sheets pasted in
place to make a picture, their seams slightly off so the facsimile painting looked more modern and
absurdist than anything.

They had a box of an old black and white television, a closed door that certainly led to a hopefully
clean bathroom that would have some kind of hot water, and one large window behind tightly
drawn burgundy curtains, the slivers of sunshine peeking around the corners.

In the corner was a little burgundy waste basket with gold accents, and it was already full of
possibly three or four styrofoam containers, food that James had already eaten while she was
sleeping.

"It's a nice surprise to be waking up to coronary clogging breakfast instead," Darcy shrugged as she
rolled experimentally on her side, looking at James as he continued to stare at her with that
impassive face, although his eyes, which she had thought to be gray in the harsh light of the Hydra
facility, were actually a very light blue.

His eyes were an interesting sort of thing to watch, even more so than the Stark Industries figure
head that was being interviewed on cable news about the Hydra facility, telling the world that it
was not a terrorist attack, and that the general public should not have to fear for its safety. James
eyes were on her though, and in one blink they were calm, welcoming and something resembling
friendly. Another blink and it almost felt like he was trying to undress her with his gaze, cocky and
sure and something nefarious that Darcy couldn't quite bring herself to dislike.

He'd looked like that when he'd snapped the neck of the woman who had been one of the only
faces Hydra had presented to her. Darcy realized she had come a long way from the intern who
had saved puppies, kittens and gerbils in New Mexico. But she refused to mourn the loss of the
wide eyed co-ed. She'd more than earned the right to appreciate a person's helpful dark side.

"If I took you to the hospital, your regenerative rate and anything residual in your system would
raise red flags," James explained, sitting back in the spartan chair next to a spartan wooden desk
(burgundy colored, of course). "Red flags would only wave Hydra back to you."

"Fuck that noise," Darcy scoffed, sitting up and swinging her legs over the edge of the bed. "The
only way they're getting me back is in a body bag."

She stood up on shaky legs and nodded in the direction of the bathroom. James watched her go
and had a silent, internal war with that monsterish asshole who had come up with a good handful of
scenarios on getting to the girl and making sure she was quiet as he did his worst.

'Our missions are successful. We get a reward. She will be willing.'

James pushed it down and checked the surveillance he had set up, making sure that no Avengers
managed to pick up his trail. None of them had gotten very close yet, although once, the archer
had managed to get to the same town James had found himself in after a takedown of Hydra. The
man was even better at tracking than the Widow, which was saying quite a lot.
"It's so nice to pee in a toilet," Darcy jabbered as she came back out, a towel in her hands. "I see you bought me some soap and whatnot, muchos of grass and ass, dude. And not to be a needy kind of rescue project or anything, because I'm grateful for what you've done, but---any chance we have clean clothes now too?"

Her voice was a light, playful, hopeful thing. James didn't remember the last time someone had spoken to him in such a way. He knew he was missing a few things still, but he didn't think anyone had ever spoken to him in such a way.

'Allow us to bathe the Pet.'

"Here," James gestured to a bag he had under the desk. "The sizes might be off, I was going off of your original measurements from your file."

"No complaints, man, I've worn a hospital gown for the last two years," Darcy dug into the grocery bag and pulled out a five pack of underwear and a package of heavy duty sports bras. She smirked at the size of the bra and then looked down at her chest, which was still an impressive thing, no matter how thin she was everywhere else.

James watched her pick out an outfit from the comfortable clothing he had procured for her. Soft grey sweatpants that promised to still fall off of her and a trio of shirts: white tank top, red and black checked flannel shirt and a discounted blue sweatshirt with a logo from a local sports team on top of that. Warmth and softness and comfort.

When James had come back to himself, he'd dressed in soft layers too, along with kevlar.

While she disappeared back into the bathroom and the shower started, the heat and steam from it finding its way through the bottom crack of the door, he busied himself in the room. He took the rest of the clothing she had not chosen and carefully and efficiently packed it into a child-sized gray back pack, along with a small handgun, a well hidden tracking device, and a small box of little granola bars. Her stomach may not want to accept a lot of food now, but soon it would be able to keep up with the newly enhanced metabolism and she would need it.

He polished off the rest of her now cold french toast, and it really was delicious. A trip to the soda machine at the end of their floor doubled as a perimeter check, and as hoped, everything was quiet and still and no archers were watching and waiting from the wings.

He didn't fear the Avengers. He just didn't want Steve to try and force him in. He wasn't finished yet, not by a long shot. And yes, he would take the journey across Canada to upstate New York to drop Darcy off so she could be well taken care of, but that would be under his terms, and he would be a puff of smoke before Steve and his band of merry idiots could try to catch a glimpse of him.

He feared what he'd do to Steve when he saw him. If he could barely stop the Soldier from demanding a glimpse of their wet and naked pet, there probably was little to no chance of stopping him from taking over and completing his last failed mission.

That would be unacceptable in James' book.

He got back to the room with two bottles of cold water and packed up the bedding he used for nights in the woods, setting it aside to put back in the car before he sat back down at the hideous desk and checking Hydra's security chatter once more.

"THAT was life changing!"

He fought against a smile when Darcy came breezing back out of the bathroom, holding onto the
bottle of shampoo he had gotten her as well as the toothbrush. She was clean and rosy cheeked, although he could tell by the state of her fair skin on her shoulders and arms that she had used too hot of water and scrubbed far too hard.

But then again, he understood that too. He'd rubbed himself raw a time or two after something horrible came back to his brain.

'Pay attention, the Pet is speaking.'

"---and honestly I was always a little crazy about dental hygiene when I was a kid, I'd brush my teeth five times a day, but not in an obsessive compulsive sort of way, I just really enjoyed giving myself a toothpaste foam goatee."

Darcy stopped talking altogether and gave him a big, beaming smile before putting on the flannel shirt and then drowning herself in the too large sweatshirt, pulling the hood up over sopping wet hair. It was so utterly foreign that he felt his stomach roll over uncomfortably, threatening to bring back the cold french toast. When was the last time someone smiled at him like that? Had anyone ever smiled at him like that?

'We shouldn't even need to force her. Eager pets are acceptable.'

"Thank you," she said it on the exhale, making it sound even more lovely somehow.

"For what?" he managed to ask.

"For not leaving me while I was in the shower. I---I, uh, panicked when I heard the door open and close, and was going to chase you, but I was naked and wet---"

'Yoptel-mopsel!' [God dammit]

James swallowed as the voice in his head swore in increasingly creative Russian and tried to focus on Darcy’s words instead.

"And then you came back in and---"

She paused and shrugged, fighting back tears. She was unable to articulate what she wanted to say, looking angry at herself for a second before finally aiming that big, honest smile back at him.

"Just thank you."

"You're welcome," James answered back, still dumbfounded. He didn't know what to do as she looked at the small shoes and socks he had left out for her, getting on the bed again and easing the thick, warm socks on her feet, followed by the sneakers. He looked back to the computer that he had closed and nodded to himself. She'd been talking of silly toothpaste stories and thanking him and she hadn't even asked why she seemed to be very nearly at one hundred percent physically.

She hadn't asked anything about what Hydra might have done to her. The reaction was so eerily familiar. He had tried to pretend nothing had happened at first, and the euphoria of being reunited with Steve had allowed it to happen.

The girl didn't have a Steve though.

"Do you wish to know what happened?" James swallowed back the annoyance at himself. He had
sounded clinical and foreign there. That's not how he sounded. He sounded like the Soldier there, without speaking in Russian at all. Stilted and unemotional and terse. He didn't WANT to sound like that. It just happened.

"Nope," Darcy shrugged, double knotting her sneakers in such a way that they would never untie, but she still would be able to slip the sneakers on at a moment's notice.

James realized he should have bought her the silly looking sneakers that just slipped on.

James thought to the pages and pages of experimentation notes he had read. His mind lingering on the last one that had been performed prior to him arriving at the facility. It was perhaps the most disturbing of them all, and yet, he felt a sort of calmness at her not wanting to know any piece of the horrid details.

He would have to get to another facility to answer his own burning questions regarding the last experiment. One burning question in particular.

"Hey! Did you eat the rest of my french toast? I had jiggled around in the shower to make more room for it."

Chapter End Notes

whew. This whole thing is a crazy monster. Thank you so much for reading it!
Warning Label

Chapter Notes

Thanks as always for my amazing betas phoenix_173 and DntPanic42.

Here we go. Warning for the winter soldier persona being---a pervert?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Three: Warning Label

Rolling with the punches seemed to be a thing that Darcy Lewis did extraordinarily well. Her ability to adapt so well to a rough and tumble life on the road with a smile that seemed to get bigger and wider each day was a thing of beauty, if James thought about it too long. Her sarcasm was a powerful, but still light thing, and it seemed to blend quite well with her enthusiasm that was ebbing back into her every waking minute.

She enjoyed sleeping in the car on the second night and she'd been giddy about the little motel they'd stayed at on the third night, despite having climbed up onto his back in a panic when a very long legged spider crawled across the mirror. She'd been rapturous about the food, which had all been junk, really, procured at gas stations and diners. But James didn't seem happy when she'd cleared her plate, as she still looked severely underweight, although her bruises were all cleared up and the circles under her eyes had lessened.

She'd taken his coddling much better than that asshole from another lifetime had taken the coddling. She seemed to eat up the extra attention, declaring him an adorable, murderous mother hen and very nearly listening to everything he told her to do.

Unlike that other tiny asshole.

Not tiny anymore. James had to shake himself out of it when one day he had stared at Darcy as she'd doggedly finished the milkshake he had shoved at her unceremoniously. His thoughts had strayed when he'd stared at pouting lips sucking on the straw and thinking of how nice it would've been to have a matched set at the same height, with him in the middle standing tall.
He wasn’t short like Darcy anymore. The museum had said Captain America stood six feet two inches tall. A whole two inches taller than James now, truth be told.

'The Pet is an ideal height to bend over, that is all that matters when you let me make her mine.'

Bucky’s bottom lip pinched in a bit at the sound of the assassin in his head all damned day. The things he said about Darcy at all hours of the day where inappropriate at best, and absolutely infuriating at worst, which was more often than not. His alter ego clearly wanted to use Darcy, and James knew that it wouldn't be the first time the Soldier had used a woman so savagely.

He absolutely refused to let the cretin surface now. It had been a close thing though.

They'd run into a rogue Hydra operative on the fourth day of their travels, and Darcy had been nonplussed, even going so far as very quietly, but enthusiastically cheering for him when he choked the life out of the desperate Hydra man. He felt the Soldier impinging on his control, wanting to rip the man's head clear off of his shoulders with the metal arm. James wanted to let him do it too, Darcy probably would have been a little shocked, but would have gotten over it quick enough when she realized the man was Hydra.

But Bucky knew if he gave the Soldier his way then, he'd be hard pressed to get him back in his box, and he'd lose Darcy's trust forever after the Soldier had his way with her.

'Trust is unnecessary. The pet will be pleased and squealing like a pig in heat.'

He was disgusting, base, and awful. Bucky beat him back with metaphorical sticks in his head and looked to Darcy as she smiled at him from her comfortable perch in the truck. She held up a big white sheet of paper with a '10' on it, a smiley face in the middle of the zero.

'Forget the small man. Claim our Pet.'

"Good violence, James. Excellent work," Darcy grinned at him. "Now, you promised me something coated in cheese, let's get him all covered up so we can get the cheese."
"Tell me you have something."

Steve looked up at Natasha with genuine, heartfelt pleading. He'd been going out of his mind for the last eight months. Since Ultron, Bucky had been making pretty noticeable appearances at Hydra facilities around the world, concentrating on South America, the United States and now Canada.

Even though he was systematically dismantling places, he hadn't been easy to trace or track. Neither Clint, nor Natasha nor Friday could find him.

But this last base was different. Forensics showed that it housed another wiping machine that had been used to electrocute Bucky's brain into the order following soldier that Steve had fought against over a year ago.

The machine had been completely destroyed and the base had been burned to the ground. Steve had interpreted that to mean that Bucky---the Winter Soldier, was getting more unstable. The other machine that had been in Brazil had just been destroyed with the base intact. Steve errantly hoped that it meant the hot headed half Italian half Scotsman he remembered meeting so many years ago, quick to shout when angered, quick to throw an alarm clock against a wall when it annoyed him, was coming back out, burning things to the ground that upset him.

"Two things," Natasha pushed folders to him a sad smile on her face.

"Either of them good news?" Steve sighed, putting his hands on the folders.

"Depends on what you consider a happy ending nowadays," Natasha said honestly. She shook it off and opened the folder on the right. "There was someone on that base."

"I read the body count and the forensics, I know how many he killed," Steve said quietly. He wrinkled his nose minutely and shook his head, his jaw going taut as he insisted strongly, "And quite frankly, I really think he has every RIGHT to do it. Those Hydra scum did---"

"Save the impassioned speech for someone who doesn't already agree with you," Natasha smiled and tapped her finger against a sheet of paper with an incomplete medical report taken off of the nearly wiped Hydra database. "Friday is working on trying to recreate it from the deleted files, but she's not having much luck."
"They had a person there? With experiments?" Steve's eyes flew over the words of the report. It was missing every fifth word, practically, so it was not an easy read by any means.

'Twenty-five. Female subject---serum---success. Healing factors---further tests.'

Steve felt his stomach turn.

"Do we have any idea who she is?" he asked.

"Is?" Natasha said softly.

"IS ," Steve insisted.

"You think the Winter Soldier killed every soul at the Hydra facility and didn't kill the woman they were torturing and experimenting on?" Natasha said without an ounce of judgement on her face.

"He wouldn't have killed her," Steve shook his head, looking at the incomplete report. Frowning when the woman was simply referred to as Codename Ostera and mentioned multiple times with the procedures missing.

"Bucky Barnes wouldn't have killed her," Natasha was playing a gentle devil's advocate.

"Friday, please search through hospital admissions within a two hundred mile radius of the Hydra facility, see if you can find a young woman---"

"A woman between the age of twenty-five and twenty-seven, underweight, malnourished, severe physical trauma, contusions, bruising, broken and re-set bones and sexual abuse," Natasha interrupted.

"Poor girl," Steve felt another piece of his heart clenching. So many had been hurt by Hydra, not just him. Not just Bucky. Nameless girls, taken away from their lives and tortured endlessly, all in the name of Hydra's greater good.
It only made him want to destroy them more.

"What's in the other file?" Steve sighed.

"I have news on Retta," Natasha gave him a sad smile.

Retta Archie was his eighty-seven year old personal assistant. Peggy had recommended her when Darcy Lewis had never called Steve back all those years ago. Retta had a level four SHIELD clearance and had been Peggy's most trusted girl from 1962 until Peggy's retirement in the nineties. She'd survived the fall of SHIELD, taking out four Hydra men in the process and had finally stated she would retire.

She hadn't of course, and had been secretly organizing the details of Steve's travel and finance during his mad search for Bucky. She'd gone missing three months ago, and Steve had been searching for her just as relentlessly as he had Bucky.

"Clint found her two days ago," Natasha revealed, opening the folder to show a picture of Retta from the 1970's. Shrewd, dark brown eyes stared at Steve from her SHIELD photo, a smirk playing on full lips and her naturally styled hair was in a stylish (for the time) afro.

"She had been taken by Hydra, and she activated a morse code call for help using two exposed wires in her cell," Natashas chuckled. "That call for help was picked up by a ninety-one year old ex security guard for Peggy Carter, and within days, Retta had gathered a crew of a dozen senior citizens that have been loyal to Peggy every damned day since they met her."

"Jesus Christ," Steve let out a watery chuckle as he paged through the surveillance photos, showing a bunch of snowy haired, rounded back individuals, men and women, some with canes, one in a motorized scooter, all of them armed to the teeth with various firearms.

"They got her out, and they've been underground ever since," Natasha grinned. "But Retta said she quit being your secretary because she's found something more meaningful than making sure you had a hotel reservation for the night. Unearthing other Hydra faithful that may or may not be confined to senior citizen care centers."

"I'll be damned," Steve laughed and sighed, happy that Natasha had let him have the good news last. "I'm glad she's alright."
"Yeah," Natasha agreed. Retta had always been kind to Natasha, even when she had first come in as a skittish, angry Russian spy.

"Could you imagine if Miss Lewis had taken me on instead?" Steve shook his head in disbelief.

"To hear Thor tell it, you both would have probably exposed Hydra two weeks into the position, and then ridiculously set the entire building on fire," Natasha said seriously.

"He talk to her lately?" Steve asked casually, which was a mistake, because Natasha sat up straight immediately.

"I'm not sure, but I can find out."

Her smile was like a cat who had eaten the sweetest cream and her green eyes sparkled in a way they hadn't in a few months. She'd given up on setting him up after Ultron had happened, both of them too involved in establishing the new facility in upstate New York, searching for Bucky, and training up the new Avengers. She would be all too happy to find Steve a date. Or a girlfriend. Or a wife. Whichever.

"Don't go overboard," Steve sighed in exasperation.

"What's overboard?" Natasha smirked.

"You are not allowed to coerce the girl into a date with me," Steve said resolutely.

"Rogers, when have I ever had to use coercion to get people to do what I want?"

If Darcy noticed they were moving southeast through Canada, she didn't say anything. She seemed to be not only content with her current situation in life, but overjoyed at every little thing, nearly every day. She learned how to clean the guns, one late night in the motel, and James didn't think anyone had ever taken such enjoyment in such things before.
The Soldier had noticed, and if anything, seeing her clean the guns made the louse want 'their pet' even more.

She'd been with him for eight days now, and while James couldn't shut up the lecherous beast in his head, he noticed that the Soldier was speaking less of forcing himself on her and more about wooing 'the pet', and thinking of how something 'the pet' did was particularly adorable.

It was disconcerting to say the least.

"You have like, a lot more bullets than you had yesterday," Darcy looked down at the backpack that James kept. It was a lot different than the one he packed for Darcy. His were full of notebooks and bullets and gloves and a hell of a lot of knives.

She never asked questions of him. She simply went with the flow, happy enough to be free and of sound mind and not in pain.

'The Pet is safe with us. She will reward us for keeping her well fed and safe.'

"You planning something fun?" Darcy wondered as she went about cleaning his favorite rifle with the calm and patience of a saint.

"There's a facility ten miles from here, hidden in the woods. They might have a server there with information on it," James revealed as he paged through a newspaper's classified section carefully, intent on looking for coded words.

"Information about me? Or information about you?" Darcy wondered.

"Both, hopefully," James admitted truthfully.

"Are there Hydra assholes guarding the information?" the hope in her voice was unmistakable.

"Seven men, three inside, four guards on posts outside," James nodded. He furrowed his brow as
he came upon a coded message in the classifieds.

"What's that?" Darcy noticed right away, looking at him with concern.

The message was clear as day to him. It was a code used by only one other person in existence. The Widow. 'He misses you. You are welcome here.'

"Why would a person buy a used mattress?" James asked, covering for himself.

"Disgusting," Darcy nodded. She held up one index finger, as if asking him to hold on a second as her face went pale and her brow went sweaty.

'Pet is ill. Help her.'

James listened this time, getting up and reaching for her immediately, picking her up and out of the rifle parts undisturbed before quickly walking her to the bathroom, placing her on her feet so that she could rush to the toilet.

She was crying, which wasn't a strange thing to happen to a person currently spewing their guts out into a toilet. But her whimpers and tears did awful things to his insides and James was on his knees behind her in no time, pulling strands of her hair out of the way of the sick she was coughing up. His metal hand moved up and down her back on instinct and he was reminded of doing the same thing for another small, sick person a million years ago.

"Ugh, I shouldn't have eaten those gas station nachos," Darcy lamented. "Don't let me eat nachos with mystery meat chili and cheese food product on top of it anymore."

'Poor Pet. Rub her lower.'

"You're okay," James promised, knowing that now more than ever, he had to hit that Hydra facility. "You're going to be fine, Darcy."
James went over the plan with Darcy, relentlessly, for the better part of the next twenty-four hours. Her attention span and seemingly limitless patience for anything related to him was surely waning, but he needed to make sure she would be safe.

The Soldier would not accept anything less.

'The Pet is to be kept in one piece. Her figure becomes more pleasing every day. Feed her more cakes.'

Still, as he drove them to the facility, he found that her usual levity and mirth were disappearing and a grim determination set in its place instead. She was to follow him, and he had armed her with his most forgiving handgun, along with a baton he had taken from another Hydra outpost. She favored the baton heavily, but he had to make sure she could shoot, and when they had practiced that morning, she had been a natural.

Apparently, an arcade game called Deer Hunter at her corner sandwich shop had been an excellent trainer throughout her youth. She was itching and raring to go by the time he put the truck in park at a nearby camping ground that they would take a hike through to get to the facility. She made her way to hop out when James put a gentle hand over her thigh.

"Darcy," he whispered as she sorted out her clothing. He'd procured dark clothing for her, layers of it that still allowed her to move as quickly as she was able to. He'd squeezed a layer of kevlar onto her that morning, black, tight material encasing her chest and protecting her vital organs. She'd been gaining weight back at a steady pace, her enhanced body wanting to operate at optimum efficiency.

And neither the Soldier nor James would ever deny her whatever she had wanted to eat.

"James," she gave him a small smile back. "I promise you I can do this. Let me---let me feel useful. Let me earn a little piece of revenge back, okay?"

'Our Pet wants blood. We will give her all of their blood.'

"I'm not worried about you," James clarified. "You can handle your weapons well for being untrained. I believe you will do well."
"Thanks," Darcy grinned at him unabashedly.

"It's---I'm worried about me," James admitted.

' Nyet! '

"When I've been doing this, I slip," James admitted.

"Slip and fall?" Darcy gave him a small, confused headshake, a look of concern stealing over pretty features.

James gave her a very small, very soft, very genuine smile.

"They programmed me for decades, to be their Soldier, the Winter Soldier," James admitted.

"Sounds spooky and dangerous," Darcy's grin was back, her eyes lighting up.

' Our Pet will enjoy me, of this I am sure. '

"He's a killer," James dissuaded. “An assassin who only cares about violence and destruction.”

"Cool, he's gonna have seven people to dispatch with soon," Darcy nodded.

"He is ruthless," James shook his head in slight frustration.

"Sexy," Darcy winked at him.

' Pretty Pet, a good girl should be rewarded. '
"Darcy, he's an animal, and if I can't keep a handle on him, you're in danger," James blurted, the barest hints of an accent tinged his frustrated words.

"But---he saved me, didn't he?" Darcy asked calmly. "He was with you, in your head, when you found me and saved me."

"Yes," James wrinkled his nose. "But---"

"No buts, buts are dumb," Darcy waved him off. "He hasn't hurt me yet."

"YET," James whispered. "He wants to have you."

"Well, I'm right here," Darcy chuckled. James threw her a pained look and she nodded. "OH! Oh, like---"

She made a crude hand gesture in combination with her eyebrows lifting up and down suggestively.

"Yes," James sighed, trying desperately not to let her levity cause him to forget why this was important. He didn’t want to come out of a fog with the thinly veiled memories of forcing himself on her.

"And you're afraid that when you go all GRRRRRR, he's gonna ravish me?" Darcy wondered as she inched closer to him on the bench seat of the truck, her hands reaching and rubbing up and down his flesh bicep.

Another sigh along with a nod of his head.

"And he's---this soldier in your head, he's YOU, right?" Darcy asked thoughtfully. "Just a dissociative aspect of your personality, something branched off that was created because of what Hydra did to you, born of pain and anger and rage, right?"

James blinked at that, wondering if it was true. The accented voice in his head had always felt like a foreign entity, a whole other person that constantly threatened to take control and do unspeakable
"Did the Soldier do all the killing, James?" Darcy asked softly, running her hand up to his shoulder, fingers inching up his neck so that she touched his face. "Did he do what was asked of you, when you didn’t want to do it?"

"Our Pet is so clever. She knows you are too weak."

"Yes," James whispered.

"And there's nothing wrong with that," Darcy assured him. "The human mind, the soul, the whatever that makes us tick, we will do what we can to survive what we're put through."

"What did you do?" James countered.

"Dreamed about this," Darcy admitted. "Dreamed about being strong enough to fight back. To destroy them."

'Pretty, clever, Pet. So beautiful in her anger.'

"If he gains control--" James sighed.

"If he does something to me, I will know that it is you, it's your body, it's the side of you that deals with the destruction and the death," Darcy said calmly. "And he won't hurt me. Because I'd wager that you like me a little, to have kept me around for more than a day or two."

James could only nod, afraid that if he opened his mouth too much truth would spill out.

"If you can't control him, then the Soldier and I will figure something out," Darcy assured him, her hand petting at his stubbled cheek, smiling at him when his eyes closed in obvious enjoyment at her touch. "Don't worry so much James, I'm not made of spun glass."

"I know that, I do," James promised her. He took her hand off of his face and held her hand,
bringing it to his lips for a kiss before mumbling, "You're a helluva dame, Darcy Lewis."

Darcy blinked up at him curiously when he dropped her hand, his words heavy with an old accent once again. She watched him as he did another once over of the multiple weapons on his person, hidden amongst the black leather suit with the straps and buckles all over his torso. She smiled and picked up the mask he had worn to rescue her and handed it to him.

"Let's go kick some ass."

Chapter End Notes

If anyone needs a visual for Retta (who will be showing up much later), in my head she is Nichelle Nichols, who was the original Uhura on Star Trek.

Thanks for reading!
Revenge Therapy

Chapter Notes

As always, thanks to my super betas phoenix_173 and dntpanic 42

Okay. Mind the tags people.

If you are not a fan of violence, stop reading. If you are not a fan of seeing nameless Hydra goons meet their death at the hands of 'white-ish' hats, you should stop reading. If you are not a fan of inappropriate sexual thoughts from a perverted and slightly unhinged Winter Soldier, then definitely stop reading.

Oh my god, just don't read this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Four: Revenge Therapy

The Soldier looked at his little Pet, unabashedly coveting her behind his mask, his eyes focusing on the ample bosom she had been blessed with, constrained but not hidden behind layers and kevlar. When she was properly fed, she would be plump. Of that he was certain. And he found himself impatient for that time. He looked forward to the day where he would be able to grab her and pull her on to his lap, taking her at his leisure, fingers pressing into plump flesh and leaving marks behind.

Although he had not seen the need to escape Hydra's control nearly two years ago, he did have to admit that this sort of life would be better than cryofreeze and unending orders.

He still could indulge in violence, discord and brutality, but now he had his soft pet to fatten up, and the freedom to have her whenever he could, whenever he could get the weak and stupid James out of the way.

He knew she coveted him as well, he had caught her staring at him as he dispatched with one of the perimeter guards. Her pouty lips had been open, slow but erratic breaths pushing and pulling between them. She had given him a little smile, shyness creeping into her expression when she realized not James, but the Soldier was staring back at her.
"Come here, Pet," he gestured for her.

She looked confused, blinking adorably at his words, which had been muffled behind the mask and were in Russian to boot. He repeated his come hither hand movement and she got that shy, lovely little smile on her face again before tiptoeing through dead leaves and the debris of the forest to stand beside him.

"You're thirsty for blood," the Soldier said softly, still speaking in garbled Russian. "It's understandable. Commendable."

"Whatever you're saying sounds awesome," Darcy grinned at him. "Like dark and dangerous and angry, and, you know. Sexy."

She shrugged her shoulders a little and the grin was replaced with that timid little smile that the Soldier wanted to bite at.

"What do you want me to do?" she asked in Farsi. "Cause watching is fun, but doing is better."

The Soldier managed a chuckle at that, understanding her perfectly. He pulled her to stand in front of him, her back to his front, her body soft against the unmoving wall of his. His hand trailed from her shoulder, down her arm, grabbing her hand and guiding it to the gun that James had holstered for her. She took his cue and held onto the handle as he un-holstered it. There was movement coming from the last outpost, and the Soldier wanted to give his Pet a treat.

"When you are well again, and not so easily breakable, I want to have you bent over in front of me so I can grab you here," he mumbled, still speaking in Russian and not following her lead into Farsi. He gripped her hips that were still not quite as full as he would like them to be, pulling her into a proper stance, his fingers caressing more than they needed. "You will be so happy, Pet, you should never want to leave me."

"Dude, Boris and Natasha were never this hot with their accents," Darcy swallowed nervously.

Her slightly anxious reaction to his special brand of flirting had him smiling ferally under the mask as he brought her arms up carefully while she held the gun like James had taught her. He helped her to aim and they waited. She mimicked his long, slow steady breaths, her back flush against his chest, her proud little rear end pressed against his front.
He was straining behind the protective cup built into his suit, and he wanted more than anything to be able to shove her to her knees and relieve himself in her willing mouth. He would wait though, because she promised to be a willing and eager participant, the Soldier could tell. Even the foolish James knew that she looked at him with more than just the grateful eyes of the rescued.

But first, she had to be well and healthy. And then, they needed to find out what samples had been used to put her in her current condition. He errantly wondered when she would want to know what Hydra had done. She would know sooner rather than later.

"Be calm, be patient," the Soldier whispered in Russian, his voice low and raspy. "Look here."

His finger hovered above the sight, which he knew was expertly aimed, waiting for the walking guard to hover within it. The wait wasn't a particularly long one, the Soldier had been trained to wait for however long it took to take the perfect shot. Days if need be. But it was more than a minute, and when Darcy's arm started to tremble from holding the gun up for so long, the Soldier supported her and forgave her for her weakness.

She was not a Red Room trainee. She was his soft little Pet playing with revenge like a ball of yarn. He would indulge her little, precious appetite for payback. She was trying very hard, he could tell, because her nonsensical words had not fallen from those coveted lips since he had her take aim. She simply mimicked his breathing pattern, the steady slow breathing of a sniper and waited.

"Now," he whispered in English, bracing her for the backfire as she immediately squeezed the trigger, no doubt or hesitation in the movement, the sound of the bullet was muffled and silenced and it hit the mark the Soldier had set for her, falling into the man's weak spot on his kevlar, right above his right armpit.

The Soldier smiled beneath his mask and his hands fell to her hips again, giving her a congratulatory squeeze before he rushed to the outpost, intent on finishing what the Pet had started. He heard her heavy, clumsy footfall following him as fast as she could. But he'd already snapped the guard's neck by the time she caught up.

"HEY, hey!" the Pet whispered, pouting and clearly a little upset.

The Soldier's eyes were curious, and amused as he watched her catch her breath quickly, his gaze falling to her bosom, which rose and fell in delightful ways. She snapped her fingers at him.
"My eyes are up here, pervy Soldier," she glibly asserted. "That was my kill...you aimed my gun and everything."

"My sweet Pet doesn't need to do the hard work," the Soldier parroted in Russian. "Your hands are better suited to pleasing me than killing."

"I don't speak Russian, switch to Farsi, dude!" Darcy whined.

"I will allow you to play," he switched languages to Farsi easily. "But you may only play."

"That's bullshit!" Darcy grumbled, crossing her arms under her chest and remembering she still held the gun. She jumped a little and wound up holding her right arm at an awkward angle away from her body so the gun didn't touch her. The look in the Soldier's eyes, amused and fond, seemed to be some kind of vindication for him. She pouted and the Soldier was utterly bemused with her.

He pulled off his mask and stepped forward, placing a surprisingly gentle kiss against the tip of her nose before re-holstering her gun for her.

"I will let you play, my blood thirsty little pet," he promised. She seemed slightly placated. "And you may watch me finish them. Come along, ten minutes until they expect reports inside the facility."

"Cap!"

Steve bolted upright in his bed. He didn't need much sleep to begin with, but he'd been having trouble even catching the three or four hours that his body needed. He was out of the bed and halfway into his uniform as he rushed from his bedroom into the living area of his spacious and spartan quarters. Sam was standing there, grabbing Steve's go bag.

"Friday pulled a call to authorities about three hundred miles from the Hydra bombing. Muffled gunshots," Sam reported. "Nat's got the quinjet ready."
"Thanks," Steve grabbed the bag an already uniformed Sam handed him and they ran the short distance to the launch pad. He buckled in while Sam joined Nat in the cockpit and they were off the ground seconds later.

"We diverted the call to Friday's servers, no local authorities are dispatched," Sam assured Steve.

"What were the details of the reports?" Steve wondered.

"Two figures walking into a campsite eighteen hours before a snowstorm was due," Natasha reported.

"Two figures?" Steve asked hopefully.

"Two figures," Natasha repeated, she looked to Sam, expecting HIM to play the bad guy this time.

And if the man hadn't wanted to impress Natasha so damned much, he probably would have flipped her off. But instead he took the comfort of a nearly silent sigh before turning to Steve and giving him a very careful, stern look.

"Just because it's two figures, doesn't mean that it's the girl from the Hydra facility," Steve said quietly. They still didn't know very much about the girl, just that she had been Hydra's guinea pig for two years and that her remains were not found among all the other Hydra operatives.

They knew she'd been exposed to unspeakable things. They knew that she had not volunteered for it. And they knew she was now missing again.

"Yeah, Cap, but if it is," Sam's voice was a steady firm thing as he squared his shoulders, "it doesn't mean that she's a willing guest of Barnes'."

"He wouldn't," Steve said grimly.

"But it's not just him," Natasha reminded him.
"He wouldn't hold her against her will after everything that had happened to him," Steve insisted.

He'd consulted plenty of psychologists and people with multiple letters behind their name regarding blind case studies detailing what Bucky had been through. Most agreed that the brain was capable of regenerating broken neural pathways, especially given the presence of an undisclosed 'mutant' factor.

The data dump that Natasha had orchestrated had been picked up by Friday, and it was confirmed that Bucky had been exposed to a variant of the super soldier serum, prior to Steve's rescuing him at Azzano. His healing rate wasn't as quick as Steve's, but it was much faster than Nat's according to some sickening research they had done shortly after his fall from the train.

His brain was healing, Steve knew it. That's why he had recognized him and pulled him from the river. And if the real Bucky was even a quarter of the way there, Steve knew that he would never hold a woman against her will, especially one that had been so unjustly hurt and tortured already.

Steve had faith. Something good had to come from this, even if it was Bucky Barnes helping a hurt woman regain her footing despite how ill advised that seemed.

"Just---drop it, and get us there."

Infiltrating a Hydra facility felt a lot like that time Darcy had been in her tenth grade production of 'A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum'. She had been cast as a teenaged prostitute, and not only got to do a vastly inappropriate sexy dance at the age of fourteen, but she also got to participate in a chase scene while wearing the musical theatre equivalent of a bikini. Halfway into the second show on Saturday, the police raided the auditorium and arrested three child molestors.

It hadn't come as a surprise when the drama teacher was fired at the end of the school year after that, really.

But although there was no bouncy and catchy show tune playing in the background, Darcy kind of felt the same way while she and Bucky made their breakin at the Hydra facility. She was standing directly behind a man much larger than her, and she was expected to follow him, movement for movement across a stage. They waited, and waited, and Darcy didn't know if he'd remember his cue and she'd have to shove him towards the Hydra agents that needed murdering, but soon enough
he pounced and Darcy followed after a moment of surprise and it was over in the blink of an eye, really.

And lying dead at her feet were two disgusting Hydra losers, their necks snapped handily. The third was being held at his throat by a seriously amazing metal hand and Darcy calmly walked over to where Bucky had the last of the scientists, a small, grayish green hued, trembling man in his thirties. The top of his balding head was breaking out in a panicked sweat and beady little blue eyes were darting between a blank faced Winter Soldier and a smiling and waving young woman.

His face displayed recognition at Darcy's appearance.

"Help me?" he breathed out towards Darcy before whimpering as the hand clenched around his windpipe threateningly.

"Oh, dude, no!" Darcy snorted. "I hate you. I mean, I've never met you, but I really hate you. And I'm kind of wondering why my guy here hasn't snapped your disgusting neck yet."

"My good Pet gets to play," the Soldier said in Farsi.

Darcy clapped her hands together in excitement before fairly skipping to stand next to Bucky and the man in his clutches. She saw as the Soldier's grayish blue gaze darted to his thigh and she got out the small blade he had tucked into a loop in his trousers. She marveled at it, two inches of steel, but it was tiny and curved and almost pretty in a way.

"Doesn't look very dangerous," she admitted.

"Tiny things can be sharp," the Soldier told her, still in that monotone Farsi that was making the Hydra lackey in his grip nearly wet himself in fear. "This one is a coward, Pet. He has not used the pill in his mouth. I believe he will give us anything we should need."

"Cool. Cool. Cool," Darcy nodded, holding up the wicked tiny blade and placing it against the slight paunch of the man's stomach. "Do you still have an appendix? I mean, I was shit at the physical sciences all throughout my life..."

The blade pressed easily through clothing and into flesh and the man whimpered.
"I read once, that people got appendectomies without anesthesia before," Darcy continued to converse congenially as she let the tip of the blade make an inch long shallow cut. She then made a swooping motion and the line turned easily into the letter 'D'. "And I always wanted to be a surgeon, even though I was complete shit at science."

"No letters," the Soldier warned his Pet. "Forensics might get ideas."

"I---I---will tell you," the Hydra lackey promised, not knowing if the Soldier was ordering the deranged little lab rat girl to do worse with her knife. The coward's voice was a strained, weak thing already.

The Soldier's eyes narrowed at him in disgust. The man had barely endured what the Soldier would consider highly enjoyable foreplay, and he was willing to throw in the towel so quickly. He supposed he understood to a degree, the Pet's cheerful bloodlust was palpable...a thing of beauty really. Most weak mean would waver at the sight of a beautiful face easily promising pain as if they were being promised that the sun would rise the next day.

Darcy wrinkled her nose though, and the Pet did something that almost made the Soldier laugh out loud. She took the tiny blade away from the man's stomach and very quickly jabbed it into his stringy right bicep, all two inches of it slicing through flesh like a hot knife through butter.

It took a certain strength to get a blade into human muscle like that. And the Soldier felt himself straining against his protective cup again, because his Pet was everything he ever wanted and more.

"RUDE!" Darcy hissed out. "I was going to be so good at torturing you."

The Soldier's gaze fell away from Darcy reluctantly. His Pet was so adorable when she was angry and he wanted to find ways of pushing her buttons again at a better time for both of them. He saw out of the corner of his eyes, the surveillance program he had disabled earlier automatically reboot and while he had expected to see the signals of four fallen bodies, instead, he saw those and three unknown heat sources approaching from a mile out.

He cursed in Russian and dropped the snivelling coward to the ground, where he landed in a heap, his hand going to the blade sticking out of his arm.
"Don't pull it out," Darcy warned helpfully. "You'll TOTALLY bleed to death."

While that wasn't true at all, the man seemed to listen to what she said.

"Records," the Soldier demanded. "You have clearance for the records."

"I---yes, for your records only," the coward admitted. He flinched when Darcy's hand went for the knife jabbed into his arm and nearly cried when the Soldier came to his rescue, lifting him up and putting him in the chair, throwing a small USB drive to him.

"Two minutes," the Soldier warned and the man began typing faster than humanly possible, immediately.

Darcy was letting one of her black sneakers that James had provided for her toe obnoxiously at the ass of one of the dead Hydra already, looking a little bored. The Soldier smiled at her, the expression useless since he was wearing his mask, but something in his eyes had Darcy smiling back and shrugging. He gestured for her to follow him and she did, going to the door on the side of the room. His metal hand obliterated the doorknob and he opened the door to reveal a small room full of a lot of explosives.

"Hydra is practical," the Soldier intoned. "One man for technological needs, one man for weapons maintenance and storage, one man for chatter translation, all in one building, neither needs to interact with the other, all the work is completed for Hydra's glory."

"Hydra is a bunch of cheap bastards is what I'm getting from that," Darcy nodded. "Sending their wimpy contractors to work in a shack in the woods that they use for bomb storage."

"You may set one," the Soldier smiled indulgently again, but Darcy didn't catch the twinkle in his eyes as she began doing a small, celebratory dance that involved raising her hands in the air repeatedly and shaking her hips back and forth. He cleared his throat so that she would pay attention and he showed her the simplistic keypad. "Five minutes, my Pet."

He wanted to kiss her nose again, but wasn't willing to remove his mask to do it, instead, he gave her behind a pat with his left hand. She made a delighted sound at it and gave him a wink and a finger gun before inspecting the little bomb that would give her a small sense of satisfaction, but not serve as a beacon for the Avengers or other various sundry authorities.
The Soldier went back to the coward, and he could see that in addition to downloading the files, he was trying to type out an SOS. He screamed in agony when both of his hands were efficiently broken and then proceeded to wet himself.

"What do you know about the girl?" the Soldier demanded.

"We---videos would go around of her," the coward admitted, the flush on the bridge of his greasy nose indicating that he had partaken of those videos. "Surveillance, when she was having nightmares. Naked. Nothing interesting until they had her in stirrups and implanted the samples a month ago. Made a show of it for Hydra's continuing glory."

The hint of fond remembrance colored the coward's face.

The Soldier seethed silently, his vision going red as he pulled his knife out of the man's bicep and aimed it for the man's groin instead. He took delight in the wail of anguish as he twisted, pulling the knife out and wiping it on the coward's shoulder. He reached for the USB port and pulled out his information before taking the entire computer tower and ripping it out of the wall, taking it and bashing the large, bullet proof box against the skull of the coward, once, twice, three times...

He heard the crack of bone but was lost to it, continuing to beat the skull in of the dead coward, imagining with each blow he was righting some wrong. Taking back the image of his Pet being violated by hundreds of Hydra faithful. Taking back the knowledge that he too had been similarly violated decades earlier. He and his Pet were alike in so many ways, and he could feel the weak James in the back of his head trying to be the voice of reason.

'We need to give her to Steve. Alone we'd ruin her, turn her into a violent, angry mess.'

"C'mon Soldier," Darcy said softly, her hand gently placed against the small of his back, mid-swing of the computer tower.

He halted his violence immediately, dropping the electronics to the ground as Darcy placed both hands at his waist and pressed her face into his back. He took deep even breaths, looking down at what used to be a human face and immediately turned in such a way that the Pet couldn't see, her hands still on his waist as he looked down at her, wondering how much she had heard.

"This place is gonna go psssh boom psssh--fireworks," Darcy's eyes lit up like a child getting a Christmas present. "We should go."
He nodded and made sure to resheath his knife before pulling up Darcy's black hood attached to her outermost layer, hiding dark heavy curls and her brow. He walked quickly, feeling her hand going to his back and gripping onto one of the straps as she followed a step behind.

He had them safely behind a rock when a shout caught Darcy's attention. He had seen the oncoming trio immediately upon exiting the shack-like building. But Darcy had not.

"I saw some movement, Cap! Lost it---no, it was bigger than a damned squirrel, Nat. Approach with caution."

"Uh oh," Darcy whispered as she watched a tall, muscular figure in a dark blue tactical suit approaching the hut, an iconic shield in his hand, followed closely by a much smaller figure in all black. "I think that's Captain America?"

"Fuckin' punk."

Darcy furrowed her brow at that, having caught another hint of a third separate kind of voice and accent coming from the Soldier. That wasn't James and it wasn't the Soldier. That was someone different.

"He's gonna get a face full of explosion if he doesn't bring that shield up," Darcy wagered, looking a little contrite and conflicted.

The Soldier nodded, knowing that James wouldn't forgive this. It felt odd to see that shield and that man in the darkness and stillness that preceded an oncoming snow and not want to KILL him. He was just staring at him in a sort of clinical fashion, his brain working fast to figure out threat levels, to wonder how best to defend his Pet.

James wanted to give the girl to Steve, but the Soldier didn't. Darcy was his Pet. He would keep her forever if he was able to. She was getting anxious though, she had no love for the Avengers, the Soldier could tell, they had failed her after all. But she knew that obnoxious Captain was essentially good and didn't deserve the fate they had so happily dealt the Hydra loyal. The Soldier knew what he had to do, taking the small explosive from it's spot in the back of the jacket and tossing it very carefully so it landed a decent enough distance from the Pet, to keep her safe and unsinged, but close enough to garner attention.
Luck smiled down on him as the bird man started to descend just as the explosive went off, tossing him out of the air and onto the ground. The Widow, perfectly poised and trained didn't turn to the explosion, but instead looked inside and saw the ammunitions room open.

"Rogers, cover!" she called out, turning away from the door and careful to make sure she was small and compact before Steve did the same and shielded the both of them.

The first explosion from the shack was about the same that had thrown the Birdman from the air, but then, much faster than they should, the other bombs started to explode, and Natasha and Steve were turtle crawling to a more safe zone.

Darcy laughed, loud and clear as a bell.

"I set them all off, thirty seconds apart," she giggled as the Soldier got her to her feet and began rushing back to their vehicle now that the Avengers were occupied. "That's what they get for leaving me to ROT!"

"Yes, Pet, you've had your revenge, let's go."

Chapter End Notes

This is just a general reminder about me as an author. I take criticism about as well as I take vitamins, and that's ---never well? If you have constructive criticism, go and find an author who enjoys that sort of thing. I promise you, it gums up my works and the update well will run dry.

If you didn't like this chapter, or anything in my writing ever, then please exit out of the browser tab. I really don't want to hear about how you don't like it, or you were offended, or how much I suck.

Thank you very much for reading!!!
Wednesday!!!!!!! I think every week that I manage to publish three different chapters to three stories, I should celebrate with pizza and ice cream. Or something...

Uhm---warnings? nothing that hasn't been warned for before. i feel accomplished.

And of course, huge thanks to my betas, phoenix-173 and dntpanic42

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Five: Blast from the Past

Steve's ears were ringing, but it wasn't due to the fact that he'd just been nearly blown up by the man who had warmed his bed and then taken possession of his everything back in the 1930's. It was funny to think that there were certain historians who not only missed the fact that Bucky and Steve had not been the most platonic of relationships (something that Uncle Sam had managed to hide spectacularly well), but also simply assumed that Bucky had been some coddling, gentle force in Steve's life.

He had not been. This hadn't even been the first or second time that Bucky had nearly exploded Steve. The first time had been on his fourteenth birthday, when Bucky had obtained a few illegally imported fireworks from somewhere foreign. They had been a little too amazing, and Steve's eyebrows took a whole ten months to grow back properly.

Bucky back in the late 30's and early 40's had always been concerned about Steve's health, wanting to make him as healthy as possible. Steve had always thought back then that he wanted him to not be sick just so he could continue to try and explode him, or launch him into the stratosphere on roller coasters, or just that one time sticking him in a barrel and rolling him down a sloping hill. Essentially, Steve needed to be well so Bucky could try to get the little guy to do ridiculous stunts with him.

History only remembered the fact that Steve had been a daredevil. They hadn't known how he had gotten to be that way.

But yes, his ears were ringing, but not with the explosion. The sound of laughter was ringing in his
ear, sounding so strange in such a setting. It was clear and mirthful and delighted, like someone who had just received the Christmas present they had wanted so badly. It was a woman's laugh, an infectious sound that had Steve forgetting the stinging slaps from the debris landing on the parts of his legs that were exposed.

He looked up and squinted, Natasha cursing at him as the shield moved as another explosion went off.

In the distance, he could see Bucky, rushing away at top speed, hidden by darkness and shadow. But clearly, something was thrown over his shoulder. Something decidedly feminine shaped and Steve could see the bounce of a curly piece of dark colored hair in the shadows that had escaped whatever was covering the woman's head.

The sound of thunder was louder than the third explosion to go off, each one split by thirty seconds. Rain began to fall instead of snow, in a torrential downpour as lightning split the sky. The fire extinguished and it would seem it had a dampening effect on each consequential bomb that went off.

"AWWW MAN!" came the annoyed shout from the laughing woman, nearly a mile away at that point. Only Steve heard it, Natasha was not quite as enhanced in her hearing ability. "JAMES, LET ME GO, I'M MAD. NOW HE SHOWS UP?!!"

Steve left the shield to cover Natasha in case any of the explosions were larger, he hopped to his feet and was off at a blistering gallop in the direction of the woman screaming, his arms pumping viciously as tried to access some hidden speed when he heard a truck roar to life in the distance.

"ROGERS, GET BACK HERE!" Natasha shouted through the comm unit.

But he wouldn't, he couldn't. Bucky was right there. The woman had said James. She'd asked to be let go, but Steve didn't think it was in a way a kidnapping victim would say it. The request had been annoyed, but playful, just like the mirthful laughter had been at the explosion of the Hydra shack. She'd said JAMES. Which meant he knew who he was. He was James now, and not some cold, unknowing killing machine. Steve ran as fast as he could, getting to the truck which was stopped in the middle of the exit from the campground.

His heart hammered in his chest. Bucky had stayed. He hadn't run off. He'd stayed and that meant he remembered and Steve could HELP him and bring him home. Or hell, go with him, because he'd been all of thirteen years old when he realized that home was where Bucky was, and nothing else really mattered.
He could see a lone figure sitting behind the driver's wheel of the truck and Steve felt his stomach do a flip flop.

"Bucky?" he called out hopefully, yanking off his helmet and throwing it to the ground. He shook his head and amended, "James?"

No response, but Steve wasn't about to be deterred. He took another step forward and called out, "Is the girl with you? The one from the last facility? Do you need help?"

The silence was making Steve even more anxious as he stepped forward again.

"I don't want to hurt you, and I don't want you to do anything against your will, but we can help you. The both of you. You should come with me---Buck, please talk to me. Goddammit!"

"Yo, Captain Twenty Questions!"

Steve jumped in his place, his hands going up as he started to turn when he felt an absolutely unforgiving amount of pure electricity course through his body. He'd once had Thor zap him with Mjolnir during a team practice, and this was just a shade or two below that. It felt like one of the Strike team's batons turned up way past 100. He was on the ground, flat on his stomach with the electric baton still pressed to his neck.

"Just---just leave us alone!" the woman spoke again sounding churlish and annoyed. She stepped around him as he still spasmed, opening the back gate of the SUV and hopping in.

Steve struggled to get his eyes on her, but his vision was a little blurred thanks to the volts coursing through him. She was a small thing, from what he could see, and he couldn't see much. Her dark clothing made her blend into the night and the hood on her head covered her brow, whereas a too large mask, borrowed from Bucky, he knew, covered the bottom half of her face.

What he could see was the stark paleness of what little skin was showing, and the hint of large eyes, narrowed in righteous anger as she glared at him before bringing the gate closed.

He tried to open his mouth to say anything, but the vehicle was gone by the time he could speak.
again. He pulled himself to his knees to see Thor approaching him with a congenial grin.

"Steven! Natasha is most pleased with Wilson," Thor announced. "He sent a message my way to arrive with assistance, and now she believes much evidence can still be gathered from the wreckage."

"Great---good," Steve managed to squeak out of a too raw voice box.

"Did I hit you with lightning by accident, friend?" Thor worried.

"No---it was---a girl," Steve said between shaky breaths to refill his lungs.

Thor laughed in spite of the annoyed look Steve threw him. He helped his fallen comrade off of the ground and tried to dust him off. But Steve was having none of it, too angry that a damned rescued Hydra hostage, probably still recovering from torture and injury, had managed to get the drop on him and took him down. He'd been so swept away with the idea that Bucky was within arm's reach that he'd been taken out like some idiot recruit on the first day of the job.

And he knew, if that had been the real Bucky, with all of his memories back, he would have laughed at him immediately for being taken down by such a tiny slip of a dame.

Steve shrugged Thor off, which Thor was having none of, gripping Steve by the shoulder of his uniform, staring down the scant two inches that separated them. He gave him a commiserating look and then a small smile full of humility.

"There is no shame in being felled by a small girl," Thor promised him. "I was felled by a small girl in the past."

"Yeah," Steve nodded as the two men began walking back to the wrecked Hydra facility. He felt a jolting shock run down his back from the origin point of the hit to his neck and had to mentally will himself to swallow, as if his body had forgotten the steps thanks to the shock. "Darcy Lewis, right?"

Thor gave him a shrewd smirk and shrugged, "You play coy, Steven, but Natasha has told me of your interest."
"It's not interest---it's just, she was an interesting sort of girl---woman," Steve amended. "Bucky would've gotten a kick out of her."

"I have not heard from dear little Darcy in two Midgardian years, at least," Thor sighed, giving Steve an apologetic smile. "She and Jane severed their connection and their work together, for what reason, I don't know. Jane's work has never fully recovered, there was none so loyal to her as Darcy."

"So---she just, Jane doesn't even know where she is?" Steve furrowed his brow at that.

Two years. A little less than two years ago SHIELD had fallen, Steve's world had been upended. SHIELD had been upended. The timing of it made Steve suspicious. He doubted that Miss Lewis was Hydra. Thor had sung her praises to any who would listen. Steve had even heard Erik Selvig go on about her when they were setting up the labs at the new facility.

"Our friend Natasha is 'working' on it," Thor made air quotes, and then grinned, pleased with himself for getting the quotes right. "You would suit each other extraordinarily well, if you enjoy hearing pleasing chatter."

"I don't mind it," Steve admitted it. There had been days where Bucky had chattered on endlessly about anything and everything, and Steve had just sat and watched him go through the very dramatic retellings of mundane events.

"I would have hesitations about you meeting my dear friend from the past, should your heart already be sworn to another," Thor said delicately. "One that you chase relentlessly."

"No---ah, that's not," Steve shook his head. "I mean to say--we had always wanted, uh..."

"Ah, no, I see," Thor laughed. "I am not of the proclivity to enjoy all sexes. But my brother Loki was always very fluid in his conquests. He often enjoyed taking the shape of a woman and being taken with fervor."

Steve looked a little scandalized, but covered it quickly with a nod, "Well, that's just---great."
The laughter in the SUV was loud. So loud it rattled the little plastic hula girl that Darcy had defiantly placed on the dashboard despite James telling her that it made their car noticeable. But there Hannah Hula was, her grass skirt shaking because the laughter was maniacally loud and booming. Darcy flinched when a metal hand hit a thigh extra hard.

She was chuckling too, because James’ laughter was downright infectious. But she still worried that James was laughing so hard that his eyes were squinted shut as tears rolled down his face, and she didn't understand how he was driving on the winding, dark back road at such a high speed with his eyes closed from laughing so hard.

He'd been at it for five minutes, every once in while taking a gasp of air or choking out words. Joyous words like

' Like a sack of bricks !'

' Shaking like a leaf !'

' Scared of a little slip like you !'

' Jumped out of his skin !'

Darcy was very much aware that the man uproariously laughing at the moment was definitely not the Soldier and he was not quite her steadfast and lovely James either. This was someone different, hints of him had been coloring James' speech and expressions in the barest little slips in the past days. She liked it though, but then again, she liked all of him. She liked James. She liked this mysterious, mirthful guy with the Brooklyn accent. And she liked the Soldier in spite of James' attempts at keeping her safe from him.

She hoped someday, with enough time to heal, all three of them would be harmoniously living inside the brain of the man laughing his ass off at the moment. That was a man she really wanted to meet someday.

His laughter was finally dying down a little as they got on the highway and back tracked, going North and West into the heart of a blizzard. Darcy felt greedy though and wanted more laughter so she leaned into James with a smile pulling at her pouty lips.
"He smelled like star spangled barbecue."

She giggled in delight as it set him off again, laughing so hard that Darcy was sure a normal man's abdominal muscles would have been aching by now. She was pleased with herself, one for taking out two of six Avengers with her own special brand of lightning, and two for extending James' mirth. She shimmied on the front seat and leaned into him, absolutely giddy when he lifted up his arm and wrapped it around her.

"Oh Dollbaby, that was the best," James sighed, pulling her in as close as she could go and squeezing her arm. "I might let him get close again someday just so you can knock him out again. Right on his ass. You're a champ, a real doozy of a dame."

Darcy giggled and preened at the glowing words of praise and they drove in the comfort of silence for a few seconds. Precious few seconds.

"You know Captain Rogers, then?" Darcy wondered.

"A few life times ago, yeah," James sounded a little more subdued. A little more like the calm James she had been spending most of her time with.

"So---you're old," Darcy made the statement, not a question. She looked up at James through her lashes and said, "And you're like a super soldier, like him, strong and fast and strong."

"Yeah," James patted her shoulder. "Darcy, what do you know about James Buchanan Barnes?"

"That he died a long time ago," Darcy said truthfully. "And one of my friend's great, great aunts who used to live in Brooklyn said he was smokin' hot and a great kisser. She bragged about the smooch behind a dance hall endlessly every Thanksgiving. I think her tombstone says, 'Beatrice Dettler, I made out with Bucky Barnes in 1939'. She was very proud."

James laughed again, this time shorter and more explosive. He shrugged and looked down at Darcy for a split second, seeing only gentle curiosity in her expression, no judgement or censure at all.
"Steve used to call me Bucky. A long time ago."

Darcy nodded and waited a beat before saying in a silly sort of voice, "In a Galaxy far, far away."

James gave her a confused look and she shrugged.

"Tell me?" Darcy asked hopefully.

He took a very long inhale and blew it out slowly before nodding once.

"I don't remember everything. But I remember he used to be smaller."

Darcy knew that James didn’t need a lot of sleep. She honestly didn’t even know that he did sleep. She knew that when they slept in the car, he might have caught a few winks in the front seat. But when they stayed in motels, he would tell her to take the bed and never take her up on her offer to share. The first few days, she had fallen asleep mid word, chatting about anything and everything.

She’d told him about a lonely childhood, being raised by a grandmother for the first nine years of her life. She hadn’t had the opportunity to socialize with anyone under the age of seventy before going to school, and it showed. She hadn’t known how to make friends, but she had tried like hell to do it, and the cheerful enthusiasm that James enjoyed so much about Darcy hadn’t exactly endeared her to her classmates. She’d been an outcast from an early age, but had kept on trying, working so hard at finding friends all the way up until she had taken an internship with Jane Foster.

She had clammed up about Jane though. However, James could tell what went unsaid. Darcy had thought Jane was her friend. A close friend. They’d been through some pretty amazing things together. They’d never done what Darcy had deemed ‘best friend rituals you see in movies or on tv’, but Darcy had thought that it was because Jane was always preoccupied with being brilliant.

James could tell she was still sore that Jane had never raised the alarm. James himself was pretty sore about it. He’d searched through the security file Hydra had kept on Darcy, and there had been only two requests that had to be diverted from SHIELD resources. Both of them had been from the same person. Erik Selvig had demanded to know where Darcy was right before the fall of SHIELD, having called her cellphone and gotten no response. He’d been fed a story by a Hydra
agent, stating that Darcy had requested a new start far away from SHIELD.

Selvig had tried to find out where she was again, just two days after the fall of SHIELD. The smart man had figured the first response he had gotten from SHIELD had been someone lying to him. But the second call had been intercepted by Hydra as well, and this time, Selvig was placated by Darcy himself. A voicemail was downloaded on the man’s phone, with Darcy’s voice telling him that she was fine and that she wanted to continue her new life away from the antics of heroes.

Bucky knew how they had gotten Darcy’s words too. Darcy wouldn’t have remembered it, being blissed out and drugged as she was, but they had managed to get enough sounds out of her to manipulate them into any words they wanted.

It had been enough for Erik Selvig to drop looking for Darcy any further.

They’d hit another motel just a few days after their brush with Steve, and Darcy had given up on trying to get James to sleep in a bed, figuring that he must get enough sleep, because he certainly always looked and seemed well rested in the morning. She simply crawled into the bed while James combed through reports and chatter feed, all the while chattering away.

That night, her one sided chat fest had been about how the one thing she had always wanted to do was travel, but her work with Jane hadn’t exactly taken her to the places she had wanted to go. A desert in New Mexico, a lab in Oslo, and London had been the extent of it. She had hoped for astronomical phenomena to take her to more exotic locale, and she yammered on about a list of countries she might like to go to now that she was no longer a labrat for astrophysicists or Nazis.

‘We will take our Pet to Europe. So many enemies to destroy and places to debauch her.’

“And I’ve never seen Paris...I can speak French, did you---did you know?” she whispered drowsily.

“No, I didn’t know that,” James smiled at her as her eyes closed and didn’t open back up.

“Voulez vous couchez avec moi se soir,” she murmured, then giggled herself to sleep.

James silently chuckled and watched her greedily as she slipped further into slumber. He indulged for countless minutes before going back to the small laptop he had secured months ago, allowing him to find all the Hydra bases, keep track of Steve and his friends, and digest all of the
information he had taken from Hydra.

He’d finally managed to decode the files they’d gotten from the last base. His entire file. He’d gotten pieces of it before, but this was the entire file. He navigated through it, skipping to what he wanted to know right then. His genetic samples had been collected decades ago, he remembered the unusual mission that the little scientist had set for him in the fifties, stating that with new techniques, the Soldier could continue fathering children hundreds of years from now.

The procedure had already been performed on older samples that Hydra had found in SHIELD laboratories. James hadn’t understood then why Zola had told him then.

He had already forgotten Steve by then.

James had destroyed the stockpiles of his own genetic material less than three months after breaking away from Hydra. It had turned his stomach to remember what they had aimed to do. What they had tried to get him to do with nameless, forgotten, destroyed women throughout his servitude.

It was necessary to look to the future after all. To continue to make Hydra great, even after his own expiration.

He pulled up a file and read it quickly, seeing for the first time the reason why none of the women who he had taken repeatedly had ever been deemed competent enough to bear the children of the Soldier. Apparently, not just any woman would do.

She would have to be enhanced in order to complete it. And even then, it was not a sure thing that any child would develop. It was problematic for Hydra, for the only women that were worthy of being enhanced were the Widows from the Red Room, and they were only enhanced after their graduation ceremony.

And James knew from his own memories that the serum didn’t take to everyone it was administered to, not the bastardized version that was available to Hydra anyway. There had been a reason why there was only one Asset for so very long. Hydra didn’t have access to the real serum. And they certainly didn’t have access to Howard Stark’s vita-rays.

‘We are lucky that we were the ideal physical specimen prior to our serum. Our Pet is also ideal.’
James read on as quickly as possible while Darcy started to make incontent sounds in her sleep. It had been happening more often. As she seemed healed and happy throughout the day, at night, her sounds of discomfort and pain were enough to fuel both James and the Soldier with seething anger for the ones who had caused her pain.

He rose out of his chair and approached the bed, placing his right hand on her forehead, pushing long hair away from her face as he soothed her quietly.

“You are safe, I won’t let anyone hurt you anymore,” he whispered.

‘Hold her, you fool.’

James didn’t quite trust the animal in his head to hold the beautiful woman in a bed. He doubted the beast would stay down should such an opportunity present itself. He continued to stroke her hair and whisper reassurances until she calmed, then went back to his research.

He didn’t quite know what he wanted to find. If one of his samples had been moved to the facility that Darcy had been in before he had the opportunity to destroy it, then he knew that Darcy was carrying his child. Once he was certain of that, he would gently prod her into realizing what her condition was.

She seemed blatantly ignorant of the fact that Hydra’s last experiment on her had been a success. She was also intent on being equally as ignorant of the file that James had obtained, not interested in the least. James had tried to ask her if she wanted to know, nearly every other day, and she had said no every time. He’d even let the laptop up and running with the synopsis of her on the screen, giving her privacy in the name of obtaining her breakfast.

He’d come back to the room to see her watching cooking shows on the television, the laptop turned off due to inactivity.

He felt that if he knew whether he was the father or not, he’d be able to get her to listen to him about what had happened to her.

Darcy was enhanced with Hydra’s serum, the same that ran through his veins, if at a lower dosage. She’d survived it at impossible odds and hadn’t turned into a monster even when Hydra had tried to force her into being a monster. And when they couldn’t make her stronger or faster or less human, someone came up with the brilliant idea of making her a broodmare for a new generation.
of super soldiers.

And the first try at artificial insemination, done as crudely as possible, had been successful.

‘A child of mine with the Pet would be a fearsome, beautiful creature.’

James sighed, not wanting to hear the Soldier’s hopeful dreams about a small, beautiful murder baby. He almost feared what the Soldier would do if the baby was fathered by a different enhanced monster.

“Attempts to obtain Winter Soldier’s samples have failed, all are destroyed,” James whispered aloud from the file, feeling his stomach turn over as the words blurred in front of him. “Alternative enhanced samples will be requisitioned for Project Ostera.”

James sat back in his seat and ran a hand over his brow, up into his hair. It was a weight off of his shoulders, in a way. He wouldn’t want to be the person responsible for putting Darcy in this impossible situation. He didn’t remember everything about life and humanity, but he knew that making a child should be done out of love and want for that child. And if it wasn’t his child, Darcy wouldn’t feel pressured to keep it out of some sense of loyalty to him.

‘The child will still be a beautiful, stunning creature, because it is hers. It shall be weaker though because it is not ours. We will need to protect it.’

James’ head fell back at that surprising declaration from the Soldier, and he closed the laptop down before pulling off his boots and turning to look at Darcy in the bed, sleeping soundly through her nightmares now. He took a slow, measured breath, feeling exhausted suddenly, something he didn’t feel very often, thanks to the serum.

He lay on top of the quilt that Darcy was wrapped in, scooting close to her and laying on his side. She turned into him immediately, and small arms wrapped around his waist and held on tight.

He maneuvered his left hand to lightly brush against her lower abdomen, wondering what she would decide to do. He couldn’t detect a heartbeat yet, not even with the delicate sensors on his index finger.

“James,” Darcy whispered, burrowing into him as best as she could with the quilt in between their
bodies. A contented sigh blew from her lips and landed on his collarbone, causing him to shiver.

‘You will tell her about her child tomorrow. She must know.’

For once, James agreed.

Chapter End Notes

....aww Bucky/James/Soldier. My love for you is getting a little ridiculous, to be honest. So, if Bucky's samples weren't used to conceive the Hydra zygote, then that leaves like---six or seven other options...

Thanks for reading!
Chapter Notes

And another week of posting done! I get a cookie now.

Chapter warnings: inappropriate and pervy Winter Soldier making me fall in love with him. Sickness. ...and that's it for this one.

As always, thanks to phoenix-173 and dntpanic42 for being the most awesome betas and sounding boards ever!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Six: Pet Care

Darcy woke up to incredible warmth, and the feeling of her hair tickling at her forehead. She blinked her eyes open to see her whole area of vision taken up with a soft gray long sleeved t-shirt and she let her eyes slowly move up to see the column of James' throat, along with his stubble that was a few days away from being a full fledged beard. Her hair moved again, being pushed by the air James let out through parted lips. They were laying on the bed together, Darcy wrapped up in the quilt, face to face while they were on their sides, James lay on his metal arm, but his right arm was wrapped around her middle, and both of her arms were wrapped around him in kind.

"Nice to wake up to," Darcy murmured. "If you won't let me have coffee, this will do."

James made an aborted little sound in the back of his throat. It sounded like he was comfortable and pleased with how he was slowly surfacing to wakefulness. His right arm pulled her tighter and Darcy gladly snuggled into him and all the heat he was giving off. She hummed in contentment and started to stretch her body out, starting with her toes and moving up.

"Bucky," she whispered, testing the name out on her lips. It seemed wrong somehow.

She knew that Bucky was the one with the lazy accent and sweet, but outdated terms of endearment. Darcy figured that it would be hardest to bring Bucky back, seeing as he was buried so long ago.
But someday, she'd figure out a way to help him get himself all put together again, all three parts that she liked very much. Then he'd be Bucky, and maybe he'd be willing to stop running and burning and pillaging. And she'd probably be sated for revenge then too.

She didn't know what happened then, and she was willing to bet James and Bucky and the Soldier didn't know either. But they could figure it out together.

Darcy wondered if Steve Rogers and the rest of the super squad were in her future. Bucky had seemed fond in his reminiscing about Steve, what little he could remember. And he'd randomly interspersed his memories with chuckles about seeing the 'punk' laid flat out on his ass by a tiny little dame. All of it was said with an underlying fondness.

Darcy couldn't understand it, but then again, she'd never had the opportunity to care about someone as much as Bucky and Steve apparently cared for each other. She realized that Steve was chasing after Bucky for a long time now. Nearly as long as Darcy had been taken by Hydra.

No wonder they hadn't had time to notice she was missing. The Super Squad had been busy looking for Bucky Barnes.

She felt her stomach lurch suddenly and went to jump out of James' embrace. He resisted her escape, his eyes snapping open, cool and assessing, the sudden jolt into wakefulness bringing out the Soldier immediately rather than James.

"Sleep," the Soldier muttered in Russian, closing his eyes when he realized there was no threat to him or his Pet. "Gain your strength so I might ravish you, Pet."

"I'm gonna hurl," Darcy warned before clapping her hand over her mouth and turning olive green in her complexion. She didn't know if he understood exactly what she meant by that, but he hopped off the bed and grabbed for her, rushing her to the bathroom, but she couldn't hold off and got some sick all over the front of her before he tenderly placed her on the ground by the toilet.

"You're alright, Pet," he whispered in Russian.

"Farsi, dude," Darcy reminded him miserably, her head completely in the toilet as her entire body heaved with the next wave of sick.
"You will be a good little mother for your bastard," the Soldier continued to coo at her in Russian though. "And I will protect you. Both of you. My pathetic, sweet, little Pet."

"Ohhhh," Darcy sighed as she sat up a bit, looking completely drained and disgusting to boot. "Don't know what you're saying but it sounds nice."

"Come along, Pet, you need a bath," the Soldier insisted, picking her up and placing her on the sink counter and handing her her toothbrush full of paste before going about flushing the toilet and starting the running water.

Darcy watched in exhausted amusement as he filled the tub with scalding hot water, looking around the pitiful motel bathroom for anything to make the water better, settling on taking a bar of soap and crushing it in his left hand before sprinkling it all over the water.

She had her head leaning against the wall, scraping the toothbrush in her mouth lazily, feeling bone crushingly tired despite the fact that she had just woken up. She was pretty sure her upper intestines had been flushed down the toilet with the rest of the contents of her stomach and she had no fight left in her. And she didn't want to fight the Soldier when he stood in front of her, leaving no personal space as he went for the t-shirt she slept in, pulling it up. He moved her around like a doll, toothbrush taken from her hands, lifeless limbs raised just enough to get the shirt off of her, and suddenly she was just sitting there in a pair of underwear, staring up at a covetous assassinating machine.

"Not plump enough," the Soldier sighed, still in Russian, his hands going from her shoulders, down her arms to rest at her stomach. "Smaller than just a few days ago."

"Too tired for shenanigans," Darcy whispered as his hands went for her panties and eased them down, allowing her to move her bottom so he could get them off of her. "Not that I'm saying shenanigans aren't gonna happen, cause let's face it, all three of you are hot, but I'm too tired right now."

"Don't worry, Pet," the Soldier finally spoke in English to her, his voice just holding a bit of Russian accent, the words low and raspy. "I will have you when you are wet with wanting me."

"Sounds nice," Darcy nodded as he lifted her off the counter again and took her to the bath, easing her into the piping hot water. "If you leave me I'm gonna drown. That's a thing that happens in bathtubs, you don't need more than like, an inch of water to drown, really."
"Don't worry, Pet," the Soldier repeated, before quickly divesting himself of layer after layer of clothing.

Darcy felt a little more awake now, sitting up straight and staring as skin started to be revealed. Her eyes were drawn to the metal arm, because the only thing that could take her eyes away from a stomach like that was a metal arm, and she frowned at the sight of the angry looking scars.

"You frown, is it not pleasing?" the Soldier demanded, looking down at his fully erect, twitching manhood. Undressing the Pet and seeing her full bare beauty had made him hard with the want for her, and he had always thought his manhood to be very fine indeed.

"Huh?" Darcy blinked, looking down to what the Soldier was staring proudly at. He was long and wide and uncut, and jutting up towards his belly button, twitching under her inspection. "Holy shit."

"Much better," the Soldier smirked at her immediately flushed cheeks, parted lips and wide eyes. "Another time, Pet."

He climbed into the tub with her, the water just barely sloshing over the edge, and he opened his arms to her. A low groan of contentment rumbled in both of their throats when Darcy turned in the tub and rearranged herself so that she was sitting with her back against his front.

"And you thought you were some raging beast about to ravish me," Darcy scoffed as his cock lay against her back, his arms wrapped around her middle.

"I am no animal," the Soldier insisted. "James is weak."

"No, not weak," Darcy corrected. "He's strong where you're not. You're strong where he's not. Together, you make a pretty amazing person. Minus a few memories and old timey ways to say girl."

The Soldier scoffed at that, but cupped his left hand in the water, bringing it up and out to gently pour it on her shoulders. She moaned in appreciation and he spent the next fifteen minutes gently bathing her, the soap infused water settling into their skin.
"Sleepy," she was a melted puddle of a woman against his front and he had to pick her up out of the water as it started to go cold.

The Soldier was concerned that her strength was flagging. It was certainly because of the bastard child she carried. He would have to find a way to help her somehow, medication or some kind of vitamin.

He didn't want her to lose the bastard child without even knowing of its existence.

Darcy woke up to find that they were already on the road, and a container of something warm and delicious smelling was underneath her nose. She looked around, peering in the orange light and realized that it was already late in the afternoon, the winter sun setting in the distance. She also noticed that instead of the usual trees and nearly abandoned roads, they were in a city. A very metropolitan city.

"Where are we?" she whispered, a spoon being gently teased against her lips as soon as her words were done.

"Calgary."

It was the Soldier that answered her, which was unusual. She'd only ever seen him a few times now, and usually those times were tied to violence. Well, twice it had been violence and this last time had been to bathe her.

"Why?" Darcy questioned and got another spoonful of delicious soup shoved into her mouth.

"You are ill," he answered shortly.

"Don't leave me here, don't leave me," Darcy was suddenly full of energy, sitting straight up and looking around in a panic. "I know I'll slow you down, if I'm sick, but I promise, I'll get better. Please don't leave me. James---Bucky---whoever, PLEASE."

"I will never leave you, Pet," the Soldier answered, his words a solid and sure thing. He looked at
her with the closest thing he had to sympathy and gave her a small smile. "I will never allow anyone to take you from me. You are my Pet, now."

"Oh," Darcy whispered. She grinned at him suddenly, big and bright and lovely. "Thank you."

"Yes, Pet," the Soldier nodded.

"So---are you going to have to you know---grrr," Darcy made a finger gun and pulled the trigger a few times.

"Nyet," he shook his head. He fed her a few more spoonfuls of soup and frowned severely when her energy seemed to flag and wane. "You require medicine. I will obtain it for you."

"This doesn't seem like a Hydra facility," Darcy whispered, looking around. They were in the middle of a bustling city landscape, namely a very avant garde building full of chrome and high windows, built up to the sky like some sort of obnoxious monument.

"It is not. There is more research and information here about the serum that is affecting you so adversely than anywhere on Earth. Hydra has been trying to gain access here for quite sometime. It is Stark Industries."

"Well---shit."

"Boss, there seems to be a hostile attack on one of the hidden servers."

Tony, sitting on a low stool, a blowtorch in hand as he worked at the undercarriage of the Hulkbuster suit, did a full seven hundred and twenty degree turn before stopping with a jerk. He went over the statement in his mind and then stared up at the ceiling contemplatively.

"We have hidden servers?"
"The servers were established by your father over thirty years ago," Friday explained.

"And---no one ever told me about them, why now?" Tony wondered.

"They were never under hostile attack before," Friday answered back, and her tone was definitely glib.

Tony heaved a sigh and stood up from his rolling stool, grabbing a large bag of something slightly sweet and crunchy before walking towards the nearest screen, he stuffed his mouth full of sustenance before he began to work in earnest, trying to quickly ascertain what his father might have put on hidden servers thirty years ago.

"Vita-ray research and serum development," Tony rolled his eyes. "Way to be predictable, Dad."

"Boss, I'm not going to be able to hold off the attack, I've done what I can to modernize the server, but it's still a big room full of computer closets," Friday reminded him.

"Shut them down," Tony advised. The world didn't need to know what Howard had figured out about the serum that made Captain America. Especially since it seemed Howard had it all but figured out according to what he was seeing. “Do we have anyone close by?”

“Captain Rogers is roughly an hour away,” Friday revealed.

“Send him there, and can you shut it down already?” Tony demanded hotly.

"It's not that easy," Friday practically seethed. "I'd be shutting down the electricity to an entire city block."

"DO IT!" Tony insisted. "And suit me up, like, five minutes ago."

The Soldier smiled when the lights to the building went out. He nodded at Darcy who was in the car, working at his laptop to continue the attack against the Stark servers. He didn't need to know
what Howard Stark had gotten out of his research and recreation of the serum. He knew how that story ended already.

What he needed, was to get into the building, on the third floor, in a little office that had been rented out to the same person since 1986. He easily got into the building through a door he had scoped out around back, kept open with a brick so that a few people could sneak out and catch a cigarette throughout the day. The door had probably been open for decades now, and the alarm had been dismantled on it long ago.

The cover of darkness and the fact that more than half of the workforce was already gone for the day allowed the Soldier to walk through the halls unnoticed, and before long, he was standing in a cheerfully decorated office, with old fashioned rock music playing softly from a desk.

"Good afternoon, young man. I've been expecting you for some time."

The Soldier turned to see a little white haired woman staring back up at him, a smile on her thin, wrinkled lips. Her big brown eyes weren't quite hidden behind thick lenses and hair the solid color of gray fell around her cheeks in a bob.

"I'm Doctor Carla Rivera, and you must be the Winter Soldier. It has been a very long time since we saw each other last. But you look exactly as I remember you."

Chapter End Notes

I really hope you enjoyed this chapter. That bath scene was one of the most favorite things I've ever written, ever.

(Also, random, I like giving people ideas of who is playing who with the OC's, and Dr. Carla Rivera is totally played by Rita Moreno, who is like...my hero.
Darcy startled awake for what seemed like the hundredth time in the last forty-five minutes. She no longer had to aggressively type out damaging code into the laptop as the Soldier had encouraged her to do. What had started as a power outage in the building to discourage the hacking had rapidly devolved into the entire information highway in Canada being obliterated and useless.

Tony Stark was NOT fucking around, desperate to keep the information that Darcy was toying with secret. She didn't blame him, really, because like hell did she want any more people suffering through the super soldier serum. The world had lucked out with those two Brooklyn boys being the primary recipients.

She looked down at what she'd managed to pull off the servers before they'd been yanked away and put under the cover of darkness. Howard Stark had hired a very small, elite crew of people to recreate Erskine's brilliance. What they found out was not so encouraging.

The Vita-rays were what had made Steve Rogers turn from a 98 pound asthmatic into two hundred and twenty pounds of All American Beefcake. If he hadn't of had those, his health would have improved with the serum, and everything in him would have been amplified. So, essentially a tiny Captain America, brilliant master strategist.

Darcy ruminated over the other super soldier, the one that had decided to adopt her as a road trip companion and hopefully a potentially, eventually sexy times Pet. He hadn't had the vita rays, but
apparently he didn't need to gain extra inches or bulk. But it had taken what was there already and made it stronger and more resilient. The only thing she really knew about Bucky Barnes from history class and Great Great Aunt Dettler was that he had been loyal, smart and the best kisser in Brooklyn.

And the serum had taken that and made it stronger and better.

And Hydra had used that loyalty and wickedly fast brain and turned him into a killing machine.

"Well suck it up buckos, we're bringing the pain to you now," Darcy mumbled to no one as she looked around with sleepy eyes, wondering how much longer they had before Iron Man came rushing onto the scene.

Her mind wandered to her own version of the serum. From what James had managed to tell her when she'd been willing to listen, and from what she could put together from Stark's research, the serum didn't take to everyone.

There was less than a five percent chance that any test subject would react positively to it. Stark was fairly certain that if a person didn't become a monster, they would probably die. He hadn't been willing to do the experiments, but Darcy knew others had. The Red Skull. Hydra. Bruce Banner. It didn't tend to go well.

She wondered if that was why she was so tired and sick feeling. Was her body finally rejecting what had been pumped into her months and months ago? Was she going to die unless the Soldier could find a cure inside?

What had the serum amplified in her?

That made her stomach turn unpleasantly and she made a conscious effort to stop the meager soup she had managed to get down from coming back up again. She noticed that on the floor of the truck was a brown paper bag from the takeout place the Soldier had gotten the soup and it was full of individually wrapped saltine crackers. She pulled up a handful and opened one, nibbling on it absently as her exhausted mind wandered.

She'd been just a normal person before. A flighty millennial that Jane Foster had always scolded for getting distracted by music or the latest buzzfeed article about what people really do behind closed doors with their significant other. Thor had once called her a maiden of Hestia, goodness
and warmth and home.

She'd liked that, it had made her blush. She sighed and wished that Thor had actually thought well enough of her to wonder where the fuck she had been for two years straight.

Erik Selvig had thought she had been clever, but had also called her catty in the same breath. It hadn't been her fault that she HAD to have gotten a little bit of juvenile revenge against the SHIELD agents who had shown up too late in London, intent on getting her to sign even more of her free will away with all of the nondisclosure agreements.

Darcy wondered though if the serum had stuck on her because there just hadn't been anything to enhance. She was a plain vanilla cone of ice cream in a world full of fantastical sherbets and fancy loaded Ben and Jerry's pints. You couldn't be made more dangerous if there was nothing remarkable about you to make dangerous in the first place.

The city block their SUV was parked on was completely dark, but she still saw a small movement about one block down. Something shiny descending quickly and the outline of large wings that resembled angel's wings. She squinted, knowing she shouldn't be able to see anything at all in the pitch black, but sure enough, she saw the faint outline of a shield going off running towards the building Bucky had gone into, leaving the one with wings behind to handle anything nefarious on the outside.

"Really Captain Assface? You had him for decades, can you give me like, a month with him before I have to give him back to you?" Darcy sighed before cramming another saltine into her mouth and closing the laptop. She reached under the seat and grabbed her weapons of choice (the only weapons James and the Soldier agreed she was more than capable of wielding) and then very carefully opened the door to the SUV, her slow and sluggish movements allowing for silence at the very least.

For a member of the Super Squad, the Big Bird with the wings wasn't exactly stealthy, he was talking into a comm unit and wasn't even using coded words. Darcy wasn't a super spy by any means, but even she understood why the Soldier used different languages all of the time. Darcy managed to get herself leaned up against a dumpster well before Ducktales McGee managed to get close and she shamelessly listened in on his conversation.

"No, I'm telling you, he's crazed right now. If this asshole Fucky doesn't come back in house soon, Cap's gonna just---combust," Flip Flap muttered into his comm. "You can't get him that date with Little Miss Great Rack any sooner?"
Darcy scoffed at that silently. Only one person had called her that in her lifetime, and she had hoped the nickname wouldn't stick. She much preferred what the boys in eighth grade called her when she'd been forced to wear a smaller t-shirt during gym class. Bazooka Boobs was better than Little Miss Great Rack.

"Yeah, well find her, because Cap needs a distraction before he runs himself into the ground."

Darcy didn't want to hear anymore. She didn't want to hear herself being gossiped about when she had been MISSING and TORTURED for nearly two years of her life.

"And you don't find that suspicious at all? No one's heard from her for two years? Nat---"

The rest of the Woodland Fairy-man's words more closely resembled one of those old fashioned cartoon animals that had dropped a toaster into a full bathtub and after his gibberish ended he dropped face down on the ground.

"What's up Donald?" Darcy asked, from just out of the grounded duck's line of sight.

"Nat---down," Sam whispered.

"You're lucky I turned it down, I could have used a Captain Asshole sized charge,"

Darcy shrugged, turning the voltage down again and giving Tweety bird a smaller, but still painful zap in his bicep. "I'm gonna say this once, alright?"

The singed goose managed a wrinkle of his nose and a nod as the baton crackled ominously. His hand moved to the screen he wore on his wrist, intent on tapping something out.

"Don't even think about it, dude," Darcy warned. She sighed and sounded quiet and serious then, "Leave us alone. Just---just find a way to occupy your Captain, alright?"

"Why?" Peking Duckling wondered.
"Because, James needs this," Darcy answered. She did too, truth be told. "We just need a little more time, he's coming back together, I can tell. Just---we're not hurting anyone that doesn't deserve to be hurt."

"Not for you---to decide," the bird gasped out quietly.

"YEAH? And it wasn't for me to decide to get run off a road in New Mexico and have two years of my life taken from me, either!" Darcy spat out. "You don't get to tell me I can't have this. Fuck you, man."

"Steve---"

"He can have him back when we're done!" Darcy spat out, sounding petulant and annoyed. She felt her stomach lurch and turned, coughing and spluttering as she expelled her soup and crackers.

"You---you alright?" the flightless turkey boy asked in true concern.

"Just---I'll give him back when he's ready, he's getting better, I can tell," Darcy whispered, on the edge of tears. "Until then, just, occupy your Captain, alright?"

Sam wasn't arguing, but he wasn't agreeing either.

Darcy nodded and turned up the juice a little once more, giving him a little zap that had him passing out on the alley floor. She slowly walked back to the truck, pulling herself in with just enough time to spare before the Soldier had the driver's side door yanked open, climbing inside and making the engine roar to life.

"What's---what's going on?" Darcy wondered softly.

"We will have your medicine in forty-eight hours," the Soldier answered, turning on the car and pulling out quickly.

"That's good, but---there's company here," Darcy told him, holding up her baton and giving him a little shrug, her cheeks tinged with color that stood out on too pale skin, a smile pulling at her lips.
"Yes, I just missed the Captain inside," the Soldier nodded curtly. "We have a safe space to wait, my Pet, don't fear."

"Really? How did we get a safe space?" Darcy furrowed her brow.

"A very old friend, apparently."

Sam had been twitching and knocked out for quite a bit of time, long enough for Tony to arrive and start destroying old fashioned computers and servers. A little white haired doctor had shown herself at the lobby, when Steve and Natasha had dragged Sam from the alleyway he had been found in. Natasha had left Steve to tend Sam's bedside, intent on combing the alley for any evidence.

"He'll be fine," Dr. Rivera announced in a way that was both cheerful and businesslike at the same time. "He'll need a week of downtime for his muscles to get over the shocks, but it could have been worse."

"He could be dead," Steve sighed. If the current of electricity that had gone through Sam had been anything like what had gone through him, by all means Sam should be dead. His friend twitched in his sleep again and Steve sat back in his chair, running his hand over his face as he tried to figure out his best course of action here.

Obviously Bucky and his rescued cohort didn't want to be found and had no problem hurting anyone who came after them and tried to stop them. But he couldn't just let them run around, wreaking havoc on Hydra facilities and civilian facilities alike. It was only a matter of time before someone got hurt by their tour of vengeance.

If only Bucky trusted him enough, Steve would HELP him.

"Captain Rogers, you appear exhausted," Dr. Rivera said softly. "There is another bed in the examination room, perhaps you would benefit from lying down."

"Can't sleep anyway," Steve said quietly.
"I could give you something," Dr. Rivera offered quietly.

"I don't quite work the same way as your normal patients," Steve wagered, looking around at the cheerful posters on the wall, targeted to children about how to keep healthy.

"No, you don't. You have a metabolism that burns four times faster than the average human," Dr. Rivera replied with casual banality. "Any normal medication would burn out of your blood stream before it could do anything to help you, I'm sure."

"How did you know that?" Steve asked bluntly, too tired and frustrated for politeness.

He looked around again and guessed, "Bucky came here to see you?"

"I don't think he goes by the name Bucky at the moment," Dr. Rivera smiled placidly, although her dark eyes looked mischievous. She opened up one of the cabinets and pulled a few things out, bottles and vials and an empty mixing beaker. She walked out of the room that Sam was in and wasn't surprised when Steve followed her into the small, but cheerful lab she spent most of her hours in. "Not yet, anyway. Your healing factor is perhaps the fastest out of any serum enhanced individual, aside from Dr. Bruce Banner, but then again, nothing about Dr. Bruce Banner is normal, is it?"

"What did he want?" Steve demanded as he looked at the four small countertops in the room. One of the countertops was already rigged with beakers and apparatus, boiling down some kind of solution and filtrating into pipes and tubes and another beaker.

"Help," Dr. Rivera answered back without hesitation as she began to set up a different apparatus quickly. "Much needed help."

"For him or the girl?" Steve felt his pulse quicken.

"The woman," Dr. Rivera raised an eyebrow at him. "From what he told me, she is a strong, beautiful thing. I believe he is quite enamored of her, truth be told. He was willing to come here, after all."
"Dr. Rivera, whose side are you on?" Steve asked very quietly, his voice a low, dangerous thing, meant to intimidate people looking to start wars.

"I wasn't aware that there were sides when it came to fighting illness, Captain. I assumed we were all on the side of illness losing. And life, precious and beautiful and real, well, life should be the victor," Dr. Rivera nodded in agreement with herself.

"I want to help him," Steve was quiet as he watched Dr. Rivera working, his anger flown from his sails. "I want to help them both."

"And lessen his triumph over his own demons?" Dr. Rivera nodded as she set a bunsen burner ablaze to boil the latest rounded beaker she had dumped contents into. She turned to Steve and smiled, "Give me an hour, I should have effective sleeping pills for you, feel free to take a few to your laboratories in New York to have them replicated."

"What about your other experiment?" Steve looked at the slower moving experiment that had been set up.

"That is for the woman," Dr. Rivera revealed with a smile. "She is in great need of these pills, without them, she would surely die within a week."

Steve sucked in a breath. He didn't know the woman who had been taken and rescued by Bucky. He had been laid flat out by her a few days ago, Sam had been taken down by her earlier that night. Natasha had been suspiciously quiet, refusing to speculate about what had happened to the girl---the woman. He didn't know the woman's name, didn't know where she had come from.

But he cared. Bucky had taken her under his wing, and he had lived a solitary existence for years. So that must mean she was something special. Steve didn't want the poor woman to die after finding freedom after so long.

"I will send a few to you in New York, to have your laboratories replicate them as well," Dr. Rivera nodded in agreement with herself.

"You seem to think---that she'll be coming to me eventually," Steve said quietly.

"Oh yes, that was part of the agreement," Dr. Rivera nodded. "When it became too much for her,
she would have to turn herself in for treatment."

"Oh," Steve nodded dumbly. "What's wrong with her?"

"Doctor patient confidentiality, Captain, you should know better," the small, gray doctor scolded playfully. "But rest assured, she will have to eventually give up this tour of vengeance."

"Good," Steve sighed. Enhanced or not, this was not safe work.

"And, as I stated previously," Dr. Rivera had a playful little smile playing against her face, dark eyes now dancing. "He is quite attached to this small mystery he has rescued. He will not be separated from her when the time comes, I feel."

For the first time in a very long time, Steve felt hope bloom. He watched as the sleeping aids the doctor was working on began to take form, a thick, honey like liquid slowly dripping into a beaker for collection. Bucky just needed space. He just needed time. He would come back to Steve when they were ready. He had to believe that.

Bucky had always come back for Steve before, after all, never leaving him alone for too long.

He would be back.

Forty-eight hours passed by in a blur for Darcy. It felt very vaguely like a lot of her time with Hydra had felt like. Dull, throbbing pain. The gnawing of a stomach that was too empty. The hazy sleep that seemed to rob her of her concept of time and her surroundings. She could feel herself whimpering every time she was moved around, not knowing if this was the time she'd be poked, prodded, cut open or worse.

But still, she wasn't panicking. Because while there were similarities, there was also the soft, low whispers and murmurs in her ear.

' You'll be alright, Pet. Open and drink this. For me, Pet, please.'
'I'll keep you safe, Darcy. I promise. You're going to be fine.'

'Look at you, my poor dollbaby, shivering like a leaf, c'mere, let me hold you till the Doc can come with the medicine.'

She was clean and warm and even though she was hungry, she could tell that James or the Soldier or Bucky, was trying their best, seemingly taking turns in running a cool cloth over her brow, or gently pushing a straw between her lips and encouraging her to drink what tasted like a lukewarm milkshake, or holding a cracker up to her lips while she nibbled slowly.

His metal hand found its way to her stomach more often than not, petting her lightly there, as if in search of something. She liked it, she liked all the little touches she could vaguely realize he was giving her. Sweet kisses on a sweaty brow as she burned like a furnace. The soft pull of a comb through tangled tresses. Metal armed embraces that made her feel safe, and cherished and wanted.

She heard the sharp tones of an older woman, going over instructions very clearly, a warning given that they only had a few more months left before it wouldn't be enough.

And then she felt a pill being pushed past her lips as James encouraged her to swallow it down, giving her a straw that delivered extra sugary juice past her lips. She wavered between consciousness and sleep after that. But she felt her body being arranged just so and had a moment of panic when she realized an examination was being done, just like before, her legs spread and someone doing something she didn't want.

"Shhh, shh, my Pet, it's alright," the Soldier soothed her, and suddenly he was solid behind her, holding her in surprisingly gentle arms, his lips pressed against her ear.

"We must make sure you are well, you will not be hurt, I would never allow it. Never again, Pet, I promise you."

She whimpered but stopped trying to struggle and melted against his body, drifting back to much needed sleep as she heard the sound of a machine and something cool and wet being pressed against her stomach, and then the very rapid sound of someone's heartbeat.

James didn't quite know what to do with himself when Dr. Rivera left, leaving behind a four month
supply of medication. He would never understand how he had managed to find such loyalty in a person so damned smart, decades ago when he had been the brutal Winter Soldier, but he had been glad for it.

Once upon a time, the Winter Soldier had inadvertently saved small, scared Carla Rivera. A bullet through the head of an abusive step father who had managed to get on the wrong side of a conflict with global political ramifications had changed her life forever for the better. He had saved her when she was at her most vulnerable and she would never, ever forget the silent, metal armed man who had stalked out of her bedroom that night.

She'd devoted her whole life to repaying the favor, tracking down Stark Industries and waiting patiently, developing ways to help a man who had strength far beyond a normal human. She knew more about super soldier serum than any one person on Earth, and not because she had wanted to recreate it, but because she had wanted to help those that had been affected by it.

Darcy slept for another fourteen hours, and James tidied the cabin Carla had provided for them, gotten their bags ready to leave at a moment's notice, and gotten up to date on chatter and security reports. Steve and his friends had returned back to the upstate New York facility for Avengers, focusing on training missions and tracking down high profile Hydra enforcers instead of combing through small towns in Canada looking for the Winter Soldier and a young woman with previous trauma.

It was good. James knew that. When Darcy was well enough again, he would move them further along the planned out tour of Hydra facilities around the world, getting more and more files until he could be certain who the father of Darcy's baby was.

Her baby.

He went into his front shirt pocket and pulled out a small, black and white photo that Carla had printed out for him to show Darcy when she was recuperated enough, when the pill the elderly doctor had created for her started to work, to balance out her hormones and the serum enough to stop killing the mother to enhance the fetus. It was a small little dot on the picture in a sea of black.

Just six weeks along, but the heartbeat had been strong and steady and fast enough to cause the Soldier alarm. Carla had smiled at him and reassured him that although it was early to hear the heartbeat, that the sound of it was encouraging.

"I'll protect you," he looked down at the picture and gave a small smile. "I will always protect
'Do not listen to him, I will be the one to do the protecting, little sweet bastard.'

"James?"

He put the picture back into his pocket and ran swiftly to the little room that he had placed Darcy in, looking a little more flustered than he usually did as he stared down at her. She was inching herself into a sitting position, looking less ghostly pale than she had over the two days of her convalescence. He was at her side in a moment, gently bringing her to sit up straighter.

"I have to pee," she whined out in annoyance. "Like, thanks for the juice dude, but now I'm gonna piss myself, I swear, and that's just not something you live down with a friend. You know?"

James smiled, picking her up quickly in a fireman's carry, stepping quickly into the hallway and then into the bathroom of the small cottage they had been holed up in. She was only wearing one of his t-shirts and he placed her on the toilet and turned around to give her some semblance of privacy.

He snorted with laughter as she let out the longest sigh of accomplishment as she took a very long time to empty her bladder.

"Holy shit, that's so good," Darcy giggled. "Wow, I feel so much better."

"Yeah," James nodded. "We figured it out."

"So I'm not gonna die?" Darcy asked,

"No, we have a---a vitamin of sorts to keep you balanced out," James admitted.

"Excellent," Darcy sighed as she finally finished. She didn't ask anymore questions, not wanting to know that she had almost died, her body doing everything in its power to put all of her internal resources into growing a bundle of cells rather than keep her alive.
It was getting a little frustrating for James. She should want to know what happened to her, what was GOING to happen to her, but she was still intent on being blissfully unaware.

"Do I have panties at all?" Darcy asked hopefully. "Commando is a choice every person should make for themselves, and I'm all about letting people free ball it, but I don't really think I want that for myself...sooooo...."

Chapter End Notes

Sorry I fried Sam's wings extra crispy. sort of. Spoiler: He'll be fine.

Next chapter is a doozy of a chapter. The next few chapters are doozies. Real doozies. Dooze-ariffic.

Thank you so much for reading and putting up with this crazy. I really appreciate it!
A Monster

Chapter Notes

....gird your loins, if you got 'em.

warning for: emotional outbursts, failed attempts at violence against a friend, descriptions of torture and unwanted medical procedures, mentions of abortion and hints of bisexual super soldiers.

as always, thanks to phoenix-173 and dntpanic 42 for the beta amazingness

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Eight: A Monster

"Cap?"

The sounds coming from Steve's quarters were not promising. For one, they were entirely foreign. Sam stepped gingerly past Steve's unmade bed towards his en suite bathroom, where the harsh and disgusting sounds of gagging and dry heaving were originating from.

"Friday, what in the hell is going on?" Sam wondered, having just been released by medical after his electrified convalescence. He hadn't been too badly injured, but Natasha Romanoff had warned the emergency medical personnel that normally reported to Dr. Helen Cho, that if he wasn't treated properly, there would be hell to pay.

They'd not only made sure that Sam had no more twitches or other nasty side effects from electrocution, they had also ensured that he left with better vitamin levels than he had entered with, along with straightening out that soreness he got in his right knee whenever it got a little too humid out. All in all, the last eighteen hours had felt like he had been on the medical version of Pimp My Ride, and now he was shiny and new and wanted to ask Steve what it meant when Natasha was so concerned about your physical well being.

But here Steve was, tossing his cookies. Or attempting to.
"Cap's been a little sick," Friday admitted. "Although it just appears to be nausea, disorientation and dry heaving. He hasn't actually regurgitated---"

"Gross," Sam interrupted. "I thought the guy was indestructible?"

"It's nothing," Steve called out, pulling himself to his feet with an audible grunt. He began running the sink and Sam poked his head into the bathroom to see Steve brushing his teeth. "I just---I feel sick sometimes. Just the last few weeks."

"Okay, that's weird," Sam said bluntly. "I once saw you eat Clint Barton's salmonella delight, and you didn't turn one shade of green. Your stomach is indestructible and so is your immune system."

"I'm not actually vomiting, I'm just---sort of feeling sick," Steve waved him off. "It passes in a few minutes and I'm fine."

"Still, what if it's those pills that Cho's team was so keen to work on?" Sam demanded. "What if Fucky's doctor friend is poisoning you?"

"That wouldn't happen," Steve rolled his eyes. "Just drop it, it's just---phantom illness. I'm fine."

"Sure," Sam nodded, clearly not buying it at all.

Steve didn't look like himself. He looked like he'd been put through the wringer...a few times. He was a little paler than his normally pale Irish ass was. His eyes had dark circles underneath them, and his lips were looking extra chapped.

"What did you need, Sam?" Steve wondered.

"Oh---yeah," Sam shrugged. "So, would you think that if Natasha, you know, was ready for me to take her to dinner and a movie when she's all 'if he's in pain I'll destroy your world' to the med staff?"

"Huh," Steve shrugged. "Either she's ready for you to ask her out, or she's ready to become your mommy."
Sam's eyes narrowed as Steve regained some of his color at having found his insolent words once more. Sam held up both middle fingers in Steve's face.

"I hope you spend the rest of your day with your head in the toilet, Cap."

Darcy recovered quickly, once everything found a balance thanks to Carla Rivera's miracle vitamin, her serum enhanced body was back on track. She still experienced occasional nausea, but found if she concentrated hard enough, she could will it away. She had also found her appetite again, the morning sickness that had been so dangerous before now manageable. James found that their path meandered according to Darcy's appetite and cravings, and he seemed helpless but to spoil her completely rotten.

"This website says they have the best donuts," Darcy announced as they pulled into a Tim Hortons.

"How is it different than the twenty other Tim Hortons we've been to in the last five days?" James smirked at her as he put the car in park and turned to tighten the scarf around her neck a little more securely, pulling her in a little closer (she was already quite close, cuddling up to him as they drove all day to the next destination).

"The internet said this one was the best one, and the internet has never lied to me, ever," Darcy grinned at him.

"You...you are a menace," James whispered before tugging her by the scarf so his lips hit her forehead.

Darcy lingered after his sweet kiss and angled her face upwards, her grin disappearing as pouty lips pursed for a kiss on the mouth. She waited a full five seconds before smiling again, her eyes full of understanding as she shimmied backwards and away from him as far as the hold on her scarf would allow.

"So when is our next stop?" Darcy wondered. "You know. For vengeance."
"I already went last night after you were asleep," James said quickly, like ripping off a verbal bandaid.

Darcy scooted back further on the bench seat, her scarf stretching the entire width of the car. Her pretty features quickly twisted with the stinging shock of betrayal and she yanked on her scarf to no avail, as James had the fabric firmly in his grip.

"Let me go," she whispered.

"Dollbaby, no," he said softly. "Don't be sore, now."

"Oh, now the charmer comes out!" Darcy scoffed. "Give me the Soldier, Bucky!"

"Really?" Bucky scoffed at her, pulling her closer by an inch. "C'mon, give us a hug and don't be mad. It was better to let you sleepin'."

"I'm not sick anymore!" she countered hotly. "You know that I want to help---that I need to help. They need to pay for what they did to us and I want to help do that!"

"Dollbaby, don't be sore, honest, I'll take you on the next trip," Bucky gave her his best wheedling little smile and was absolutely shocked to have Darcy dart forward and smack him across the face, the hit was barely enough to hurt a fly, but his entire face went blank at the movement and he dropped her scarf.

She scurried out of the car and ran into the Tim Horton's, rushing around the store and grabbing everything and anything she could think of, paying with the cash that James regularly replaced in her coat pocket. The Soldier was standing outside in the cold, his back against the SUV, his point of view allowing him to see clearly into the store to make sure that she had been fine the whole time. This only seemed to incense Darcy more and she shoved him in order to clamor into the car and slam the door behind her.

The Soldier took it in stride, immediately circling the car and going to open up the driver's side door when Darcy reached out and pressed the lock button.

"Open," he ordered tersely.
"Fuck off," Darcy threw him two middle fingers before shoving a donut into her mouth.

"Pet, open," the Soldier repeated. "Now."

"Kindly fuck, the ever loving fuck, off," Darcy said through a full mouth before picking up a big glass bottle of iced coffee. She shook it triumphantly, waving it around as the Soldier stewed. She hadn't had caffeine in years, and was fairly sure that the turbo charged, espresso boosted beverage in her hand would send her into cardiac arrest. "Hmmm, yummy. My introduction back into the world of stimulants!"

She jumped in her seat, but didn't screech when James broke the glass window with a metal fist and opened the door. He yanked the bottle from her hand and threw it about a hundred yards into a neighboring field before he got into the car and immediately took off.

"That was mine, you big jerk ass bitch!" Darcy screeched at the top of her very powerful lungs.

"You are not allowed caffeine of that size," the Soldier said calmly, racing to get them to a spot he knew would afford privacy should she continue to scream dramatically.

"WHY?" she continued to shriek. "Why do you get to tell me what I can and can't do? Why do you get to decide to let me sleep when all I want to do is kill every single Hydra person out there that is wasting oxygen? WHY?"

"Because you are expecting a bastard baby," the Soldier said calmly as he threw the car in park on the side of a road. He looked to her and pointed at her stomach. "You are seven weeks pregnant. It was the last experiment that Hydra subjected you to and it was successful."

Silence extended between them, cold and harsh. Darcy gave him a look of utter disbelief, her face frozen in a mask of horror as her brain struggled to digest what he had just bluntly said. It was impossible. She knew it for a fact.

"You're a liar," Darcy whispered.

"I do not lie," the Soldier disputed calmly.
"You're a liar!" Darcy screamed immediately, reaching out and pushing against his bicep, not even moving him.

"No Pet, you are Project Osteria, the aim was to bring forth a new generation of super soldiers," he calmly explained. "They succeeded."

"No they didn't!" Darcy yelled, shoving him one more time, this time, succeeding in moving him slightly before she jumped out of the car and made a run for it down the side of the road.

He caught up to her easily, wrapping her up in an embrace she tried to struggle out of. She was wriggling, her chin digging into his chest, her feet kicking just below his knee caps, hands like claws were digging into his sides in an attempt to get him to put her down.

"Pet, I'm sorry," he whispered softly, placing his lips against her temple as she railed against him. "I'm so sorry."

"It's not true, it's impossible, it's not true," she repeated, her tone desperate and wild. Her knee managed to connect with his unprotected groin, powerfully so that the air went from his lungs and his hold loosened, allowing her to drop to her feet and try running again. She stopped about ten feet away and doubled over, vomiting in a snow pile.

He made an aborted move to go to her, but she held up her hand to stop him and tried to compose herself. Instead, he dug into his pockets, bringing out the pack of gum he had taken to carrying with him, unwrapping a piece and waiting for her to at least let him get close.

She walked right into the middle of the completely empty road and sat down right in the middle of it, putting her head in her hands and sobbing. The Soldier was next to her in a heartbeat, picking her up and putting her in his lap, wrapping her in a metal armed embrace.

"I know you did not want to know, Pet," the Soldier whispered. "I know that there is comfort in ignorance. But you must know."

"What did they do to me?" Darcy whispered, taking the gum he offered her and shoving it into her mouth before wiping her tears on his shoulder.

He held her tight and began petting the braid she had put in her hair with his flesh hand.
"When you were taken, it was obvious that the timing was off to leverage you against Thor. Selvig was deemed useless at the time," the Soldier said in that lightly accented, disaffected English. "After being beaten and tortured for information on Foster's theories, you were given what the little heathen scientists had called a preservative and shoved into cryofreeze."

"I remember that," Darcy nodded. "After waking up and it being painful, there's not much else."

The Soldier nodded, he knew how painful it was to wake up from cryofreeze. And he knew that Hydra had developed ways to make a person forget about the pain and the torture without resorting to the wipes.

"Someone noticed you had a certain resiliency. You were quick to recover from whatever had been done to you, your spirit had been..." he paused and pressed his lips to the tip of her nose quickly before giving her the most tender smile she had ever been the recipient of. "You are indomitable and they used that for their advantage."

Darcy melted into him, sniffling and crying into his shoulder as he rocked her slightly back and forth, whispering little Russian words into her hair as he attempted to soothe her. It hurt, after all, to find out that one of the best things about you was what someone else wanted to torture out of you.

"What else?" she squeaked out.

"You were given a variant of the super soldier serum, less than a five percent chance of success. Most will die when they receive it, those that do not die become monsters," the Soldier said clinically.

"You're not a monster," Darcy whispered.

"Pet," the Soldier sighed and held her tighter. "Your body took to it. And they tested it in the worst of ways, cutting you open, breaking your bones, all the pain is there, Pet, you felt it all, and the serum doesn't make it hurt less, it just allows for you to heal faster."

"That's why I'm so mad," Darcy whimpered into his shoulder.
The Soldier smiled again, knowing that her version of mad was that of a harmless kitten. His Pet was not built for anger. Not even before the serum. She felt it, but turned it into something else, fuel. Energy. The sheer will to survive and be defiant at any and all who should try to hurt her.

"You were moved a few times, frozen each time," the Soldier revealed. "They attempted to weaponize you, to see if the serum would affect you in the way it affected others."

"Others?" Darcy pulled away and looked up at Bucky warily.

"Do not worry about them, Pet. I will handle it," he promised. "Project Ostera had lay dead in someone's cabinet, dusty and old. Decades ago they collected samples from me and---others. To ensure Hydra's weapon would live on to new generations. They attempted to bring women in, to have them carry my children. But each woman was found wanting, they could not even conceive."

"So they fridged it, and you," Darcy scoffed.

"With you, a young woman who had survived the serum, who could not be tortured and programmed and trained into a killing machine, they revived Project Ostera," the Soldier revealed. "You were placed in sleep for six months while the samples were obtained."

"Bucky---Bucky?" Darcy whispered, pulling away, looking up at him with large, watery eyes. "Bucky?"

The Soldier looked at her with unmasked curiosity and saw that something was blooming in her gaze as she stared at him, her mouth open. The mint from her gum wafting the short distance between them.

There was hope there. The Soldier felt a pang go through him when he realized she hoped that he was the father of her unborn bastard. He gave her another kiss on the tip of her nose and sighed.

"I destroyed my samples weeks before they decided to move forward with Project Ostera," he revealed. "Other serum enhanced samples were used to make your baby."

Darcy choked in a breath and immediately began to hyperventilate. The Soldier did his best to calm her, but he knew it wasn't enough and soon enough his accent shifted and the way he held her changed, instead of her straddling his lap, suddenly she was being held with her back to his chest.
"Dollbaby, it's alright, it's fine, you're gonna be fine," Bucky promised. "Breathe in with me."

He made her breathe with him for five whole minutes until she regained control, all the while, his lips frequently landed on the top of her head, his arms steel bands around her.

"Monsters," Darcy managed to whisper when she'd calmed.

"Hey now," Bucky pulled away and looked at her with a smile. "You had the serum and you ain't a monster."

"But---"

"And the Widow had it too, and she ain't quite a monster," Bucky smiled.

"She's a nosy bitch, but---"

"And Captain Damned America had the serum and he's the best damned man I ever knew," Bucky said resolutely. "And dollbaby, you said I wasn't a monster, you can't take it back."

"But if it had been you, then I'd know it wasn't a monster," Darcy sobbed, reaching out and shoving at his shoulder ineffectively. "Why couldn't you destroy it all a little while later?"

"Sorry, sugar," Bucky gave her a slow simmering smile before pulling her in again for a hug. "But you know what, even if it was one of those nasty sons of bitches, it wouldn't matter. You know why?"  

"Why?" Darcy sniffled.

"Cause you're this little thing's mama, and that means a lot, really," Bucky promised her. "And I'll be there, I'll protect you and the baby, and it'll know that it's not a monster, it'll grow up right."
"Yeah," Darcy sighed.

"But dollbaby, that's only if you want to keep it," Bucky said gently. "Dr. Rivera said she could do a real quick procedure, you wouldn't barely feel a thing."

Darcy stiffened and took in a long, slow breath. "I don't know."

"It's not a baby yet, I saw a picture, amazing damned thing, looked right in you and found the smallest thing," Bucky sighed, juggling his hold of her and taking out the picture that looked well worn and wrinkled by now. "Just a little blob of stuff, it wouldn't feel anything if you didn't want to keep it."

"How long do I have to think about it?" Darcy whispered.

"Two more weeks," Bucky said. "Doctor Rivera said that the serum would make it more---difficult to terminate after that."

"Alright," Darcy nodded. "I'll think about it."

"Alright, good," Bucky nodded. "Now, dollbaby, can you drive at all?"

"Yeah, I can drive," Darcy turned to take a look at him, and his face looked very drawn and pale. "What's the matter?"

"Taxes the old noggin, this switching around," Bucky said softly. "S'easier to be just---James, and not the Soldier and not what I can hardly even remember yet."

"I'm sorry," Darcy put her hands on either side of his bearded face. "You should be whatever makes you feel comfortable."

"Nah, I'm gonna be what you need me to be. For forever," Bucky promised. "But my head hurts now, and I need to sleep a little. If you could get us to the next safe house, well then, I owe you one, sugar."
Once Darcy finally understood what had happened to her, she didn't seem to want to rest until she'd come to a decision. She could feel herself getting healthier every day, and although she wasn't sporting a baby bump, she knew that she'd been grabbing for Bucky's greens off of his plate whenever they stopped at a diner because her body knew it needed it.

She'd been using Bucky's laptop to email Dr. Rivera too, asking her all kinds of questions now that she knew.

James knew that she'd started a pros and cons list too, about a mile long at this point.

"When do you think we'll have Hydra all destroyed and stuff?" Darcy wondered one day while they were doing a set of laundry in the middle of the night. She had a king sized bag of chocolate licorice and was tugging strands of it between her teeth to viciously rip off.

"Let me check my crystal ball," James smirked at her. "Hmm...nope. Not destroyed yet."

"No, seriously, how long until we're done?" Darcy wondered, looking at the napkin she scribbled things on.

"Darcy, I can do this on my own, you know," James gave her a small smile.

"You're gonna get this licorice shoved up your nose, is what you're gonna get," Darcy wrinkled her nose at him. "You're stuck with me now, dude. And I know, I know that makes your plans with Steve---"

"I don't have plans with Steve," James reminded her calmly.

"Yeah but, I mean, you guys were like," Darcy shrugged and looked off at the tumbling dryer, where her underwear tumbled with Bucky's undershirts. "In love, and stuff. And he still loves you, cause he just keeps chasing you."
"Maybe," James shrugged. "I'm no good for him like this. I can't be what he needs or wants."

"Well, I think that's for him to decide," Darcy pursed her lips.

'S she is upset, soothe her! Tell her she is the only one we want or need.'

"Darcy, the Soldier is SCREAMING at me right now," James sighed, looking up to the ceiling. He pushed the cart that was full of their dark, dry wash towards the table she was sitting on and began throwing things up on it so that they could fold them. "You should know that there used to be a time, when two boys from Brooklyn were together."

"I knew it," Darcy narrowed her eyes at him in comic shrewdness. "Peggy Carter was a beard!"

"No, she wasn't," James laughed. "Steve had fallen head over heels in love with her. And he thought—he thought she'd be...open minded."

"Whaaaaat?" Darcy said softly, her voice scaling up into falsetto notes.

"Open minded," James shrugged.

"Explain and define open minded," Darcy ordered, pulling another piece of licorice between her teeth. "Explain and define in detail. And use it in a sentence."

"Back in the day, now, I'm not entirely sure Steve is still like this, it's been a few years," James admitted, hints of Bucky coming through in his accent. "Well, back in the day, we liked both."

"Both," Darcy repeated. "So Great Great Aunt Dettler had a shot?"

"She didn't like Stevie," James shook his head. "She had no shot."

"And Peggy didn't like you," Darcy concluded shrewdly.
"Not in that way," Bucky shrugged.

"So what would have happened there?" Darcy whispered. She made a little shocked gasp and pointed at James before hissing "SWINGERS! And not the dancing variety!"

"We would have worked something out to make everyone happy," James assured her. "Peggy wasn't exactly--exclusive to Steve either. They loved each other, to be sure, but they weren't married and you took what comfort you could get."

"SHOCKING BEHAVIOR!" Darcy pretended to faint into the pile of socks and sweatpants.

"You're a menace," James accused as he moved his sweat pant pile away from her.

"So, what you're saying is, that when we're done destroying Hydra, we're going to go back to Stupid Steve."

"Boy, this is gonna be a hard sell," James rolled his eyes.

"I'm not gonna fall in love with him," Darcy said stubbornly, crossing her arms under her chest with a playful glare in his direction. "You can't make me do this weird 40's polyamorous thing. I mean, honestly, the Baby Boomers seemed so normal and destructive, who would have known that ten short years before they were cranking out kids, their predecessors were all free love and taking comfort where they could get it."

"The short of it is, that unless you can figure out a way of getting the Winter Soldier his own body, then you're stuck with me. Because he's never gonna leave you," James shrugged. "And whatever might happen YEARS from now with Steve."

"I love my cuddly-murder-snuggle-buddy," Darcy smiled sweetly.

"Son of a bitch," James sighed before he felt his control slipping too fast. The Soldier reached for her and held her close and tight, reverently murmuring against the top of her head, "My sweet Pet."
Wednesday. Done. Boom.

.......I hesitate to ask, but---thoughts?
I am so sorry for leaving for a little while. Thank you for understanding! And thanks to everyone who commented on the last chapter, I'm sorry I did not get a chance to chat with you.

Okay chapter warnings: violence and discussions of violence that are typical for this story now. Sexy soldier times. Mocking language questioning the sexuality of meathead assholes. And a cruel author at the end...

Thanks as always to the patient and amazing betas of Phoenix_173 and dntpanic42!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

**Chapter Nine: Goals**

"I want to keep it," Darcy announced randomly in the car as James made lazy circles around the perimeter of Calgary, never straying too far from Dr. Rivera, just in case Darcy made up her mind.

"Okay," James nodded, pulling off the road immediately to get to the highway. "Good."

"Good, that's it?" Darcy looked at him curiously. "You don't want to hear my reasons why?"

"You've been reciting your pro and con list to me for days," James reminded her.

"Right, but I flushed it down the toilet this morning and realized that what bigger fuck you could there be to Hydra than having the baby they put in me," Darcy's eyes gleamed with mischief and revenge, "And raise it up to be even more righteous than Captain America? They want a new generation of super soldiers? Well they're gonna get one and it's going to kick Hydra's balls in."

"Good," James shrugged. He smiled at her and pulled up his arm so she could scoot underneath it. "Darcy, I'm never gonna question your reason, you should know that. A third of my mind is in complete love with you, you took a murderous son of a bitch and made him love you."
"Yeah? What about the other two thirds?" Darcy questioned.

"The other two thirds is smart enough not to tell a dame he loves her without kissing her proper first," James arched an eyebrow.

"Well I love all three of you, I don't care about being smart," Darcy said primly. "Now give me my Soldier so he can ravish me."

"No," James sniffed.

'I will find a way to separate us and kill you.'

"RUDE," Darcy gasped out.

"How do you feel about going to Europe?" James kissed the top of her head.

"To destroy Hydra once and for all?" Darcy clapped her hands in gleeful anticipation.

"Among other things," James nodded. "See, a lady once told me she wanted to travel. And it's a lot easier to travel without a little baby squalling and demanding to be fed. So I think we have a few months to sightsee."

"That's a great, and amazing idea," Darcy kissed his cheek tenderly. "Thank you."

"Anything for you."

Doctor Jane Foster wasn’t that easy to track down. Aside from her guest lecturing schedule, her research locations and schedule were kept more secret than most matters of national security. Her security detail consisted of Sif and the ten women that Sif had chosen and trained to defend Jane.

But Thor was now in house at the upstate New York Avenger’s Facility, and Natasha didn’t think any less of Jane for wanting to spend time with him. Their time together had been very brief in the
last few years. The strain was starting to show on the relationship, though no one quite wanted to admit it.

Natasha walked into Jane’s lab space cautiously, as Tony would always tell presumably tall tales about the dangers ever present in Jane’s lab. Natasha knew not to put stock into everything Tony said, but she wasn’t about to take risks when the chances were high that she could be transported to a different galaxy. The entire space was a mess, to be honest, and at first, Natasha didn’t even realize that Jane was there.

A moving pile of paperwork in the corner caught Natasha’s attention and she went to the back right corner of the lab, and sure enough, the pile of paper was on top of the desk, and in between the paper and the granite was one sleeping astrophysicist.

“Doctor Foster?” Natasha reached out a hand and gently pushed on a thin shoulder. “Doctor Foster?”

“NO SIF, NO I DON’T WANT TO RUN DRILLS!” Jane shouted as she sat straight up, causing a lot of papers to float up and drift down into even more chaos.

“So much for having a paperless environment,” Natasha smirked at her.

“What do you want?” Jane looked at the superspy suspiciously. “If Sif sent you, I’m not doing drills. I don’t care if it’ll help me not be kidnapped. What good is a super hero boyfriend if you can’t get rescued from kidnappers every once in awhile?”

“You’ve never actually been kidnapped,” Natasha reminded her.

“Nope,” Jane smiled.

“So the drills must be working,” Natasha concluded.

“You are forbidden from speaking with Sif,” Jane warned, her eyes narrowing up at the Black Widow. “Ugh, are you here to take Thor away again? Because honestly, I had eight hours with him before you had him flying up to Canada.”
“I’m not here for Thor,” Natasha assured her. “Clint is taking him to an all you can eat Chinese buffet.”

“Oh, awesome,” Jane nodded, pulling out her phone and texting rapidly. “I’ve been craving sugar donuts.”

Natasha waited patiently for the texting to come to an end, but then Jane got distracted with a piece of paper that had landed in front of her and she dug a pencil from under the pile and began scribbling. Natasha cleared her throat three times before she realized that Jane wasn’t about to pay attention to her any time soon, so she put her hand on the paper right next to Jane’s scribbling pencil and smiled at the Nobel nominee when she glared up at her.

“I’m here to ask you about Darcy Lewis,” Natasha said with the same calm, cool determination that she would use in the interrogation of a person immune to torture.

“Don’t want to talk about Darcy Lewis,” Jane scoffed, pushing Natasha’s hand off of her paper, confident in the fact that she was safe to do so as only the beloved of the future King of the freaking Universe could be.

“Have you been in contact with Darcy in the past two years?” Natasha’s voice was soft, concerned, really.

Because Jane was shaken. It was subtle and it was covered with annoyance and vitriol, but it was there. Natasha could tell from the pursing of Jane’s mouth, the way her gaze drifted to the left, the slight drop in her shoulders, that there was hurt there.

So Natasha went with it.

“Darcy quit her unpaid position as your intern less than a month after the London incident in 2013, is that right?” Natasha was purposefully airy and unconcerned.

“Yes,” Jane said tightly, writing around Natasha’s hand on the paper.

“And you never heard from her again?” Natasha nodded. “After over two years of working with you? Two thwarted alien invasions. Travelling half the globe, really.”
“What is your POINT?” Jane snapped.

“Seems off,” Natasha gently smiled.

“Yeah, it does seem off,” Jane grumbled, rising from her seat and stomping towards a machine set up in the middle of the floor.

Natasha looked to the nearest surveillance camera and arched an eyebrow, a code shared with Friday which would cut the power to Jane's lab so no wayward portals could be created. She then walked towards Jane who was digging through a toolbox as she muttered under her breath.

“Sorry?” Natasha blinked with faux innocence. “I didn’t catch that.”

“FUCK OFF SPY CHICK,” Jane snapped. She swallowed when Natasha arched a brow of warning and Jane had the good grace to shrug and say with some measure of authenticity, “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean that, but talking about Darcy---it just annoys me.”

“Because you ended on bad terms?” Natasha prompted.

“No, I mean, I don’t think so,” Jane sighed. “I didn’t think it was, but I’m not always---observant.”

“Really?” Natasha asked dryly as she surveyed something furry moving out of a beaker.

“Darcy was like a miracle worker, I know that I teased her about not getting what I do, but, she was good at what she did do,” Jane admitted. “And whatever she’s doing in her new life, I’m sure she’s great at too, but she left me. She quit, right when things were starting to look up. Didn’t even train her replacement. Or the ten other replacements after that.”

“She hasn’t contacted you at all?” Natasha prodded.

“Erik tried calling her a few months after she quit, right about the time that your former employer went bonkers and tried to kidnap him,” Jane admitted. “SHIELD said they moved her into a new
life, an alias or whatever.”

“They what?” Nataska demanded all pretense of gently interrogating Jane promptly thrown out the window.

“You know, SHIELD did it’s mojo and now Darcy is happy doing something she’s qualified for or whatever, living a good, non alien invasion kind of life,” Jane looked down at the wrench in her hands and sighed. “Erik got a voicemail from her a few weeks after SHIELD fell, telling him she was safe and happy and she loved him but she just wanted to be left alone. I mean, she changed her name, moved away, cut everyone out of her life just to get away from me. I know that I’m not good at the friend stuff, I don’t tell people they matter enough, I get that. But—-I would have tried harder.”

Natasha nodded and gave Jane a small, thankful smile.

“I’ll be in touch, Doctor Foster.”

"So what exactly are we looking for at all of these little dens of disgusting and inept evil?"

The Soldier looked up from his work of clearing out ammunitions from the weapons storage of the Hydra facility. This one was a little bigger than the shack they had first invaded. His Pet had proven to be invaluable in their invasion of it. Ten men seemed easy enough for him to dispatch with, in a melee at least. It was more difficult when the targets were spread out and enacting specific security patterns to maintain their stronghold.

Darcy had used the electric baton mercilessly as well as the two-inch small blade of his that appeared to be her favorite. She would provide the shock or sting and he would swoop in for the kill.

All in all, if Hydra had figured out how well they worked together, they might not have pursued Project Ostera so relentlessly.

Now, the little mother to Hydra's shattered hopes and dreams was sitting on top of a tabletop, his laptop in front of her as she typed rapidly. His Pet was not only cunning in her kittenish violence, she had proven to be better than him at electronic violence. They'd hit two other bases on their
way southeast through Canada, and Darcy had not only pulled every piece of information from their servers, she'd destroyed the evidence better than he had ever managed.

She stopped typing and wrinkled her nose, her hand going to her stomach and she sighed, "Hungry."

The soldier stopped loading up on bullets and cash to go to a holster he used to keep his favorite knife in. Now, in its place was a protein bar. One day James had come back with one of each kind from a convenience store and told her to pick her favorite. Nineteen of them had been disgusting, even to his tortured palate. Darcy had deemed a non-offensive dark chocolate covered cookie bar to be acceptable, and James approved of the content of them, and now always kept one on his person.

Building a supersoldier from scratch was not the easiest of things to do, it appeared. Aside from her daily 'vitamin' made by Doctor Carla Rivera, Darcy now required higher amounts of calories than her already serum enhanced metabolism would normally require. The Soldier had been delighted to take her to diners along the way, ordering her all kinds of extra add ons and he had taken extra pleasure in actually hand feeding her french fries from his own plate on more than one occasion.

It had been nearly three weeks since Darcy found out about the baby, it was officially too late to end it, and the passing of that milestone had brought something new and fierce out in all three aspects of James' personality. He watched Darcy's every move, counted her every breath, and constantly tried to anticipate her every need. Even the Soldier had decided he would not ravish her until she asked for it, and she hadn't. To Darcy's credit, she'd only requested being cuddled at night while she slept, and James’ unwarranted concern had been overridden by the other two battling for space in his brain.

He couldn't remember having slept so well before. Having Darcy in his arms at night felt like the most correct thing he'd ever felt before.

And then a tickling would emerge in the back of his overcrowded brain, from Bucky's side, of course. It was a feeling that there was just one thing missing. Something that used to be small but was now very large. James would sweep a left hand down Darcy's back and realize that it wouldn't be so cool to the touch if there was a solid warmth there. If there was someone there at Darcy's other side, then she'd be protected from all angles.

That's how Bucky, his voice faint in the Soldier’s head but clearly wanting and all too persuasive, tried to subtly sell the Soldier on where Steve would fit in eventually.
The Soldier replied by mostly swearing in Russian.

"I mean, we know you're not the father, Maury style," Darcy interrupted James' thoughts. "But honestly, what does that matter? Cause you, my cuddly-murder-snuggle-buddy, said you would never ever leave me, so you know---"

She waved her hands around as a way to end her thoughts before going back to typing very quickly. The Soldier smiled at her and opened the protein bar, putting it against her mouth so she might take a bite.

"I will claim your bastard as mine, Pet," the Soldier said softly, his mouth twitching into a very quick upturned quirk when she looked up at him immediately, her eyes so big and blue and hopeful. "No matter who they chose to help you create it, it can be mine."

"Okay," Darcy said after swallowing a bite of her snack. A soft, shy smile bloomed on her face and she very quickly pushed the laptop to the side and popped up so she was kneeling, her lips immediately pressing against his with more firmness than finesse. It was over in a heartbeat and she sat back down with her cheeks pink and her eyes unfocused.

The Soldier simply stood there, blinking very slowly as he stared down at her. He could still feel the pressure from that pillowy bottom lip against his mouth, the almost sticky texture of the peppermint flavored lip balm she slicked on her lips every half hour. His right hand itched and even one of the servos in his left forearm began turning needlessly.

She went back to her work, and he quickly did the same, emptying the cash flow and picking up passports and the materials he would need for fake id's. He grabbed one of the bombs that Darcy enjoyed so much and didn't need to ask her to follow him as he walked out of the room heading towards the entrance.

Steve no longer chased the explosions. The new faction of SHIELD was tasked with cleaning up after James and Darcy were through with each Hydra facility. It was a mostly thankless task, because they very rarely left anything behind of any value. He placed the bomb down strategically and gestured for Darcy to set it, giving her whatever tiny fractions of joy he could.

The ride to the next motel would take them right along the border of Canada and the United States, and it was a longer one. Neither of them said anything and Darcy was asleep for most of the travel. He carried her into the motel, much like he had the first night after rescuing her, placing her in the bed to sleep while he made them passports and id's.
She woke up before dawn, and didn't say anything, just sat up in the bed and held her arms up and out to him. The Soldier stood by the end of the bed and stared down at her, uncertainty showing on his face.

"I have stains on my hands that won't ever wash off," his voice was a low, rough thing, barely above the volume of a whisper.

"So do painters," Darcy reasoned. "You just have different mediums. And no offense, but I don't have any need for Da Vinci right now, only you can give me what I need."

When he didn't move, she stood up on the bed and walked to him, her hand going out to caress his temple. He leaned into the touch. No one had ever touched the Soldier with gentleness or reverence before. He didn't remember much, but he remembered that. Then again, Darcy was the first person to do a lot of things for the Soldier. She was the first one to look to him for care and not violence. She was the first one to give him that beautiful, soft and shy smile that never failed to make a pit of warmth appear in his stomach unbidden.

"No one else could make me feel the way you make me feel," Darcy promised him, the words velvet against his skin, healing something that was broken up inside of him. "Like I'm safe and cared for, and important. And---and loved."

The Soldier put both hands on her waist and hauled her to him, pressing his mouth against her lips as she had done the evening before. His press quickly moved from a firm touch to an open mouthed kiss, hungry and searching and lacking a certain finesse that only made it that much better. His tongue swiped across the seam of her lips and he felt something turnover pleasantly in the pit of his stomach when she let him in, moaning at the first languid stroke of his tongue against hers.

His hands drifted from her hips to her backside and he lifted, making a low sound of appreciation when her legs wrapped around his waist. He walked two blind, but sure steps to the side of the bed and brought her down to lay her on her back, quickly following down and supporting his weight above her with his left arm. His lips never completely disconnected from hers during the slight change in location. He continued to kiss her with nearly brutal focus, one moment biting her bottom lip, and another sucking on her tongue until she reached for his hair and pulled.

Her hips came up and off the bed, his hands still on her ass, and he met the twisting of her hips with a snap of his own hips against her body. She cried out at that, right into his open mouth and he seemed to greedily stifle it before his mouth moved off of her lips, allowing her to take in harsh, panting breaths as he placed open mouth kisses on her jaw and down her neck.
"Good God, that's---uh---good," Darcy panted, feeling like her brain was dribbling out of her skull and onto the quilt James always placed on the motel bed tops. Another thrust of his hips had her eyes rolling into the back of her head and she drug her hands out of his hair to start yanking at the uniform he still wore, hands ineffectively pulling at straps to get it off of him as quickly as humanly possible.

"Pet, I promised myself I would not have you until you were plump again," the Soldier murmured against her collarbone before his tongue licked along it slowly.

"You're lucky I used to be so, so proud of my body," Darcy giggled. "A girl might get offended."

"You are the most beautiful creature I have ever looked upon, in seventy years of living," the Soldier promised. His mouth had moved and he nosed under the loose t-shirt she wore to swipe a line down her cleavage with his tongue. "But I will have you when you are delightfully plump again."

"Soldier, you can have me forever," Darcy winked at him, so blatant in her corny obnoxious silliness that the Soldier's resultant smile at her lasted longer than five whole seconds.

But then two pairs of serum enhanced ears, one slightly less enhanced than the other, heard a noise outside. One they were both familiar with, although one slightly more familiar with it than the other. It was the safety of a gun being clicked off. The Soldier froze on top of Darcy before moving very quickly. He reached for the kevlar he had peeled off of her earlier and draped it over her before placing a very gentle, very besotted kiss on the tip of her nose.

"Wait, Pet."

Darcy nodded in spite of herself and the the man who had been licking into her mouth and squeezing her ass seconds ago disappeared right in front of her eyes, the door to their room was silently shut and the Soldier was gone, leaving Darcy completely alone. She lay there silent, holding the kevlar against her, before her mind started to catch up and she realized if someone out there was after them, then they'd have to get the heck out of Dodge as soon as the Soldier was done dispatching with them.

She nearly jumped out of bed then, grabbing for items and shoving them in their bags. Every time they left a motel room, they made sure that it was very nearly untouched by the time they left.
James used to do it alone, but Darcy had just started to do some of the things that James used to do, wiping down for fingerprints while he pulled hairs of hers off of pillowcases.

She did her best with the chore alone, ignoring the sounds of multiple punches as the Soldier ended whoever dared to try and get them. The bags were packed and everything wiped and she was just looking over the bathroom for any evidence of their stay, finding none, knowing that James would have likely just brought her into the room and watched her sleep. She walked back into the room and froze as someone at the door held a gun up at her.

"He took a whore," the man dressed in head to toe black body armor grinned. He shook his head in amusement and then his eyes narrowed. "You."

"Me," Darcy said back hoarsely, her eyes flicking briefly to the bag that lay on the floor midway point between her and the door.

"You're the little astrophysicist's girl," the man shrewdly guessed.

"Nope," Darcy narrowed her eyes at the man, trying to place him. He had to be Hydra, the body armor was similar to what Darcy had already seen too much of at the facilities she and the Soldier had dismantled. “Haven’t been for a very long time, now.”

"I saw a video of you getting knocked up," the man leered.

"Shut up," Darcy swallowed as the sounds of more fighting outside filtered to her ears. She didn't doubt that the Soldier could handle whatever was thrown at him, but if Hydra brought a battalion, it might take a little while. She just had to take care of this one guy, and the Soldier would handle the rest.

"You were an uptight bitch in London, I wanted to waste you then," he shook his head. "If Sitwell would have let me. But then I would have missed the show."

Darcy's eyes narrowed at him as recognition sparked in her brain. She remembered him, arriving after everything had happened in London, a part of a SHIELD strike team. He'd been given the envious task of watching Darcy and Ian while Jane answered questions with Thor.

He’d asked Ian if he could borrow the bimbo.
"Rollins," Darcy nodded. "Where's your life partner, Rumlow? I thought you guys were like Bert and Ernie, you know, totally married husbands who lick each other's assholes but pretend they like boobs and pussy."

"Filthy mouth on you," Rollins sneered. He looked her up and down, focusing on her stomach which wasn't showing any signs of pregnancy yet. "Mother of the year candidate, I'm sure."

Darcy froze for a second, not really knowing what to say to the deranged Hydra muscle in front of her. She had no doubt that the Soldier would end him, but if he was wearing some kind of communications unit, that meant others within Hydra could hear.

For the first time, she felt a fierce, protective surge go through her body for the small thing that she’d been forced to have a hand in creating. There was no way she was going to let Hydra lay a finger on the baby. So she lied.

Chapter End Notes

Aren't you glad I didn't go on a hiatus after this chapter??! That would have been awful for everyone. Only a truly evil person would have done that.

Also, a wild Jane Foster appears in her natural habitat. I really didn't want Jane to be unlikeable. She did nothing wrong, really. No one did. So I hope people are kind that I'm using her single minded distractions as a plot device.

I hope you enjoyed. I'm sorry about the cliffhanger.
Hi guys! Wednesday!!

Warnings: All the warnings. EVERY SINGLE WARNING. If you think of something bad that needs to be warned about, it's in this chapter. No sugar coating here, if you are offended by any of this, then CLICK THE LITTLE RED X IN THE TOP RIGHT OF YOUR SCREEN: ABHORRENT violence, crass and disgusting discussion of previous non consensual activities, attempted rape, violent (justifiable) murder, catatonia, violence, explosions, disturbing things.

Dear god, why did I write this?

Please, just don't read it.

And thanks to my betas for NOT STOPPING ME FROM WRITING IT...Captain Corruptor phoenix_173 and Admiral Enabler dntpanic42!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Ten: Ruined

"It didn't take," Darcy lied easily. "The Hydra abomination was terminated, dude. Sorry. I know you and Rumlow were looking forward to finally starting a family in the closet you crammed yourselves into. You know, if you just admitted to who you were deep down, the caveman aggression might ease up?"

"Fuck you, bitch," Rollins grumbled, taking a step forward.

Darcy's feet were braver than every other part of her, because at the moment they refused to take a step away from him even though her brain was screaming at her to run. She borrowed one of the Soldier's expressions, staring at him with her mouth in a set line, her eyes nearly half lidded in her disinterest at the current predicament.

"Shame you got rid of the kid," Rollins nodded. "The stuff they shoved up in your worthless cunt was priceless, really. But I'm sure we can wipe the Asset into compliance and get you knocked up
again in no time. Since all you're good for is spreading those fat legs of yours."

"He will never hurt me," Darcy said confidently.

"I thought they showed you the machine," Rollins laughed, he pointed his finger to his temple and shook his head with a grin on his face. "He doesn't get a choice. His brain gets fried, and then we give him a to do list consisting of YOU. So instead of getting a turkey baster full of vintage jizz fucked into you till your drugged ass comes in front of everyone, this time, you'll get a real man. Well, as much as a neutered murder puppy can be a real man."

"He will never hurt me," Darcy repeated, no less confident than before, completely ignoring the lurch in her stomach at the crass words being thrown at her. She hadn’t remembered much about the last procedure. It had been the one thing that hadn’t hurt, but now she realized that the evil bastards had made a disgusting spectacle out of it.

"He won't have to hurt you," Rollins laughed. "I'll do it for him."

Darcy had to send out one small thanks to the serum running through her veins at the moment, because her reaction time was absolutely amazing as she jumped forward, going to her knees as Rollins made a grab for her. She slammed her fist into the left side of his stomach, hoping that it hit something important as she scrambled to get to her bag and her baton.

Even one of the Soldier's many, many guns would have been preferable at this point.

She got her hand on the handle of her bag when she felt something hard hit her in the back of her head, and her entire field of vision went white. She felt a vague pain at the back of skull, as if her hair were about to be ripped out as she was literally picked up by her braid, a meaty, unforgiving hand gripping it tight and hoisting her off the ground so that her toes scrabbled for purchase on the scratchy carpeting. The spots in her vision cleared enough to see that she was now facing a very red faced, angry Rollins and he opened his mouth to spit more uncouth vitriol at her.

She swung the backpack right into his jaw with all her strength. And the thing about the serum, she was rapidly discovering, wasn't that it made her as strong as Captain America, or as good at fighting as the Black Widow, or as beautifully deadly accurate as her Soldier...

It did make her strong enough to knock a steroid addled Strike team member off of his balance, causing him to drop her. She immediately dug into the bag and pulled whatever she could out.
Rollins recovered quickly though and he yanked her up off the ground again and threw her on the bed, knocking her head against the bedside table so hard that Darcy wanted to simultaneously pass out and throw up at the same time.

"Your precious Soldier is out there getting reprogrammed as we speak," Rollins sneered down at her as she wavered on the bed, off balance and completely dazed. "Before he wrecks that sweet little pussy of yours, let's have a go, yeah?"

"He will never hurt me," Darcy reiterated, her words sluggish as she reached for the phone on the bedside table. She didn't know if she wanted to get the authorities on the line or if she wanted to use it to bash Rollins' skull into bits, but she didn't get a chance to do either, because Rollins reached for her arm and twisted her wrist at an unnatural angle, getting her to cry out in pain.

He slammed the phone down on the receiver before launching himself at her, forcing her to lay on her back on the bed. His hands went for her pants immediately, an absolutely disgusting gleam in his eyes: excited and anticipatory. He looked at raping her like a kid looked at getting a new toy at a store. Darcy refused to cry out again or whimper, but her eyes filled with angry tears.

"You're gonna love it I--"

His eyes widened in shock at the two inch blade stuck right in his throat. His hands went for it and he feebly fought with Darcy's hand, trying to get her to release the grip of the knife. In the process, it moved around in his flesh and ripped and broke free, a cartoonish amount of blood spilling out.

It took less than fifteen seconds after the small knife came out for Rollins' skin to start to go ashen as he coughed and choked and spluttered, the blood flicking against Darcy's skin like stinging, hot rain. He collapsed completely on top of her in a dead weight, and she didn't even dare open her mouth to scream out, afraid that the blood would get past her lips.

She didn't know how long she lay underneath him, trapped by the seemingly unmovable weight of his body and what had just happened. She understood now, she knew why the Soldier never let her take the kill shot, why he only let her play at revenge before doing the hard things that she was clearly not entirely capable of.

She was covered in blood, it was all over her. She wanted a bath. She wanted to sit with her back to the Soldier's chest while he poured warm, soap scented water over her gently. She vaguely heard the roaring sound of a man's guttural shout, pained and angry. She recognized it as Russian and then the heavy weight on top of her was gone, a loud crash rattling the entire room as the Soldier picked Rollins up and off of her, with one left hand, tossing him against the opposite wall.
Darcy felt that she was no longer laying on the bed, she was cradled in a pair of strong arms before she recognized the smell of their car, a combination of mentholated smoke that James sometimes smelled like after getting back in the car, along with an unholy amalgamation of all the road food they'd ingested over the last month.

The Soldier left her in the seat and she looked out through the front window, past Hannah Hula, who was rocking gently to and fro. She saw a sea of bodies in the lot, ten---fifteen, she couldn't count how many. Electric batons littered the ground, a rifle's barrel was bent upwards.

She threw up all over herself, combining with the caked on blood from Rollins. The tears started to follow and she tried to focus on Hannah Hula and not the sea of dead bodies, and certainly not the Soldier tossing the lifeless body SHE had created onto a pile and then positioning one of the bombs Darcy had been so fond of and giving himself three minutes.

When he got back into the car, he swore in Russian at the sight of her.

"The rest of the people," she whispered.

"Empty," the Soldier advised her. "There could be no witnesses of them bringing us back in, so they emptied the motel."

"Smart," Darcy nodded.

"Pet, are you alright?" the Soldier asked in concern. "Did he hurt you?"

Darcy shrugged, not really knowing how to answer that. She'd killed someone. What did it matter if he snapped her wrist and gave her a concussion or three? She'd taken his life, so it was pretty clear that she won out in the pain inflicted column. She pulled her legs up to her chest before falling over on her side, a small Darcy ball on the bench seat and she continued to cry.

She felt a flesh hand at her temple and she turned her face, pressing her lips into his palm.

"Don't worry, Pet. I'm going to make this right."
"That's a lot of bodies, Cap."

Sam sighed preemptively as Steve looked over the report from the border. Eighteen bodies, to be exact, were found in the parking lot of a deserted motel, burnt to a crisp thanks to a small explosion. The ones that were put together enough to identify were all former SHIELD, turned Hydra. Steve was nodding as he turned the page.

"It is," Steve nodded. "They must have been pretty desperate to either stop him from what he was doing, or get back what he's taken."

"Maybe we should work with some of the Alphabet agencies on this one, throw it worldwide, see if we can bring them in sooner," Sam suggested. "Just to bring the body count down a little, maybe."

"Sam do you know what Hydra's body count is?" Steve wondered with that put upon innocent look in his eyes that was just a precursor to him getting his way and Sam conceding that Steve was ultimately right.

"High," Sam nodded.

"I hate Hydra with everything in me," Steve said bluntly. "And if it were up to me, I'd go after every single one of them and not a lot of them would make it to prison."

Sam nodded and rolled his eyes only a little as he pulled the report that Steve was clearly finished with back so that he could make sure Maria Hill and company dealt with the cover up appropriately. He pulled on one of the folders that always seemed to be on Steve's desk and opened it up, the file picture of Retta Archie staring back at him.

"She looks like she don't have time for anyone's shit," Sam chuckled.

"Your secretary?" Sam nodded. "The one we were looking for right after everything went to shit?"

"Yeah," Steve sniffed. "Hydra took her."

"Uh---she's like---ninety something?"

"Spring chicken at eighty-seven," Steve smiled. "Took her and tried to torture details about me out of her."

Sam was about to open his mouth to swear and Steve shook his head quickly and explained, "She's fine, she's good. I had a highly covert video call with her a few days ago. She's part of the underground group of ninety-year olds taking the old cash cows of Hydra down one at a time."

"Amazing," Sam huffed out a sigh.

"Her one request of me, was to burn them to the ground," Steve nodded in agreement with her words. "And look---what would you do, if you had just finished a mission, went back to the hotel with your girl, and wanted to just---sleep? And they came after you. And your girl."

"So you're cool with Bucky Barnes having a girl?" Sam asked in disbelief.

"She must be something pretty special for her to still be stuck with him," Steve shrugged. His smirk was slow and downright devilish. "Bucky always had the best choices in ladies who---were open minded."

"Define open---no, nevermind," Sam laughed just a little bit, clearly not wanting to know, but getting a clear picture anyway..

"If the girl is important to Bucky, then she's important to me," Steve shrugged. "And if they tried to hurt her, or take her back, then I think Bucky was justified for what he did here."

"Alright, but please promise me, that someday, you're going to hit a point where you don't just write off everything Barnes does," Sam said seriously. "He can get away with murder, sure, but he can't get away with murder."

"When Hydra isn't involved, I see a little more clearly," Steve promised. "Speaking of, if he's working hard on his end to finish them, I think we need to do the same."

Steve pulled the folder back out of Sam's hands and pointed to one of the names. "Jack Rollins was identified. The coroner says he was stabbed in the throat."

"Jesus, your boyfriend is a terrifying son of a bitch," Sam blew out a long steady breath.

"Let's start to look for Rumlow again."

"Cap, last time we looked for Rumlow we all almost---"

"Sam, we're Avengers, it doesn't matter what almost happened. We go and find the bad guys and we get it done," Steve said resolutely. "Let's go find Rumlow and finish it."

The Soldier was tired. He hadn't been in control for this long a period of time in a very long time. Even then, when he was Hydra's tool for death and destruction, he was never out in the open for as long as he had been for the last few days. Not without a wipe in between. He looked down at Darcy, who was clean now, the blood and sick having been washed off slowly and painstakingly in a roadside rest stop.

He'd found that her wrist was broken when he was undressing her, and she barely made a sound as he set it and found something to make a splint with. It was nearly healed already, the serum accelerating her healing nicely. If only it could help with the catatonia she was stuck in. Killing the Hydra scum who had tried to hurt her had been something that he had been trying to shield her from. But it had happened in the worst possible way, and he felt sick from the guilt of it.

He refused to give up control now. His other counterparts wouldn't know how to help her. He was the only one capable of doing what needed to be done. He had hand fed her the last twenty-four hours, holding her against him as she slept, soothing her when she woke up with a scream on her lips. He would be willing to do anything to make it right for her.

She was curled up with her head in his lap, feigning sleep that wouldn't come. They'd made it
across the border and he had driven as far as he could without stopping. The small bit of wilderness in upstate New York looked ideal, it looked beautiful and perfect, actually. Bucky remembered dreaming about living in such a place, a short train ride away from the city. The best of both worlds, with green and concrete every other day if they so choose.

The Soldier blinked, wondering how such thoughts had wandered into his mind and he put the car in park, his right hand gently stroking through Darcy's hair.

"Pet," he whispered.

"Sleeping," Darcy promised. "Don't have to pee yet."

"Pet, up," he said gruffly, pulling her gently up to sit. They exited the car and walked a few steps away, his posture stiff and unyielding as Darcy followed him dutifully, her hand resting on the small of his back.

She looked around in confusion, but then saw the ostentatious 'A' cut into the shrubbery in the distance.

"NO."

"Pet---"

"NO!" she screamed, more life in her than before. "I won't, you can't make me. I'm not going back to them yet. We're not finished yet. You said I didn't have to go back for MONTHS. NO!"

“I can finish the work alone, I will leave for Europe and you will---”

The Soldier paused then for a moment and Darcy took it as an opening to counter argue. She couldn’t help herself and pushed against him with both hands, hiding the wince from the pain in her broken left wrist. The Soldier immediately put his arms around her biceps, his touch gentle but enough to hold her in place.

“That’s not part of the deal! You said when we were done we’d come back here together!” she
shouted, the tears not falling gently, but rather falling almost explosively out of her eyes and hitting the ground between them. “You promised, give me Bucky, give me Bucky now! He promised!”

“Pet, no,” the Soldier’s voice was as soft as Darcy’s was loud. “Go to the Captain, he will care for you until I can come back to you.”

“Fuck you!” she spat out. “That’s not how this is going to work, you can’t just give me to your boyfriend and have me treat him like he’s you. I don’t know him and you’re not interchangeable super soldiers. And---and I love you.”

“He will love you as well, and he is the only one I can trust to protect you,” the Soldier admitted, pained, his chest rising and falling more rapidly. His resolve was crumbling though. He was loathe to part from his Pet. Her admission of love for him, although it was a screaming and angry thing, affected him more than he wanted.

He was a weapon. A Machine. An Asset.

For nearly seventy years he had been starved of anything that wasn’t full of pain and blood and violence. And at that moment, his Pet, a young, beautiful woman who couldn’t be broken by the things he had faced, was standing in front of him and promising him an entire world that he didn’t deserve.

“They will attempt to bring us both back to them,” the Soldier said softly.

“Fuck those guys, really,” Darcy shook her head. “Just---fuck those guys. If they keep coming, then we’ll just keep burning them down.”

“Pet, you are not made for that,” he shook his head sadly.

“So you do the hard parts, this---Rollins was a one time thing, and yeah, I’m shaken by it,” Darcy acknowledged. “I don’t want to ever have to do that again.”

“You won’t,” he promised, pulling on her arms so that she was flush against him, his eyes closing when she wrapped herself around him. “I’m sorry, Pet, I should have guarded you better.”
“Don’t do that, no one is better at guarding me than you,” Darcy promised him. “You can’t leave me, promise me you won’t leave me. I can’t do this without you.”

“The Captain would treat you very well,” the Soldier promised. He swallowed and his voice was just a little looser, “He won’t have any other choice but to love you.”

“Please?” she looked up at him hopefully, those big blue eyes soft and searching. “Please don’t leave me here. Let’s finish it together, okay?”

The Soldier looked into the distance and could just make out the barest edges of buildings of the Avengers Facility. She would be safe there, he knew it. And while she protested about the Captain, he knew that the old voice in his head, the one that snuck out at times and called his Pet the sweet, old fashioned names, was correct. Eventually, they would fit together, like three puzzle pieces.

But there were things that still needed to be mended in his own mind. Hydra still had ways, buried with past handlers, on how to make him compliant. And although he knew that the baby Darcy carried was as good as his, he had to find out what sample was used to create the child. Darcy feared it was a monster, and he wanted to put her mind at relative ease. If any ease could be found in such a situation.

He didn’t want to give her up yet. He couldn’t imagine it. With Darcy, he could feel the three jagged pieces of his mind coming back together slowly. She anchored each piece, a precious touchstone for the fragmented parts of him to return to.


She melted into him and a happy sound was muffled into his chest.

“You will listen to me, Pet,” the Soldier whispered. “You will do as I say so that you can remain safe.”

“I will, I promise,” Darcy agreed. “Just don’t leave me.”

“I won’t.”
“Hey.”

Natasha looked up from her work and gave Clint a nod as he walked into her quarters. The room appeared spartan to the untrained eye, but Clint made out quite a few things that made the place home for the Red Room escapee. There was the bed spread, plain gray, but Clint knew just by looking at it that it had been selected with extreme care by both Natasha and Sam Wilson (once Sam knew Tony was footing the bill, the importance of ultra-deluxe interior decorating sky rocketed).

Clint knew that if he opened up the sleek and modern armoire, the doors would be covered in his daughter’s art, along with a poem or two penned by his son. As a matter of fact there was a visible picture on the desk that Natasha was working at of her with all three of the Barton children cuddled around her. Next to that was a framed postcard from New Brunswick, New Jersey, showcasing Camp Lehigh and undoubtedly given to her by Steve Rogers.

The little things were everywhere. And it proved to Clint that Natasha, who he had brought in broken and tired, a nearly feral thing with no trust and no value put upon any other living soul, had finally found a home.

Which made the little rubber duckie sitting on her bedside table even more surprising. It had a pair of red wings on its back and was dressed in a black tactical suit. Clint stared at it for a full thirty seconds before looking back to the desk Natasha was working at, unsurprised when she was waiting for him to pay attention to her, a photo of a young woman up on her screen.

“Laura’s gonna be disappointed,” Clint gruffly acknowledged, nodding to the duck. “She thought you and Banner were kind of a thing.”

“Did she? Maybe she is a fan of distance in her relationships, but I find that not knowing the whereabouts of a romantic partner for nearly a year to be----annoying,” Natasha smirked.

“But the other bird? C’mon, people are gonna talk that you only went after him cause I don’t want to do a threesome with you and my wife,” Clint whined. “And the only reason for that is I’m pretty sure my wife would leave me for you.”
“I am superior in all ways,” Natasha nodded. She looked to the duck on the bedside table and shrugged nonchalantly. “That’s nothing. He won it in a crane game and I thought it was funny.”

“Uh huh,” Clint rolled his eyes.

“How about we talk about the real reason I called you in?” Natasha offered and gestured to the screen with a tilt of her head.

Clint squinted at the picture of the young woman, brunette, bespectacled, cute as a button, truth be told. She seemed familiar, but he couldn’t quite place her. Her appearance gave him a feeling of amusement as she stared into the SHIELD picture with clear annoyance and a definite mischievous gleam in her eye.

“She jammed microwavable popcorn bags into all the SHIELD vehicles in New Mexico after Thor left,” Clint clicked his fingers and pointed at the picture in remembrance. “And Carter told the story of the tainted diarrhea brownies at a SHIELD breakfast in London.”

“She’s been missing since before the fall of SHIELD,” Natasha revealed with a sigh. “The last contact that I can make out was an ATM withdrawal near Puente Antiguo, June 22, 2014.”

“Shit,” Clint sighed, walking up to stand behind Natasha, looking over what she had compiled. “Selvig says he heard from her in July 2014?”

“A voicemail,” Natasha explained. “Telling him that she had been relocated by SHIELD, new name, new identity.”

“Uh, we don’t offer that service to just anybody,” Clint shook his head. It had taken an act of God and Fury himself to get his wife and kids hidden as well as they had been. “Did you check with Fury and Hill?”

“They have no idea where she is,” Natasha admitted. “And yes, I already hacked their servers, they really have nothing on her after she resigned as Foster’s assistant.”

“Well----shit,” Clint sighed.
“There’s more,” Natasha clicked a button on her laptop and a new picture displayed. This one of some burnt skin, and a crudely drawn ‘D’ carved into skin with a blade. “Forensics found this on one of the Hydra bodies recovered in Echo Bay in Canada.”

“Double shit,” Clint breathed out. “You think Barnes has her?”

“I’m not willing to say I know for certain,” Natasha said softly.

“But what’s your gut say?” Clint asked knowingly, knowing that Natasha’s instincts were very rarely wrong.

“I think that Darcy was taken right after the fall of SHIELD, I think that Hydra was monitoring her, thinking she could be used as leverage against Thor,” Natasha’s voice was a quiet thing, her words accurate and to the point. She paused and took a very small breath before continuing, “I think that she was tortured and experimented on ever since then, in ways that no person should be able to come back from. And I think---I think Barnes hit that Hydra facility and found her.”

“And he’s kept her since then, that’s not really his style,” Clint furrowed his brow. “I mean, Bucky Barnes taking a dame and going around the world Bonnie and Clyde style, maybe, I mean, if he could have Steve at his side too. I could see it happening.”

“Peggy’s been telling you stories.” Natasha’s mouth lifted up at the right corner for the briefest of moments.

“Ole Peg don’t gotta tell no stories, you can see what Barnes means to Steve,” Clint shook his head. “But the Winter Soldier’s not exactly---people friendly.”

“No, he isn’t,” Natasha admitted, her own memories verifying it. Even when he trained her for a brief period of time decades ago, the Winter Soldier, the Asset borrowed from Hydra, didn’t interact with anyone with a pulse for any longer than he needed to. He certainly hadn’t been swayed by any of the feminine wiles on display at the compound. She hit the arrow key and a video began playing of surveillance lifted from Stark Towers. “She met Rogers once, a few months before she was taken.”

“Oh---oh, he seems smitten,” Clint smirked at the screen. “That’s a sight to be seen.”
“He wanted her to be his assistant,” Natasha smiled. “She refused.”

“Either way, Hydra would have gotten their hands on her,” Clint sighed, thinking of Retta with a fond smile.

“She made an impact on him, he asked about her a little while ago,” Natasha revealed. “It’s why I started to look for her, to set her up with Steve. Nearly two years, and aside from Selvig, I’m the only one to think to look for her.”

“Poor kid,” Clint nodded. “It was a screwed up couple of months after Hydra, Nat. No one knew what end was up. She fell through the cracks.”

“She was on SHIELD’s watch list, and Hydra erased her from it so they could torture her,” Natasha said bluntly. “And no one thought to look for her except for a man still recovering from being held at a mental institution thanks to SHIELD.”

“Have you told Steve?” Clint asked.

“No, not until I know for sure,” Natasha admitted. “Because if he knows it’s Darcy Lewis with Barnes, then---”

“We might just lose Captain America to a Bonnie and Clyde and Clyde road trip of burning Hydra down,” Clint finished easily. He nodded and took a deep breath, “What do you need me to do?”

“Carter is with the CIA right now, I think that’s our best way to try and find Barnes still,” Natasha admitted. “Barnes and...and Lewis have exhausted Canada of Hydra outposts, and he’s clearly not going to start in on the United States.”

“Hey, Romanoff! I told you that the last time you put the grounds down the garbage disposal, Tony lost his---oh, hey Barton,” Steve stopped in Natasha’s doorway, and smiled in welcome at Clint. “You know, I think I’ve seen more of you in the last three months than I’ve seen of you since the Avengers have been founded.”

“Nathaniel is teething, I take my breaks when I can get them, Cap,” Clint smiled.
“If Laura calls me, I’m not taking the blame this time,” Steve said with actual sternness. “Your wife is---she’s---”

“Terrifying, I know.”

Chapter End Notes

and this is sort of the end of "book 1", we're going to be moving closer to Civil War, starting with the next chapter.

Thank you for reading this. I know it was hard, and if you were offended by any of it, I'm sorry (but you should have bailed when you had the chance dude).

....Christ I don't want to hit post.
"I didn't think this was how a lovely and exciting trip to Europe would be, honestly."

James sighed and gave Darcy an encouraging little smile, before pulling her to him closely. It wasn't exactly first class, he knew that. But it was the only way he knew how to travel that wouldn't expose either of them to ever present surveillance in even the smallest of airports. They were stuck in an large, insulated crate, just big enough for them to sit as they flew for ten whole hours in the cargo hold of an express shipping plane.

The serum had blessed the both of them for their trip, really. Because it was very cold. Not quite as cold as cryofreeze, but definitely cold enough. He'd made sure Darcy was dressed in layers and layers of warm wool and cotton. He'd done the same and he'd managed to bring the quilt that they had been sleeping on top of for nearly two months.

The unit they were in was Hydra tech, it adjusted for the very unpleasant air pressure of the cargo hold, but it didn't much care for other physical comforts or temperature control. James had been sitting on the floor of the crate, holding Darcy in his lap as she wavered between sleeping and chattering. He realized about an hour in that he didn't quite understand how he had thought he would have been able to make this journey alone. Without her there to share the body heat with, without her sleepy smile and the way she just never ran out of things to talk about...he would have lost his mind.

"Just, even coach seats might have been more comfortable, maybe," Darcy sighed into his neck. "OH! Or maybe getting a small boat, just big enough for the two of us, like the little boat that Pacey and Joey sailed away on at the end of Season Three."
"Hmmm?" James furrowed his brow adorably, not understanding what she was referencing.

"I'll make sure we netflix it later, someday," Darcy promised.

"I never liked boats," James admitted.

"No?" Darcy looked surprised at that.

"Ferries, boats, dinghies," James wrinkled his nose just the slightest bit to show his disgust at it. "I used to get motion sick when I was younger---"

"Really?" Darcy's eyes widened. "So how did that work with tiny Steve Rogers?"

"Well, you can't really say no to a fella like that," James reminisce, sounding more and more like Bucky with each syllable. "And not for the reasons you think."

"I don't know, if he had that pouty mouth and those big baby blues when he was a little guy, I think it'd be hard to say to no to him," Darcy wagered.

"Oh, dollbaby, he didn't pull the puppy dog look when he was a little guy, that came later when we had to get extra rations and supplies from the girls back at headquarters," Bucky laughed. Because he was Bucky in that moment, a fond smile on his face. "When he was a little shit, he was just that, a little shit."

"I believe it," Darcy agreed confidently. "From what I've seen of him so far, he's been a little shit."

"He kept a runnin' tally of all the times I got us into scrapes, now not the fightin' scrapes, cause that was his specialty," Bucky clarified, holding Darcy a little closer, his left hand going to her lower abdomen, fingertips seeking out the faint hint of a rapid heartbeat. Bucky kissed her temple slow and sweet before pulling away and continuing his lazy recollections, "I used to try and get us into schemes. To make money, to get an extra bit of something in a restaurant, to have a little extra fun. And he'd bring up the list and show it to me every time he wanted to do something that I didn't want to."
"Did you really run him down a hill once in a barrel?" Darcy whispered.

"I didn't tell you that," Bucky squinted at her with playful suspicion.

"You said I could read your notebooks," Darcy reminded him.

"Oh yeah, well---yeah, I did, but it was only 'cause I wanted to win that bet with those country boys. That kind of money would have kept us fed and fed well for the better part of a week," Bucky revealed. "Here's what I never got about Stevie, the punk would jump head first into fights, getting his face smashed to pieces over a principle, but he had to be dragged in kicking and screaming into stunts that didn't require getting the snot beat out of him."

"I'm sure once he got all beefy, he fell in line with your daredevil schemes," Darcy smiled.

"He did, mostly, still hemmed and hawed about things when he had more than a second to think about it though," Bucky cuddled her closer. "Oh, Dollbaby, he's gonna love you so much."

"Did you win?" Darcy wondered, changing the subject back. Bucky made his appearances with her more often than he had at first, and he always, ALWAYS managed to sound like he was selling the concept of Steve to her, like the best used car salesman of all time.

'Take a look at this old time jalopy right here, now there's some dings and scuffs, but I promise you that once you get that motor runnin', he'll treat you real nice and lovin', you won't be able to stop taking him for a ride. And look at that back end...could bounce a quarter off it and he'd enjoy it too.'

She didn’t mind, if anything she was flattered to have Bucky think she was good enough to be invited to the party. And she knew that if she really didn’t want it to even be talked about, much less ‘sold’ to her, Bucky would happily comply. She spent most of her worry on the idea that Steve wouldn’t be sold on her, and she’d somehow lose Bucky, James and the Soldier all at once.

"Course we didn't," Bucky laughed. "But only 'cause they cheated. And Stevie found out about it and all of a sudden, it was like he was jumping with his face first right into their big farm boy fists."
"You guys needed a handler," Darcy sighed, melting a little into Bucky's one armed embrace, his left hand still pressed against her stomach.

"Funny you should say that, Dollbaby," Bucky chuckled. "We always used to talk about needing someone else, a girl, cause we both liked girls plenty, in addition to liking each other quite a bit too. Needed someone a little level headed, but still willing to go in for a real good time every once in awhile."

Darcy didn't say anything, but she smiled softly, so Bucky counted that as progress, slow and steady. Before the end of her second trimester, she'd be ready to go back to the Avengers. She'd be willing to spend some time with Steve and not hate him on principle. If nothing else could go wrong between then and now, Bucky figured it had a very small chance of all working out. Just maybe.

"We wanted her to be soft and funny and sweet," Bucky's words were like a tender lullaby, making Darcy's blinks last a little longer each time. "Wanted her to love both of us like crazy so we could bicker about who she loved more."

"You, duh, I love you more," Darcy answered easily.

"For now, we'll see what those sparkling baby blues do to you, dollbaby," Bucky smirked.

"I like your baby blues just fine," Darcy stubbornly insisted.

"Stevie always thought he scared gals off, the ones I could find that were open-minded," Bucky revealed. "I hated to see him so down on himself."

"Noooo," Darcy whined quietly. "Don't make him sympathetic. I want to be mad at all of them for at least another year or so."

"He tried to break things off when I went to basic training," Bucky continued despite Darcy's sleepy protests. "Said that I could find anyone better than him to enjoy whatever little freedoms I had left. Boy or girl."

"He's dumber than a sack of rocks," Darcy mumbled. "My Bucky is loyal as the day is long."
"I am that," Bucky smiled. "And you can't just take that love out of your heart once it's there. It stays."

"Forever?" Darcy ventured.

"Forever and ever," Bucky promised, bending his head so that his lips pressed gently against hers. He smiled at her with a soft warmth that seemed to banish the cold out of their little traveling box. "Hey Dollbaby?"

"Hmmm?"

"I got this friend you just gotta meet," Bucky launched into his pitch. "He thinks he's not much to look at, but I'll tell you true, he's got a beautiful pair of eyes, a set of kissable lips, and a mind sharper than a tack. And he's got the best heart."

"Sounds nice," Darcy whispered, falling back to sleep easily. "Later."

"Alright, later," Bucky grinned, kissing Darcy's sleeping pout once more before settling in for a nice long bout of staring at her and getting lost in daydreams.

"I'm not trying to be a dick."

Steve looked up from his report, the one that was tracking down Rumlow's last known whereabouts. They thought that he might be heading to Africa, along with a team of Hydra loyal, hitting up medical research facilities in the big cities. Chasing him down would be a good training opportunity for Wanda, who was still having trouble standing out where she shouldn't.

Sam was standing above his desk and staring down at Steve in concern.

"I never said you were trying to be a dick?" Steve questioned, curious as to where this was going.
"Chatter analysis thinks that Barnes and friend made the move out of the country," Sam revealed.

"I'm aware," Steve nodded. "You told me to give them time. Natasha told me to give them time. Everyone told me to give them time, so I figured, that was probably a really smart thing to do."

"Right," Sam nodded. "Time."

The pair remained in silence as Steve finished making notes on the report, before looking up at Sam with a small smile on his face.

"Go ahead, say what you have to say, Sam."

"You're not jealous?" Sam asked quickly. "Cause look, I mean, not to project my own shit on this, but you know I have a thing for Natasha, and she has a thing for Banner."

"Had a thing," Steve corrected. "You don't abandon Natasha Romanoff and still get to claim a stake on her heart, as far as I know."

"I mean, I get jealous and Nat and I are just...pre-relationship negotiations, we're not exactly a love story for the ages," Sam arched an eyebrow as he sat down opposite Steve at the desk. "Barnes is out there, with a looker, on a clandestine and romantic kind of operation."

Steve rolled his eyes and smirked.

"She really a looker?" Steve managed to ask, his eyebrow arching in that trolling, teasing way. "Like---could we get what you have to the sketch artist and maybe get a visual aid? Because you and I might have a different idea on what a looker is."

"Smartass," Sam scolded easily. "And from what I remember with my fried brain, she was pretty, you know. For a recovering tortured kidnapping victim. Pretty eyes. Nice lips. Curly dark hair."

"Sounds about right," Steve huffed a chuckle. "Don't tell anyone, but me and Buck always sort of had a thing for brunettes. Well, with one exception in Bucky's case."
"I can't believe I'm having this conversation right now," Sam sighed, his eyes rolling up to look at the ceiling, his expression dripping in horrified disbelief.

"Neither can I," Steve sassed back.

"Is this how it worked in the roaring forties? You sent out the pretty boyfriend to hook girls to bring back to the lair?" Sam demanded.

"Well, yeah, how did you go about finding a dame for your threesomes?" Steve deadpanned.

"Motherfucking asshole," Sam rolled his eyes hard.

"You kids call it polyamory," Steve shrugged. "Sometimes, in order to get a relationship to work, you need more moving pieces."

"And you and Barnes wanted one more moving piece," Sam guessed.

"Nothing wrong with it," Steve nodded. "Not if everyone knows how it works going in."

"Didn't say there was," Sam agreed. "You hoping he brings her back here and---what, happily ever after?"

"No Sam, I hope he brings her back here so she can get the help she needs, so he can get the help he needs," Steve said seriously, his teasing and smirking vanishing. "I want them to come back because they WANT to come back. I want to make things right, I want the world to know that the both of them, their circumstances and their reactions aren't entirely their fault. I want to protect them."

"I still don't get it," Sam said after a beat. "You're cool with the man you love running around with a beautiful girl, presumably sharing beds and bodily fluids and comfort."

"I'm totally fine with it," Steve said confidently. "Just like Bucky was fine when I brought him
back from Azzano and he saw I had met Peggy."

"Weirdos," Sam accused. "But still, well adjusted weirdos for there not to be any animosity there."

"Thanks," Steve said flatly. "They will come back though."

"That's what mystery zapper said," Sam nodded, giving Steve a soft smile. "They just needed a little more time."

"Well, then that's what they'll get."

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Traveling in Europe was very different to traveling in Canada. For one, James and Darcy no longer had their cozy (secretly bullet proof) SUV. They simply had their expertly packed back packs, all the weapons that Bucky could hide on his body and Darcy's, a lot of easily transferable cash, and trains that would take them absolutely anywhere.

They landed in Germany, and once their small travel crate had been loaded into a storage facility, James crushed the locking mechanism on the box and the door to the facility and had his arm wrapped around Darcy as they made their way to the nearest train station. James kept sliding Darcy small snacks, quietly promising her that they'd eat once they arrived at the Berlin Hauptbahnhof, where they would be able to catch a different train, taking them to their final destination.

No matter how Darcy had tried, James would not tell her their ultimate destination, but he had teased her with the very promising and tantalizing idea that they would be mostly centrally located, and would be able to stray from their base to missions.

"You mean a home?" Darcy murmured as they got off the small train at the large station in Berlin.

"Hmm?" James hummed as his right arm went around her shoulders, his left in his jacket pocket where he held a small firearm.
Darcy cuddled close to him as they made their way towards the food court. He had hidden her electric baton in the small of his back, making it easy for her to pull it out and use it, should she have to. But she still wasn't used to having it there, her eyes going a little wide as her fingers brushed against it in her cuddling of him.

He gave her surprise a small, beguiled smile and kissed her temple adoringly. To anyone who saw them as they skirted a very specific pathway that would keep them out of view of all of the security cameras at the facility, they looked like a young couple who were backpacking through Europe. They were tired, but clearly happy, and very much enamored of one another, with the way the woman looked up at the man with softness and care, and the man looked down at the woman with nothing but adoration and worship.

"I smell---I smell munchkins," Darcy whispered, turning slightly out of James' embrace. "Holy crap, there's a Dunkin Donuts down there."

"No coffee," James reminded her with an indulgent little smile.

"DECAF," Darcy insisted. "And munchkins, honey. MUNCHKINS."

James gave her a blank look.

“Little pieces of heaven? Tiny circles of donut goodness?” Darcy prompted. “Chocolate and jelly filled and powdered bits of sugary delight?”

"Donut holes? You had Timbits a few days ago," James laughed as she made a horrified face, clearly not seeing how Munchkins and Timbits were the same at all. He nodded and began pulling her along to the food court. "If you eat something relatively healthy, we'll get you your donut holes and decaf coffee for the train ride."

' Give our Pet all the cakes. She will feel so soft held in my lap. '

"Train ride to where?" Darcy wheedled expertly, fluffy dark lashes batting over big blue eyes.

"To a sort of---home," James shrugged. "Almost home."
"Almost home," Darcy gave him a smile but still rolled her eyes. She'd been getting the hard sell on Steve Rogers for a little while from Bucky, but now even James was getting into the mix.

She was going to be absolutely gobsmacked if the Soldier ever started in on her about how their duo should be upgraded into a trio. Although she would find the slight Russian accent twisting and turning around the descriptions of what the three of them could get up to highly enjoyable.

"Obsttresen---" Darcy squinted her eyes at one of the signs at the food court. She had always been pretty good at languages, and had dabbled in some German in the hopes that she could figure out how to sound like a harsh schoolmaster one day but had actually wound up sounding like a badly accented idiot milk maid. "Fruit trunks---bar?"

'Cakes, feed her cakes, not only fruit. Cakes as well.'

"Fruit, yes," James nodded. "Would you like some?"

"I want plums," Darcy put her hand on a low point of her stomach, feeling James' gaze move down to the gesture. When he looked back up at her his smile was real, full of indulgence and affection. "If they have something with plums, I want it. Oohhhh, curry!"

James handed her a handful of Euro's and told her to obtain her curry while he went about getting the rest of their feast. His eyes never strayed from her though, watching carefully as she stood in line trying to read the menu in German.

'My Pet should not be made to stand alone. She is helpless and adorable. '

Darcy's face pinched when she realized that currywurst in Germany had little to do with rice and curry and naan. But she ordered anyway, and carried her little tray of food to a table, leaving it sit as she wandered back to the food court, stopping at two other shops before meeting James back at the table.

"You're not sick of pizza, yet?" James stared down at the little box she had obtained from Pizza Hut.
"Dude, it's pizza," Darcy shrugged, as if that were the answer to everything.

'Let the Pet eat her tomato cake, and give her the plum cake you found.'

James reached out and grabbed the little tray of sushi, reading the label carefully. When he saw that it had raw tuna and salmon, he began popping pieces in his mouth at high speed.

"James, I haven't had sushi since London!" Darcy scolded reaching out for a piece, but James took the tray from her and began shoveling pieces into his mouth at a faster pace. "At least dip them in the soy sauce, that's the fun of it."

"You are not allowed the raw fish," James said simply.

"Why not?!" Darcy scoffed.

"Our baby will not have it," he replied softly.

Darcy sighed and grabbed for the little plum cake he had on one of his trays, unwrapping it and taking an angry bite. Her left hand went to her stomach anyway, and James knew that the day before they left on the plane, she had discovered that her usually soft flesh on her stomach had gone a little stiffer, indicating that that baby was growing quickly.

"You said our baby," Darcy whispered around a full mouth, her words barely discernible.

"The Soldier prefers to call it our bastard, if you would prefer?" James offered.

"No, our baby sounds better than that," Darcy nodded as they steadily ate an obscene amount of calories together, like two bears readying for hibernation. She had just started nibbling on the so-called curry, which just looked like a sloppy sausage to her, when her expression turned pensive.

"You're thinking too hard, I can smell the smoke," James gently joked, hints of Bucky poking through.
"Did you mean it?" Darcy whispered. "Or is it---is it some kind of thing you're saying to make us blend?"

"What, Darcy?" James furrowed his brow, she was clearly getting herself agitated and worked up emotionally and he didn't appreciate the feeling of the Soldier trying to take over so that he could hold her and hand feed her and soothe her.

"The baby," Darcy shrugged, looking more vulnerable in that moment than she had since they had pulled her out of that Hydra facility two months ago. "I know it's not ours, but---but, can it be ours?"

His left hand darted out, quick and efficient, just as it had when he'd been the Soldier and he'd taken the neck of some Hydra idiot in his grasp, ready to snap it. Instead, it grabbed her own right hand and gloved metal fingers grasped hers as tenderly as they could. She didn't mind the unnatural strength though. The pressure of it felt right.

"Dollbaby," it was Bucky who sighed at her, his eyes sparkling and moving over her face with affection. "I'd be proud to have that baby you're making call me it's Pop."

Her shoulders lifted, like he had taken a great weight off of them, but her big blue gaze was still doubtful. She looked around the food court, it was an idle time of day, between lunch and dinner where most people were still at work or had already gone on their travels for the day. But there was a family eating on the other side of area, a stocky toddler strapped to the man's front, little arms and legs waving about as they got a meal together to eat.

"I'm really scared," Darcy admitted. "That they used some awful monster's baby batter to put this little thing inside of me."

"No, we're gonna make sure we find out, and I'll take care of it," Bucky promised.

"I decided that I kind of---I like it?" Darcy hesitated. "I don't know that I love it, which says so much about me as a future parent, I know."

"Dollbaby, how could you love it yet, when you don't know it? You didn't even have a decision in making it," Bucky reminded her. "I'd say you're adjusting just fine."
"But I like it," Darcy insisted. "One day I'll be able to hold it and protect it, and sing to it and---and I like to think that it'll make the bad things that happened---less?"

"That seems like it just might work," Bucky nodded with a hint of eagerness. "For what it's worth, I think you'll make a real good ma, Darce. Really good, cause you got a fierce loving heart, and that's what I remember the best about my own ma."

"Yeah," Darcy gave him a small smile, obviously a burden off her shoulders, but she was still looking at him with trepidation.

"Please, dollbaby, just say what you need to say," Bucky pleaded. "The Soldier is going nuts up here with worry for you."

"What about Steve?" Darcy whispered.

"What about him?" Bucky shrugged. "Used to be short, now he's tall. Still dumb as a box of self-righteous rocks most days."

"The Soldier will never leave me," Darcy nodded, believing it in her heart.

"I won't either," Bucky promised.

"Okay, but---," Darcy sighed, not knowing how to voice the little seed of fear and instability that had been planted in her brain. "Did Steve or you ever want kids when you were younger? You know---before the war?"

Bucky sat back at that, clearly having to concentrate on bringing the memories up and back to the forefront of his mind. He took a slow, steady breath and smiled like the sun when it came to him.

"When we were still in our teens, I found a piece of old newspaper, and it had the fifty most popular names for girls and the fifty most popular names for boys printed on it," Bucky recalled slowly and deliberately. "James was only second by then. Robert---Bob was number one, ridiculous."
"Agreed," Darcy nodded. Her fingers pressed against the harder flesh of her stomach and she whispered, "You are not a Bob of any kind."

"Mary was pretty high up for the girls, might have been at the top," Bucky tried to remember more clearly, but that would have been difficult for a normal person. He was a nearly 99 year old man with traumatic brain injuries inflicted upon him. "But anyway, I came over to his place, and found the paper, and he's got about ten or twelve names circled very decisively in pencil....a few erased off."

Darcy watched Bucky, absolutely engrossed as he thought of the small details, like pictures were slowly being revealed in his brain as he began to put the puzzle together. She wished she could always get him to do this, to painlessly bring up memories of his past, ones that he had thought he had lost time and time again. His expression was so fond as he spoke of a small Steve Rogers and a circled list of names.

"I asked why he had so many circled, didn't understand it at all," Bucky admitted. "And he says to me, Well I like to daydream about the kids someday."

"What a sap," Darcy said with downright fondness.

"That he is," Bucky nodded eagerly. "I mean, we had just kissed for the first time on his birthday a few weeks ago, right when the fireworks were shaking the walls of the building. And I'm staring at the paper and looking back at him like he's a crazy person.

"First off, I tell him, all we did was kiss, I wasn't proposing marriage yet. And second off, I can't have kids, Stevie and neither can you, so are we gonna rob an orphanage or a ride along with the midwife and steal them as they get born?"

Bucky shook his head and chuckled a bit, that feeling of bewilderment still clear and palpable. His hand was still clutching Darcy's and he squeezed.

"He called me an asshole and said he was very well aware that men couldn't have babies, but he figured that one day I'd find a nice lady who didn't find it odd that Uncle Stevie lived with them," Bucky shook his head. "Course once he tells me this, I can't think of nothing else BUT finding a nice lady to bring home to him, and I knew that even if most girls turned their noses up at Stevie cause he was little, there were quite a few that thought he was still handsome and good, you know?"
"Yeah, I've seen the pictures," Darcy nodded. "He was still real handsome then too."

"See, there you go," Bucky laughed. "We talked about it a lot. Liked kissing each other. Found out later we liked doing other things together too."

"Ohhhhhhh," Darcy teased.

"Menace to society," Bucky squeezed her hand a little. "By the time I went off to Basic, I knew that we'd have to find a girl that was okay with Steve as a lot more than Uncle Stevie."

"Kinky old bastards," Darcy mumbled. "Why'd he have so many names circled?"

Bucky smirked and waited as she leaned forward and took a sip from one of her drinks, this one a water with fruit chunks floating in it. She took a long sip and Bucky leaned forward and said confidentially,

"Well Stevie wanted a dozen kids, so he thought it would make sense to pick out his dozen favorite names."

Darcy choked on her drink uncontrollably, and Bucky laughed as he got up, finally freeing his hand from hers as he approached her chair, picking her right up and setting her on his lap as he rubbed her back.

"Fuck you and your boyfriend and your twelve kids," Darcy coughed.

"Well, I came from a family of four kids, so that seems reasonable," Bucky offered playfully.

"Three, tops!" Darcy rasped out as Bucky brought the water she had just choked on back to her lips. She sipped again and sighed. "Three is the perfect number."

"Three then," Bucky nodded. "Stevie came from a family of just him and his ma, so he was fearful lonely til I met him later on. He always thought that with a whole house full of kids, no one would ever get lonely."
"Three is plenty," Darcy insisted, but her mouth turned upwards in a smile of understanding. "So what were your favorite names on that list?"

"I liked Ruby, thought it was fancy and exotic," Bucky admitted. "And Michael. Seemed trustworthy."

"Hmm," Darcy sighed. "I'm getting sleepy."

"Vitamin, doll," Bucky reminded her, digging in a compartment of her backpack and holding up her pill bottle. "Now c'mon, finish your curry hot dog and we'll go get you your treats for the train."

Chapter End Notes

Guys, did you know we haven't even gotten to the scene that inspired this whole story? The smutty scene inspired by a gif that phoenix_173 sent me months ago. We'll get to that scene later though...I promise.

THanks for reading!!
Chapter Twelve: Support Networks

Darcy was asleep in their private car on the train after being well fed and having the opportunity to wash up. The Soldier was watching over her as he plotted out the hits he and his Pet would be able to make in the next two months. Hydra had been very smart at hiding their information. While the Black Widow had dumped all of SHIELD's information onto the internet, not all of Hydra's information lay within SHIELD's hold.

His own information had been in Canada, in a non-remarkable shack that now lay in ashes on the forest floor. He had obtained the female soldier's file in South America, learning from that where the icy resting place of the other soldiers was. The others, the other soldiers, their files were scattered throughout Europe. Of these men, one of them must be their precious bastard's father.

Darcy turned in her sleep on the small pull down cot, and he reached his hand over from his perch next to her, his left hand pressing gently against her abdomen. He smiled when he could feel the faintest hints of a fast heartbeat, steady and unwavering although still small and vulnerable.

One of the soldiers he could rule out entirely. His files lay in Africa, and he had been made a eunuch decades earlier by his own set of tormentors before being brought into Hydra as an assassin. The Soldier was pleased that this man had not been used to create his precious little unborn bastard, because he had been a sick and twisted man, deadly and accurate with any weapon put into his hands. He had craved pain and destruction. He had been the first of the new soldiers to turn on the handlers, the ringleader so far as cruelty and violence were concerned. The Soldier didn't crave such things. He excelled at them, to be certain, but he didn't crave them. They were a means to an end. When Hydra pulled his strings, those ends were whatever Hydra wanted. But now that he no longer had handlers, his only aim was to destroy the ones who had tried to contain
him.

And now, the rapid heartbeat along with the soft warm Pet laying in the bed...they were the new mission. He would do what he had to do in order to secure their comfort and safety. Even if it meant in a few months he would be pushed back further into the weak mind and be forced to play nice with the Captain and the Avengers.

For his Pet and their precious unborn bastard, that would be a simple enough task to accomplish. In the meantime, he would find which of the three remaining soldiers was the genetic contributor to his precious unborn bastard.

And then he would kill them so they could never attempt to take his Pet or the bastard away from him.

A flicker in the corner of his eye had him standing, going to the door to their private cabin and glaring out of the small window. Black jacket, brand new, dress shoes rushing down the narrow hall and no luggage of any kind on their person. The Soldier grabbed a silenced gun and locked his Pet in the compartment, silently rushing to catch up to the man who had just glimpsed into their cabin.

He reached the end of the train without finding him, but was not deterred, turning and following his path back to his Pet. He stopped in front of one of the supply closets and paused briefly, listening closely for signs of rushed breathing, finding none he walked further, stopping this time in front of a water closet designated for women only.

He broke the lock on the door and quickly opened it, walking in to see the man who had been peering in at them, sitting on the floor next to the toilet, looking terrified. The Soldier aimed his gun and the man held his hands up, panicked.

"Don't shoot, please, Oh God, I'm not---I'm not bad, I swear," he said quickly.

"Who are you?" the Soldier demanded, staring at the Asian man curiously.

"Nobody, nobody, I'm just here on a vacation with my wife, I swear, I'm nobody," he stammered.

"You---you are familiar," the Soldier admitted.
"Yeah, so are you," the man whispered. "It's why I stopped, I saw you getting on the train with your wife and I thought you looked like someone---like someone I've seen in a lot of pictures."

The Soldier blinked and ceded control to Bucky, who slowly smiled at the man staring up at him, scared out of his mind. Bucky put the gun in the back of his pants and nodded.

"Morita."

"That's, that's my last name," Morita nodded. "Are you...are you really him?"

"Jim Morita your granddad?" Bucky asked.

"How did you---you're really him, you're James Barnes," Morita looked amazed. "I didn't know what to think, first Steve Rogers, and then you, is my granddad's friend Dum-Dum gonna come back too?"

"No," Bucky gave a sad smile. "No, he's not."

They remained silent for a whole minute, Morita staring up at Bucky in wonder now, instead of fear. Bucky withstood it, marveling himself at the nearly exact replica of his old friend sitting in front of him.

"You can't tell anyone," Bucky said softly. "Not a soul."

"I won't," Morita promised. "I mean, I'm just a Principal at a school in New York, I doubt anyone would believe me."

"Thank you," Bucky gave him a soft smile.

"Do you need help, Sergeant Barnes?" Morita offered. "Do you need me to get in touch with Captain Rogers for you? Or---or Jones's grandson is with one of those spy agencies, he might be able to help."
"I'm fine," Bucky promised. "I just need time to get my head together, kid."


He scrambled to his feet and went to his back pocket, flinching when Bucky tensed and reached for his gun once more. Morita held up his hands in apology and moved slower.

"Just----my card, if you need help. I can get you and your---your girl any help you need," Morita explained, handing it over. Principal of Midtown School of Science and Technology. "Just got the promotion, taking my wife on a trip around Europe to celebrate."

"That's real nice, kid," Barnes smiled genuinely.

"We do a Howlies tour," Morita blurted. "You know, the kids of the Howlies did it with their dads, and then their kids started to go too. And now we meet up every five or six years and do a tour. England, France, Azzano."

Bucky stiffened at that.

"We did it to honor your sacrifices. Your's and the Captain's," Morita explained. His shook his head in disbelief. "None of us would exist if it wasn't for you and Captain Rogers. My grandfather---he told me that you volunteered for the experimentation so that the other men would be safe. I can't----repay that. But, Sergeant Barnes are you sure you don't want me to contact Captain Rogers for you?"

"No. Not yet. But thank you."

"Okay, open your eyes."

Darcy opened her eyes and James' right hand fell away from her field of vision, revealing where their home base would be. She blinked very forcefully and the Eiffel Tower still stood in front of
her face, tall and strong and right in front of her. It didn't dissolve like a mirage. It was right there.

"Springtime in Paris, dollbaby," Bucky whispered, wrapping his arm around her, kissing her temple gently.

"Oh---oh wow," Darcy breathed. "You were listening to me when I---babbled?"

"Darce, why wouldn't I listen to you all the time?" Bucky chuckled.

"But I babble, and some people find that annoying," Darcy admitted.

'I will find these people and point out the error of their ways.'

"Some people are idiots," Bucky promised her, hoping his murderous other side wouldn't come up with full-fledged revenge plans for those that had ever insulted their girl. "I like the way you talk. You remind me sometimes of Katherine Hepburn, just talk talk talking away all smart and sharp and gorgeous."

Darcy opened her mouth to say something and closed it, smiling at him as she shook her head back and forth.

"Didn't want to make you speechless, dollbaby, that's the opposite of what I want, actually," Bucky said gently.

"It's just, no one ever listens," Darcy whispered, she spun around in his hold and was on the tips of her toes in a heartbeat, her lips pressing against his urgently.

Bucky had to stop himself from grinning into the kiss, but he couldn't stop himself from holding her close, his hands very low on her back as he kissed her back with whatever old skills and charm that he could dust off. Darcy's lips were quite a heavenly thing, to be sure, and she kissed like a champion, firm presses and tickling kitten licks of her tongue all making Bucky's blood rush to his head.
"You brought me to Paris," Darcy whispered when she pulled away.

"Dollbaby, I'd bring you anywhere, I promise," Bucky answered back. "You want a tropical island--a moon on Jupiter? I'll find a way to get us there."

"No, I don't need the moon. I just want you," Darcy promised.

"Well, I don't think that'll be a big problem at all."

Candles. Real fabric tablecloth. An assortment of Greek food from his (their) favorite local diner, put into various pans and dishes to look like he'd made it all himself. Otis Redding playing in the background, crooning his heart out and setting the mood sublimely. The bottle of wine that was chilling in a bucket (that belonged to Steve, gifted to him by an earnest old Congressman) was more expensive than the amount of money he'd made the summer he had turned sixteen. And he'd paid for it with his own money too, not taken Clint up on his offer to pilfer something from one of Stark's many varied and unoccupied safe houses (glorified wine cellars at this point) across the United States.

Sam Wilson folded the fancy napkin expertly into the facsimile of a swan and placed it on a perfect white plate. That summer working at the fancy golf club restaurant when he was sixteen had clearly paid off. Or he hoped it would payoff.

"You, are going to be charming," Sam lectured the swan in a mutter. "She's gonna be charmed by you, and then your benevolent creator, aka me, is gonna get me some of that Russian sugar that she calls lips."

He pointed his finger at the swan menacingly and nodded.

"You get me, swan. You get me."

Natasha was returning after a five day mission, doing God knows what, God knows where. They were scheduled for a training mission in a few weeks, taking Wanda out and teaching her the ropes. Poor kid needed some help, she was terrible with the covert missions, preferring to cheat with her red swirly hands of vague magic and mind manipulation.
He heard his door opening and rolled his eyes, albeit fondly.

"Hey! Thanks for just barging in. I could have been in flagrante delicatessen in here, you know. Unless, that's what you were going for, catching me in my dressing gown as I fluffed my face and painted my hair. You know, the shenanigans aren't necessary, I'll put out if you want---oh shit."

Sam sighed as Natasha smirked at him from his living room, and she wasn't alone. There was someone he vaguely remembered as being in the rendering department with Hill's investigative crew. The young woman was on the tall side, her brilliantly colored hair a turquoise and lavender that was cropped short stood out against brown skin. Her dark brown eyes were dancing with mirth at Sam's predicament.

"Your hair used to be---uhm, green?" Sam had the good grace to feel a little foolish as the woman stared at him in amusement.

"Yeah, I went back to my natural color," she sassd, pointing to her fantastically colored locks.

"Wilson, this is Maya Archie," Natasha introduced.

"We've met," Sam nodded.

"But you didn't remember her name," Natasha clarified.

Sam sighed heavily, again, and aimed a pointed look at Natasha. He sucked at his teeth before muttering, "Didn't actually have to call my shit out like that, Romanoff. Rude."

"Ms. Romanoff has called in a favor with my grandmother," Maya revealed.

"Retta Archie, right?" Sam squinted in remembrance.

"Everyone always remembers my grandmother before they can even bother remembering my name," Maya laughed, but brought her large cross body bag up and over her shoulders as she and
Natasha walked towards the table that Sam had been setting. She picked up one of the swan napkins and wiggled it around. "Wow, fancy."

"Yeah, didn't realize it was a working group dinner," Sam huffed out as Natasha began clearing things away for Maya to set out her tools. "No offense, but I already did the sketch rendering of Bucky Barnes' mystery gal zapper. All I could remember after having my brain fried by her was 'nice lips' and 'pretty'."

"Right, we thought we could get some help with that," Natasha nodded as someone came walking into Sam's quarters.

"Wow," Sam said in a flat monotone. He thought he had been perfectly clear when he'd invited Natasha over for dinner that it would be a completely non-working date. But Wanda Maximoff was coming in with three boxes of pizza and a bag full of styrofoam containers. "Throw in Helen Cho and this'll be a girls' night."

The door opened again, and Helen appeared with her hands carrying a case of wine coolers.

"Seriously?" Sam looked back at Natasha.

"Sorry, I got a little carried away," Natasha shrugged. She gave him a small tilt of her lips and her voice was a soft murmur. "I'll make it up to you."

Sam blinked rapidly a few times before allowing that soft look of Natasha's to sway him. The smile on his face grew a little too cocky and he waggled his eyebrows.

"Yeah?"

"Sure, I'll let you out of practice tomorrow," Natasha deadpanned. She smiled at the girls and brought up the holoscreen in Sam's quarters that was currently showing a romantic sunset montage. She replaced it with a file. Specifically, the file of the woman the Winter Soldier had freed from the Hydra facility.

"Okay, Sam, work with Wanda and Maya to try and get a more concrete sketch of this woman. I need something that can't be disputed. Helen, you and I are going to go over what Friday has managed to salvage from her file to see what's been done to her, medically. We have a few weeks
until we're going to have to go off base, I'd like to get some actual work done."

Chapter End Notes

Chapter Thirteen: Home

James worked at the lock to the little studio apartment that they would call home for the next two months. Darcy had been simmering with excitement as they remained within Paris, meandering around the left bank of the Seine into a very prestigious sort of neighborhood between the Champ de Mars and the Musee Rodin. To her credit, Darcy didn't question his choice. There was high traffic of tourists in the area, so even the locals didn't take much notice of each other's faces. They could blend in with bland anonymity if they needed to.

And after being attacked in plain sight at an out of the ways motel, it seemed smarter to be in a more densely populated and visited area. It made it a lot harder to send a battalion of attackers against them if they were within walking distance of one of the world's most recognizable landmarks.

"It's not much," James warned her.

"Because Hydra had me in a palace," Darcy shook her head slightly, an amused smirk on her face. "C'mon, open it up, I want to see."
James did just that, opening the door to reveal a narrow, dark hallway with no windows. Darcy pushed her head in and wrinkled up her nose.

"Neat. You got us a closet," she managed to sound slightly enthusiastic, but not nearly as enthusiastic as she had sounded the first night they’d slept in the truck back in Canada.

"Menace," James sighed before picking her clear up and off her feet, swinging her pliant body into a bridal carry. "C'mon, there's more."

Darcy grinned as he carried her over the threshold, cuddling into him as he opened one of the doors in the hallway, revealing a small, but modern bathroom, complete with a tub that would just barely fit both of them and a few gallons of water. But it had a clothes washer, so Darcy would not be complaining. They’d seen too many disgusting horrors at public laundromats.

"Go on," Darcy recommended in a lilting voice and a regal wave of her hand. "I wish to see more of our palace."

There was an open archway in the hallway leading into the tiniest, narrowest kitchen that Darcy had ever seen. But it was clean and very clearly all new stainless steel (tiny) appliances.

"That's the cutest damned oven, I've ever seen," Darcy remarked at the little thing that stood at the end of the narrow kitchen. She was itching to be put down now, eager to try and figure out where everything was and how logistically she could make anything in such a small space.

She was sure that her Soldier would be feeding her plenty of Parisian takeout, actually. James wasn't about to put her down yet, and he stepped out of the archway of the kitchen and went to the doorway at the end of the dark hall, gently pushing the door with his foot and revealing the living space.

The bed took up most of the space, and it looked heavenly indeed. Faced opposite what she was sure was bullet proof glass windows with a really excellent view of the outside world, was a sumptuous looking king sized bed, already made up with soft blue linens and white covered pillows.

The rest of the small room was filled with a tiny table just big enough for two and one dresser that would barely fit what they currently carried, along with a wooden bookcase that looked like it had never held a book in its life. Darcy began wiggling to make James put her down, and she sighed
happily when he kissed her lips with the barest, most gentle brush of his mouth before he did place her on her feet. He went about doing a sweep of the small space, leaving Darcy to her devices in the living/bed room after he had deemed it safe enough.

She spent just a few moments staring out the window, marveling at the view and the bustling streets below them. There was a bakery on the opposite corner from their apartment building and her stomach made a small noise of want at the idea of french pastries and perfectly made coffee.

Not like James..or Bucky...OR the Soldier would allow her to have coffee. To Darcy's amused delight and fondness, he had returned to one of their motel rooms just a few days after Darcy had decided she would not be terminating the baby that Hydra put in her belly, with a little paper bag with the logo of a family bookstore on it. Inside were two books. One was a well weathered and annotated used copy of 'What to Expect When You're Expecting'. James had been fanatical about making sure she had a healthy and safe pregnancy. Caffeine was limited to a very small amount, obviously raw fish was out of the question, and he had even taken away scalding hot baths, replacing them with regular, run of the mill warm water baths. It was annoying, but she adored him for it.

The other was a little leather bound notebook, different than James' normal notebooks where he worked through memories and details of the past.

She'd noticed that he had taken to writing in it every night, and eventually her curiosity won out, and she sat herself down on his lap and read what he had been writing.

'Dear Baby, Today, your mama said she didn't like the smell of poutine, but she really liked to eat it. She blamed it on you, said you were a riddle making shit stirrer. Don't worry, I figured it out, got a clothespin and popped it on her nose before feeding it to her. I'll keep the clothespin just in case we need it for your smelly diapers later. Love, Papa.'

The notebook was filled with similar little notes, nothing too heavy, just little glimpses into Darcy and James’ everyday life: cute little stories, tiny hidden pieces of advice, truly corny jokes and song lyrics that he had heard and enjoyed and thought the baby might like. She’d cried her eyes out in an emotional haze, bringing the Soldier out full force as he desperately tried to get her calm and happy again.

Darcy opened up Bucky's backpack and lovingly handled the notebooks and the weapons alike, taking them out and finding space on the bookshelf that stood next to the dresser. She then went to her backpack and set aside clothing, actually looking forward to putting them in the dresser, as if putting down little searching roots that would eventually grow fatter and take hold.
She knew that those roots would take hold in New York, at that stupid looking Avenger's facility, and she'd have to learn how to share her metal-armed angel of revenge and pretty hair. Whether that meant a threeway share of mutual satisfaction or simply waving at Steve while he took Bucky away from her every other night, she didn't know yet. She wagered that she wouldn't know for quite some time, actually.

While her emotions, loyalty and love had settled quickly upon James' shoulders, she didn't think that would happen again any time soon. She didn’t even know if it was possible to happen again for her, as it had for James, seventy years removed.

She did know that she would never try to deny her James one small ounce of happiness. So if him being happy meant that he would be in a relationship with both her and Steve, then that was the way it was going to happen.

She dug into one of the pockets of her backpack that James had wanted to store weapons in, but instead, she'd prevailed and she pulled out little Hannah Hula, who she had secretly wrenched from the dashboard before James had destroyed their car. She popped the tiny plastic hula doll right on top of their dresser, poking at her skirt to make her sway.

"What on Earth?" James laughed.

Darcy spun around, he had silently entered the room and had been observing her, as he usually always did. If he wasn't so darned good looking and she wasn’t so completely gone on him, it would have definitely been considered creepy and predatory behavior. She grinned up at him as he came to stand next to her, poking at the skirt so Hannah Hula would dance a little more. He finally looked down at her, his eyes sparkling with amusement, fondness and warmth.

Darcy's mouth went a little dry at his expression, it almost felt, for the first time, that he was whole.

He wasn't just James, and he wasn't just the Soldier. It felt like he was Bucky , that man she had wanted to meet so much someday, all three parts sewn together expertly, hardly a stitch showing. His left hand settled at the small of her back and turned her to face him completely. He bent his head and kissed the tip of her nose with the reverence the Soldier always showed with the small sign of affection.

"I love you, Darcy."
Before she could say anything back, he stepped away from her, picking up the bags that had been placed on the bed, depositing them on the floor and then quickly going back to her, lifting her up and into his arms again as he swept her towards the bed. She whooped with delight before he placed her down, following her quickly to stifle any other loud noises with his kiss. Darcy's hands went right for his hair, her fingers combing through heavy brown locks with reverence.

"Dollbaby," he murmured as soon as he broke away, the term of endearment hot and wet against her mouth. He was breathing heavily, a feat that Darcy hadn't thought possible, as his eyes searched her face for any trace of hesitation. Finding none his smile lit up his face. "My sweet Pet..."

"Mmm," Darcy hummed as she stretched out underneath him, her hands straying from feather soft hair to the sides of his face. She pulled him in for another kiss, soft and sweet and short this time. "Am I plump enough for debauching, Soldier?"

Bucky snorted with a little laughter and sighed, holding himself up with his left hand over her, his right hand resting on the admittedly plumper waistline. She'd come a long way from the malnourished kidnapping victim he had rescued. She was back to what her file had said she was supposed to be, and then some.

"Let me check," Bucky winked at her, his tongue darting out to lick his lips before a moment of realization stole over his features.

"No, don't change your mind!" Darcy insisted, seeing that brief cautious hesitation flip into his eyes. It was a look he usually got when he was preparing them for a Hydra raid, obsessively going over where weapons were placed on his person and hers.

Darcy might dribble into a puddle of nothing if he changed his mind now. She was ten weeks along in this serum enhanced pregnancy. She'd been at James' side for seven of those weeks. And she'd wanted him days after meeting him, even more when her lovely, deadly Soldier had bathed her and taken such good care of her during her illness. She wanted him, she wanted all of him, and she didn't know what she'd do if he didn't want to.

Her eyes began to well up with tears as he practically hopped off of her and went to the bookshelf.

What she would do is cry, apparently. And she was totally blaming this one on the supersoldier baby.
Bucky had his back to her and he looked at the weapons she had unpacked, taking his favorite handgun and one of her batons along with the straps he would need to store them before turning back towards the bed.

"Pet?" Bucky furrowed his brow, he took two quick steps back towards her, carefully placing the weapons where he could reach them easily, strapping them in. Once finished he looked at her with utter concern, his right hand going to wipe at the tears staining her cheeks. "Dollbaby, what's wrong?"

"If you don't make all the love to me right now, I think I'm gonna go crazy," Darcy sniffled.

"Darcy, my silly Pet," Bucky sighed, the term of endearment was the Soldier's and it sounded foreign without the accent, but still, lovely. He sat down on the bed and quickly pulled her into his lap, cuddling her close. "All I want to do for the next few weeks is just make love to you, I promise."

"And get revenge," Darcy added with a slight sniff.

"Nah, I could give up revenge if it meant I got you," Bucky promised, his lips finding her forehead.

"You have me, I promise," Darcy nodded. "Forever and then two weeks past forever too."

"Sounds perfect," Bucky promised as he allowed her to maneuver in his arms so that she straddled his lap. She kissed him fiercely, her teeth pulling at his bottom lip so that she could lick into his mouth filthily. He let out a pleasurable moan as she pushed against his chest, making him fall back to the bed on his back.

Darcy smirked from above him. She realized that someone didn't mind being a little manhandled. And she then remembered that he'd probably done every sex act known to man with Captain America on the frontlines of the war, and he would have definitely gotten manhandled then.

She ripped off her shirt, then the other two layers of shirts that he dressed her in, her ever enlarging breasts heaving in the bright pink sports bra. Bucky’s hands went right for her bounty, but he stopped halfway when he saw her wrinkled nose and pursed pouty lips.

"What, dollbaby?" he asked cautiously.
"I didn't mean to think of Steve Rogers, but here he is, in my brain, taking you all manly and bodily style and it's driving me nuts!" Darcy's words were whispered and quick. "Nuts in the pants, but also nuts."

Bucky laughed again, looking absolutely delighted at the revelation. He sat up on his elbows and managed to get his chin to rest right on top of the line of her cleavage. Sparkling, playful light blue eyes stared up at her adoringly.

"He does like being the one who is doing the pushing," Bucky admitted.

"UGH, shut up," Darcy pushed him back down on the bed. "We aren't talking about Captain America in this bed."

"Alright," Bucky nodded eagerly.

He brought her back down for a kiss, and easily flipped them so Darcy lay on her back. His warmth disappeared from her body a second time, but this time he didn't go far, standing at the edge of the bed as he quickly and efficiently undressed.

"I'll tell you this, since I'm not in the bed right now," Bucky gave her a playful wink as he yanked his pants down along with his underwear all at once. He straightened back up and smiled down at her sinfully, looking like an Adonis in a painting, beautiful muscles and beautiful scars creating a masterpiece. "You'd have him in a damned puddle, useless and speechless, cause dollbaby, my sweet Pet, you are the most sinfully gorgeous thing I've seen in a long time.

He still didn't climb back onto the bed, instead, he reached out his hands for her pants, and she avidly attempted to help him yank the yoga pants that were starting to get a little tight, and underwear right down, wiggling her hips and putting her legs straight up as he peeled them off of her. He tossed the pants to the side and placed a tender kiss on the inside of her right ankle while keeping a hold on her calf.

Darcy quickly went about yanking her sports bra up and over her head, wiggling and jiggling as she did so. She grinned at Bucky, and the dazed expression on his face. A shrug from her had his eyes drawn to her breasts, his tongue sliding out on his lips and leaving a wet shine.

“So, am I plump enough, to you know,” Darcy’s voice was sweet and wheedling as she made a
lewd gesture with her hands.

Bucky laughed, explosive and satisfying before he knelt on the bed, still holding her calf. A slight pull on her leg and she was exposed to him, his gaze falling from that mischievous face and the beguiling breasts right over the small belly she was sporting. His tongue poked out again and made another swipe of his lips as he gazed at her wet center. It was a fascinating sort of thing for Darcy to see the mirth in his eyes be replaced with hedonistic intent. She could honestly say she wouldn’t mind seeing those pale blue eyes going half lidded very often in the future, as he took a deep intake of breath before very literally diving right in.

“Oh sweet Jesus,” Darcy sighed, her hands going to long brown locks, so soft underneath her fingertips.

His focus was certainly that of the Soldier at the moment: precise, unrelenting, and devastating. Instead of death and destruction, that focus and skill were being used to pull her apart, piece by piece. She felt his tongue teasing at her lips, teasing at spots she hadn’t known had existed before. He was working her up quick, his left hand resting on her ass, lifting her lower half up and off the bed so he could get to every beautiful spot of her.

“That feels so good,” Darcy gasped out as his tongue stroked right over her entrance, a sinful twirl and she felt the warm pleasure pooling from the point of contact into all of her extremities. “Fuck.”

“Dollbaby, you taste so good,” Bucky’s declaration was muffled and fast, like he wanted to get the words out sooner so he could get back to tasting her immediately.

“No body has---nobody has done this for me before,” Darcy stuttered out, ending her sentence on a disappointed moan as Bucky immediately stopped. “No, no, go back, do the swirly bit with your tongue some more, cause that was just---mind blowing.”

“Pet?” Bucky was looking up at her, his cheek practically resting against her thigh, his mouth wet with her arousal. The pupils of his eyes were huge, leaving only a pale ring of blue. Her hand drifted from his hair to his stubbly cheek, patting him gently as if to try and wake him up.

“No one’s ever tasted you, Pet?” Bucky’s voice sounded very far away, even if he was closer to her than anyone had ever been before.
“Right,” Darcy nodded. “And you know, no one has ever—been with me before.”

He froze, every muscle in his body suddenly tight as he stared up at her. Darcy’s mouth went pursed, her cheeks flushing red.

“Please don’t make a big deal out of it, it’s not like—-it’s no big deal, it’s just, I didn’t have anyone I trusted or loved. So I didn’t do it,” Darcy shrugged. “Please?”

“It is a big deal,” Bucky said quietly. His expression finally broke from shock, and instead, he looked adorably flustered. The fingers on his right hand danced along her inner thigh and moved to where his mouth had just been, gentle touches marking the places that had just made her shiver. “Dollbaby, it’s a big deal.”

“Why?” Darcy sighed as she felt the rough pad of his middle finger easing gently into her. “S’nice.”

“Well, let’s not get into the whole, Virgin Mary thing,” Bucky said wryly. “My mother is probably in heaven, crying her Roman Catholic eyes out.”

“Let’s not talk about your mother when you’re inside me,” Darcy sarcastically pleaded. Then moaned when Bucky sank his finger in just that little bit deeper. The intrusion was a heavy feeling, and the slow, shallow pump of the digit had the pleasure building back up inside of her. “That’s really good—really very good. Please, I want you. Please.”

“I want to make this special for you, Pet,” Bucky whispered, looking like he was concentrating very hard. She was velvet soft around his finger, wet and warm and supple. He didn’t believe for a second that he was deserving of what she was about to give him, but he was a no good louse, and he knew it. Because he couldn’t bring himself to not give her what she was asking for.

One finger became two and Darcy tensed slightly for a moment before melting into a puddle as he stroked inside of her with meticulous care. She’d never felt so full. Her own smaller fingers had never managed to make her nerve endings sing like this. She closed her eyes and just let the pleasure continue to build, her mouth falling open and little pleasured gasps falling from her lips.

“Bucky,” she whimpered when she felt his tongue on her again, his fingers never faltering in their pace. Her hips jerked off of the bed when his tongue gently lapped at her clit.
She felt like a finely tuned instrument, playing a symphony under his hands. His left hand was kneading her ass, his fingers pressing inside of her, stretching and searching. His skilled tongue ran a nonsensical pattern over her clit at a maddeningly erratic rhythm only he knew. Every time her hips pushed upwards in response, a deep satisfied groan echoed from Bucky’s throat.

Her eyes were closed, but Bucky couldn’t stop staring up at her as he earnestly worked her over. She was beautiful, every gasp and sigh, every piece of her was so beautiful. He could feel her walls bearing down on his fingers and he curled them inside of her, pressing against her. He tried not to grin as her thighs pressed against his ears with all of her strength, but he failed and he watched her carefully as she broke into gorgeous little pieces.

The first words she heard once she came floating back down to Earth, where his soft murmurs, repeating the same sentiment, soft and slow and over and over again.

“I love you, Darcy.”

“Yeah?” the smirk on her lips was sinful. “Prove it, big talker.”

“I always get the smart mouthed ones,” Bucky sighed before giving her thigh a kiss and easing his fingers out of her. He placed his hands on her outer thighs, keeping them there when he maneuvered on the bed so that he was laying on top of her, finding a place between her legs. His erection pressed against her lower abdomen and he shuddered pleasurably at the contact.

“It might be nice to have a partner in crime,” Darcy admitted.

“Nevermind, we’ll keep you separate forever,” Bucky teased right back. He pressed his lips to the tip of her nose and pulled away to look her in the eye with that laser sharp assessment of his. “You sure, dollbaby?”

“Yes,” Darcy nodded eagerly. “Please?”

“Stop me if it’s too much,” Bucky’s whisper was rough as he took one hand off her thigh and grabbed ahold of himself.

“Okay,” she nodded again, a little too distracted with the feel of him against her core, she shivered with anticipation, he was hot and hard as he slowly moved the head of his cock between her wet
lips. He pressed inside of her and she stiffened at the foreign feeling, a small noise echoing in her throat. She put her hands on his shoulders and gave him a pat, wordlessly encouraging him to go on. When he pressed further she couldn’t help her mouth opening and a sharp gasp, “Oh.”

“Are you alright?” Bucky panted above her.

“Are you? ” Darcy wondered. “You’ve sprinted a mile with me over your shoulder and--and nothing. And now…”

She couldn’t finish her thought, as he pressed his hips into her more, the feeling of it burning but not at all in a bad way. It was slow and frequently halting, she realized, and his pace was exactly what she needed.

“It’s you, Pet, it’s you,” Bucky was hoarse, ragged and absolutely wrecked with pleasure. His hips were now pressed against her and she surrounded him in her wet, velvet warmth. “Haven’t felt something so good as you in a long long time.”

He stilled again, trying to regain his bearings while she did the same. He knew in that moment, that leaving her was no longer an option. She was the best thing that had ever happened to him in over seventy long years, and now she was his, completely and fully his. Small hands went from his shoulders, tracing scars gently, before falling on the small of his back and giving a little push.

“Oh God,” she whispered when he withdrew slowly, only to push back in, his pace decadently slow. He was perfect, giving her exactly what she wanted without needing it to be verbalized. He was reading her every noise and movement, playing her body like he’d known it for years.

Darcy felt like she was floating, the burn disappearing and being replaced entirely with the decadent coiling satisfaction as he rocked himself into her body. She watched as a bead of sweat rolled from his forehead down the side of his face and disappearing into his scruff. She arched into him, her chin lifting up and managed to press her lips to the divot underneath his bottom lip.

He kissed her back, his mouth sloppy against hers, and she felt his hands grip her hips harder. The most desperate sounds were escaping from his mouth and Darcy realized he was holding on by a very thin thread. She wondered how long it had been for him, being whole and being intimate with anyone.

“Let go,” she whispered against his lips.
“Dollbaby, I can---I can get you there,” he panted above her.

“Let go,” she repeated. “Let go for me, please?”

Another strangled moan from him and another drop of sweat on his brow. He stared down at her and she put every ounce of love in her reverent gaze, kissing his chin twice for good measure. His smile back at her was distracted, but genuine and she couldn’t help the stuttered cry of surprise as he doubled his pace, the rhythm of his thrusts into her going erratic.

“So good, so good,” he whispered. “You feel so good, Pet.”

She agreed with his sentiments, it really did feel amazing, and she could feel it building once more, the heavy coil reaching out from her center to the rest of her as he continued his frenetic thrusts. She could feel it building again, just within the reach of her fingertips…

“Fuck,” Bucky croaked out, burying himself inside of her. His face scrunched up adorably, his eyes going closed as he shook with the force of his orgasm. “Oh hell, oh god damn, dollbaby, that’s---oh god damn.”

“Yeah?” Darcy nodded. She waited until he caught his breath again, enjoying the warm feeling of his considerable release as he continued to twitch inside of her before she asked, “I’m that good?”

“So good,” Bucky praised, placing his sweaty forehead against hers. “I didn’t get you there again, Darce---”

“I’m okay,” Darcy promised.

“I will. Just, just give me a second,” Bucky swallowed slowly. “Just---just don’t tell Steve I didn’t--- I didn’t make it good for you.”

“Oh lord,” Darcy laughed. “Now it’ll be the first thing out of my mouth when I meet him. Hello Captain America, nice to see you again. By the way, did Bucky Barnes make you orgasm the first time he made sweet sweet love to you?”
“Oh hell, dollbaby. Don’t do that.”

Chapter End Notes

Does it kind of make sense now why Darcy never even thought of being pregnant? She kind of lacked the normal prerequisite training.
Chapter Notes

Are we ready for some fun? Or at the very least my idea of fun...

warnings: kinky and strange solo (?) moment for Steve. casual offscreen murdering of Hydra goons. Some feels. and Sam being a sassmaster.

Thank you Captain Corrupter/aka phoenix_173 for the enabling on the first scene. And thank you to phoenix and dntpanic42 for the beta awesomeness!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Fourteen: Day to Day

"Oh fucking hell..."

The whispered curse and the moan that followed it were foreign to Steve's ears. He hadn't made a sound like that in a very long time, after all. Probably since 1945, his last fleeting moment with Peggy, hasty and fast and messy in a weapons storage shed back in London before they had taken off for the last battle with Hydra. That last private moment between them, so soon after Bucky's fall from the train, had been a tangled mix of tear stained cheeks, desperation and the need on both of their parts to reassure themselves that they were still there. That Steve hadn't fallen from the train after Bucky and that Peggy had not been torn away from him too was confirmed in intense, passionate union.

Now, as he writhed in the ultra deluxe sheets of his bed, the high thread count still feeling too heavy and too much against his heated skin, he wasn't full of grief or longing or desperation. He felt like he was flying high on a cloud, every inhale was exhilaration and every exhale was a heavy, full, complete feeling that had the butterflies in his gut swirling.

He didn't know where it was coming from, but it had been coming quite often over the last few days, at the most inopportune times. He'd had to let a training session out early at the base when he'd been so overcome with desire that he had not been able to see straight. And he had barely made it back to his room before he'd dirtied his pants with his heavy release, untouched and unassisted, his back against his front door and his chest heaving with the effort of breathing as his climax eased but then quickly built right back up.
Super soldier serum was one thing, but he'd still never been gifted with multiple orgasms before. He had inspired them quite a few times with his head between olive drab clad thighs, clever fingers curling and stretching, but he had never actually gotten to feel that rapid fire staccato feeling before. It was overwhelming and exhausting and amazing.

If there had been some kind of schedule to it, he might have been able to feel alright bringing it up to Doctor Rivera, but as it currently stood, he had no control over when it would hit. But he knew it hit a few times a day. Quick spikes of pleasure, or long drawn out episodes where he'd feel his peak hit over and over again.

This morning, he'd woken up painfully hard, sweating and twisted up in his sheets. Happy to have managed to rid himself of clothing before hitting the hay the night before, he didn't even have to rid himself of boxer briefs as his hips strained on the bed, his considerable hardened length tenting his bedsheet.

"Shit," he moaned out again as the muscles in his stomach tensed as his breath stuttered on a wave of deep pleasure.

He didn't even have to touch himself, he'd become practiced enough in the feeling of it in the last week to know he didn't. When he did touch, it felt like too much and not enough at the same time. The arousal he was feeling was somehow different than what he normally felt. It was a feeling of hot fullness, of decadent pushing and pulling and jolts of swirling pleasure deep in his gut. His body would push his hips up on its own accord, erection twitching but he didn't need contact.

Steve didn't really want to tell anyone about this new development. Not only would it be embarrassing to explain, but he was also hard pressed to want any of it to end. It felt lovely as his vision went a little sideways and jolts of pleasure ran up and down his spine. He planted his feet on the bed and thrust up into nothing, the images of lines of hard muscle and soft supple curves dancing behind his eyelids as his body seized and fists clenched in the bedsheets, tearing bits off.

He couldn't control what was coming out of his mouth and wouldn't be able to recall it later, but he knew it was loud and he knew it was filthy and he knew Bucky's name was a part of it.

"Jesus fucking Christ," he blasphemed as he tried to catch his breath, the bedsheet around his waist now sticky and wet. He could finally think clearly, but now he was exhausted and just wanted to sleep, despite the fact that he had a full schedule ahead of him to prepare to leave for Africa.
Just when he thought he could get up and get to the shower, he felt the pull again low in his gut, a fluttering of warmth and he knew another mysterious sensual round was about to start up.

"Shit, I've got to figure out how to block this off."

Life in Paris settled pretty quickly for Darcy and James. That first time when James had woken up just a few hours after making love to her, Darcy had been petting his hair as he rested his face against her bare breast. She'd been looking at him with unfettered adoration, and James swore he could have lived off the look from her for years if he had to.

The Soldier had come to the forefront then, less blended in with the other parts in James' brain and he'd insisted on spending the next twenty-four minutes making up the grievous error that he'd made in fulfilling his lovely Pet's needs a few hours ago. He'd only stopped tasting her and coaxing her to shivering finishes with his fingers when she'd pushed him away and whined about needing food.

It hadn't mattered that it was nearly ten at night, they got dressed, with James avidly trying to keep Darcy undressed for as long as possible, swiping the shirt she pulled out and holding it behind his back as she wiggled and jiggled and attempted to get it back from him. They managed to get to an old, cramped little cafe restaurant (au Pied de Fouet) just before close. James and his bulk could barely fit through the door, he had to turn sideways to slip in and he gave a charming smile to the waiter and spouted off a lot of French.

Whatever he had said had worked, and he handed over a few euros in exchange for two bursting bags full of food. They found a place to sit outside, watching the still busy streets full of tourists as they ate heavenly, buttery food, and eventually, James wrapped a concealed left arm around Darcy and led her back home.

It became a habit over the next week. They slept and did so much more in bed, and every other square inch of their spartan little studio apartment, and then would meander into Paris, taking in the sights (Darcy), looking out for trouble (James), and eating at every little cafe they could find.

It was a nice life, and Darcy felt she could get used to it. She wanted to go to museums, but James wrinkled his nose and patted her head and told her, 'Next time, we'll have Steve take you.'

It was jarring on the seventh day of their stay, when James packed her backpack and instead of
leading her around Paris, he took her to a train station, heading to a rural village in Italy. It was strange to not go about her now normal life of leisure with James spoiling her.

"Dude. You are really slacking on your wing-manning."

Sam looked up at Tony with narrowed eyes, his lips pinching together in an annoyed way as the billionaire breezed through Sam's office space, colored sunglasses on his face, a look of disinterested boredom painting his manscaped face.

"Dude. You are really slacking on your human interaction skills," Sam retorted. "I thought we all talked about you trying to make an effort since Thor's offworld, and Viz looks up to you regarding human interaction. He's already a fucking robot-man, at least have him be a nice robot and not one that's gonna melt my face off for science's sake."

"Fuck you, alright," Tony sassed back. "Viz is the epitome of human grace and interaction."

Sam's phone chirped and he picked it up to see a text from Wanda. Sam let out of a huff of disbelief and held the display up to Tony.

"He's the epitome of human grace and interaction, which is why Steve's gonna KILL him for walking through his bedroom wall and catching him---" Sam hesitated there, much to Tony's great delight. The younger man shrugged and sighed, "Caught him in a delicate situation?"

Tony's grin could have split his face in half.

"Vision found him in the throes of passion," Tony corrected Sam with gleeful patience. "Vision had been concerned due to the sounds that our good virtuous Captain was making in his sleep. Sounded almost pained---although I've reviewed the tapes, and it wasn't pained."

"Do you have an off button, because I know where Vision's is," Sam sassed back. He'd threatened to accidentally yank out the mind stone on more than one occasion when Vision had gotten on his and everyone else's last nerve. Natasha had rewarded him once with a lingering touch on the small of his back when the android being had even gotten her to the point of annoyance with his incessant questioning of everything.
"I'm just saying, someone needs to find Cap a super friendly date while he waits for Barnes to fill the swiss cheese holes in his head and come back home to bone him," Tony shrugged. "Friday tells me Natalie is trying to find somebody, but she won't tell me who."

"Cause it's none of your business?" Sam ventured, still clearly annoyed.

"See, that's a funny thing, because I fund everything, including those paperclips you're bending due to your own sexual buildup---everything that happens here is kind of my business," Tony shrugged. "So who is it? The brunette from analytics? The chick from the coffee cart that comes on Tuesday mornings?"

Sam was a stonewall of silence. Tony actually wrinkled his nose in annoyance before turning on his heel and walking out of the man's office.

"I'll find out eventually. I always do!"

"You wanted to see me, Miss Romanoff?"

Natasha turned off her tablet that she had been working on and gave a surprisingly pleasant smile to the slightly disheveled scientist who had walked into the Avenger's common room warily. Erik Selvig worked at the Avenger's facility, but aside from Thor and Clint, he didn't try to have that much contact with the super heroes. Clint had explained it as a feeling of guilt over what had happened with Loki all of those years ago.

No one really wanted to force the matter, all parties concerned could understand that level of guilt.

"Thank you for coming to see me," she gestured to the fresh pot of coffee she had made and grabbed two mugs. "How do you take it?"

"I don't," Erik waved his hands slightly before placing one on his heart. "High blood pressure and caffeine don't always mix well."
Natasha nodded and went about pouring herself a mug before opening the tea shelf that Wanda kept meticulous, she pulled out the decaf options before going to put the kettle on.

"No offense meant, Miss Romanoff, but what exactly did you need from me?" Erik wondered. "Most of my work deals with astrophysical phenomena, which isn't exactly your area of expertise."

"No, it's not," Natasha agreed, going back to her tablet and projecting an image. It was a really well done sketch in color, of a young woman with an irritated look on her face, dark, curling hair tumbling over her shoulders, pouting lips pushed in a frown.

"Darcy," Erik whispered, staring at the image in wonder. He chuckled and shook his head, "That was her exact expression when she had realized SHIELD had stolen her stupid ipod."

"I still haven't been able to track that down," Natasha admitted. "Whoever took it wasn't willing to part with Miss Lewis' eclectic musical tastes."

"Hmm," Erik nodded, picking out a blend of tea and getting it ready for the boiling water. He looked up at Natasha hopefully and wondered in a quiet voice, "Has she gotten into trouble? Is she being brought back to this world of superheroes and alien invasions?"

"Dr. Selvig," Natasha said softly. "What made you call SHIELD back in 2014?"

"She had promised me that she would check in every month or so," Erik shrugged. "I never had a wife, or children of my own. Science was always my mistress. But Jane and Darcy, although they are complete opposites, they were like my two girls."

Natasha didn't ask another question as Erik went over his memories and thoughts. He was clearly sad, clearly MISSED Darcy very much. But he had the resigned air of a father who knew that his daughter had had to go away for the greater good, no matter how sad it had made him.

"She saved me," Erik sighed. "I was so hopelessly lost after Loki. And she found me and saved me. She is a young, brave, stubborn little fool of a girl, and she didn't deserve what SHIELD gave her. She couldn't finish her degree, she couldn't find employment other than taking care of Jane. And while I know Jane appreciated Darcy's help in her own way, she never really made an effort to help Darcy in turn."
"I've found that the many geniuses in my life rarely have the brain capacity to think of ways to help other people who don't outright ask for it," Natasha put in. "I don't blame them for it, but it's why having someone like Darcy around makes things---better."

"Yes, better," Erik nodded. "I wanted to make sure she was alright. I owe Darcy too much to put into quantifiable measurements."

"What did SHIELD tell you on that first call?" Natasha asked gently.

"I was transferred to four different agents on that first call, the first three couldn't have cared less about a girl that had gone missing," Erik said bitterly. "A girl that had helped to save the world with her own bravery and cleverness. They treated her and my inquiry of her well being as an annoyance."

"I'm sorry," Natasha said genuinely.

"The fourth agent told me she'd been relocated," Erik recalled. "I didn't want to believe it. I didn't think she would---abandon us, no matter how ungrateful myself or Jane might have appeared. One of the reasons I called was because I had just been offered the guest lecturer position at Oxford, and wanted to see if she might like to go back to England as my assistant, you know."

"I didn't know that," Natasha admitted, taking the whistling kettle off of the burner and pouring it in the mug that Selvig held out to her.

"Darcy can make the most soothing cups of tea," Erik smiled, looking down as the clear water went brown and fragrant. "She would never drink the stuff, but she had a knack for getting the right combination."

"Dr. Selvig, you called again, after the fall of SHIELD," Natasha prodded.

"Well, can you blame me?" Erik laughed bitterly. "You had just revealed to the world that half of your trustworthy organization was full of snakes and liars and Hydra."

"You suspected that the person who gave you the information was lying," Natasha nodded.
"I had read my own file, found that it was a Hydra directive to place me in the madhouse," Erik spat out. "Jane's own file contained plans for her eventual capture and control. And Darcy's file---"

"Was empty," Natasha finished.

"Her name and nothing else," Erik nodded. "Suspicious, is it not? SHIELD should want to know where the people are that hold information that could be used against them. But then she called and left me a message, and---and I realized I was being selfish, trying to pull her back into such a mess."

"What did she say?" Natasha asked quietly.

Erik dug into his pocket and pulled out an older model iphone, which was supposedly forbidden on Stark property. Erik clearly had defied that rule, and had also refused to give up a very old phone. He pulled up his voicemails and played one of the few saved messages and suddenly Darcy's voice was on speaker phone, echoing against the stainless steel appliances of the little kitchen area.

'Hey, so I'm sorry that I just took off, but this was my only chance. Just---stop, alright? I'm okay. I'm happy. Leave me alone, please? I don't want to spend my life like that anymore. It's not right and it's not fair. I'm going to be happy where I'm at, where people appreciate me. So---yeah. Bye."

"I didn't play the message for Jane," Erik admitted, sipping absently at his tea. "I was properly chastised by it, but didn't have the heart to do the same to Jane. When she returned in 2015, and saw that Darcy was well and truly gone, she was lost. She's still a little lost, although she'll never admit it."

"I've seen," Natasha admitted. She took a very slow breath, readying herself for Erik's reaction. He needed to know, clearly. "Dr. Selvig, I believe that Darcy was NOT moved into witness protection. SHIELD never actually participated in such activities."

"But---" he attempted to interrupt, slamming his mug down on the countertop, his eyes going wide with intense worry.

"I believe that Hydra had been planning on trying to kidnap Darcy the moment she came under
S.H.I.E.L.D's radar, in hopes of accessing Jane's research or leveraging her well being, and then after London, they found their opportunity," Natasha said quickly.

"Is she alright?!" Erik asked desperately, quick tears making his wild eyes glassy.

"The sketch is of her from a few weeks ago in Canada," Natasha gestured to the sketch. "She was rescued from a Hydra facility a little over two months ago after being kept by them for over five hundred days."

Erik pressed a shaking hand to his mouth as he shook his head back and forth.

"I want to thank you, Dr. Selvig," Natasha said softly. "For thinking of her, for raising the alarm."

"I should have demanded to speak to her, to try and find out---"

"No, there are much more nefarious people at work here, who worked very hard to make sure that Darcy wouldn't have been looked for," Natasha assured him. "But I can promise you, that she's safe now."

"When can I see her--or speak to her?"

"Not for a little while yet," Natasha admitted. "But she's safe, I promise you. And she'll be home soon enough. And Dr. Selvig, I'd appreciate if if we could keep this between us. I'm not ready to have her name out there yet, or what's happened to her."

"Of course. W-What did they do to her?" Erik whispered, his voice breaking as he wiped tears from his cheeks.

"I'm not sure of everything yet, but I'm going to find out."

The Hydra facility in Italy was even easier to infiltrate than the ones they had encountered in Canada. The men at this facility were completely off guard, taking a smoke break of all things
when Darcy and James got within sniping distance. Apparently, Hydra had thought the vengeance seeking duo would have headed to American bases instead.

When they finished taking the information from the computers and then destroying the place, they took a short walk to the nearest train station, ready to head home after a short day of work.

"I can't believe we came to Italy and we didn't eat food," Darcy sighed as she leaned into James. "Half of the reason to go to Europe is to eat."

"You know, before you came along, I didn't much care about what kind of food I ate, so long as I had food to eat," James smiled at her.

"I'm a food enthusiast," Darcy gave him a little grin. "It's how I stay so plump for you, Soldier."

"Hmmm," James looked her over with the Soldier's covetous, greedy leer, his hand that had been around her waist going lower and squeezing an ample hip. "You do realize that Italy doesn't have anything to offer that is similar to your Pizza Hut, right?"

"Ha ha," Darcy rolled her eyes at him as he led her down a little dusty lane, away from the train station. Her body went rigid and while her face kept resolutely forward, her eyes darted here, there and everywhere.

If James was taking them off their path, that meant something bad was on its way. She could feel herself breaking out in a cold sweat at the sudden terror going through her. They were in a wide open space, but there were lots of people who could be hurt in the crossfire. She knew that James could take on dozens of men by himself, she knew he was entirely capable, but she wanted to help in any way she could.

She only hoped the baton she had used on three of the smoking Hydra goons would have some kind of charge to be able to be of assistance. She had eschewed knives ever since what had happened with Rollins had---happened.

"Pet, what's the matter?" James wondered, feeling her tense in his hold. Her panic was silent but he could feel it raising his guard.

"You tell me," Darcy demanded as they stopped in front of an incredibly rustic, incredibly small
"Dollbaby, I saw this place and thought I'd get you a little Italian food before we go home," James smiled at her. He leaned in and kissed the tip of her nose. "I'm sorry, Pet, I should have said something, but this old idiot likes to be spontaneous sometimes. I know you're not used to that."

"No, you haven't been all that spontaneous before, except for, you know, finding me and taking me with you," Darcy admitted.

"And falling in love with you," James said softly.

"Yeah," Darcy was a little breathless in her wonderment as she stared up at him with nothing but worship.

James felt all the tension bleed from him immediately, replaced with a buoyancy of sorts. He'd only ever had that feeling with Darcy. If a feeling could be a life preserver, then that's what this was: happiness and safety and warmth, all wrapped up in the girl smiling up at him. James knew that Steve also made him happy, but this felt a little different. It felt like what SHE was feeling, not only what James was feeling.

"If they don't have Pizza Hut, they at least have pizza right?" Darcy gave him a playful little smirk, knowing damn well that they probably did NOT have pizza.

"I will get you your Pizza Hut when we return home," James promised.

"And plums so I can make those little cakes we had in Germany," Darcy bartered.

"What am I getting out of all this, dollbaby?" James wondered playfully as he took her hand and led her into the little restaurant that only had two other customers in it. They took a seat and looked at the menu that was written in chalk up on the board. It didn't much matter what was on the menu, they'd probably be trying a little of everything.

"My ever lasting love and gratitude?" Darcy offered.
"And unlimited kisses?" James prodded.

"Always."

Chapter End Notes

so.....what did you have for lunch today?

Thanks for reading!!!
Chapter Notes

WEDNESDAY!

warnings for the chapter: ...routine murder of Hydra scum. ....and that's it? whoa.
slacking on my pimping.

Thanks as always to the beta babes, phoenix-173 and dntpanic42.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Fifteen: The Virgin Darcy

James was getting a little frustrated at this point. Not with his life, his life was actually pretty fantastic, if missing a little fatheaded stubborn stupidity and muscle. He loved the little nest of a home he'd created with Darcy. He loved spending every day with her. He loved spending every night with her. He knew that as non-negotiable as eventually having Steve back in his life was, then forever having Darcy in his life was just as non-negotiable.

He worried a lot about Steve and Darcy just not clicking. One third of him thought the idea ridiculous, for of course they'd get along like a house on fire. Another third of him thought the idea ridiculous, because in no way was the Captain good enough for his Pet. James hoped the bickering factions of his brain would eventually come together on the idea of Steve Rogers, because it was becoming increasingly apparent that time was running out on their Steve-free adventure.

It was March before he knew it. Darcy was approximately three months pregnant, and James was constantly floored at just how gorgeous she was. Her previously soft belly was now rounded and noticeable, especially when she was undressed. And to be honest, whenever they were home, she was undressed an awful lot. He wasn't going to be comparing her to the Virgin Mary anymore, that was for sure, having had her on every available surface in their little studio apartment. She was discovering all things about what she liked, sexually, and he was discovering that he would do just about anything for her.

Including going back to New York. She only had enough pills to last her another seven weeks, and when they were through, Dr. Carla Rivera had told him that she would need something more, as
well as bi-weekly checkups.

James looked over the latest file he had pulled, this time from Spain. It was another dead end. Just like Italy. None of the super soldiers that had been created over two decades ago had provided the genetic samples to be put on ice. They had been deemed too dangerous prior to their last freeze, too unpredictable. Too much like monsters.

There was only one more file to obtain in regards to the rabid monsters that the Winter Soldier had a hand in creating. From what James could gather, it was in England, and he wanted to make a nice trip out of it for his Pet, while avoiding all the places in London that she had already declared she had never wanted to see again.

If the final file wouldn't give information about Darcy's child, James didn't quite know what he would do.

There were two other options aside from himself and the super soldiers that had been put into cold sleep so long ago in Siberia. But they were both a longshot, to be sure.

"I think I got it right this time!" Darcy called out, rushing from the small kitchen to the main room that James had been working in. She had a plate with a large, still warm bundt cake on it, plums that were caramelized and sure to burn the roof of his mouth laying atop a golden sponge cake. She excitedly handed him a fork and nodded. "Try it, try it."

James smiled and carefully took the fork to the cake, pulling off a piece and blowing on it patiently as Darcy watched him very very excited. She'd made plum cakes nearly every day for two weeks, trying to recreate what she had eaten in Germany. Every try had been delicious in its own right, and James would have eaten it had it not been delicious, but she still claimed that she couldn't quite get it right.

The cake was moist and buttery, with the sauce of the cooked plums leaking into it, along with a hint of cognac, which James could appreciate. But it was not her German plum cake by a long shot.

"Delicious, Pet," Bucky assured her.

"But not the same," Darcy deflated.
"But STILL delicious," Bucky assured her. "Maybe it's because the plums aren't in full season yet. We'll have better luck further into Spring, I promise."

Darcy seemed to be placated by that, and he could feel her happiness at the idea that they might still be right where they were later in the Spring. She took his tasting fork and went scurrying off back to the kitchen, intent on writing down what had worked and what had not.

James marveled for a moment on how good she was. How she managed to go through every day, knowing what she had gone through. Knowing that the baby she carried was not of her direct choosing, and knowing that half of its DNA could have very well come from an out of control, serum enhanced monster.

Or a megalomaniac.

James sighed and pulled up the schematics for the Hydra facility in England. The last file would have the answers. Because he refused to believe that Hydra would have the ability to inseminate Darcy with the seed of the Devil himself. His Pet was resilient, but he didn't want to discover how she would handle the possibility that the baby she carried was the Red Skull's.

"Romanoff, where are you?"

Natasha rolled her eyes fondly as Steve's voice practically shouted at her over the phone. She walked through the permanent care clinic, beds filled with those that were no longer able to care for themselves, dressed as a run of the mill social worker, her cell phone to her ear.

"Some of us have real work to do, Rogers," Natasha said with as much patience as she could muster.

"You do have real work to do, back in New York, with the Avengers," Steve reminded her. "We leave for Africa in two weeks, and you know that Vision isn't ready---"

"Vision will NEVER be ready for the kind of work we need to do in Africa," Natasha assured him as she scanned her badge to open the locked doors to the mental trauma ward of the clinic. She nodded at the guard on duty with a small smile before walking onto her destination. "Best to just leave him at home."
"But---"

"Not every tool we wield will be used for every task," Natasha reminded him. "We'll focus on Wanda, and leave Vis at home this time. Relax. It'll be NICE to not have him pontificating for once."

"Fine," Steve said shortly. "What are you doing anyway? I didn't see anything on the docket for you."

"I have my own side projects," Natasha said nonchalantly. "Trying to find you a date, for one."

"Romanoff, I told you not to go overboard," Steve reminded her.

"I'm really not," Natasha promised as she walked right into a private room where a man was strapped to the bed. "Talk to you soon."

She hung up the phone and took a few more steps closer to the bed, a neutral smile on her lips only as green eyes took in everything around the room in clinical interest. The man in question was physically a wreck. He was covered in intricate scars, his nose looked twisted, having been so violently broken six or seven months ago. His eye had never recovered from the vicious beating, and was nearly swollen shut still.

"Herr Mitger," Natasha nodded. "How is that Hail Hydra business working out for you?"

Mitger began to panic at Natasha's words, thrashing around in the bed and calling out sounds with vocal chords that were forever changed. Natasha had spent a lot of time tracking this man down.

He had been the Hydra operative in charge of the wiping procedure performed on the Winter Soldier. He controlled the pain that was constantly inflicted upon James Barnes for seventy years. Well, he had done so for thirty of those years, taking over for his father before him, another Hydra faithful.

Retta Archie, Steve's former assistant, and her band of merry Hydra crushing senior citizens had been instrumental in tracking the man down. Afterall, someone had to pay for the care of the
physically and mentally destroyed Hydra man thrashing around on the bed. Retta and her team investigated Hydra money, finding where it branched out to and branched out from.

Mitger had been left for dead by James Barnes exactly one year after the fall of Hydra. Only he hadn't quite been dead. Natasha still didn't know if that was by the Winter Soldier's design or not. Mitger certainly was not living life any longer.

But he was suffering.

"Do you recognize this woman?" Natasha held up the sketch of Darcy, her anger a small, pretty thing.

Mitger calmed instantly and smiled.

"Mary," he gasped out. "Holy Mother..."

The look on his face wasn't that of reverence that the pious would usually display. While his eyes held the madness that he had had when Natasha had walked in, there was a little snarl on his lips, greedy and disgusting, a covetous twisted expression on his face.

"Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope," he began in a whisper, his voice increasing in volume with every word. "To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then---"

"Enough," Natasha said sternly, her voice just sharp enough to make Mitger take pause. He was about to open his mouth again, but she held the picture in front of his nose, her hand going to his neck and pressing against a pressure point with considerable strength. "Did you wipe her?"

"Nothing to wipe, all clean, beautiful and perfect," Mitger grinned ferally. "Turn the, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us and after this our exile---"

Natasha wasn't a religious person. You didn't go through the hell and trauma that she went through in her long life and come out the other side with a belief in one God. Add the fact that Thor existed to the mix, and it seemed highly unlikely that there was just one God. But that didn't mean she was ignorant. She had heard girls in the Red Room, girls who never lasted very long at all, whispering fervent prayers to the Virgin Mary every night, praying for an impossible miracle.
"She was a virgin," Natasha blinked as Mitger strained against her hold on him and the straps holding him down, attempting to get a finger on the sketch of Darcy.

"And after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb Jesus," Mitger whispered, sounding equal parts worshipful and unhinged. "O clement, o loving, o sweet Virgin Mary. Amen."

Natasha's stomach turned as a possibility unveiled itself in her brain. She'd not wanted to consider it before, but it had sat there in the ever growing file on Darcy Lewis that she kept in her mind, covered and banished to the corner. Now the sheet had been violently yanked from it, and suddenly it was the only thing she could think of.

Darcy Lewis. Taken. Forgotten. Violated in the worst of ways.

"Hail---"

Natasha moved her hand, a powerful fist striking what little remained of Mitger's rebuilt vocal chords, rendering them useless once more. She moved quickly, yanking the electrical supply to the monitoring system before pulling out the IV's connected to Mitger as well as the small machine that was intended to keep his badly damaged liver working. She looked down at the man with pure anger on her face.

"I won't allow her child to be used by anything that Hydra has left. I promise you that, go to hell knowing that you all failed."

"Fair warning, I might just throw my hands up in the air and say WHEEEE for the next hour."

James snorted with laughter as he carefully placed his and Darcy's bags in easily accessible places as they got on the high speed train that would take them very quickly across the channel to London. His eye caught on a small square of paper he had placed in his backpack weeks ago on their first train ride in Europe. He pulled it out and stared at the last name on the card as he sat down next to Darcy, his left arm automatically going up for when she yanked up the seat divider and cuddled into him indiscriminately.
"What's that?" she whispered.

"Morita," James whispered.

"Like---the Howling Commando?" Darcy wondered.

Bucky gave her a humored look of suspicion. "Have I got a Howlie girl on my hands?"

"Rude," Darcy accused turning her head against him and BITING him on his pectoral muscle. "My bubbe was obsessed with all of you. Like all the kids who were RESCUED by you guys in 1944 at---"

"At Treblinka," Bucky finished for her. He remembered the Nazi concentration camp. He remembered the Howlies teaming up with the Russians and trying to liberate the labor camp and killing center. He drew in a slow breath and shook his head in wonder, before placing a reverent kiss against the top of her head, sniffing lightly at the shampoo. They used the same shampoo, but for some reason, it smelled so much better on Darcy than himself.

"Bubbe was eleven at the time. They tried to kill everyone before the Russians got there, she had to watch---she had to watch everyone else die," Darcy recounted with tears in her eyes. Her expression turned bitter and she drew in a shaky breath, "Looks like a few decades had them playing the same games, stealing Lewis girls and locking them up and doing whatever they wanted while the rest of the world spun madly on. Hydra assholes, am I right?"

Her words were meant to be glib, but they seemed to have a tinge of real hurt there. It was the first time she'd had that kind of reaction to Hydra, or even spoken out loud about what Hydra had done. Bucky wondered if she felt like she could now, seeing as he was getting so much better, so quickly, in the mental department. It barely felt like he was broken in three anymore. His voice slid between James, Bucky and the Soldier so easily, as their three separate missions in life fell to the wayside and became one concentrated mission. Keep Darcy safe. Keep Darcy happy. Keep Darcy loved.

Maybe she noticed it too, how there weren't any jarring switches anymore between accents and countenances. How JAMES started becoming just a blended version of Bucky and the Soldier. It was a little jarring to think that he now felt ready to turn himself into Steve, mentally.
He was just waiting on Darcy to give the okay.

It didn't even matter that he hadn't gotten all of the information needed to figure out who the father of Darcy's baby was. And if this last super soldier's file didn't give him the answer he wanted, Bucky wasn't so sure on how much further they should dig. There were only two other options left in the super serum category. And it didn't seem likely that Hydra would have chosen Steven Rogers to father a legacy of Hydra warriors, even if they had access to his genetic material. Given a choice, they would have certainly inseminated Darcy with a much more terrifying option.

Bucky would rather be thrown into the wipe chair than to have to find out and then reveal to Darcy that her baby might be fathered by the Red Skull. So if this last file didn't have the answers he needed and so desperately wanted at this point, he might even try to convince Darcy that they could rendezvous with Steve, just for a meeting. Something easy and safe. Just to add that extra layer of security for her. Just to hopefully give her one more wall of strength to love, safety and happiness to lessen the blow of what their baby might be.

"Bubbe thought Morita was the most handsome, said he had a kind smile and a sharp tongue," Darcy continued on, pulling the card out of Bucky's hands and reading it carefully. "So, is this guy his son?"

"Grandson," Bucky corrected. "Pet, if we ever get separated---"

"If we ever get separated, lord help the person who separated us," Darcy interrupted. She wrinkled her nose, "I'll lift my no stabbing policy."

"If I should be compromised, or taken from you," Bucky continued. He smiled at her fondly when she tensed and looked mutinous. "Dollbaby, it could happen. But just know that if it does happen, and Steve isn't there to protect you...you can go to this guy, and he will get you to Steve."

"Who says I want to be gotten to Steve?" Darcy pouted petulantly. "Boring old man is what he is."

"I'm a year older than him, Pet," Bucky reminded her with the beginnings of a sly smirk on his face. She was still pouting, so he forced himself to become serious and offer, "If you are uncomfortable with talk like that, you tell me, and I'll put the brakes on."

"I didn't---"
"I promise you, dollbaby, that you and I ain't got nothing to worry about. I love you, and I'm gonna keep on doing that forever, whether things work out favorably for you and Steve or not," Bucky promised, his lips hitting her hair again.

"Swingers," Darcy muttered, turning her head again and biting at him like a contentious tiny kitten.

"There's no pressure," Bucky assured her. "We would never---"

"I know," Darcy interrupted. "I know. And I just get mad sometimes. At---everything Avengers, really. And he wears a big fat A on his head for Avengers."

"Thought that was for America?" Bucky interjected playfully.

"Asshole, it's for asshole," Darcy decided. "Asshole that wants the Black Widow to set me up on a date with him, except WHOOPS, she's been kidnapped by Hydra and we totally didn't even notice for you know, years. That kind of makes it difficult---"

Bucky immediately felt her annoyance bleeding into him. He sat up a little straighter, managing to stare down at her as she seethed and raged about the Avengers.

"He wants a date with you?" Bucky demanded. "What are you saying, Pet?"

"It was---something the bird dude said. I was sick, and didn't remember for a while, but I remembered it yesterday in the shower, and I was so pissed," Darcy admitted. "Apparently, your boyfriend is very much on board with what you want. Because the bird guy said something about setting Steve up with me faster so he'd back off on the Captain America-ing of it all."

Bucky blinked as he translated the Darcy-speak into something he could more easily digest.

"That little asshole," Bucky whispered.

"Hmm?" Darcy looked up at him curiously.
"That little asshole," Bucky laughed. "He was gonna get a date with you, make sure he flaunted it in my face from afar, seeing how pretty and perfect and downright kissable you are, just to try and get me back sooner."

"Bucky, I don't think---"

"No, no, no, that was his plan, I know it," Bucky insisted, shaking his head in amused disbelief. "He was gonna try to make it all so perfect. Him and a gorgeous, spitfire of a little dame, just waiting for me to come home and make everything the way we always wanted it."

"SO---I was gonna be Bucky bait?" Darcy smiled, unable to stop herself from liking the sound of that.

"Oh dollbaby, you are Bucky bait. Wherever you go, I'll follow, I promise."

Chapter End Notes

So I'm going to go and see Thor: Ragnarok on Friday. I would expect Darcy and Jane fix it fics from me next week, probably. Cause it has to happen.

General reminder, you don't need to use the comment box if anything I write displeases you. You can just peace out, I'm cool with not knowing, really.

Anywho, we're coming up on some exciting stuff in the chapters to come. London is going to be---interesting?
Happy Wednesday!

Chapter warnings: casual and fun killing of Hydra goons. awful non Hydra real world violence. Mention of something resembling an anxiety attack. And a cliffhanger. I'm sorry.

Thanks so much to the beta babes, phoenix_173 and dntpanic42 they are so so so so awesome

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Chapter Sixteen: Teamwork

The Hydra facility in London was very different than any of the other bases that both Bucky and Darcy had ever paid a friendly little visit to before. While the previous hidey holes had been isolated and far off the map of the average citizen, this one was located in a set of apartments in Rowley Way, a housing estate in North West London. The sprawling housing complex was all harsh cement block and slanted lines, almost beautiful in its terribly efficient ugliness.

There were PEOPLE everywhere, in and out of their apartments, hanging out and smoking on their identical concrete patios. This wasn't settled in the quiet, isolated bits of nature that Canada had offered. This was loud and busy and perfectly hidden amongst the chaos and anonymity a crowd offered. There was no car traffic thanks to underground parking, which meant that any escape would have to be by foot. Darcy was confident in Bucky’s ability to get them out fast.

She was a little disappointed there wouldn't be any fun explosions this time, but she'd take solace in the spy games they were currently playing. Bucky had been careful to drill her on acceptable escape routes as well as tactics to be the least memorable as possible to potential witnesses.

Public displays of affection made people uncomfortable.

This was why his left hand, expertly veiled, was full out groping her ass in broad daylight as they walked down the brick lane that divided one set of concrete terrace monstrosities from the other set. They arrived at one smack dab in the middle of the long row of apartments and Darcy looked up at Bucky questioningly before popping up on the tips of her toes and placing a fairly filthy open mouthed kiss to his lips.
He took the opportunity to bring his right hand up and pull out a small, metal orb he had placed in her jacket pocket, palming it carefully before kissing her back with as much gusto as he ever did. This section of housing seemed quieter somehow, the two apartments sandwiching the Hydra property were empty, making Bucky wonder if they were thinking about expanding.

"Love you," Darcy whispered against his lips. She stood flat on her feet and pulled out their phone, pretending to check for messages, but really running a remote program she had managed to magic together that would destroy the surveillance currently running inside the building.

"Hmm, love you too, Pet," Bucky rumbled, bending and kissing the tip of her nose before turning lazily and walking to the front door, Darcy following behind with her hand clinging to the back of his jacket.

They meandered to the door and Bucky patted Darcy on her behind before reaching out with the left hand and destroying the doorknob, taking a small step backwards before rushing forward with his left shoulder, and the door gave but didn't fall off its hinges, reinforced as it was. The pair entered the apartment, the foyer of which looked like any of the other five hundred apartments in the complex, before closing the door calmly behind them, Bucky's left hand jamming the door just hard enough so that a person with average strength couldn't open it, but someone like Darcy could.

They were silent as they walked to the end of the little entranceway hallway, Bucky in front, his footsteps undetectable and effortless. Darcy had to go a little slower to keep her tread light, but she never let go of the grip she had on his jacket, her other hand holding her electric baton tight, ready to discharge in a moment's notice.

Bucky got to the bulletproof, reinforced door at the end of the hallway, and rather than bust in as he had the front door, he knocked, pleasant and friendly as he pleased.

"Pet," he said tersely, the closest he had gotten to full Soldier in days.

Darcy reached and pressed a button on his left wrist, loosening the nanotech veil that had been covering his left arm and projecting the image of moving flesh and jacket material alike. She pulled it off completely, revealing his entire metal left arm, the jacket he wore not having the correct left sleeve. She then plastered herself to his back, unseen and completely protected by his body just as the door opened and the gunshots began.

There were only six men in this facility, and only two had come to the door with guns drawn.
Bucky easily deflected the shots with the metal arm before throwing the metal orb into the room. Darcy ducked around him and let her baton go full blast on the closest body before rapidly going back to her hiding position.

The gas began to unfurl from the ball as two more men ran into the main room full of computers and Bucky stepped back in concert with Darcy before he yanked the door shut, allowing the gas to do the work so that the noise would be kept to a minimum. He turned, keeping his left hand on the handle of the door so that it stayed firmly shut. His mouth tilted up as Darcy simply plastered herself to his front, grinning up at him with adorable affection.

He put his right palm against her cheek, his thumb caressing a dimple before drifting down to her neck and then right down the collar of her t-shirt, fingertips tickling sensitive cleavage as he pulled out a red handkerchief slowly. One more kiss on her lips before he handed the piece of fabric to her so that she could tie it around her mouth.

"Ready?" he questioned, soft and quiet.

"Always."

Bucky was beginning to notice a few things about his little Pet. While she absolutely wanted to exact revenge for everything she had gone through under Hydra's hands, as well as everything Bucky had gone through at Hydra's hands, she wasn't quite living up to her potential in the violence category. A part of him thought there was nothing wrong with that, she didn't need to deal out violence the way he did. One day she'd have not only him, but also Steve on the other side of her, and she'd never have to lift a finger when it came to protecting herself.

It wasn't for lack of trying though. She was handy with her baton. She was a good shot when push came to shove. She no longer touched the knives, her terrifying incident with spilling the blood of the scum who tried to attack her had left its mark. She worked well in tandem with him, still. Protecting herself and giving him a sense of calm in the way she used him as cover without having to be told. She would dart forward when whoever was coming at them was at their most vulnerable and jab her electric baton into a tender point, letting them drop to the ground, twitching.

As well as he knew Darcy, her likes and dislikes, what made her grin big and bright as the sun, how a lingering touch of his finger to the base of her neck could cause her entire body to shiver, how she felt when she broke all around him into a million beautiful pieces...there was still so much
he didn't know, and that was thanks to her own reticence about thinking about what she went through. There was only so much he could piece together based off of Hydra research.

She had been a virgin. The knowledge of that and the notion of it she had willingly handed him. She'd been in cryofreeze. She'd been tested physically by the devils responsible for her torture. That was all she was willing to talk about in the past few months. So he had to find his answers elsewhere.

Hydra had given her a diluted version of the super soldier serum. One meant to enhance her strengths and diminish her physical weaknesses. If Bucky were to go by his history with the serum, it took what you already had and made it stronger. Steve's goodness and idiotic bravery had skyrocketed. Bucky's own sense of loyalty and quick thinking had increased so much that Hydra had forced that loyalty to them, as well as the brain power that made so much of the Winter Soldier deadly. The Red Skull had become maniacal and even more focused on his disgusting goals. Natasha's cool, calm collectedness was the stuff of legend, but so was her ability to shut down everything and focus solely on a mission.

The other super soldiers' blood lust and ability to dispense pain seemed unending, which was why they were decommissioned shortly after their training and testing began.

Darcy was a mystery though. Aside from making her strong enough to conceive a child whose other enhanced parent was still a mystery, he had not yet found what inside of her had been amplified. She was physically stronger than she had been, but it was far from being on the level of the super soldiers before her. He liked to think it was that irreverently cheerful little bit of her that was now stronger and more resilient than ever. But he suspected it was so much more than that.

He watched as another man tried to go for a gun, to hesitate and fumble once he got within ten feet of Bucky and Darcy. Darcy used that opportunity to dart around Bucky's side, her electric baton extended, zapping the man and bringing him to his knees before Bucky could do more than smile.

There was another mystery there. And as much as Bucky tried, he couldn't stop that little portion of his brain that had always loved trying to figure out the mystery in the cheap novels he would devour from the first word. Even if he already had the worrying conundrum of the technical father of Darcy's baby to worry about.

He kicked at the last attacker, the body sailing in the air and going to a small built in alcove with a weapons closet in it.

"Play, Pet," Bucky advised. "I will handle the computer."
"Okay," Darcy fairly chirped as she finally stopped hiding behind Bucky and fairly skipped to the still twitching goon. She stared down at him and gave a cheeky little wave as the man looked up at her in fright. "Sup."

He whimpered in response.

Bucky watched as Darcy exuded confidence...irreverence...glee. She kicked at the man's shoulder to get him to turn on his side before she reached into her back pocket and pulled out a feather she had pulled from one of their pillows (probably Bucky’s). She sat down on the man's bicep and held the feather against his nose.

"You want to itch it, don't you?" Darcy questioned cheerfully. "I mean, it's right there, and if your muscles weren't all twitch-a-palooza, and there wasn't electricity overriding your spinal cord, you might be able to, but you can't. Sad for you, really."

Bucky went about popping the new and improved thumb drive that Darcy had programmed. He had to do nothing, just insert it into the computer and it would do the work for them. Most importantly, they never had to have one of the Hydra scum do the work for them. Bucky walked towards Darcy, as she ruthlessly itched the man's nose. He crouched down low, giving Darcy a little, proud smile, before focusing his vitriol on the man who was whimpering in his low pain, no blood torture.

"You have a capsule, coward," Bucky demanded in German.

Darcy wrinkled her nose and shrugged, "I prefer the Russian, babe."

Bucky gave her a wink before looking back down at the man, who was wide eyed in fear, tears trickling out of the sides of his eyes and down cheeks that were fairly trembling. The man was helpless in his fear. He couldn't move, couldn't make a decision, couldn't do what so many of his former co-workers had done when captured.

It had happened more than once before. The first Hydra that Darcy had run into back in Canada, the one she had carved a simple D into with the little knife. He hadn't used the cyanide capsule in his mouth either to stop the torture or stop himself from betraying Hydra in his dying moments. The Soldier had thought it was only due to the fact that he had been a true coward.
But it had been happening more often. The Hydra that Bucky and Darcy had run into together fell at Bucky's hand, and not their own.

They were so trapped in their fear, that it overrode their own conditioning.

As if to reinforce that fact, Darcy cleared her throat and gathered the spit in her mouth, before letting the rather impressive glob of liquid slowly ebb out of her mouth, hanging above the man's ear.

He wet himself in answer to the perceived threat and whimpered as if he were dying when Darcy's spit landed in his ear.

"Enough playing, Dollbaby," Bucky nodded, getting enough answers for now. He stood up and picked her up off the man.

"Awww," Darcy whined, wrapping her arms around Bucky's midsection, missing the fact that he had moved his boot covered foot slightly to land on the Hydra goon's neck, stepping down hard and not relenting as he whined and suffered in his death. "I mixed cayenne powder with salt and wanted to smear it all over his mouth."

"We'll go to a store and get all the cookies you kept talking about," Bucky promised her.

"Sweet!" Darcy clapped. Her face turned a little green at the smell of someone's voided bowels wafted through the room. "Ugh, I gotta--I need fresh air."

"Go, I'll be out in two shakes," Bucky promised as he walked to the weapons closet to empty it of money and bullets.

"Okay, love you!" Darcy called out as she made a run for it.

Bucky looked at the computer, watching as hundreds of files copied over to the thumb drive and then destroyed themselves. His eyes caught on the file he had come for. The last super soldier created in the 90's. He automatically went to the last line and sighed.
Bucky sighed as he ripped the drive out, watching as the computer began destroying itself thanks to Darcy's clever programming.

That only left two in the mystery of the baby's father.

Steve or the Red Skull.

Darcy breathed deep as she sat on the bottom of the concrete steps to the apartment. Her feet were solidly on the ground and the air was mostly fresh, making it so much easier not to toss her cookies. The morning sickness had been disappearing gradually, but certain smells definitely set it off again. Bucky had been very careful in their little Parisian apartment to make sure that she never got a whiff of any bodily functions. Not after the first bout of gagging at smelling HER OWN had brought on.

She stared up at the sky, miserably, wonderfully gray, not a speck of blue to be seen. There was something to be said for gray skies, really. Let the song writers praise blue skies, but blue skies usually meant blinding sun. Right now, all Darcy wanted was cloudy and gray and cool. No sun to blind her, no fluffy puffs of white clouds to distract her.

Her thoughts and adrenaline settled and she sighed, closing her eyes and wondering just how many cookies she could stuff into Bucky's bag before they went home.

"Pretty one, moneymaker for sure."

Darcy sat upright, hearing the voice from at least four houses down. It had been whispered. She turned and looked and saw two sketchy looking men in their twenties, covered in piercings and tattoos, which would have been fine in Darcy's opinion, had it not been for the way they were looking at her.

They were silent now, but they were moving up on her.
They weren't Hydra, she could tell that much. And they certainly weren't SHIELD. But she knew she was in danger. She slowly stood and contemplated running back into the apartment, leading them into a bunch of dead bodies, and to their certain death, as she knew Bucky would handle them immediately.

She squinted her eyes and saw one of them handling a rag as they stared at her. She didn't know how or why, but she could see exactly what they were aiming to do. She could feel the sense of pride and accomplishment, knowing that they'd done this before and it would be child's play to do it again. Find a girl, knock the girl out, sell the girl, reap the rewards.

They'd done it DOZENS of times.

She was caught in her own head. It wasn't like a vision, persay. She wasn't seeing them do these things. But she could understand exactly how they were feeling. Their intentions and excitement. She was in a daze and in less than a minute, she could feel the rag on her face.

"Hey pretty, don't worry, you'll find someone to take care of you," one of them cooed at her.

Darcy blinked as the chloroform hit her system and she swayed.

She already had someone to take care of her. She began to struggle, to move and they used strength to hold her still.

She had someone. She knew it. He'd do anything for her, just as she'd do anything for him. She had someone. Someday, she'd have two someones. Because even if Steve hadn't thought to look for her in two years, now there was Bucky. She was important to Bucky, she could feel it down in her bones. Bucky would make sure that Steve looked for her this time. She felt everything going black very, very slowly and she focused on the feeling, the surety of knowing that if these idiots should get away with their plan, she had two someones who would move heaven and earth to find her again. It wasn't like before, she wasn't alone.

With her last moment of conscious thought, she had a burst of panic, worried that Bucky would be upset at what had happened.
Steve gasped for air as he sat straight up in bed, looking around in a panic. It was so dark. It was terrifying and dark and his heart was hammering in his chest and he didn't know what was going on. He took deep, even breaths as he tried to step out of bed, dizziness and disorientation taking over.

The darkness ebbed and he could see the blue display of the clock reading four-forty-two in the morning.

"Friday?" He demanded, walking as if his limbs weren't quite attached to his brain.

"Captain Rogers?" Friday questioned as she slowly brought up the lights in his room from darkness to bright.

"Is everything alright?" Steve asked, feeling foolish for asking, but too desperate, too scared and crazed all of a sudden to care about looking like a fool.

"Everything is fine on base, Cap," Friday assured him. "All personnel are accounted for---"

"No, is there, check the chatter for all the top alphabet agencies across the world," Steve did a walk of his room before turning and going to his closet, pulling out his go bag and quickly pulling on his uniform. "Check for anything that matches Sergeant Barnes' profile, any explosions---a---any hostage situations or disasters or---Fuck..."

He felt sick. Cold and clammy and WORRIED.

He'd woken like the shot from a gun, his adrenaline at max, his muscles tensing quickly for a fight that wasn't right there in front of his face. He had the worst feeling of foreboding dread. Of GUILT. The clear picture of Bucky in his mind, worried and tense.

"Cap, I'm getting absolutely nothing," Friday announced. "Can I get anyone to help you?"

"NO---I just---I can't," Steve felt tears sliding from his eyes. The feeling was so real. Terror and dread and guilt mixing altogether. He wanted to fight his way out of something, but to hell if he could remember what he wanted to fight. He put his shield down and sat back on the bed, his
hands finding his forehead as he hunched over and tried to breathe through the panic and adrenaline spike.

"Cap, I really think you should see someone."

Friday's voice was a quiet thing. Reassuring and kind, something that Steve never quite got over. She was artificial intelligence. But she sounded just like his ma, and there were times, like that moment right then, where she ACTED like his ma too.

This wasn't the first time Steve had woken up in an altered state in the last month. He'd woken up sick as a dog shortly after Sam's incident in Canada where he'd been electrocuted. Despite having a perfect immune system, and the inability to contract stomach bugs, he'd found himself sick more often than not.

And then there had been the unfortunate arousal incident from a few days ago.

But those incidents hadn't felt real. They'd been gauzy and fleeting. Something he could write off as not enough restful sleep, too much stress and an overactive imagination.

Now---this terror was real, it was palpable. He was disappointing Bucky and he didn't know why. He couldn't explain it.

"Cap?" Friday said softly.

"Yeah, can you---can you make an appointment with Dr. Carla Rivera?" Steve wondered. "I think she might be able to help."

Chapter End Notes

Bucky really really loves mysteries, and his sweet little Pet is just full of them.

I'm sorry for the cliffhanger. Not really though. It made sense when I was breaking this thing into chapters.
Thanks for reading! I appreciate every single one of you so much.
Happy Wednesday!

Slightly puny chapter here this week. I must be forgiven for this, because with my last chapter of Bucky Bear, I hit 1,000,000 words published. WOO. I'm wordy!

Warnings for: shameless slaying of bad dudes, mentions of sex trafficking, bisexual supersoldiers, and Darcy's irreverence an inappropriateness in delicate situations

Thanks to the beta babes, phoenix_173 and dntpanic42!

Something was wrong.

Bucky could feel it right down to his bones before he even hit the open air. There was a panic, an undefined, unnecessary feeling of terror blended with guilt. And underlying all of that just a shred of surety, the thin and narrow safety net that promised it would be made right eventually.

Darcy wasn't on the stoop as he thought she would be.

Everything in Bucky, his breath, his pulse, his thoughts, came to a grinding halt. There was nothing there for a moment, his entire being was put on pause as he looked down at the empty stoop. No sound, even though the birds were chirping. No feeling, even though the wind had kicked up a little and it was moving his hair against the back of his neck in tickling little movements. No breath, even though he would need it, and he found that his lungs were betraying the serum that enhanced him, burning even though they had lasted so much longer without oxygen before.

Thought came back to him in slow whispers.
'Activate her tracker.'

'Call Stevie.'

'Kill everyone until my Pet is in my arms again.'

'Call Stevie. Call him so he can help before anyone hurts her.'

There was a flash of movement from a few houses down and just like that, the entire world came rushing back like the bang from a gun. He drew in a harsh breath that was bordering on something sounding like a growl, his entire countenance went murderously angry and his legs set off quickly, jumping down the steep set of stairs and rushing four houses down in a blur.

He didn't go blank this time. Usually when the anger invaded his vision with swirls of crimson red and murky black, his brain never registered what his body was doing. It had happened when he had destroyed the chairs used to wipe him. It had happened when he had obliterated the skull of the coward that Darcy had stabbed back in Canada. But this time, there was no annoying loss of time, blankness before he would come back to himself with blood on his hands.

He saw himself kicking the front door to the apartment in, he saw the chaos of a group of young men reaching for guns to retaliate. He saw Darcy being dropped haphazardly to a couch that already held another girl who appeared sluggish and drugged, tied up sloppily. He watched as his hands became a blur of violent activity. He felt a neck snap. He felt the weight of the gun he had pulled from one of the men, felt the satisfying pull of the trigger. Once, twice, three times.

The last man, the oldest and most haggard looking, reddish hair thinning on the top of his head stumbled towards the couch, intent on finding some leverage with one of the girls against the angry, feral man who had destroyed his entire crew in less than thirty seconds.

Bucky's eyes slid to Darcy, who was groggy and stirring. He realized they must have chloroformed her, but that wouldn't last long on the serum enhanced Darcy. Big eyes the color of the beautiful sea blinked open slowly and she looked around in a panic that Bucky could feel before her sight set on him and she managed the smallest, softest smile.

Bucky could see everything, he didn't lose focus. And he realized that it was thanks to the fact that every part of his brain was working in harmony at that moment. It had happened just once before since his fall in 1945. When he had dove into the water of the Potomac to save Steve.
The look on Darcy's face was like a vial full of Hydra's most relaxing psychotropics being pushed into his veins. No words were spoken, but Bucky knew what she was saying.

'I knew it. I know you'd come.'

And he did. And he would. He would protect her to his last breath, no matter the cost. He would always ensure that she was safe.

The balding man who had tried to take his girl, who had obviously been working at taking a lot of girls, made a sluggish movement to reach down and grab Darcy by the hair, she was an anchor of safety for a desperate man. Bucky was on the idiot in a second, whipping the cheap gun against the man's temple and knocking him to the opposite wall of the apartment.

He followed, left and right fists punching against the man's midsection with equal power.

'Keep him alive, pal.'

'He will be far more tortured as a vegetable.'

'I was thinking he could tell the authorities where the other girls were, but yeah, that too.'

Darcy's hands were suddenly on Bucky's back, immediately stopping him from pulling another punch and destroying the man's internal organs completely. Bucky took a step back and a slow breath pushed through his parted lips.

"M'okay," she whispered.

"Yeah?" Bucky questioned.

"Knew you'd find me," Darcy nodded. She sighed happily when Bucky turned and wrapped her up in an embrace. "I think these guys do this---professionally?"
"Yes," Bucky's eyes settled on the woman already on the couch. "I'll---we'll call someone to come and clean it up and fix it."

"Are you kidding me?"

Steve tensed and looked up from his preparations on the quinjet. They were due to leave for Africa in a day, hoping to track down Rumlow while simultaneously working on a few of Wanda's weak spots in the field. He hadn't been able to go back to sleep that morning when he had woken up in a blind panic. The feeling had faded almost as quickly as it had come on, and now he only wanted to get ready, to occupy his mind with something normal and routine.

And usually, that included getting cussed out by James Rhodes a couple times a week.

Steve was used to the man standing in front of him, an Avenger, a friend, and a guy who didn't let ANYTHING go quietly. Rhodey was a good man, but he was also very well practiced at getting his point of view across to people who weren't always great at listening to others points of view. Steve mostly was appreciative of the help Rhodey provided in the training up of the new team. His only prior experiences of being in charge of teams had been sort of happy accidents.

The Howling Commandos were like lightning striking, an odd occurrence to get men from so many different backgrounds working so well together so quickly. And then when the Avengers formed, it was like lightning striking again. But things were a little more difficult now with Wanda and her trauma, Vision and his inability to shut the fuck up, Sam and his ability to smart mouth anyone and anything in his way, and Rhodey, who was kind of used to being in charge himself.

Rhodey held up his phone in Steve's face.

"I'm not going to make it to Africa, you know why? Because I have to get my ass to England."

Steve squinted his eyes at the screen, not for lack of being able to see clearly, but because of what the words were. It was a text message from Maria Hill.

'Air Force Cadet recovered in London, England. We're going to need your finesse here.'
"I HATE having to finesse things, Cap. I hate it," Rhodey reminded him. "I spent the better part of three decades finesseing my way around Tony Stark's shit. I'm not in the mood to finesse anymore."

"I'm sorry you won't be able to make it to Africa, we'll miss you?" Steve said, unsure of where Rhodey's anger was coming from and why exactly it was pointed in his direction. When Rhodey rolled his eyes and heaved a heavy sigh, Steve shrugged and said, "What do you want me to say, man?"

"This is your guy," Rhodey accused. "Five civilians dead."

Steve went stone straight at that, his jaw clenching immediately.

"He hasn't touched a civilian," Steve's voice was a low, dangerous sounding thing.

"Friday, bring it up on the big screen," Rhodey asked, turning to face it.

There on the screen, just the barest glimpse of a profile on the edge of a security camera in a residential neighborhood, was James Buchanan Barnes. Steve felt his heart hammering in his chest like a pounding drum. It was the first real glimpse he'd seen in quite a while.

And seen more fully on camera than Bucky's jaw, was the fact that his arms were full of a woman. She was being carried like a bride, her hands clutching at Bucky's shoulders, her face mostly hidden in his shoulder. Her jaw could just be made out, mostly hidden by dark curls.

"What happened?" Steve whispered.

"Five dead, Steve, that's what happened," Rhodey repeated.

"What HAPPENED?" Steve demanded. In the picture, Bucky's jaw was clenched, as it used to when they were teens and Bucky had had to worry about money for both his family and themselves. And the girl didn't look well, especially if she needed to be carried.
"Reports indicate that the five dead civilians were low level members of an international gang that kidnapped young women and sold them to the highest bidder," Friday interrupted Steve and Rhodey's silent staring match.

Rhodey did another patented heaving sigh.

"Before you do what you always do and write this off as Barnes being a well meaning vigilante, let's just make sure we realize that he's STILL a vigilante," Rhodey spoke before Steve could.

"Is the girl alright?" Steve asked.

Friday was the one to respond when Rhodey threw his hands up in the air and turned away in annoyance.

"No reports at local hospitals," Friday revealed. "Although a girl inside the house was found and taken to the local hospital. Air Force---"

"Cap," Rhodey tried again to be the voice of reason that the Captain so desperately needed at the moment.

"Save it," Steve said gruffly. If those human traffickers had tried to go after Bucky's girl---Steve couldn't find reasons to condemn him for what he did. And Steve had a moment to realize that that was probably a problem, but he didn't want to discuss it with a sanctimonious, annoyed Rhodey. "Go to England, Rhodes."

They were back on the bullet train to Paris before Darcy felt like she wasn't disoriented. She had felt like she had been placed in a snow globe, looking out at the world through something just a little thicker than water and distorted glass. She'd managed to hide her state quite well, actually, cuddled into Bucky's side, allowing him to take the burden of half of her body weight with each step, allowing him to guide her to safety, allowing him to set the pace.

There was some lingering panic. Before she had passed out, the all consuming thought had been 'I don't want to make Bucky sad', and to be honest she still didn't want that. She would never want that. But he hadn't seemed sad. He'd seemed angry, but not at her. His touches to her had been a gentle thing, different than the heavier touches and fierce embraces he would give her in the
She was spun glass, and she knew it.

She was a liability, whether it was Hydra or not.

"Don't. Please, Pet," Bucky said softly, as if he could read her thoughts or feel what she was feeling. He leaned imperceptibly into her, the physical closeness only a temporary band aid for the crash of adrenaline and the potent mix of dread and panic in his gut.

Darcy looked up from her hands in her lap, turning her gaze to Bucky, who was staring out of their small compartment, his entire body tense and alert. She didn't know what to do for him. She wanted to assure him that she was safe and well and fine and that she would never ever stray from his sight again, because she couldn't risk the thought of his despair at losing her. She tried to formulate the words in her head, something soft and meaningful.

"Were you the catcher or the pitcher?" she blurted.

Bucky's head made a small shake as his eyes crinkled with confusion.

"Top or Bottom?" Darcy amended.

"Dollbaby, what are you on about?" Bucky demanded.

"How'd it work, I mean, when you had---activities with our guy?" Darcy shrugged. "Like, were you the giver or the taker? Were you Santa or the Christmas stocking? Were you the one to be---accepting the offering of the star spangled salami or were you the one pounding one home for the land of the free and the home of the brave?"

Silence extended, which was probably better than Darcy continuing her curious ramblings. Bucky's lips fought in vain to hold back the amused little uptilt that her questioning brought on. He tried desperately to hold on to the reasons why he'd been so upset to have her nearly taken away by the sadly ordinary thugs in the world. There was a reason he was upset. He knew that his entire association with her, from the moment he saw her in that torture chamber to right then sitting on a train that he was nothing but bad news for her. But he'd been swept away with love and the feeling of having a savage beast inside him tamed for the first time in seventy years and the hope,
the dream that maybe, someday, he might get a happy ending after all.

He was bad for her, and he tried to remember that, but his stupid mouth was breaking out into a grin and Darcy was looking up at him with that off kilter irreverence that he really did love and suddenly the only thing that mattered was that she was giggling and making lewd hand gestures and being so damned adorable.

"I'm only asking because you know, wondering if things work out the way you want them to work out---" Darcy's eyebrows bounced up and down with salacious meaning, "---you know, where do I fit?"


Darcy looked supremely unimpressed.

Bucky looked back up to the only entrance point into their compartment before looking back down at her, leaning forward and kissing her lips, soft and sweet. He didn't drift away, his words were hot, with breaths against her mouth.

"We're switch hitters, dollbaby. And the one thing I can't wait for, the one thing I think about in my wildest dreams, in my weakest sort of moments, is being driven inside of you by Steve working me over and into you. That'd be heaven."

"Huh," Darcy barely opened her mouth for the sound to come out.

"Yeah," Bucky sighed against her lips. His brain had a tickle at the forefront, he knew he had something else, he wanted to say something else, to bring up something that definitely didn't involve the hypothetical logistics of a trio of people equally defiling each other. However, he suddenly couldn't care. He just wanted to continue to rile his Pet.

Darcy leaned back and away from Bucky and looked up at him with that little shit-stirrer look she so often got, like his pet was a tiny kitten, batting at a ball of yarn.

"So, you do know that in the modern day, I could TOTALLY enter the sword fight, right? I mean..."
Another rude hand gesture involving her fist making a thrusting motion.

"I could TOTALLY do you proper if you really wanted it before we were ready to go back to the star spangled salami."

Chapter End Notes

So next week in the US is our Thanksgiving week, so I will be travelling and also having to deal with family dinners and baking and the like. I MAY have to take a week off, but I will do my best.

Thank you for reading!
Chapter Notes

Thank you guys for your patience last week. I had no opportunity to internet properly during the holiday.

AND WE'RE BACK!

Warnings for: senior citizens being adorable lesbians, and then an emotional breakdown that came out of nowhere, and the some mediocre smuttage!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Eighteen: Enhancements

"Captain Rogers."

"Hi, it's---hello, Doctor Rivera," Steve answered, looking around the spartan room of the SHIELD facility they'd be bunkering in for the night in South Africa. He held the phone to his ear and took a silent breath, wondering what on Earth he was thinking.

Friday, the ever helpful artificial intelligence that was terrifyingly interested in his mental well being, had set up alarms on his phone, alerting him to the fact that he had wanted to call the doctor for twenty four hours now. They had six hours of downtime before picking up Rumlow's trail further north in the vast and all encompassing continent of Africa. It seemed as a good a time as any.

"What can I do for you, Captain?" the doctor asked. There was some commotion on her end of the call, someone making something like a squawking sound and a scuffle for the phone. "Really? Ret---"

"Rogers," the new voice was smooth, low, like smooth dark caramel poured over slightly jagged baked goods.

Steve knew that voice quite well. The confidence, power and authority in it was the only voice that had ever come close to matching his mother's tone. Steve was confused for a second then shook his head in amusement. Natasha had gotten in touch with Doctor Rivera just a few weeks
ago, demanding the doctor's contact information after one of her own solo missions out. She had said something about bringing the doctor in house for serum related patients.

Steve had eagerly complied, hoping that it meant Natasha thought Bucky and the mysterious woman would be coming in-house soon enough. He had set aside some of his own budget for the doctor, unwilling to have Tony foot the bill yet again. Natasha had handled it all, but she'd not told him where she'd stashed the good Doctor Carla Rivera.

"Retta?" Steve questioned, although he knew it was her well enough. His retired, but still Hydra hunting personal assistant was on the other end of the line and Steve realized just where Natasha had allowed Dr. Rivera to set up shop. "Hi."

"Don't HI me, Rogers," Retta snapped coolly in her no-nonsense way. "Carla says you were running yourself ragged a few months ago."

"Well I---"

"And I thought I told you after that whole debacle in December 2013 that you were under very firm orders not to run yourself ragged anymore," Retta plowed ahead, as she usually did.

"But I---"

"I didn't think I was wasting my breath on you, Rogers, when I give very reasonable orders," Retta continued as if Steve weren't trying to interrupt. "Carla, I'm gonna ask you very politely to stop trying to get this phone away from me, I'm talking to my boy right now and I'll deal with you after. Rogers, you listen to me, and you listen to me with both of your ears, and not just half of your ass, you get me?"

"Yes, Retta," Steve managed to say calmly, a smile spreading across his mouth.

"Your boyfriend needs someone to come home to," Retta said with her trademark bluntness. The woman lived her long life so far with the idea that there was no time for frippery or space wasting tact. She drove to the point quickly and hammered it home.

"I know," Steve acknowledged softly.
"And Carla says that someone else might be coming home too, and she'll need you," Retta's voice was softer then, soft enough so that Steve could hear the little doctor in the background protesting about Retta keeping her pretty mouth shut.

"Do you know about---what do you know about her?" Steve whispered. "Is she going to be okay? What was done to her? What will she need? Should I go and---"

"Rogers," Retta said with that caramel coated sharpness.

"Yeah," he breathed out.

"You've always been an anchor whether you knew it or not because you were frozen in a snow drift at the time. But you have been an anchor to Peggy, to Howard, to me, to everyone," Retta rattled off. "But these two, they're going to need a real anchor."

"I can do that," Steve promised. He hesitated, doubt plaguing him. "I can do that, right?"

"There is no one else on the face of the planet that could, Rogers," Retta was soft again, encouraging. "But you can't do that if you run yourself ragged. I know you're in Africa and---"

"How did you---"

"---Don't interrupt, Rogers, I know exactly where you are and what you're doing, and I swear to the good lord above, if you don't take some care and come back in one piece and actually REST for the first time in your life," Retta heaved a heavy sigh. "I'll slap you upside your head, Rogers, I will. And I'll have this clever little doctor come up with a way to keep you in bed for a week."

"I'm okay," Steve promised. "Actually, I had---I wanted to talk to the Doc, there's something strange going on. With me."

"Alright, here you go," Retta quickly passed the phone off, and if Steve wasn't mistaken he heard the smacking of lips against a cheek and he wondered who was kissing who in that scenario.
"Captain Rogers," Carla said quietly. "We have privacy."

"Good, I've been having, uhm, it's hard to explain," Steve admitted. "A few months ago, I was sick."

"That's impossible," Carla disputed.

"Well, I FELT sick, nothing came up, but I was more nauseous than I've ever been in my life," Steve explained. "There've been moments where I'm sort of--overwhelmed with a feeling that I have no business feeling at that moment. Ever since I started taking your pills to sleep."

"Are you accusing me of---"

"No, no!" Steve insisted. "I just wondered if they could be side effects."

"Hardly," the doctor sniffed, clearly offended that Steve was questioning her abilities. "Captain Rogers, there are a lot of things about the serum that we still don't know, namely because the two best cases of enhancement were stuck in various states of ice over the course of the twentieth century."

"But you still worked on it, how did you know --how to do the sleeping pills?" Steve questioned, his tone curious and non confrontational. Natasha had always said his interrogation skills were worse than awful, but Steve hated playing games to get answers.

"You were rejected from the army a handful of times and still found your way in," Carla shot back. "When the desire to get something done is great enough, a person will find their way around it."

"Illegal experimentation?" Steve guessed.

"In international waters, nothing is really illegal. Howard Stark taught me that," Carla shot back. "Do you want to know how I did it or what I learned?"

"What you learned," Steve said eagerly.
"The serum enhances what is already within a person," Carla said with surprising softness, reverence echoing in the lyrical quality of her voice. "We're not talking Vita-Rays here, Captain Rogers. We're talking just the serum. Erskine managed to have it settle in genetic code that we still haven't discovered yet. Genetics that are responsible for temperament, empathy, all manner of things that aren't eye color and inherited disease."

Steve understood that, to a point. He sat back on the cot, quickly switching the phone from one ear to another. He couldn't see it so much in himself, it was always difficult for a person to acknowledge the best parts of themselves. But he could see it in Bruce Banner. The man's thirst for knowledge, the quiet calmness that was so strange for a man who shared his existence with a huge rage monster, his unique characteristics seemed bigger somehow than they should be.

Natasha and her ability to juggle so much in her brain and keep it all straight and never let anyone know. Aliases, schemes, knowing the next movement of her opponent. Her brain worked so fast that it wasn't natural. And the fact that she could essentially look at a person and know inherently whether they were telling the truth or not was beyond impressive.

Bucky. Bucky had always been loyal. And Hydra had found a way to scramble his brains so heavily that he pushed that loyalty towards them instead of what it should have been aligned with.

"I can't know for sure until I meet with the young woman," Carla's voice filtered back, breaking into Steve's thoughts. "But given what I do know, what James has told me---"

"Bucky's been in contact with you?" Steve sat up straight at that. "Are they alright? What's wrong?"

"They're fine," Carla assured him. "James was just noticing a few things about his new friend, in regards to the serum."

"What can she do?" Steve's voice was a quiet, curious thing. He wondered what the girl who seemed to have bewitched Bucky enough to be traveling with him in close quarters for the last few months.

Steve liked to imagine that she was a sweet, funny sort of lady. He remembered when he and Bucky had thought Katherine Hepburn to be the epitome of any woman ever. They'd thought that a dame who could talk faster than most people blink would have been a fascinating sort of dame to have in their life. Smart and funny and never afraid to let words spill out of her mouth...in 1939,
that had been their dream woman.

"It's all very interesting really," Carla admitted, sounding only as excited as a very brilliant scientist could. "And while I can't tell you everything, I do find it exceedingly fascinating that you are feeling things you shouldn't. Almost as if someone were pushing those feelings on you without them realizing it."

"She's an empath?" Steve wondered, knowing that such things were possible. They'd run into it with mutants and inhumans before.

"I don't know, Captain Rogers," Carla sighed. "James has noticed that she can influence other's moods in accordance with her own. Making people nervous or scared instead of being nervous or scared herself."

"But why me, then? I'm nowhere near her," Steve admitted.

"Perhaps she was thinking of you?" Carla offered. "It's all very fascinating and I can't wait to meet the girl, quite frankly. Because your friend Natasha was not overly eager in offering me any data points to study."

"You could have come to the facility and studied me," Steve offered.

"What's the point of studying perfection?" Carla scoffed. "Like a lot of medically minded people, I much prefer studying irregularity rather than perfection."

"I'm not perfect," Steve was quick to shoot that idea down.

"Erskine's purest, truest serum runs through your veins, Captain Rogers," Carla clarified. "But rest assured, Retta has been very clear on where your actual imperfections lie."

"Yeah," Steve huffed out an aborted laugh. "So---so, maybe, maybe James mentioned me to her, and she was thinking about me when she was feeling---sick."

"Maybe," Carla offered. "Or it could be something else entirely. I won't know until she offers to let
me try and figure out what exactly the serums did to her, and if she received anything else from her captors."

"I woke up today and I was so scared, so worried, so panicked," Steve revealed in a hushed whisper, even though he knew he had privacy. "And then we found a blip of James and the girl in London, they'd---they'd found a group of people kidnapping girls for sex trafficking."

"Dear God, the depravity in this world is a sickness in and of itself," Carla sighed. "Are you better now, Steve?"

"Yeah, hungry, actually," Steve admitted. Although there was something else too, that he didn't dare say out loud, even though he was sure the doctor would have been fascinated by it.

There was a low level warmth deep in his gut, spiraling up and out to the rest of his body. It was a heavy, thick feeling, like honey dripping slowly out of a jar and onto warm toast. He could feel it unfurling like a mystery, spreading from the origin point out towards his extremities, slow, steady and greedily taking up more and more of his brain space. And he didn't need to feel his own cock going stiff to realize what the woman at Bucky's side was feeling at the moment, but that didn't stop it from happening either.

"I uh, I gotta go," Steve said quietly.

"Grab a bite to eat and get some rest, before Retta gets upset with you."

Bucky nudged the little forkful against Darcy's lips, the pie he had managed to purchase at the train station before taking off back to Paris had been just what the doctor ordered, and feeding it to his little Pet in their bed was calming his frayed nerves at everything that had occurred on what was supposed to be a two day trip to England but had only lasted a few short hours instead.

Darcy pursed her lips and shook her head. She wasn't hungry anymore, and the pie, while delicious, was also sickly sweet. Besides, she had other things on her mind. She pressed her cold toes against Bucky's thigh and nudged him.

He'd gone pretty nonverbal after their humorous exchange on the train, once they were in the more vulnerable streets of Paris, he was more singular Soldier than the blended Bucky he had been for
the last few weeks. The silence remained once he brought her home, stripping her naked and checking over her obsessively for any injury. He'd wrapped her in the shirt he'd taken off of himself and then had proceeded to alternatively feed her sweet, creamy pie and run his hands up and down the length of her, as if to reassure himself that she was still there, solid beneath his fingertips.

She didn't mind the fact that he seemed unable to find words. It had been a pretty intense experience, all in all. So she let him coddle her, and stare down at her in wonder and thankfulness and she tried her best to assuage his fears. And she'd tried in vain to not push him to his back on the bed and mount him every single time he kissed ridiculously sweet whipped cream right off of her lips.

"I almost lost you today."

Darcy looked up into his eyes and saw there were unshed tears pooling in those pale blue eyes and she did manage to grab the pie box and place it on the ground before pushing him onto the bed on his back. She straddled his body and put her head against his bare chest, her arms going around his torso. His arms were quick to come up and encase her and they stayed quiet and content, listening to the other breathe for uncounted minutes.

There were so many things Darcy wanted to assure him of. She wanted to tell him, to make sure he would always understand that he would never lose her if she could help it. She wanted to make sure that he understood that she never felt safer than when she could feel him standing next to her. That he was the best thing to have ever happened to her in the entirety of her life.

"I love you," she whispered, pressing her lips to the expanse of skin above his steadily beating heart.

"I love you," Bucky repeated, soft and with coarse and rough feelings threaded through the quiet words. He looked apologetic as he swept his hands up and down her back before asking very quietly, “Darcy, dollbaby, are you ready?”

Darcy knew what he was asking. It went unspoken, but she knew he was asking if she was ready to end their tour of vengeance. He wanted to know if she was ready to give up this life of relative freedom and go to Steve Rogers and the rest of the Avengers and start something brand new. He was asking if she was ready to potentially give a part of his heart back to its original owner and see if she got a new piece in return. And she also knew why he was asking. A violent, disgusting piece of the world had pushed its way into their revenge fueled paradise and the Soldier in him was willing to concede that he needed help in protecting her.
But she wasn’t ready. And it wasn’t because she still craved vengeance any longer or didn’t want to go back into the world of superheroes and world ending disaster. It was because she was legitimately terrified that when they did go back to Steve, she wouldn’t measure up and the Soldier that loved her so much would fade as Bucky took over and decided that in order to keep Steve, he would---

“Stop,” Bucky begged, tears welling in pale blue eyes and dripping out of crinkled corners that were barely touched by time. He took a deep breath and felt a shiver work through him. “I can feel it---what you’re feeling. I won’t leave you. I won’t.”

“But---”

“I won’t,” he reiterated. “I love you. And no matter what, I will always protect you and I will always come back.”

It did nothing to calm her. It all came back to Steve---Steve and the Avengers and Thor and Jane and SHIELD. How would Steve ever come to care for her when she’d not even been thought of for so long? She felt anger and spite and dejection just thinking of them, there was no way Steve would take a second look at her when she was most likely to hiss and spit at him like an angry cat. She could see it now, he’d try to be understanding, but eventually her anger would drive him away and he’d take Bucky with him and honestly, without Bucky, she might as well be back in that Hydra facility, strapped to a gurney and drugged into nothingness.

“Stop. Just stop, please Pet.”

Darcy looked up at his face and winced when she saw he was full out sobbing, his eyes red and leaking tears. He took in a ragged, harsh breath and shook his head.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered, bracing her hands against his chest and pulling herself up to sit astride his torso. She pressed quivering lips to his, her hands cupping his cheeks. A bone rattling sob shook his whole body in response and she kept kissing him, chaste and firm and insistent. Her very real insecurity and deepest darkest fears got pushed down yet again, as the desire to ease Bucky’s mysterious emotional response took over.

His sobbing ceased, and his breathing evened out after a full minute of loving, devoted kisses. One flesh and one metal hand gently moved to her hips and he managed to maneuver her up and off of him, reverently placing her on her side and spooning close behind her. His left fingers brushed against her small baby bump as he nuzzled his face into the crook of her neck. He wanted to tell her a lot of things, he had so much that she needed to know, but she was overcompensating for her
earlier dark thoughts and now he could only feel determination.

A single minded determination to please overtook him and in response he placed an open-mouthed kiss on her pulse point, lingering long enough to leave a mark. He moved his left hand from the reassuring, rapid heartbeat that she carried and caressed her thigh, before taking a more firm hold and moving her leg up to allow his other hand better access. His fingers moved with a practiced surety, rubbing up and down her folds before grazing his middle finger against the wetness gathering at her entrance.

He had certainly never gone from sobbing to rock hard and twitching with want before, and he knew for certain that it was Darcy’s special brand of magic that had developed from her exposure to the serum. The pregnancy hormones were probably playing a significant factor there as well. But he didn’t care at the moment, the only thing that mattered was making her happy, and the surest way of doing that was proving to her how much he loved her through touch.

He could feel her moan, low and throaty against his bare chest as he worked his middle finger into her tightness, his palm lightly resting against her clit, providing just enough pressure to work her into a frenzy quickly.

“More,” she whispered, and he complied, adding his ring finger into her velvet soft depths. The only thing between the plump roundness of her ass and his suddenly aching cock were his boxer briefs, so when she whined with need and pressed back into him, a pleasurable jolt went up and down his spine. She was wet and grasping around his fingers, warm and willing and more than ready to go. “More, Bucky.”

He pulled his hand away and managed to pull his boxer briefs down low enough to expose his twitching length, feeling a low, rumbling moan echo in his own throat at the first feel of her soft skin against his cock. She arched her back and pressed harder into him and he just barely managed not to curse.

“Fuck,” Darcy whispered as he stroked himself against her wet lips before pressing into her with a jerk of his hips. She rested her foot on his bent leg and made small moves with her hips the moment he was fully inside of her. She turned her head and found he met her kiss right away, mouth opening and tongues pressing against each other in little strokes and languid circles.

She cried into his mouth when his hand wrapped around her again, fingers finding her clit. It was a fast, steady pace they set, her hips moving in concert with his shallow thrusts. The angle hitting every spot deep within her that made her thighs begin to tremble.
Bucky’s fingers dipped to the point where his length worked in and out of her as he rutted into his very own personal heaven. He spread her wetness that was coating the base of his cock to her engorged clit and rubbed with unerring precision. Every time he pressed into her, he felt that jolt down his spine, pure pleasure and completion, as if he was having one continuous orgasm without spilling himself inside of her.

He realized that he felt it, the lust and the desire and the lovemaking from two sides. His own and what she was pushing onto him. That realization caused him to thrust harder, to have his fingers move with faster, heavier pressure against her clit as she panted and sighed against his mouth. He gently grabbed for her cotton covered breast with his left hand, kneading with care, the unyielding metal of his thumb stroking across a pert nipple.


She could only moan and gasp in response as she hovered over the edge of her quick and fierce orgasm.

“Do you understand?” he demanded. “I will always come back to you, I will always want you. Do you understand, Pet?”

“Yes, yes,” Darcy answered in a whimper, her body going completely stiff as the first waves of her orgasm hit.

Bucky couldn’t comprehend how he hadn’t simply melted at everything that was hitting him. He felt her pussy quivering around his length as he pressed as far into her as he could. His balls tightened quickly as he felt her orgasm hit him through the mental link that was surely due to her serum enhanced abilities, as well as the gushing wetness as she shook against him.

He swore out loud, his eyes squeezing shut and just let everything wash over him in waves as he came deep inside of her. His fingers stilled against her clit when he felt the hint of overstimulation and he tried to remember to breathe as the bone crushing orgasm, both hers and his, echoed within him.

“I promise,” Bucky whispered, his lips moving against her neck. “You’re stuck with me, dollbaby. I promise.”

Chapter End Notes
Oh Bucky. Don't make promises you can't keep.

Guess what? we're coming up on the gif smut that started it all! In a few chapters, you'll see a slightly different version of what I wrote at the beginning of this and then went back and wrote nearly 100k words to set up one scene.

Also---Civil War beckons (A side note, the only thing that happened in Civil War that is not happening in this fic is the Sharon/Steve kissing. Sharon is too cool for Steve's messy lovelife).
Domesticated

Chapter Notes

Happy Wednesday!

Warnings for this chapter: tons of POV shifts, domesticated vengeance cuties being cute, Natasha and her mysteries, Sam Wilson is my highkeyfave, AND a character who has been missing comes back for a beat.

as always thanks to the enabling beta babes, phoenix-173 and dntpanic42

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Nineteen: Domesticated

"I can't help but think you're spreading yourself kind of thin."

Natasha looked up from her place on a chair by the pool of an ultra luxurious hotel that all of the Avengers, minus Steve, were currently staying at. Maria Hill's excellent chatter department thought that this hotel was where Rumlow and his crew of hired goons turned Hydra newbies had last stayed. They were using it as an exercise for Wanda to try her hand at espionage. With her powers, she would be an invaluable asset when it came down to it, perhaps even better than Natasha herself. Though Wanda herself had scoffed at the idea when Natasha had presented it.

Wanda was taking it well and currently was laughing with a bartender by the poolside drink station, a pair of sunglasses perched on top of her head and something rum based in her giant glass. She was doing well with using the coded movements that Natasha had drilled into her to relay information immediately. The young woman's stance could be better. She was already vulnerable in her bikini and sarong and flip flop ensemble. But her whole posture was relaxed and she was boxed in by two bar stools. It would have been better to lean against the counter and have the ability to move freely if she should need it.

"Hello, Earth to Natasha?" Sam smiled, waving his hand in front of her face.

"Hmmm, just enjoying the sunshine," Natasha waved him off, her movement irritable even if her
tone was placid and calm.

"Sure, yeah, you're watching the kid work the mark, second hand I might add, 'cause I already worked the mark over and got us the information we needed," Sam disputed. He pointed down to Natasha's phone, "You're running some kind of program on that, and it's not Candy Crush. Plus you JUST sent off an advertisement to be put in major newspapers across the world. A coded message that I can't break, and not to brag or anything? But I was really good at code breaking back at the Academy."

"How did you know about the ad?" Natasha demanded, betraying her calm cool demeanor with a furrowed brow and a slightly annoyed, put off pursing of her lips.

"You only text two people from that phone, me and Rogers," Sam's smirk was entirely too confident and the slight waggle of his eyebrows made Natasha want to kick him in the shins. "And Rogers dropped his phone in the toilet---"

"Again?!" Natasha demanded with a snort.

"Again," Sam assured her. His smirk was confident and smug and just the smallest fraction of cute. He dangled his phone between his fingers. "And I haven't gotten any text messages from you since two weeks ago when you wanted to play tonsil hockey with me cause you were bored."

Natasha rolled her eyes. Sam was clearly fishing for something. Reassurance. An assertion that she hadn't called him to her quarters two weeks ago on a whim and perhaps he was looking for the slight chance that it could happen again.

"That still doesn't explain how you knew it was an advertisement," Natasha didn't take his bait.

"You think Steve, 'Space Case dropped my phone in the toilet' can be bothered with approving budgets? After way too much spider web unweaving, I saw where your money was going, small ads in unreadable code all over the place," Sam admitted. "More specifically going to local papers where we thought the Winter Soldier was going to be."

"You're very thorough with the budget," Natasha accused with some levity. "If you were only that thorough with your field reports, I might not have to put coded ads into newspapers."
"So they are to the Barnacle," Sam heaved a sigh as he plopped his entire body down on a reclining pool chair, threatening to rip the thing apart at the seams with the force of his drama. He threw one forearm over his eyes and sighed as heavily as he could. "So you guys have your own code? Cause you're long separated lovers and shit?"

Natasha looked down at her watch, seeing a separate message come through from Pepper on her separate phone line, the message was short and sweet.

'Sokovia Accords=bad news. Be 4warned.'

Sam heaved another sigh.

"We are NOT long separated lovers," Natasha said softly. "I do owe him a debt. A great debt. He saved my life. He taught me nearly everything I know, combat wise. And he understood what it was like to have all your feeling ripped from you."

"How come Steve don't know about all that?" Sam pulled his arm just barely off his face so that he could peer over at Natasha.

"Because only you know about that now," Natasha shrugged.

Sam's grin was brighter than the African sun beating down on them.

"Before---when I was younger, I didn't have the ability to feel certain things," Natasha said delicately. "It was burnt out of me, and it was burnt out of Barnes. Had the situation been different, who knew what could have happened?"

"Gross," Sam sucked his teeth.

"Without him, I would be dead," Natasha said resolutely. "And I feel---I feel responsible for the girl. I want to help her."

"Why would you be responsible for some random girl?" Sam asked shrewdly, sitting up on his elbows and staring at Natasha intently, looking for some kind of facial expression or sign about
what she was feeling, all for naught, because she just smiled back at him placidly.

"It's a little like helping myself, isn't it?" Natasha shrugged. "I've been in her shoes. Taken away from my life, experimented on, hurt. I would have wanted someone looking for me...someone looking out for me."

"Hmm," Sam hummed softly. "You know who it is?"

"I do," Natasha nodded. "I'm nearly certain I know who it is."

"And you haven't told Steve who is potentially making whoopee with his guy?" Sam arched an eyebrow.

"No," Natasha shook her head. "We'd lose him if he knew. Nothing would keep him away from them. There are times when it's better to keep things closer to the vest."

"You got a lot held close to your vest, Nat," Sam sighed as she went to stare back at Wanda, who had never been more than five seconds out of her line of sight, all throughout the conversation.

"Well, now, thanks to you, I have a few things less," Natasha murmured.

"Yeah," Sam nodded. Silence extended as Wanda finished up with the bartender and went to go sit with her legs dangling in the pool. Natasha worked quickly and efficiently, using her watch to send messages and reports here and there.

She signaled to the waiter for two more drinks before turning to Sam and a real, genuine, little smile stretched those beautiful lips of hers.

"Go ahead, ask," she encouraged as she stood up from her chair and delicately pulled off the gauzy swimsuit coverup off, revealing a truly amazing black one piece with very strategic cutouts.

"Ask about how that thing is staying on?" Sam gave her getup a thrice over. "Or ask where you're keeping your weapons?"
"I am the weapon," Natasha shrugged, a droll little smirk working at her mouth. "Ask what you want to ask, Sam."

"You said you weren't able to feel those feelings before, they were burnt out of you." Sam's voice was a low, deep rumble and his gaze was soft as he stared up at Natasha. "Is that still true?"

Natasha's smirk eased gently into a soft, almost shy smile. She shrugged and her voice was a melody as she walked towards the pool, "Green things grow out of burnt places, Wilson. All of the time."

Darcy woke up to the smell of something buttery and decadent wafting in front of her face. She cracked an eye open to see Bucky sitting next to her, a large platter full of food in his left hand, waving it around. It was like the smells of hot, fresh croissants along with what looked suspiciously like crispy oven toasted bacon were exotic, glowing tendrils doing an intricate dance around her head, slowly bringing herself into wakefulness.

"Good mornin', dollbaby," Bucky smiled down at her gently.

"Morning," Darcy's voice was scratchy with sleep and she smiled softly as Bucky put the tray on the bed and gently pulled her by her forearms into a comfortable sitting position.

In a moment, he was cozied next to her and brought the tray to his lap. He ripped off a corner of flaky croissant and slathered it in more butter, then tapped a little mason jar full of something gelatinous and beautifully orange.

"Marmalade," Bucky explained. "There was a little jam vendor down the street by the bakery. I haven't had marmalade in a very long time."

"I've never had it," Darcy shrugged as he opened the pot one handed and grabbed for a little spoon to smear it on the bit of croissant. She opened her mouth eagerly and kissed his fingertips after accepting the morsel of food.

"What do you think?" Bucky prodded.
It was delicious. It was sweet and tangy against the richness of all the butter and flaky pastry. She chewed thoughtfully, loving how each component seemed to match up perfectly with the other, the sweetness making the butter more rich, the pastry making the tangy orange even more delicious. She sighed and smiled up at him.

"More please."

Bucky chuckled, but did what she wanted, happily hand feeding her an entire croissant, piece by piece. He leaned in on the last bite and grabbed a kiss, full of butter and sweetness. He sighed and shook his head.

"I love you so much," he said softly. "Don't seem fair to have you all to myself."

"Too bad, cause you're stuck with me," Darcy insisted, cuddling into his body more insistently, finding that she fit perfectly under that left arm. The heaviness of the metal felt right, as his fingertips traced patterns up and down the bare skin of her arm. She looked down to the little, rounded ball of her stomach and put her hand against it for a moment, marveling at how foreign it felt. Hard and stiff and unyielding where she had once only been soft and malleable. "You're stuck with both of us."

"Wouldn't have it any other way, Pet," Bucky promised her. He went to feed her another bit of breakfast, taking a piece of extra crunchy bacon and spreading some of the orange marmalade onto it. She nibbled the entire piece with little bites until she kissed his fingertips again.

"Oh that's good, make me a sandwich of all of it together," Darcy licked at her lips eagerly.

Bucky's tongue mirrored her movement and he looked down at her with half lidded eyes. His left hand moved from her arm to her torso, cool, hard metal tickling at the sides of her breasts. The slow smirk he gave her might as well have been patented at that point and she couldn't help the bright grin she gave him in return.

"How in the world did you and Steve fight Nazis back in the day when you have an insatiable libido?" Darcy demanded.

"Sugar, I hate to tell you, that's not only my libido here," Bucky assured her. "You're pressing an awful lot of WANTING my way."
"Hmmm, have you seen you, lately?" Darcy countered. She licked and nibbled at her bottom lip before shrugging, "Is that what we're calling it?"

"Calling what?" Bucky shook his head.

"Pressing? Pushing?" Darcy questioned. "Is that what it feels like for you?"

"Pet, I haven't felt it very much, so stop worrying that you're doing something wrong," Bucky quickly assured her. "I think you've been pressing it elsewhere, or maybe it's not something that works all the time."

"What's it like, though?" Darcy whispered, truly worried at what Hydra had left her with. "Does it hurt?"

"Not a bit, unless you're hurting," Bucky promised her. "The moment I found you in that facility, I've started feeling more---ME. Less, broken apart. So I think you've been doing good. But sometimes, there are places where you're feeling too much, and I can feel it too."

"Sorry," was a small, whispered word as she looked down at her hands.

Disgust. She felt disgust.

"Dollbaby, no, it's not a bad thing, all in all when you're thinking about it, it's a great thing," Bucky assured her. "I mean, those sons of bitches frozen up in Siberia, the serum took their cruelty, their violence, everything that made them less than human, and it made it WORSE. All in all, pushing your feelings on someone else don't seem so bad."

"Yeah?" Darcy looked up hopefully.

"Seems more useful than me being able to calculate the best way to kill a person in two seconds time," Bucky said ruefully, leaning to place a kiss on top of her head. "And Stevie's enhanced ability to be a righteous son of a bitch with no regard for the current arrangement of his face..."
"And the Black Widow being the nosiest person on the face of the planet," Darcy wagered. Bucky laughed at that, nodding in agreement and Darcy couldn't help but find her smile stretching her lips once more. She wrinkled her nose in an approximation of intense, adorable concentration before whispering, "I'm sending you hungry vibes. You getting them?"

"Not even a little bit, you tiny little menace," Bucky shook his head, feeding her one of the sandwiches he had assembled. "I don't know how we'll work on getting a handle on it. You seem to push it out when you're distracted. When we hit Hydra bases, you're scared."

"I'm not scared!" Darcy disputed very quickly, looking a little heated. "I'm---I'm kicking their butts."

"Feathers to the nose and arranging their cremations, yes, you are an asskicker," Bucky gave her a little goose with his left hand. "You're pushing the fear to them so you don't have to feel it, I think. Dr. Rivera will definitely want to know how, and why, and everything in between."

"Yeah, yeah, eventually," Darcy waved that off easily. Suddenly all of Dr. Rivera's chatty emails, peppered liberally with invasive questioning that Darcy had conveniently ignored, made a lot more sense. She wasn't signing up to be a lab rat though, even if the good little doctor had saved her and her unborn bastard child's life.

She looked up at Bucky with narrowed eyes.

"I didn't do it, dollbaby," Bucky automatically denied without knowing why she was annoyed. "It was Rogers."

"I called the spawn a bastard in my head, and it's all your fault you sexy beast," Darcy accused.

"So spawn is better than bastard?" Bucky asked, not looking at all impressed.

"I could call it DEMON spawn," Darcy shrugged. She looked a little contrite and uncomfortable even as Bucky fed her more of her cobbled together breakfast sandwich. She chewed and swallowed before asking softly, "Do you know? Is it---is it a monster? Is that why you wanted to go back now?"

"No, Pet, I wanted to go back because I want you safe," Bucky said earnestly. "And Steve may be
a dope about keeping himself safe, but he is good at looking after other people."

"So you don't know yet, who---what was used?" Darcy's voice dropped in volume, sounding like a small murmur as her fingers worked over a small fray on the waistband of Bucky's pants.

Bucky felt like he knew. He just had to be certain. Communication with Dr. Rivera had told him that Bruce Banner couldn't be a contender, regardless of whether or not Hydra could have obtained samples. He was sterile.

None of the sleeping beasts in Siberia could lay claim to the baby.

Which left only two other serum enhanced men in the last hundred years. Steve Rogers, recipient of Erskine's most effective serum. Bucky had seen first hand how blase Steve had gotten about filling up cups with any manner of bodily functions for the scientists and doctors that would poke and prod at him for a half hour every Wednesday.

Hell, Bucky had helped him to fill up one of those cups when he'd been bored and feeling extra affectionate.

But would Hydra use the genetic material of a man who openly and loudly decried every thing that Hydra had ever done or will do? Would they risk that loyalty and good heart passing down to what they would consider a replacement for all Winter Soldiers?

Bucky believed, deep down in his gut, that they wouldn't. They couldn't risk the small chance that a child couldn't be made into a weapon. He fed Darcy another bite of food and kissed the tip of her nose for good measure. Between Darcy as a mother and Steve as a father, it was doubtful that their child would ever break. There was too much stubbornness and resilience there. Neither one of the great loves of Bucky's life knew how to stand down after a punch.

Bucky was certain that Hydra had managed to retain something of the Red Skull's. And that was half of what had gone into making the small, precious life that Darcy carried. But he didn't have concrete proof, and he would want it before he told Darcy anything.

"I have one more stop, Pet, and then I will know," Bucky gave her a gentle smile.

Romania, the hidden Hydra facility that would contain every medical procedure ever performed on
"Barton's house of horrors. Kids for sale. Cheap. OW, dammit Lila!"

Natasha couldn't help herself. She snorted into the phone at Clint's antics. The former Red Room Agent felt pride for the little girl she was enthusiastically trying to mold into her own image. Lila was taking to it very well, using all the skills she was obtaining to annoy her father at every opportunity. Even Laura Barton couldn't scold the child for booby trapping their closet, so long as Clint would up strung up from the ceiling.

"Fuck off, Romanoff, I'm fucking bleeding." Clint huffed out.

"Really?" Natasha asked, clearly not buying it.

"She ripped a hangnail off, inadvertently, it hurts like a son of a bitch," Clint complained. "What do you want, anyway? I'm retired, remember?"

"Sure. Retired," Natasha rolled her eyes as she made her way up the steps from the weapons room of the SHIELD base they were camping out at before moving to Lagos in the morning.

"Getting any good work done? How's my girl doing?" Clint wondered.

"Good. Surprisingly good," Natasha admitted. Wanda had been really doing well with the light espionage work she had been doing. And she had gotten great information about one of Rumlow's suspected cohorts, which was why they were headed to Lagos in a matter of a few hours. "Just getting a few things wrapped up."

Clint grunted into the phone and Natasha knew he understood.

They worked really well together after all. And after many years of missions, where Clint had been afraid he wouldn't make it back, he'd found in Natasha someone he could trust totally. They
had contingencies in place. Laura and the kids would be protected if something happened to him.

And now, Natasha was evoking the same, even though she had no blood relations left in the world. Clint knew though, that over the course of a few months, Natasha had started to feel an unusual kinship with Darcy Lewis. The Black Widow felt responsible for the girl who had been kept in Hydra's grasp for too long. Clint didn't know everything, as Natasha never really told anyone everything, but he knew enough.

"Is she ready to come in?" Clint asked thoughtfully.

"Not even a little bit," Natasha admitted. "But I've been getting nothing but bad news. It's not going to be easy for them to be in a pair soon."

"You tell Sarge that?" Clint wondered, getting a humming noise in response. "Don't worry. If the worst happens, I'll be ready for pickup."

"Thank you," Natasha's words were soft and earnest.

"No big. Between my wife, and you and Wanda, add another foxy lady to it, and I'll have a harem of rescued and recovered hotties," Clint chuckled.

"You're an idiot," Natasha snorted again.

"Yup," Clint agreed. "And so are you, if you think I don't know that you're standing in front of Wilson's room."

Natasha stopped in her tracks, looking truly perplexed. She looked around without physically moving and saw the small, dime shaped heat sensor stuck to a ceiling tile. She rolled her eyes.

"I get my kicks where I can," Clint laughed, knowing she was miffed. "And Wanda's heat signature is smaller. Caps is the biggest, so I imagine that's you standing in front of the door of the normal dude heat signature. Go on, knock. Give him a hug and a kiss and whatnot."

"Fuck off Barton," Natasha snapped before hanging up on him and looking at Sam's door. Her
nose wrinkled imperceptibly before she sighed, held up her hand and knocked gingerly. It took a full minute before the door creaked open and a bleary eyed Sam was staring back at her. She gave him a half smile, full lips pulling up at the right side of her face before lazily blinking at him. “Hey.”

The Russian curse echoed in the previously silent and still apartment, and Darcy poked her head out of the bathroom/laundry room where she had been waiting for her favorite t-shirt of Bucky’s to get out of the dryer so she could pop it on after her and Bucky’s shared morning shower.

“What’s wrong?” she asked down the little hallway, getting no response. She ambled down the little corridor and poked her head into their bedroom, where Bucky was pacing the short length of the room, a newspaper classified section balled up in his left fist. “Is it Steve, is he okay?”

Bucky automatically stopped his pacing and gave Darcy a lovely, beguiled smile. She realized why he looked so happy, at her first worry being about Steve, who she liked to think she didn't think about at all, ever, since he never thought about her ever. But obviously, her brain went right into the sticky, delicious, honey filled trap that Bucky had slowly set for her in the last few months. She shrugged and wrinkled her nose, her hands resting on panty clad hips, the rest of her bare as the day she was born.

“Not Steve, chatter says he's still in Africa tracking down Rumlow,” Bucky promised. He held up the balled up newspaper. “We have a problem.”

“People selling their used mattresses again?” Darcy asked hopefully.

“I have---I remembered, about a month before I found you, that I used to have a code,” Bucky said softly, finding it difficult to remember that blank, bereft time he had had without Darcy. He had been adrift and lonely and lost. And then he'd found her and he'd been saved. Every part of him had been saved and he now felt like he could go back to Steve and not have to worry.

“A code with Steve?” Darcy wondered.

Bucky shook his head and put the newspaper down on the bookshelf before going towards Darcy, taking off his t-shirt he had put on with the goal of leaving the apartment to go and grab them some food. He popped it over her, covering up her bewitching, distracting nudity and put gentle hands on her shoulders.
"With Natalia," Bucky admitted.

"Oh," Darcy blinked up at him. "So---you guys were. I mean. You know."

She went to make one of her lewd hand gestures again, but Bucky stopped her, bringing her knuckles up to his mouth and kissing them soft and sweet. His unwavering blue gaze, light and sparkling, was aimed right at her, as if he were trying to use it as some sort of warning beam to dispel the suddenly anxious feelings fluttering in her gut.

"We were never," he said with earnest honesty. "She was an ally. She's still trying to be an ally."

"Nosy. She's trying to be nosy," Darcy mumbled, but the anxiety was gone. She knew it was nonsensical, but Steve Rogers seemed like less of a threat to her than the formidable Black Widow in regards to Bucky's love and heart. She highly doubted the Black Widow was into sharing much of anything.

Bucky kissed her knuckles again, before leaning in and kissing the tip of her nose and then her lips. He then turned and grabbed the newspaper, showing her the passages that had concerned him.

They were normal ads, or appeared to be, but words were misspelled, and numbers were listed in nonsensical patterns in the sentence structure.

"I'll teach it to you," Bucky promised. "But for now, it says Hydra, looking for pairs, close to Paris. Out of time."

Darcy stiffened at that.

"They're going to be looking for us together if we try and leave Paris again," Bucky said softly. "And I imagine they still have some agents in other agencies in Europe who can use bigger resources to cast a wider net."

"Oh," Darcy breathed out. She stayed silent for a long time, her emotions unreadable to Bucky, both on her face and through the unidentifiable ether that she used to push her feelings on other people.
It was like she had them under lock and barrel and was trying to internalize them even deeper. There was a little divot between her brows, a fine line worked into creamy white skin, and the only thing Bucky wanted to do was swipe his fingers down it to ease it away and keep it away forever.

"So, we don't leave?" Darcy offered hopefully. "Ever?"

"Dollbaby, I gotta go and look, just this last time," Bucky said gently.

"And leave me here?" Darcy's voice rose an octave immediately and Bucky felt nothing from her, even though he could tell she was panicking. "You can't leave us here."

"I'll come back," Bucky promised. "Two or three day trip, tops. But---this one I have to do."

"I'm not staying here waiting for you, I'm coming with," Darcy informed him resolutely, her spine going rigid and her eyes suddenly more serious than anything he had ever seen.

"If we go together, they'll be a better chance of being caught," Bucky hesitated.

"Who is to say it's safe here anymore, then?" Darcy reasoned. "I mean, we've been out and about all the time together, they might know we're here, and if you go, I'll be---I'll be a sitting duck."

"Well, Pet, there is a way to keep you protected," Bucky said softly, gently, approaching the subject like he was approaching a skittish colt.

"Not without you," Darcy shook her head. "I'll--we'll go together, after this last base. I'll go with you. I promise. I'll play nice with Steve and the nosy Widow and Tom Turkey legs, and everything. I promise. Please, Bucky. Please? Don't leave me."

Bucky didn't need to feel what she was feeling, she didn't need to push that mysterious emotional energy on him. He could see it plain as day on her face. Leaving her behind, even for a few days, even for her safety, wouldn't be an option in her eyes. He wouldn't be able to bear causing her that much heartache, not even temporarily.

"Alright, Pet," Bucky nodded, feeling her euphoria pushing towards him as she quickly pounced,
her lips pressing wet, insistent kisses on his chest and neck. He wrapped his arms around her and tried to think of a way to pull off the trip to Romania to get that last little piece of the mystery. Just a quick trip before coming back to her and bringing her in to finally meet Steve.

"Okay, now come on, teach me this code, so I can understand what that nosy woman is saying too."

Chapter End Notes

So this brings us smack dab up against the beginning of Civil War. And to the chapter that started this whole story to begin with.

This chapter here though has my favoritest line I ever wrote so far. Cause I'm a sappy cornball.

Thanks so much for reading!! See you next week!
Chapter Notes

First off, mucho de apologies about missing last week. It was the perfect storm of busy at the end of the semester

Are you guys ready?....are you sure?

The last scene was what I wrote first in this story, you know, thousands and thousands of words of backstory to get to this one scene. that scene will feel like a whole story rehash, I tried to update it as much as possible though so hopefully it doesn't feel like a 'previously on Left Behind'...

As always, thanks to the beta babes, phoenix-173 and dntpanic42

Warnings: drugging/roofying but not for reasons of non-consent.

Also, Civil war update: the beginning of this chapter is set directly after the Lagos explosions but before Turd Ross comes a calling at the Avenger's Facility.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Twenty: Left Behind

"I don't want to hear the goat's bubble gum, I want to spank Captain Buttmunch butt."

Bucky stared at the bed that the nonsensical sentence had come from. Darcy turned over in her sleep, her arms reaching for Bucky, but not finding for him. Her pout was noticeable, even in her deep sleep and she flipped to her other side, arms reaching out for another empty space.

"Buttmunch ."

She muttered in her sleep again, rolling once more and grabbing the pillow that Bucky usually rested his head on. She gripped it to her face in her sleep, the silly dream she had fallen into
ebbing away as she fell into a deeper state of slumber. Bucky would take these kinds of nonsensical dreams, the talking in her sleep to what she had done the first few weeks after being rescued from Hydra. He had hated to see her tossing and turning, crying and whimpering, and just a few times screaming out in pain.

He would have preferred being in bed with her at the moment, allowing her to cuddle against him to defy the ‘Captain Buttmunch’ in her dreams. He would have coaxed her awake with lazy, sweet kisses and then tired her out so thoroughly that she would have slept like a log until mid morning. But he had work to do, and he couldn't get it done during the day, because Darcy had taken to watching him like a hawk, the tingling feeling of her suspicion needling at him throughout the day.

He opened up an antiquated form of messaging on an untraceable connection and took a deep breath at what he saw. Four apprehensions had been made of Hydra teams in four of the places he and Darcy had visited since arriving in Paris. All within twelve hours. The last one had been from three days ago when they'd gone out of the apartment to buy Darcy a pair of maternity jeans to fit over her baby bump.

There was one message on the list of reports from the Black Widow.

'It's only a matter of time. You must come in.'

Bucky knew that. He knew it was only a matter of time. He knew that the safest place for Darcy was at the Avenger's facility. Steve would be there. And the Widow would never allow harm to come to her. But he couldn't. If he went back with her not only would he be taken into custody for all of the crimes that the Winter Soldier had committed at Hydra's demand, but he wouldn't be able to get that last missing piece regarding who had fathered Darcy's baby. He wasn't scared to face the authorities for what he had done. On some level, he almost welcomed it. He would be placed somewhere safe and Darcy and Steve would be able to visit until hopefully, one day it would be enough time away and he could finally live the rest of his days in peace, quiet and the love of the two people who owned his entire heart.

But he couldn't live without knowing whether or not the Red Skull was the father of the precious, unborn bastard.

And Darcy was not safe with him any longer. He had two options. Leave her in Paris and have the Avengers retrieve her and take her to safety, or he could leave her and give her instructions to follow him when it was safer. He looked at the newspaper sitting on the right of the laptop and sighed. The United States was leading the charge for the Sokovia Accords, an initiative and set of international laws to regulate all of those who were enhanced in any way.
That included Darcy and their baby.

Bucky couldn’t keep her safe from both Hydra and nearly every government on the face of the Earth. But Steve might be able to until Bucky could find answers.

He typed out his response quickly and hit send before any part of him could think to hesitate.

'I will come back soon. send someone for her now. and a way to keep her quiet. She will not go willingly without me.'

He swallowed and waited for the Widow's response.

'package on the way with what you'll need. pickup in seventy-two hours.'

“I don’t know how many times I have to tell you, no matter how stealthy you are, I can sense you there.”

Natasha smiled ruefully, put away her second phone and walked into the common room where Wanda Maximoff was staring forlornly into the refrigerator. Natasha bypassed her and went for the cabinets, plucking out her hidden canister of the finest beans that money could buy, in her opinion. Dunkin’ Donuts. Sam made fun of her for her admittedly pedestrian coffee tastes. But she had been around the world quite a few times, and her specific tastes had declared the brand her favorite.

She did hide the coffee in a canister and destroyed the evidence of where she had purchased it, but all the same, it was her favorite. She set about brewing a pot, giving Wanda nothing but silence in return.

“Steve is making you check in on me,” Wanda accused as Natasha unscientifically dumped a good portion of coffee grounds into the coffee filter and set it in the machine.

“He might have mentioned something in passing,” Natasha admitted. “And he’s still in his own grief shell in his office. Might be a little while before he can come out and mother hen you
“Mother hen,” Wanda huffed out with fond derision. There was no other way to describe Steve Rogers that was more apt. After Pietro’s untimely death, the Avengers had formed protective ranks around her, their new teammate. If Clint was now her adoptive father, Steve was certainly her mother hen. And Sam and Natasha had taken up the mantles of cool Aunt and Uncle, then as well.

“Underneath the frozen bags of peas, I have dessert stashed in a box of lean cuisines,” Natasha whispered confidentially, as if she were telling Wanda what the nuclear codes were to all the countries in the world. It was necessary though, because while they had all the finest ingredients that money could buy, not one of them knew how to cook or bake. So if you brought something in that was particularly delicious, it was very likely that it would be stolen.

Wanda retrieved the box and opened it to find pieces of valuable treasure wrapped up in saran wrap. She slowly and reverently unwrapped them and looked up at a smiling Natasha in shock.

“You’re letting me have one?” Wanda asked in disbelief.

“They taste better when shared, believe it or not,” Natasha whispered as she reached for her own treat. Laura Barton’s red velvet brownies were sandwiching a perfect layer of vanilla ice cream. She quickly licked some excess ice cream around the edge before chomping down on the whole sandwich.

Wanda quickly followed suit, and the two women ate their precious treats in silence. By the time they were done, they were cold and the coffee was ready to be poured out. Wanda wordlessly got up and dug around in the vegetable drawer of the fridge, pulling out a coveted bottle of Girl Scout caramel and coconut creamer. She shared a secret smile with Natasha and admitted,

“Sam will drink it straight from the bottle if he had the opportunity,” Wanda admitted. “I have to hide it.”

“Understandable, he’s a heathen,” Natasha said with inappropriate fondness as she went about fixing them two mugs of coffee. “Do you want to talk about it?”

“I—-I never wanted something like this to happen,” Wanda admitted softly. “Not even when I was my angriest would I want so many lives to be lost for something that I did…”
“Wanda, if you had not been there, Steve would, at best, be in a coma as Helen tried to regrow pieces of him,” Natasha said softly. “And just as many people on the ground would have died.”

“I should have been able to control it, to send him straight up.” Wanda was whispering as she stared into her coffee cup, the guilt twisting at her features.

“Steve or Sam or Clint will tell you that there was no control there, that it wasn’t your fault,” Natasha put her cup down and went to clean up the evidence of her coffee brewing, taking the grounds and dumping them straight into the disposal with a quick smirk. She looked back up at Wanda and her lips formed a small, sad smile. “I’m not going to tell you that, because I know. I know from personal experience, that it won’t matter. That it won’t make you believe it.”

“You’re right,” Wanda agreed.

“What I will tell you, is that this, those people, their lives, they get added to the scale, the ledger, your column in red,” Natasha said softly. “And you do everything in your power to make sure the other side of the scale, the lives you help, the lives you save, is heavier than the side that is lost.”

Wanda sniffled and sipped at her coffee again. She took a deep breath and gave Natasha a knowing look.

“I meant it, you aren’t as covert as you think that you are. I know that you’re looking for the girl,” Wanda whispered. “Darcy. Your thoughts are consumed with helping her.”

“That might happen sooner rather than later,” Natasha admitted, unsurprised that Wanda knew. The young Sokovian woman had delved into Sam’s mind to get a better picture, to confirm what Natasha suspected.

“What can I do to help?” Wanda asked, her tone eager.

“I hope it won’t come to needing your help,” Natasha admitted. “I’m sending your Dad to pick her up.”

“Is that wise?” Wanda’s doubt was clear.
“I do have backup plans,” Natasha assured her with a smirk. “But until then, just---stick by Steve. Okay? We’ll figure it all out when things start happening.”

“And that will be?”

Natasha thought of her reports, of the Sokovia Accords, of everything she knew and worried about every second of every day. She preferred to be in control. She preferred to be in charge. She preferred to know where all the moving pieces were, but at the moment, it wasn’t the easiest of things to do. Things were about to get very hectic and harried. She could tell.

“Soon. Things are changing. Very soon.”

Darcy liked to pretend that the mysterious pregnancy hormones that everyone talked about and Bucky read about had little to no effect on her. Her need for additional calories could be blamed on the watered down super soldier serum running through her veins. Her random bouts of weepiness and sad thoughts could easily be attributed to the vast and diverse trauma she had picked up in her last few years of life. And her increased need to pounce on Bucky and have intimate and thorough carnal relations with him many times throughout the day could easily be written off as a case of hello, have you seen him without a shirt on?

The nesting however? She was having trouble finding an excuse for that other than the whole, being a few months pregnant with a mystery Hydra baby. She was constantly cleaning their spotless apartment. Their very small amount of possessions had been reorganized more times in the past few weeks than was strictly necessary. Hannah Hula had been moved on the bookshelf twelve times, as she constantly tried to find just the right place for her.

She’d started a list in one of Bucky’s notebooks, two pages crammed between his messily recorded memories of Steve Rogers and it was titled:

‘Things we will need before the baby brings the pain to Lady-ville’

She didn’t presume to dream that they would stay settled in Paris, so the list was full of things that they’d need should they be in a bigger place, say the Avenger’s facility or even some remodeled brownstone in Brooklyn.
Bassinet (for the first few months).

Convertible crib.

Baby monitors (Bucky had written next to it VIDEO baby monitors).

Rocking chair.

Breast pump.

Bottles.

Diapers (Again, Bucky had written CLOTH diapers next to it).

Clothing.

Swaddling blanket thing-a-ma-jigs.

One of those strappy things to hang the baby off of your manly and pretty chest (Bucky had written a simple Thanks Dollbaby next to it).

The list went on and on. Darcy had remembered a lot of it from the few baby showers she had attended. She’d bought the baby baths and the special soaps and the ridiculously adorable onesies before for friends who were welcoming bundles of joy into their lives. She snorted at the idea for herself. She couldn’t quite picture a baby shower being thrown for her. She could see the banner now...

Congratulations on the Hydra Spawn, if it’s a monster, we promise to Avenge it.

No, the superhero themed baby shower was not in her future, which meant she and Bucky had to go out and get the things themselves. At least Bucky had loads of cash he had liberated from Hydra, they should be able to figure out the purchasing of it all pretty easily.

Speaking of cash, she wanted to run down to the corner and grab more of the marmalade if it was available. She and Bucky had been blowing through it, very quickly and if she couldn’t have more of it, well, she was afraid her first pregnant lady food tantrum would be happening. She was already keeping her cool about the damned plum cake she wanted more of, she was not going to hide a hankering for orange marmalade too.

She went to the hollowed out book that Bucky kept the Euros in and furrowed her brow to find it empty. When they had gone clothing shopping a few days before, when it was still safe to go outside as a couple, the box had been stuffed to the gills with cash. It was now completely barren.

She wasn’t about to crawl on the ground and get the floorboard up where there was more cash
hidden. She could feel uncertainty bubbling up within her and was careful to try to tamp it down, less Bucky feel it in the kitchen. She saw his cell phone lying on the table and went for it, picking it up and trying to see some kind of evidence to confirm her suspicions or assuage her fears.

It was wiped clean. Wiped clean in a way that she had taught him, so that no one could track him or ever get to the information that had been previously on the phone,

She thought back to their last conversation, about her going back to the Avengers and him finishing up his mission. She had thought that was the end of the discussion, but now she knew she was very, very wrong.

“Dollbaby, I’m heading out for a moment to get us more marmalade,” Bucky called out from the hallway, sounding cheerful and nonchalant. “Don’t forget to take your pill.”

Darcy opened her mouth to make a sound, but found that panic had caused her throat to dry up and no sound would come out. He was leaving her. He was hell bent on leaving her in Paris, where she would be a sitting duck for any friendly, neighborhood Avengers, and she didn’t know if she’d ever see him again. He’d lied to her. He was lying to her.

The one man in the whole word that she trusted, and he was going to abandon her. She should have grabbed her baton and rushed for him, laying him out on the ground before he could leave. She should have screamed and yelled.

Instead, she took a deep, calming breath, pushing her panic and anxiety down and away and she ran to stop him before he could go.

"Don't you dare even think about leaving."

A broad pair of shoulders slumped, a metal hand rested on the doorknob. The warning had been stern and hard, but there was a wobble on the last word, the hint of tears, a heavy layer of desperation.

"I have to," Bucky said softly, already halfway gone. Gone was the playful tone in his voice, the smirk that you could hear in his voice when he talked to her. He was full of resignation, of regret. He'd hoped to leave while she was still sleeping, leaving her a note to explain.
"You don't have to do anything," Darcy insisted, stomping her way to the door and grabbing his left hand. "You told me we'd go together. You promised. Bucky, what's going on?"

"There was an explosion in Lagos," Bucky explained.

"Is---is everyone, is Steve okay?" Darcy questioned quickly, clearly concerned. She leaned her head against the impressive metal bicep, appreciating the unyielding metal that always seemed strong enough to hold her up.

She didn’t often bring up Steve. It was usually Bucky who brought him into conversation. When she did bring up Steve, he could feel the insecurity coming off of her in those pushed feelings. He didn’t know how to make her believe that Steve wouldn’t turn her away or steal him from her. It was more than her insecurity. She couldn’t think of Steve---Captain Rogers...or any of the Avengers, Jane and Erik too, without feeling sad and lonely and desperate. It had been so long since she’d even spoken to any of them, well over two years now.

Thor had said his friends would make sure she was well, that she wouldn’t have to join up with SHIELD. Jane had promised that she’d get back in touch with her once she came back to Earth, but Darcy had seen that she’d been nominated for the Nobel Prize the year prior, and didn’t seem too fussed that her former intern that had spent over two years of her life helping her find a way to travel between planets had completely fallen off the face of the Earth. Tony Stark had said Pepper would call her, and Darcy had gone back and dropped a (handmade) business card.

Even SHIELD had failed her. One of their numbered agents, Carter, had stood over her shoulder and made sure she had filled out all the NDA’s. But apparently it hadn’t mattered whether she was tortured for SHIELD’s secrets, it only mattered that she couldn’t put it on Facebook. Erik Selvig had said she was dearer to him than any daughter he could have had when she’d rescued him from that psychiatric ward. He’d promised that if she needed him, he was only a phone call away.

And nothing.

No missing persons reports filed, no news stories about a missing young woman. She’d fallen off the face of the Earth into literal Hell and no one missed her enough to think to look for her.

She'd been at that medical facility for two years, most of that time in modified cryo freeze, before a fallen Angel with a metal arm lay waste to it, finding her in a cell, strapped to a table. He'd lifted her up and had taken her to safety and she'd refused to leave him for the last four months. He was the only thing that was safe for Darcy now. And she'd be damned if she let him leave without her. She knew who he was. When she hadn't been able to sleep properly for a week after the rescue,
he'd softly told her everything he could remember about himself. Every day there was something new.

She knew he was James Buchanan Barnes. She knew what he'd done. She knew what he wanted to do.

"He's fine," Bucky whispered. "But I need to move."

"Why?" Darcy demanded.

"Because if I don't move, they'll come for me, I know they will," Bucky explained softly. "Someone always manages to get close after something big happens. That bird-brain got close last year after the Robot attack. They saw us in Canada. The chatter is showing that they think I'm in Europe. Pet, they're close, they're right outside our door, and they're going to come for us. It's time for you to get to safety."

"I thought we already established that the safest place for me was with you. And---and you're ready to come back, aren't you?" Darcy whispered. He had brought it up before, after all. "I mean---Bucky, I know that you love him, and he obviously cares for you deeply, he doesn't give up on---"

"I'm not ready," Bucky said resolutely. "Don't know if I'll ever be ready, really. But I will come back to you, as soon as I'm done."

"Alright," Darcy sighed. "But you can't go without me."

"You'll be safe," Bucky promised her, turning so that he could wrap both arms around her, holding her close. "Nothing safer than that facility in upstate New York. Just---they'll come for you and you should go with them. They'll come for you, I promise."

"I'm not important enough for them to look for. That's already been proven. Besides, there's nothing better than being with you," Darcy mumbled against his chest, feeling tension seep from his body. His right hand rubbed up and down her back and his left hand went between their bodies, fingers touching the small swell of Darcy's belly.

"Strong," Bucky sighed at the feeling of a heartbeat.
It wasn't his biological child. He knew that. The files he had unearthed since then had proven it and the first time he and Darcy had made love was just a month ago, when she had been too impossibly beautiful after seeing the Eiffel Tower for the first time and Bucky had taken her to the little flat that was safer than anywhere either of them had ever been, and laid her down on a real bed and worshipped every square inch of her after waking up from their first time.

He needed to know who the other biological contributor to the child was. He needed the peace of mind, good or bad.

And he was so very close to finding out who the father was.

"I'm not letting you leave me," Darcy insisted stubbornly, stepping out of his embrace and staring up at him with a stubbornness that brought back another unbidden memory to Bucky. Little Steve Rogers, all of eighteen, glaring up at Bucky as Bucky contemplated selling his own body to make rent for the month.

"Steve'll take care of you," Bucky promised.

"He doesn't know me!" Darcy very nearly shouted. "He didn't give enough of a shit about me to come and look for me. He doesn't know me!"

"He will," Bucky promised.

"What did you do?" Darcy demanded harshly.

"Sent a message for you to be picked up," Bucky admitted readily. He found the lies falling from his tongue, just as easy as they used to when he'd fib to Steve back in the day, "They'll be here in two days."

"Well they won't find me, because I'll be with you!" Darcy insisted, stomping to their room and grabbing her bag, filling it with the clothing that they had bought for her when her baby bump had gotten too big for her pants. "Where are we going? Somewhere warm?"

"China," Bucky lied. He would be going to Romania, to where his answers about Darcy's baby
"Okay, that'll be nice," Darcy admitted. "A country to cross off the bucket list."

"Darcy," Bucky sighed. He shook his head and whispered with incredible feeling, "Pet."

"No, we're going. That's that," Darcy said resolutely. Her eyes got big, imploring and beseeching, "Please don't leave me behind. Please."

Bucky sighed again. Her entire face should be made illegal. He'd told her that weeks ago when he'd first tried to drop her off at the upstate New York Avenger's facility. She'd agreed with him and pitied him and mocked him and he'd smiled that smile that was just for her, the one she’d inspired to bloom on his lips for the first time in decades. In his new world where the only thing he knew was revenge and the fact that he had once been loved by the best man to have ever breathed and now no longer deserved, Darcy was a beacon, a life preserver, and everything he didn't deserve.

"I won't," he whispered, another lie.

The Soldier was so angry at him that he wasn’t even speaking.

"Okay, we'll leave tomorrow morning, early," Darcy decided. She stood up and pulled off the shirt she had nicked from him after his rescue of her. Then the panties quickly hit the floor. "C'mon, back in bed, sleep and travel tomorrow."

Bucky bit back a groan as she threw herself on the bed, bouncing in a very beguiling way. He didn't know when...or even if he would ever be with her again. Yes, he wanted to sink himself inside of her, to feel that wet warmth gripping him and pulling him over the edge. But he also just wanted to hold her, to kiss the tip of her nose, to feel her pulse under his fingertips. If he was leaving forever, he would take the comfort she was always willing to provide.

And with the feelings she was pushing towards him, the wanting, the desire and the heated feelings, he wasn’t having a problem pushing aside his guilt, knowing that he was going to be doing exactly what he had promised her he would never do.

"Did you take your vitamin, Doll?" Bucky asked, lifting the bottle of pills that Dr. Rivera had
created especially for Darcy and the enhanced baby she carried, that was over two thirds of the way empty by now. Yet another reminder that their time alone was coming to a rapid close.

"Shit, see, this is why I need you, I'll forget," Darcy smiled up at him as he grabbed the cup off of the bedside table and went towards the bathroom. She took the pill he handed her and sipped at her water, watching as he began to strip. "C'mon old timer, come help put me to sleep."

"Charming," Bucky rolled his eyes at her fondly, and did exactly as she said. He shucked his boxer briefs off, and couldn't help the soft chuckle as she smacked her lips together.

Her arms went up to welcome him as he crawled on the bed, laying on top of her and feeling his stomach turn over pleasantly when he kissed the tip of her nose. She hummed happily and played with the long strands of hair that were escaping from the low ponytail he had put his hair in. Her fingers trailed along the shell of his ear gently, and he couldn't help the pleased sound rumbling in the back of his throat.

Her touches were everywhere and he tried to memorize how they made him feel. It was a luxury he hadn't taken back in 1945, when he'd shared those last intimate touches with Steve. He didn't know if it was due to having his brain fried hundreds of times since then, but he thought that their touches, while worlds and decades apart, still made him feel the same. The feel of Darcy's thighs sliding along his hips as she wrapped her legs around his body was like the best pain reliever in the world.

Pain, both physical and mental, whether it came from a punch to the jaw or remembering some atrocity he had committed, disappeared when she touched him. It had been the same with Steve.

He loved that about them.

He loved them.

"Darcy," he whispered, his mouth hovering on her chin, nipping at it lightly before going for her lips, delighting in her own moan as he kissed her thoroughly.

"I know," she answered when he pulled away. "Me too."

"Yeah?" Bucky looked down at her with the same amazement he had felt when she had said it the
first time. It never felt less. If anything it always felt that her loving him, this beautiful wonderful amazing woman loving him, made everything feel so much better.

"Bucky, of course I love you," Darcy gave a happy little sigh as he rubbed himself against her swollen lips, hot, hard and ready for her already. She felt him push in and she let out a small gasp and swore, "Fuck you feel good."

"Look who's talking," Bucky drawled out playfully, the hint of Brooklyn chasing around the edges of his voice. He didn't have much time before she would pass out, he knew that. The moment his hips rested against her skin, he pulled out and pistoned into her hard and fast.

"Yes, yes," Darcy's hands went for his back, a fingertip rubbing at that place where metal met flesh, knowing that the softest touch made chills run up and down his spine.

"Say it again?" Bucky was nearly begging, near tears as he continued to fuck her hard and fast, all the tenderness in the way his right hand touched the side of her face, his thumb running along her cheekbone. The softness in his eyes as he stared down at her in wonder.

"I love you," she promised with a gasp.


"I love you, I love you Bucky," she repeated. "You can't ever leave me behind, you can't. I love you."

"Shit," Bucky cursed as he felt the tingles running down his spine too soon. "I love you, Darcy."

She writhed beneath him before clenching her thighs around his hips, her orgasm washing over her and him in a series of flutters and spasms that had him gasping for air as he quickly joined her.

"What---what?" Darcy asked, looking sleepier than was necessary. She squinted her eyes up at him in drowsy suspicion. Tears sprung up and she shook her head ever so slightly. "Bucky, no---"

"I love you," he whispered, kissing her forehead.
"Don't leave me here," Darcy begged.

"I love you," he repeated pulling out of her gently and looking away as she tried to make her sleepy, drugged face display her anger properly.

"Please," Darcy whispered in resignation. "Come back to me? When it's done?"

Bucky brought the blanket up to cover her, tucking her in tenderly, taking a sharp inhale when she reached out and grabbed his left hand.

"Bucky---"

She was out like a light, and would remain out until after Steve and the rest of the Avengers came to retrieve her. She'd wake up safe, and with Steve, who was the only one Bucky would entrust her to. Steve would understand. Steve would know what she meant to Bucky. He untucked her and quickly and tenderly dressed her before tucking her back in. He gave her lips one last chaste kiss after he was dressed again and took a deep breath.

"I'll come back to you. I will."

Chapter End Notes

merry Christmas?

Guys I'm so sorry that my brain went there. And this whole story by the way, was inspired by a porny smutty nsfw gif that phoenix-173 sent me, and it was only meant to be a short porn drabble that I post on Tumblr. clicky clicky...

And here
Hi, happy Wednesday and I'm freezing. It is very very cold out.

I hope that everyone had a nice Christmas that celebrates it.

Are you ready for the fallout?? Buckle up, buttercups!

Warnings for: Civil War canon, the aftermath of Peggy's death, emotional manipulation via serum related empath powers, and electrical violence. Imagine this picks up right after Steve gets the text about Peggy's passing.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

**Chapter Twenty-One**:

"Clint can't fly us?" Sam wondered softly as he watched Natasha prep the quinjet for Steve to fly he and Sam across the Atlantic.

Steve had gotten the text message regarding Peggy's death less than an hour ago. The man had been a wreck since then. Not that anyone could see it, his face had been stoic, but after what happened in Lagos, the utter shit show that was the end of Rumlows life and the horrifying cleanup and recovery afterward, and then Secretary of the Douchey State Ross and the Accords...Peggy's death was just another brick on top of him. A brick right on top of his chest to add to the thousands of bricks already there, valiantly attempting to suffocate the life from Steve Rogers.

"He's got things to do," Natasha revealed as she programmed the automated flight path on the quinjet.

"Retirement is busier than ever, it seems," Sam arched a knowing eyebrow at Natasha.

"Three kids under the age of twelve will fill up the hours," Natasha said with no small amount of distraction as she looked down at her watch before going back to programming.
"You can't come with us?" Sam prodded. "Not for me. I mean, yeah, I wouldn't mind having you around."

Natasha stopped her quick and thorough work to give Sam an incredulous look. Sam had the good grace to let a sheepish grin break out on his face.

"I not only wouldn't mind, it would be a damned pleasure," Sam corrected himself.

"There are contingencies that need to be in place before the Accords go into effect," Natasha whispered. "There are too many things that could happen between now and us signing it in Vienna in less than forty-eight hours---"

"I'm NOT signing them," Sam said pointedly.

"Well, then you retire too. I hope your 401k is healthy," Natasha said dryly. "Or you have a backup plan in place for when Ross comes after you."

Sam prided himself on being able to read most of Natasha's double speak. He was one of very few who could. Steve could do it if he tried hard enough. Once he had seen the super mind manipulator Wanda squint at Natasha's casual double talk during a game of Uno while they were flying out to a crisis in Denver. Really the only person who was as good as Sam was at finding the half truths and hidden meaning in Natasha's innocent statements was Clint. And he had years on Sam in his Natasha study.

So Sam did pride himself in the ability to take a simple sentence from Natasha and translate it into what she really meant.

"I don't know how I'd even go about doing that," Sam sighed.

Natasha gave him a very soft, very genuine smile that had Sam give a full body tremble that looked entirely delightful.

"Good thing you have me to pick up the slack. Now, course for London is set. Make sure Steve
doesn't get into too much trouble," Natasha ordered in a quiet, hushed tone.

"Yeah, last time one of the great loves of his life kicked it, he wound up crashing the plane into the Arctic. I'd like to be one of the people in this superhero club who hasn't been frozen alive, thanks."

---

Darcy blinked her eyes open with some difficulty, thanks to the crustiness of sleep gathered at the corners, along with the sedative that Bucky had administered upon her. There was no sunlight streaming through the bulletproof windows of their little Parisian apartment, no moonlight either, but it was dark, and the light that filtered in through the breaks in the gauzy white curtains was artificial from the street lights.

The serum that ran through her veins wasn't an optimum serum at all, but it was still difficult to get her down and out for the count. And it had worked for hours at this point, when Bucky had taken his leave it had been afternoon sunshine. There was anger simmering deep down that Bucky had done this to her, but she also knew that he deeply cared for her wellbeing. And he was absolutely devoted to making sure the baby was healthy as well. He wouldn't drug her if it had any chance to hurt the baby.

Which meant that he had been given the drug to knock her out by someone they both had trusted: Doctor Carla Rivera.

Darcy winced as she pulled herself into a sitting position, every slow movement making her feel more and more awake and aware. Bucky had put clothing on her before he had left, apparently. She was dressed in her fuzziest pajama pants as well as a large t-shirt of his. It smelled of him, the rich natural smell of his, tinged with mentholated smoke and simple soap. She felt a stinging, tight sob climbing up her throat as she realized that he was gone. He had left her, and she didn't know if he would be back.

It didn't matter that he did it for her own good. It didn't matter what safety had been involved.

He was gone and she was sitting on a bed with only a shirt to remember him by. Her eyes scanned her surroundings in the dim light, looking for some other sign. A note. Something that told her he was sorry and that he would be back. But there was nothing.

She felt the life she carried in her stomach flutter and her anger surged.
She was up and out of the bed like a rocket then, rushing around the room as she grabbed her backpack and began tossing things in. One set of clothes, anymore would drag her down. Two electrical batons in the x-ray proof pocket, and one on her physical person. The box of protein bars that they'd painstakingly selected weeks ago. She looked at the bookshelf, which held trinkets they'd picked up on their travels, a notepad full of plum cake recipes, a leather bound notebook and Hannah Hula.

Darcy's mouth opened and a stifled cry echoed out of it as she picked up the notebook first and opened it up, rifling through pages and pages of little notes that Bucky had written for the baby. She got to the last page, and it was dated that very day.

'Dear baby. I love you and I love your mama, and I promise, I'm gonna make sure you and your mama are safe. I have some work to do, but I will find a way back to you. Love papa.'

Darcy felt like throwing the book into the toilet for one second before she ruthlessly threw it into her bag. She KNEW what safe meant for Bucky. He was going to try to make her go back to the Avengers WITHOUT him and she couldn't abide by that. Like hell she was going back to those people who never cared enough to notice she was gone. Like hell was she going to be put into a room full of scientists that would poke and prod at her and her child and wonder what Hydra had turned them into. Like hell was she going to let stupid, noble Bucky do this on his own.

She'd follow him, wherever she went, and she'd make him cry and beg on his knees for her to forgive him for daring to leave her. She grabbed Hannah Hula off of the shelf and threw her in her bag before going to the bed they had shared. She got down on her knees and reached underneath, unsurprised to find batons strapped to where the guns had been. She bypassed the additional weaponry and went for the floorboard where they kept a baggie full of cash and passports that they had been using during their travels.

There was nothing there.

"You son of a BITCH!" Darcy cursed, maneuvering her belly to see under the bed more clearly, and only seeing the weapons he had left, no cash and no passports to be seen. "Oh James Buchanan Barnes, you are going to pay for this."

There could be only one reason why he would have left her without cash and a means to travel easily. He didn't expect her to need to go anywhere or fend for herself. He wanted to keep her right where she was so the Black Widow or Captain America or WHOEVER would be able to just pick her right up.
Darcy struggled to her feet again and bit back the tears that threatened to fall. She tried to focus on her rage and her anger instead, pushing the tears and sadness far away from her.

She didn't know how to direct the power. She wanted to give them to Bucky. She wanted him to feel how sad she was. She stomped around the bedroom, getting her sneakers securely on her feet and grabbing a hooded sweat jacket and yanking it on. She reached for the soft gray knitted hat and stuffed her hair up and into it to hide the recognizable brown curls. She sniffled and wished she knew how to handle the nebulous power that the serum had gifted her with. She wanted Bucky to know what she was feeling.

But then the door to the apartment clicked open.

In all the weeks they had lived in the little Parisian apartment, Darcy had never so much as glimpsed another human soul on their floor. The fact that this intruder was able to get into the doorway of the secure apartment had her taking a step or two back in fear. Her hand went back under the mattress and she grabbed one of the batons, setting it to its highest setting.

It had been the charge that had taken Steve Rogers down. If it was an unenhanced human, they would be out for hours. If it was Bucky coming back and realizing his error in leaving her---well, he'd still be twitching on the ground, useless for at least a half hour.

Darcy didn't hesitate in jumping back on the bed and diving under the covers, holding the ready baton in her tight grip. She closed her eyes and focused, taking everything she was trying to push down, the fear, the hopelessness, the utter dejection and gut wrenching sadness at what Bucky had done, and she pushed with all of her mental might at whoever was walking down the hallway with a nearly silent tread.

The sniffles started nearly immediately, whoever it was they were getting what she was forcing on them emotionally. She heard a masculine voice mutter 'fuck' and the handle to the door of the bedroom turned.

That wasn't Bucky.

Darcy lay under the blanket taking deep and steady breaths as she continued to force her sadness onto the intruder, both of her hands steady as she waited.

"Jesus," the man muttered, his voice thick with tears. "What in the hell?"
His voice broke on a sob and Darcy could feel him standing above her in the bed. A hand gripped at the covers and he pulled them back slowly, sobbing the whole time.

His crying ceased though when she jabbed the baton in his midsection and let her charge loose. She managed to scramble when he went down on the bed twitching, avoiding being crushed under his weight.

"Unenhanced then," she muttered, staring down at the unconscious man. His face was on the rugged side, his dark blonde hair pushed up into haphazard tousled spikes. She squinted at him in concentration, wondering why he seemed so familiar. He was dressed in black leather, the hint of a purple t-shirt underneath his jacket. He was also still breathing, and Darcy felt relieved at that. She stepped off of the bed carefully and stared down at his face, willing herself to remember.

A face sprung into her brain, one similar to the man lying unconscious on her bed. A smirking face from a magazine that Jane had tossed at her shortly after the Chitauri attack. The picture had been taken by paparazzi in a park in New York City when Thor had left with Loki in chains. That face had been smirking as the Asgardians left, and he had been standing next to the Black Widow.


She wasted no time in rifling through his pockets for money or a wallet, but came up empty except for a pack of juicy fruit and a five dollar bill which she happily pocketed.

Darcy went back to the bookshelf and ripped a piece of paper out of the notebook with her plum cake recipes in it. She scribbled a message to the unconscious AVENGER in her and Bucky's bed and placed it right in front of the man's nose.

"Fuck off Parakeet ass. Just try and catch me and bring me back to your weird spider girlfriend."

Darcy had never liked being so short. At barely reaching five feet and three inches, she had spent the majority of her life reaching and standing on tiptoe to do normal things like grab a box of crackers from a store shelf, or put away dishes after washing them. The most comfortable she had been, had been in the small motorhome in New Mexico with an equally tiny Jane. Erik had hated it, knocking his head on the ceiling most days, but she and Jane had been so comfortable in a space seemingly built around their size.
Now, as she rushed through the streets of Paris, heading towards the train station that she and Bucky had used to get to England, she appreciated her smaller size. She was well below the gaze of the average human, so no one was really looking at her and her oversized comfort clothing. She didn't garner much attention, and that was a good thing. She skirted the pavements the way Bucky had always done when they'd strolled through the streets of Paris together. He was unnaturally adept at avoiding surveillance cameras, and therefore they never got on anyone's radar.

She had no money. She had no passport. But she knew she had to get out of Paris. Not only had Bucky allowed the Avengers to come and bring her in, but there was still the threat of Hydra. She supposed that she was minutely grateful that Hydra was looking for them to be together. Without James and his tall form and bulky stature next to her, she was practically invisible.

But she still had to get the hell out of Paris. She had to get somewhere she could lay low until she was able to search out Bucky on her own. He had said he was going to China. But if he had lied to her about everything else, including never leaving her, then she wagered he had lied about that too.

Bitterness coated her tongue and her heart and her brain waged a war within her. Yes, Bucky had lied to her. Bucky had drugged her and took off, leaving her behind. But she knew inherently that he loved her and only wanted what was best for her. Her brain won out after a complicated struggle and she retained her anger.

A few feet away from her at the center of the walkway, a man bumped into another man, and instead of politely nodding and acknowledging the movement, they lunged for each other simultaneously, spitting mad, violent and full of rage. Darcy's eyes widened in surprise, but she didn't wait to see the outcome, she kept walking, heading straight for the entrance to the train station.

She had caused that, inadvertently, but still it had been her fault.

She had to be able to control the empathetic power that had developed within her from the serum. She had the ability to push feelings of her own onto others. If she could do it—she could figure something out. She rushed into the train station and found a bench out of view from the security cameras and took a deep breath as she observed her surroundings. She just needed it to work once. She just needed one person who she could convince to give her what she needed.

She saw the matronly, motherly looking woman, probably in her sixties, dressed to the nines but obviously on a vacation, what with the ridiculously expensive camera hanging from her neck. The woman was walking into the station on the arm of her husband. He made a beeline for the lavatory and Darcy stared at the woman unabashedly and tried her best to focus.
Fear wouldn't do, how could Darcy play on her sensibilities if she was scared? Sadness was out of the question, Darcy couldn't conceivably ask for what she wanted with the woman in tears. Anger, well Darcy had plenty of anger (and sadness and fear), but it wouldn't work for what she needed. She needed money. She needed a way to get out of there. Her hand fell to her rounded little stomach, well hidden behind cozy layers and she took a deep breath. She needed to protect the baby, at all costs.

When Tracie Gray-King had planned the trip to Europe with her husband, it had been a spur of the moment thing. Their children were grown, and her husband was retired. They had a lot of time to fill up suddenly, and enough money to fill that time with very enjoyable things. So a two week trip through Europe, not backpacking as they had in the sixties, but luxuriously instead, seemed like just the ticket.

But she was suddenly hit with a wave of fierce protectiveness. She felt like she had when her oldest had started kindergarten and had come home crying one day and told her she had been deemed strange by a whole group of children. She had wanted to shield her child and protect her from everything and everyone. She had wanted to give her the moon. It was a strange burst to be feeling and she reached for her phone, wondering if something was wrong with her now grown child.

She heard a sniffle and looked up, seeing the little slip of a young woman sitting on a bench, her hand pressed against a little swell of pregnancy. Tracie didn't even have to think about it, she walked quickly to the bench and sat down next to the girl.

"What can I do to help you?" Tracie asked softly.

"I just want to go home," the girl whispered.

Tracie smiled and nodded. She could do that. She could help the girl find a way home. She went into the crossbody purse that had cost more than what she and her husband had spent on their original backpacking trip and quickly went into the little zippered compartment inside, pulling out a relatively thick envelope.

Being a stay at home mother for so many years had taught her how to have a fun money fund. It wasn't necessary since her husband spoiled her at every chance, but it had been instilled in her from her mother. Never mind that her husband was the one who secretly put the money in places for her to find, it was her fun money and she could do what she wanted to do with it.
Tracie didn't hesitate to take the whole envelope out and press it into the girl's trembling hands.

"Go home," Tracie urged. "Good luck."

The beautiful young woman's face bloomed into a fantastically beautiful and grateful smile and Tracie sat back a bit, feeling a surge of happiness and joy hit her squarely in her stomach, warming her up all over.

"Thank you. I---thank you. I want to pay you back," the girl said with clear conviction.

"Sure, sure, although there is no need at all. But let me find my card," Tracie laughed. "Here you are."

"Hon! Their johns are so much cleaner than I remember them!"

Tracie rose from her seat, giving the girl a wink before scampering off, feeling the most amazingly light touch of sweet relief hit her senses.

Chapter End Notes

as always, thanks to the beta babes, phoenix_173 and dntpanic42.

Uh oh. Darcy is on mission. Where do you think she will wind up?
Chapter Notes

Happy first Wednesday of 2018!

warnings for the chapter: stealing? Soldier threatening violence?

This chapter is set at the point in Civil War after the bombing of the UN summit and ends right before the point where the Soldier takes over thanks to Zemo's trigger words. ;)

as always, thanks to the beta babes, phoenix-173 and dntpanic42

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Twenty-Two: Prelude to War

'Go back to her or I will make you pay.'

It had not taken James long to get to Bucharest. The travel was effortless, and the loss of his beloved travelling companion was keenly missed. He'd arrived at the much less hospitable safe house and taken a look around, knowing that it was a lot easier to defend than the little love nest he had shared with Darcy, but not only was it dirtier and less comfortable than their home, but it was also not their home.

'Bring me back to my Pet or I will find a way to kill you and take the body as mine.'

He'd gone right out again and purchased what he could to make the space more livable. In the vain hope that she would join him there soon. He'd put a message out to the Widow when he knew it was safe, and he would have Darcy at his side again.

'Bring my Pet back to me now and you will not wake up tomorrow with blood on your hands.'

Something was wrong. It was more than the uncomfortable safe house. It was more than the loneliness and worry about Darcy after having been at her side for months now. It was more than knowing that even when they were reunited, she would be very, very upset with him and his decision to leave her. And it was more than the petulant, angry soldier issuing desperate threats in
his mind.

Without her---it felt like he was broken back up into three people again. And it was more him and the angry Soldier living in his head. Bucky---the closest he'd been to whole in a lifetime, was silent. It felt like a dark and empty closet in his mind and Bucky had been left back with Darcy.

He hadn't thought much on the fact that Darcy had been a salve to his broken brain. He had only focused on what she was doing to others with her empathy. But apparently she had been doing so much more, allowing for something that had been broken into three to find its way to whole again.

'Bring her back.'

He could do that. He could make the space liveable. He could have the Widow bring her back to him. He cleaned as best as he could, stowing weapons and bug out bags and setting up the modest kitchen and dilapidated mattress on the floor.

Sixteen hours after leaving Darcy, when she would be waking back up in the custody and protection of the Avengers, he had wandered to the market and had been astonished by the plums. They were the first harvest of the young season, and he wanted more than anything to have them for her when she came back. He would beg for her forgiveness and provide everything she wanted or needed or even carelessly thought about.

He could make it right.

And then the sirens.

The nervous newspaper peddler.

'You fool. You should have never left my sweet Pet.'
"Sharon, hi. It's Steve."

Sam snorted with aborted laughter at Steve's awkward duckling impersonation as he piloted the quinjet towards Bucharest at max speed. It wouldn't take them long to get there at all, having left Sharon Carter behind in Vienna to her job. She had promised to keep in touch with them with any other important information about what the CIA had picked up about the Winter Soldier, but aside from a neighborhood sighting at a plum stand, there hadn't been much to go on.

Steve had been fidgeting for fifteen minutes before finally caving and calling Sharon through the quinjet comm system.

"No, I told you that you're to maintain your line of sight on the suspect," Sharon snapped into the phone, clearly around someone that didn't need to know she was on the phone with a rogue Avenger.

"Right," Steve hesitated, clearly trying to remember that Sharon wasn’t actually mad at him. "In the hurry to get out of there, I didn't tell you---I didn't ask."

"I'm going to need you to spit it out, Agent," Sharon barked into the phone, clearly exasperated.

Sam was getting exasperated himself. He didn't think that Steve was into Sharon, but here he was, awkward and nervous like a teenaged boy with a boner staring at the girl of his dreams across the room. Sam was kind of suspicious that Steve was trying to get a girl so that he and Bucky could both have one, but he didn't take either of the men from another century to be such lotharios.

Then again, he hadn't thought that either men would be into open and honest polyamorous relationships either, but here they were.

"Have there been any reports of a woman with Bucky?" Steve asked quickly. "Brunette. Small. Mid-twenties."

He paused and Sam saw a blush barely show up on the tips of Steve's ears.

"Pretty as a picture, or so I'm told."
"This is new intel, why wasn't this given to me before?" Sharon demanded incredulously. "Your one job, Agent, is not actually to get Ross's coffee, but to relay pertinent intel to me, remember?"

"I got blindsided about the whole Bucky reappearing and seemingly blowing up an office building," Steve snapped back. Sharon was clearly mad at him now and not even playacting a little.

"He does that," Sam piped in. "Get distracted about Bucky that is."

"Up until Vienna, we had assumed that Bucky was travelling with a woman, a woman he rescued from Hydra," Steve quickly revealed. "I think she has some empathy powers based off of serum exposure."

"You WHAT now?" Sam demanded.

"And you didn't think to disclose this before?!" Sharon shouted in unison with Sam's angry words. "She wouldn't hurt anyone with it. I don't think they understand it," Steve admitted. "I spoke with a Doctor who specializes in the serum and its after effects. We think that she can force certain feelings onto others."

Sharon sighed heavily on the other end of the line. Sam could feel her pain.

"I'm going to digest this and put it back into the pipeline to see what I can get," Sharon finally acknowledged, sounding pretty tired. "YOU are going to do your job, and tell me EXACTLY what you learn. Do you understand, Agent?"

"Crystal clear, ma'am," Steve smirked before the call cut off. He looked to Sam, who was staring at him incredulously. "It never came up before."

"So---she might have gotten the drop on me back in Canada because she was making me feel---distracted?" Sam asked quickly, clearly hoping to get some benefit out of this.
"Maybe, I don't know," Steve shrugged. "I've been feeling things lately that I have no business feeling. At the most random times. Being sick after Calgary. Being panicked after the London incident with the human traffickers. Being---ah, just, Doctor Rivera seems to think this is the most likely explanation."

"So what are we hoping for here?" Sam wondered as he began to make his descent. "Do we want Bucky here with your hopefully, future shared girlfriend or do we want him alone?"

"She might be able to keep him calm, maybe stop him from running," Steve reasoned. "So, yeah, I'm hoping she's there."

"Yeah," Sam nodded in agreement. Barnes obviously cared about the girl, and who knows, she might even be able to slow him down...or maybe even provide the former Winter Soldier with an alibi for the Vienna bombing.

"It'll be nice to finally meet her," Steve added, a small, hopeful smile pulling at the corner of his lips.

Sam rolled his eyes as heavily as he could while he went to land the plane.

"Guess that answers my question about Sharon and you then. You and your threesomes, man. Seriously unexpected and still so strange."

The money had been enough to not only get her on a train out of town, but enough to buy her a burner phone smart enough for her to jailbreak and a printer where she could churn out some id's. It wasn't enough to get plane fare, and she couldn't pay in cash anyway, so she had to figure something else out there.

The rest of the money had paid for food, and she was on another train mechanically eating the cold sandwiches and chips, heading towards the airport, staring down at her phone. She was now at a crossroads, ethically. When Bucky and she had been living off of Hydra's dime, it hadn't seemed so bad taking money and using it for their own purposes. Hydra was BAD, so it was a Robin Hood situation, taking from the rich and evil and putting ridiculous amounts of food into her poor stomach.
Only the money was now for far more than food. She needed to get somewhere safe. And in order to do that, she'd need real money. Or more specifically, the credit card information that she was currently staring at. It was tied to Captain Rogers' Avengers budget. His huge, Tony Stark funded Avengers budget. He used it very sparingly, apparently, and using it to book airfare would be a huge red flag.

She sighed and looked out the window as the train sped along. She really wished that the last twenty-four hours hadn't happened. Her phone chirped and she switched screens, going to the alerts that she had set up for Avengers and James immediately after getting the phone.

"The funeral of Margaret Elizabeth 'Peggy' Carter, founder of SHIELD, dead at age 95'.

Darcy drew in a deep breath and looked back out the window. Steve had been to London, there was a picture of him as a pallbearer. Darcy’s heart ached for him and the sadness in his eyes despite how her brain was telling her not to care. As sad as the situation was, it was like it was a golden opportunity placed right into her hands. She pulled her phone closer to her face and looked like any other person on the train as she began typing rapidly, breaking into a travel booking website.

She had twenty flights bought within minutes, all originating from Paris and going to different corners of the globe, in an effort to cover her tracks. But she only cared about one destination. Her hands went to the business card sitting by her bag of chips.

"Daniel Morita, principal, Midtown School of Science and Technology."

Clint Barton woke up to the feeling of his phone vibrating against his ass and tingling, twitching pain all over the rest of him. It took him several concerted tries to get his arm out from under him and then a few more seconds of weak flailing until he managed to get his phone out of his pocket and up to his ear.

"Your girl is wicked. That Soldier really knows how to train angry pretty little things," he grumbled into the phone, his voice raspy and his words slow and unsure.

"---My girl? Clint? What---" Steve was on the other end of the line.
Clint tried to sit up on the bed but only became more tangled in the sheets that definitely smelt of sex and bodily fluids, and he didn't want to try and find the wet spot with his recently electrocuted face. He managed to sit up, and his ass definitely found the wet spot then and he grumbled under his breath about the state of his pants.

"Clint, what in the hell is going on?" Steve asked.

"Nothing, Cap, it's nothing. Just---the kids being kids and I thought you were my wife---Cooper no, put that down," Clint shouted at his imaginary child as he got up on shaky feet and looked around at the empty apartment. The girl---Darcy Lewis, the one that Natasha had sent him to retrieve and take back to the farm with Laura, was now gone.

She'd used some sort of strange, nebulous power to get him crying like a damned baby, then had pushed enough electricity through his body to render him completely unconscious for several hours. He looked out the window and sure enough the morning sun was shining through. He had busted into the apartment to retrieve Darcy at seven the previous evening.

Clint couldn't WAIT to get his hands on the girl now. And promptly hand her over to Natasha or Steve or whoever, and let Darcy Lewis electrocute the shit out of THEIR brains.

"Clint, there's a problem," Steve admitted.

Clint could hear the quinjet controls over the phone as he made his way to the kitchen, grabbing a towel and wetting it under the sink. He began scrubbing at his pants in earnest, knowing inherently he wouldn't have time to go out and buy a new pair.

"I thought I handed in my letter of resignation," Clint sighed heavily.

"Yeah, well, I'm going to need you to come out of it. Please Clint?" Steve asked earnestly. "There was an explosion at the signing of the Accords."

"Status on Nat?" Clint asked quickly, throwing the dish towel into the sink and rushing through the apartment for another quick walkthrough. Barnes had been thorough on the first pass, and Darcy had gotten everything she needed on the second pass.

"She'll be okay, but I'm more worried about Wanda," Steve admitted. "Sam and I are on our way
to Romania right now for---for something."

Clint could make out Sam in the background scoffing and complaining about said "something'. Natasha had told Clint that Barnes was going to leave Darcy for extraction and that the former Winter Soldier would then be heading elsewhere in Europe to finish his own mission. Clint was expected to get Darcy to safety, but now he had no idea where she was and no way to track her.

And to be honest, he was more concerned about Wanda at the moment, rather than the spitfire who had easily taken him down.

"You owe my kids, Cap. I was supposed to take them waterskiing. I'll be in touch when I have what you need."

Bathroom and meal duty wasn't exactly one of Sharon Carter's original job duties. It certainly wasn't something she had ever done before. But here she was, waiting on the psychiatrist to arrive to evaluate the Winter Soldier, aka James Barnes, aka Bucky Barnes, standing in front of his imposing cell as he stared down at the ground, straight faced and unresponsive.

"You need water," Sharon said brusquely.

Even though she hadn't phrased it as a question, James still shook his head slightly in the negative, not bothering to look up at her. He knew who she was. The Soldier had no problem rattling off her statistics. Carter, Sharon. SHIELD agent, not able to be corrupted by Hydra. She had been entrusted to protect Steve back in Washington DC. He had waited to take his shot on Fury that night until she had been out of the picture. The Soldier had deemed her too competent and needed her out of the picture in order to complete his mission.

Sharon stepped forward and pressed a button on the mobile prison cell's controls, a compartment opened and a water bottle appeared, with a downward facing straw that was slowly extending closer to the captive's mouth.

James' eyes went wide with a blend of muted horror and anger. He looked up and glared at Sharon.

"I am not an animal," he ground out in a quiet, but steely tone, the words accented slightly with
Russian overtones.

"Right," Sharon sighed. She could certainly see how giving nourishment to a former prisoner of war in such a way might have been offensive. Apparently her bosses didn't care about that though, which made her question where exactly they were better than the Winter Soldier's former puppet masters. "I'm not having your death via dehydration on my head. Rogers wouldn't be pleased."

James knew the blonde woman standing in front of him, staring him down with compassion and bravery was the niece of Peggy Carter. But the way she had said Rogers was without any sort of affection... Some soft voice in the back of his brain, the part that had been so desperately missing since his separation with Darcy whispered that Stevie didn't prefer blondes.

They reminded the fair haired man of his ma.

Still, she obviously was genuinely concerned for him. Not like the other CIA lackeys who had jeered at him from outside the cage. She fiddled with the controls, looking as if she was just casually drumming her fingers, but Bucky heard the static from the machine that was monitoring him go out suddenly. The surveillance was disturbed for the moment, giving he and Sharon privacy.

"Just take a sip," Sharon encouraged. "To keep your strength up."

James took a pull off of the straw, the water was clean and cool, but it still felt bitter to swallow. He tried to focus on that one afternoon in Italy, when Darcy had offered him her straw to her fancy little Italian soda she had gotten. He tried to remember how her nimble little fingers had danced on the shell of his ear. He tried to hold onto her, but the terror at having gotten taken and the muddled state of his mind at her absence was a hard thing to overcome.

"Where is the girl?" Sharon asked, her voice barely audible.

Blue gray eyes looked up at Sharon very suddenly in alarm. Sharon's face was entirely neutral and it only made James' stomach twist in knots faster.

"Steve is concerned that she wasn't with you," Sharon admitted.

"The Widow," James whispered, looking confused. "I---she was going to move her to safety."
Sharon shook her head imperceptibly. Natasha had given her the short explanation via an encrypted email. Barnes had taken a prisoner of Hydra and essentially made her a girlfriend before touring the world. And Hawkeye had failed to secure the girl. The pregnant girl.

"She ran off, took out the Avenger sent to pick her up and she ran. When was the last time you saw her?"

James hesitated. A lifetime ago. He could feel his gut churning and the Soldier's anguished cry within his head, the anger and the terror building quick. The Soldier was threatening to take complete control, to bust through the door and track his beautiful Pet and their precious unborn bastard down. He had placed his trust that the Widow would take care of the girl, and now she was lost in the wind.

Or lost to Hydra.

"Barnes. BARNES," Sharon cut in. "We have less than a minute left. When was the last time you saw her?"

If he couldn't trust the Widow and he couldn't trust the Avengers, then he certainly couldn't trust the CIA agent in front of him, no matter who she was related to.

"I don't remember."

Ned opened the broken fire exit of the back hallway, where Roberto from Ando's Pizza usually delivered their afternoon treats, saving the students from having to run up to the front of the school and also saving Roberto from an extra block of travel. And it was raining today, so he was very thankful for the much needed shortcut.

"Man, I'm so excited for pizza, I hope you brought the extra---" Ned stopped, his beaming smile going flat and confused at the sight of a small woman in front of him, dressed in big, baggy dark clothing. The young man shook his head back and forth slightly, as if he were attempting to clear his vision. "You're not Roberto."
"No," the woman said. "I'm not. I'm looking for Principal Morita? I---I'm a friend and I need help."

"Uhhhh----it's like six at night?" Ned answered her with something that sounded very much like a question. "Principal Morita leaves at five mostly every day so he can catch the train and go home to his wife. They've been married like, eight years, but I think it's super sweet they're still like---you know. Happy and stuff."

The woman in front of him had looked out of place before. She had looked a little scared and worried, to be honest. And she had looked very, very tired. As if she had been awake for way too many hours in a row. But now she looked relieved and it made her entire face look younger. She still looked tired though. So tired, in fact, that she was swaying on her feet.

"Dude, the seniors are going to start eating the rest of the freshman if you don't bring the pizza back!" Michelle warned Ned as she lazily strolled the door that Ned was staring out in confusion. She furrowed her brow for a moment at the scene in front of her before pushing Ned bodily out of the way. "Let her in, you moron, it's raining and she's gonna pass out."

"Sorry!" Ned said quickly as he stood aside to let the young woman in.

"Thanks---I'm---I'm," the woman blinked as she took a few steps inside out of the rain. Her steps fumbled and very suddenly she pitched forward, her entire body losing equilibrium as if her strings had been cut.

Ned made a grab for her, making a yelp as she all but fell right into his body. He wrapped his arms around her and looked over to Michelle in a panic.

"What do I do?" he asked nervously.

"Uhhh---pizza?" Roberto announced from the door. He then rattled off something in quick Spanish.

He definitely said something about policia and that didn't sound like a good idea at all. Usually when pregnant women came around looking tired and scared in their neighborhoods, the police never actually helped.
"Nah, man, we're good," Michele waved him off, taking the cash that was in Ned's hand and exchanging it for the pizza. She shut the door and looked to Ned and the small, pregnant woman that he held cushioned against the front of him. "Let's get her to the nurse's office. Then, hell I don't know, ask Liz what to do?"

"Well---she is the new captain, so that sort of makes sense."

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to everyone still sticking with me on this. I really appreciate the support on this monster. I'll be honest with you, I'm starting to flag right now in finding time and energy to write and your continued engagement with me on stories means the world to me. Thanks for reading!
Chapter Twenty-Three: This is War

Berlin

"This guy is a little---you know, a little whackadoodle, isn't he?"

Everett Ross's joke seemed to fall a little flat in the room full of agents who had been through the ringer ever since the signing of the Accords four days ago. It might have been because since the bombing in Vienna, the handful of high level access agents in the room had not had a moment's rest, what with apprehending and then losing the infamous Winter Soldier. Some of them were caving. Sharon Carter was already missing from the mandatory strategy planning session to try and track down where Steve Rogers and company had disappeared to.

Ross was feeling an awful lot of pressure from that other Ross, thankfully not a relation of his. The Secretary of State from the United States was not exactly a very reassuring presence to have breathing down someone's back, and he was very much breathing down Everett's back right now. The CIA agent had unfortunately been laden down with most of the blame for Barnes' escape from custody three days ago. It was still a mystery on how Barnes had gotten out, actually.

Footage had gone out during his psychological evaluation, and by the time tech support got it back up again, Barnes was already on the rampage. Everett watched the footage looping of the Winter Soldier battling the goddamned King of Wakanda, who also happened to dress up in a vibranium threaded onesie to fight crime. They seemed evenly matched, which threw up red flags for Everett.
He'd reviewed the footage from the fighting and chase through Bucharest and Barnes hadn't quite been so good back then as he had been here in Berlin.

"There's something about his face," Everett mumbled, pausing the footage and staring at Barnes' face. "Pull up some footage from before the shrink got in."

One of the techs did just that, showing Barnes' face just after he had been placed in his containment unit and compared it to the face caught on the surveillance as Barnes stalked away from the King of Wakanda. The difference between the two images was startling. Everett was kind of good with faces.

Actually he was kind of good at a lot. He had spent a lot of time his entire life making up for his size. He was a great profiler and tracker.

"Where's Clarkson with the damned personal effects?" Everett demanded impatiently.

He had also cultivated his cutting words and abrasive personality to make up for the fact that most CIA agents were a head above him in height and at least fifty pounds of muscle more than him. He'd always kind of looked up to Steve Rogers, as they had that in common. And now the fully disgraced Captain America had grabbed his ex-boyfriend and ran off, becoming the world's most wanted in the blink of an eye.

A box of things was pushed onto the desk and Everett wasted no time in rifling through it. He pulled out one of the more worn notebooks taken from James Buchanan Barnes and looked through it as quickly as he dared. There were the half recorded memories, some mundane, some racy and damned near pornagraphic, and some absolutely terrifying. There were half recorded food lists, some of the foods weren't even produced anymore, as if he were writing grocery reminders from seventy-five years ago. And right next to a list for Barbasol, gelatin and carrots would be a vivid and clinical description of a covert assassination of the upstart leader of some rebel faction.

It was jarring, to say the least.

But Everett's eyes tracked to a specific list written with the rest of the jumbled mess. This wasn't the sloppy slanted handwriting of Bucky Barnes, listing what he had gotten at the corner store in 1939. It wasn't the precise, mechanical printing of the recounted murders and assassinations performed over seventy years. This lettering was rounded printing mixed randomly with rotund cursive letters. And each of the 'i's' were dotted with a round circle.
Like a girl who was passing notes in the back of seventh grade study hall.

He read the list of things that had been started and felt his head go a little fuzzy.

"Clarkson," his voice was barely a whisper. "Get me Carter."

"She's not---I haven't been able to find her, Sir," Clarkson admitted, a little sheepish. "She had been friendly with Cap, maybe she---"

"Comb through the Bucharest security, try to find out where he was before Bucharest and if we have ANY picture of him anywhere," Everett barked out, standing up as tall as he could. He pointed to the book, "Get forensics on this passage and try to get me a date on this writing."

"The writing?" Clarkson stepped forward. They had been through the books, scanning them into the database, matching up the accounts recorded with unsolved cold cases.

"Cribs---bassinet---baby monitors," Everett rattled off. "Either Bucky Barnes and Steve Rogers got a girl into trouble before they both took big ice naps, or the Winter Soldier had a pregnant ice princess in the last few years. Someone get me Carter, NOW!"

“Sir!” Clarkson called out from his place in front of the largest monitor in the room. It was showing violence amongst superheroes at the Berlin airport. “You’re going to want to see this.”

New York City

"Lady? Lady? You alright?"

Darcy blinked her eyes open to see the concerned dark brown gaze of a teenage boy, his cherubic, friendly face the picture of relief as she regained consciousness. She looked around in confusion and whispered, "Morita?"

"He's still at home, remember?" the young man reminded her. "I'm Ned. And this is Michelle."
And our Captain is on her way..."

"No Captain," Darcy said quickly.

"Alright, no Captain," the young woman who must be Michelle said quickly, before sending off a quick text. "Are you some kind of superhero Accord refugee or something?"

"What?" Darcy whispered as she struggled to sit up. The smell of pizza was pervasive in the small nurse's office the teenagers had brought her to.

"The Sokovian Accords. After the bombing, all of the countries like, signed them," Michelle reported, sounding bored even though she was carefully watching Darcy, a little dixie cup of water in her hand and hovering close as Ned helped her into a sitting position. "Spider-Man like--left the country and was in Berlin to bring in the bad ones."

"Did you see that? It was AWESOME," Ned admitted. "It was like that really old Star Wars movie..."

Darcy pat Ned on the shoulder, then reached past him for one of the pizza boxes, pulling it towards her and opening it immediately. She didn't hesitate in grabbing one of the slices and shoving it in her mouth.

"Want some pizza?" Michelle joked.

"Sorry," Darcy said around a mouthful. "I'm really hungry."

She WAS really hungry, even though she had just eaten two hours ago. She had been midway through the flight across the Atlantic before she realized she had forgotten her miracle pill that Doctor Carla Rivera had provided for her. And that was probably the reason she had fainted in a high school boy's arms a little while ago. And it was definitely why she was so hungry now.

She had to find a way to get more of the pills without actually turning herself in.

"Why would you say I'm a superhero?" Darcy questioned the girl sitting across from her, nodding
gratefully as she handed her a cup of water.

"Cause you feel like you're running a body temperature of like, 108," Michelle observed. "You twitched in your sleep and gave me a bruise when we carried you over, which kind of makes me think super strength. And also, like, I feel---worried about something? And I don't normally worry. Ever."

"Are you an empath?" Ned asked with excitement.

"Maybe a little," Darcy muttered before taking another large bite of pizza. The two teenagers watched her, Ned with a patient smile and Michelle with a bemused and calculating expression. She swallowed her bite and said, "My name is Darcy, and you can't---you can't let anyone know that I'm here."

"Could you like, force us not to tell with your empath powers?" Michelle suggested, sounding almost eager about it.

Ned LOOKED downright eager and his eyebrows went up quickly. "COULD YOU?"

"No---I don't know, dude. This is new to me, I don't even know how to control it," Darcy admitted. "Look, I just know that bad people are looking for me."

"Like the Secretary of State?" Michelle questioned. "I read on a message board on the darkweb that he's pretty much a dick. But my Aunt lives in Harlem and could tell you that he was a dick without a message board."

Darcy swallowed nervously and her free hand went to her rounded belly. She knew what General Ross had been willing to do in order to have a superpowered person at his disposal. She didn't want to think of him ever knowing about her and Bucky's precious little bastard. She had to figure out a plan. She needed safety. She needed her damned pills.

She needed Bucky.

She didn't know how to get Bucky to her or even contact him at this point as he had disappeared again after the superhero skirmish at the Berlin Airport, hand in hand with one Captain America, skipping into the sunset. But she knew she could track down more of the pills, and that was the
most pressing issue at the moment, as she had to make sure their baby was safe.

Someone had to finance the pills. And ten to one the money originated from the Avengers.

"Can you guys get me a laptop?" Darcy questioned as she polished off the last of her slice of pilfered pizza.

"I got one," Ned nodded, unlooping his backpack from his shoulders and digging in it until he brought out a well loved, very high powered, sticker covered laptop. He opened it and put in the long and complicated password before handing it off to Darcy.

"Are you just naturally that nice or is she making you be that nice with her mind voodoo?" Michelle asked Ned casually.

"I think I'm just naturally that nice," Ned shrugged, watching as Darcy began typing really fast automatically. He turned to get a better view and his eyebrows went up in shock again, "Woah, how do you even get into that mainframe without an established connection?"

Darcy smiled in spite of herself. Ned was DEFINITELY a kindred spirit. She looked up at Michelle, who despite her general air of teenaged disenchantment, looked interested as well.

Darcy angled herself on the small cot a little better and asked, "You guys want to learn a few really easy tricks in messing with Stark Technology? First off, he makes it easy for people to get in. The real challenge comes in when you have to go through the hoops he sets up. Pay attention. This will help you someday..."

Siberia

"Are you going to tell me anything about her?"

The quinjet doors opened to reveal a frosty and cold Siberia and the Hydra facility there. They hadn't had much of an opportunity to discuss what Steve had just brought up in the last few days. It had been a whirlwind of violence and running and hiding and Sam Wilson watching their every
word with bated breath. Now it was just them and the six sleeping super soldiers contained therein.

"You do remember her, right?" Steve was quiet as they trudged through the snow for the building.

"Course I do," Bucky huffed out indignantly. "Couldn't forget her if I tried."

"Yeah?" Steve felt a smile pull at his lips for the first time in a long time. "I hear she's a looker."

"A real fine tomato, too fine for the likes of swine like us," Bucky admitted, before looking away. "Steve---if something happens."

"Nothin's going to happen to you, Buck, I won't let it happen," Steve promised swiftly and with a lot of force behind his words. "We'll fix this up, and go and pick up your girl. You---you, ah, ever tell her about me?"

Bucky's huff of incredulous laughter was hardly disguised by the small grunt of exertion he and Steve let out as they pushed the heavy, long forgotten door to the Siberia facility open. Bucky had spent a lot of time there in the last seventy years, most of them unconscious and frozen. It held a lot of importance to Hydra, it had once been the main base for all of their operations after World War II.

Bucky hesitated for a fraction of a second when he realized that one very important file was kept at the Siberia facility. He had unwillingly contributed to it after bouts of torture. It had been information he had not been willing to part with, no part of him wanting to give up what he had on the one thing that would always keep Bucky Barnes tied to the tortured Winter Soldier.

Steve Rogers' file was housed in a dusty database in Siberia.

"I didn't have to tell her about you, she already knew you," Bucky admitted as he walked quickly into the facility, following a path that the Soldier knew by heart.

Steve followed in his wake, looking awfully concerned about this revelation. For one, if Bucky's girl knew him by reputation alone, then that was a disaster, because the public persona he had was tightly controlled by SHIELD at first and then Stark Industries. SHIELD had put him in a set of public service announcements from everything ranging from Math to reproductive health and Stark
Industries had had the audacity to suggest a reality web series showing him doing mundane, boring, everyday things.

The one and only video of him chopping up bananas for a smoothie and sassing an offscreen Barton was still the most viewed video on Youtube.

But if she knew him personally---Steve tried to think through all the people he had met since coming out of the ice, any of them that could fit the description and been taken by Hydra YEARS ago...

"Stop thinking so hard, there's smoke comin' outta your ears," Bucky muttered as he led Steve down a dark corridor, towards a room with computers in it. His right hand brushed against Steve’s forearm and it felt like a bomb of tingling warmth went off at the point of contact.

They turned into each other just beyond the door of the storage room, and their lips collided, parted and searching. Steve pushed Bucky into the steel door, his hands going to his shoulders and keeping him there as they shared their first kiss since 1945. It had been so long, and it had been the only thing Steve had wanted since realizing that Bucky was Bucky again after the helicopter crash days ago.

This was Bucky. This was the man he’d loved since he was a teenager. The man who called a pretty dame a tomato and still made it sound romantic and not brutish. The man who he had watched movies all day with before the war and built castles in the sky about a fast talking dame and all the love they could manage under one roof.

Bucky’s hands gripped what he could of Steve’s uniform at the small of his back, one hand obviously much stronger than the other. The difference was enough to pull Steve back a little, his short, little pants of breath hitting Bucky’s wet and swollen lips.

“That’s not changed then,” Bucky said slyly. He sighed and managed a small smile, “She’s gonna fit just right. I know it.”

“Where is she?” Steve furrowed his brow, taking a step back.

Bucky’s face went stony and he walked around Steve further into the room.
"Just---don't touch anything, I have to get something off of this computer."

The database would have Steve's file. It would have been updated from afar, collecting any information about him that Hydra could obtain.

"Is she okay?" Steve questioned.

"Widow was supposed to get her out of Paris and back to you, but you're here and the Widow is running for cover, I'd wager," Bucky sighed. "I don't know if she's okay. I believe that she's---I have to believe she's okay. We can find her when it's done. I have to find her."

"You love her," Steve accused without any heat. He watched carefully as Bucky's face went soft, his mouth tilting up in a small, secretive smile as he rifled through pockets on his jacket, pulling out a usb drive that Sharon had returned with Steve and Sam's gear.

An old monitor from the eighties booted up, glowing with green Russian characters. Steve couldn't decipher what was there, but Bucky could and the soft look left his face as his eyes darted over the screen quickly.

"She's---she's everything we always wanted," Bucky whispered. He took in a small breath at what he saw on the screen and he turned suddenly watery eyes to Steve. "Steve... Stevie. We're gonna be so happy, you me and her, we're gonna be a fa---"

The sound of the large metal doors at the front of the building falling to the unforgiving ground echoed throughout the facility, followed by the unmistakable sound of Iron Man's repulsors.

Bucky yanked the USB drive out of the computer and righted the sniper rifle he had swiped from the Widow's weapons cabinet. Steve took the shield off of his back and nodded at him.

"We'll talk about happier stuff later."

_Barton Family Farm_
Natasha didn’t know her next move.

That had not happened very often. She looked around the farm that Clint and his family had lived at for so many years, as the kids ran around the lawn in front of the quinjet she had liberated and flown out of the Avenger’s Facility after her last verbal sparring match with Tony.

She knew that Steve’s team of heroes had been branded criminals, and were being ‘processed’ by a task forced from the UN. She didn’t know where they were headed, but she figured it wasn’t anything resembling freedom.

Her priority had been to secure Clint’s family. Natasha knew that Tony was not the enemy, not really. But he knew where Laura and the kids were, and if there was even a one percent chance that Tony’s knowledge could transfer to Secretary of State Ross, then Natasha was doing the right thing in protecting the Bartons.

Now, she had two options. Stay with the Bartons and work on getting Clint, Sam, Wanda and Scott from afar. Or she could be proactive.

“Cooper, Lila!” Natasha called out, and the two pre-teens immediately stopped running and looked to their Aunt, ready for instruction like the good little Agents of Destruction they were. “Pack it up, Protocol Burn it Down.”

Lila fistpumped as Cooper’s eyes went to the size of saucers.

“Captain America isn’t going to be able to save himself, Coop,” Natasha smirked.

The boy swallowed heavily before nodding at his Aunt and taking off after his sister to begin Protocol Burn It Down.

“Oh good, we’re burning it down?” Laura Barton asked as she walked out of the house with Nathaniel already strapped to her back and two wheeled suitcases in her hands. “Do you have any idea where we’re going? Can it be something with you know---a grocery store within a thirty-mile distance this time? I’m so sick of farm life.”

Natasha laughed at Laura’s eagerness to leave the farm. She reached out to grab the bags from her long-time friend and nodded, “How do you feel about living in a private, gated community for a very special group of senior citizens?”
"She needs a place to stay. Like---a comfy bed or something. I mean, she's gonna have a baby, and she can't have a baby at school. We don't even have a nurse full time here."

"No shit, she can't have a baby here. But she can't stay with me, my mom's boyfriend is a skeezy loser who absolutely would not be cool with a house guest," Michelle answered back, her voice barely above a mumble.

"I mean, we don't have the room at home either," Ned answered back, his voice a little louder than Michelle's but still, obviously making an effort to stay quiet. Darcy could hear the comforting clacking of a laptop keyboard in her half awake state. She had worked as fast and as quick as her anger would allow her to, but her body was feeling the effects of not having a pill and needed a catnap while she let Ned do the work she had tutored him in. He was doing quite well.

"We could take some of this Avenger money she grabbed and use it to buy her a hotel room," Ned suggested. "Too bad Peter's not here. His Aunt is super nice and she has the extra bedroom."

"Where is Peter, anyway?" Michelle wondered. The slapping of hands could be heard as Michelle knocked Ned's hands away from the keyboard. "Stop messing with Stark programs. She only asked that we make sure the money went into the offshore account. I'm all for redistributing wealth, but Pepper Potts would probably notice if we made Stark Industries bankrupt."

"But---I can do it, so I'm kind of like, shouldn't I do it?" Ned admitted.

"You're clearly not ready for all this power," Michelle snorted and Darcy could practically HEAR the rolling of her eyes. There was silence again before Michelle asked, "What else can we do to help her?"

"We should call Principal Morita," Ned suggested cheerfully. "He's really nice."

"Yeah, he's nice, and also Captain America's number one fan," Michelle reminded Ned.
"So?"

"Something tells me that the lady who just bled Captain America's bank accounts and savings and Avengers 401k dry doesn't really want to hang with Captain America's groupies," Michelle admitted.

"Oh hey, look at this!" Ned pointed to the screen. "Ouch dude, that looks---not fun."

"What did you do?!"

"I just hacked into one of the Iron Man suit’s visuals," Ned said softly. "Holy moly, they are really beating the crap out of each other. Is that---is that?"

"Captain America," Michelle answered.

Darcy sat up immediately, all pretense of rest and sleep flying out of the window. She hovered next to Ned and looked down at his laptop, where they were sharing what Tony Stark was seeing at the moment. And what Tony Stark was seeing was Steve Rogers as the two men tried to beat each other to death. A flash of silver caught her eye and she saw Bucky's face come into view.

"Holy crap, who is that?" Ned wondered, awestruck as the view began to shake as Captain America and the silver armed man traded blows with Iron Man, the shield flying between them.

"Bucky," Darcy whispered.

"Isn't that the Winter Soldier? James Barnes?" Michelle asked. "He's hot. You know, if you like them emo."

"Bucky," Darcy flinched at every hit. She didn't understand why they were fighting. "Why are they---what's going on?"

"They had a big fight in Berlin like---a few hours ago," Michelle reported. "The governments are
hiding it, but I saw on tumblr that the airport is basically destroyed and then most of the Avengers are arrested and on some prison raft already. But all the mainstream media is saying is that Captain America is dangerous and you know---wanted by every country on the Earth for war crimes."

"What?" Darcy breathed, taking the laptop from Ned and typing into it, bringing up a command box so that she could try to figure out what was happening and how to STOP it. She cringed as Steve began to lose ground, and it looked like he was in serious danger. Her heart stammered in her chest and she wanted to DO something, to help them somehow, to stop the three men from fighting.

Ned and Michelle watched in amazement as Darcy typed nonstop, each trying to decipher what she was doing. She was entering in termination codes, that much was certain, but it seemed more advanced, like the programs she was constructing on the fly were viral in nature, and once settled into computer programming, they would rapidly multiply, taking out huge swaths of data at once.

"Are you---are you shutting down Iron Man?" Ned pondered.

"I'm shutting down all of the Iron Man suits, anything that Stark can turn into a weapon is getting fucking wiped out," Darcy muttered.

"Marry me?" Michelle whispered.

Darcy's fingers paused when she heard Bucky's guttural shouting. She watched as Iron Man was driven back by a feral, angry Soldier, his metal hand on the arc reactor in the suit, clawing at the source of Iron Man's power. Darcy didn't and couldn't understand what the fighting was about, but she knew what the Soldier was doing was a smart move. Her smart, deadly, murderous Soldier that she loved so very much.

Ned moved to support her when the Iron Man cannon went off. Darcy nearly went boneless when she saw the Soldier standing there, in shock and pain with his obliterated left arm.

"Darcy?" Michelle whispered warily, even as Captain America began beating the ever loving shit out of Iron Man. It answered a lot of questions that she had about the personal relationship between the two super soldiers from World War II. Head canons confirmed.

"I can't---I can't get there," Darcy whispered, seeing the coordinates of the Iron Man suit, knowing
it was impossible. She swallowed back the urge to vomit and shaky hands began typing away at
the laptop again.

"Uhm?" Ned looked at Michelle warily, wondering if the woman who always slacked off in
computer sciences knew what Darcy was doing. She was still shutting down every robot under
Tony Stark's control, but now she was expanding the command boxes, and it looked like she was
going for all the big guns around the world, casually and distractedly destroying their electronic
safeguards and world surveillance, including the CIA and Homeland Security.

"I need to get to wherever Tony Stark's servers are, somewhere in upstate New York," Darcy said
distractedly as the fight between Captain America and Iron Man waged on. She winced as Steve
looked to now be on the losing end.

Not Steve too. She didn't know if Bucky was okay, she didn't know how to help him. But now
Steve was going to be hurt too, and she just wanted it all to stop.

She closed her eyes and took a deep breath, before trying her damndest to push out her feelings.
She was feeling terror, and tried to keep that from going out, so instead the only thing that was
there was the desire to be useful, to help in someway.

'I could do this all day---'

Darcy winced, waiting for a lethal blast to land on Steve, on Steve who Bucky loved so much, who
Bucky had told her would love her too. Something happened outside of the line of the Iron Man
suit's vision, and Tony hit the ground.

Bucky was okay, he was still alive. The realization of it fueled Darcy up and off of the small cot as
she reached for the purse she had brought with her. Ned looked worried and confused, while
Michelle seemed to be ready to assist in any way necessary.

"I need those server banks. Who knows how to drive?"
SO......THOUGHTS?

From this point on, I'm going to try to list the setting at the beginning of scenes. I'm going to try and go back and relabel this monster, because I do bounce around to different POV's and locales each scene.

Also thanks so much for the overwhelming love and support. I absolutely appreciate each and every one of you.
And Another One Bites the Dust

Chapter Notes

It is Wednesday. AMAZING. These Wednesdays seem to be coming back faster and faster.

Chapter warnings: ross doucheoff. emotional manipulation. electrocution of machines and things. prelude to the Civil War mid-credits scene. and a very upsetting set of reunions. BUCKLE UP BUTTERCUPS. THINGS ARE HAPPENING.

Thanks to the amazing and awesome beta babes. phoenix-173 and dntpanic42

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Twenty-Four: And Another One Bites the Dust

"Everett. Give me something."

Everett stared up at the Secretary of State with narrowed eyes, not backing down from the elder statesman that towered over him. They were back in the States, searching the Avengers facility from top to bottom.

"Thought you were on the raft, Sir," Everett grumbled before pursing his mouth churlishly.

"Stark couldn't get any of the caged canaries to sing." Thaddeus waved off his concern. "What do you have?"

"Next to nothing," Everett admitted truthfully. "According to Vision, the Black Widow left the premises approximately four hours ago, and as you know, she's not too keen on leaving anything behind for dissemination."

Everett had not had luck in finding much of anything. Everything was wiped clean from nearly any computer they had tried to secure information from. From training itineraries to supply orders, everything had been wiped devastatingly clean. Everett had spent most of his time personally
ransacking Captain America's quarters, trying to find a hint of something.

A person didn't idolize Steve Rogers for most of his life without knowing a lot about Steve Rogers' personal life. The kind of stuff most people didn't care to believe. But Everett had found nothing about Bucky Barnes in the room. And certainly nothing regarding Bucky Barnes' mystery mother-to-be.

There WAS a mother-to-be. Everett could feel it. The list of baby things found in one of Bucky Barnes' notebooks had been written in the last year according to specialized forensics. There was a superbaby out there, and Everett didn't know if he wanted to let the other Ross in front of him in on that particular secret.

"Well if you ever get your head out of your ass and figure out how to rub two sticks together and make fucking fire, then please, let me know," Thaddeus sneered down at him before stalking off to his private helicopter that would return him to Washington DC. His phone began ringing and he picked it up, sight unseen. "Sir? No...what? All of the satellites? I'm on my way."

"Fuck you very much, Sir," Everett muttered.

"That guy is a douche."

Everett turned to see a woman standing behind him, taller than him by a scant few inches, her fantastically turquoise hair done up into intricate braids. She gave him a smirk and shrugged.

"I mean, don't get me wrong, Other Ross guy, you're a douche too, but he's a bigger douche."

"I don't think we've met," Everett narrowed his eyes at the mouthy woman in front of him.

"Maya Archie, you and your goons took my sketchbooks," Maya told him casually. "You know, like douchebags do."

"Well, if the Black Widow hadn't deleted all the electronic files in the systems, I wouldn't have to confiscate pretty drawings," Everett sassed back, earning a roll of her eyes in return. He pulled out his phone and pulled up her file and quickly went through the sketches that had been digitized.
He held his phone up in her unimpressed face, showing her a sketch by her own hand of a petulant looking, pretty, young brunette. Maya looked unimpressed and shrugged.

"Care to tell me who this woman is?" Everett prodded. The sketch had been an anomaly in the woman's work with the Avenger's teams. Most of her sketches were of criminals or alien weapons, or aliens themselves. Most of his team had ignored the sketch, but Everett had been drawn to it. According to an unauthorized biography that wasn't taken very seriously at all regarding Bucky Barnes and Steve Rogers and their highly salacious activities of the late 30's, the woman in the sketch was exactly their type.

Curvy. Short. Brunette. 'With a kisser that could knock you flat'.

"Personal sketch of my latest conquest," Maya shrugged nonchalantly. "So much classier than taking pictures with my phone."

"Hmm," Everett nodded, putting his phone back in his pocket. He smirked at the younger woman before his eyebrows lifted in a quick burst of irreverence. "You could do better."

Another of his phones chirped, this one in a waistband holder and he pulled it out, "Ross here. You found--- who? Take him to the Berlin office, I'm on my way."

"Uhm. Are you sure you're allowed in there?"

"Flash. Shut up," Michelle advised as they pulled the car up to the gates of the upstate New York Avenger's facility just as the second quinjet took off from somewhere on site in the last few minutes. Michelle looked back at Darcy and wondered if she could get her one of those jets. For reasons.

"Yeah, man. Seriously," Ned nodded, trying his hardest to be menacing. "And if you don't, my finger is going to get really slippery and post those pictures to twitter."

"And believe me, no one wants to see you dressed up as Santa's Elf when you were nine," Michelle assured him. She glared extra menacing at the young man who had driven them to the facility before looking to Darcy, who looked car sick, tired and hungry. "Are they going to be able to help you here?"
"Hopefully," Darcy whispered, unbuckling herself. And if they couldn't help, she would be sure to take her revenge for what Stark had done to Bucky.

She'd been using Ned's laptop to try and scour the internet for some sort of answer as to what had happened in Siberia. But no one was reporting on it, and there had been no glimpses of either Bucky or Steve. She handed the laptop back to Ned now, and gave the teenagers a soft smile.

She stared at the back of Flash's head, while a cocky thing, he had still tried to be helpful, so rather than incapacitate him with tears, she sent the uncontrollable urge to laugh, which he did, uproariously. She looked back at Michelle and said,

"I wanted to thank you, for helping me. To thank you both," she smiled at Ned.

"We should have taken you to Principal Morita, but he has his house hidden from like---every server," Ned admitted.

"Senior pranks almost always lead to his house being tp'd," Michelle explained.

"It's okay, if I need to come back, I will," Darcy promised. "I have a donation—more like a repayment of a loan to this nice lady who gave me some money in Paris. And as a thank you to the both of you, I kind of set your club up with a donation too."

Ned looked at his laptop and his eyes grew huge.

"Holy crud, we don't have to fundraise for this year's trips," he whispered.

"Yeah, no selling candy bars," Darcy smiled. "Alright...Ned, I set up a program, it should override JARVIS so that I can get in undetected."

"No problem boss. And good luck," Ned said earnestly.

"Thanks. I think I might need it."
"Mr. Barnes, I’ve been looking at cryofreeze ever since your story came out in 2014. I believe, against all odds, it's been beneficial to you."

Bucky stared at the small woman with the fantastically and intricately braided and woven hair. She looked to be a delicate thing, and he would have believed she were a delicate thing if she had not bodily pushed away T’Challa from him as the new King of Wakanda helped to bring Bucky into the private infirmary that she had readied for their arrival.

Steve and Bucky had been surprised to see T’Challa outside of the Siberian Hydra facility, with Zemo tied up and ready for transport with one of the King's men hovering nearby with a larger jet than what T’Challa had flown there. Bucky had not been halfway conscious when Steve held him close with a hand around his torso as Bucky hung limp in his hold while the Black Panther stood in front of them. Steve had been tense and ready for battle again, determined to protect an injured Bucky. When T’Challa bent to look Bucky in the face and softly apologize for wrongly accusing him, Steve nearly went boneless in relief.

Bucky had begun babbling then, half dead from the pain that the severed arm parts were feeding his brain along the controls that had allowed him to use the arm for decades. T’Challa had administered Bucky's sedative himself when they were on the plane on the way to Wakanda, with his trusted advisor left to aide Stark and bring Zemo in.

The next moment of pure consciousness had hit when Steve and T’Challa had pulled him from the plane into the Wakandan infirmary. Princess Shuri, as Bucky heard Steve call her, began to work immediately on Bucky while other medics tended to Steve after being waved off by T’Challa.

She was a genius, that much was clear, seeming to speak to the wires on Bucky's frayed arm as she coaxed numbness into them, ending the painful feedback that had happened. It was a neat stump in no time, and for the first time since the Russians had found him in 1945, Bucky felt the true emptiness of a missing limb.

"Didn't feel very beneficial...felt like a human ice cream cone," Bucky mumbled, his voice a gravelly, quiet thing.

Shuri huffed a breath of laughter.
"I figured out a better way," she boasted, the tone sounding like something she used a lot, and probably did, to lord things over her brother. "My father always said that to treat another person with kindness and compassion is to invite the treatment back to you. And I want to help you, Mister Barnes. It's the least I can do when my brother spent the last week terrorizing you for wrongdoings that weren't your own."

"I---I have to go and find her," Bucky whispered. "My girl, she's out there all alone and---"

"You can't do much with your current state," Shuri insisted, her tone gentle but firm, unyielding in the truth she was telling. "There were alerts for the Captain and a one armed man less than half an hour after you left Siberia."

Bucky looked more pained at the realization that without help, he wouldn't be able to look for who he wanted and so desperately seemed to need.

"Allow me a few weeks, to put you into the cold sleep," Shuri proposed. "I can have an arm attached when you wake up, and if you see fit, my mother is pretty talented at mending broken minds. You'll feel nothing, only contentment in your sleep."

"I---" Bucky opened his mouth to dispute, but couldn't find one.

"My brother will help Steve to find Darcy," Shuri promised.

"How did you know about Darcy?" Bucky furrowed his brow.

"You were repeating her name when T'Challa brought you off the plane," Shuri gave him a small, sympathetic smile. "I'm sure she's special, Captain Rogers seemed quite concerned."

"She's the best thing that could ever happen to us, and I can only hope I haven't ruined it all by leaving her," Bucky sighed. He shook his head and said, "My mind isn't so much broken as in pieces. Dangerous pieces. I don't want your mother getting hurt poking around up there."

"She is the Queen of Wakanda, she can handle it," Shuri laughed. "Mister Barnes, allow us to help you."
"I'll be in deep freeze? I can't hurt anyone?" Bucky asked as a tech brought in a change of clothing for him. He struggled with his balance, but managed to get up and off the examination table that he had been placed on. He was thankful that the apparent Princess of Wakanda turned to fiddle at something on one of the surfaces across the room. He began to to take off the simple shift that had been put on him sometime after arriving in Wakanda.

He was clean too. Something he hadn't really had a chance to be since he had left Darcy behind in Paris a week ago.

One week ago, and the entire world was shifted on its axis. He had Steve. But Darcy was scattered to the wind, probably angry as a wet cat and hurt at being abandoned by him. Nothing mattered except being able to have her safe, to have the child--- their child safe.

As he dressed in the comfortable clothing that had been provided to him, soft cottons and fabrics that Darcy had liked to swathe herself in at all times, he thought of the baby. Their precious unborn bastard. He couldn't remember those first few weeks, when he hadn't thought of the life that Darcy carried as his. And while genetically it was not his, knowing what he knew now, it felt more like truth than a conviction.

He wanted to tell Steve, but for some reason, he couldn't tell Steve such a thing and then have it be the first thing out of his mouth when he finally found and met Darcy.

"Just a few weeks?" Bucky asked Shuri. He wanted to be healed and whole. He didn't want to rely on Darcy's fledgling empath powers to be a functioning human being.

And he certainly didn't want to be a danger to her, Steve or their child.

"Less if you decide you only want your old, boring arm," Shuri answered, sounding delighted with herself.

"Uhm---there are other options?" Bucky questioned.

Shuri turned then, a swish of the braids at the back of her head making an excited noise that matched the delight in her face. She was holding a hologram of sorts, a design of his arm, but it clearly held---options.
"I don't know what I'd do with a laser arm," Bucky admitted. "But maybe gun storage would be nice."

Darcy was pretty keyed up. That was an understatement. She had watched hours ago as Tony Stark blew off the arm of her beloved.

She was livid.

But as mad as she was, she realized that it was easy to get onto the Avengers Facility. The security wasn't as good as Stark's reputation suggested it would be. JARVIS used to be better than that.

And she'd only had to electrocute two members of security so far. They had been easy marks, as they had been weeping with astonished fear as she used every ounce of energy she had to stroll through the doors of the biggest building on site. Ned had pulled up schematics for the facility, and she knew where Stark would be. Where any Avenger left would be. They'd be congregated wherever the alcohol was, as they had been when she had met them after coming back to the states from London all those years ago.

She went into the elevator at the end of the hall, glad to see that any workers were staying put in their offices, overcome with tears. She was doing that, and she finally felt like she understood a little more about the gift that Hydra had inadvertently given her.

She could take the things she didn't want to feel and weaponize it, forcing it on other people. Her sadness, the uncertainty, the fear about Bucky's current condition, of Steve's current condition, those were all things that she was pushing onto anyone within a one mile radius of her.

The anger? That she was keeping for herself.

"Please identify yourself," a woman with a lilting Irish accent asked over the intercom system.

"Fuck off," Darcy answered, the elevator came to a halt and Darcy shook her head before taking out one of her electric batons and jamming it into the very well hidden panel that held the elevators controls. "Either move the elevator, or I'll make you pay."
"The elevator will resume movement when it has been ascertained that you are not a threat," the female voice answered. "Facial recognition indicates that you are Darcy Lewis..."

"Fuck. Off." Darcy's reply was accompanied with a jolt of electricity to the circuits, the elevator doors began opening and closing on an erratic rhythm and Darcy wasted no time in squeezing through them.

"Miss Lewis."

Another voice greeted her on the other side and she took a step back at the tall, skinny, FUSCHIA man(type thing) stood in front of her. There was a yellow stone set in the middle of his forehead, and his outfit was the oddest thing she had ever seen. And she had once been witness to Erik Selvig in an ugly Christmas sweater and nothing else.

"You have a fucking cape," Darcy scoffed.  "Indeed, I do," he answered with a familiar voice. "You are Miss Darcy Lewis, Friday has a protocol in place should you be here, at the Avenger's facility. Natasha Romanoff has been alerted, however she is not currently in house. Sam Wilson and the Captain were to be notified second, but they are also, indisposed."

"Yeah, indisposed," Darcy fumed and she tried her best to push all the really truly horrible feelings she was feeling onto the purple-ish burgundy pain in her ass standing in front of her.

But he only tilted his head to the right and studied her with a clinical expression.

"Are you a god damned computer?" she demanded. She held up her baton and didn't hesitate in poking it in the normally tender spot at the place where his arm met his body, and went with a full blast hit and he didn't even flinch.

"No, not quite," he answered. "Previously I was JARVIS. And now I am a sentient being powered by this stone. You are very angry, Miss Lewis."

"Yeah, and I'd like to talk to your manager," Darcy quipped. "Where is Tony Stark?"
"Darcy?"

Darcy turned to the right, away from the purple idiot and she felt her stomach roll over at the person in front of her. Jane Foster was dressed in her usual comfort chic flannel and cotton layers and she was staring at Darcy with an astonished expression behind the tears that Darcy had been forcing on everyone in the building. The astonishment melted away and only anger remained as Jane wiped underneath her eyes before demanding in a cold voice,

"What in the hell are you doing here?"

"They've taken your boys to the Raft."

Natasha took a deep breath and looked to Retta, who despite the jab about 'her boy', was looking grim. Laura Barton was sitting in the dining room of a little split level house, in the most secure retirement community in the entirety of the world. Situated in the near isolation of the farmland in central Pennsylvania was a newly built and very exclusive community.

They had five square miles of land, but only one square mile had anything of use on it at the moment. Two meandering lanes of paved road, manicured lawns and cookie cutter mini-mcMansions, along with a larger community building at the center of it that, to the Barton children's great delight, had an inground pool with a diving board, and at least one eighty-year-old lifeguard on duty from the hours of 11 am to 5pm.

The residents of Asskicker Meadows, as Laura Barton had decreed it, were unique.

Namely they were all Hydra hunters over the age of seventy.

Retta Archie sat at her dining room table, looking over various ipads that had intel that Natasha would need. Doctor Carla Rivera was on the opposite end of the table, a small chemistry set in front of her as she worked on creating new pills for Darcy. While the Avengers had been ripping each other's throats out, one of Dernier's cousins had gone to the Parisian apartment that Darcy and Bucky had stayed in to clean it of any personal effects that the pair may have left behind.

Carla knew Darcy didn't have her pills, and worried what effect it might have on her and the baby.
She was currently planning out a worst case scenario, her third trial as she tried to be as prepared as possible for a young, enhanced mother-to-be in critical condition. In fact, as soon as she had laid eyes on Natasha, she had a needle in her hand, ready to take blood to run rudimentary experiments.

The rest of the women in the room were working on finding Barton and the remaining members of Steve's team in order to liberate them. The Raft was a worst case scenario kind of situation. As skilled as Natasha was, she could not infiltrate the Raft alone, not without being caught at it in less than ten minutes.

And she imagined that the team would be on the lowest levels, guarded to the teeth and set up with the latest in biometric shackles.

"Retta," Natasha whispered.

"Hmmm?" Retta replied as she idly pressed at screens as if she were simply playing Candy Crush. Her face was serene, although there was a slight furrow in her brow as she worked.

"You still have those doomsday scenarios?" Natasha wondered.

"Doomsday scenarios?" Laura questioned as Retta brought up surveillance from the Raft. She brought a hand up to her mouth and took in a shaky breath at seeing not only her husband, but also Wanda in severe restraints, unmoving and dead eyed in her prison cell.

"When you work under Peggy Carter for so many years, you become very good at planning," Retta said in an offhand manner as she continued to press at buttons with authority. "No one ever quite knew when she would run off in the 50's, 60's, 70's, 80's and 90's, if she would come back with lunch, or call in to say she had somehow wound up on a submarine full of nefarious ne'er do wells."

Laura let out a watery chuckle. Her husband had certainly been recruited and distantly cultivated by Peggy Carter, then.

"It was smart to always have a doomsday scenario," Retta admitted. "And yes, since Steve Rogers was defrosted like Sunday's chicken, I have been putting together a lot of doomsday scenarios."

"What do you have for the Raft?" Natasha asked.
"Well, I always assumed if Steve Rogers was thrown into jail it would be space jail," Retta cracked her knuckles. "Especially after all this alien nonsense turned out to be true. But underwater is a lot like space---"

She pushed one of the ipads to Natasha and Laura.

"We don't have Wanda's powers to help here," Natasha said quickly. "And I don't have anyone out there that owes me a favor that can also control people's emotions..."

Glass shattered on the other end of the dining room table and Retta immediately rose from her seat and went to Carla who was looking like any of the geniuses in Natasha's life that had not gotten enough sleep while their brain spun madly on. She held up a finger and whispered, "I might have someone."

She paused for dramatic effect that Retta rolled her eyes at as she efficiently cleaned the mess of glass so that the absent minded doctor couldn't injure herself.

"Darcy can do that," Carla revealed. "The serum seemed to have given her side effects."

Natasha automatically hid her surprise. She had known about the baby. She had known about Darcy. She was trying to find the girl while simultaneously planning the breakout of four of the most wanted people on the face of the Earth. But she had not known anything about the prospective empathetic powers of Darcy Lewis.

She understood side effects of the serum. She had them herself. She was never calm unless she had three or four projects running in her brain at once. She could get a feel for the truth from one spoken word from a mark. She understood that there were always side effects.

"Unfortunately Doctor Rivera, I also do not have a Darcy Lewis," Natasha reminded her patiently.

All of Retta's ipads began vibrating and Laura poked at the message coming through.

"Maya?" Laura questioned.
"My granddaughter," Retta nodded, walking to look at the message over Laura's shoulder. "Looks like we do have a Darcy Lewis. Maya said she has currently descended upon the Avenger's facility like a pissed off, tiny, adorable, pregnant avenging Angel."

"So I guess you got sick of your new life, huh?" Jane demanded as she approached Darcy. She steadfastly wiped tears from her face that were replaced with more. She was actively trying to resist whatever Darcy was pushing out, accessing her own anger, so the blend of sadness and vitriol was potent and downright poisonous as she glared at Darcy.

Jane's eyes did a quick once over of her former intern, settling on the way the clothing that Darcy had obtained in Europe still, a pair of forgiving maternity jeans and a lovely blue flowered blouse she had gotten in a maternity boutique at the airport. It was cut for comfort, but also accentuated the small bump of baby she sported by having a tied ribbon right under her bosom, the rest of the fabric of the blouse draping just so that anyone who looked at her would know she was pregnant instead of just well fed.

"You can't work for me like that," Jane wrinkled her nose, wiping again at the tears that refused to stay inside of her eyes.

Darcy might have joked with Bucky, ad nauseum, about the demon spawn, the precious bastard, and how she wasn't exactly maternal towards it just yet. But something about her anger in that moment finally made something click inside of her and she put a protective hand over her bump.

"Fuck off, Foster, as if I want my little bastard running around at the next Alien invasion planting your machines into the ground and nearly getting crushed by cars," Darcy snapped. "Where the fuck is Tony Stark?"

"Miss Lewis, I believe it best if you leave," Vision announced from behind her.

"I'll leave when I've spoken to Tony motherfucking-arm-mutilating Stark!" Darcy barked out.

Darcy took two steps towards Jane, and the diminutive astrophysicist took a step back for one second, her face crumpling into the hint of an ugly sob, as if whatever Darcy was pushing out finally broke through her own resolve. She seemed to recover about halfway, and her bottom lip wavered as she accused.

"Leaving is what you're good at, anyway," Jane continued with a shaky voice. "When a person needs you most, you just disappear without even a---a goodbye."

"Yes, I left. And you want to know what I did for two years?" Darcy demanded. "What do you want to know Jane?!!"

"Miss Lewis," Vision interrupted again. "It would seem your emotions are causing a widespread panic---"

"FUCK OFF, YOU GIANT PURPLE DICK STAIN!" Darcy yelled at him quickly before going back to Jane, who was looking a little green around the edges, despite stubbornly standing her ground and holding onto whatever natural anger of her own that she could in the face of Darcy's empathy. She shook her head in disbelief, "You think I was living a happy life? Is that what you think?"

"You asked to be relocated, and you never ever---you never even called or texted, and we all know you always have your phone on you," Jane nodded to the phone that Darcy had used to get in, stuck in the pocket of her jeans. "You never even said congratulations about the Nobel---"

"Oh, I'm sorry I didn't call or text or write to say congrats for being nominated for a Nobel Prize, Foster," Darcy snapped. Her tone was acid, dripping in condescension and irritation, "Let's see, that was in 2015, right? Now, forgive me for this, because my mind is a little fuzzy, but in 2015, I was---where was I? Oh right, drugged out of my skull, or frozen in a tube waiting to be drugged out of my skull and then experimented on, OR, OR just maybe, maybe around that time I was on a table while those Hydra bastards cut into me to see what special thing I can do!"

"Miss Lewis, please," Vision looked the closest to frightened as an android could.

"NO!" Darcy screamed, the sound was loud and Jane stumbled back as something unseen came out of her former intern.

Two more people were staggering towards the common room, someone very tall and someone a
little smaller, but they were having trouble putting one foot in front of the other, thanks to the emotions that Darcy was projecting. It was more than anger or sadness.

It was heartbreak.

"What do you mean, Hydra?" Jane whispered, trembling with the bone aching sadness that was rapidly eating her anger. What she was realizing very quickly was unwarranted anger. "Darcy, what happened to you?"

"Darcy," Erik, the tall person that had been approaching them was barely standing upright, supported by a young woman with fantastically colored, riotous tight curls. "Oh my girl, Darcy, I'm so sorry."

"Erik, you knew?" Jane questioned quietly.

"Just for a few weeks now," Erik nodded, taking two rapid sniffs. "I was worried about her around the time she was kidnapped. They told me what I told you. Put the voicemail on my phone, Jane--"

Maya Archie supported Erik as best as she could considering she wanted to vomit with all the awful feelings swirling inside of her gut. She got a good look at the famous Darcy Lewis, the girl everyone forgot, the girl that she had sketched three months ago. Now her Grandmother said it was important to get the girl out.

But she couldn't even open her mouth to speak without sobbing.

"I didn't----I didn't know," Jane was very quiet, looking deflated as she stared back at a livid Darcy. "I didn't know."

"I don't care," Darcy said with a healthy amount of angry bitterness. "We spent two years together, Jane. Two years. It never even occurred to you, that dropping off the face of the planet, not contacting you in a small way, even? You didn't think that was odd? Did you even know anything about me after TWO YEARS?"

"Of course I did, that's why I was upset," Jane defended herself weakly, as if fighting a losing cause.
"You were upset, but not upset enough to call someone and ask about me?" Darcy guessed. "You are surrounded by heroes and spies, and you never thought to ask about me once?"

"I---I can't, I don't," Jane stammered, her anger had been the only thing allowing any defense for what Darcy was putting out with her undefined powers. Her face screwed up entirely into a mask of sadness and a broken sob fell past her lips before she fell to her knees, feeling every ounce of sadness that Darcy wanted her to feel.

"Hydra had me for two years too, and they might have made me a freak, but at least I know they're still out there looking for me," Darcy hissed out.

"Miss Lewis," Vision interrupted again. He stared into the distance at the windows. "I believe that someone is on their way here---for you."

"It's Ross, the General, not the little Bilbo Baggins of the CIA," Tony Stark's voice echoed over the sound system. "I'm coming in, Vision, go and stall Ross."

Darcy felt her spine go steely and she began walking away from Jane, who was on her knees, sobbing quietly into her hands. She paused as she passed Erik, who held out a trembling hand and put it on her cheek. She faltered in her anger and her mission for a moment.

"I should have tried more," Erik whispered.

Darcy said nothing, which was significantly better than laying into the man as she had done to Jane. The woman helping Erik to stand struggled to speak, but gave her a concerned look.

"They're coming for YOU," the woman whispered to Darcy. "We have to get you out of here."

"Don't worry about me," Darcy muttered as she walked away. "You'll fit right in here if you can manage it."
....sniffl.es. THAT WAS VERY DIFFICULT TO DO. I don't dislike Jane in the least, and I hope I did this right in showing that they were both hurting with Darcy's absence. Jane is not the enemy. Thaddeus Ross and Hydra are the enemy.

...and there is more on the way.

Why am I writing this again? Oh yeah, because you guys are awesome and supportive and lovely. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR READING!!!!
Chapter Notes

Happy Wednesday!

This chapter is shorter than usual, but packs an emotional punch. warnings for: talk of Hydra's previous treatment of Darcy, tasering and violence, and feeeeeeels.

Thanks as always, to the beta babes, phoenix-173 and dntpanic42

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Chapter Twenty-Five: The Return of Great Rack

Wakanda

"I can't trust my own mind," Bucky huffed out. "So until they figure out how to get this stuff out of my head, I think going back under is the best thing...for everybody."

"For Darcy?" Steve whispered.

Bucky couldn't help the smile, the very real smile at the sound of her name. "Steve, you've got to go and find her. Please. She---she needs help."

"Darcy---her last name is, is it Darcy Lewis ?" Steve asked, looking a little green around the edges.

"How did you---did you find one of her files with Hydra?" Bucky worried, thinking that they had destroyed every trace of Darcy in the computer systems.

"I met her once, she's---she's beautiful," Steve's smile was familiar to Bucky, it was shy and unsure. "When I met her, a long time ago, she, she had a way with words. But then she wasn't around. And just a few months ago, I thought about her again."
Bucky looked away at that, seemingly conflicted. He knew that if Steve had ever laid eyes on Darcy before, he would have been taken with her. But to not think about her for so long, he understood why Darcy would still hold that grudge. Bucky was upset on her behalf. But Steve was shy around women that he didn't have to work with. That's why when they were younger it was Bucky who would go and try to pursue the girls.

Bucky had never been shy.

"What happened to her?" Steve asked quietly as the techs went about quickly assembling things to Princess Shuri's recommendations. They were not wasting any time, that was for sure.

"Hydra," Bucky answered, his voice a scratched, hurt thing. "Tried to break her into bits, used her as a guinea pig. Poor girl's been shot full of the knock off super soldier serum, and at least a dozen others. She was cut open. Parts of her were broken up. Knocked out. Put on ice. Raped."

Steve's eyes welled with tears as Bucky bitterly listed everything she had been through.

"I should have been braver," Steve whispered, getting the words out as he fought against the urge to vomit. "Should have asked for her number. She could have been safe then, maybe."

"All those things happened to her, my sweet babydoll, and she just---she bounced back," Bucky's face was full of loving, adoring wonderment for his 'babydoll'. He reached out and grabbed onto Steve's hand and squeezed as the man clearly tormented himself with the blame and the guilt. "You're going to love her."

"She deserves to spit in my face," Steve shook his head, still looking green around the edges and absolutely disgusted with himself.

"C'mon now, punk. I'm gonna be unavailable to smooth this over between you two," Bucky gestured to the tube that was currently being powered up with an unknown source. There certainly weren't any plugs or wires coming out of his resting place for the next few weeks. "When you find her, she might be a little mad at you."

"I hope so," Steve nodded slowly. His jaw twitched and set in a hard line. "I deserve it."

"You're gonna feel things you don't mean to," Bucky warned. "When you find her. She’s going to
"I have been. Feeling things that I shouldn’t," Steve perked up at that. "Doctor Rivera thinks it's some sort of empathy thing, amplified by the serum."

"Yeah, she's---she pushes things at people. Things---feelings that she doesn't want, and sometimes she feels too much and it goes everywhere, good or bad," Bucky revealed. "She can't control it yet, we didn't get a chance to work on it."

"Was she sick?" Steve worried once more, the line between his brow forming anew. He melted a little as Bucky reached out to smooth the worry line off of his skin. "I was sick before."

"Yeah, she was sick," Bucky nodded. He couldn't tell Steve everything about the baby Darcy was expecting, he had to tell Darcy first. But he could tell him this. "It happens when you're in the early stages of building a baby inside of you."

Steve's eyes went as wide as they possibly could and Bucky could see the millions of questions going through him, ready to spew from his lips. Shuri came back into the room and did a quick check to see her instructions were followed to the letter before looking back at Bucky and giving him a nod.

"I'm gonna give you something to give to the Widow. It's coded," Bucky told him. "So don't use your super brain to try and figure it out. The long and the short of it is, she's expecting a baby. Now, my sweet little Pet didn't want a baby, but Hydra didn't care. And they---they made her that way."

"Did they---did they---" Steve couldn't breathe. He was twenty-one years old again, wondering if his lungs would cooperate long enough to take one coordinated breath. He was suddenly so angry, he didn't know what he would do.

"She didn't want it, they violated her, pal, in the worst of ways," Bucky looked morose. "Inseminated her with the, ah, stuff from a serum enhanced person, not very clinical about it either. To make a new Soldier, to replace the old one that got away."

"Christ," Steve blinked the tears out of his eyes. He wanted to punch something. He wanted to destroy something. He now knew with terrifying clarity why Bucky and Darcy would have gone on a worldwide mission to burn Hydra to the ground. He wanted to get back to that mission as
soon as possible. Bucky handed him an envelope and Steve guessed what was inside, "You know who the father is."

Bucky nodded.

"But she should find out first," Steve guessed correctly again.

"She'll tell you once she's read it, and then you two can come and pick me up when this is all done," Bucky took two steps towards Steve, his gaze going down to where Steve's eyes normally were, but only got the sight of his throat working to swallow. He looked up and his lips were a small smile as they met Steve's. Their kiss was a small thing in the room with the Wakanda Scientists and royalty alike. But it wasn't rushed, and it was like a balm to their worry and frayed nerves.

When they pulled apart, Bucky gave a little shrug and whispered, "I have a lot of penance to pay---"

"Buck---" Steve tried to interject.

"No, I do. But I want to pay it, and I want to finally, to finally be home," Bucky said with no small amount of longing. "I want to be with you and Darcy and the beautiful baby she's busy making, and I want to be home, Steve."

Steve nodded and felt the tears slip down his cheeks. He opened his mouth to speak, but found no words would come out. He kissed Bucky again, strong and sure and quick, and it was a promise that Steve would move heaven and earth to make that happen for him.

"I'll see you soon," Bucky promised as he finally disentangled himself from Steve. "Be sweet to my Pet, punk. She's not going to be too happy with either of us, I think. Tell her I'm sorry. And I was wrong and I miss her. And that I can't wait to see her again. And tell her I love her. And I love our baby."

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_New York_

Tony took the shield that Steve had dropped back in Siberia and as soon as he made it inside his top
level quarters at the Avenger's facility, he threw the damned thing across the room, watching as it bounced off the wall and hit the ground with a loud and rolling clatter.

He had hitched a ride back to the facility with W’Kabi, King T’Challa's right hand man, but had not invited the man in for drinks, as he had an unconscious and bound prisoner to deliver to the authorities. The moment Tony had stepped off the (seriously amazing) Wakandan jet, he'd felt waves of emotions that he had been actively trying to suppress since Siberia hit him in the face like a heavyweight punch.

He leaned against the nearest surface, the bar of all things, and tried to catch his breath at all the swirling emotions inside of him being drawn out as the vibranium still echoed throughout the room. He didn't even notice the young woman walking into the room until she was six feet away from him.

Tony stood up straight and tried to compose himself as he stared at the stranger.

--- No, not a stranger.

"Do I know you?" he asked.

The woman's smile was not kind or benevolent.

It was angry, if a smile could be angry. It was a wicked expression, filled with so much righteous indignation, that if Tony were in the right frame of mind, he might suggest that the woman meet Cap so they can trade scary, superior looks with one another. Just then something clicked in his brain and he snapped his fingers and pointed.

"Great Rack?" he asked tearfully.

The woman, Darlene, something or other let out a low huff of air meant to resemble a laugh before Tony couldn't see anything else of her expression as he doubled over with renewed sorrow and gut wrenching sobs.

"What are you, what are you doing?" he demanded before his breath hitched. He was bordering on hysteria and hyperventilation, hiccuping sobs that had not happened to him since he was a child. "What are you?!!"
"Where is Bucky?" she asked in return as she picked the shield up from where it had landed by a chair. "What did you do with them?"

"The murderer?" Tony spat out around his tears. "Probably out there killing someone else's parents, it's kind of a thing he does---"

He didn't see the electricity coming from the baton she'd whipped out of nowhere, but he'd felt worse from being shocked by a piece of Foster's faulty machinery. But it did surprise him and set him off his guard for the swing of vibranium against his face. He went flying to the side and groaned out in pain. As he struggled to stand back up, he brought a hand to a tender jaw and regarded the girl carefully from head to toe as she threw the shield away from her, letting it clatter to the ground again.

The sadness he had been feeling was seeping away and in its place was worry. Bone chilling worry and fear, unlike anything Tony had ever felt before. Namely because when he'd been scared before, it had been because he'd gotten himself into a wormhole in space, or whatever, but this time was different because he had no reason to be afraid.

"Boss, Secretary of State Ross will be back in the facility in less than twenty minutes," Friday announced.

"You want a one way ticket to a floating international prison for psychopaths?" Tony asked the girl nonchalantly. "Then by all means, stick around."

Great Rack---Lewis, her last name was Lewis, first name Darcy, looked conflicted for a moment and her chin went a little higher. Tony's eyes drifted from her face down her body, pleased to see she really did still have a spectacular set of breasts, but then saw the bump of her abdomen.

Things clicked in his head very quickly, as they usually did. He realized why she was mad and why she was asking for Barnes. The fear was still there in his gut and the laugh he tried to force past his lips sounded more like a wounded cry. He shook his head.

"He murders a guy's mother, and he gets to go out and have a happily ever after with a pretty girl. Not quite fair," Tony muttered, each word dredged and coated in bitterness.

"I don't know what he did to your mother, and if he hurt her, I'm sorry," Darcy said with surprising
"He was forced to do a lot that he didn't want to do."

"You don't know shit," Tony spat back at her.

"Yeah, because a two year stint as Hydra's prisoner after you all forgot about me, doing what I don't want to do," Darcy gestured to her baby bump. "Yeah, I know nothing."

Tony clenched his jaw in response. He felt the unwarranted fear melt away and it was slowly replaced with something else.

Something warmer.

"He saved me," Darcy continued. "He found me when no one else was even looking for me, and he got me away from Hydra, and he helped me put myself back together. He's done bad things, yes, but if he was given the choice, he WOULDN'T have done it."

"Stop whatever you're doing to me," Tony demanded. Because he knew the feeling swirling inside of him. He'd felt it before. Tony Stark knew what love was, romantic, all consuming, unconditional love. And he didn't want it clouding his mind when he was still so angry.

"Tell me where they are!" Darcy begged. "Tell me where they are, please, Stark. Did you--is he--please tell me that he's not dead."

Tony wanted to vomit, because the girl was desperate longing and pure, unfettered love for a man who was no more than a monster in his eyes. And she was working some kind of mojo that was making him feel what she was feeling.

"He's not dead," Tony mumbled, clearly agitated by the swirling emotions taking up too much space in his body. "Not when I last saw him. Rogers took him, to Wakanda, I think."

The relief was something she couldn't hide, literally, as it swept through him as well. Tony furrowed his brow at her and shook his head, his eyes focusing on the little baby bump she sported.

"What did they do to you?" he questioned bluntly.
"Knocked me up with mystery super sperm without buying me dinner first," Darcy deadpanned. She sighed and felt tired all of a sudden. If her guys were in Wakanda, she had to get there.

"Boss---" Friday interrupted. "Maybe it would be a good idea to get her out of here before Ross arrives."

Tony thought about that. He didn't know much about Great Rack. Darcy Lewis. The young woman standing in front of him who had apparently been in Hydra's grasp for far too long. He did know she was resilient as all hell if she could stand in front of him, whole and mostly sane.

He'd already sent too many of the people he had considered friends to the Raft. He might not be friends with Great Rack, but she didn't deserve the Raft. And she didn't deserve to become Ross's new experiment.

Not even if it would mean an ounce of revenge against what Barnes had done.

"Hey, obnoxious Irish computer!" Darcy called out to the ceiling. "I can handle myself, thank you very much. Mind your own 1's and 0's."

"You don't have to," Erik Selvig had finally made it up to Tony's floor, flanked by Maya Archie. In his hands were something that looked like more refined, chrome accented version of the portal sticks that she and Ian had used a lifetime ago in London. Jane's portal sticks. "Come along, dear. We're getting you and your---and your little one out of here."

"Darcy, I'm so sorry."

Darcy had thought for years now, that she would have loved to hear the people who she had considered closest to her, on their knees, begging for her forgiveness. They would bargain and plea and apologize profusely for forgetting her, for leaving her, for not caring enough to find her. It had been something to look forward to in between bouts of days and weeks she couldn't remember thanks to being drugged or frozen. She would have exalted at their supplication. She would have been regal in turning her nose up and leaving them there with their miserable sadness.
"Don't be, Erik," she answered. She reached for his hand as Maya looked between her phone and the portal remote that she clearly did not know how to operate. Darcy looked shy, and shrugged. "You asked about me?"

"Not enough. Never enough," Erik shook his head, tears glittering in those bloodshot blue eyes. "I was fooled, they used your voice. You told me to leave you alone---"

Erik's voice cracked and he shook his head back and forth. "I can't imagine how they got you to say it."

"It wasn't fun," Darcy half joked.

Erik reached for her and sighed with relief when she let him take her into his arms and hold her tight. He kissed the top of her head and squeezed her as tight as he dared. The feeling of the hardened little expectant belly in between them.

"Did they---did they do this to you?" Erik wondered, stepping away for a moment and looking down at her.

Darcy nodded.

"My poor girl," Erik began crying anew.

"It's okay, I've made my peace with it," Darcy insisted. She put a hand on her bump and shrugged. "I kind of love it actually, even if I don't know who makes up half of it. It's a good little spawn, didn't ask to be made anymore than I asked for it."

"Ms. Romanoff seemed to indicate that you had a young man looking out for your best interests," Erik said delicately. "Where is he?"

"I need to go find him," Darcy looked a little distracted and looked at Maya. "You're sure you're sending me somewhere that will help?"

"I would, if I knew what I was doing," Maya sighed. "I have the coordinates of where you need to
go, but I don't know how to even begin understanding how this damned thing works."

"Wait, you're not the new intern?" Darcy furrowed her brow.

"Sketch artist working with Investigations," Maya scoffed. "Dr. Selvig?"

"Allow me to call Jane," Erik walked towards the equipment.

"No," Darcy insisted.

"Darcy, I know you're upset with her, but she also was fooled by what I was fooled with," Erik said patiently, as if explaining to one daughter why his other daughter threw out all of the toys. "She sent us with the portal devices to get you out of here in time."

Darcy wrinkled her nose in frustration and turned away. As quickly as she had given up her high and mighty plans of spurned rejection when it came to Erik, the only person who ever thought to look for her, she still wasn't ready to forgive Jane. She didn't know if she ever would. She'd given a little over two years of her life to Jane's passionate work. For free. She'd risked her neck time and time again to help Jane.

All she had wanted was a little concern.

"Alright," Erik finished up his phone call and adjusted the machine accordingly. He turned and walked to Darcy, grabbing her hand and bringing her into the portal. He didn't leave her standing there, instead he dropped her hand tenderly and stood next to her, careful not to touch her in any way.

"What?" Darcy questioned.

"I'm going with you, child," Erik said casually. "You can't expect me to let you out of my sight now."

Chapter End Notes
To be honest, I'm in a bit of a funk and didn't think I'd get this chapter up today. But I love all of you that read this so much, that I put on my big girl pants and hit post. I hope that you sort of liked it. despite all of its yuck.

THANKS FOR READING!!!!!!!
Precious Little Bastard

Chapter Notes

WEDNESDAY. Again. boom.

thanks to the beta babes phoenix-173 and dntpanic42.

warnings for:. . . for:. . . uhm. medical procedure?

OH and a warning for a great, big, ginormous cliffhanger. Sorry not sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Twenty-Six: Precious Little Bastard

Asskicker Meadows

"Herb, for the last goddamned time, I'm gonna need you to subvert the power from your no good, goddamn, time wasting Bingo machine and I'm gonna need you to apply that power to the cloaking panels to cover up the light show that's about to happen...Herb. HERB, don't give me that wounded puppy look, would you rather I subvert the power from Allan's ventilator? That one hundred and five year old piece of shit needs that to breathe, you selfish Bingo addicted fool!"

Natasha was USED to Retta Archie's domineering ways. She had been boxed around the ears once by the self-proclaimed 'humble secretary'. It had been years and years ago when she had first been brought in to SHIELD, and Retta had discovered Natasha's backup plan to destroy Peggy Carter, Nick Fury and Clint Barton.

Natasha had not had any actual intent on dismantling the hierarchy of superspies she had been made a part of, but she still had the backup plan. Just in case. Retta had found it during a routine check of EVERYTHING in Director Carter's dossiers, and had cornered the former Russian assassin and literally smacked sense into her. It had already been five years out of the cold, there was no need to worry that the people who had taken her in were going to need to be taken out someday, after all.

It was pleasant to watch Retta's fury unleashed on others, she had no doubt that she'd have the indomitable Barton children in her pocket in no time. What Natasha was truly concerned about
was how the impending arrival would take everything at this new and unusual base of operations. Darcy Lewis had been out in relative freedom and seclusion with Bucky for months and for years before that, she'd been the tortured and experimented on prisoner of Hydra.

Retta had a firm hand in all things, even comfort, but Natasha knew deep down that everyone, even the most hardened of people, never reacted poorly to how Retta treated everyone. She once told Brock Rumlow that his mother was probably ashamed of him and his awful hair choices, and Brock had no choice but to smile and laugh his agreement.

No, Natasha wasn't worried about Darcy interacting with Retta. But the girl who the Black Widow had only met once, the girl who Natasha wanted so desperately to protect and assist and nurture was at risk of at least being annoyed by the small, energetic doctor who was still madly working with a syringe and a makeshift beaker (coffee mug) in her hands.

Natasha did not have the empathetic powers that Maya Archie had briefly but emphatically warned them about Darcy having. But she trusted her suspicions about other's intentions as they were very rarely wrong.

And Doctor Carla Rivera was absolutely ecstatic to have Darcy arrive. Natasha could tell it was equal parts wanting to help the young, weakened woman as well as a greediness for knowledge. Especially regarding the baby that Darcy carried.

"Incoming," a pouting Herb announced as he looked up from his ipad.

The lights of the portal were fantastic, just as beautiful as the lights that appeared when Thor came and went on Earth, but these seemed slower somehow, less harsh and fast. When the corridor of light receded, Erik Selvig was quick to have his arms wrapped around Darcy, supporting her weight.

Doctor Rivera made a run for the young woman, syringe in hand and bedside manner completely thrown out of the window. Erik immediately hustled Darcy so that he stood in front of her, while Natasha took a few quick steps forward to block the Doctor's overzealous attempts at medicating her former patient.

"She needs this, Agent, step aside," Carla snapped.

"She has had enough people injecting things into her without explanation," Natasha snapped right
back. Natasha would know, seeing as she facilitated Barnes drugging her in Paris. She turned to see Darcy peering her eyes around Erik's arm to look at her warily. Natasha gave her a very genuine, small smile and said, "Darcy, it's good to see you again. I'm very sorry, about everything."

Darcy didn't say anything, but she did look slightly annoyed, and what was worse was that Natasha could feel that. She felt annoyed in that she wasn't allowed to be appropriately angry. It was a very itchy sort of feeling.

"Steve?" Darcy asked simply, displaying single minded determination in one name.

"We'll go to him the moment you are well enough," Natasha promised. "But first, it's come to our attention that you were without your prenatal vitamins."

"Prenatal vitamins," Carla scoffed, clearly offended that her brilliant work was being equated with something that could be found on a drugstore shelf.

"Doctor Rivera, please explain to Darcy what you would be injecting," Natasha ordered.

Carla was still bristling about the complex nutrient stabilizers and polyoxidased inhibitors she had created being called vitamins and Retta cleared her throat before giving the small, older woman a magnificently arched eyebrow.

"A highly concentrated dose of what you've missed these last few days," Carla answered finally, she took a deep breath and an excited glint came into her gaze as she was clearly going to go into a detailed scientific explanation, but Retta cleared her throat once more and Carla sighed heavily before explaining drearily, "As well as something I've managed to create that will allow specific cells of yours to learn how to adapt to keep you well while the child grows, so you aren't reliant on the pills."

Darcy nodded, and scooted forward and away from Erik, while still happily taking the hand that the man offered. She held out her free arm and Natasha watched her carefully, feeling the spike of fear when Carla approached with the syringe.

"Once she's done, we go to Steve," Darcy looked to Natasha, wincing when the needle went into her arm. Her words were less of a question and more of a demand.
"Actually, he's coming here," Retta announced. She took a few steps forward and held out her hand to Darcy with a warm smile. "My name is Retta Archie, you just met my granddaughter Maya at the Avenger's facility. A few years ago I came out of my third retirement to be a last minute replacement for a very smart young woman who didn't want to be Steve Roger's assistant. I'm happy to meet the young lady who dodged that bullet.

"Oh, I would have fucked that whole operation up. SHIELD would have been dust in a month," Darcy said calmly as Carla applied a needless bandage to the already healed puncture wound on Darcy's arm. The young woman put a hand over the small baby bump she was sporting and the gray looking tinge her skin had taken on had quickly disappeared as Carla's miracle drugs began working once more. "How long until Steve gets here?"

"Soon baby, don't you worry. Rogers likes to make a dramatic entrance," Retta assured her. The older woman winced as a wave of nervousness hit her like she was fifteen but pretending to be eighteen years old again, applying for a job typing up reports for a British lady spy. She could feel the heat in her cheeks and fought back a nervous giggle before saying, "He learned at the feet of show girls after all."

"What in the hell?" Herb grumbled loud enough for all to hear as he packed up his diversionary/bingo equipment. "Feel like I did before I married my first wife, the one that left me for our dance instructor."

"Sorry," Darcy muttered before biting down on her bottom lip in contrition. She looked to Doctor Rivera for answers.

"The shot might have made you more powerful as a side effect," Carla admitted, not in the least bit bothered by that consequence. "For just a short period of time before everything levels off."

"Rogers lands in about a half hour," Retta managed to say around the stomach full of butterflies that began flying in her gut.

"What do you want to do, Darcy?" Natasha asked kindly, trying like hell not to be affected by what Darcy was putting out, but failing miserably nonetheless. These nervous twirls of anticipation were not nostalgic for her.

Natasha had never felt like this as a young woman. She felt it very recently. In the modest suburbs of Washington DC. Over breakfast and talks of breaking into a vault for a pair of bird wings.
"When Steve gets here with the Wakandan jet, we will go straight to the Raft and free his teammates, if you are willing to help that is," Natasha murmured.

"What do I have to do?" Darcy shook her head in confusion. "I only electrocute people."

"I'm aware," Natasha smiled, full of something akin to pride.

"And sometimes Bucky would let me set the bombs," Darcy added.


"And just a few times hold feathers under their noses or put cayenne pepper on their lips," Darcy continued to speak as her nerves clearly went haywire.

"That's my girl," Erik placed a kiss on the top of Darcy's head.

"I would need you to do what you're doing right now," Natasha revealed. "Just, maybe not this fluttering anxious feeling and more like a bone crippling sadness and fear."

"I made your parakeet boyfriend sob like a baby in Paris," Darcy mumbled.

"That'll work too," Natasha nodded. "Clint is not my boyfriend."

"More like platonic soulmates," Retta chimes in. "You know what they say about stupidity attracting more stupid."

"Thanks, Retta," Natasha pursed her mouth in amused annoyance.

"I'm here to rescue pretty damsels in distress and tell truths," Retta sassed back as easily as she breathed, loving the new little smile on Darcy’s face. "And I already rescued myself the prettiest damsel right here—"
"I want to check the baby," Carla announced loudly and bluntly and not looking the least bit sorry for interrupting any cute conversation happening in that moment. "Before you take her away again. And possibly lose her again."

Natasha stopped herself from smacking the over zealous genius upside her head before she turned to Darcy and asked quietly, "Is it alright with you if she takes a quick look before Steve gets here?"

Darcy tapped her fingers against her baby bump, the sweet little precious bastard that was hers and Bucky's. The little demon spawn who was constantly trying to bleed her entire body dry in order to build its own super muscles. She wanted to know how it was doing. If only to be able to report to Bucky whenever Steve brought him back to her. "Yes---yes please."

New York

"Do you want to tell me, Miss Archie, what you were doing in the labspace with some of Jane Foster's equipment?"

Maya took a heavy sigh and shrugged, as if she were fifteen again and her grandmother had just asked her how she had been able to get her eyebrow pierced without parental consent. She was channeling all of her rebellion from her teen years into this one moment with the Secretary of the State and Chief Douchebag in Charge of Douche Filling, Thaddeus Ross. She was also secretly enjoying herself, because currently her ridiculous stonewalling and refusal to cooperate were causing the vein on his forehead to bulge indecently.

"Do you want to tell me who was with you approximately fifteen minutes ago? Or where they might be now?"

Maya pursed her purple tinged lips before making a big show of shaking her head back and forth slowly. It would have earned her a half hour lecture from her Grandmother, but she was pretty sure that these antics with Ross were causing his blood pressure to skyrocket and she was enjoying every moment, even if she would be thrown on the Raft with the superheroes and supervillains alike.

"Where is this woman's superior officer? I demand cooperation!" Ross screamed.

"Captain Rogers is my superior officer," Maya impishly smiled. "So you can totally ask him to make me cooperate with you, but like---I HIGHLY doubt it, man. But best wishes. Fond farewells
"Cuff her!" Ross yelled.

"Wait! Wait!" a loud, feminine yell echoed and a small woman came running in. "I'm Doctor Jane Foster."

"I'm well aware of who you are, Doctor Jane Foster," Ross sneered down. "If you recall, I've been asking you about Thor's whereabouts a few times a week for the last year."

"Right. Right. We broke up," Jane said quickly, not sounding like she meant what she said at all.

"I don't believe you," Ross shook his head. "And if Thor wants to set foot on this planet again, he will do so as someone willing to toe the line of the Sokovia Accords."

"Yeah, that seems likely," Maya snorted.

"Well, I can't tell him that, because we totally broke up," Jane insisted. She reached out and grabbed Maya's hand. "This is my new girlfriend."

Ross paused at that while Maya grinned like the sun was trying to come directly out of her mouth.

"That's why she was here," Jane insisted. "She helps me out during her downtime."

"Bond building," Maya chimed in cheerfully. "Gotta keep it tight."

"Get me Stark," Ross grumbled, clearly not willing to put up with both of the women. Jane was a practiced thorn in his sides when it came to Thor’s location. And the Archie woman was clearly genetically linked to Peggy Carter's old right hand gal.

The women were left in the room alone and Maya turned with a small smile towards Jane.
"Thanks."

"Yeah, I mean, thank you for helping to get Darcy out of here," Jane nodded. "I don't think she really wants to see my face right now. I mean, I wouldn't want to see my face right now."

Maya nodded her agreement before giving Jane a thoughtful look, "So---are you and Thor really broken up? Because I mean, I'd totally be willing to be a part of any kind of freaky deaky Alien harem. I mean, I'm a lesbian, but...you know. Thor."

Asskicker Meadows

Darcy didn't remember the first ultrasound she had received. She'd been too sick and had been mostly unconscious during the first time the procedure had taken place. James had spoken of it with her, wonderment and awe in his retelling of the strong heartbeat and little bundle of stuff growing inside of her. This second time was nerve wracking. She longed for Bucky, deeply. But Natasha was refusing to leave her, acting as some sort of patient advocate as she watched Doctor Carla Rivera like a hawk while she set up the equipment that would allow her to take a look at the baby Darcy carried.

Erik had blushed beet red and offered to stand guard as Darcy had her ‘young lady business tended to’. And he firmly stood sentinel, glaring at the three senior citizens who dared to walk near the house.

Natasha was the one to help Darcy into the chair. She was the one to help Darcy adjust the pretty top so that the doctor could get the high-tech, clearly experimental ultrasound on her skin. And Natasha was the one who held Darcy's hand as they waited for the sound of the rapid heartbeat from the ultrasound machine.

The image flickered into view and it was surprisingly low definition for such advanced machinery. Just an image in black and white, filled with static.

"Oh, yes, definitely serum enhanced," Doctor Rivera was downright gleeful.

Natasha tensed.
"If you try to dissect my precious little bastard when it's born I'll make you feel the worst feelings ever," Darcy promised. "Like, non-stop stepping on fucking legos pain and second hand embarrassment forever, dude."

"I would never---" Carla insisted with indignation that she couldn’t maintain. She looked hesitant then and gave her most innocent batting of her eyelashes, "But surely you know that a baby enhanced this way---with both parents receiving the serum would mean---"

"I will make you actually step on legos," Natasha said evenly. "And you would not want to deal with Barnes or Rogers should you continue to covet the baby as a lab rat, Doctor Rivera. It is a child, and any tests or samples you would want to study will only come to you with the express permission of Darcy."

"I wouldn't," Carla looked a lot like Tony or Jane or even Bruce when they were made to put down the universe altering science experiment. She sighed heavily and pointed at the image before rattling off, "Toes, legs, body, arms, head. Above average growth for this point of gestation. Phenomenally so."

"That thing's head is going to destroy my lady town," Darcy whispered.

"You'll heal," Natasha promised resolutely, giving Darcy a shrug. "Quickly."

"Look at that kid's nose...it's like a ski slope. Isn’t it supposed to be squashed?" Darcy peered at the screen. "That's definitely from it's sperm donor and not me."

Natasha stiffened. She had not been able to find the father of Darcy's baby. She realized that Hydra would have used a serum enhanced sample, but James had been destroying all of the evidence in the last few months. Darcy's words seemed to mean that she also didn't know who the father of the baby was.

The woman in question began silently weeping and Carla soon followed.

"Darcy?" Natasha asked, feeling it hit her as well and she struggled to remain calm, but her eyes welled with tears. She wasn't feeling scared. She wasn't feeling sadness.
It was something warm and beautiful and *terrifying* in its magnitude.

"I just---I just kind of love that life force sucking little bastard," Darcy whispered through her tears. "Gigantic head and ski slope nose and all."

Carla wiped her tears away efficiently before moving the probing wand around a bit. She smirked when she saw what she was looking for. "Want to know the gender?"

"No---no I want Bucky to be here for that," Darcy whispered. She looked to Natasha and asked, "He's okay, right?"

"From the communication we received from Wakanda, he's fine," Natasha promised. "He'll be fine."

"And?" Darcy asked. "Don't lie to me, please."

"And---Steve said that Bucky was going to remain in Wakanda while they---treated him," Natasha said delicately.

"They are putting him back into the freezer," Carla revealed with some annoyance. "The Wakandans know NOTHING about super soldiers, and yet they think they know what's best for treating them. Didn't even ask my opinion."

"There was an episode in Berlin, Barnes was triggered into a Winter Soldier state," Natasha forged ahead, ignoring Carla's annoyed mutterings just as she would have ignored Tony's if someone in the tower had gone to the Apple Bar instead of straight to him with tech questions.

Darcy's brow knitted together and she shrugged, "*SO*?"

"He was dangerous, and the Wakandans believe that they can work with him to remove the trigger words," Natasha said calmly, feeling a lot of things coming off of Darcy at once. Anger. Sadness. Sheer impatience.

"But---what's wrong with the Soldier?" Darcy whispered. "I spent weeks with him when he was
mostly just the Soldier and it was fine."

"It was his choice, Darcy," Natasha promised.

"Yeah," Darcy said quietly. It had all been his choice. To leave her in Paris. To go running around and playing War with Steve. She was still stewing and simmering mad about it all, but it went hand in hand with the blind concern she had for his well being. She didn't care if he left her, so long as he was safe. "But Steve is coming here?"

"He is," Natasha nodded. "He's going to be very happy to see you, I think."

"Yeah, we'll see about that," Darcy sniffed as Carla finished up. She stared down at the pictures that had been produced and handed to her, her finger rubbing up and down the profile of the little parasitic bastard that she kind of, sort of, really actually loved. She wondered what kind of conversations Steve and Bucky had had. If the Soldier had been at the forefront, they probably weren't the most pleasant of conversations, as the Soldier had always been antagonistic about Captain America.

"Nat," a younger woman than the normal residents poked her head into the room. She looked worried, but her brown eyes were warm when she gave Darcy a tentative smile. "Steve's landing."

Chapter End Notes

...do you hate me yet? SOOOooooooooooooOOOOON friends. Soon.

Thanks so much for reading and supporting me. I couldn't do all of these shenanigans without each and every one of you.
Happy Wednesday!

Very short chapter this week, but I feel it is still very satisfying.

Thanks to the beta babes, phoenix-173, dntpanic42 and brand new beta babe queenspuppet! YOU LADIES ARE AMAZING here we gooooooooooooooooooo............

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Twenty-Seven: Butterflies

Somewhere over the Atlantic Ocean

The Wakandan jet was remote piloted by one of the fastest and most skilled pilots that Wakanda had to offer. Her name was M’Bali, and she was really the most excellent pilot Steve had ever witnessed. She evaded radar and drone patterns with ease, all the while chatting with him conversationally about what he was seeing outside of the window, and a few of the advanced technological tools that were available to him should they get into any trouble.

The flight from Wakanda would have taken nearly five hours in a quinjet, but in the Wakandan jet it had only taken three. But still, an hour and a half into the journey, Steve began to mutter to himself, and thankfully M’Bali had answered.

"She deserves to spit in my face on sight," Steve mumbled. "What they did to her---that's my fault. I'm the one to blame there."

"Captain Rogers, it seems fruitless to place blame," M’Bali assured him with the same steadfast kindness she had used when she told him about the special gloves in the storage unit that could be used as an advanced repulsion unit in air and water. "Wakandan ancestors learned that blame will only allow you to dwell in the past. It is better to move forward into the light of the next day."
"I left her to rot in Hydra's hands, and then I took Bucky from her, if I was her I'd sock me right in the face," Steve continued, M'Bali's words of wisdom barely making a dent in his guilt.

"I am having trouble finding anything about this woman, as she has no remaining social media profiles and her files are empty from the SHIELD data dump of 2014, however, if your mate is so enamored of her, she must be full of beauty and forgiveness."

"She's beautiful too, you know," Steve mumbled. "When I met her the one time, I was absolutely enchanted, but too scared and too stupid to do anything."

"Did you learn your lesson then? About being scared and stupid?" M'Bali asked. "When you see this young woman again, will you allow yourself to run from feelings or will you hold them in open palms and offer them to her? What is the best option to show her that you care deeply about her happiness and health?"

"Not being stupid. Not being scared. Yeah. Yeah," Steve sat up suddenly as the plane began to make its descent. "Thank you, M'Bali. When I get back to Wakanda, I'd like to buy you a cup of coffee. Or pay a counselor's fee."

"That is impossible, Captain Rogers, for I am an incorporeal computer program," M'Bali answered back. "All Wakandan children must learn how to effectively pilot the aircrafts as part of their schooling."

"So---you're artificial intelligence?" Steve questioned, feeling a little sheepish. He had known JARVIS and Friday had been computers right away. M'Bali has fooled him though.

"Indeed, I am," M'Bali answered cheerfully.

"For children?" Steve clarified, looking embarrassed.

"Yes, between the ages of six and seven."

"Of course you are. Thank you, still. You've been an excellent listener," Steve chuckled in a small moment of self derision. He watched as a little patch of land became clear in the middle of deserted farm fields, it was what appeared to be a relatively tiny, but growing retirement community, with green grass and winding lanes and his jet was landing in a spot that already had a
quinjet, one that he knew Natasha had commandeered.

He could feel his stomach swirling with nervousness. M'Bali had told him that Darcy had made it safely to this safe spot with Retta and the rest. She'd told him that Darcy and her child were safe and WELL and it had soothed Steve's worry about her. He hoped that somehow, in the cryofreeze unit, that Bucky knew Darcy and the baby were okay as well. It would no doubt bring no small amount of joy to the man that loved Darcy and the man that Steve loved.

"Leave behind blame and move forward into the light of the new day?" Steve asked M'Bali softly. He wanted to do that. He wanted to do whatever it took to make Darcy feel comfortable. He knew that Bucky, the Bucky of old at least, would always try to talk him up to prospective dates. So he had little doubt that Darcy had heard the song and dance routine of Bucky having a friend that was real sweet, and real funny and real genuine and sort of cute if you could get past the recklessness/hardheadedness/etc., etc., etc.

At this point, coming to her with no Bucky to smooth things over and make them comfortable, he was hoping that she wouldn't smack him across the face.

"Excellent Captain Rogers, you have learned the lesson well already," M'Bali. "I will coordinate our flight plan while you bring our special guests back."

Asskicker Meadows

“It went well, then?” Erik asked Darcy as she exited the house with Natasha. He was still blushing as he waved his hands at Darcy’s midsection. “Everything working to specifications—-down there?”

“It's all good in this one baby hood,” Darcy gave him a small smile. She reached into her pocket and held up a picture, looking shy and unsure. “Want to see a picture?”

“Of course!” Erik replied with the enthusiasm of a first time grandparent. He might miss a lot of social cues himself in the pursuit of science, but his entire mind and heart were singularly devoted at the moment to Darcy and her needs. He looked down at the picture and beamed with appropriate pride. “A noble little man you have there.”
“Oh, I don’t know about that. The man part,” Darcy shook her head. “Noble little bastard. We’ll keep it gender neutral.”

Erik wrapped an arm around Darcy and made to walk away from the house, when Natasha interrupted.

"Darcy, please look at me."

Natasha stopped Darcy before she and Erik could get too far away from the small medical house. The Doctor hadn't even seen them out, too excited to go over measurements and level readings from Darcy's blood to bother to be hospitable. Natasha had been guiding Darcy back outside, but the girl was a whirlwind of emotion.

"I thought you'd have more questions," Darcy said bluntly as Erik fell in line like a bodyguard of sorts. "Like---I'm sorry dude, but I totally called you a nosy bitch behind your back, and usually that's not my M.O., because calling other girls bitches in a non-ironic way is a kind of awful thing to do, but I called you it, because I---I thought you always asked questions."

"I pride myself on being a nosy bitch, so all is forgiven," Natasha smiled at the woman warmly. "Can you do me a favor?"

"I can try," Darcy shrugged. She looked around warily and looked a little forlorn. "I'm kind of out of sorts right now. I'm pissed. But I miss Bucky. And I'm pissed at everything and everyone, and I just want---I didn't want to meet Captain Assface for a long time, because---I was mad, but now it's more than mad. It's...it's..."

"Scared," Natasha guessed. "I haven't felt scared or nervous like this in a long time, Darcy."

"Sorry, after what I did at the facility in New York, I'm kind of on permanent output mode," Darcy admitted.

"Maya said you crippled at least a hundred people with uncontrollable sobbing back in New York," Natasha arched an impressed eyebrow. "Even Wanda can't get to that many people at once."

"Who is Wanda?" Darcy shrugged.
"Another soul who was taken in by Hydra and meddled with," Natasha sighed. "We are going to rescue them."

"Okay. But then I get to go back to Bucky," Darcy clarified.

"I'm sure that Steve will want that too," the redhead nodded. "Now about that favor. Can you focus your feeling and push it to just one person instead of all of us?"

"Dunno," Darcy shrugged. "Who would I send it to?"

"Send it to Steve. He can take it," Natasha smiled. Laura opened the front door of the facility and handed her two bags.

"One full of clothes for everyone. One full of food," Laura announced. "Make sure to save at least one of the brownies for my husband."

"Husband?" Darcy furrowed her brow.

"The guy with the bow and arrow belongs to me, unfortunately. I heard that you made him cry like a baby, then fried his nuts. Thanks, kid," Laura grinned. "I've been meaning to get him the vasectomy pamphlet, but nut frying sounds like it would work."

"Or you could have electric zappy kids," Darcy countered.

"Touche. I like her, I'm going to keep her," Laura told Natasha.

The jet doors opened and a super soldier stepped out, looking a little worse for the wear, obviously still healing from the severe beatings he had taken in the last twenty-four hours. But he was bright eyed and looked nervous and eager. Natasha could see that there was a lift in his shoulders, just a slight one, and she noticed that he didn't carry the shield.
His eyes searched the people who had come out of their houses to see the great Steve Rogers arrive, and Retta waved at him from her own porch before taking a pointed and exaggerated look at the small brunette who was walking outside of the medical house with Natasha and Laura, Dr. Selvig trailing behind with a scowl thrown Steve’s way.

Darcy. Small and strong and beautiful. Steve's steps faltered and he stared at her, thefluttering feeling in his stomach felt wonderful, nerves and anticipation and hope all wrapped up into one confusing mess. But it was still a good feeling, because it was different than nearly anything he had ever felt before. He'd felt something similar, the first time he had ever kissed Bucky and the first time he and Peggy had spoken to each other in private. It was heady and messy and real, and he loved it.

The woman, who he had heard Bucky refer to as Babydoll just a few times, the first when he was babbling and in pain on the plane to Wakanda, did look like a living doll. Alabaster skin that looked like it had been painted on by the most talented artist in the world was glowing, nearly ephemeral in its beauty. A pouting bottom lip was being worked between her teeth and big blue eyes the color of the sea were staring back at him and only him. She was wearing something blue and flowered and flowing, cut just right to showcase the rounded pregnant stomach and abundant bosom that he had stolen a guilty, but necessary, look at when he had first met her. His eyes ticked down this time too, despite wanting to be on his best behavior.

Annoyance. Worry. Nervousness. All the things hit Steve like a tsunami, but what came at the end had him nearly nauseous. She was scared. She was scared that he was going to dislike her. She was terrified of being rejected for saying or doing something wrong. Like that was even possible.

He began taking steady steps towards her, focusing in on her as her emotions hit him like a club against his heart. He let it, finding that he could take it much better this way than when he had felt the morning sickness or uncontrollable, unexplainable arousal periods. This was Bucky's Babydoll. Bucky's love. Steve knew that he would have to purposefully try to slow down, because if Bucky loved her so much, then Steve already was halfway in love with her and she wasn't ready for that, she wasn't ready to have all of it dumped on her when she was still recovering and expecting a baby she hadn't asked for and he would wait---he would.

But when he got to the pathway they were on, she dropped Natasha's hand and stepped around Laura Barton and she ran towards him, launching herself into the arms he quickly put out to catch her. He held her close, her feet dangling off the ground by nearly a foot and before he could get one word out in greeting, those plush, pretty pink lips were kissing his mouth hard and quick.

Steve stumbled, and not because she was heavy or had knocked him off balance with her body, but
the sheer force of the kiss was enough to take his breath away. She was pouring emotions at him at a rapid rate, relief was the primary one. She'd been worried. She'd been worried out of her skull, for he and Bucky, and now it was sheer, cool relief at seeing him whole and knowing that if he was still standing and coming for her, then Bucky was okay too.

She broke away and was about to apologize for the very informal greeting, but Steve grinned and spoke quickly, "You happy to see me, Sweetheart? It has been quite a while. Too long. Bucky says he loves you. And he'll be back to us soon."

Darcy let out a small breath, her arms clinging around his shoulders, the hard baby bump pressing into his ribs. She was staring at his face intently, a million things running through her at once, before finally her lips turned upwards in a decidedly impish lilt before she opened her mouth to speak.

"So, tell me the truth, Rogers. Did Bucky make you orgasm when he stole your virginity? Because I had to wait five hours for him to wake up and make me really see stars after he took mine properly."

Chapter End Notes

.......so. that went very, very, very well. For Steve, mostly.

I'd like to think there was enough explanation here regarding Darcy's physical first greeting of Steve. I know some people might have liked the angst drawn out and for Darcy to be angry at Steve. However, that's not who Darcy is in this story. and she was just so overwhelmingly HAPPY to see Steve, because Steve=okay then Bucky=okay...

So. yeah. Let's start down this shieldshock book of the story....it's going to be a good one, I think....
Wanton Harlot

Chapter Notes

Happy Wednesday! Happy Valentine's Day! Happy SUPER LONG CHAPTER DAY!

Warnings for this chapter: intense sexual desire. Mentions of hypothetical abortions that didn't happen. And then, a really necessary mean trick from Natasha and emotions. ALL THE EMOTIONS.

Thanks to the beta babes, phoenix-173, dntpanic42 and queenspuppet! YOU LADIES ARE AMAZING
Okay. deep breath. We can do this...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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Chapter Twenty-Eight: Wanton Harlot

Plane over the Atlantic Ocean

Despite the kiss they had exchanged, Steve was still approaching Darcy like she was an angry hellcat, and he was also still behaving like a shy, stage fright filled lion tamer. Natasha had a smugly pleased smile permanently plastered on her face when she ushered Steve and Darcy onto the Wakandan jet. She'd immediately begun chatting with the Wakandan preschool flight tutor, M'Bali, as if she had known about her all along, and then went through the rigorous training that Steve had ignored while using M'Bali as a therapist.

Natasha left Darcy and Steve to their own awkward devices, and they were spending the fifty minutes it would take for M'Bali and Natasha to fly to the Raft prison in the middle of the Atlantic sitting on opposite sides of a surprisingly comfortable set of benches, staring at one another when the other wasn't looking.

"M'sorry."

Steve's whisper had Darcy finally meeting his eyes. She licked her lips and Steve felt something turn over pleasantly in his gut. But then she sighed in exasperation.
"I thought it would feel better."

"Uhm---what?" Steve wondered. "Kissing me? Or I mean---what?"

"Hearing you, or Erik or Natasha or anyone saying sorry," Darcy mumbled. "It was supposed to make me feel better. Vindicated. Or something."

"And it doesn't?" Steve reached into one of the bags that Laura had packed and that he had taken out of Natasha's hands as they made their way to the jet. He rummaged through it and found a black jacket, hooded and large enough for him. He had his own jacket, but he looked at Darcy, who looked pretty as a picture in the pretty top and jeans she was wearing, but not exactly stealthy. And certainly not as warm as she could be.

He stood from his seat and shook out the jacket in his hands before holding it out to her. She hadn't been paying attention to what he was doing, staring outside the window instead, but her arms automatically went up, as if she were used to well-muscled, bulky masculine types trying to cover her more fully with additional clothing. Steve smiled at that a little. Bucky called her Babydoll for a reason, and one of those reasons was probably because he handled her with gentleness and care that a child would show a Babydoll.

He tugged the sweatshirt down and swallowed deeply when his fingertips hit her stomach. He would hand the letter off to Natasha once everything was alright and secure.

"It's not his," Darcy said softly, as if reading his thoughts. Her small hands were quick, but she reached for his own hands with them and placed them firmly on the small swell. "I mean, it is, he's the dad, just. Not---biologically."

"Families are built by more than biology. The good families are," Steve quietly reassured her. His heart ached a little at that. He had thought he was building something like that, but he'd lied to Tony and kept secrets and now the people that mattered to him most, aside from Bucky and Natasha, were stuck on a floating prison in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.

"But it's his," Darcy looked up into Steve's eyes with a small smile when his fingers began gently rubbing at the baby she had not asked for. Her hands rested on his wrists and her own fingertips went to his pulse point, somehow calming and feeling more at ease with a familiar heartbeat that perhaps was even more sedate than Bucky's slowed, serum enhanced heartbeat. "He called it his precious bastard."
"Doesn't sound like him," Steve admitted in a whisper, looking a little confused.

"The Soldier does sound a little different than old school, unremixed Bucky Barnes," Darcy chuckled. She pulled on his wrists so that he would sit next to her.


"He was kind of like three different people at first," Darcy revealed. "Bucky took the longest to come out, but then when he was there, he was---it was like he was all the parts together."

Steve was silent. He had never witnessed all the parts together. He'd encountered the Winter Soldier, too many times for his personal safety and comfort. He'd encountered James, that in between, confused, scared and trepidatious amnesiac that was so slow to remember what they had been. And he'd known every square inch, inside and out of Bucky Barnes. But that had been decades ago, and Darcy knew who he was now, when all three of those parts were integrated into a whole.

"Are you angry at him, Sweetheart?" Steve whispered, feeling the tendrils of heated anger tickling the back of his neck.

"I love him," Darcy insisted. She turned to face him and buried her face right into Steve's chest, her words coming out the moment his arms wrapped around her. "But hell yes, I'm angry. He drugged me and left me for the Avengers to grab up when the whole world was going to shit, all because of my safety. But guess what? I proved---I proved I could handle it all myself. I don't need anyone to protect me. I can protect HIM and he just, he just left!"

"I know how you feel," Steve consoled her, and it wasn't a trite throwaway to comfort her. It was true, he understood what she felt deep down in his bones. "When I found out that the Winter Soldier was Bucky, I chased after him for years. I just wanted to help him. I wanted him back with me, and I wanted to do whatever he needed to pull him through."

"And he stayed away to protect you," Darcy lay her cheek on his surprisingly comfortable pectoral muscle and sighed. "That big, dumb self-sacrificing idiot."

"He'd do anything to protect you. To protect me, and if that means running away and leaving us in a cloud of dust, he'd do it," Steve nodded.

"Yeah, one of the things you gotta get good at if you want to love Bucky Barnes, is you have to be as stubborn as he is self-sacrificing, Sweetheart," Steve's voice was a low rumbling caress, vibrating against her cheek. He paused and furrowed his brow, anger lighting up in his eyes as he whispered, "Bucky—he drugged you?"

"To leave me in Paris, so he could run off," Darcy mumbled into his chest.

Steve’s jaw set into a hard, unmovable line and Darcy managed to sneak a peek at him from the safe spot she had found against him.

“After everything they did to you?” Steve whispered. He looked toward the cockpit in anger, piecing things together quickly. Only Doctor Rivera could come up with a safe way to put someone serum enhanced out with medication and Natasha would have been the one to get the drugs to Bucky to give to Darcy.

Steve looked angrier and felt like he was suddenly made of stone. He felt her anxiety though and tried to put a lid on it for now. It was something to deal with later, and he promised himself he would definitely be dealing with it later.

"I wanted to hate you a lot," Darcy confessed quickly, pulling away from the embrace and staring up into watery, crystal clear blue eyes. "I wanted to electrocute you. All the time."

"You DID electrocute me, and if it would make you feel better, if it would earn me an ounce of forgiveness, you could do it again," Steve warned. "I'll pay whatever penance, Darcy. I'm so sorry that you went through this and I wasn't able to stop it."

"Yeah," Darcy nodded. "I don't hate you though."

"That's...that's really, I feel like you're letting me off the hook for something you should hate me for," Steve said honestly.

"He loves you," Darcy whispered, her eyes going soft at the thought of Bucky. "How could I hate
"He loves you, too," Steve assured her. He brought his hand up to her face and cupped a blushing cheek. "I don't mean to presume anything, Darcy, I don't know what you and Bucky spoke about."

"How the two of you are into freaky deaky threesome relationships," Darcy regained a little sass that she had so readily displayed five seconds after kissing him.

"I'd like to court you, to--to pursue you, separate from Bucky," Steve tried to whisper, tried to keep this conversation private, but he knew, he KNEW that Natasha and probably M'Bali were listening in. "One of the things we never got right back then was, well, never finding the right girl to pursue, and two, I think we would assume that if a girl liked one of us, she would just fall into liking both of us."

"Please stop talking, because every time you say a word, it kind of makes me want to kiss you, and I don't understand why. I mean, you're kissable," Darcy mumbled.

"Thanks," Steve smiled down at her, clearly pleased.

"But I'm not that easy, I was a blushing virgin until your boyfriend had his way with me," Darcy spouted off. She put a cool hand to her brow before demanding, "HEY! Romanoff?"

"Yes, Darcy?" Natasha asked pleasantly.

"Did the eager beaver doctor do something to my lady bits?" Darcy questioned. "Cause I kind of want to throw this big lug down on the ground and have my way with him, and that's really not me, you know?"

There was a pause before the computer program began speaking, "I have checked in with your primary care physician, Miss Lewis, and it appears that normal pregnancy symptoms will be amplified during the first cycle of your hormone realignment."

"So magnified horniness and the insatiable need for marmalade?" Darcy questioned.
"Entirely normal!" M'Bali cheerfully told her, as if she were telling a seven year old that it was normal to want to scratch their rear end.

"We have twenty minutes to land," Natasha turned and looked at Steve. "And I don't need her horny, Rogers. I need for her to make everyone on board ridiculously sad."

"What am I supposed to do about that?" Steve stopped looking at Darcy with serious want and instead turned to Natasha like she was a sibling that was irritating him. "I'm not making her sad."

"I can do the sad on my own, I just need to---to---" Darcy shook out her hands and gave Natasha a desperate look. "Get rid of this and then I can focus on the sad."

Natasha smirked right at Steve and he had the good grace to gulp nervously.

"Either you make out with her, or I will, Rogers. Tick tock."

"That's not how this is going to happen," Steve said softly. He felt a prickly poke of self-conscious anxiety waft into his brain, feeling just as he had when out on any of the dates that Bucky had set up for him back in 1941. The sting of rejection that would slap him in the face at the first disappointed expression from a pretty, but shallow dame was now prickingling at his skin. He shook his head quickly and put both hands on Darcy's face with tender care. "Not that I don't want to, because Christ, you are beautiful."

Darcy's cheeks warmed beneath his palms and he gave her that soft, shy smile that he hardly ever had the opportunity to pull out any more. His thumb tenderly stroked at the adorable blush and he tried to keep his voice low enough so that Natasha wouldn't hear, which was a lost cause because she was attentively listening in.

"I meant when I said I wanted to court you, to make up for the time that you and Bucky had. I want this to be as equal as it can be, for the three of us," Steve whispered. "You and I just as strong as the other sides of it, and that's going to take time, because I want to earn it proper and have your heart be given freely."

"You're not really helping me feel not horny right now, Rogers," Darcy muttered, causing Natasha to snort with laughter.
"Next time we kiss, I want it to be because you can't stand not kissing me," Steve's hope was earnest and beautiful and everything Darcy had thought was going to happen when she finally met Bucky's long lost love kept getting thrown overboard with Steve's unpredictable, beautiful words. "Not because some medication is making you feel it, or your worry about Bucky and me had you doing it...I want it to be real for us. As real as what you and I have with Bucky."

"Okay," Darcy's approval of the plan was a whisper and she looked around nervously as she sat back on the bench, putting inches between herself and Steve. "But what should I do about all this--this warm gooey feeling?"

"Send it to me," Steve suggested. "Just force it all on me, sweetheart."

"Uh---but---you'll, really?" Darcy asked skeptically.

"He's actually really great at repressing things," Natasha put in with her traditional sarcasm. "Even if his regency era word vomit indicates otherwise."

"I can take it, I promise. You've been sending me feelings and emotions for months now, Darcy," Steve revealed. "At least now I know where they're coming from---and that I'm not losing my mind."

"I've been sending you things?" Darcy questioned.

"You must have been thinking on him a little," Natasha slyly muttered.

"You were sick for a little," Steve recalled. "And then when you and Buck would---when you would make love, I could---hell, it was beautiful."

Darcy turned beet red and looked away with a wrinkled nose. Steve's hands left her cheeks and he got off the bench to kneel in front of her, looking up at her hopefully as she fought against the embarrassment.

"I hadn't meant to do that," Darcy admitted. "But when Bucky would talk about you, I would---I would think about you, and I guess it just went to you."
"Seems about right," Steve nodded in agreement. He furrowed his brow and asked warily, "Bucky didn't talk about me when he was in bed with you, did he?"

"No---not like that, but sometimes. Oh hell, I don't know, you just came up sometimes," Darcy crossed her arms in front of her defensively. "You're the love of his life, of course he's going to talk about you!"

"I'm one of the loves of his life," Steve corrected her. "He got around a lot."

Darcy looked at Steve with playfully narrowed eyes. He seemed pleased with himself that she was looking at him at all. He shrugged and tilted his head to the right, "C'mon, Darcy. Get those feelings out. We're going to need you to get onto the Raft."

"I mean, I'm sure you could send down amorous vibes, but I doubt Barton would appreciate that if there is no lube to be found," Natasha quipped. "And I doubt anyone down there has Laura Barton’s special touch."

"Fine, fine, okay, hold on," Darcy waved her hands around a little as she centered herself. She closed her eyes and pursed her lips and concentrated. All the things her body was craving, the need to be touched, the need for lips against her skin, the scratch of stubble, the pleasant sting of marks being sucked and bitten and licked onto her.

Steve went from kneeling in front of her to swaying and finally landed on his rear end on the floor of the plane as his skin turned pink all over.

"Keep going," Steve demanded, his voice a low, ragged thing that rumbled through the plane. He fought against closing his own eyes at the feelings running through him, keeping his eyes on Darcy as she concentrated, biting down on her lip as she pushed downright lewd and inappropriate feelings to him.

He was so hard he felt like granite, and a single touch would have surely had him coming in his pants like a green untested youth. It was heaven and hell all at the same time, the amorous, needy, sticky want was like a warmth in the pit of his gut, something that could build into an inferno, and he ENJOYED the feeling, but wouldn't do a damned thing about it all for the sake of his principals. He was breathing heavy, craving a touch, wanting so desperately to scramble back to his feet and place his face between her thighs and worship the woman that clearly needed to be worshipped. He wanted to lay back on the floor of the plane and let her have her wicked way with him.
Because she may have been innocent at one point, but Bucky had clearly done an excellent job at introducing her to the more hedonistic and enjoyable things in life. He'd never felt so needy, so desperate for touch. He tried to swallow the strangled moan in the back of his throat and failed completely.

He wanted to feel these feelings while he was inspiring them. He wondered if it could work that way and immediately hoped for it with every fiber of his being. He wanted to inspire her rampant pleasure and feel it at the same time. He wanted everything.

It began to ebb away, bit by bit, the wanting and the warmth and the slippery feeling of need, and it was replaced with something akin to awe. Steve tried to catch his breath without appearing like a wanton harlot sitting in front of Darcy, while also trying to have his t-shirt cover the massive erection he was still sporting. She was staring at him now, her mouth open slightly and her beautiful eyes blinking at him owlishly.

"See...not so bad?" Steve asked breathlessly.

"Rogers, send her up here so I can go over the game plan," Natasha ordered.

"You heard the General," Steve managed a hapless smile as he quickly got to his feet and adjusted his shirt in vain. He held out a hand to her to help her up and smiled at her as she openly stared at him in awe. When she'd finally gotten out of sight, he put both hands on his waist and took a pained breath.

The sound of a hissing door at the back of the jet opened and M'Bali's voice cheerfully announced, "If you need privacy for a few moments, the bathroom is soundproof."

Steve drew in another shaky, but relieved breath and his head lolled back in relief. "Thank God."

-Asskicker Meadows

"Jane?"
"Hey Erik...did it work?" Jane's voice was hushed and subdued on the other end of the line.

"We're here, we made it fine. The portal was a thing of beauty," Erik reported. He was seated at one of the window seats of the so-called recreational center of the so-called retirement community. But no senior citizens were gathered around tables of dominos or playing cards and no one was watching The Price is Right on the television.

Instead, a group of about seventeen of the nation's finest elderly, along with one Laura Barton, were working feverishly around a war room table taken right off of a World War II movie set, complete with facsimile troops. This table also had holographic screens with world maps, biometric readings and hazy, hacked surveillance from one of the world's most impenetrable prisons. Two children and a toddler were pushing a stroller around the room that had a tray on it full of bottled water and low sodium snacks and were offering it to all of the hardworking, well seasoned spies that were currently working in tandem with the rescue unit to free the rest of Captain America's team.

All in all, it was one of the most bizarre things that Erik had ever witnessed, and he'd been present for all of the alien invasions that had so far happened on Earth.

"Is she---is she alright?" Jane whispered, sounding unsure of her question.

"She's fine," Erik insisted.

"That can't be true, not even a little bit. I mean---she was kidnapped. For YEARS, how could anyone be alright after that?" Jane argued with Erik immediately, sounding both snappish and distraught at the same time.

"Darcy is a very resilient young woman, who always managed to find her way to the lighter side of life," Erik reminded Jane. "You remember well that she was your life preserver for two years after Thor left the first time."

"Yeah," Jane whispered. "Is the---is her baby okay?"

"According to the doctor on site, the baby is the epitome of human perfection," Erik replied with a smile as he thought of the picture Darcy had shared with him. "Two serum enhanced parents would probably result in either the epitome of human perfection or the absolute zero sum of
"It should have never happened," Jane muttered.

"It's too late to think of what should have happened, Jane," Erik told her patiently. "It's time to think of what will happen now. She needs support and care and love. She needs to continue to feel strong and—"

"It shouldn't have happened," Jane hissed into the phone. "She had no say in it. She said she was--she was drugged into a coma practically and got no say in it!"

"I believe she has made her peace with the baby," Erik said softly. "The baby didn't ask to be made anymore than Darcy asked for it. She showed me the picture with joy in her heart, and Darcy never lied about her joys in life, you must remember that."

"She doesn't have to have it, she shouldn't have to," Jane sounded like she was crying. "Any doctor worth their salt would take it into account, even if it's late term."

"Jane, it was Darcy's decision," Erik tried for a combination of soothing and firm. "I do believe that she was given the option to terminate the pregnancy when it was feasible, according to what Darcy managed to tell me."

"Did she---did she say anything about me?" Jane wondered, rapidly changing the subject. She asked the question nervously. As if she didn’t want to know the answer. "Does she really hate me now? For---forgetting her?"

Jane's words were drowned in tears at that point, barely more than squeaks and whispers. Erik could feel his heart hurting, because his girls, his Jane and his Darcy both had done nothing wrong, but in his heart, he felt Darcy deserved to be upset at everyone and everything.

"Darcy hates only one thing on this Earth, remember?" Erik asked softly.

"White chocolate, because it's just sweet butter," Jane parroted.
"Give her time to heal," Erik encouraged. "And when she's ready, be present, Jane. Be attentive. There is more to the world than the stars that twinkle above it."

"Yeah," Jane sniffed.

"We need something to divert as many satellites as possible!" Retta Archie barked out from across the room to her team of semi-retired spies. "Someone get me Coulson on the phone---"

"I can do it," Jane piped in over the phone, happy to have something to focus on that was not her own self recriminations.

Erik immediately put her on speaker and stood up, walking towards the war table towards quite a few people who had decades over his own contemporaries.

"I can do it!" Jane called out. "Or---I mean, I can get someone I know to do it. When do you need it?"

"Exactly ten minutes," Retta answered back.

"Okay---just, hold on," Jane put the phone down on her end and there was the sound of a few footsteps. "Heimdall? Send anyone down. Anybody who is available. Just not Thor! Send them right on top of the United Nations building in New York City. Then the White House in Washington DC and then---hold on, let me get you coordinates."

"Well then, that's handy," Retta smirked. "Widow, you got that?"

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Plane over the Atlantic Ocean

"Got it," Natasha nodded. She turned and smiled at Darcy warmly. "Jane Foster is asking Asgard for a favor. You don’t need to try your trick with the satellites again and you can just focus on giving us cover."
Darcy took in a slow breath and nodded, trying not to let the anger affect her. Natasha had told her that she would prefer everyone on the raft below to be affected by sadness and not any other emotion. Especially not anger. After Steve’s impressive display of willpower earlier, Natasha got the feeling that Darcy wasn’t exactly feeling sad.

It was a problem, to be sure.

"Wonder if they’ll send Thor," Natasha mused casually. "I mean, yeah, he and Jane say they broke up, but their stories keep changing around the small details, so I’m thinking that’s all for show. It keeps Jane safe. No one will come and try to grab her if she’s no longer important to Thor."

"Sounds like ridiculous subterfuge, I thought Loki was the one that was the trickster dickhead?" Darcy mumbled as she brought her arms up and crossed them under her chest, looking down at the passing clouds as the plane began their carefully controlled and elegant descent towards the Raft.

"Heimdall keeps an eye on her though, one eye for the rest of the universe, one eye for Jane Foster," Natasha continued conversationally. "There was one time when Jane was out on the lecture circuit and a very enthusiastic fan got a little too excited and hugged her so hard she fell back against a table---"

Natasha laughed a little.

"The portals above opened up, and one pissed off thunder god was there immediately, ready to crush some skulls in with a divine hammer."

"Good boyfriend," Darcy whispered, clearly trying to blink back burning tears.

"When I found out about you a few months ago, when I finally found your name and realized you were the Darcy Lewis who had been present when Thor first came to Earth, I was confused and doubtful," Natasha whispered. "It couldn't be the same Darcy Lewis that Thor had thought so clever with her magical lightning contraption. The same Darcy Lewis who he had regaled as brave in the face of the Dark Elves. Because if it had been you, Heimdall should have seen it. Thor would have asked for you to be looked after too."

Darcy sniffed and looked suddenly small and hunched over in the large co-pilot seat of the Wakandan jet.
"You were just a funny story to tell. The plucky girl from Midgard who had taken down the son of Odin with his own power," Natasha whispered, leaning in for the kill. "You didn't matter to him, not enough to protect."

"Stop it," Darcy whispered.

"I'm sorry that I didn't know you enough to think of you," Natasha continued on anyway, quickly flicking her wrist on a control that caused the jet to behave like a submarine instead as they touched down on water. "I didn't remember you until Steve remembered you and asked about you. If Bucky hadn't have come across you, if that connection back to Steve hadn't been made, if you never forced your feelings on Steve from across the globe, no one would have known."

"I know," Darcy weeped openly. "Don't you think I know that?"

"What's---what's going on?" Steve demanded as he walked back towards the front of the jet. He bent over to look at Darcy and looked wild with fright at the weeping, sad state of her. He wasted no time in picking her straight up out of her seat and cuddling her against his body.

Natasha glared at Steve and reached out to turn Darcy's face away from Steve's chest so that she could look her in the face, expression void of emotion as she continued to spew calm, poisonous venom intended to hurt the girl sobbing in Steve's arms.

"When Bucky was interrogated in Berlin, he didn't remember you," Natasha revealed.

"Romanoff! That's not true---Darcy, sweetheart, I swear that's not true," Steve disputed immediately.

"It is true, Carter asked him so that we could get hands on you, and he didn't remember you anymore," Natasha insisted calmly. "Three days, and you were already less than a memory to him, the one person who you thought would always remember you."

"Romanoff, I swear to God, I'll punch you in the fucking face!" Steve roared out, putting Darcy back down and taking a menacing step towards the Black Widow.

Darcy's scream stopped him cold. It was blood curdling, loud and piercing. If a heart breaking could have a sound, it would have been the scream issuing forth from her mouth. She had her
hands on the side of her head, fingers gripping at brown hair. Steve turned back to Darcy immediately and put his hands over hers so she couldn't rip her own hair out. But she kept screaming in agony, blind to whatever comfort Steve tried to pour over her.

"Send it out, Darcy!" Natasha urged after a quick look at the holoscreen console. Surveillance was looking away as they touched the water thanks to Asgardian assistance. Natasha was looking pale and tired after her hurtful playacting to get the girl as sad as she possibly could as she pressed a few buttons so that they could attach the jet to the underwater prison. "Down to every person on that raft. Give it to them now!"

Chapter End Notes

Poor Darcy. Poor Nat. I promise that she didn't WANT to be mean, but she had to get this drawn out of Darcy, thanks to Steve putting her in such a schmoopy place.

I also promise that when Darcy is done with all this adventure, she is going to get some sweet relaxation and other fun things. Cuddles. LOADS OF THEM.
Chapter Notes

Hi guys!

So apologies for going missing. I lost my way and was letting myself get too psyched out and miserable about posting any work. Hopefully I can keep this up once again and get back on a regular posting pattern.

warnings for this chapter: threat of sexual coercion, overwhelming sadness, brief threat of suicidal action, grief. Jesus, no wonder I didn't want to post this!

Thanks to the impressive and awesome and intimidating trio of beta babes: phoenix-173, dntpanic42 and queenspuppet!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Twenty-Nine: The Unbearable Wrath and Sadness of Darcy Lewis

The Raft

"Birdy birdies, with your clipped little wings."

Sam looked up from his place on the spartan cot in his desolate, sanitized cell to glare at the armed guard who had made the last nine hours of his life incredibly annoying. He wasn't the most clever of men, this brutish thug in tactical gear and holding a comically oversized assault rifle, but there was no escaping him, seeing as Sam and his contemporaries were currently locked behind impenetrable plastic that had the ability to knock each one of them out with a zap of electricity if someone at the control panel felt a little punchy.

"Fuck off, Fletcher," Clint called out from his own bed. "Still don't know how you managed to crawl out from the Hydra Strike team and not end up persecuted as a traitor."

"Gotta have more finesse than a bumbling pair of dodo birds, a criminal and a Sokovian whore," Fletcher answered back with a grin.
Sam sat up at that and shot his fiercest glare at the former Strike team member turned rent-a-cop. He pointed one finger at the absolutely disgusting man and warned, "Watch your mouth."

"Or you'll what, flap your wings at me?" Fletcher laughed. He turned away from Sam and Clint's cells and walked cockily towards Wanda's, where the young woman was sitting on the ground, restrained by a straight jacket that was wired with a shock system and drug relay system to keep the very dangerous Scarlet Witch from speaking in complete sentences, much less doing any harm. "Hey Witchy, you want out of your cage for the better part of an hour? The switching of the guard is coming up and I get a little bored up there in temp housing."

"You mother-fucking better stay away from her, or you and I are gonna have a very uncomfortable discussion, very, very soon," Sam warned.

"Something is coming," Wanda whispered, her eyes glowing red.

"Wanda?" Scott questioned, able to see her from his cell better than either Sam or Clint could. "Wanda, you okay? Your eyes are like---hardcore right now."

Fletcher put his hand to his comm device then, ready to put a warning to the control room to dose the woman again into complacency, but before he could, he hit his knees. Wanda struggled to stand, but couldn't manage it. Instead, a wavy line of red energy leaked from under her vest, from where her hands were. Her face, which had been slack with equal parts sadness and drugged complacency for the past twenty-four hours, was now a tight, pinched look of intense concentration as she struggled to get her power out past her restraints and then the walls of her cell to her friends who had been so very worried about her since the capture.

The energy shielded Sam first, then Scott, and Clint was last. Just long enough for the man to be affected by something else first. Something completely invisible, but clearly powerful. Fletcher was on his knees, his head bowed as he let out a mournful wail. Clint doubled over with it as well, that feeling he had felt once before in Paris, France, the one he had hoped to never have to feel again. Uncontrollable sadness that had no origin point. It just enveloped him and threatened to rob him of any sanity for a few moments before Wanda's shield enveloped him too, giving him a moment to breath.

"What in the hell?" Sam demanded as he watched the guard's body heave with sobs. "What is going on right now?"
"Maybe he's just realized what a complete and utter dick he is?" Scott asked hopefully as the guard rolled onto his back and screamed up at the ceiling in grief and sadness that was so completely genuine that it made the four prisoners recoil.

Clint wiped away at the tears that had managed to fall and shook his head.

"This is Darcy Lewis," Clint revealed. "This is what she can do."

Wanda shook her head slightly in confusion and Scott shrugged at Sam.

"Oh God---oh God!" Fletcher cried out from the ground as he rolled once more, his hands finding the assault rifle he had dropped moments ago. He quickly grabbed for it and held it up, pointing it at Clint's cell. "WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME?"

"Not me, dick," Clint assured him. "Good luck shooting against those walls at me, I'm pretty sure the bullets will bounce back at you."

"Bring up the windows!" Fletcher shouted into his comm before pointing the gun right at Scott.

"WOAH DUDE, I was being good!" Scott put his hands up automatically as the windows to cells jerkily made their way up. "This is NOT the way to run a prison. I would have been given extra rec time for my behavior at a proper prison, dude. This is ridiculous."

"SHUT UP!" Fletcher was begging as he waved the gun around. He let out another pained cry as tears explosively fell out of his eyes. "Why am I feeling this way? What's happening? What the fuck are you doing?"

"Holy shit," Sam whispered. Darcy Lewis, she could apparently manipulate emotions. Bucky's rescued lady could also manipulate emotions. Which meant Darcy Lewis was the rescued mystery lady who had zapped his ass back in Calgary months ago. He'd heard a story about Darcy Lewis before. When at the party before Ultron, he'd heard Thor waxing poetic about a girl who had knocked him on his ass with a blast of her own lightning.

She was here. Which meant that Natasha and Steve were there too.
"I'm going to enjoy punching you in the motherfucking dick, man," Sam sneered at Fletcher.

The man sobbed in response, and looked to Wanda with despair.

"Help me---please help me, I don't want to feel like this---I---I'm so scared and, and fucking SAD, please for the love of God HELP ME!" Fletcher managed to beg around his sobs and deep gasps of breath.

"No," Wanda had the closest thing to a smile on her face. "You were Hydra, were you not?"

"I didn't mean to!" Fletcher wailed. "I just wanted to be cool with the others."

"You are complicit to what was done to her," Wanda said with calm conviction. "You get to feel her pain now. Are you terrified? Are you sad?"

"I'm lonely," Fletcher lamented. "I'm alone. I'm---I'm not good enough."

"Yeah, sounds about right," Scott smirked.

"Nothing left," Fletcher sniffed, looking weak from the extreme emotion taking over. He looked down at the assault rifle and nodded to himself before turning it around to point in his own face.

"Oh shit," Sam turned away so he didn't have to see the explosion of whatever brains the dimwitted guard had left.

There was no sound of a gunshot, though, just the sound of a heavy fist against a skull and then the resulting echo of an unconscious body hitting the floor. Sam's head lifted and turned, a slow, pleased smile pulling at his lips as Steve stepped out of the shadows, looking a little better than the rest of them as his shit eating smirk lit up his face.

"You guys ready to go?" he asked cheekily.

"Man," Sam sighed and couldn't help put roll his eyes. "It's about damned time."
The Wakandan jet had its limits, and the newly released quartet were pushing at its limits for space. M'Bali had helpfully walked Sam and Scott through moving some panels of electronics in such a way that allowed for just enough room for them all to be able to sit down, and was now patiently teaching Clint how to pilot them back to the unique retirement community that they would all be calling home for the foreseeable future.

There hadn’t been much of an opportunity for introductions to the small, buxom brunette that had been waiting on the jet for Natasha and Steve to return with the freed prisoners. But Clint had managed to narrow his eyes playfully at her and say,

"You owe me a new pair of pants."

To which Darcy had calmly replied,

"Did you wet them when I zapped your kidnapping ass?"

Steve had laughed at that, then taken Darcy's hand and led her to the bench. She looked completely wiped out, and it was no wonder why. She'd been on the run for days now, just as he had been. But she had just managed to completely and thoroughly incapacitate fifty-seven people from afar. She'd managed to avoid him and Natasha with her nebulous powers, and thankfully Wanda had shielded the rest of Team Cap just in time. Steve knew without a doubt, that Darcy had earned a break. So while the rest of the team followed M'Bali's direction, Steve sat on the bench, pulled Darcy onto his lap and felt no shame in cuddling her until she promptly fell asleep before Clint and Natasha could get the jet back in the air.

"Interesting," Sam smirked, as he, Wanda and Scott crammed their bodies together on the other bench. "You old timers move fast."

"This is Darcy Lewis," Steve spoke in a low rumble, not wanting to disturb the very deep sleep the expecting woman had slipped into.

"She's totally knocked up," Scott whispered. He looked to Sam and then Wanda. "Does Captain
"Stop saying that," Sam advised through gritted teeth. He looked to the clearly pregnant woman and then back up at Steve warily. "Did you know about this--pregnant lady situation?"

"Found out about four hours before I met her again," Steve admitted, looking far more calm than Sam could have ever imagined him being.

"Is it---"

"We don't know," Steve's voice dropped to an even quieter level, knowing that Sam was going to ask about the baby's paternity. It didn't seem like the time to discuss all of that though, with everyone watching them with baited breath. "It wasn't exactly something she signed up for. But she’s so strong. And she is going to be a great mom. Even if she had no say in it."

"Oh God," Wanda put her hand over her mouth, clearly distressed at that revelation.

"So where's Barnes?" Sam demanded, wanting to change the subject quickly. He wanted to wait for privacy with Steve and Darcy to discuss what he had witnessed less than an hour ago.

Darcy Lewis was some kind of empath, obviously. She had made remorseless hired killers feel so desolate with sadness and loneliness and despair that they had attempted to kill themselves. That kind of emotion had come from Darcy Lewis. Sam was very worried about that small detail, to say the very least.

And Natasha hadn’t said anything, which wasn’t unusual at all, but Sam had gotten really good at reading the woman’s emotions, the true, hard, irrepressible ones that flickered in and out with the blink of an eye. Sam remembered that look, the furrow of her brow, the set of her shoulders, the way her chin pointed down ever so slightly. She had that look when she first tried to pull Wanda out of her grief fueled stasis one month after Ultron was defeated.

It hadn’t been pretty and it had taken quite the toll on Wanda and Natasha both. He put two and two together and managed to come up with Natasha doing something unsavory to get Darcy to an appropriate emotional head-space.

But he didn’t want to discuss it while the sad woman in question was passed out cold in Steve’s
embrace. He would approach her when they were all much more safe. He forced a slow smile on
his face and asked, "How'd you get cradling the cutie detail?"

"It's a long story," Steve sighed. He shrugged and looked at Scott specifically. "But we can start it
out with the fact that you guys don't have to call me Captain America anymore. I'm giving the
shield up. Gave it up. Left it with Tony."

Sam and Wanda sat back at that news, shocked down to their cores. Wanda watched carefully as
Steve adjusted his hold on Darcy, with the intent to hold her closer and more protectively. The
unconscious woman's head lolled a bit into Steve's shoulder, her nose brushing up against his neck.
She could feel the butterflies coming off of Steve, new and tentative and beautiful. This woman,
this Darcy who Natasha had looked for so relentlessly in the past few months, she was immensely
important to Steve, despite the fact that they had only just met.

"But---Captain America, if I can't call you Captain America, then what do I call you?" Scott
seemed more distressed at that exact moment than he had been under his imprisonment on the raft.

Darcy snored in her sleep and spasmed slightly before nuzzling into Steve more and muttering,
"Captain Buttmunch."

Wakanda

"C'mon scruffy white boy, stop fighting the nanites," Shuri muttered under her breath as she
worked with a single minded determination at her sand station, carefully letting her fingers dance
along the pathways that simulated the neural pathways of Sergeant James Buchanan Barnes, aka
the frozen popsicle taking up residence in her lab space. She was pushing along the sand nanites,
smoothing over frayed edges.

Her father had been properly buried six hours ago and she'd come right back to the lab, working in
overdrive ever since the formal celebration to mark T'Chaka's passing to the next plane of
existence had begun. Tradition dictated that she and T'Challa be the last to leave the celebration of
the late King's life, but she couldn't bear it a moment longer. Her mother and brother understood
and she was allowed certain liberties in being an indulged little sister and only precious daughter.
Shuri usually enjoyed a good celebration. When her mother's mother had passed at the age of one hundred and two years old, the celebration for her life had lasted four whole days. And Shuri had enjoyed every moment as a young child. It had been pictures of her great-grandmother everywhere, at every moment of her life. There was a nonstop buffet of her favorite foods and Shuri had made herself sick on dipping too much flatbread into too many rich and savory sauces. She had danced herself to the point of exhaustion and her father had forcibly carried her away when she had begun to sway on her feet, a moment away from succumbing to unconsciousness.

The celebration of her father's passing though was a more somber affair. He had not eased from his old body into the new realm of existence like others. He had been forcibly removed. It was too soon. She had not even said goodbye to him properly. She'd only demanded he bring back chocolate from Vienna.

She didn’t want to linger at the celebration. Shuri was afraid that if she had truly celebrated her father's life with all the love she had in her heart for him, she would wind up dead on the dance floor as well, with no father to carry her off before she fell.

"You stubborn old relic!" Shuri shouted as one of the nanites could not get to where she needed it, stuck solid as a pathway became too narrow for the infinitely small object. She turned to glare at the man standing comfortably in the freezer unit. She narrowed her eyes playfully at him and did her best impression of a Dora Milaje., "Move. Or you will be moved. ...Straight to the kitchens. You can keep the juice cool, ice cube."

T'Challa had told her all he knew of Sergeant Barnes' condition. They had learned that there was a set of nefarious words that would cause everything that made the man a human to disappear, leaving behind a cold hearted killer. Shuri had not been too fussed at the trigger words. She had found removing them almost too easy. But there was still the problem of the splintered man.

The cold hearted killer would not be removed with the words. The broken pathways would not heal to fold all of Sergeant Barnes' pieces back. Some of them had gone easily, but there was still the killer who remained, fighting back every step of the way.

"You really want to do this, old man?" Shuri crossed her arms in front of her. "I have youth on my side. And genius. You cannot defeat me. I am the Princess of Wakanda. I am the warmth in my fath---"

She paused at that, looking suddenly deflated. She had used that card very often, at a very young age, pushing her way past tutors that bored her. Pushing her way into labs that were restricted. Pushing her way into a position that she had been far too young for.
Princess Shuri of Wakanda. The warmth in her father's heart. If she is sad, her father will be sadder, and no one wanted that.

She felt tears burning in her eyes as she thought of never being able to say that again. her father's heart was no longer warm. He had no need of it where he was now, at peaceful rest with the ancestors. All of her fight, all of her joy bled out of her and she felt like that tiny child, about to fall onto the ground at her great grandmother's life celebration.

"Princess of Wakanda. The helpful thorn in her brother's side," T'Challa's voice was soft and teasing as he wrapped an arm around his sister, supporting her and simultaneously stepping around the sand table, intent on leaving the lab. He kissed his sister's forehead before turning to the foreign man in the freezing unit. "If she is denied what she wants, her brother will pay the price, and no one wants that."

"Too true," Shuri sniffed slightly, too tired to spill the tears that threatened and burned in her throat.

"Come, you need sleep and our mother needs you close," T'Challa advised, walking them out of the lab. "You've worked for too many hours to fix this man already. He has been on this planet for one hundred years, he will keep for another twelve hours."

"Working is good," Shuri defended herself. "Can't think on too much if I'm trying to solve the problems caused by seven decades worth of Hate-tra torture."

"Hydra," T'Challa huffed out a small laugh.

"Stupid name, Hate-tra seems better," Shuri waved off T'Challa's correction. She sighed, and the sadness in that gesture seemed too heavy for such a young person to carry.

"Remember when Baba let you name the rhino that W'kabi's father gifted to him?" T'Challa whispered, the hint of a smile in the sound of his voice as he continued to help his sister through the compound, intent on returning to his mother so the remains of his family could come together and try to heal.

"Pokey Leatherface was a great name," Shuri defended. "Much better than your name for it."
"Fierce Stabber?" T'Challa shrugged while his sister scoffed at him. He gave her a little, insolent smile. "I was naming it what I wanted it to do."

"Dear Bast, please don't allow this fool to have children. He'll be naming them Good Job and Listens Well," Shuri teased.

T'Challa smiled. It would take time for the loss of their father to not feel like a fresh wound, but it would eventually get there. They had each other, they had their mother. And they had the good work that they would do. He squeezed his arm just a little tighter around his little sister's shoulders.

Asskicker Meadows

Darcy remained asleep the entire flight, and then beyond, even as Steve carried her off of the jet and into a house that Retta had led him to that was close enough to the medical house to be safe, but far enough away so that Doctor Carla Rivera wouldn't come a callin’ every few hours. The house was one of the modest McMansions that one usually found in retirement communities, split level to keep the stairs to a minimum, with four bedrooms and two bathrooms.

It was decorated in a distinct style. Namely the catalog from Fingerhut in 1972, but everything was clean and seemed new and it was safe and warm, so Steve wouldn't complain about the strange green shag carpeting, or the overabundance of bright yellow flowered wallpaper in the kitchen. He put Darcy in the (ridiculously orange) bed of the master bedroom, and tried to get away, but found that she wouldn't let him go in her sleep.

He'd disengaged her clutching hands in order to get his boots, off, and she'd whimpered as if she'd been wounded the entire time. He couldn't stand to hear it, much less feel the spike of thorny anxiety that exuded from her, so he lay in the bed with her, above the covers, holding her in her sleep.

It took half an hour before Natasha came into the room, followed closely by Sam.

"Are you taking liberties with her, Rogers?" Natasha demanded, sounding a little harsh.

"Nat, come on," Sam rolled his eyes, although it was strange to see Steve cuddling any woman in
the manner he was currently cuddling Darcy.

Sam had not seen this kind of affection coming from the former Captain America in all the years of knowing him. It was a little strange to see him doing it with someone he barely knew. Sam shrugged and narrowed his eyes at Steve. "Are you, though?"

"She won't let go of me," Steve shrugged a bit, far from distressed at the idea. He was puffed up a little with pride, and it made him look much younger than he actually was. "And I'm far from complaining. She's soft and warm like a kitten. And I can feel she’s happier with me holding her."

"Hmm," Sam smirked a little. "Why is she so tired, anyway? Is it...is there something wrong with the pregnancy?"

"You saw what she was doing," Steve closed his eyes as his fingers twirled around soft brown curls that fell down her back.

"The last few days she's been on the run on her own," Natasha continued to explain as Steve very quickly blissed out, his breathing going deep and relaxed. "Clint was sent to extract her from Paris, but she evaded---"

"She evaded Clint Barton?" Sam questioned. "You can't even evade Clint Barton."

"Who told you that?" Natasha scoffed.

"Children, stop," Steve mumbled. He opened one eye and glared at Natasha. "And you and I are having a talk later about how Bucky got the dose that put her to sleep back in Paris. And your methods and words in getting her sad back at the raft."

Sam watched as Natasha's posture went just a little straighter, like someone was tugging on the line that held her up. His earlier suspicions were confirmed and he felt for everyone in the impossible situation. Natasha was good at manipulating people but it very rarely made her feel good. She didn't miss a beat though and turned to Sam again.

"She knocked Barton out, traveled through Europe without any money or assets, all alone. She found her way to the Avenger's facility in upstate New York, right after completely decimating national computer driven radar and satellites for two whole hours and draining all of Steve's bank
accounts and moving them to an offshore account set up in her name," Natasha reported, listing all the reasons Darcy should be tired.

"Clever dame," Steve mumbled, kissing the top of Darcy's head gently. "Remind me to thank her for that."

"She put the entire facility in a state of useless tears and, from what Maya Archie has stated were 'all of the feels', before smacking Tony with the shield and electrocuting him," Natasha reported.

"Hmm," Steve hummed happily as he shut his eyes once again.

"And she did all of this while building a super soldier inside of her body, so I would say she's earned a little rest and relaxation," Natasha shrugged.

"Is it Barnes' kid?" Sam whispered to Natasha, to no avail, as Steve could easily hear him.

"I don't---I don't know," Natasha admitted with some reluctance. She had not been able to find out in the last few weeks, as Darcy and Barnes had been very thorough in covering their tracks.

"Oh, here," Steve opened his eyes again, with some effort. He moved a little to get at the inside of his jacket, displacing Darcy for a moment. He pulled out a sealed envelope and held it out for Natasha. When Darcy began to whine in her sleep, grasping back at Steve for his arm, he kissed her hair again and hushed her gently, "S'okay, Sweetheart. I'm right here. I'm not going anywhere. You'll have to chase me away, promise."

Natasha took the envelope and turned it over in her hands, seeing her name on the front of it in familiar handwriting. She looked back to Steve with questions in her eyes, which he barely saw as his eyelids began to droop. As exhausting as the last few days had been for Darcy, they had been nearly as bad for Steve. Plus he would wager that he was feeling a little of what she was feeling as well, so it was almost like a double whammy.

"Buck found out who the sperm donor was," Steve explained, and he would have been nonchalant even if he hadn't been so blissed out and close to sleep.

"The father?" Sam questioned.
"Bucky is the father," Steve was resolute and hard in his statement, despite his sleepiness. "The sperm donor's name is in that envelope."

"You don't seem too interested, Steve," Sam observed, as calmly as he could. Hell, Sam could admit that even his interests were a little piqued, but Steve was too busy cuddling the pretty lady to be bothered.

"Doesn't matter," Steve gave a small shrug. "It's her baby, and Bucky wanted to be called the baby's Papa, so that's good enough for me. M'gonna love it no matter what."

"Weird," Sam nodded in mock agreement. He didn’t want to press the issue, he was just content to see that Steve seemed happy, after everything had happened, Steve wasn’t on the precipice of a debilitating depression. He was snuggling a pretty lady and he was happy. And it was highly unlikely that Darcy could be sad enough to destroy herself with Steve clinging to her. And that was definitely good enough for Sam, for now. "Get some shut eye man. I'm gonna go explore this town for sexy grandmas."

Sam led Natasha out of the room, surveying her carefully for any reaction about him looking to score with the retired set that they were surrounded by. But of course, she was staring down at the envelope with those dangerous bedroom eyes, like the answer to the mystery was the sexiest thing she had ever seen.

"C'mon," Sam rolled his eyes. "I'm starving, and you can decode your secret spy letter while I'm seeing if any of these grannies know how to feed a hungry, strapping young man."

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for your kind messages and patience in waiting for this chapter.

I saw Black Panther FOUR times since I last posted, and I loved it. And especially Shuri. And especially the lovely brother/sister relationship she has with T'Challa. So yes, we will be getting more glimpses into Wakanda in the future.

And maybe Natasha will decode a message or two.

Thanks again!
What Dreams are Made of

Chapter Notes

Happy Wednesday! I've had so much caffeine today that I've just spent the last three minutes staring at my left hand and wondering why it is my hand.

I think I have a problem?

Warnings for this chapter: uhm. I don't think there are any warnings? that can't be good.

Thanks as always to the beta babes. phoenix-173, dntpanic 42 and queenspuppet/ragwitch!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 30: What Dreams are Made of

Wakanda

"How is he?"

Queen Ramonda sighed and gave a small smile to Okoye, the General of the Dora Milaje that protected the royal family so closely. Okoye often had her hands full, with Shuri, the indefatigable genius and her unpredictable energy often going this way and that. T'Challa, without the stable presence of his father, was also a challenge to keep safe and secure, as he was often running around wherever he could, trying to help people.

Ramonda couldn't fault her son for that. While Shuri took after her father in her quest for knowledge and innovation, T'Challa took after her. There was too much suffering and sorrow in the world, and Ramonda, in her youth, had wanted to burn those down who inflicted it, while simultaneously trying to heal those that had been burnt. Age brought her wisdom though, and she could look at someone like Sergeant James Barnes and realize that through no fault of his own, he was both the victim and the perpetrator.

"Or more importantly, how are you?" Okoye asked shrewdly. "This is taxing you, my Queen."
"I'm not so old as that," Ramonda scolded. "There are parts of him that will not be healed, despite what my clever daughter has already managed to accomplish. She was frustrated with the obstacle and I merely wish to ease the way. But his fractured piece is stubborn."

"Understandable, with the trauma he has experienced," Okoye nodded in understanding. "It would make him no less a warrior, though. And a warrior who has his own agency can find peace."

"No, it's the warrior that will not go," Ramonda admitted. "The Soldier that was made to be a tool of mass destruction will not be smoothed over back into the healed mind. The words that would bring him into such a state are gone, no one could manipulate him again, but yet, he remains, stubborn and resolute."

"A Soldier does not enter a battle to die, my Queen," Okoye said thoughtfully. "The greatest fighters often have only one goal in mind at all times. To survive."

"This is more than that," Ramonda sighed, her hand going to the orange gem that had been in Wakanda since the dawn of their civilization. The energy had been difficult to master, but now the gem would do her bidding, as it had done for countless generations that had come before her. "He fights for survival, but not to simply live another day. Not to fight."

She closed her eyes and manipulated the energy from the stone, tendrils and wisps of orange light going from the stone towards the cryofreeze unit that Bucky Barnes gently slept in. The energy from the mystical stone seeped into the man's skin, and as it descended under it, Ramonda commanded it softly.

"Give him what he wishes to see. He will be a part of the whole. Bring the souls that fit with his to his mind and give the Soldier peace."

Elsewhere

"What is this?"

The phrase was spoken in Russian, harsh and angry. The Soldier blinked his eyes rapidly as he
looked around, trying to understand his sudden surroundings. The comically thick carpet on the floor was a very light shade of olive green, which clashed spectacularly with the heavy orange brocade drapes that were valiantly keeping the obnoxious, bright light from the sunrise at bay. A darker green wallpaper covered one wall, and it mirrored the brocade pattern of the curtains.

Heavy dark oak bureaus stood on either side of the bedroom, and the same heavy dark oak made up a four poster bed, the biggest he had ever seen, and with a terrifyingly orange and mustard colored bedspread wrinkled on top and barely covering the feet of two people.

"Pet?" he whispered, taking two steps forward to see that it was indeed Darcy, laying on her side on the hideous bed.

The Soldier wanted to fall to his knees. She was more beautiful than anything he had ever seen before. Dressed in a simple white t-shirt that was a thin, soft cotton, it was barely long enough to go to the tops of her thighs, and it was stretched obscenely around her rotund belly. Her hair was wild and free, cascading on orange covered pillows, and pouty lips were parted as she slept heavily, a little drool accumulating at the corner of her mouth.

"My Pet, my beautiful Darcy," the Soldier whispered, taking a step towards the bed to reach out for her, but stopped when he realized who was lying in the bed next to her. He scowled at Captain America, nude except for a bit of orange sheet wrapped around him in a modesty saving line. Rogers' arm was wrapped around the woman that the Soldier loved so much, holding her close.

The baby that she carried, had to be about seven or eight months along now, and it pressed against Rogers' body, his fingertips laying against Darcy's protruding belly button very lightly. The Soldier wanted to rip Rogers' entire hand off for daring to touch his Pet and their precious bastard.

"What're you doin, jerk?" Steve mumbled as his eyes blinked open. "You know Darce doesn't like waking up before brunch is ready on a Sunday, and Thuy won't start the griddle up until nine am and it can't be more than six. Get back in bed before she notices her pretty little behind is cold."

"What?" the Soldier demanded.

"Oh for the love of---" Steve huffed out, an exasperated smile pulling at his lips before blinking his eyes open fully and looking at the Soldier, not with the sleepy affection he had a moment earlier, but with a challenging look. The Soldier couldn't have anticipated Steve speaking to him in sloppy, unaccented Russian, "Your Pet is cold and wants to be held. Bed. Now."
The Soldier immediately complied, the stern, but clearly affectionate command felt comfortable to him, and he found himself crawling into the bed, easily slipping in to spoon Darcy. He felt a contented warmth settling down into his very bones as she wiggled in her sleep to more firmly press into his body. She was more plump than she had ever been before, and his left hand, new and slim and beautiful, went to her hip and gave a very small squeeze before going for the giant swell of child she carried.

He huffed out a small breath of surprise at the kick that found his fingertips.

"Yeah, yeah," Steve yawned. "You told us both she shouldn't have had the ice cream at ten last night, but we didn't listen cause she's a headstrong naughty little Pet, and I spoil her rotten."

The Soldier didn't say anything at that, but a clear look of confusion flittered on his face.

"Hey," Steve whispered, his hand going overtop of the vibranium hand that was touching Darcy's stomach. "You're right where you're supposed to be. You're safe. We're safe."

The Soldier gave a small glare over the top of Darcy's head at Steve. Vibranium fingers pressed a little more possessively into Darcy's skin. She was HIS Pet. Not this capitalist monstrosity's. He would share her with the others in his head but he didn't want to with anyone else. The giant idiot on the other side of Darcy only smiled sleepily in response.

"We love you," Steve promised. "Every part of you. Even the one that wants to murder me a little."

"SHHHHHHHHHUT UP," Darcy hissed, not bothering to open her eyes. She began rocking back and forth in miniscule movements on the bed, clearly working herself up to turning herself over so that her front was plastered to Bucky's front and her ass was now pressed against Steve. She didn't open her eyes still, but managed to get a drool covered, firm kiss to the scruff on Bucky's chin. "Soldier, if Rogers opens his mouth again before it's time to wake up, you have my full permission to whoop his ass."

"Yes, Pet," the Soldier dutifully replied, kissing the tip of her nose and feeling warm all the way through his body in response. He looked back up at Steve, less murderous and more confused as the man who had been his enemy cuddled back in close to Darcy, his left arm going up and over her, his hand finding a natural resting spot low on Bucky's waist.
The touch felt just as warm and right as Darcy's touch had been, which was enough to set the Soldier to confusion again.

Steve snorted and muttered under his breath, "And you say I spoil her rotten."

'He does spoil her rotten, the no good punk. Always givin' into her at the first pout of that kisser. Without us, she'd lead him straight into some kind of disaster.'

"Go back to sleep, Soldier," Steve mumbled in very, very bad Russian, stopping the voice in the Soldier’s head from speaking further aside from a very short, but fond

‘Aw, fuck off, Punk.’

He didn't want to. He didn't want to follow orders from anyone anymore, for one. But there was also the warmth he was feeling. It was soft and giving and he never thought he could have it even after he’d experienced it with the love of his sweet Pet. But here it was, in a badly decorated bedroom, from his Pet and the last person on Earth who the Soldier could have ever imagined receiving it from.

He had spent two years running from Steve Rogers. Because as much as he knew that decades ago Steve had loved him, he knew that Steve could never love him as he now was. And he probably would have kept running until he met his sweet Pet, his beautiful Darcy. She lay between them, deep in sleep once more, drool wet against his chest. She was the cement between the old and the new, the good and the bad.

His hand went from the small of Darcy's back to cross over Steve's arm, touching his back gently before pressing with a quick insistent touch that had the trio impossibly smashed together in bed. It was warm. And it was right. And the sun came in through the cracks in the hideous orange curtains and illuminated the three (and a half) people in a ethereal amber glow until the Soldier felt his eyes go closed and sleep take him over once more.

Asskicker Meadows

Natasha sat right down on one of the rocking chairs that was outside of Steve's (and probably
Darcy's) new abode, staring at the envelope in her hands. Sam, who had been genuinely interested in finding something good to eat, had to stop at the end of the walkway from the house to the main street when he realized his companion was no longer walking with him.

"Really, Romanoff?" Sam questioned from the walkway.

"This is---this is important," Natasha insisted as she ripped into the envelope and saw the page full of hardly legible code.

"No, this is you, being you," Sam corrected. "So it's a letter from the spokesman for L'oreal's super hold hairspray, guaranteed to hold while you kill your way through the centuries..."

"How long have you been holding on to that one?" Natasha asked shrewdly, sparing him a glance.

"Since I saw his hair doing that swish swish thing in Bucharest," Sam admitted freely and without one ounce of shame. He sighed when Natasha looked back down at the letter. "Alright, here's the deal, Nat...pay attention to me for the next fifteen seconds, please."

She sighed heavily and managed to pry her eyes away again to look at Sam. His expression was not playful, as she had thought it was going to be. He looked stern, serious and absolutely hurt and disappointed. Natasha immediately put the letter back in the envelope before getting up from the rocking chair and approaching him with a forced evenness and calm.

"I know, that part of your deal is to play things from all angles, I get that. I do. I'm not mad at having to fight you when you were on Tony's side," Sam insisted. He gave a rueful glimpse of a smile and shrugged, "And I appreciate that it didn't take you too long before you came and rescued my ass."

"I'm---I---I'm sorry," Natasha offered, not knowing what he wanted to hear at that moment.

She hated not knowing what people wanted her to say.

"So---getting put into a max security prison puts some things into perspective," Sam reached his hand the scant inches they were seperated and brushed her fingers with his own. "This is me, putting it on the line. I want us to be real. Not just a random hookup when you need to take the edge off."
"Don't try and placate me with your smooth words and your pretty face," Sam laughed a little then. "The thing is, I'm going to need more from you, and I don't know if you're capable of giving it. I hope you're capable of giving it. But I don't know."

Natasha furrowed her brow. She was not used to having her capability questioned. Not in the least.

"And maybe I need some reassurance. And reassurance could mean, holding off on a mystery that will KEEP for an hour while we get a square meal in us," Sam shrugged. "Some of that will mean admitting in public that you like all of this---"

He gestured really slowly up and down his body.

"Like ALL of this," he continued. He pointed to his mouth. "Right here."

Then his neck. "Right here."

His chest. "I know you like this, you pet it when you're riding this---"

"Alright, stop, there are children and old people present," Natasha stopped him from pointing lower. She took a deep breath and squared her shoulders. "I'm willing to put in the work. Because I like you. A lot. When you're not talking all the time."

"Nice, nice," Sam nodded like he was seriously considering her words. "I talk a lot though."

"You noticed that?" Natasha sassed as she began walking down the lane back to the main recreational building, where there was bound to be some kind of food.

"Yeah," Sam smiled at her, grabbing for her hand as they walked down the lane side by side. "So, what's in that letter from Sleeping Icy that you want to read so much? I mean aside from some
Hydra ass who donated sperm. Instructions on how to handle Steve's nap friend? Like, should we not feed her after midnight, not get her wet---"

"Not so much that," Natasha shook her head. "It's more about who the other biological contributor to her baby is. Barnes found an answer and wanted to give it to me to give to her."

Sam sighed and rolled his eyes, hoping that it conveyed how over this particular mystery he was. Steve had not seemed to be too concerned about the sperm donor, so Sam didn’t see why it was so important.

“It’s someone who has had the super soldier serum in the last century,”’ Natasha said quietly, knowing that Sam knew that list of potential candidates was very, very short. “I’m sure of it.”

"Someday, somehow, I’ll manage a life where my needs come before others' drama," he muttered before beginning to walk faster. "You get to that room we debriefed in, and I'll find us food while you decode Buster Bark's letter."

Darcy and Steve slept for ten straight hours.

Natasha had returned, with Sam hot on her heels after an hour of sleep, and he'd been pretending to read the materials that Retta had put under his nose about their current home and the mission statement of all the retirees, but in actuality, he'd just been staring at Natasha as she wore a hole in the shag green carpeting of the living room.

Erik had been fretting that the girl had not had a proper meal to eat in days at that point, and took over the kitchen in the house they had crashed in at about hour three. At hour three and seven minutes, the smart house alerted Retta to a small fire on the stove and Erik was quickly joined by someone who knew what they were doing around a kitchen. Thuy Nguyen was one of the younger members of Asskicker Meadows (the name Laura had branded them with was sticking, apparently). She'd been seventeen years old when she'd applied to be a dishwasher in Maria Stark's New York Mansion, and by the time they had died, she was thirty-nine and was their official chef.

And she had somehow managed to teach both Maria Stark and Erik Selvig how to boil water without burning down the house, so all in all, she was a miracle worker.
Wanda timidly knocked on the door at hour five, looking lost and tentative, but not so terribly despondent as she had been on the Raft. While Darcy and Steve still slept, despite the enticing smells of freshly baked bread, bacon sizzling, and coffee brewing, Wanda sat reading through the ‘Little House on the Prairie’ books that had been found in the living room.

Each hour, brought a new guest to the house where Darcy and Steve slept blissfully unaware of the oddly festive party that had broken out beneath them. The sun set in the sky, and senior citizens and newly released war criminals mingled and ate far too much sugar and salt than their doctors would have recommended. But still Darcy and Steve slept soundly.

"Orange jam?" Wanda furrowed her brow and looked at Clint and Laura for assistance.

"Marmalade?" Clint wrinkled his nose. "Disgusting."

"She wants it," Wanda had a small smile on her face. The young woman had gathered quite a bit of information about the other young woman, Darcy, from the very entertaining debrief run by an eighty-seven year old man named Big Paulie. Big Paulie was a head shorter than her, and looked to be nothing but bones and wrinkled skin, but he had a sharp voice and a sharper Bostonian accent, and he’d given them all they needed to know (that Darcy had allowed) in less than half an hour.

Where Wanda had been fooled by Hydra, sold a dream of revenge against an enemy, her torture painted as a necessary step to success, Darcy had been given no choice in the matter. Wanda felt for her immensely, and found it interesting that their powers were similar in a way, or in the way that they both revolved around feelings. Darcy could force a feeling she was experiencing on a person. Wanda could identify and magnify feelings already within a person.

Clint had decreed that the two should never be allowed to collaborate and Wanda had immediately decided that she WANTED to.

"She's dreaming about it," Wanda smiled slightly, trying not to be invasive into Darcy's mind, but only reading the tendrils of thought the expectant mother and paramor of Bucky Barnes was sending out. Wanda turned a subtle pink color and shook her head, putting up her blocks quickly. "Also dreaming about other things."

"Get it girl," Laura snapped her fingers before turning and going towards the kitchen to see if Thuy had any marmalade.
Wanda smiled, happy that they could try to make Darcy happy. She had saved their asses from the Raft, and for that Wanda would forever be grateful. She looked towards Natasha, who was standing by the front window, green eyes surveying the whole road. Sam sat nearby, stealing looks every once in a while at the Widow, who obviously had a lot on her mind.

But she seemed HAPPY, just around the edges. So it couldn't be too bad, whatever was stuck in her brain at the moment.

"Steve's awake," Wanda announced as she felt that alert mind jump into wakefulness, sharp and vibrant as ever. The Scarlet Witch had felt the same as she had last Christmas, when she and Sam and Vision had been eagerly awaiting Steve to wake so they could give out and open presents, like a bunch of children waiting for their parents to wake up.

She went pink again and put up more blocks so that she didn't feel whatever Steve was feeling.

"That sly old dog," Clint muttered under his breath, reading Wanda's reaction perfectly. "Really, him and Barnes have quite a system going. They should patent it."

Chapter End Notes

I think we're going to get a big secret revealed at the end of the next chapter. Probably.
*winkiest winky face*

Thanks so much for reading! Thanks for the lovely unwavering support. you guys mean the world to me.
Happy Wednesday!

Are you ready? Are you? Are you sure????

Warnings for: ABSOLUTELY ADORABLE DARCY AND STEVE MUSH.

Oh yeah. And a huge ass reveal, 30 chapters in the making.

Are you sure you're ready?

Thanks to the beta babes, phoenix-173, dntpanic42 and queenspuppet/ragwitch.

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Chapter Thirty-One: The Sperm Donor

Asskicker Meadows

Steve was awake before he blinked his eyes open. All of his senses were sharp immediately as they usually were when he managed to get a good night's rest (not often). The smell filtering through his nose was faded, but was undoubtedly the shampoo that Darcy used, melded with whatever perfume still remained on her person. It was a sweet smell, like honeysuckle that would grow impossibly out of cracks in concrete back in the hot nights of late June in Brooklyn. He remembered sitting on a stoop in the dark, leaning against Bucky as they watched the summer sun fade into brilliant colors before cool blue night took over completely.

Those warm and happy memories were now sharing the smell of honeysuckle with this moment. There was a wet spot on his shirt, right above his heart, and it was because Darcy had her face pressed against him there. His arms were full of her, wrapped around her tight, because she calmed a little when she was wrapped up tight.

His fast working brain did not gloss over the fact that she would be held even more tightly if Bucky were also in the bed with them. They could bracket her small, soft body, giving her all the warmth and tight confines she could want. Her breasts pressed into his side, one of her hands was tightly
fisted around his belt buckle, while the other was stuffed under his body.

The hard swell of her belly, too small and too new to move with the life she carried, was a comfortable weight pressing into his waist. He opened his eyes then and stared down at the mess of brown curls obscuring his view. He blew out a quick breath to get the most invasive strands out of his face and smiled at the pretty picture she made, wrapped up in his arms.

"A fella could get used to this," Steve whispered.

Darcy stirred slightly at that, squirming in her sleep before turning so that she was nearly laying on top of him, her leg hitching up over his as her face pressed right into his chest. Steve simply smiled, soaking it in.

Bucky was safe. Wakanda would be safe for him. And he was well cared for, and Shuri had promised it would just be a few weeks. And Steve had Darcy right there, firmly held in his arms. Despite his painful fracture with Tony, and despite the fact that he was a wanted fugitive, and despite the fact that for the first time in a very long time he was once again, Steve Rogers instead of Captain America...

There was a bright side and it was Darcy Lewis.

His stomach growled and Darcy's quickly followed, nearly as loud. As nice as cuddling was, and it was, Steve figured he could do this all day if he was allowed to, they had to eat. He couldn’t remember the last time he ate something substantial and he was sure Darcy was in the same boat. And he didn’t know much about pregnant women, but he knew they needed to eat.

"Sweetheart," Steve whispered, holding her extra tight with one arm so that the other could gently begin to move hair out of her face.

"No, you get the fuzz," Darcy mumbled in her sleep, then bit his pectoral playfully, humming a content and happy noise right after, like she had just taken a bite of something really tasty.

"Okay Tiger, I'll get the fuzz," Steve promised, unable to contain the happy, amused smile stretching his lips while he pet her hair.

"Y'better," Darcy mumbled around a mouthful of Steve's muscle.
"Ease up, Tiger, those are sharp," Steve couldn't help but grin as Darcy let up for a second before biting about half an inch to the right, getting a mouthful of t-shirt and skin between her teeth in a playful pinch.

"Yum yum yum," Darcy answered before biting again, then promptly going right back into deep sleep, his t-shirt still between her lips.

"Christ, you're adorable," Steve sighed, knowing that there was no use in trying to put the brakes on. He was going to fall for her in the next heartbeat and there was nothing he wanted to do to slow it down. He wouldn't try to rush her and her decisions, but he would do his very best to court her, to prove to her that he was worth her time, that he could offer her happiness and worship and all the warmth his heart had to offer.

He may not have impressed any of the girls that had been interested in what Bucky was selling them back in the forties, but he liked to think that he had a little more charm to him now, not limited to the muscular, tall body he had. He immediately went into strategy mode, plotting out his best options of courting her properly and it wasn't until his stomach growled again five minutes later, then hers, that he stopped building romantic scenarios in his brain that would prove to her that he might be worth a little of her affection.

"Darcy," Steve murmured. "Let's go get some food in us."

He laughed when she bit into his chest again in answer, clearly having all the food she needed right under her body.

"Easy, Tiger, easy," Steve couldn't help the way his whole body rumbled with chuckles that had her easing up on biting him and blinking well rested eyes lazily up at him.

"Marmalade?" she asked with a sleep soaked, scratchy hopefulness.

"Yes, let's go find you marmalade," Steve suggested. He slowly eased up on the tight embrace of her and simultaneously helped the both of them sit up. "You sleep well, Tiger?"

"Huh?" Darcy blinked at him. "I mean, yeah. Sure. You...you are cuddly and good and warm."
"Best review I ever got," Steve nodded, his mouth twisted into a happy little smirk.

"Did we time travel into 1974?" Darcy looked around at the frightening decor surrounding them. Garish orange (but very comfortable) bedding. Terrifying wallpaper that looked like art deco and bright paisley print had an abomination of a monster child and then murdered him on the wall. She pressed herself into Steve more so that she could look down at the rug underneath the bed, and sure enough it was a plush, muted lime green color.

"We're at a very special retirement community," Steve explained. "I think they appreciate this sort of aesthetic."

"So, do you have like, a membership here cause you're old?" Darcy asked, trying to appear serious, but failing a little as her eyebrows arched slightly with teasing. "Special in like, only the oldest of retirees can live here?"

"Alright, Tiger, you continue being a smartass," Steve nodded with some self-deprecation as he got up and out of the bed and meandered towards the en suite bathroom. "I'm going to look for a bathroom before finding us food."

"If the walls are wood paneled in there and the toilet has a cover of that shag carpet on it, knock twice!" Darcy called out. She dissolved into giggles when two knocks rung out.

Steve wound up taking a shower. In the (hideously decorated) bathroom, he saw that there were two stacks of clothing sitting there, along with a pile of toiletries that looked to be closer to toiletries from his own era than from Darcy's. He couldn't remember the last time he had seen Halo brand shampoo. He hoped Darcy wouldn't mind a few old fashioned things.

He chuckled to himself as he lathered himself in Ivory soap. She definitely didn't mind old fashioned things, as she obviously had no problem with Bucky. And she might even be quickly warming up to him. He knew that he still had a lot of things to make up to her, though. Steve couldn't help but blame himself for her time with Hydra. He'd failed her, but was determined to make it up to her now.

The sound of the toilet flushing had him jumping in place in the shower and the warm water of the shower turned scalding enough to have him cursing and scrambling away from the spray.
"Whoops."

The small word drifted to Steve in the shower and he realized that there was only lightly frosted
plexiglass between his nude form and Darcy's wide eyed gaze as she stood in front of the sink,
staring in at the shower.

"Sorry?" she offered, her voice sounding scratched and not at all sorry.

He saw through the distorted glass that she took a step towards the shower and turned her head to
the right in eager appraisal.

"You peepin' on me, Tiger?" Steve questioned playfully, after he swallowed down his initial
reaction to be a little shy. His statement still came out sort of hesitant, and he hoped that she might
find it a little charming.

"Yup. I forgot for a minute that you were you and not---" she trailed off and shrugged. "But if it
had been him, he'd have drug me in with him...so."

"Huh, that must be a Winter Soldier thing, then," Steve put the soap down on the shelf before
ducking his head under the spray again, keeping one eye open enough to watch her as she took
another step forward and leaned forward as if trying to make out things clearer. "Buck hated
sharing a bath or shower back in the day. It made him think of the dust bowl too much, when
people HAD to share baths and showers."

"The Soldier said that it was efficient to clean and debauch at the same time," Darcy confirmed, so
close to the shower door that her nose was almost touching it. "It really wasn't, but neither of us
were gonna complain."

Steve couldn't help his body's response to her proximity, and she surely saw the changing state of
affairs as he stood there rinsing out his hair. He knew the exact moment she saw it too, because he
was hit with a second wave of HER arousal that had him humming low in appreciation.

"Sweetheart, you're gonna have to clear out for a little," Steve rasped out weakly.
"I need to shower too, and it'd be efficient," Darcy whispered, her voice hushed but clearly eager. "Not by saving time at all, but because of the principle of it."

Steve laughed and cracked the shower door just slightly so that he could look out at her. Darcy's cheeks were red, her pupils were blown and that perfect, juicy bottom lip of hers was caught between her teeth. She was gorgeous and beautiful and he wanted nothing more than to take that bottom lip of hers and soothe the impressions of her teeth with his tongue.

"I think we should have a few dates before that happens, just so you can be sure you don't get buyer's remorse," Steve offered softly. He gave her a genuine little upturn of his lips and managed to catch her gaze with his own, looking at her as intently as he could through a one inch gap. "And sorry to tell you, Tiger, but once you're sold on me, I think you're going to be stuck with me for a while. And by a while I probably mean forever."

"Okay," Darcy whispered, completely mesmerized at the thought of it. Then something must have hit her brain quickly. She looked a little confused for a moment before shrugging again. "Whatsit, Tiger?" Steve asked, concerned he had said too much, moved too fast for her liking.

"Where did you get all smooth? Not---not like physically," Darcy clarified quickly, swallowing heavily at the peek of his skin she was getting. "Bucky said you were bad with women, and --- talking to them specifically."

"Yeah, I was," Steve agreed with an amused shake of his head. "But maybe all his lessons finally kicked in in the new century, along with a few really great wingmen and women."

"It's good," Darcy mumbled. "I like it. You flirt---you flirt good and it’s nice. And——"

She squared her shoulders and seemed to access hidden reserves of confidence.

“And I want you to flirt with me a lot. All the time."

"Well then," Steve took a deep breath and nodded. "Gimme a minute, Darcy."
"Just a minute?" she got her sass back pretty quickly, quirking an eyebrow at him dubiously.

"Yeah, I'm terrible in bed, thought Bucky would have told you that, at least," Steve sassed back and was happy to have done it, because Darcy's resulting giggle was the thing dreams were made of, all anticipatory and excited, like she'd finally found someone that might be able to keep up.

She skedaddled quick then, but not before reaching for the toilet and flushing again, cackling with absolute joy when Steve yelped at the hot water once more.

"Two minutes, Rogers, I haven't had a hot shower in a while!"

Sam watched Natasha carefully as Darcy and Steve made their way down the half flight of stairs from the bedrooms to the main floor of the split level home. Natasha, who he had never seen so keyed up and tense, had stopped moving immediately, standing in the middle of the living room decorated like a page out of Better Homes and Gardens from 1971. Green eyes went wide and plush lips parted as she stared at Steve as he blushed, holding Darcy's arm gently before looking around.

"Captain Buttmu---Steve," Scott waved from the kitchen. "They made pigs in a blanket! Also? Your house has a rec room downstairs and it's a pretty sweet setup. Or I mean, the kid in me in 1982 thinks it's a pretty sweet setup. It's pretty amazing, and I call dibs on the bean bag chair when we have ragers."

"Ragers," Darcy repeated. She narrowed her eyes at Scott playfully, then looked to Clint. "How do the middle aged rage, exactly?"

"We sob and then get electrocuted by pretty ladies," Clint waggled his eyebrows at her before tossing a pig in a blanket in the air so that Scott could try to catch it with his mouth.

"We have marmalade," Laura announced.

"How did you---" Darcy looked to Steve in confusion, who only shrugged.
"That's my fault," Wanda held up her hand slightly as she looked down at the toast she had been helping to make. She looked shy and shrugged. "I can't help it, you were sending out thoughts. Regarding marmalade."

Darcy furrowed her brow and shrugged, "And marmalade was what you got? Not Steve's butt in the shower?"

Clint sprayed Scott right in the face with the mouthful of beer, which was unfortunate, because Scott's mouth had been gaping open in regard to the idea of Steve's butt in the shower. Wanda laughed and nodded in confirmation.

"When it became---more explicit, I put up blocks. For privacy," Wanda explained.

Steve shrugged at Clint's astonished look at him as they made their way into the yellow paisley and wood paneled themed kitchen, guiding Darcy with a hand to the small of her back so they could get to the food. He picked up a pig in a blanket and threw it into his own mouth before nodding in approval. He offered one to Darcy, but she wrinkled her nose in distaste and gave no explanation as she picked up a piece of toast and then took a jar of marmalade. She used the piece of bread like a tortilla chip and the marmalade as salsa, filling her mouth quickly.

"I'm---I wanted to thank you," Wanda said quietly, feeling suddenly shy. Her eyes darted to Steve, who got a soft smile on his face, despite his cheeks bulging with pigs in blankets.

"Huh?" Darcy asked around a mouthful of toast and marmalade. She saw an assembled club sandwich that had been cut into triangles and had a toothpick stuck out of it. She reached and quickly unassembled the sandwich and grabbed the bacon, placing it on top of a piece of toast that was already drowning in marmalade.

"You saved us," Wanda answered.

"Oh yeah, that's right. Thanks man," Scott chimed in as he finally stopped wiping the inside of his mouth out with a napkin. He gave Darcy a big smile and said, "I mean, the old dude told us how we got out at the team huddle earlier today, and that was totally awesome of you. It was ROUGH down there, and I'm saying that as someone who knows what real prison was like. I mean, I'd GLADLY go back to real prison, that Raft was terrible. You have no idea."
Steve's smile faded and he stopped feeding his face in order to observe Darcy carefully. She had no idea what the Raft was like, to be sure. She knew of more terrible conditions. And she had spent two years under those conditions while the people in the room, most of them anyway, were the ones that should have rescued HER. And here they were, she had rescued them instead, with zero hesitation on her part.

Steve's gaze went a little dreamy, despite the frown he was sporting. Equal parts admiration and worship went to battle with his inherent need for guilt and self-flagellation, but in the end, when Darcy turned to him and gave him a shrug, holding out the remnants of sandwiches she had pilfered the bacon out of, her mouth covered with sticky orange marmalade and toast crumbs, the admiration and worship won out. Handily.

He took the sandwich and shoved it in his mouth, before giving her a closed lip smile.

"If there's anything I can do to repay you," Wanda drew Darcy's attention back to her. The younger woman gave Darcy a shy smile. "I have powers similar to yours, if a little on the opposite end of the empathy spectrum. We could help each other."

"That sounds. That sounds nice," Darcy whispered. She couldn't help but beam a gigantic smile when Steve crowded in close to her to get to the club sandwiches, carefully extracting the bacon and placing it on her plate of toast. She blushed as he stayed close, his free hand finding the small of her back and lightly placing his fingers there, a lovely reassuring touch as the kitchen and attached dining room and living room erupted in typical chaos and chatter.

Sam was still watching Natasha, who was staring at Darcy and Steve like she was solving a particularly tricky puzzle. Sam didn't know what Natasha had gotten from that letter. He had been halfway through a box of Eggo waffles from the rec center when Natasha had stood up from the little table she had been working at, looking absolutely astonished and surprised.

She'd taken him by the hand and drug him back to Steve and Darcy's house, waiting it out since then. He had expected to have to clear out the party that had gathered while Darcy and Steve slept, but instead, Natasha stood there, having a clear crisis of conscience. Sam grabbed her by the shoulder and she went with him as he led her back out onto the small porch, sitting her down on the rocker.

"Spill it," Sam demanded.

"I can't do it to him. I can't tell her," Natasha whispered, looking shell shocked.
"Tell who what? Doing what to who now?" Sam shook his head back and forth in confusion at Natasha's current state.

Natasha took a deep breath before turning her face up, green eyes earnest and honest and filled with a sort of hope that Sam wasn't used to seeing from her. She lifted her shoulders once and whispered,

"I can't tell Darcy that Steve is the father of her baby."

Chapter End Notes

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Thanks for reading?
*runs away!*
Happy Wednesday!!!

Warnings for this chapter: unbearable cuteness from Steve and Darcy, Natasha being Natasha (just how I like her).

Thanks to the beta babes, phoenix-173, queenspuppetwriting/ragwitch and dntpanc42!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

**Chapter Thirty-Two: Flutters**

"I can't tell Darcy that Steve is the father of her baby."

Sam's jaw dropped, his entire face turning down at the weight of his jaw hanging loosely. Natasha shrugged again and bunched her hands up into fists in her lap. The weight of it had been weighing heavily on her for hours now. She didn't know how Barnes had managed to keep it a secret during the skirmish in Siberia. Natasha was an expert in keeping secrets, but this was different. The people involved. The relationships. The barely there tendrils of a relationship that were rapidly growing and solidifying between Darcy and Steve.

She wanted to put Darcy's mind at ease. Barnes' coded letter had told her that he had feared the worst, that Darcy's baby was genetically fathered by a super serum monster from over half a century ago. To know that it was Steve instead would surely give her some kind of solace.

But Natasha couldn't know how it would---

Sam finally picked his jaw up and off the floor and took confident steps back into the house, his face set with grim determination. Natasha knew he would clear the entire house of guests and tell Steve and Darcy immediately. She couldn't let that happen.

She gripped his shoulder and yanked back, both of their bodies stumbling off the short step of the porch onto the walkway.
"Dammit Nat!" Sam hissed as she manhandled him with ease.

"You're not going in there and saying anything!" Natasha ordered in a low tone.

"To hell I'm not!" Sam scoffed. "They both deserve to know!"

"No, we can't," Natasha shook her head. "Not yet."

"Are you fucking kidding me right now?" Sam shook his head, swatting her hand off of his shoulder and turning.

Natasha did what any reasonably desperate woman would do with her sort of, possible boyfriend. She tackled him to the ground flipped him onto his back and then straddled his waist as she stared down at him.

"You and I both know Rogers better than anyone else on this Earth save for Bucky Barnes, how do you think he'd react to fathering Darcy's child?" Natasha demanded. She groaned as Sam kicked up with both legs, using his own considerable unenhanced core strength to toss her a bit, giving him enough room to flip them so that he was on top of her, staring down in anger. "Think about it, Sam."

Sam didn't want to answer. He knew that the likelihood of Steve dropping to one knee and begging for Darcy to marry him was high. About fifty percent. But the other fifty percent...given how Darcy became pregnant..

Against her will. Forcibly. And performed by a sick bunch of bastard Nazi's. Steve might go into a shame spiral if he found out that he inadvertently had any part in Darcy's current predicament.

He'd run from her in shame and guilt and ruin the cute little fledgling relationship they currently had going.

Sam could feel the skin just under his right eye ticking in annoyance at the situation he’d found himself in.
"I hate this," Sam sighed, looking deflated. "She should know. That girl has been through hell and back. And she saved us. She deserves some peace of mind."

"Not yet," Natasha whispered. “Please.”

"He should know too, he'd---it might make him happy, happier than anything," Sam insisted.

"And you know just as well as I do, that as happy as it could make him, he might be just as easily devastated that he played any kind of part in what happened to her," Natasha said with gentleness and care.

"How long?" Sam sighed, going boneless on top of Natasha, his forehead dropping to hers, his nose smashed against hers.

"Until running away isn't a viable option for Steve," Natasha offered.

"He wouldn't abandon her," Sam scoffed at the idea of Steve Rogers abandoning the mother of his child.

"Not physically, no," Natasha agreed. "But there are worse ways to leave someone."

“Okay, we keep it from Steve until things are more concrete. Two days, tops,” Sam looked sick at the thought.

“Five days,” Natasha bargained.

“Three ,” Sam had never sounded so forceful and resolute and was happy to see Natasha nod her agreement. “And we’re going to go in there and I’ll get Steve away from Darcy, and you pull her aside and tell her now,”

“Sam !” Natasha huffed out in annoyance. “She is a walking megaphone of emotions. You don’t think Steve is going to feel that revelation come off of her?”
“She deserves to know!” Sam argued.

“She will,” Natasha promised. “But you were the one to tell me that the guard tried to shoot himself in the head based off of what Darcy was sending him. I am not risking putting her in a dark place. I’ll take the blame, I’ll deal with the consequences, but she doesn’t find out until I know she can’t be hurt by it.”

”Alright, fine! Alright!” Sam muttered in defeat, losing all of his fight. “It’s on both of us now though.”

“No, I mean it, I’ll take the blame here. I needed to tell you because---” Natasha trailed off, a look of confusion filtering through her gaze.

“Because you needed someone to listen for once,” Sam suggested. “You needed to unburden, which I don’t need a license to tell you is a good thing.”

“I needed you,” Natasha clarified. She gave him a soft smile and said, “You’re good for me.”

“Yeah, I am. And you and I are going to do our damndest to get them to the point of no return as fast as possible, you get me, Romanoff?” Sam smiled when she arched up into him and pressed her lips to his briefly. “Like I’m talking romantic comedy plots to get them happy and in love in a very short amount of time.”

”Thank you,” she whispered.

”I mean, I’m talking double dates, here,” Sam added quickly. ”Couples retreats. Tandem bicycles.”

”Tandem bicycles. Really?” Natasha wrinkled her nose as much as she could with Sam's pressed against hers.

”Matching sweaters,” Sam threatened.
"It's nearly summer!" Natasha couldn't help but laugh.

"Matching t-shirts, Thing 1," He nudged his nose a little harder into hers.

"Thing 2," she kissed him again.

"Jesus, it's weird," Sam sighed against Natasha's mouth. "Steve Rogers is going to be a daddy. I'm gonna be Uncle Sam."

"Steve Rogers is going to be a what now?"

Natasha and Sam both turned to the voice of one Retta Archie, as she stared down at the two Avengers sprawled out in a compromising position on the manicured lawn. The words she repeated seemed to sink in and for the first time in a long time, Retta looked floored. She put a shaking hand up to her forehead and blew out a long, tenuous breath before a quick, small smile flashed on her face. It lingered while she busied herself with squaring her shoulders and standing as tall as she could, as if she were about to face down a particularly dastardly dragon.

"Looks like I'm going to have to come up with a whole new set of doomsday scenarios. Now stop formicating on the lawn or I'll turn the sprinklers on."

The party at the little house of Rogers and Lewis didn't last very long after Steve and Darcy had woken up, namely because they had woken up a little after seven at night, and most of the residents of Asskicker Meadows had a strict bedtime of 8:45 pm. Soon, it was just down to Darcy and Wanda talking softly as Steve chatted with Retta, Natasha and Sam.

Darcy said something out of the side of her mouth that had Wanda nearly falling out of her chair with laughter and Sam couldn't help but watch in amusement and relief. Wanda had been a shell of herself on the Raft thanks to the brutality of their treatment and the drugs they had shoved through her system. Doctor Carla Rivera had been pulled from her work (begrudgingly) and had set the girl up with a quick flushing iv that had them pushed out of her system in nearly no time, but she had still been subdued.
Wanda was something of a younger sister to him, as they had been equally submerged in all things Avengers at the same time a year ago. They'd iced their sore muscles with stolen bags of frozen vegetables together and they'd planned pranks on Steve together and they'd done their best to derail Natasha's rigorous training schedules to no avail. The last thing he wanted to see was Wanda hurting, and it seemed to Sam that Darcy was just enough of an adorable and funny distraction to stop any hurt from seeping in.

Sam turned back to Steve and saw him staring at Darcy with literal hearts in his eyes and he sucked his teeth to bring Steve back to the conversation.

"Baby Sharon reported in, she's laying low with Coulson's team in Mexico," Retta continued. "We're on lock down right now. No more joyrides. The entire world is looking for all of you, and it's best to stay put."

"But---I---" Steve began, and stopped when Retta cut him off with her meanest, most formidable glare. "---uhm. Date?"

"Rogers, if you are asking me out for a sandwich and a flicker right now, we are going to have one helluva problem," Retta crossed her arms in front of her and arched a wicked eyebrow at the former Captain America as he spluttered and shook his head. "For one, you aren't exactly my type. Your girl over there, now she's a piece and a half and if I were fifty years younger I would decimate you and your boy both for a chance of her looking my way."

"Amen," Natasha muttered, winking at a slack jawed Sam.

"Two, if you don't get your head out of your ass and put in the work to get that girl to fall head over heels in love with you, just as hard as she's fallen for your dumb best friend, well, I'm going to pull out doomsday scenario three-twenty-three," Retta warned.

"You're gonna refreeze me?" Steve asked after a beat of contemplative silence.

"See, this is why you need me. Three-twenty-three isn't refreezing you, it's implementing hypnosis and letting me drive the super soldier cadillac body," Retta disputed.

"You can do that?" Sam looked to Natasha curiously, getting only an innocent look and a shrug in response.
"I want to date her, I want to---to take her out and let her see that I'm---I'm fun," Steve blurted in a whisper.

"Yeah, because when I think of Steve Rogers, I think fun," Sam laughed.

"Explosions are a little fun," Natasha argued.

"Not when they bring a building down on your head," Sam bantered back.

"You got out in time, never sent me a thank you bouquet or anything," Natasha grinned.

"Alright, stop the foreplay, can we please---I know I can't be seen, but what if I wore a cap and some glasses and just---just took her out to a picture or something?" Steve asked, clearly morose and miserable and aiming his best puppy dog eyes at the true leader in charge, Retta.

"The nearest picture house is sixty miles due east, in the state's capitol," Retta answered. "She'd be right in the thick of the worst of it, and she'd be in danger if---"

"She can protect herself," Steve insisted. "You didn't see what she can do, not to the fullest. She’s taken most of the Avengers out on her own already, she'd be safe.”

Retta's smile was catlike, like a feline who had just gotten exactly what she wanted. She shrugged and patted Steve's shoulders, "I'm not really worried about her, but I'm not breaking you out of a high security prison too, not at least until we can get our community mandated twenty-four hours of downtime after a mission. Now, if I were you, I'd use that big, fancy, serum enhanced brain of yours, and figure out a different way to court the pretty girl."

"Take off your shirt," Sam suggested.

"Rip logs in half, Laura said it was a magical sort of thing," Natasha added in a glib tone.

"You know what Romanoff?" Steve glared at Natasha in irritation before he stood back a little and couldn't help the shit eating grin on his face. "Nevermind. I know what I want to do."
"Kiss her and hold her and squeeze her," Sam teased in a high pitched voice.

"Idiot," Steve glared at him. "Course I wanna do all that. But I'll earn it."

"Good," Sam nodded. "And on that note, I'm going to go find the sweet lady who gave me the Eggos earlier. She might know where I can find a little creature comfort."

Natasha rolled her eyes at his wink, but didn't dare even try to glare at Retta when she grabbed her by the shoulders and marched her out of the house after Sam. His old assistant turned retired vigilante turned and gave him a feline smile.

"Have a good night!"

Steve waved them off and turned to see that Wanda was hugging Darcy goodbye, meaning that they would have all the privacy the split level home could afford. Wanda stopped in front of him and hugged him as hard as she could.

"Thank you for coming for us," she whispered very softly as she clung to him.

"Course I would, thank you for everything," Steve said softly. "I'm sorry about Vi---"

"No, it's okay, it's alright," Wanda promised.

"If you need to talk, I'm here, okay," Steve mumbled into her hair.

"Yes, Dad," Wanda smiled softly. She winked at Steve and whispered, "Good luck."

Darcy had been watching the interaction with no small amount of interest, although she tried to appear nonplussed as she gave the kitchen a onceover, making note of things that she might need if she was staying there. And it did appear as though she would be staying there, since Retta had left without showing her to her own house. Darcy didn't mind one bit, really. She hadn't been alone for months, having Bucky right on top of her wherever they went. She was a little scared that she
might have grown a tiny bit codependent.

And Steve wasn't a replacement for Bucky, not by a long shot. It felt different than it had all those months ago when Bucky had rescued her. With Bucky she'd been out of it, disoriented. Sick. Needy. And now, with Steve, she felt strong on her own. She'd proven to everyone that not only could she protect herself, she could help to SAVE others. And while she had never minded the hovering way Bucky would offer his presence and protection, Steve was different and that felt right too. He hadn't kept his distance, but when he had placed his hand on the small of her back earlier, it had felt more like backup instead of holding her up.

She liked it. A lot.

"I don't know about you, but I probably won't be able to sleep again for a little while," Steve admitted, walking towards the kitchen island and reaching out and taking the tray that Erik Selvig had covered up with far too much plastic wrap. He dug out some of the pecan sandies that Erik had assisted Thuy in making (he basically retrieved trays from the oven when they were ready to remove, only burning himself three times).

"I'm wired and full of energy," Darcy gave him a small, shy smile.

"Well, what do you think we should do for fun?" Steve asked around a mouthful of cookie.

"Bucky and I would bang out the boredom," Darcy said with what Steve figured was definitely characteristic bluntness and a delightfully faulty brain to mouth filter.

"I remember doing that with him too," Steve shook his head as he chuckled. "Winter nights were long."

"No, no, no, don't put those images in my head," Darcy whispered, her eyes huge and full of trepidation. "Not unless you want me sending you all my crazy horny thoughts again."

"Wasn't so bad," Steve insisted. "Felt real nice if I were in a more---forgiving setting."

"Don't worry, I'll send it when I need to," Darcy promised.
"What else did you and Bucky do for fun?" Steve wondered.

"Killed Hydra?" Darcy offered.

"No field trips right now, but I'll work on it, I promise," Steve said earnestly. He blushed a little right on the bridge of his nose and gave a small shrug, reminiscent of how a much smaller Steve Rogers used to move. "A girl like you deserves to be taken out and shown off."

Darcy made a humming noise and bit at her bottom lip as she stared up at him with wide eyes the color of the sea. Steve took a step forward at that, fighting very valiantly against the urge to kiss her again. He nodded and a slow breath passed through his own lips and he offered her a small smile again.

"In lieu of revenge on Hydra, how do you feel about friendly revenge on a specific person who could probably stand to learn a lesson about minding her own business?" Steve offered. His jaw ticked just once and he shrugged, "And who sent along what Bucky used to dose you back in Paris?"

Darcy's eyes lit up with delight and she clapped her hands together with palpable excitement.

"Oh my god, Rogers, you are going to be so much more fun than I thought you were!"

After all was said and done and procured and set up, it had taken them two hours. Steve had known exactly where to go, who to shake down for extra parts, how to set it up, and the exact moment they would need to be back. Darcy wasn't used to taking a backseat in shenanigans, and found that he actively involved her in every step of the process.

He'd eagerly encouraged her in shaking down Herb for enough power to get their contraption up and running. He'd asked for advice and input in the nuts and bolts of it, treating her every suggestion like it was from a nobel prize winning scientist. He'd eagerly gotten down on his knees so that she could climb up on to his shoulders to reach up high to screw in various apparati.

It had been two of the most enjoyable (non murdering/non sex related/non Bucky) hours that Darcy could remember in a long time.
Who could have known that Steve Rogers was so good at petty revenge?

"This reminds me of the time me and Buck spent a whole night in the woods of Italy, working at a rig to funnel Dum Dum's night gas right from his ass straight into Phillip's tent," Steve chuckled as he held onto Darcy's knees gingerly while he walked away from the porch of the house they'd set up their simple machinery.

"Just how bad was Dum Dum's gas?" Darcy pondered, placing her hands on top of Steve's head for balance now that she was no longer reaching up and installing a lever system on a front porch. She was in no hurry to get down from her perch. Not only could she see so much more from up so high, but also---it was very comfortable, and his hands were warm on her jean clad thighs in the cool, dark spring night.

"Phillips thought he was dying," Steve chuckled. "Spent a whole twelve hours in the infirmary tent insisting he'd had a stroke. Gave us plenty of time to go and run that mission."

"Naughty vigilantes," Darcy speared her hands in his hair. "Not much has changed in the new millenia, then."

"Hey now, I'm not a---well, I guess I will be," Steve considered it before shrugging. "Can't wait to get back out there and punch the first Hydra agent I can find."

Darcy's fingers massaged his scalp a little in response to that and Steve nearly missed a step, clinging to her thighs a little harder. They were plush thighs, warm around his ears and he didn't need her sending any impure thoughts at him to start his arousal ramping up again.

"I want---" Darcy began before quickly trailing off. She was still running her hands through his hair, probably not conscious of what she was doing.

Steve was conscious of it though, every scratch of her fingernail on his scalp was sending little electric shocks down his back that were thrilling and felt amazing. He immediately became determined to walk around all day with her on his shoulders like this. He also thought of what it would feel like for her to yank on his hair while his face was buried between her soft, full thighs, but immediately tried to tamp down on that, lest he go completely useless with need.

"Hmm? What's that, sweetheart?" Steve asked as he meandered towards the abandoned
community center that served as Asskicker Meadows' base of operations. "You hungry?"

"Can we get plums? I want to bake a cake," Darcy admitted distractedly before yawning.

"I'll ask whoever Retta has in charge of acquisitions to get you whatever you need," Steve promised. "Sleepy?"

"Yeah, which is good, I guess. I should get back on this time zone's cycle," Darcy admitted as Steve immediately changed his course, heading back to the little house they had woken up in just five hours ago. "And I want to be up early enough to watch the shenanigans."

"I'll be sure to wake you up," Steve promised. He quickly made it to the front porch of the split level they were sharing and hesitated on dropping to his knees so Darcy could dismount from his shoulders. But he did, and she took her hands out of his now mussed hair and put her feet back on solid ground again. He remained on his knees and looked up at her with a nervous smile, his gaze made soft by whatever he was feeling as he looked up at her: hope, nervousness, desire. "Uhm---so, sleep?"

"Right, I mean, there are other bedrooms, I don't have to---sleep on you," Darcy put bluntly before biting her bottom lip again.

"Oh." Steve was unable to hide how disappointed that one syllable was. He quickly checked his reaction and gave her an encouraging smile. "If the room we slept in is what you want, I mean---I can bunk elsewhere. Or if you don't want me in this house---"

"Woah, woah, and really just---woah," Darcy shook her head very insistently, her expressive eyes going a little big with worry and fright at the idea of him shacking up elsewhere.

Steve automatically reached out his hands and placed them on her shoulders in response to the sudden spike of fear emanating from her. He hesitated for one second before pulling her into a very warm, very tight embrace until the fear faded. When it did, he only pulled away far enough to look down at her face and give her the warmest and most supportive smile he could.

"Leaving you here alone in this house would level me in the worst of ways," he said sincerely. "I know it’s soon and I don’t want to scare you off, but I want to keep close to you, and---and I want to spend all of my time with you."
"Awesome," Darcy whispered, his frank charm causing her to go into a daze of sorts. "Shower time together too?"

"Oh Tiger," Steve murmured, his eyes going half lidded as he stared down at her.

"For efficiency," Darcy's eyes fluttered closed as she angled her face upwards.

"Sam said it's three dates," Steve swallowed. "Until---you know, shared shower time."

"Well, I mean---this is our second date," Darcy reasoned. "Because breaking your friends out of ocean jail was the first date."

"Yeah," Steve whispered, his lips landing on her forehead and lingering before he angled his head down with intent, the air coming out of her parted lips was warm and moist on his face.

"You can kiss at the end of a second date, if it was enjoyable and if you want to," Darcy offered. "Or at least, a few years ago, that was what was acceptable. Times might have changed."

Steve's lips hovered just in front of hers, but he wasn't closing the distance. His eyes were searching hers for some kind of hint that she didn't want this attention. He felt a warmth spread through his entire body when he found nothing but starry eyed desire and wonderment.

"I told you next time we kissed, it'd be cause you just couldn't stand not doing it," Steve reminded her.

"Yeah, you did," Darcy nodded, surging forward and pressing lips against his.

The kiss was different than their first. It wasn't flavored with the hint of desperation from before, when Darcy had spent so long worried about Bucky and him by default. It was a needy thing though, the kind of need that made something inside Steve's gut twist in an entirely pleasant way. Darcy's lips were the things dreams were made of, pillowy and soft, tasting of sweet jam, and talented well beyond her years and experience.

One kiss became two and then three and Steve could feel everything in him breaking and
crumbling to pieces in the best way as he took a step back and let his back hit the pole of the porch, feeling that soft body of hers pressing against him more, crowding him delightfully as he sat against the railing, his knees parting and giving her a space to settle into. Her hands were at the small of his back, gripping the edge of his t-shirt, her nails giving the slightest of scrapes to his sensitive skin that caused a full bodied shiver to go through him.

"Guh," he managed to get a sound out as they pulled away from each other, lips red and kiss bruised and panting breaths between. "You're a helluva kisser, Tiger."

"Thanks," she whispered, leaning in to kiss him again, softer and slower this time. She pulled back reluctantly and gave him the smile of a timid teenage girl, necking for the first time and loving it. "You're not so bad yourself."

Steve grinned into the next kiss, his arms tightening their embrace of her body until her stomach was pressing hard into his. Steve had not been kissed like this, truly kissed like this, enthusiastically and for the sheer enjoyment of it and not because one of them was so glad to be out of Hydra's tortuous grasp, and not because the world might be ending, and not because they were being chased by Hydra posing as Strike team members, for a very long time.

There was joy in every firm press, every time he got to take that bottom lip of hers between his, every time his nose pressed hard against hers, every time a sigh went between them. He could kiss her for days, if he was allowed. Forever, if they could manage it.

He felt a flutter of something, but it wasn't in his own body. It was coming from HER and she stood back with a gasp.

"It moved, holy shit, it moved, the little bastard moved!" Darcy gasped out, putting both hands on her stomach. "What the hell---that was the---that was so weird."

"It moved?" Steve grinned, putting up his own hands with a hopeful, questioning look to her. He couldn't help but be pleased when she grabbed onto both of his hands and placed them on the little swell of baby she carried. "That was the baby?"

"It wasn't like a kick, or anything, just sort of a really heavy flutter?" Darcy tried to explain.

"Yeah, that's a good way to describe it," Steve nodded. He answered her questioning look with a happy shrug, his expression full of delighted sunshine. "You kind of broadcast it to me. It was---
amazing."

"Do it again, you little bastard," Darcy demanded, moving both her and Steve's hands all over.

Steve bent over and kissed her lips again, before moving his firm presses of affection to her cheek, then jaw and neck. The flutter went through both of them then and Steve couldn't help but laugh, the joyous sound feeling foreign and strange.

"Either they're angry about you kissing me, or they highly approve, I can't tell," Darcy shrugged.

"I hope you like it, Tiny Person, cause I'm gonna be doing it a lot," Steve announced. "Whenever your mama lets me, I'm gonna be kissing her. Your Pop's gonna have to wait in line too."

Darcy blushed at that, clearly pleased. She shrugged and said, "So, the Prison guy said there was a rec room downstairs?"

"Huh?" Steve blinked at her in confusion.

"I mean, I'm not that tired anymore---and you know, rec rooms are kind of made for---macking," Darcy gave a coy little smile before leaning in and kissing his lips briefly. "And I'm kind of terrified that one of these senior citizens is going to wake up and tell us to get off their lawn. ---And it'd count as like, another half date, at least."

"Hold on," Steve advised her before bending and literally sweeping her off of her feet into a bridal carry and running quickly into the house.

Steve knew that she had been worried and scared about Bucky. He knew she'd felt like she'd been abandoned, that she was alone. He had been on that plane to see how deep and painful and dangerous her sadness was. And at that moment, he didn't have to feel the giddiness coming off of her to know that her mirthful laughing was real. He'd given her a small piece of joy back and she'd given it back to him tenfold.

Bucky was absolutely right. Steve was going to love her.
Chapter End Notes

Okay, I'm going to ask for a HUGE favor from you. If you feel the need to scream about Natasha, Sam, or Retta's decision to stay silent here, I'm going to ask that you take the biggest, fluffiest pillow in your house and scream into that. I appreciate that something I write can make you passionate, but when you scream into the comment box about how Natasha wouldn't shouldn't etc, it gives me the idea that you think I'm not writing the character correctly.

And if you FEEL that I'm not writing the character correctly I'd advise not torturing yourself by reading it anymore.

But in all honesty, please scream into a fluffy pillow and not the comment box. Thank you so so so so much for reading and respecting my ultra fragile ego!!!
Chapter Thirty-Three: Shenanigans

Asskicker Meadows

The rec room of the house had full wood paneling, a tangerine colored shag carpet stretching from wall to wall, a VHS set up alongside a very impressive and large flat screen television along with a ridiculously impressive VHS tape collection. There were a pair of bean bag chairs that Steve would absolutely allow Scott to keep his 'dibs' on, as Steve was currently quite happy and content with his own spot on the sectional couch.

Said couch was neon yellow, overstuffed, and parts of it reclined into a fully flat out position. But the section of the large, bright couch that Steve was currently occupying was the deep corner, giving him a perfect view of the television where one of the Disney VHS tapes was playing. Steve wasn't watching the cartoon on the screen though, despite the catchy tunes and the fact that Darcy had declared it her favorite of all time.

But Steve was in the enviable position of having a soft, warm, eager woman perched on top of him as he lay flat on the wide portion of the sofa. She was chatting animatedly, giving him answers to his questions about her life, her likes, her dislikes. And after every three sentences, she'd bend forward and kiss him senseless, raking her hands through his hair.

Steve was disheveled, blushing red with want, and had the stupidest grin he'd ever worn on his
"But what did your nana say when she saw you had dyed your hair blue?" Steve questioned after Darcy pulled away from kissing him voraciously.

"I wore a wig for the three months it took for it to wash out," Darcy grinned. She put her hand over Steve's wet lips when he went to ask another question. "Nope, you've been questioning me all night. All night, including the entire time we set up the contraption outside of the house Romanoff and Wilson were rattling the headboard in."

"You're interesting, though," Steve's words were mumbled against the palm of Darcy's hand.

"My turn to ask questions," Darcy insisted, pulling her hand away and smiling down at him wickedly.

"Buck didn't tell you about me?" Steve sounded a little wounded at that, unable to hide his emotions around her in the least. He leaned into her touch as her fingers stroked the side of his face tenderly, absorbing the comfort her touch automatically gave.

"Oh you know damn well what he would say when I would listen," Darcy narrowed her eyes playfully at him. Steve looked a little blank at that, so Darcy cleared her throat and went into her best Bucky impression, voice purposefully gravelly and the accent far thicker than anything Bucky actually ever sounded like, "Oh babydoll, just you wait till you meet Stevie, now he ain't much to look at, but boy does he make up for it if you know what I mean---got such a pretty mouth on him, and talented too---"

She bent forward again, nipping his bottom lip before kissing him softer and sweeter than her previous enthusiastic and involved kisses had been. His hands pressed into her hips, holding on tight, wordlessly fearful that she might run.

"Hey, what's wrong?" Darcy whispered against his mouth.

"Thought your powers didn't work that way," Steve mumbled, clearly distracted and a little upset.

"I don't need magic serum powers to tell that you just got hit with a sad stick," Darcy assured him.
Steve struggled to come up with the right way to explain his sudden downturn in mood. He didn't want to upset Darcy in the least. And he hardly thought that he had the right to complain about anything. All in all, he was in a great place: safe, warm, enthusiastically kissing the most perfect woman in the world. And the reason for his slight sadness seemed stupid in comparison to what Darcy was dealing with.

"Hey," Darcy brought him out of his thoughts with an insistent press of her finger to the tip of his nose. She tapped him there three successive times and gave him a shy smile, "This dating my boyfriend's boyfriend, is weird, but---enjoyable. I feel like I'm stealing cookies from the cookie jar, but I know I'm not going to get punished for it."

"Am I the cookies or the cookie jar?" Steve wondered impishly.

"Hey!" Darcy pressed his nose again with her fingertip, squashing the tip down. "Don't be adorable for just one minute."

"Can't be done," Steve deadpanned and then his eyebrows did two quick, comical bounces up and down his forehead before a silly little smile settled onto his face.

"Hush you. The thing is, this should feel weird, but it doesn't, and that's nice," Darcy admitted. "But the one thing I want from you is---"

Steve took her moment of hesitation to press his lips to the underside of her finger before promising, "Whatever you want, sweetheart, it's yours."

"I just want honesty, and everything out in the open," Darcy proposed. "I think it's the only way the three of us is going to work."

"I think you're right," Steve agreed.

"So I mean, verbal diarrhea is what's needed here, dude," Darcy nodded. "You can FEEL what I'm feeling, but I need to know what's going on in that antique brain. It's---it's one of the things that I didn't get with Bucky, and maybe that's why he left. He knew everything I was feeling, but he didn't tell me enough about what he was thinking."
Steve sat up at that, not displacing her in his lap, but with their current arrangement, they were nearly eye to eye and he made sure to look right into those beautiful eyes of hers that were showing the traces of new tears. The tears were subdued compared to the spiralling tendrils of feelings she was suddenly giving off: sadness, disappointment, anger, uselessness. He wrapped his arms around her and held her tight.

"I'm gonna knock his block off for doing that to you," Steve promised her.

"I like his head where it is, but you can totally put him in a headlock or something," Darcy sniffled.

"He shoulda called me, and I coulda come to you both a long time ago," Steve whispered.

"I wouldn't have let him," Darcy shrugged. Her face crumpled a bit as she tried not to dissolve into tears. "I was determined to hate you, you know."

"You should," Steve could barely get the words out, and he was staring back at her with honest fear written on every inch of his face. "You should, you should hate me. And I don't deserve this, I don't, but I want it. I'll figure out a way to make it up to you, I swear. But---you should hate me."

"You met me once, Steve," Darcy sighed and suddenly all the tension went out of her body and she seemed to melt into his embrace, every curve pressing into him as he wrapped her up tighter. "I wanted to be mad at everyone for forgetting me."

"I didn't forget you though, I didn't," Steve promised. "I just---I thought about you from time to time, I'd get excited when Foster or Thor would be at the Tower or the upstate facility, thinking maybe they brought you along and I could make a better impression."

"You did?" Darcy's question was soft and hopeful.

"Of course I did, you were so---so beautiful and you sassed Stark, and you, you were interesting," Steve assured her. "But my life was a mess and you didn't seem to have contact with anyone, I thought you probably went off to live a good life."

"Not exactly," Darcy couldn't help a bitter laugh.
"I failed you, I did," Steve admitted.

"No. You didn't. What made you ask about me earlier this year?" Darcy asked softly, her hands finding the back of his scalp, fingers playfully toying with his hair.

"I---Oh hell, Tiger, don't make me say it," Steve whispered.

"Honesty, Steve, remember?" Darcy pulled away enough to look up at him with a smile.

"I was---I was mad. The last radar blip we had gotten on Bucky had been in South America, and it had been too long ago, then all of a sudden he popped up at a Hydra facility in Canada," Steve revealed. "I was frustrated and hurt. He'd purposely skipped a whole country just to avoid me, and I was angry. I wanted him to remember me. I wanted to make him pay attention to me, to stop running away and to come home to me."

Darcy remained silent, but she was looking at him shrewdly, her eyes holding the hint of sparkling amusement. He looked properly ashamed at what he was about to say, and she knew she had been right. She didn't feel even a little bit bad at the torture he was undergoing at the moment, because the payoff was going to be so good for her.

"Nat had just given me a report on Retta, how she'd been taken by Hydra, and wound up here with her entire town of vigilante senior citizens, and I thought about you, and how you never returned the call I made to you a week after meeting you," Steve furrowed his brow as he struggled with the next bit.

"I kept that message though," Darcy told him, giving him a small piece of relief. "I listened to it a lot in a short amount of time, actually, before Hydra got me. You were cute, all Miss Lewis this and Miss Lewis that. And talking about benefits."

"Not cute enough to call back," Steve teased.

"Well, if you had been my boss, I could have never kissed you," Darcy reasoned before leaning into him and doing just that. "Why'd you think of me four months ago, Steve?"

"I was mad at Bucky, and when I thought about you, I thought---I thought that you were the kind of dame that would make him sit up and take notice," Steve admitted, his cheeks growing red from
his shame. "And he'd have to get his shit together and come home or risk me screwing it up with you and losing you before he got a chance to meet you."

"I KNEW IT!" Darcy crowed victoriously, hoping right up and off of Steve's lap and jumping up and down on the hideous yellow couch. "I KNEW IT! I WAS BUCKY BAIT! I KNEW IT!"

"Tiger, what are you going on about?" Steve looked at her in astonishment, shocked that he hadn't offended her at his guilty admission.

"I told Bucky that you were going to use me as Bucky-bait, that you'd flaunt me at him and reel him in," Darcy cackled as she continued to bounce on the couch, her arms raised in victory.

"You aren't mad?" Steve asked hopefully. Her brown curls were floating around her face as she energetically moved up and down on the couch cushions. His eyes did a rapid dart from the gravity defying hair to her chest, which was doing its damndest to bend the laws of physics as well as she bounced. He quickly went back to her face though, his lips pursed with guilt.

"Mad? Why would I be mad? I'm the finest of Bucky-bait, honestly," Darcy stopped bouncing and walked on top of the couch back to Steve before unceremoniously dropping into his lap. She wrapped him up in an embrace, her fingers finding the nape of his neck again, playing with the end of his hair once more. "See, that wasn't so bad, was it?"

"You're either an angel or the most forgiving fool in the world," Steve sighed, every touch she gifted him with threatened to turn him into a happy, boneless pile of mush.

"Both," Darcy nodded. "Look, I bet you're as great with guilt as Bucky is."


"Catholics," Darcy rolled her eyes. "But what good does it do to hold onto it when it's been forgiven?"

"How are you real?" Steve demanded in amazement.
"Bucky thought it was something the serum did to me, I think," Darcy said seriously. "But I've always been like that. When you lose things when you're younger, when you're not given the comforts that other kids get, like a bike at Christmas or you know, parents---"

Steve nodded in understanding and held her a little tighter. They both took in a shaky breath at the tiny flutter in Darcy's stomach that seemed to answer to both of them.

"You either get angry and bitter and lash out, or you realize that sometimes life just happens, and you can be angry, but then you have to do something," Darcy reasoned. "And I didn't like being angry and bitter, it made me break out."

"So do you think that will extend to everyone?" Steve wondered diplomatically.

"Like Jane?" Darcy sighed heavily. "I thought that she cared about me."

"I'm sure she did," Steve nodded, eager to give her some kind of peace of mind. He kissed her temple with extreme affection. "How could anyone not care about you once they met you?"

"She didn't ask about me, she didn't know me enough to know that walking away from her wasn't something I would do, unless it was against my will," Darcy sighed.

"And Thor?" Steve wondered, knowing that Natasha had alluded to Thor in order to stoke up Darcy's sadness prior to their infiltration of the Raft. He felt it again, a stab of sadness that he wanted to soothe away from her.

"I thought I meant something to them," Darcy whispered.

Steve could feel his breath stuttering in his lungs, and not in that lovely way it did when he was kissing her. It was painful and gut wrenching. He kissed her temple, her forehead, her cheeks. He kissed every beautiful inch of her face until the sadness was smoothed over with the lovely aftershocks of aggressive affection.

"You mean something to me, and you mean something to Bucky," Steve promised her. "And you mean something to Doctor Selvig, and to every one of the people you saved yesterday. You mean so much, Darcy. And I'm sure, I know that you meant something to Thor and Jane."
"Yeah," Darcy sighed, sounding tired very suddenly.

"There is nothing wrong with withholding forgiveness until it's earned," Steve promised her. "I want to earn your forgiveness and your care and your---"

He paused and Darcy could feel the blush of his skin against her face.

"Honesty, Steve, please," Darcy whispered.

"I want to earn your love," Steve finished.

She didn't answer him verbally, but Darcy grinned at him, gap toothed and brighter than the sun. He felt it wash over him like warm sunshine. He knew he'd continue to do everything in his power to inspire that feeling within her. He wanted to fill her up with it, eradicating every ounce of that dark sadness that had decimated the people on the Raft. He kissed her lips one more time before reclining on the couch again, holding her tight to him.

"Let's get a little bit of shut eye, Tiger. We've got a six am wake up call for revenge."

---

_Destroyed Hydra Base, Canada_

"Ross."

"Ross."

"Secretary Ross, Ross."

Everett Ross rolled his eyes at the Secretary of State's pompous demeanor playing over the phone call very well. Too well. Everett had to stop himself from sassing back that the elder statesman probably wouldn't be the Secretary of State for much longer. Five hours ago, there had been an
expose published about the Raft prison, it's substandard conditions, the former Hydra guards, and the fact that the Secretary of State had been using it to house heroes that were on the wrong side of the Accords, all of the sins were brought to light...in Reader's Digest of all publications.

Two minutes after the digital publication, it had been a worldwide twitter trending topic.

And then the news had finally been leaked that the heroes had escaped the Raft. That story had been broken by a retired TV Guide reporter and had been published via facebook.

Now Secretary of State Ross was under a global magnifying glass of scrutiny and it was not looking good. Most of the United State's global allies were wavering on the Accords now. It was only a matter of time before someone started the precarious stack of dominos that would lead to the OTHER Ross's removal.

Everett looked around the decimated Hydra base in Canada that he was investigating. The digital files were of no use, as they had been destroyed. Most of the base had been destroyed actually, as had all the other bases that Everett had visited. Curious explosions dotted around the world, courtesy of Bucky Barnes/aka the Winter Soldier/aka James Buchanan Barnes, fallen war hero.

But he hadn't been alone. Everett walked around the curious cell in the hollowed out Hydra base. Most of the base had been destroyed by multiple explosion blasts, but this room stood mostly unscathed. Not for lack of trying, as most of the explosives seemed to have detonated right outside of the room. But the walls had been reinforced with a foot of steel and a very interesting sort of insulation that wouldn't burn even when Everett had held a lighter right up to it.

Whatever or whoever had been in this room had been very valuable to Hydra. The bed was barely rumpled and there was a blood stain on the tile floor in the middle of the room that either could not be removed completely or was thought to be inconsequential. Everett took out the UV light, running it over the blood stain and getting nothing to pull up and off the tile that could be tested.

"Everett, you little shit, are you listening to me?"

"No, not at all," Everett answered back honestly, distracted from the phone call and his own responses as he moved his light back and forth around the blood stain. He realized just what he had said out loud and had a moment of panic, juggling the phone and the UV light.
It was small. Just a drop, but the light shown on something that was definitely left behind by a human. And it was something substantial that he could run tests on.

"Look, I've gotten some intel about some vibranium that's turned up---"

"Shouldn't you---wouldn't it be wise to report that to Wakanda, sir?" Everett asked as he fumbled in his pockets for the sterile sample collection he had brought along.

"Wakanda hasn't been answering my calls, most likely due to the fact that they are a rogue nation of farming idiots. Vibranium is dangerous, and Stark said he already lost Rogers' shield, I'm not losing this load," Ross barked out. "I'm sending you the details, the acquisition department is getting you the cash, you're expected to be in South Korea tomorrow at 1900."

"Yes sir," Everett mumbled, ending the call abruptly before hanging up.

It hardly made sense for the Secretary of State to want to horde vibranium, but Everett figured it was probably due to something nefarious. He wanted no part in it, but he couldn't deny a direct order from the man. He'd just have to cover his own tracks.

He got the sample and put it in an envelope. It was convenient that there were plenty of places in South Korea who would be amenable to run some tests on the body fluid he had picked up.

He had the feeling he needed to find the girl it hopefully belonged to. Before the other Ross could.

Asskicker Meadows

Natasha always woke up before Sam. When they spent nights together, she normally didn't even fall asleep in the afterglow. She watched him fall asleep though, studying him as if he were a particularly advanced puzzle, when in fact it was her that was the puzzle. Or rather, her feelings for him had always been something that didn't fit in with her own brainspace. But in all of their other varied dalliances, she'd left before Sam could finish one REM cycle. This was the first time she'd spent all night with him.
She'd spent decades on her own.

She'd spent the majority of her life learning how to use every part of her body like a weapon, including her sexuality. And she couldn't remember the last time she had gifted it to anyone for the joy of it. Literally, she could not remember, as the KGB has eradicated a big portion of her memory involving an old, dead husband and a love affair. She'd read about it, of all things, being married. Being happy. Living a normal life for a very, very short period of time.

And two weeks after their destruction of SHIELD, she found herself in front of Sam Wilson's hotel door for no discernible reason she could understand. But just like the second time he had laid eyes on her, he simply opened the door and welcomed her in. And everytime after that, Sam would open his door to her, give her that slow, sure smile of his, and simply let her in. He had never asked for more than she could give until recently.

Natasha was not entirely sure that she could give Sam all that he wanted. She had been truthful when she had told him that it had been burnt out of her. But in the last few years, she found that the damage could be repaired with care and time. She ghosted a kiss over Sam's brow before slipping out of bed, finding clothes that had been eagerly shed last night after Retta had regretfully informed them that they would have to share living quarters until the next wave of construction could begin.

Sam had seemed pleased with the news. Natasha had been wary, but then again, she was rarely ever not wary. She just couldn't imagine Sam wanting her around for an extended period of time. There was too much trauma in her history, too much red in her ledger, and Sam, despite his propensity to gather the most damaged people around him, was just too good. For her.

But there were things she could do to try to even the scales. She could find a way to make the world realize that Sam was not an enemy of the State. She could find a way to repair the fractures of the Avengers. She could help Darcy Lewis.

She quickly and quietly went about getting ready for her day, showering and dressing as if she were going out for a full day of espionage, weapons included. By the time she was downstairs, the smell of fresh coffee hit her nostrils and she turned to the kitchen to see Sam in just a pair of boxer shorts, slurping down a comically large mug. Wordlessly, he put his hand on another mug on the island and moved it towards her.

"I didn't hear you wake up," Natasha said nonchalantly.

"Your ears must still be ringing from me screaming your name last night," Sam said dryly.
"Shut up," Natasha rolled her eyes, her lips quirking slightly as she sipped at her perfectly made cup of coffee. It was Dunkin' Donuts brew, her very favorite, done up with half and half and four packets of splenda.

"Retta said we had twenty-four hours of mandated downtime. That means we won't be doing anything until after lunch," Sam reminded her. "Which means we could have probably stayed in bed until the sun went up."

"There are things to be done that aren't immersive mission work," she replied quickly.

"Hmm, yeah, sure. Pulling reports off the alphabet agency and cross-referencing and logging calls and all of that fun stuff that the old people are probably already doing," Sam paused and a big, shit eating grin spread across his face. "But there are more important things to be done."

"Do tell."

"Day one of getting Steve Rogers so hopelessly in love with his baby mama that he would never ever think about leaving her," Sam sounded gleeful as he said it. "Now, I think what they need is a couples breakfast, then maybe some time going through catalogues to update the decor, also done best in a quartet. After that is lunch and maybe some kind of fun physical activity."

"Tandem bicycles?" Natasha smirked.

"Might be too dangerous for baby Rogers-Barnes," Sam shook his head.

"Baby Lewis," Natasha corrected.

"Baby L-R-B?" Sam offered.

"No," came the quick reply, as Natasha put the finished coffee mug in the sink and turned to head back towards the front door. "I'm going to go and see what's going on today, you go and make yourself pretty and when you're done being a suburban housewife and want to be useful, come and find me."
"RUDE!" Sam called after her as she made her way to the front door. "Hey, wait, I don't get any sugar before you leave? I made you coffee, woman!"

Natasha laughed as she opened the door to the split-level house that she knew was going to permanently be her and Sam's home. She took one step out and heard the tripwire give, but was too late to do anything about it. She'd been stupid and contented and distracted as Sam chased after her, and in a split second she braced herself for an explosion when something cool, slimy and wet began falling on her head.

"Nat!" Sam called out in alarm. He had been worried when he saw the woman brace herself for impact, but now she only looked like she had been the victim of a gigantic bird as something white and slimy coated her entire head. "Uhm---you alright?"

"FINE," Natasha clipped out in annoyance before turning again and looking around. "ROGERS, WHERE IN THE FUCK ARE YOU?"

She began to walk off the small porch when she heard the next trip wire go and Sam yelled out for her again as the quick release let the baton loose, jamming into her side and letting lose on a charge that was a little more powerful than her widow's bites.

There was darkness then, and when she opened her eyes again, it was to see Darcy and Steve smiling down at her while Sam scowled a few feet away.

"What?" she whispered, looking around and taking stock of where she was.

It wasn't the home she had woken up in, and it wasn't the lawn she had passed out in. What it was, was bright pink, loud and it absolutely reeked of perm solution and aquanet.

"First off, I'm sorry," Darcy said quickly.

"I'm not," Steve clarified.

"What happened?" Natasha asked of Sam, who was clearly the only one she could actually trust.
"Taser girl over here just bagged her seventh Avenger. And then fast acting bleach happened,"
Sam reported, taking a step forward and turning the salon chair that Natasha had been placed on about a half hour prior.

"I think you look pretty," Darcy put in helpfully.

"I think you look silly," Steve sassed.

Natasha looked at her blonde hair, cut and styled to look like a soccer mom and she sighed heavily. Sam was right behind her and gave her a shrug.

"I did date a lot of blondes before you," he admitted. "You were my first redhead."

"Am I forgiven?" Natasha asked of Steve and Darcy.

"Of course you are," Darcy nodded, while Steve shrugged and waved his hand in a so-so gesture. The smaller brunette glared up at him with playful menace until the former Captain America gave two thumbs up.

"Sam?" Natasha questioned.

"Yes, blondie bear?" Sam said with all the seriousness he could muster.

"Let's go find some tandem bicycles."

Chapter End Notes

So, it's safe to say that after tomorrow, this story will no longer even try to follow canon. I have a really busy week ahead, so I may not be able to reply to any comments, but know that I'll read them and cherish them!
Thanks so much for reading and being awesome.
Paternal Instincts

Chapter Notes

Hi guys! Sorry I'm a little behind today, I can't wait for school to be over this year, honestly.

How are you all doing after Infinity War? I'm posting a fix-it fic, so I'm all good, living in my head canon oblivion. I loved it though, even for all the whomp whomp Thanos.

Warnings for this chapter: the feels. the fuzzies. the cute.

Thanks to the beta babes, phoenix-173, dntpanic42 and ragwitch/queenspuppet. they are aaaaaaaaaaaaaaazzzzzzzzzinnnnnnng.

And we open with a dream(?) sequence. Or is it....

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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**Chapter Thirty-Four: Paternal Instincts**

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**Elsewhere**

A soft gurgling sound had his eyes flying open, his entire body on alert, even though moments prior he was wrapped up in warm, contented floating unconsciousness. The Soldier blamed his counterpart. Bucky was soft and lazy and had no problem in falling completely asleep, vulnerable and open to any and all kinds of attacks.

Looking down at the bed he was now sitting in, he realized the only attack was of the drooling variety, as Darcy turned away from the empty spot he had left to turn into Steve. Steve's arms went around her easy, but his hands went past her back, searching for Bucky. The Soldier rolled his eyes with a hint of fondness before taking his ridiculously overstuffed pillow and placing it in the Captain's hands.

The Soldier would never admit to smiling a little as Steve pulled the pillow tight against Darcy's back, knowing that he would have tried to do something similar with Bucky's own body. Instead, the Soldier bent and placed a soft and sweet kiss on Darcy's bare shoulder, smiling into her skin at her sleepy little moan of appreciation as his beard tickled her.
The gurgling sound started again, and the Soldier stood up completely then, slipping on a pair of pants before walking toward the source of the small sound. It came from the wooden carved bassinet standing three feet away from his side of the bed. The wood was beautiful, and the carvings were painstakingly done by hand and looked to be symbols from another world. The white sheets in the bassinet seemed to be glowing in the moonlight and as the Soldier stood over it and looked inside, a small, wriggling infant made a little grexing sound and managed to kick its legs and wave it's arms despite the full body, soft, mint green sleep sack it wore.

"Sweet little bastard," the Soldier rumbled quietly, and the baby, who was probably about three months old, stopped its movement and tried to focus its eyes to find the familiar voice. The Soldier felt a warmth bloom inside of him that had previously only happened for his beloved Pet before. But the beautiful baby was staring up at him with big blue eyes, the exact shade of its mother’s and red, sweet lips mimicked speaking, going open and closing in a nonsensical rhythm.

The Soldier carefully plucked the child from the bassinet, placing it reverently against his right shoulder, his left hand supporting the delicate baby easily. The baby made a happy, content sound, and the Soldier knew that for now, that would be enough to keep the little one quiet.

He had approximately twenty-five minutes until the baby would begin burrowing around against his chest for food that only Darcy could provide. But he’d been warned by the Barton woman that he was not to spoil the child needlessly. Just because he sensed the baby waking for a meal did not mean that he needed to provide the meal right away. Babies needed to learn to make sounds and cries and demands for what they needed.

So instead of taking the baby to the bed and placing the precious little bastard against a sleeping Darcy’s breast, he silently stalked the bedroom with his child. *His* child, despite the blond fuzz on the baby’s head that was tickling against his bare skin. The baby was content enough, although tiny hands found their way out of the sleep sack and were lightly pinching at the muscles that carried them.

The Soldier could never have imagined a softer feeling in all of his decades of torture and torment. He looked at the bed, illuminated by bright moonlight, seeing his beloved Pet entangled with the large pile of muscles should have had him flying into a murderous rage.

Darcy was *his* pet after all.

But he knew that this was tolerable. More than tolerable. It was advantageous. Steve loved Darcy without limits. Just as he loved his Bucky.
Just as he had learned to love the Soldier.

The baby grexed and pinched at the Soldier a bit harder than usual. The Soldier laughed at that a little, looking down at the beautiful baby and demanding in Russian, "You are as hard headed as your father, little Bastard. Let Mama sleep for a few moments more."

"Hmm," Darcy hummed sleepily from the bed. She attempted to turn out of Steve's embrace, but found it couldn't be done. There were times now when Steve got a hold of her in his sleep and his nightmares and dreams refused to ease up on his grip on her. The therapist said it was normal and better than a true night terror. "Steve's got me in a super cuddle again. Come over, Honey, my boobs are starting to hurt."

He complied, managing to keep the baby close to him while he wrenched the pillow from Steve's grip and then lay down, spooning Darcy while carefully maneuvering the gurgling, happy baby into the small space between Steve and Darcy. He watched with something that felt a lot like pride as the healthy baby easily latched onto the nipple that Darcy provided and began to suckle like a true champ with a lifetime of experience.

"Hmmm, Papa almost forgot last night that those were for you now and not his personal enjoyment," Darcy whispered, kissing the baby's golden head. "We'll forgive him just this once, since it had been so long since we'd done all that together since your giant Irish head made a mess of Mommy's bits."

"My sweet Pet," the Soldier whispered into Darcy's hair. He huffed out something between an annoyed breath and a chuckle as Steve's hands found his rear end and pulled in with all the strength he had, so that the entire family was pressed tight on a small portion of the bed. The baby made such beautiful sounds as it nursed, contented little sighs were the only sound in the bedroom aside from the adults breathing in it.

"I love you, Soldier," Darcy whispered.

"Yes, I love you, Pet."
The Soldier woke up to warmth, but the beautiful dream was gone. He was alone, lying on a table, looking up at fascinating artwork that covered nearly every surface of what was surely the most advanced scientific lab he had ever been in. He didn't make any sudden movements, allowing himself to adjust to the loss of the dream, the solid feeling of Steve's hands at the small of his back, pulling and pressing him tightly into the soft, sleep warm curves of Darcy's back.

He blinked and suddenly a bright, shiny, over eager face took his entire field of vision. She was a young girl, practically a child, with beautiful dark skin and sparkling brown eyes. Her hair was done up in countless thin braids, and those braids were collected in a larger braid, then wrapped in a crown-like bun around her head.

"So I finally meet the cantankerous Soldier, do I?" the teenager demanded, not quite looking convincing in her playful vitriol. "You have caused me hours...probably three whole hours of complete annoyance, Old Man."

"What?" the Soldier demanded. The girl wasn't a threat, or at least he didn't believe her to be. She could be, but currently she was benevolent. The Soldier vaguely recognized her as being Wakandan, and her helping him after the events of Siberia. She was the sister to the new Wakandan King.

"Come along. You are as fixed as you are going to get," the Princess shrugged. She tapped her finger on his left collarbone.

Sure enough, where there had been old and extensive scarring and marred flesh meeting the metal of his shoulder, was now relatively smooth skin. And a very nicely healed stump that no longer held any trace of metal. He startled at that a bit, wondering how on Earth he would defend himself or his Pet or their child without the weapon that used to be his left arm.

"I'm building a new one. But the first seven seemed insufficient," the Princess shrugged. "And in order to build what I really want, we will need vibranium."

The Soldier looked around the lab as he sat up. He gave the Princess a disbelieving look. They were surrounded by vibranium after all.

"I'm not nearly enough of an idiot to gift that much vibranium to someone who is only one or two
generations off of the colonizers who did their best to drain my continent," the Princess scoffed. "And neither is my brother. You shall have to earn the vibranium Sergeant. The hard way."

"Soldier," he insisted gruffly. He looked around in confusion. "How long did the mandatory rest period last?"

"Mandatory---" Shuri sighed. Her face that had been previously full of sunshine and teasing seemed to scrunch in extreme annoyance. "Russia. Ridiculous."

The Soldier eased off of the examining table and followed the young Princess through an absolutely astonishing laboratory. She pulled up a hologram from her bracelet and nodded to herself.

"Should I send a message to your boyfriend? Or your Darcy?" Shuri wondered. "The spider lady has sent word to us that your Darcy is safe and doing well."

The Soldier took a deep shuddering breath at that, and Shuri pretended not to notice. His beloved Pet was safe. Their child was safe. It was all he could hope to ask for. Shuri looked at him expectantly, ready to do something with the beads on her wrist.

"We will tell them when I am fully functional," the Soldier insisted. "No need to concern them until I have the arm back."

Shuri held up a finger in the universal sign for *hold on a second* before rolling her eyes slowly and deliberately and dramatically sighing. She muttered something about *old people* and *westernized toxic masculinity* before rolling her eyes even more comically once more and beginning to walk again.

"You will have to earn the vibranium for your arm. It will not be easy. Especially since you have to share with your less stoic counterpart. There is much to learn and much to do. Come along, Old timer."

*Asskicker Meadows*
There were no tandem bicycles to be found on the grounds of Retta's unique retirement community. All bicycles and motorcycles were banned thanks to Herb's last foray into trying to bring capitalism into their senior citizen super spy utopia had him trying to make some extra (unnecessary) cash by pulling a small wagon with a ducati. He'd taken the first curve on the street leading out of their community center at about seven miles an hour instead of five, and he wound up toppling the idiots who had decided to use that mode of transportation instead of their Jazzy motorized wheelchairs or the golf carts readily available.

They did have bingo right before lunchtime, and Darcy and Sam had been frustrated at how fast the numbers came down and how they were getting smoked by superspies, super soldiers and super seniors alike. Steve had put twenty-five separate bingo cards in front of him, easily memorizing them and making his marks as Herb called out the numbers fast and furiously.

He'd won a free cherry flavored sugar free ice pop, and Darcy was no longer complaining, because he was currently sharing the treat with her as they sat in the community center's gazebo, soaking in the sun and warm spring breeze. Natasha and Sam were watching from the dining area, clearly pleased that things seemed to be progressing with the speed that the weight of their secret required.

"Look at that face, man. I've never seen him make a face like that before," Sam marveled, his voice barely above a whisper as Steve handed the ice pop back to Darcy and watched as she avidly licked up the drops before they could hit her hand. "He's not even leering at her."

"Impressive, because I'm leering at her, look at her tongue do that thing," Natasha answered.

"Oh hell no, don't do that to me," Sam sucked his teeth. "Don't be getting me in a mess by making that girl a sexual creature to me. I really like you, Nat, I do, and I think we could be great, but I'm not getting beaten up by Steve Rogers and Buffy Barnes for trying to steal their girl away for us."

"It would be fun though, wouldn't it?" Natasha arched an eyebrow at him, her mouth pursed in a teasing way.

"Dignifying that question with any kind of response is a gateway for pain," Sam said after too long of a pause. He turned back to Darcy and Steve, who had traded the popsicle again, leaving Darcy's hands free so she could tell a story animatedly.

It was clearly a violent story, as her hands went into the shapes of guns and her face went dour and stony. Steve was enraptured, hanging off of her every word. She switched characters, obviously
reenacting her bit of one of their takedowns of Hydra baddies as she mimicked giving the Hydra apparition in front of her purple nurnels. Steve's laugh echoed in the little courtyard, and his body nearly went horizontal on the gazebo bench as the laughter overtook him.

Darcy grinned in response, but continued on, switching between imitating the Winter Soldier being dour and intimidating with her finger guns, back to her own part in the story, where she was doing ridiculous things in lieu of intimidating things. Steve continued to laugh uproariously and might have fallen completely off the bench had she not grabbed for his t-shirt and held on to him.

Steve was like an octopus then, suddenly having too many hands as he grabbed onto Darcy for dear life, still laughing as he embraced her, and quickly leaned down for a quick, firm press of his lips against hers. Sam took a deep breath of air from their inconspicuous viewing space as he felt a rush of contentment hit him all over.

He hadn't felt like that in a long time. He was nineteen years old again, on his first leave after basic training. He'd been reunited with his mother, and Riley had tagged along and they'd just had the best etouffee that you could eat outside of New Orleans. Everything was safe and good and uncomplicated and he hadn't felt loss or pain or war. It was innocence and wonderment and delight at having someone who meshed so well with everything in his life.

Natasha wasn't immune to it, apparently. She reached out and gripped his hand to give it a squeeze. He looked to her and took a deep breath and she gave him a small, genuine smile in response.

"Get a room!" someone shouted from further in the recreational area.

"Shut up, Herb, your second wife left you for the literal milk man!" Sam shouted back nonchalantly. He turned all his attention back to Natasha then and managed to pull her closer to him. "Hey."

"Hey," Natasha answered back.

"So---this is something," Sam laughed, unable to understand how one girl could be feeling so much all at once. Joy and giddiness and adoration and contentment and longing and the sudden want to feel every square inch of perfect skin under fingertips and lips and tongue---

"She ramps up quick," Natasha huffed out a breath, having been completely unprepared to go from
something so innocent to something so decidedly not innocent in such a short period of time. She turned back to the view of the Gazebo and found that Steve had a lap full of woman, and his innocent kisses had morphed into something that definitely required the privacy a room would provide.

Their not-so-private gazebo was about to become decidedly less private, because Erik Selvig was rushing towards the structure, looking red in the face, spluttering angrily.

Sam sucked his teeth in annoyance and cursed, "Shit, no, don't do it, Swedish Chef Scientist!"

"GET YOUR HANDS OFF OF HER YOU, YOU BRIGAND!" Erik roared, rushing up onto the gazebo and carefully getting his hands up and under Darcy's arms, pulling her out of a stunned, shocked and dazed Steve's embrace. Erik might have devoted his life to science, but that didn't stop the fact that he had descended from Vikings who had worshipped Thor. He was not a small man, and he easily manhandled Darcy until he was holding her up and off of her feet, an arm banded right above her rounded baby bump, almost like a sack of potatoes.

"Erik, no!" Darcy couldn't help but laugh at the ridiculousness while her feet dangled above the ground as her body went decidedly parallel to the gazebo floor.

"Put her down, Selvig!" Steve stood up quickly.

Erik's face went red, because Steve's aroused state was quite obvious as he stood in nothing but track pants and a criminally undersized t-shirt. The (technically younger) scientist took his Darcy-less hand and raised it at Steve in a menacing point.

"You louse!" Erik accused. "She's not only in a family way, she's got a sweetheart and doesn't need to be wooed by your---"

Erik gestured vaguely to Steve's entire body and face. Steve had the good grace to drop his hands to try to camouflage his groin a bit.

"Your you-ness!"
Darcy had her whole face hidden in her hands and Steve worried that she might be upset, as her shoulders were shaking. She was also being held like a sack of potatoes, and Steve couldn't help but be concerned that Erik might lose his grip and drop her.

"Please put her down, you don't understand," Steve said softly. "Sweetheart, you alright?"

"Don't you sweetheart her, you homewrecker," Erik snapped.

"Erik, it's alright, it's a--it's--" Darcy's voice was warbling, from either tears or giggles.

"Doctor Selvig, put Darcy down," Natasha ordered as she and Sam came up on the scene.

"Oh stuff it, Widow," Erik sassed back. "You've been trying to set this pervert louse up with any manner of woman for the last two years. You don't think I didn't notice you cycling through the entire stock of eligible females in the labs?"

"I--I--I didn't date anyone," Steve stammered.

"Yes, you just love them and leave them," Erik accused, and Darcy shook more in Erik's tenuous hold. "You can keep your fancy words and your tight shirts away from little Darcy. She has someone who loves her, and doesn't need you taking advantage of her in her delicate time of need like you've done to dozens of other ladies."

"I didn't!" Steve insisted, blushing bright red. "I never even met any of them, I swear."

"LOTHARIO!" Erik accused. "Stay away from my little girl!"

Steve took a step back at the sudden wave of humor and giggles that bubbled up from his chest and his relief warred with Darcy's gaiety as he smiled. Unfortunately, the mirth hit Sam and Natasha as well, and neither were strong enough, or even willing to be strong enough to stop from bursting into happy little giggles.
Erik shook off the feeling, focusing on his own anger in that single minded, pervasive way that so many geniuses had. He carefully placed Darcy on the ground where she had to stumble to sit down on the bench as she giggled uncontrollably. Erik ignored all that, too intent on his actions.

His intentions being punching the daylights out of the former Captain America. And Steve never saw it coming, as he had bent over with the effort of the helpless laughter he was overtaken with. Erik Selvig had a hell of an uppercut though, and the moment his fist connected with Steve's jaw finally stopped all the laughter. Darcy shouted out,

"Wait, Erik NO!"

But it was too late, as one Doctor Erik Selvig, unofficial adoptive father to two small brunette women who had seen the end of the world with him twice, knocked Steven Grant Rogers off of his feet. The former leader of the Avengers went flying backwards, his back end going through the gazebo railing and demolishing it before toppling end over end into the newly planted petunias below.

"God dammit, Rogers! What in the hell are you doing?!” Retta shouted as she rushed down from the main entrance to the courtyard gazebo. "Did someone ask you to put your ridiculous ass through my new gazebo? What in the world are you doing?"

"Getting punched,” Steve grumbled out, all the mirth gone. He put a hand over the bruise Selvig had inflicted and looked up to see that the reason the mirth was gone was because Darcy was once again tucked under Selvig's arm like a very pretty sack of potatoes, and was being carried quickly off.

Natasha and Sam, helpful as always, were now laughing even more uproariously, with absolutely no help from Darcy whatsoever.

Chapter End Notes

We have a lot of fun things coming in this story. A few more chapters of cute Steve/Darcy fluff before we dive back into plot. I need the happiness because of Infinity War.
Thanks for reading!!!
Chapter Notes

It's Wednesday already?!? Yikes. Happy Wednesday!

Chapter warnings: ahh plot, you've reared your ugly head. Frivolous overusage of original characters. Please note that the plot of Black Panther has already happened in this story, and now we're here. The story will NOT be following Infinity War canon. PEACE OUT INFINITY WAR.

Thanks to the beta babes, phoenix-173, dntpanic42 and queenspuppet! They are so awesome.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Thirty-five: A Little Help From Your Friends

Avengers’ Facility, upstate New York

"Hey."

Maya Archie looked up from her sketchpad, going to cover it defensively from whoever had descended upon her during her previously private lunch break on the secluded balcony in the Northwest corridor. She wasn't quick enough and small, slightly calloused, freezing cold hands went over top of hers, stopping her from shielding the drawings of one Darcy Lewis.

"Huh," Jane smiled, looking down at the involved sketches.

Maya had started this whole 'art' thing when she was a small child, watching cartoons had quickly evolved into watching anime, which had thrust her headfirst into the world of manga at age 12. She'd emulated the style and declared that she would be the most successful black female manga artist in the whole world. Her parents had been supportive right up until she had graduated from art school, and then suddenly it became clear that she would have to translate her art into something that would pay back her mountains of student debt.
Retta Archie, her grandmother and the family's iron-willed matriarch, had stepped in there, securing her a job with the newly formed Stark Industries privatized peace effort. She didn't need to log in huge amounts of hours as a sketch artist. She just needed to be on call when they needed her, which couldn't have been more than twenty hours a week, in all honesty. The pay was great and she had plenty of time to keep trying to build her dream.

But she'd been seriously roadblocked when it came to stories she wanted to draw. She was surrounded by the fantastical: men who wore suits of metal, women who manipulated red energy with their hands and perhaps most fantastical of all, Steve Rogers' entire body. It was hard to come up with something more entertaining than reality.

Then Darcy Lewis stormed into the facility, with no outward waves of energy, no glow, no high tech weapon attached to her, and she had managed to reduce everyone to useless piles of emotions. Maya had picked up a sketchbook two hours after Darcy's abrupt departure from the facility and had been hard pressed to stop sketching for the last week.

"She used to like to wear knit caps," Jane whispered, big brown eyes looking over the details of manga-style Darcy with a hint of longing. "She had like---a whole carry-on bag full of knitted stuff."

"That would be cute," Maya nodded.

The sound of heavy booted footsteps reverberated from the hall to the little hidden balcony alcove, and Maya couldn't help but be surprised when Jane grabbed onto her hand with conviction, and then promptly sat in her lap.

"Whaaataaaannnaaaa ," Maya breathed out in delighted astonishment, her hands finding a natural resting spot on Jane's hips.

"Hmmm, I don't know what I'd do without you, Sugar-- tits ?" Jane wrinkled her brow with minute horror at her impromptu name giving.

"Yes, absolutely, yes, Sugar Tits," Maya nodded emphatically, her eyes resembling one of the delighted wide eyed anime characters she was so very fond of. She snuggled the petite astrophysicist close as the armed guard did it's patrol past them. They both saw the man's gaze going towards them in a calculating way. Maya nuzzled her face into Jane's neck and whispered, "How long have they had someone on you?"
"Since I told Secretary Ross off," Jane admitted in a hushed murmur. "Sorry, I don't mean to make you uncomfortable."

"Boo, don't even, you know that tasty snack Thor asked me to keep you happy and warm," Maya said with enough volume for the guard to hear it. "Your Sugartits is here to keep you happy and warm. And when Thor comes home, we gonna throw down. Like all three of us. Asgard style."

Jane couldn't help but snort a little in amused laughter. She looked down at the sketch pad and sighed, "I---uhm---I was trying to find some help in doing something for Darcy and I found out that Everett Ross was shot in South Korea?"

"Is he alright?" Maya couldn't hide her true concern. Sure, Everett Ross was a little shit, but he was a NORMAL little shit, that just wanted to follow the rules and do a good job at keeping the world safe.

"He disappeared," Jane whispered. "I tried to use Friday to get to the files, but they're redacted. Someone took him out of Korea and I can't figure out who or where or why."

"I have some clearance to get into security cameras," Maya revealed. "If I get a shot of anyone, I could probably do a composite sketch and we can see who took him."

"That sounds great---Sugartits," Jane pulled back with a big, genuine smile.

"What do you want Evy-boy to help you with anyway, Boo?" Maya questioned, feeling her gut turn into jelly as Jane cuddled in close again and buried her face into Maya's neck this time.

"Darcy is---she was impregnated by Hydra, and from the last thing I got from Erik, she doesn't know who the father is," Jane sighed, noticing from her place in Maya's lap as a full bodied shiver went through the taller woman. "I want to find out what they used to make Darcy's baby, and then I'm gonna find that fucker and destroy them for doing it."

"Hot. Alright, Boo, let's do this."
"So---the one who blew up the UN is your FIRST boyfriend---"

Darcy was hidden by her hair and her arms as she sat at the kitchen table of the house she had spent the last few days with Steve. She was slumped in her chair, hiding her embarrassment. Her right fist was on the table, and she was giving thumbs up or down for each of Erik's questions.

It was something they (Jane, Erik and Darcy) had taken turns at when any of them were hungover. You could hide from the harsh desert sun and not even have to speak. All in all, it helped to keep your brain from pouring out of your skull. At the moment though, Darcy couldn't give a thumbs up or down. So she simply wiggled her fingers in what she felt was the universal sign for sort of right, sort of wrong.

"I know very well he didn't actually blow up the UN. I was thoroughly debriefed by the terrifying woman in charge," Erik admitted. "But he has approximately eight thousand monikers that he goes by, so I was trying to lay a straight line to a simpler solution."

"Don't Occam's Razor my Soldier," Darcy grumbled, but her words were hidden as her mouth nearly touched the table. She wiggled a bit so all the light was obscured by her curtain of hair.

"But clearly, this one hundred year old is not doing enough to care for you or satisfy your---your---needs," Erik sounded as if he might be sick at the thought of little Darcy having her needs satisfied. He snorted slightly and shrugged, "Really, between yourself and Jane, one could almost believe that you are trying to outdo each other in an over-the-top significant other contest. A Norse God and two troublesome super soldiers!"

"Jane wins. It's THOR," Darcy put her head up just enough to wrinkle her nose at Erik. "He's a Norse God, for Christ's sake!"

"Your boyfriends are old enough to be my father," Erik countered smartly.

"He wears a cape, a cape!" Darcy was sitting up straighter now as she tried to argue her point. She blew out a breath, causing a big chunk of her hair to go flying out of her face. Her cheeks were
stained a very bright pink color and she shrugged, "And they aren't my boyfriends. I mean, Bucky is, but that seems kind of---"

"Trite?" Erik offered.

"Yeah, he's more than that. He's like a boyfriend plus," Darcy shrugged. "And Steve is---"

"An interloper," Erik supplied, a troublesome little smirk pulling at his lips.

"NO!" Darcy countered peevishly.

"Overly handsy?" Erik supplied.

"Stop!"

"A bit of a pervert, really," Erik continued, delighted with himself when Darcy began to giggle uncontrollably. He put his hands on either side of her face, squeezing at her cheeks so that her smiling mouth puckered a little. "If it takes two men to keep up with you, and to make you happy, color me not surprised, my dear. I will never judge you for loving who you love."

"Thanks," Darcy said softly her words slightly unintelligible thanks to Erik's manhandling of her cheeks. "They love each other too, you know."

"My dear, anyone with two functioning brain cells and access to cable television in the late 90's knew that those two idiots loved each other," Erik laughed. "Their E True Hollywood story was vastly entertaining."

Darcy laughed again, this time a giggle came snorting through her nose and Erik chuckled in response.

"I still retain my rights to torture the pair of them mercilessly." Erik patted Darcy's cheeks before pulling away and standing up. "Now, I'm feeling fairly peckish, and my friend Thuy taught me to make toast yesterday."
"Yum," Darcy nodded, putting two hands over her stomach now and petting with absent-minded affection.

"My dear, you are truly happy?" Erik asked as he began rooting around in the well stocked kitchen. He pulled a jar of orange marmalade from the fridge, along with a little tray of butter. "The child---"

"Yes, I swear," Darcy nodded. "I wish Bucky were here. I do, but, this is nice too. I'm kind of pissed at Bucky, and it's nice to have all this new-ness with Steve. Feels like we can get on even footing."

Erik made a humming noise in response.

"And maybe---maybe he can bond with the baby too," Darcy's hope was barely whispered, but Erik heard it. He looked out of the kitchen window by the toaster oven and saw two eavesdroppers freeze up.

"I believe he would, undoubtedly," Erik answered, narrowing his eyes at a guilty looking Sam and a blank faced Natasha.

"I mean, obviously me and the little bastard come as a package deal now, you love me, you gotta love my demon spawn," Darcy rambled on. She smiled up at Erik, genuine and happy. "And I mean, I only had a real dad in my life for just a few years now. I can't imagine how happy the precious little bastard is going to be if it can have TWO daddies for its whole life."

Sam looked away guiltily at that, but Natasha maintained her steely eyed gaze at Erik, as if she were daring him to say one word about his suspicions out loud.

"Hmmph, here comes your star spangled Romeo," Erik remarked, as Steve did begin walking down the lane, his right hand full of wildflowers and his left hand gripping cardboard boxes that looked like rations. He stuck his entire face in the small kitchen window and shouted, "Don't bring your pollen filled weeds in here, boy. You'll have the poor girl sneezing!"

Darcy perked up at the idea of having flowers brought to her, for the first time in her entire lifetime, and she immediately sprung from her seat, swatted Erik on the arm before pushing him easily to see out of the kitchen window too. She barely glanced at Natasha and Sam, instead
focusing on Steve, who only had eyes for her, even as he went to put the flowers down on the
ground.

"Don't listen to him, he's just being a pill. C'mon in, Steve, Erik's making us toast!"

CIA Office, Dallas Texas

Everett Ross wasn't hiding, persay. He just happened to be in a weapons acquisition locker on
basement level two. Because that seemed like the most normal place to be once he had returned
from Wakanda after everything that had happened in the last forty-eight hours.

The things that had happened being: running into the new Wakandan King at an underground
casino in South Korea, getting shot in such a way that would normally paralyze or kill a person,
having a sixteen year old Wakandan princess completely heal him with technology that was
straight out of a Star Trek Episode, run from the Wakandan palace when the throne had been
usurped by a stone cold murderer, and then, impossibly, doing his small part to put T’Challa back
in power and possibly avert a national crisis.

Everett wanted a nap, but instead, he was hiding out from his superiors, hoping against hope that
they wouldn't want a more thorough debrief than he had given him. T’Challa had asked him for
discretion for the next week or so, until he could finalize a secure plan regarding bringing
Wakanda and its impressive—impressiveness onto the global stage. Everett wasn't a natural liar,
and so he did something he had a talent for instead.

He hid.

A large crate of weaponry caught his eye and he wrenched the lid off before reaching in and
picking up a handgun, testing his grip and making sure that there was no residual side effect from
his near death.

If anything, a slight tremor that had started when he turned forty-two had now disappeared.
"That Princess is pretty damned amazing," Everett muttered to himself, shaking his head in amusement as he held the gun up and took aim at nothing.

It had been nothing.

And then suddenly it was more like a brilliant, bright rainbow.

And when it was no longer a brilliant, bright rainbow, it was a large looking man in armor, a ridiculously shaved head, and the stench of some very powerful alcohol on him.

"Hey, hey, hey," the bald, inebriated warrior held up his hands, staring down the barrel of the gun. "Easy there, little guy."

"Fuck off, who the fuck are you?" Everett demanded harshly.

"I'm Skurge," he announced, as if he were announcing that he was also the inventor of sliced bread. A ridiculously arrogant smile spread over his face and he wondered, "perhaps you've heard of me?"

"Uhm, no," Everett answered.

"Thor's surely told tales of the Mighty and Fierce and Handsome Skurge---"

"Can't say he's brought it up," Everett shook his head, bringing the gun down, but keeping a grip on it.

"Blond asshole," Skurge muttered bitterly.

"You gonna take me to Asgard? Whisk me away to another fantastic Kingdom?" Everett wondered, half sarcastic and half hopeful.

"No," Skurge answered, looking over the small Midgard man with a hint of judgement. "Who would you impress?"
"I'll have you know, M'Baku, leader of the Jabari tribe said that I wasn't entirely awful," Everett shot back. He very wisely left out the fact that M'Baku, leader of the Jabari tribe had then lifted Everett clear up and off the ground by palming his entire head like a basketball. And the Jabari leader had not seemed to exert himself in the least in doing it, instead, he had laughed uproariously about the portable colonizer.

"I don't care who that is," Skurge answered.

"You Asgardian?" Everett demanded. Upon Skurge's affirmative shrug, Everett rolled his eyes before clipping out, "Look, no offense, but you might want to scoot, cause my bosses' bosses' boss is kind of interested in roping all of you into containers under the sea and popping you out to fight aliens every once in a while."

"Don't sound so bad," Skurge muttered, giving another shrug. "Look---I gotta message for Jane Foster."

"Haven't seen her in a few days," Everett replied, not having to lie.

"Really? Huh---this damned rainbow bridge sucks," Skurge grumbled. "Thor was off to go do something that I'm sure is important, and said to send her a message that he would see her soon---blah blah blah, you know, romance and blond hair, blah blah."

"Well, if I ever see the lady in question, I'll pass on the message. Now, you might want to rainbow brite out of here, before people with stun batons start showing up to put you in a cage," Everett shooed, having had enough action for one week.

"Right, right, right," Skurge nodded. He looked into the crate that Everett had been looking into and picked up two gigantic automatic machine guns. "For my troubles, if you don't mind,"

"Hey--I do---" Everett groaned as Skurge disappeared in one of those blasted Asgardian portals, seized weapons in hand. "Fucking Asgardians."

His phone rang and he looked down at the caller ID, recognizing the area code to be from the Avenger's facility in Upstate New York. He took two deep breaths, trying to match the inhale time to the exhale time before answering.
"Ross here."

"Oh, hey, dude, this is Maya Archie? The girl who draws? For the Avengers?"

Ross furrowed his brow at the unusual caller but tried to cover for it as best as he could, "Hey, Miss Archie. How're you doing? Still solely interested in female companionship?"

"Female AND Asgardian," Maya corrected him. "So long as the Asgardian looks like Thor, you can sign. me. up."

"Charming," Everett sighed. "What can I do for you Miss Archie?"

"Meet me and my friend at Sully's Barbeque Pit, half a mile from where you are now. We need your help."

---

**Asskicker Meadows**

"I don't know, when you look at it this way, it looks like Squidward from Spongebob."

"Did you just compare my sweet, innocent, unborn bastard to Squidward from Spongebob?" Darcy asked Sam, her eyes narrowing as she crossed her arms in front of her chest as she sat next to him on the flower patterned couch in the sitting room that they had had to pull the plastic off of before sitting down.

He stared back down at her in return, not backing down one bit and couldn't help the shit eating smirk on his face. He pointed at the sonogram authoritatively, pointing out the nebulous gray blobs that vaguely resembled a human fetus.

"Squidward. Q. Tentacles," he said pointedly, before cracking up as Darcy's shoulders slumped in acknowledgement.
"It's the huge head, it can't help it," she grumbled. "You just wait, someday my superbaby is going to come out all gorgeous and awesome, and it'll know how to take out your knees by the time it's eight months old, and you'll be sorry you called it Squidward."

"I'm sure it'll grow out of it's awkward fetus Squidward stage and be a stunning little thing when it pops out," Sam assured her. He couldn't help but smile as he watched Darcy run her index finger on the very ambiguous image of her baby. She had a sort of secretive half-smile on her face, her eyes dancing over the picture with clear excitement.

It was a far cry from the emotions he had seen on the Raft, that was for sure. But Sam knew well enough the complexities of a person's ability to compartmentalize. He was technically dating Natasha Romanoff, after all. Just because she wasn't sad at the moment, did not mean that there wasn't sadness in her. Dangerous sadness. He nudged his knee against her and asked softly,

"You alright, kid?"

"You're like, five years older than me," Darcy countered easily, putting the picture that she had proudly passed around earlier back on the ridiculous glass coffee table.

After toast, Erik had lingered for an hour, giving Steve the stink eye and absolutely refusing to apologize for assaulting him. Darcy had sought to ease the admittedly playful tension by bringing out the picture from the sonogram. Four sets of eyes had carefully watched Steve as he took his turn looking at the lo-tech picture. He had been amazed, asking questions that Darcy absolutely did not have the answers to, like how big was the baby actually at that moment, was it a real tiny working person or were there things that still needed to be built, did it have ears yet and if so could it hear him or could it only hear Darcy?

Natasha had immediately pulled out her phone and sent a message to someone, presumably to get all of the baby books possible for Steve to devour, just as Bucky had devoured them before. And Natasha would undoubtedly be perusing them as well, because despite seeing all three Barton children gestating, she knew very little about pregnancy and wanted to be prepared to help Darcy in any way she could.

Aside from having her hair turned blonde and being tazed, Darcy seemed to have completely forgotten and forgiven what Natasha had done to her before the Raft infiltration and back in Paris. But Natasha had clearly not forgotten and both Sam and Steve could see the older woman trying very hard to be friendly to Darcy, even if it came out in subtle things like book orders or little questions about bed comfort and temperature control.
Sam noticed, at least, but he noticed a lot of things about Natasha.

"Sorry, we'll work out the nicknames as we get to know each other," Sam rolled his eyes.

"Okay, Sir Flaps a Lot," Darcy was quick to come back with a playful little smirk.

"Okay Zappy McGee," Sam countered.

Darcy paused and looked at him shrewdly, holding that look for a full fifteen seconds before a huge grin took over her face and she declared, "I LOVE IT."

“Great. You and Sir-breaks-all-the-doors will get along just fine,” Sam jerked his head in Steve’s direction.

Silence extended between the two as Sam looked for a way to gently bring up what had been bothering him since the Raft breakout. They had privacy. And despite her sunshine smiles and earlier giggles, Sam was still worried about Darcy Lewis.

"So—uh, I checked around, and we have two former therapists here, they're like, eighty-five, and one of them actually talked about female hysteria and laudanum, so I'm not sure how helpful he'll actually be," Sam shrugged. "But I'm here too, and I'm not licensed anymore or anything, but I used to run group and---"

"Is it hard to stay licensed when you're a superhero?" Darcy questioned suddenly. "Or fugitive. Either or. Same thing in today's world I guess."


"Pretty badass, right?" Darcy's words were flippant but her expression was shrewd and calculating as she stared up at Sam. "Natasha did most of the work there, bringing up old hurts and rubbing all of the salt in them."
"Still, they're your hurts," Sam whispered. "They need to be tended to. They shouldn't fester. Squidward is going to need like---all of your energy in a few months, might as well try to make sure you're good to give it your all."

"Yeah," Darcy shrugged. She pursed her mouth thoughtfully before taking a quick peek through the dining room into the kitchen where Steve and Natasha were putting together dinner already. Neither of the hearing enhanced people seemed to be able to hear what she and Sam were talking about. "What was the other therapist like, the one who didn't prescribe laudanum or a lobotomy? Cause, no offense, but you're my---you're a friend?"

"I'm looking forward to being your friend," Sam assured her, putting a hand over her trembling hand. "It's like a thing, right? You zap your friends?"

"It's an initiation sort of thing," Darcy huffed out a small breath of a laugh. "I think it would be good to talk to someone, about all of the stuff."

"Good, I'll set something up with the one who was a kid's psychologist," Sam nodded. "Get ready to do doll therapy and coloring."

"I enjoy coloring, so that's cool," Darcy came back with quickly, earning a high five from Sam.

They stayed silent as the smell of shake and baked pork chops began wafting into the old fashioned sitting room. The clatter of a glass plate against formica countertop echoed from out there and Natasha began to tease at Steve for his clumsiness. Darcy watched as Sam's face softened at Natasha's voice, something in his spine going a little more relaxed.

"So, arachnids. Totally cool, right?" Darcy teased.

Sam gave her a shrewd look and wondered, "I hope all this teasing sass is unleashed fully upon Bunko Buns at all times."

"Oh, definitely," Darcy nodded. "Nothing says Darcy Lewis more than teasing a murderous supersoldier about---well, everything."

"So---have you zapped him yet?" Sam questioned. Darcy shook her head in the negative and Sam's resulting laugh was explosive and just a tad evil. "Oh hell yes, this is going to be fun to plan."
I hope that you enjoyed this chapter. We have PLOT coming back, but let's see what we can do about a little detour into smutland in the next few chapters.

THANK YOU FOR READING!
Happy Wednesday, everyone! Sorry I missed last week, I was crazy busy.

You are in for a wild ride this week and so is a super soldier or two. Peep the title. Warnings for this chapter: long chapter. subterfuge. unlikely trio of characters getting things done. and fluff. also, Steve will give you warm fuzzies then smack you on your ass with his sexy.

Thanks to the beta babes! phoenix-173, ragwitch/queenspuppet and dntpanic42

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Thirty-Six: The Wanton Harlot Strikes Back

Asskicker Meadows

Natasha couldn't help but smirk at Sam and Darcy's laughter as she watched Steve read the directions on a box of instant mashed potatoes. His expression seemed to convey that the instructions were for a nuclear reactor, and not dehydrated potato flakes. She refused to help him though as he fumbled with measuring cups and sticks of butter, continuing her own work on preparing green beans. Darcy had been adamant that she didn't NEED the green beans, but Steve had been surprisingly unswayed, and declared that he needed them instead, and if some fell on Darcy's plate by accident, then that was fine.

It had all been rather adorable, really. Natasha was very unused to seeing Steve being so damned adorable.

"I don't understand why there are so many conversions, why can't they just tell me how much water and butter to use, it'd be easier to just peel potatoes at this point," Steve grumbled at the box, his face pinched with concentration as he glared at the directions again. Darcy had specifically requested instant mashed potatoes, though, stating that she was craving them, so Steve would absolutely give her whatever he was able to.

Finally he simply nodded and dumped the whole box of instant potatoes into a bowl and began scooping half cups of boiling water into the flakes and stirring with as much vigor as he had ever
shown in throwing the shield. When the gummy potatoes were more a thick paste than dehydrated flakes, he threw in two whole sticks of butter and used more than a few super muscles to get it all incorporated into something that actually looked a little appetizing.

"Rogers, I want to warn you about something," Natasha whispered, snapping the ends off of freshly plucked green beans that had come from the greenhouse that a former SHIELD scientist ran with joy and love. The green beans were unnaturally perfect and quite large for it being so early in the season, but Natasha would not accuse the scientist of fooling around with nature, especially not if she wanted fresh produce during her stay at the exclusive retirement community.

"Needs salt," Steve muttered with a frown after a taste of the potatoes.

"Salt your own portion, not everyone is a super soldier and not everyone needs extra sodium in their diet," Natasha warned.

Steve stopped himself from dumping half a cup of kosher salt into the potatoes, looking concerned. He then went for the now empty box of mashed potatoes to read the nutritional facts.

"Sam's mom does have high blood pressure," he muttered, his mouth pinching at the amount of sodium that was already in the mashed potatoes.

"I was also thinking of the pregnant woman in there," Natasha said softly. That didn't appease Steve at all and he looked even more panicked as he read over the nutritional values repeatedly. She reached out and grabbed the empty box from him and used the cardboard to smack at his bicep. "There's nothing wrong with her, don't try to monitor her diet or anything. I just remembered that Laura's ankles would swell up towards the end of her pregnancy with Nathaniel when she had too much salt. But I don't know if Darcy even has to worry about that---thanks to the serum."

"Maybe we can start a list of questions to ask a doctor," Steve mumbled, still clearly worried about the list of ingredients in the potatoes that was not able to be pronounced.

"I'm sure Doctor Rivera would have said something by now," Natasha assured him.

"We can get another doctor too," Steve said resolutely. "Doctor Carla specializes in the serum, not baby delivering. Are midwives still a thing? Can we get a few of those?"
Natasha smiled at him, slow and warm and little used. She only ever had that smile around Steve, when he was being impossibly good and thoughtful and thoroughly vigilant. After Ultron, Steve had been obsessive about making sure Wanda was comfortable and felt wanted. He rarely got the opportunity to use his considerable ability to nurture another human being. If Darcy wasn't expecting his child, Natasha would have probably tried to get him to take on a cat or a dog. Maybe even a hamster.

But Steve was going to be a father.

Natasha's warm smile faded and for the first time since Nathaniel had been born and handed off to her for inspection, she felt the sharp tingle of happy tears burning in her eyes. Steve knew that expression of hers though, and he gave her a guileless questioning look.

"You're cute with Darcy and her baby, is all," Natasha whispered.

Steve grinned and shrugged. "I mean, we have four more months, hopefully, but maybe when it happens, things might be different between us. Maybe it won't just be that Bucky is the baby's father, maybe---maybe she might…”

"She will," Natasha promised, knowing what Steve hoped for. To be considered an equal to Bucky in Darcy's heart, to be considered the baby’s father as well. Steve gave a little incredulous shake of his head, although he clearly wanted what Natasha was promising. "I can't make it up to her, what happened. What I did. What she went through."

"She's not about an eye for an eye," Steve assured her. "S'what makes her so amazing. That heart of hers, it’s so full of goodness and love and beauty that it doesn't have room for meanness. She's---she's wonderful, Nat."

"Yeah," Natasha nodded. She narrowed her eyes with playful shrewdness, holding up a string bean, "I don't have to tell you that if you hurt her, that if you ever think of running away, for any reason, to protect her, to save her or whatever---"

She brutally snapped the ends off of the stringy vegetable in her hands and arched an eyebrow at Steve.

"I'd never ever, nothing anyone could do---I'd never," Steve looked a little sick at thinking of it. "She---when she sleeps she clings to me, and I can feel it. I can feel that lick of fear underneath
everything that she's going to be left alone, and I'm going to do all that I can to make sure that goes away."

“No matter what?” Natasha challenged.

“Nothing could make me leave her,” Steve promised earnestly. “Nothing.”

Natasha smiled again and put the green beans in the fancy microwave steamer that Laura Barton swore by. She crossed her arms while her portion of dinner was cooking away and leaned against the dark stained wooden cabinets. Steve continued to inadvertently whip copious amounts of air into the mashed potatoes, changing their very nature from gummy guilty pleasure into something that might actually be appealing to a normal palate. He was struggling to articulate his feelings and thoughts, but with Natasha, he always knew he had time. She was patient.

"I'm mad at Buck," he whispered. "I should have been able to stop this all from happening---"

"I'm just as complicit as you are, then," Natasha chimed in.

"But we didn't stop it from happening, but now---now she's free and the one thing that seems to scare her the most is being alone and he---he did that," Steve's voice could barely be heard, but it was a strained, tearful thing. He sniffed and shrugged, stopping his non-stop whipping of the potatoes. "He did the same to me. He just---he left us both, and I'm mad."

"You can be mad," Natasha assured him.

"I'll forgive him, I will," Steve admitted. "And so will Darcy. But we're allowed to be mad."

"Of course you are," Natasha agreed as the microwave beeped. She opened it up and hissed at the first touch of fingers to the ridiculously hot plastic container. Steve grabbed it from her with nearly invulnerable fingers and placed it on the little kitchen breakfast nook where the quartet would be eating dinner.

They worked in silence, grabbing dishes and setting the table, pulling out little rolls, butter, even a salad that Thuy had brought over and had been gleefully ignored earlier in the day. Natasha turned away from the pretty adorable dinner set up to call Sam and Darcy in for the meal, when Steve put his hand on her shoulder.
"Nat, did you---did you read Bucky's letter to you?"

His request was even quieter than a whisper, soft and hesitant, like he didn't know if he should be asking the question or not.

"It's hard to decipher," Natasha murmured.

"He was in a lot of pain when he wrote it," Steve admitted. "One handed at that."

"Yeah," Natasha nodded. "Give me another day or so. I'll have the answer."

"I just---Bucky was sure it wasn't biologically his, and I was---I just want to give her peace of mind," Steve admitted. "If it was one of those poor stiffs back in Siberia, at least then, she'd know and she'd be able to move forward."

"I'll tell you in a day or so, now c'mon. Let's eat," she waved him off and gave him a playful smile. "I'm pretty sure that you're going to need your strength. Lewis was using you as a jungle gym earlier today before her own adoptive father put a stop to things."

Steve couldn't help the little smirk and the glaze that went over his eyes at the memory of he and Darcy and the physicality that had been building.

"Third date," Natasha whispered. "I mean, sure, this is a double date for dinner, but I'm pretty sure that it counts, Rogers."

He couldn't help but look like his head was halfway in a cloud at that. Natasha rolled her eyes and smacked him on the side of his Temple.

"You better worship her, head to toe. Rumor has it that Barnes was awful good at that sort of thing back in the day, gotta live up to expectations."
"We need to track down some sperm."

Everett's eyes went wide in surprise. After everything he had gone through in the last few weeks, he had not expected those words to come out of Nobel Prize nominated Doctor Jane Foster's mouth. He looked to the granddaughter of SHIELD's secret backbone, but Maya Archie could only smile with delight, her eyebrows disappearing into her hairline as big, bright, brown eyes went huge with excitement.

"This just got so interesting," Maya whispered.

"I'm hoping it's not my sperm, because unfortunately, a bad case of the mumps as a baby has left me firing blanks," Everett shrugged.

"Oh, I'm sorry," Jane shook herself out of that single minded mania that she was so accustomed to falling into. Maya patted her on the shoulder before wrapping an arm around the diminutive brunette. "I'm trying."

"That was good, Baby, I'm proud of you. You're going to be great at this empathy thing in no time, you didn't tell him to fuck off with his janky ass sperm or anything," Maya praised her and Jane fairly beamed back at her with an accomplished smile. "That's progress, and next time your friend goes missing, you'll notice."

"What in the hell?" Everett stared at the two women sitting across from him in the booth with no small amount of incredulity.

"Sometimes, my Boo is too smart for her own good. She missed out on something big before and now she asked me to help so she doesn't do it again," Maya explained patiently. "Not that it's any of your business. Weren't you shot, anyway, Evy?"

"Long story," Everett huffed out. Both women looked at him curiously, or Maya did right away, and Jane had to be gently prodded into looking like she gave a damn about Everett while her fingertips drummed on a file folder full of paper. When Jane rolled her eyes pointedly at him and made an impatient gesture of her hand for him to continue Everett did, "Wakanda is a---really amazing with their, you know, health care."
"Sure, sure," Jane nodded. "How advanced? Do they have a database of sperm donors?"

"What in the hell is all this talk about sperm?" Everett demanded.

"My friend was taken by Hydra right after the fall of SHIELD, she was tested and used as a guinea pig for years and then they fucking raped her with mystery sperm and now she's five months pregnant," Jane hissed. "I want to find the fucker that did it to her."

Everett felt his mouth gaping as he tried to calculate what Jane had just blurted out. His thoughts immediately went to what he had been working on before being sent off to South Korea. The Winter Soldier's mystery mother. The girl that was still out there, vulnerable and ripe for the Thaddeus Ross's picking.

His pause was disconcerting to Jane, who wrinkled her nose slightly and continued speaking as Everett mentally rebooted in front of her, "And then when I find him, I'm gonna portal his balls off. Right into the mouth of a bilgesnipe."

"Well---as fun as that sounds, can I?" he reached for the folder and took it out from under Jane's fingertips. He opened it up and couldn't help the feline smile at the picture of the pretty brunette looking at him.

"Ohh boy, you don't want to go down that road," Maya warned him. "Little shorty is cute, I'll give you that, but she's taken. Twice over. I asked my Grammie, cause---that mouth. Damn."

"No--no---it's not that," Everett shook his head, paging through what Jane had worked through already. "How'd you get the donor DNA?"

"Portal," Jane shrugged. She seemed pleased when Everett's eyebrows went up. "I have to know certain things about who is coming through when I open them. It's a bit of technology gifted to me from a friend of Odin's, some guy who collects these oddities of the universe. It scans the molecular makeup and provides a breakdown of their genetic makeup. Dark Elves? Their DNA composition registers with the portal and when it analyzes the sequence, we close the gate on them before they can get more than halfway through."

"Ouch," Everett nodded.
"It grabbed Darcy's DNA makeup, and the little hitchhiker she's incubating," Jane placed her finger on one charted graph that looked to be exactly half of Darcy's genetic makeup and another person's.

"As advanced as Wakanda is, I doubt they have the genetic mark up of every man on the planet," Everett mumbled, reading through the file as quickly as possible, intent on finding answers.

"Oh, it's definitely not an ordinary person," Maya cut in. "Our pretty lipped girl, Darcy? She's not your average college dropout."

"Yeah, she's the Winter Soldier's girlfriend, I get that," Everett distractedly admitted as he scoured the file. "She's enhanced?"

"Yeah, I was getting to that Evy," Maya snapped at him, but tempered it with a mischievous little smile. "She's WAY enhanced."

"You see that column," Jane pointed to a simple chart graph. There were three bars, one in purple and one in red that were very large and one that was blue that was decidedly smaller. "We stole these from Tony's server at the Avenger's facility, even though it’s my intellectual data they’re working with."

"Cameron Klein stole them, but that's neither here nor there," Maya waved that little detail off. "He owed me a favor."

"Darcy is purple. Natasha Romanoff is blue. Thor is red," Jane revealed. "Darcy wasn't just given super soldier serum."

"Does it have anything to do with the scepter that made Wanda Maximoff?" Everett questioned.

"I don't know, I'd have to get Wanda's readings to be sure or not," Jane sighed. "But the fact of the matter is that Darcy is reading closer to Asgardian than super serum enhanced now."

"And her baby," Everett nodded, looking at the graph of DNA that was a combination of Darcy and someone else.
"Hydra wanted to make a super duper baby," Maya pursed her lips.

"So the sperm donor would have been serum enhanced," Everett guessed, and then a very slow, very pleased smile stretched across his lips.

"Ew," Maya wrinkled her nose at the creepy expression.

"Ladies, how do you feel about coming with me to Washington DC?"

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**Asskicker Meadows**

One yawn was all it took. Darcy wasn't *tired*, exactly, but Steve saw her yawn out of the corner of his eye while he had been digging in the chest of drawers for something that wouldn't make him look like his actual age. Retta was very generous and thoughtful, but she still thought men lounged in linen pajama sets and robes. Darcy had loved the rejected pile of pajamas that Steve had tossed to the side, immediately layering the top and the robe on top of her own shirt.

Retta had not been prepared for a pregnant woman when it came to prospective wardrobes. She'd been prepared for nearly everything else, but maternity clothing wasn't on her radar. And when it had come on her radar, she'd employed the resident retired seamstress who had spent most of her youth in the forties and fifties sewing up various uniforms and disguises for Peggy Carter. However, the seamstress had only thought to make a large, obnoxiously floral smock meant to hide Darcy's baby bump.

Steve had thrown it in the compost drawer immediately, without letting Darcy lay her eyes on it.

She was making due with large t-shirts from Steve's designated chest of drawers. And now was happily making herself look like the most adorable old man ever with the striped linen button down pajama shirt and the sensible blue flannel robe. Steve was still on the search for the athletic wear he usually wore to bed when he saw the tiny movement from the ridiculously dressed pregnant woman out of the corner of his eye.

"Sweetheart, you tired?" he immediately questioned, his concern level high. They had had quite the day, when all was said and done. It had felt like an entire twenty-four hours filled with setting up pranks, spending time with close friends, and so many kisses that Steve had gladly lost count.
And that was after nearly a week of non-stop activity for the little woman sitting crossed legged on the bed they had shared that first day, her frame dwarfed by the old fashioned mens loungewear. Not to mention the fact that she was literally building a small person inside of her body. He would understand if she wanted to rest up, despite the spoken and unspoken intentions of---physical relations beginning between them.

"I think I read somewhere that sometimes people yawn because their brains are running too fast and too hot," Darcy shrugged. "I'm not actually tired."

She stifled the next yawn while Steve looked at her shrewdly.

"I'm not tired," Darcy insisted, looking up at him with narrowed eyes. "I'm a grownass woman and I can stay up as late as I want doing whatever I want."

"Sure, of course, yeah," Steve nodded, smiling as he took the pajama bottoms to the top that Darcy was wearing and quickly went into the en suite to change.

Darcy's body moved back a bit at that, as if shocked by Steve's response. She inched herself to the right on the bed so that she could get closer to the en suite and leaned as far forward as she could go, but failed to be able to peep in. Steve caught her at it when he came back out, with nothing but a white sleeveless muscle shirt and a pair of linen pajama pants on. She couldn't help but look at him like he was a particularly tricky puzzle that she would like nothing more than to work on for a few hours.

"Whatsit, Tiger?" Steve wondered as he settled himself next to her on the bed, reaching out to fiddle with the belt of her bathrobe.

"I want sushi," Darcy demanded.

"Alright, I'll ask Retta where we can find some," Steve automatically agreed with a shrug.

"I'm gonna stay up all night," Darcy declared nonchalantly.

Steve gave her a look that said he didn't quite believe her, but he wouldn't argue with her about it.
He didn't quite understand why she got thoughtful and quiet and he wasn't having any luck in reading the emotions she had been broadcasting to him non-stop since he had stepped foot off of the plane a few days ago. But he waited patiently, still playing with the tie to her robe while she thought through what she needed to.

"Sushi is bad for the baby," Darcy whispered.

"Oh? Oh! Then, I guess you wouldn't want it," Steve nodded.

"No, Bucky took all my sushi one day when we were in an airport, said it was bad for the baby," Darcy revealed.

"He's a stickler for rules sometimes, but it's usually only to save someone's neck," Steve smiled in fond remembrance.

"I just---it's interesting," Darcy shrugged, inching closer to Steve. "The way you two work. Together."

"How's that?"

"Well, I mean, with just Bucky he's kind of the taskmaster," Darcy explained. "Let's do this, Pet, let's eat this babydoll, let's go here, Darcy."

"Hmmm, yeah, sounds familiar," Steve nodded.

"And you're like, okay, eat sushi and jump on the couch and whatever you want Tiger I'll get it for you," Darcy recounted.

"I sound way more fun than boring ole Buck," Steve's lips turned upwards in the barest hint of a smirk.

"It's just---you complement each other. For me," Darcy huffed out a breath of disbelief. "He TOLD me you would. That the three of us would be good."
"Smart man, that Bucky Barnes," Steve let his hands drift up from the robe's tie to Darcy's waist, his thumb rubbing against her bump while his fingers wrapped around her midsection. "You believe what he said?"

"I do now," Darcy whispered, leaning into Steve.

"Good," Steve whispered back, before pressing his lips against her mouth in a gentle kiss.

She couldn't hide the next yawn with Steve's close proximity and he caught her at it, giving her a humorous little discerning look. One more kiss to her forehead and he fell onto his back on the bed, making sure one arm was wrapped around her to bring her with him so that she could cuddle into his side.

"But---third date shenanigans," Darcy whispered.

"You're tired, Tiger," Steve insisted. "And I may be the one to let you do whatever you want, but I also listen to what Bucky says and he asked me to keep you safe."

"You outrank him!" Darcy disputed and gave a snort of a laugh at Steve's hapless, exaggerated shrug. It amused her that even though her mother-hen Soldier was on the other side of the world, recuperating in a giant tube of cool ice (Natasha had given a picture, thankfully the one that Sam had not drawn ridiculous doodles on), Bucky was still kind of in the bed along with her and Steve. "You're gonna regret this decision, Rogers."

"Never. I can take anything you want to throw at me," Steve assured her. He gave her a small wink and whispered, "If it gets to be too much for you, sweetheart, you just send all the naughty thoughts my way."

Darcy's responding grin was devlish, to say the least.

Steve had the good grace to look just a little terrified, but mostly delighted, as Darcy's entire expression changed, morphing from thoughtful and happy right into playful and sinfully mischievous. His pulse ramped up at that look, internally declaring it one of his favorite expressions from Darcy.
And then his pulse ramped up for an entirely different reason.

The heat exuded from her, wafting off as invisible tendrils that were soft and enticing, licking at his skin with unrelenting persistence. He felt himself melt into the mattress, even as every muscle in his body seemed to tense as the arousal that Darcy felt was pushed into him, and he couldn't help the moan as he hardened inside of his pants with alarming quickness.

"That's gonna be trouble if you can do that all the time, Tiger," Steve mumbled hoarsely, his hips lifting minutely off of the bed in a thrust. His pants left nothing to the imagination, but Darcy's hand snuck out and went to pull at the waistband he shook his head. "Didn't have underwear."

"So?" Darcy shrugged before her grin turned wicked.

"Wanna romance you," Steve grumbled before his breath hitched audibly and his hips came up in a thrust again, his cock straining against the soft, silky fabric. "Give me a---give me---"

Darcy couldn't help but delight in the hedonistic groaning sound that rumbled from Steve's chest. She watched as the ability to use language filtered out, replaced with sharp intakes of breaths and absolutely explicit moans as Steve let her untapped, unfettered arousal wreck him. She wouldn't touch him until he gave a green light, and she had to wonder if she even needed to touch him at that point. She bit her bottom lip and watched as Steve kept thrusting his hips into nothing, getting only the friction from his pants as both torture and relief.

She watched in fascination as the outline of his erection gave two strong twitches, pulsing in time to two throaty groans from Steve. She looked up to his face and saw his head was thrown back, the long line of his neck exposed and the veins there throbbing with his quick pulse. His eyes were closed and his mouth was wide open as he panted.

"More, more," he practically begged.

Darcy had previously thought that learning to expertly control her power would involve more torture with the Black Widow yelling awful things at her to make her sad. She had not been looking forward to it in the least. This alternative was decidedly better. She found that with just a little hazy concentration, she managed to push every last wanton, needy, desperate drop of lust in her body right onto Steve, who writhed with enjoyment of it.

His left hand went to the hem of his shirt, pulling it up to expose his entire torso, then his pecs. He
managed to move just enough to get it up and over his head, his arms still caught up, but the slight restraint didn't seem to bother him, instead, his hand swept down again, dragging nails up and down the lines of his abs.

He moaned when Darcy ruminated on that in her brain, thinking of how she'd rather be tracing those lines with her tongue instead. He couldn’t help the sounds coming from him. A small whining sound made it past his lips as a fine sheen of sweat broke out on his forehead. There was a heaviness low in his abdomen, it was a searing hot pressure and it felt better than fantastic, it combined easily with his own heady arousal and threatened to rob him of all sanity and sense of propriety.

And in that moment, he never wanted it to end. He wanted it to go on forever. He wanted to feel this way when Darcy had him wrapped up in her soft heat. He wanted to feel it with both Darcy and Bucky tangled up around him, all skin and mouths and sweat.

“Shit---shit---fuck that’s good,” Steve gasped, his core tensing as he continued his small thrusts into the air. His hands gripped at the comforter as he tensed, his cock twitching hard against the fabric of his pants. “I’m gonna---I’m---”

“Come, Steve,” Darcy whispered, absolutely amazed when his whole body went rigid and he let out the loudest, guttural groan so far.

She could see his release turning the material of his pants dark and wet and after three extended pulses, Steve collapsed on the bed, like a puppet with his strings cut. Darcy waited patiently for him to recover.

She waited about three patient seconds before asking, “So was it good for you, honey?”

Steve huffed out a laugh before turning and reaching for her, pulling her gently to be pressed back into his side. The little, gentle kisses he pressed on her cheek seemed to be the polar opposite of the lewd act she had just pressed upon him, but she couldn’t find it in her to complain. Steve was super warm, and it had been a long day. She hoped that if she fell asleep, he wouldn’t be too uncomfortable staying still with his now soiled pajama pants.

“Tomorrow, I’d like to take you out on a date,” Steve whispered to her hopefully, sounding so earnest and shy after what he’d just done in front of her and because of her.
“I thought we weren’t allowed to go off base?” Darcy mumbled sleepily.

“Don’t worry, Tiger. I’ll figure it out.”

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Wakanda

Ayanda, elder of the Merchant Tribe of the great Kingdom of Wakanda, had thought it cruel when Princess Shuri dropped off the white man and formally (as formal as the Princess could attempt) announced that the one armed man wished to prove himself worthy of the gift of vibranium and Wakanda's protection. For one, the trial had never been successfully completed. No colonizer had ever made it past their borders AND proven themselves to every tribe of Wakanda. Most of them were turned away at the Border tribe.

Here though, the outsider had been brought in by the Golden Tribe, and so, he was able to begin the Trials. And so she had waved one of her assistants to take care of the strangely quiet, intense, one-armed white man.

It was cruel though to start him on the trials. Ayanda was sure of it.

She quickly learned that having only one arm did not matter to the tall, formidably muscled outsider. He was tirelessly hauling bags of grain from the transport pod to the storage unit of the market. He had been at the same mundane task for hours, long after all of the other employees had left for the day. He was singular in his focus, and Ayanda could appreciate having him in her employ for some time, even though he would eventually move on to prove himself worthy of another tribe.

And there lay the cruelty. Yes, he had been accepted and brought to Wakanda by the Royal Family itself. The Mining Tribe might find use in a focused worker and deem him worthy. The River Tribe would no doubt be hesitant to trust an outsider, but may eventually be swayed. The Border Tribe would most likely try to thrust the white man out of the country out of force of habit.

But the Jabari? Host this silent, one armed white man in the snow covered mountains? To gift him with a fragment of wood and allow the man's quest for vibranium to continue?
It would never happen, Ayanda was sure of it. She was so sure of it, she was tempted to end the man's quest where it stood, to deny him her approval early, so he couldn't continue on the fruitless task.

Then he could continue to work for her and move things off of transport pods so efficiently all day. Ayanda walked slowly and carefully down the staircase from her office to where the man was toiling, surprised to see that he had left the transport pod half full.

Her quick temper rose and she bustled about the area to find the lazy man and tell him to go back to the palace and tell the insolent little Shuri that he had failed. She turned a corner and saw the white man, nearly bent in half, his right forearm laying flat against the wall as he tried to catch his breath.

Ayanda looked him over for injury and her eyes widened, seeing how his robes were displaced and askew, showing proof of his virility. He was breathing heavily through his nose, the sounds of a man in the throes of passion, his hips moving languidly into nothing.

Ayanda couldn't help but smile in smug satisfaction. She had been the only soul left in the nearest 100 meters and here, the virile and handsome white man was so overcome by her that he pleasured himself without touch.

She knew that her husband had been speaking rubbish. *She still had it.*

"Pet---" the white man gasped out groaning as he approached his conclusion.

Ayanda backed away as silently as she could, but the movement of her jewelry had the white man straightening and looking around in muted nervousness. He looked up and swallowed repeatedly, a touch of pink crossing over his cheeks.

The elder of the Merchant Tribe suddenly felt as if she were a much younger woman than she was. She smiled serenely at the younger man and reached a wrinkled hand out to pat his cheek.

"I am flattered, but spoken for. Come along, there is much to be done."
*Rimshot sound effect*
Don't forget to tip your waitresses.

Thank you for reading!
Happy Wednesday, everyone!

So---warnings for: issues of consent regarding feelings and specifically Darcy using her magic powers in pushing feelings on a person who doesn't want that particular feeling. If you get squicked about issues of consent in any manner, perhaps skip this chapter? Also warnings for Steve and Darcy being adorable (a recurring theme).

Thanks to the beta babes, phoenix-173, queenspuppet/ragwitch and dntpanic42

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Thirty-Seven: Revenge is a Dish Best Served Giddy

Asskicker Meadows

Darcy didn't like waking up alone one bit, to be totally honest, but here she was, waking up in bed with no cuddly super soldier. Steve, thoughtful perfect Steve, had attempted to minimize his absence. He had utilized every pillow and couch cushion in the house to build a buffer zone that was meant to replicate dense muscles and shoulders that were approximately shoulder width. The spike of fear that bubbled in her gut at realizing he was gone was quickly replaced with mirth, as the mustard yellow couch cushion pressed against her back had a piece of paper safety pinned to it.

A cartoonized drawing meant to resemble Steve with an impressive duck face and a note scrawled in the edges of the paper put her mind at ease and then some.

'Good morning, Tiger! I just ran to the community center to get a few things handled. Hopefully I'll be back before you wake, but if you do, feel free to give this ugly mug a kiss or five or as many as you can stand. Yours always, Steve.'

Darcy couldn't be blamed for the rush of happy warmth that assaulted her entire body as a result of Steve's ridiculous sweetness. She could feel it slinking down her back, making her feel safe and cared for and wanted. She didn't feel one ounce of shame for wrapping her arms as best as she could around the couch cushion and placing more than the five requested kisses against cartoon Steve's puckered pout, each kiss fast and quick and accompanied with a giddy little giggle.

She carefully unpinned the picture and placed it in the corner of the mirror on the dressing table,
petting at the cartoon's nose before walking with a definite spring in her step and figurative song in her heart towards the bathroom. She opened the door, intent on doing her business before tracking down the man with a plan to be stinking adorable, but there was already someone in her bathroom, sitting on the sink counter.

"Sorry---I didn't want to---"

The unannounced intruder didn't have a chance to explain further, as Darcy took a quick step back and fairly detonated with an explosion of intense feeling, the last feeling she had been feeling, actually.

Natasha fell off of the sink, landing face first on the shaggy, thick bathroom rug, her ass in the air. She tried to move, but only managed to move her head enough to get her lips off of the rug, opening her mouth and letting out a vowel sound that seemed to convey nothing but boneless, happy, gooey contentment.

Darcy began reaching into the hamper for dirty clothing and began throwing it at the incapacitated Black Widow. Natasha could do nothing but spinelessly wiggle on the ground while letting out happy squeaks and squee’s of enchanted adoration as Darcy covered her with dirty laundry, including Steve's soiled pajamas from the night before.

One of his socks landed in front of Natasha's nose and she sniffed, and found that she could just begin to struggle and force her way out of the forced feelings of young, excessive puppy love and adoration, slowly managing to move her usually graceful body into a kneeling position.

"Sorry," she gasped out and then proceeded to try to speak, only to let out hitching, joyful, giddy breaths for a solid twenty seconds. "I wanted to speak to you without Steve...please stop."

"NO!" Darcy snapped and wrinkled her nose as she sent Natasha MORE of that giddy, new love feeling. "Maybe this will teach you to learn boundaries!"

"Send something ELSE!" Natasha begged breathlessly as she found herself flat on her back, the dirty laundry now beneath her as she began wiggling back and forth as it felt like a million feathers running up and down her arms and between the valley of her breasts.

She liked to think that she had felt love before. And with Sam, certainly, he inspired a sort of fluttering, churning feeling deep down inside of her. But this was an all over feeling of giddy and dangerous joy, this inability to see straight and to focus on anything other than the sweet, dripping, exhausting exuberance that was crawling right under her skin.

"You're lucky I wasn't *horny,*" Darcy hissed.

"DON'T!" Natasha squealed, sounding like a romantic comedy heroine right before her lover
tackled her with ticklish kisses. "I just wanted to talk! Please!"

It was another two full minutes of happy giggles and breathless sighs before Natasha could sit up on her own power again. She disdainfully pulled the clearly soiled pajama pants off of her shoulder and tossed them to the side. Her entire face was flushed a pretty pink as she tried to not look at Darcy with eyes full of stars.

"Well, if I had known you could incapacitate a person with love instead of sadness, I might have used a different tactic back on the Raft," Natasha mumbled, her voice still a higher pitch than she would have liked.

"Those assholes didn't deserve that feeling," Darcy muttered, stalking towards the toilet. She smirked when Natasha spun around just in time for Darcy to shimmy her panties down without her prying eyes.

Darcy remembered doing science in the deserts of New Mexico with Jane, going so long and so hard, that they had forgotten everything else. Including bathroom breaks. It had not been strange to have the petite brunette ladies both dropping trou in front of each other and carefully taking a whizz in the middle of nowhere. And quite frankly, Darcy was closer to being five months pregnant than four months pregnant, so if the delicate, blushing lady spy in front of her couldn't deal with her using the toilet, well then, that didn't really seem like a DARCY problem anymore.

"So what did you want that you had the need to sneak into the house and hide in the bathroom?" Darcy asked conversationally as she wiped up and flushed. She went to the sink and washed her hands as Natasha turned and stared at her.

"Barnes wrote me a letter before he went under back in Wakanda," Natasha revealed, gaining some cool back as the after effects of her love bug attack faded. "Steve gave it to me a few days ago and I've managed to decode it."

"Bullshit," Darcy accused as she spread far too much toothpaste on her toothbrush. "James could decode your messages in moments, and he wasn't even all put together again yet."

"I was waiting to see what your mental status was," Natasha said with blunt honesty. "What I said to you on the Raft--Sam said that one of the guards was ready to blow his brains out because he was so sad."

Darcy brushed her teeth, staring straight ahead at the mirror and not glancing a bit towards Natasha.

"I'm truly sorry that I brought that out in you," Natasha offered. She brought her hand up to her hair and flicked at the pale blonde ends. "I seem to have gotten off rather easy, when you add it all up against me."
Darcy spat in the sink before looking at Natasha in the bathroom mirror and rolling her eyes with excessive exaggeration.

"Yes, I'm really sad when I think about some of the things I've gone through," Darcy admitted in something that seemed like an irreverently mocking imitation of Natasha's own no nonsense attitude. "And you're really good at your job."

"Barnes loves you," Natasha said softly. "The note said it was breaking his heart to leave you."

"Yeah," Darcy whispered. She shrugged and began to rifle through the vintage toiletries on the sink, intent on finding something to tame her wild curls with and coming up short. "Yes, I was sad. But everyone is sad. Sam already found someone for me to talk to. And I'm going to be okay. I always end up on my feet."

Silence extended again, a comfortable silence this time as Darcy tried to ease a comb through her curls, only to wince and stop as she hit a snag. Natasha came to stand behind her and began gently finger combing through small snags, eventually arranging Darcy's hair into a large, loose braid that fell over her shoulder.

"The note also said who the father of your baby is," Natasha's voice was a soft thing as she tied the braid off with an elastic from her own pocket.

"Bucky's the father," Darcy answered back. "And---and I think Steve wants to---he wants to be permanent."

"He absolutely does," Natasha promised. "All of that giddy, loving emotion you sent me earlier? I can guarantee you that big dope is feeling it for you."

"That's all I need," Darcy insisted.

"Darcy, you should know---"

"That's all I need!" Darcy hissed out and before Natasha could say anything more, she was flat on her back, incapacitated once more with a forceful wave of young, sweet love.

"Darcy?" Wanda called from the first floor of the house. "Steve sent me to come and get you for breakfast. Is that Natasha upstairs with you? She feels... funny. Are you talking about Sam?"

"Hey, Wanda! Remember that thing you said? About taking something inside of someone and making it bigger and more powerful?" Darcy called out, calm, cool and collected.
"Yes?"

"Can you do that to Natasha right now?" Darcy asked hopefully. She grinned wickedly at Wanda's throaty giggle.

Natasha writhed on the floor in exquisite torture as silent giggles wracked her body.

"Relax, have fun!" Darcy chirped before waving quickly and stepping over the incapacitated lady spy. She stopped and saw that Natasha was once again in the pile of laundry and hesitated, before pulling at Steve's pajama pants and putting them back in the hamper. "Never say I didn't do anything for you, Red. Enjoy the lovely squishies!"

Washington DC

The small portal opened in a dark records room, and two women stepped out, followed closely by a middle aged man who immediately put both hands over his mouth to suppress the urge to vomit. He tried to recover quickly, standing up straight and nodding briefly before immediately shaking his head 'no' before doubling over and fighting against a dry heave as he slapped his hands on his thighs.

"Evy, really?" Maya questioned.

"I have trypophobia," Everett gasped out harshly against his effort to keep the urge to vomit at bay. "The rainbow thing is like staring at a million tiny, clustered holes."

"That's because your molecules are being taken apart and put back together while somehow not moving at all," Maya shrugged.

"You paid attention!" Jane beamed at her new friend.

"Because that's what people should do, Boo," Maya reminded her patiently. She gently patted Jane's head and smiled, "You're doing good, Boo, I promise."

"Thanks," Jane's smile was slightly self-deprecating. She hadn't had this kind of learning experience since she was very young and needed to be taught the basics. It was strange to have
someone attempting to tutor her in one of the tenants of basic human interaction, but the strange
was still very helpful. She turned to look at Everett and shrugged, slight disgust evident on her
face. "You gonna hurl?"

"I'm good," Everett waved her off before straightening his posture and marching further into the
cavernous, dark records room.

He led the women to a long row of weather proof, large lockers, reinforced to withstand nearly
anything. Except, of course, someone who had a clearance card. He opened the first locker to
reveal garment bags, the second to reveal weaponry, and then several more contained boxes and
boxes of physical files.

Maya opened up one of the garment bags and wrinkled her nose.

"This is why men revolt me. This STINKS," she spat out in disgust. She turned to Jane in concern,
"Does Thor sweat that bad? I mean, is he like---rank? Cause I'm not gonna be able to maintain
lady wood if he does."

"No, he smells---good," Jane shivered a bit in remembrance.

"Really?" Maya smirked. "THAT good?"

"Yeah," Jane blushed a little.

"That clothing is from World War Two, please forgive Captain Roger's aftershave not lingering on
it," Everett sneered, definitely sounding a little defensive on Steve Rogers' behalf.

"Why are we at Captain Rogers' Storage Warehouse locker?" Maya wondered.

"Because, your friend, Darcy, she was taken by Hydra, experimented upon, enhanced in ways that
no other human has been so far on Earth in addition to the bastardized super serum that changed
Natasha Romanoff and James Barnes. You said she took out the entire Avenger's Facility staff,"
Everett began pulling out large boxes full of paper and going through them.
"Do you want me to pull up the selfie where I look like a raccoon again?" Maya asked. "A girl does smokey eye for a fun Friday at work, and then some little hottie comes along and makes you cry, and suddenly you're an Evangelical Pastor's wife who just found out that their husband had his seventeenth affair."

"You would really rock a smokey eye," Jane offered helpfully.

"Evy, turn away, I'm about to hug Jane Foster inappropriately," Maya warned.

"Cut the cute shit for now," Everett warned as he paged through documents. He grinned at finding something he needed and waved the file in his hand in triumph. "Hydra violated your friend, inseminating her with someone's sperm and impregnating her."

"Yeah," Jane looked more than a little sick at that and Maya wrapped an arm around her to comfort her.

"Now, I don't understand what gets fucked up in someone's mind to make them choose Hydra. I mean, don't get me wrong, the CIA had its fair share of Hydra moles, and I didn't get it back in 2014 and I don't get it now," Everett sighed. "But I can take a guess at what their end goal was with Darcy Lewis and her baby. What they wanted was to create a new breed of supersoldier. Something incredibly powerful. Something very nearly perfect."

"And Steve Rogers has the most perfect variant of the super soldier serum," Maya concluded, letting her hand drop from Jane's shoulder to pull out her phone to text her grandmother. This seemed like news that should be shared immediately with the parties in question.

Jane went to the locker with the garment bags, ripping them open until she came upon one of the later suits with blood on it.

"Man, that guy just fills whatever cup a doctor hands him," Everett sighed as he took a look at the paper medical records. "Right after he got the serum back in the 40's, they took as much blood as they had vials for and then sent him into a room with two magazines and a whole case full of glass jars."

"Would they have had the technology to freeze man juice like that back then?" Maya disputed.
"Wouldn't matter, when he came out of the ice, they did the same---well, except for the magazines. They gave him an ipad with x-rated instructional videos on it," Everett rolled his eyes. "Hydra made up half of SHIELD's work force back then. It wouldn't have been hard for them to snag a few of the jars."

Jane pulled out one of Steve's uniforms from the locker and pulled out her controls for the portable rainbow bridge.

"Grab your souvenirs, Everett. We're going to go find out."

Asskicker Meadows

Steve felt the mischief coming a mile away. He stopped everything he was doing in the mess hall of the community center and nearly swayed on his feet as the delightful feeling of mirth and incorrigible need for harmless trouble bubbled beneath his skin. He had not felt something even remotely similar to that since he had been eleven or twelve years old, shortly after meeting Bucky.

He was reminded immediately of pulling pranks on Bucky's oldest sister, and running away as fast as his lungs would let him when she'd hollered and shouted up a storm at the way all of her skirts had been hemmed to be about ten inches in length. He knew what he and Bucky had done was a little wrong, even if it WAS out of well deserved revenge, but there was still the joy in doing a prank and doing it well.

This felt kind of like that, except there was a lot less remorse and a lot more joy. Joy at unexpected victory? Steve didn't know. The feeling was so specific that it was hard to name now. When he had first encountered Darcy Lewis after landing at the retirement community, she'd been sending him just a few, easily definable feelings. Even before that, it had always been easy to identify what she was unwittingly sending him from afar.

It was like crayons, a bit. When he was a kid, there were just a few colors and they were named red, and blue and yellow. And now, when looking at the crayons the Barton kids went through far too fast, the colors names’ were like a dandelion's wisp and blood of your enemies and deepest ocean depths blue. Before, he would have felt happiness from Darcy, but perhaps in getting to know her better, in getting to hear her stories and listen to her talk for hours and hours and hours in the past few days, he could figure out the layers of the happiness.
Joyful accomplishment at a prank well done. Giddy anticipation at whatever she was about to encounter. With a hint of petulant and stubborn obstinance.

Steve gazed into the distance and grinned like a mad man. He really felt like he loved her far too much for his own good already.

He blinked and came out of his haze to see a wrinkled hand waving in front of his face.

"Your burning the hotcakes, son!" Herb called out. "Get your head outta the clouds and stop making this place smell like my third ex-wife's lunch time experiments gone wrong."

"Don't son me Herb, you hadn't hit puberty yet when I was killing Nazis," Steve teased, mostly playful as he quickly yanked all of the ruined pancakes off of the griddle and started once more. "And your third ex-wife was probably trying to poison you."

"She was the one we figured out was KGB, so there's truth in that," Retta interjected as she walked into the mess hall. She ignored Herb's pout and his mutterings about being nearly as good as seventeen at the end of the war and Korea being hell, and she instead focused on what Steve was doing instead.

The griddle had about ten pancakes on it, and Steve was rapidly trying to sprinkle in things before the batter could cook too much. Tiny bits of candied bacon that she highly suspected was flavored with some kind of marmalade were added to the batter before Steve would flip them. There was already a plate stacked high with flapjacks, sitting next to a little container of syrup that looked to be from Thuy's kitchen, colored orange with bits of orange zest dispersed throughout.

"I got my costume girl Tessie to draw up a bunch of designs for your little Missus to approve," Retta told Steve. "If Herb stops bitching about Korea long enough to help her with her email, we'll see if we can get some new maternity clothing from this millenia."

"She's not my Missus," Steve corrected gently. His smile was slow and extra dopey as he flitted off into happy, mischief dreamland, just thinking about the idea of a little Missus to keep he and Bucky in line, all of them going out on adventures together and filling up their days with entertaining stories to tell the grandkids someday.

"Well I mean---I know a guy," Retta grabbed the pancake turner out of Steve's hand and took care of the breakfast on the griddle before Steve could burn another batch of pancakes. "He did a little
cute ceremony to 'marry' me to Lesley in the sixties, didn't even care that Lesley was married to Arnie and I wasn't too interested in what Arnie was packing."

"Hippies," Herb muttered from the industrial sized refrigerator.

"Herb, I told you, go and help Tess with the email, and stop eating all of the sugar free pudding cups," Retta barked out. "There may be no sugar, but the dairy is too much and I won't stop the next committee that forms to take you out after one of your gassy days."

Steve snorted as Herb ran off with his tail between his legs (and a whole four pack of sugar free butterscotch). He watched as Retta finished up the pancakes, a thoughtful expression on his face as he contemplated what Retta had divulged about her own polyamorous past.

"I'd want to wait for Bucky to come home, to settle things with him properly. We have a few problems to work out, a few things to make sure that we still work the right way together and with Darcy," Steve admitted. "But maybe someday, I'll take that number of that guy you know."

"Work things through with just Bucky?" Retta's eyes narrowed at Steve in intense dissection as he went about gathering his breakfast feast for his 'missus'. "Things really are going well with Darcy, then?"

"I'd be useless without her, already," Steve admitted without hesitation or fear. "I never talked so well with anyone. Not even Bucky. I could fill up a hundred years of just talking to her all day, and I'd never be bored or get tired of hearing her. You ever feel that way?"

"Not since my Lesley passed," Retta admitted. She shrugged and muttered to Steve confidentially, "Don't tell Carla that. But honestly, all she talks about is super serum this and super soldier that and the baby is human perfection, look at this measurement! It gets a little tiring."

"She calls the house once an hour," Steve rolled his eyes. "Who do I talk to in this place about getting a new number?"

"That'd be Herb. You'll get a new number by the time the baby is thirty-three," Retta joked. She put a hand on Steve's shoulder before he could walk away. "Rogers, seriously. I wanted to talk to you on something. When Lesley and Arnie and I started having babies, even though I knew damned well that those children weren't birthed by me, they were still MY babies, just as much as the one I grew on my own."
"I'm gonna ask her, about that. Directly, sometime soon," Steve's small smile was enough to light up an entire room. "She already considers Bucky to be a parent. And I'm---she seems to think I'm---
"

Both Retta and Steve shivered as a rush of something came over them. Retta might have pegged it for happiness. Steve knew differently.

Giddy excitement coupled with warm comfort and joy at getting to spend time with someone special. HIM.

"Yeah, I get that she's falling in love with you," Retta laughed in acknowledgement at the feeling coursing through her courtesy of Darcy. "You there too?"

Steve huffed out an astonished, awestruck breath before nodding slowly, "Yeah, I'm definitely there."

Sam found Natasha attempting to storm her way through the retirement community's main street. She was doing her best, really. But the woman who had been known to make SHIELD agents wet themselves when she walked purposefully down a hall with an absolutely gorgeous resting bitch face was not quite living up to her own legend. It mostly had to do with the fact that every time she got her gait under control and her face in a neutral, annoyed position, a little zip of red light from down the road would hit her in the small of the back.

"MAXIMOFF!" Natasha squealed, sounding absolutely delighted and downright gleeful as her entire body bent in half, her hands slapping against her thighs as her back contracted with what might have been violent spasms.

Sam immediately stood up from the dominos game he had been playing on a porch with a small group of Korean War veterans. He was down the walkway and in front of Natasha in the span of two seconds and put his hands on her shoulders in concern.

"Are you---are you giggling?" Sam wondered at the aborted little sounds coming out of his probably, sort of girlfriend. She turned her head to look up at him and she was obviously
struggling between a euphoric look of affection and a diametrically opposing look of seething, murderous anger. Sam huffed out a breath and looked a little confused, "Uhm, I think I'm turned on?"

Another little blip of red energy hit Natasha's back and in the blink of an eye she was standing up right again and pressing the entire length of her body into Sam. She grew approximately six other arms and Sam felt like he was getting frisked. In a sexy way. His elderly playmates began hooting and hollering from the porch when Natasha's plush lips began peppering what felt like hundreds of kisses up and down the column of his neck.

"Woah, nice," Sam muttered automatically before shaking his head at the sound of an irritated growl grumbling in an uncharacteristically giddy Natasha. He put pulled away from her body, which was a damned shame, and looked at her quizzically. "What in the hell is going on?"

"Darc---" her words were cut off as another beam of red light hit her. She jumped up and Sam had no choice but to hold onto her body, carrying her as if she were his tiny little bride that he was about to carry over any number of thresholds surrounding them. She wrinkled her nose in annoyance before the euphoria came back and she seemed to let it, her body melting in his arms, her expression going gooey and appreciative over his face. "You're beautiful, Sam. You're so beautiful."

"WANDA!" Sam shouted, looking around. He knew they had been working on range before Lagos, and she was getting good. She could have been anywhere in the retirement community at that point. The red energy was clearly the Scarlet Witch, but the emotions were not entirely Natasha's own. Which could only mean one thing.

"Those little witches are doing combo moves," Sam sighed, causing Natasha to squeal with delight and whisper excitedly about her smart and beautiful Sammy. As good as that was for his ego, he knew that it wasn't entirely Natasha.

And the thing was, he kind of liked Natasha as is. Steve and Bucky might appreciate the effervescence of Darcy and her brand of sugar-laced, demonstrative love, but Sam had appreciated something more sedate. Blackmail aside, he would appreciate Natasha being back to normal.

"Alright, calm down, girl, get your teeth off my earlobe or we're going to literally have to bang this outta you," Sam's annoyance blended well with the sudden surge of arousal that her kittenish antics were invoking.

One thing was for sure, he could understand how Darcy would NEED two super soldiers to tend to
her. Natasha was a damned octopus and he was sure at this point she had grown an extra mouth with all the kisses and playful biting she was doing.

"Wanda, you hit her again, and I'm going to tell Clint that you made out with Vision at his kid's birthday party!" Sam shouted out into the distance. It seemed to do the trick, so Sam nodded and took a still euphoric and affectionate Natasha down the main road, intent on finding Darcy and telling her to lift whatever whammy she had leveled at the Black Widow.

"Did you like it?" Steve couldn't contain his curiosity as he finished up the last of their breakfast dishes in the industrial sized community center kitchen.

Darcy had insisted on helping to dry the dishes and would have tried to find their homes for them, but Thuy, the massively talented chef of the retirement community, was physically vibrating with anxiety at having Steve and Darcy even touch her equipment. Darcy wondered briefly why Steve had not done breakfast in the little split level they were currently calling home, but as soon as she wiped off the last plate and placed it on the pile (for Thuy to probably re-wash to her own liking), Steve had grabbed Darcy's hand and led her to a different area in the community center.

And it was very different.

It was a war room, for lack of a better description. This one was decidedly more high tech than the rest of the community's aesthetic. There was a wall of flat screen display panels, and a half dozen desks with keyboards, remote controls, and gadgetry. Steve led them to one desk in the middle of the room, where there was a champagne bucket full of ice and glass bottles of coke, an entire jar of marmalade and something that made Darcy squeal in delight.

"DESSERT SUSHI!" she clapped her hands and looked down at what Steve had been working at very hard early in the morning with the assistance of Chef Thuy.

There was an entire silver serving tray full of what looked to be bright and cartoonish sushi. Upon closer inspection though, it was clear that it was anything but traditional sushi. Bright pink sponge cake had been rolled into tiny jelly rolls and wrapped in sprinkles. Little pillows of krispie treats were made to look like nigiri with large red pieces of swedish fish candy laying atop them. Steve had obviously enjoyed using his artistic talents in the culinary endeavor. There had to be at least a dozen different types of 'rolls' cut up on the platter, all made up of sugar and fruit and all the candy pilfered from everyone's kitchens.
Darcy took one of the fruit roll up wrapped cakes that looked like the happiest, most psychedelic shrimp tempura roll she'd ever seen and popped it into her mouth. Steve looked her over carefully for an honest reaction, but instead of an expression of distaste or dislike, he got a beautiful woman throwing herself at him with arms wide open and one of the sweetest, sugariest kisses he'd ever gotten in his whole life.

"You're---you're lovely," Darcy whispered, sticky lips barely moving against his own before going back in for a deeper kiss.

Steve couldn't help but moan into it as he let her push him into the commander's chair, and then let his hands run up and down her sides as soon as she crawled into his lap. He felt as if he were melting into the fabric of the chair when she licked into his mouth and simultaneously rolled her hips against him. More than the physical though, her feelings were seeping into him and they were a bounty of thick, syrupy, carnal urges.

He wanted. He wanted so desperately on his own, but there was something so satisfying at feeling her want, genuine and natural and earnest. It made him feel like a million bucks, back when a million bucks meant being the richest man in the world.

Steve's hands drifted from her sides and he felt the flutter go through both of them as his palms gently pressed against the roundness of her belly. Darcy sat back and gave him a smirk that would have made a less resilient man a puddle. As it was, Steve could only grin at her, big and wide and bright as his hands encompassed the entire swell of the baby Darcy was building so well.

"Is it wrong that I think you're more attractive like this?" Steve blurted. "I mean, you were beautiful before, there's no doubt about that, but---I like this."

His fingers rubbed her bump and Darcy laughed.

"You have a kink. It happens, I guess," Darcy assured him.

"Yeah? What's your kink?" Steve wondered.

"Riding super soldier stallions," Darcy waggled her eyebrows at him, delighting when Steve threw his head back and laughed with abandon. "But I don't think we're doing that here, cause I kind of think Retta has this whole building locked down---surveillance wise."
"There are a lot of cameras and monitoring here," Steve confirmed. He pet her belly some more and looked suddenly shy, "We can't go out and destroy Hydra bases."

"That's alright, I'm having so much fun with you," Darcy assured him, giving him a delicate, soft kiss against the tip of his nose. "More fun than I could have ever imagined really."

"But, still, I'm not gonna have Buck pestering at me cause I couldn't show our girl a good time like he did," Steve paused, noticing the happy warmth coming off of her as an aftereffect of his words.

Our girl. She'd definitely enjoyed being called that.

"Well, if we were somewhere camera free, we could have a real good time," Darcy gave him a comically obnoxious wink.

"That sounds so much better than what I had planned," Steve sighed. "But---we should try this out, just in case you like it a little more."

"Doubtful," Darcy scoffed before squirming around in his lap until she was sitting with her back to his chest.

Steve took it in stride and let one arm wrap around her middle to secure her in his lap and brought his other hand to the desktop, pressing a few buttons before grabbing a joystick remote that resembled something from a video game system from a different era. He handed it to Darcy and went about pulling up a camera feed on one of the many monitors.

"Not exactly the stick I thought I'd be handling," Darcy wisecracked, grinning wickedly when Steve's chest rumbled with chuckles at her antics. She looked at the screen and saw that they were getting an aerial view of what looked to be a Hydra compound. "This is a really fancy video game."

"Not exactly a video game," Steve laughed. "This is something that Retta's tech crew had been working on to get around the immobility of some of their best retired agents."

"This is--holy crap," Darcy saw a Hydra guard through the camera and automatically pressed the big orange button on the joystick. She let out a peal of laughter and squirmed in Steve's lap when
something let loose a bolt of electricity on the guard and he went down twitching. "THIS IS THE BEST THING EVER!"

Steve laughed along with her as Darcy quickly got ahold of the controls. She sent the drone attack unit all around the small Hydra base, stealthily approaching people one by one and taking them out. Steve held her close on his lap and watched her with literal hearts coming out of his eyes. He didn't know how much time passed with him just mooning over her, occasionally hand feeding her a bite of dessert sushi or carefully holding a bottle of soda to her lips as she enjoyed herself and screamed obscenities at the screen.

"All out of bad guys, I think," Darcy announced, putting the controls down. She wiggled on top of her Steve-seat and wrinkled her nose. "And just in time too, I gotta pee."

She hopped off of Steve's lap and made a rush for the door, and Steve stared after her, completely useless and immobile thanks to the astronomical levels of dreamy, starry eyed love coursing through his veins. He finally managed to shake himself out of it and reached for the keyboard, typing in a message to Retta's resources that the base was dirty and needed to be cleared out, knowing that some secret faction of SHIELD would have to intake and process the fifteen odd Hydra forces that Darcy had decimated.

He felt her before she opened the door and couldn't help his pride inflating and fluffing up at the beautiful bouquet of feelings she was pushing. There was an overwhelming blanket of contentedness, spiked through with sprigs of pride and accomplishment. He reveled in the attraction and lust, being able to feel that they ran so much deeper than the superficial. And there was something there, tempered and cautious, but sincere and so beautiful that Steve could cry.

It was more than simple affection and care. It was deeper than admiration and attraction. It was something he felt for her already, something he had first felt so long ago with Bucky. It was small and new, but it was there and it could be built up to be grandiose and towering and perfect.

The building blocks of love were precious and Steve could have flown at recognizing them coming from Darcy for HIM.

She opened the door and grinned at him.

"You're amazing," Steve blurted. He shrugged and smiled sheepishly. "You are. I can't---I can't help it. I want to carry around a sign telling people to look at how amazing you are. Then I want to take you everywhere so that everyone can know."
"Bucky didn't warn me about you being a sappy, perfect little shit," Darcy stepped into the room and closed the door behind her. "I mean, he said you were a little shit, but he didn't warn me about---the squishies."

"Squishies?" Steve questioned.

"The way you make me feel," Darcy whispered.

"I know. I can feel it too."

"Oh," Darcy blinked up at him and couldn't help but feel a rush of giddy anticipation as he took a step towards her. He was glowing, bright and beautiful.

...Otherworldly, almost. Like the lights of the Bifrost.

"Steve!" she shouted, looking alarmed as he disappeared in the beam of light. In a heartbeat, another beam of light glimmered ten feet away and when the lights receded, Darcy scowled.

"What in the hell did you do with Steve, Jane?" she demanded of her old boss.

"Darcy, I---I sent him away," Jane shrugged. "How are you?"

Darcy looked at Jane as if she were insane. To her credit, Jane NOTICED how Darcy was reacting and looked nervous. A few years ago Jane would have barely glanced at Darcy's face before pulling out a notebook and getting down to work.

"I'd be better if I knew where Steve was," Darcy told her.

"He's not---Darcy, before you start feeling things for Steve, you should know," Jane nodded in agreement with herself. "You should know that Steve is the biological father of your baby."
OH, and a warning for a massive cliffhanger.

SOoooo. thoughts?

I am the human version of the smirky emoji right now. sorry?

Thanks for reading!!!!
Hi guys! I’m back.

Thanks for all of your patience in the past months. I lost my way. I hope to update this every other week until we find a mutually beneficial ending.

Where we left off: Bucky is in Wakanda working on earning the vibranium for his arm. And Jane found out who Darcy’s baby daddy is. And portalled Steve to parts unknown.

Thanks to the beta babes, Phoenix-173 and ragwitch/queenspuppet

Chapter Thirty-Eight: Blame Me in the Aftermath

**Space**

"Oh, is that right, Slonna? You're going with that story. That you don't know? What happened to the entrails of the Ancient Eel of the bottomless lake of Lathdran? Because, I'm sorry, but I don't believe you."

Slonna, to their credit, gurgled under the meaty hand currently wrapped around their slime covered throat.

"I didn't---" Slonna tried to argue, the puce colored flesh that made up its amorphous body rippling with fear tinged adrenaline.

"The ancient eel entrails on your chin tell a different story, Slonna!" Thor, son of Odin, future King of the Nine realms and Thunder God was well past his limit for games. His eyes were wide and manic and he shook the slimy alien as hard as he could. "I needed those entrails to find the path to the---Cliff."

"Cliff?" Slonna coughed.

"I don't know, it's all very mysterious," Thor almost sounded like he was whining before he sighed in slight defeat, dropping Slonna to its foot. "I'm trying to save the Universe here, and the Fates are not making my quest easy."

"You're Thor, why do you have to search out saving the universe, don't it usually find you? You
know, trouble?" Slonna questioned.

"Yes, when I was a boy and foolish, but now---now I have, there's," Thor hesitated and then narrowed his eyes at Slonna. "I'm not having a heart to heart with a thieving, villainous---eater of ancient beings."

"I get peckish," Slonna defended pathetically.

"I have to find the Cliff to find the blasted orange stone---"

"Stones?" Slonna sounded panicked and began to wriggle slowly in trying to get away from Thor the wet sound of slime hitting stones echoing in the cavern. "I want no part of stones, Odinson."

"Well then, you should have thought about that before you ATE the guide that would take me to the stone." Thor sassed back impatiently, reaching for the creature again to shake the Ancient Eel out of him.

A blast of light from the rainbow bridge illuminated the dark and dank cave that Slonna had been hiding in and when it receded, Steve Rogers stumbled.

"Captain!" Thor called out, absolutely delighted at the appearance of his friend. "It's been too long. Come, help me to rip Slonna in half to get my Eel."

"I---what?" Steve blinked, looking around nervously. "Darcy?"

"On Earth, last time I checked with Heimdall, which was quite a bit of time ago, but your people were most adept at hiding her," Thor blinked at him quizzically.

"She wasn't---she wasn't safe, someone took her," Steve felt a little breathless at the sudden travel. His eyes darted from the alien within Thor's reach and realized pretty quickly that he had not been zapped to another part of Earth. Just a second ago, he had Darcy within a finger's grasp, all the happiness and warmth he had ever wished for right there and now he was God knows where and she was---

"I have to get back, NOW," Steve barked out, looking wild with worry. "Tell your gatekeeper to put me back on Earth."

"I don't understand, they said dear little Darcy was safe in a new life on Midgard," Thor looked suddenly concerned. "What did your people do to her?"

"Well, it seems like you're quite busy with this Darcy fellow, so I'll be---" Slonna muttered, taking a singular step away from Thor. "Just going along then---"

Thor scowled and reached for Mjolnir, which had been (dropped) placed on the ground where Steve had appeared. But the hammer did not heed his command, instead, it was lifted right off the ground with no hesitation by one Steve Rogers, and the lightning cracked across the sky outside of the cave as Steve took two steps towards Thor and Slonna, holding the hammer in a threatening gesture at the alien.

"Give him what he needs! NOW." Steve demanded, with the heat of a man who needed this particular task to be completed quickly so his own desperate need could be tended to.
Slonna had the good grace to immediately vomit, all over Thor's outstretched hand, the sludge bringing a long tapered purple snake like creature with it. Thor looked disgusted at the state of his hands, but softened when the snake wrapped itself around his wrist.

"That's a nice snake," Thor murmured. He turned to Steve and looked distinctly bewildered at the hammer Steve still held in his hand. To his credit, Steve immediately turned the handle and offered it to his friend. Thor wiped one of his hands off and took the hammer before looking to the sky. "Heimdall? Please take us to where Darcy is."

They waited for the rainbow bridge, while Slonna gurgled with nervousness and abortive choking. In addition to the aftermath of being sick, the pathetic being's stomach started to grumble. Loudly. Slonna had not been lying when it had said it was hungry earlier.

"I have no idea what's going on with Heimdall, he's been slow lately," Thor muttered in annoyance. "If he wouldn't try to stab me, I'd suggest he was getting too old to look over all the nine realms."

Slonna continued to gurgle and whine in its renewed hunger and Steve looked around as they waited.

"Where are we?" he whispered to Thor.

"The stomach of the Wersludgsnipe, the mother of all Bilgesnipes, a nasty piece of work," Thor shrugged nonchalantly, as if that weren't a terrifying, confusing sentence. "No worries, she's as big that huge country of yours on Midgard---Russia. But with less snow."

"Neat," Steve answered grimly. He sighed and said, "If I don't get taken back to Darcy, I swear to God, I'm gonna take that Hammer and shove it right up your gatekeeper's---"

The lights came on and Steve's threat wasn't finished as the gatekeeper whisked them out of the belly of the beast and back to more familiar territory.

---

Asskicker Meadows

"What in the hell?" Maya Archie blinked her eyes opened and tried to reorient herself to her current situation.

That current situation being passed out on the floor of the rec room of her grandmother's retirement community. A lot of strange things had happened at her grandmother's retirement community since it opened ten months ago. There was that time she had visited shortly after it had opened and walked in on what was certainly the tail end of a shoot out, complete with smoking bullet holes in newly finished drywall. The problem was, of course, that there were no gunmen to be found. Just a
lot of people over the age of eighty who all claimed that they had no idea how it had happened and then asked her how school was going.

There was the time she'd tried to facetime her grandmother on her birthday and Retta Archie had answered the call wearing night vision goggles and full bulletproof tactical gear. Maya had explained that away as her grandmother being an active old broad, playing laser tag or paintball or something as a group activity for the senior citizens.

She had a little more trouble explaining away what had happened in 2014, when Natasha Romanoff had forced Hydra out into broad daylight on twitter. Retta and her backup Herb had parachuted onto Maya's campus from a quinjet, taken out her awful history professor with high tech blow darts, then drug her back to the first retirement community until everything could blow over.

She'd spent the better part of two weeks at the retirement community then, playing bingo with Herb and eating meals that were always low sodium. She'd gone away with less water retention in her ankles and the knowledge that her grandmother had never really retired from her work in the spy world. Even after realizing all that, she had still been plenty surprised at the magnitude and scope of their work.

But still, arriving via a Doctor Jane Foster created portal, ushering Everett Ross into the community center main hall while Jane went to Darcy directly, and then promptly falling to the ground and losing all consciousness was new. Maya attempted to bring some sort of moisture to her dry mouth as she looked around, seeing that most of the senior citizens had simply passed out sitting in their seats and motorized carts. Her grandmother had fallen gracefully on top of her, and Everett was ass up, face down on the highly polished tile floor where they did bi-weekly swing dancing events.

Maya could feel the edge of something at her brain as the fog cleared. Devastation. Fear. Heartbreak.

"Poor girl," Retta whispered as she slowly pulled herself away from her prone position on top of her granddaughter to sit and look around, those sharp eyes trying to assess the situation. Her gaze settled on the small body that was face down ass up on the floor next to her.

“Grammy, this is——oh shit that’s a big gun,” Maya panicked and began scrambling away from both Everett Ross (his face down and ass way up in the air) and her gun toting Granny, who had said gun trained on Everett’s ass.

"Hands where I can see them!" Retta ordered with as much authority as possible. And it was a lot
of authority. Maya had once wet her pants when Retta had ordered her NOT to eat all the Christmas cookies one year. She had been three, but still, it had been a terrifying experience.

"Grammy, it's alright," Maya tried to intervene, looking around in confusion. Jane had split their destinations. Jane's portal went straight for Darcy's signature, and Everett Ross and Maya herself were sent to the middle of the largest building at the community.

"You hush, child," Retta waved Maya off. "You don't know what this man is."

"Uhm, FBI troll?" Maya shrugged. She shook her head in earnest and held up a hand, "No, he's actually CIA. I think."

"This man is under Thaddeus Ross's thumb, and I will not have him anywhere near my people," Retta said through gritted teeth.

"Not under---Jesus, I gotta better reception in Wakanda," Everent grumbled, half audible as his ass wiggled in the air. He tried to pull himself up while keeping his hands up, knowing intrinsically that a gun was aimed at his person.

"How did you get here?" Retta demanded.

"Jane Foster sent us here," Maya explained. "Remember how I explained she's my fake girlfriend right now? And remember how I said I was gay except for Thor? Well---"

"How long have we been out?" Everett looked down at his watch, his hand shaking. "Five hours? How did---Does anyone else---do you guys feel---"

"Devastated," Retta whispered, still keeping her gun trained on Everett. "What did you do to Darcy Lewis?"

"I did nothing, Foster needed to have a chat with her about highly sensitive and confidential information," Everett shot back, gaining back some of his own sass.

"Yeah, like what?" Retta scoffed. "Like Steve Rogers is the father of her baby?"

"How did you---" Everett shook his head to stop himself from asking. "You're Peggy Carter's secretary."

He looked to Maya with wild eyes and asked, "I didn't know you were related to her?"

"Yeah, sometimes I find myself wondering how that worked too," Maya nodded. She pursed her lips before declaring, "I mean, I am a bad ass bitch, but still. I don't really appreciate the guns and espionage like she does."

Retta stood and finally put the gun down at her side, if only because her hand was shaking as she looked around at the state of her little community. Most people were still passed out, but some had come to and were either weeping or staring off into the distance with a blankness that was truly terrifying.

"Retta---where's Darcy?" Sam shouted from the end of the hallway, following Natasha closely. They were both having trouble with walking briskly. It looked like their limbs weighed five times their normal amount. He stopped in his tracks and looked suspiciously at Everett. He scowled, and
didn't think he was in the wrong a bit too. They hadn't exactly had the best run in the last time they saw each other.

"Darcy is talking to Jane, or at least she was five hours ago," Maya answered. "She's going to tell Darcy something she needs to know. About the father of her baby."

Natasha swore in Russian and from the look on Retta's face, she understood what the Black Widow was saying.

"Herb!" Retta shouted. "Get me a scan of our entire facility and let me know where the last energy signal was from a Bifrost bridge. Get our search party out for Darcy, NOW."

---

**New York Avenger's Facility**

"And I'm telling you, you bald ignoramus James Bond, that maybe if you could keep a handle on your organization, this shit wouldn't have even happened in the first place! I mean, my God, Fury, you couldn't even keep track of the secret Nazi's in your organization, we should have known you couldn't keep track of a small, helpless intern."

Tony was glaring at the hologram of Nick Fury in the empty lounge of the Avengers Facility. Stark's coffee was long forgotten on the coffee table, his hands balled into fists at his sides, a vein on his forehead bulging. He had been happily ignoring Thaddeus Ross' telephone calls, and he knew he should have ignored this secret call from SHIELD's former Director.

"Oh, she's helpless, is she?" Fury demanded of Tony. He picked up a small Stark pad and scrolled through it. "According to my reports she incapacitated over one hundred and fifteen people with no weapons at all. She and Barnes have been decimating Hydra bases over the past few months. And as a matter of fact, I just got word that another one went down."

"Yeah, you know what I mean, if you had been able to keep your house in order, she would have never been put in that position," Tony snapped back.

"Do you know where the girl is?" Fury demanded, clearly not willing to continue to be brow beaten by Tony.

"Why?" Tony looked up at Fury with petulant security. "So you can stuff her into spandex and give her to Coulson so he can screw up her life too?"

"She's dangerous out there without prop-"

"She's a PERSON," Tony argued, wincing a little at the end of it. He realized that Steve had made the same arguments about Wanda weeks ago. Two women that had been messed up by Hydra and then set on the world. Before he had tried to rationalize that Wanda had volunteered for the upgrades, but how hard was it to persuade an angry teenager to accept a bunch of superpowers they didn't understand?
He didn’t know Darcy Lewis, either. But like hell she deserved to be drugged, put into a straight jacket and an impenetrable cell.

"I don’t know where she is, but if I did, I'd take it to my grave," Tony's voice was a quiet, mumbled thing.

"None of us have anyway of defending ourselves against her, Stark," Fury reminded him.

"You afraid of crying a little?" Tony scoffed. “Don’t worry your extra shiny head about it, Nick, it was very therapeutic afterwards, even if I did have a hell of a migraine after crying so much.:

"Boss---incoming," Friday announced and before she could finish her announcement, the common room was illuminated with lights from the Bifrost.

They had built a patio that connected to the large multi-purpose room, in the hopes that Thor would be able to use the landing pad and come right into an Avenger's private space. He had not used the pad for nearly a year, though. Today, he walked in shoulder to shoulder with Steve.

"What are you---get the hell out of here!" Tony quickly shot to his feet.

"Rude," Thor objected, looking like an overgrown, kicked puppy. "It's been many months of yours since you last saw me, you should at least be---a little happy that I'm here."

"Rogers, now is not the time," Tony began after sparing an exasperated glance Thor’s way.

"Captain Rogers, good to see you," Fury boomed from the hologram. "Care to tell me where your boyfriend's new girlfriend is?"

"First, it's not Captain anymore," Steve said calmly, taking a few steady steps to get closer to the hologram. His mouth set into an aggressive, unfriendly looking smirk. "Second, fuck off."

"What is going on?" Thor muttered to himself.

"That girl is a danger to everyone---"

"You don't need to worry yourself over that girl, because the day you put your hands on that girl is the day that I will throw you into the fucking sun, Fury," Steve barked out. "You keep her name from your lips, she's not a toy or a bargaining chip and she isn't on your roster."

"Who, exactly are we talking about?" Thor muttered to Tony.

"Oh, he doesn't know, that's perfect, since it's HIS fault," Fury pointed to Thor. "You had three humans in contact with you since you fell to Earth all those years ago, and every one of those humans has been put through the ringer."

"Seriously, you are all being really rude," Thor scolded under his breath. He gripped Mjolnir tight before stepping towards the Hologram screen. "If I remember correctly, your organization used and abused Doctor Selvig then left him to rot in an institution. And you never answered little Darcy's calls when she needed assistance in London."

"Is she here?" Steve turned to look at Tony. "Did Ross get her?"
“No,” Tony muttered, looking away from Steve's unwavering stare. The only other person he had seen Steve get that worried about had been Barnes before. It didn’t take a genius to figure out that Steve cared for Barnes’ baby mama a whole hell of a lot. "Get the hell out of here before someone catches wind of you being here."

"It's Darcy?" Thor questioned, looking between all three men, true concern lining his face. "Is she alright? What has happened to her?"

"She's---she was taken by Hydra. Years ago," Steve explained patiently. "And I'd like to go back to her, please. Now."

"Is she harmed? Is she---do Jane and Erik know?" Thor questioned. He shook his head, "Jane said nothing in her last letter to me, but that was months ago. What's happened to her at the hands of Hydra?"

"Now he cares," Fury scoffed.

"You were meant to protect her!" Thor roared out, taking Mjolnir and shattering the hologram into fragments of light.

"Cut the feed!" Stark called out. He sighed and looked to Thor, "Good thing I replaced all the glass screens. Look, just, get out of here. We have ears listening in, I'm sure. Just---get the hell out of here."

"Tony---" Steve began.

"I got your stupid phone. I'll call if I---, just get out of here," Tony muttered. He looked like all of his anger had been knocked right out of him, and only miserable resolution remained. He looked to Thor and said, "Your crazy doctor woman has been using her damned portals to go everywhere on good ole Midgard. Might want to have her curb that or she's going to have Ross on her too."

"Who is this Ross?" Thor narrowed his eyes. "If he puts himself on my Jane, there will be a very large amount of hell to pay."

"I'll explain on the way," Steve promised. "Let's get out of here, pal. I need to find my girl."

Asskicker Meadows

Steve supposed that there were reasons the Bifrost couldn't transport them to the retirement community. One, the retirement community should remain a safe haven for the fugitive Avengers and crime fighting super senior citizens alike. Two, he would prefer zero attention from the outside world on the place that he and Darcy were calling home. Three, the Bifrost hadn't been prompt or accurate earlier.

Still, Steve longed for the quick and efficient travel. It had not been fun being held tightly against Thor (Not that he's not an attractive fella, because he was, but Steve was already taken twice over and he preferred not thinking about his teammate in that manner at all). And the flight had been so fast and so harsh, that Steve had felt the delicate skin under his eyes flapping in the high winds.
But now his feet were on solid ground again, and he surveyed the state of what Laura Barton still lovingly referred to as Asskickers Meadows.

It was bedlam and chaos.

Senior citizens were wandering aimlessly, whether on their feet or in their motorized wheelchairs. They had hands full of tools or weapons, but they had no sense of urgency. Most of them were crying and those that weren't looked absolutely despondent.

Natasha and Sam stepped onto the well manicured lawn of the community center and Steve felt his stomach drop at their expressions.

"We can't find her," Sam blurted out, looking anxious and tearful.

"What happened?" Steve demanded, searching for those feelings that Darcy had been sending him just a few short hours ago. He got only an echo of it, laying underneath everything else. And everything else was cold devastation, inordinate sadness and a terrifying amount of self-loathing. He felt his stomach churn as it hit him and he was even more desperate to get to her in that moment.

"Jane Foster happened," Natasha revealed, glaring at Thor.

"I haven't---that---I didn't," Thor abortively tried to defend himself. He looked bewildered and serious as whatever Darcy was doing managed to have an effect on him as well. He sighed and shook his head. "Is Jane here? Is she with Darcy?"

"She's here," Erik Selvig called out from the still broken gazebo twenty yards away. He cradled a small brunette in his arms but it was not the brunette that Steve had hoped for. Thor rushed to them, taking Jane from Erik and gently brushing her hair from her cheek. "She took the brunt of whatever Darcy pushed out. The best that I could get of the emotion before I passed out was---devastation?"

"Self loathing," Sam whispered, still feeling it as he looked away from Thor and Steve, lacking any of his usual bluster and energy.

"Terror," Natasha added.

"I don't understand," Thor looked down at Jane tenderly. "If something terrorized Darcy so and took her---"

"She left," Erik corrected him. "We checked the surveillance."

"No," Steve said resolutely. "She didn’t."

"Steve, I'm sorry, she sent out the feelings blast and every soul in a three mile radius passed out. The surveillance shows her going for Herb and grabbing his control pad and then the feed cut out," Sam said gently.

"No, I don't---she wouldn't," Steve shook his head. They had been doing so well. He knew that he could feel the true and deep affection she felt for him just hours ago. "She wouldn't."
"She might," Natasha sighed, looking annoyed at herself. She had been worrying about Steve for the last few days, but she should have been worrying about Darcy's reaction to the news of the baby's father. "Steve, in Bucky's letter, and what Jane told Darcy before she went---"

"Nuclear," Sam finished for her.

"Nuclear," Natasha agreed. "Jane told Darcy who the biological father of the baby is."

"Is it---you said---I thought it wasn't bad?" Steve panicked. Darcy was hurt and alone and worried and Steve had to get to her and assure her that no matter what, they would get through it together.

"I---" Natasha couldn't get any words out, her eye building with tears. She had only wanted to make things right for Darcy and Steve. She had only wanted to make sure that they could build a small piece of happiness. Now that was all scattered into the wind, just like Darcy herself.

"It's you," Jane whispered, stirring in Thor's arms. "They---they used your sperm, Rogers. They violated her with a piece of you that she has to carry for---"

"Jane," Thor admonished, following the conversation well enough, knowing that too much had happened since he had last glimpsed Darcy. Steve had managed to convey enough information, shouting into the breeze as they flew with Mjolnir to this elderly paradise. And now he felt it. All too well.

"You just go around filling up random cups so they can try to do this with other girls?" Jane mumbled, glaring at Steve. "Or were you in on it too? Got an army of super soldier babies that you don’t have to pay support for?"

“Hey lady, I don’t know you, but that’s not him,” Sam defended easily.

“The only thing I know is that I let my friend, the only person who cared for me for years be hurt by monsters,” Jane’s tears weren’t the effect of Darcy’s lingering emotional wizardry. They were her own and they were effortlessly spilling down her cheeks as her voice went ragged. “And now it’s about time someone helps her by telling her the truth. You can’t tell me that Lady Spies-A-Lot over there hasn’t known for a while now. That you all probably knew and didn’t tell Darcy!”

She was met with silence that seemed to enrage her more.

“You’re all lucky I didn’t portal every last one of you away from her,” Jane muttered.

“My love, you can’t---” Thor sighed, unable to truly argue with Jane. Darcy had clearly been misused and Thor was having trouble understanding who hadn’t hurt the girl at this point.

"Steve?" Natasha said quietly, because the man had gone stock still, his eyes darting back and forth as he mentally computed this supposedly life changing information. He nodded slowly before turning on his heel and walking down the path, heading towards the small house that he and Darcy
had been living in. "Where are you going?"

"I'm finding my girl and telling her that I love her," Steve turned his head and called back to the people who seemed shocked at his reaction. "That it doesn't matter. Bucky is the baby's father, and no matter what---it doesn't matter what everything else says. If she wants me to be the father too, then...then good."

He broke out into a quick sprint, to where, the remaining team didn't know. Jane wrinkled her nose in consternation and muttered something about 'honorable assholes'. Thor took some solace from that, although he was now more worried than ever for Darcy's safety and well being. He and Jane would make amends to her as soon as the resolute Steve found her. Thor pressed his lips to Jane's temple.

"It's been too long, my Jane."

"HEY! HANDS OFF THE GOODS! That bootie belongs to Sugar Tits!" came a shout approaching the Gazebo. Maya Archie stopped in her tracks and her eyes went wide as she saw just who was molesting Jane Foster. Her mouth fell open and a high pitched sound began to filter out before her entire posture seemed to fall. She propped a hand on her hip and shrugged as nonchalantly as she could. "Oh, hey thunder bae. How you been? I'm---I'm Sugartits. I mean, your. Hi."

Chapter End Notes

Thanks Again for the patience and well wishes while I worked through my hiatus. I’ll see you in two weeks with another chapter.
Chapter Notes

Hi guys! I fulfilled a promise and am here two weeks later. Yay!!!!

So warnings for this chapter. M’baku!!!!!!!!!!!
Also depression sadness and suicidal thoughts.

Yikes. Also. M’baku!!!!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

VChapter Thirty-Nine: The Eye of the Storm

Wakanda

The one armed white man was a nuisance. The old soldier had been deemed the White Wolf by the children of the Mining tribe. After James Buchanan Barnes had been deemed more than acceptable by the Merchant tribe, he had wasted no time with rest or relaxation, instead, going straight for the vibranium mines, solely focused on proving his worth and gaining their trust.

The youngest children on an observatory trip through the mines had glimpsed the man in the glittering, beautiful darkness, and his skin had been so pale it had glowed in the dark. The children had recorded a ten second ultra slow motion clip of the American refugee shaking the hair out of his face as he lifted a heavy piece of machinery. The clip had become viral in Wakanda within the hour and the White Wolf was now infamous, even more so than that tiny Everett person who had helped to crush Killmonger's uprising.

It had been only days, and the so-called White Wolf, the one armed White Wolf had obtained the approval for vibranium from the Golden, Merchant and Mining tribe. The Border Tribe was currently dealing with its disgrace and betrayal of T’Challa, but would surely approve of the white man so long as he could care for the goats for a day or two.

Again, it was M'Baku's duty to be the harsh voice of reality in a country full of morons.

"A one armed man does me no good during harvest days," M'Baku grumbled, stepping forward
into the light of the late summer sun.

If the Soldier was surprised by his appearance he didn't show it, the specialized ax that someone had thrust at him at his feet. His right hand was slowly moving up and down the ancient Jabari tree that grew quick and strong, a gift from Hanuman. It wasn't vibranium, to be sure, but the tree that the Jabari cared for was vastly important on its own merits. And the fact that a shield woven from the tree bark could withstand a vibranium blow was certainly one of those merits.

The nearly ancient Soldier looked at the young leader of the Jabari tribe, his face devoid of emotion or reaction. They stared at each other for one long minute, M'Baku trying and failing to understand the purpose of it. Silence was well and good, for other people. M'Baku preferred action.

The Soldier turned away from him and put his forehead against the tree.

"Are you speaking psychically with the tree, old man?" M'Baku sneered. "Is this some majestic super soldier ability?"

The Soldier inhaled slowly, and the breath wavered in a way that M'Baku's youngest child's breath did when he was ready to cry. Sure enough, there was a small sniffling sound coming from the supposedly intimidating Winter Soldier, master assassin of the ages. M'Baku's eyes went round and wide as the one-hundred-year-old man quietly cried like a child as he tried to hide his face in the sacred Jabari tree.

"So sad," the Soldier whispered.

"Yes. You are?" M'Baku remarked. It seemed like the wrong thing as the White Wolf's shoulders began to shake with silent sobs.

M'Baku couldn't help his reaction. Suddenly this white nuisance was the picture of M'Baku's youngest child, helpless and pitiful and sad. The leader of the Jabari tribe sighed before putting a comforting hand on what was left of the Soldier's left shoulder.

"If you cannot have the vibranium, we will build you an arm out of wood," M'Baku offered immediately, all pretense of toughness evaporating.
"My Girl, my sweet pet," the Soldier tried to explain, wiping away tears. "Something has her so sad that I can't---"

"You feel her feelings?" M'Baku furrowed his brow. The idea of feeling his own lover's feelings was terrifying. She was often unapologetically ridiculous, it was why he liked her, but he wouldn't be able to keep the semblance of leadership should he feel that boundless gaiety impinging on his own feelings.

"She has the ability to project feelings onto others," the Soldier quietly explained. He wiped at his eyes and straightened up and looked earnestly at M'Baku. "Please, I need to be sure she's alright. Please help me, I want to go home to her."

M'Baku had come down to the tree to mock and tease and annoy the white man so that he would give up in his quest. But this stoic, stern, silent man, with his focus and determination and intense, all encompassing love for his woman had derailed all of M'Baku's plans and intent. He gave the Soldier's shoulder a squeeze before nodding towards the tree.

"A gentle touch and an earnest promise to Hanuman is all that is needed for the tree to yield. The ax is unnecessary," M'Baku revealed. "Come, little wolf. Take the strip of bark from the tree and we will go find what is left of the Border tribe to get your approval so that you may go home."

______________________________

**Asskicker Meadows**

Steve was unnaturally calm as he jogged to the little house that he and Darcy had shared. It was unnerving, because he meant to be sprinting as fast as he could, but instead, his body would only jog, even slowing down to a brisk walk the closer he got to the house. He could feel it in his bones, seeping into his bloodstream and saturating his muscles.

He could feel her complex and overwhelming sadness with every fiber of his being. And it was getting stronger and more debilitating the closer he got to their house. With a heavy and nearly unresponsive hand, he managed to get his hand on the doorknob, unsurprised when it was locked.

It took him two whole minutes to get the proper strength to break the knob and push the door open. When he staggered through, he was breathless and exhausted, only to have a fresh wave of anxiety
and the most awful feeling of self loathing rush at him.

"Tiger?" he whispered, taking slow steps inside. "Please---"

He was unsurprised she'd managed to keep the entire community out for five hours. He wouldn't be surprised if she had just knocked everyone else but him out again with this new burst of feelings at his arrival. His girl was powerful, not just because of the magnitude of her abilities, but because not one of them could defend themselves against her. Not even Natasha.

Steve was sure he would be flat on his back if he weren't so damned stubborn. But he needed to see her, to set her mind at peace, to assure her that no matter what, they would work through it.

"Tiger, can w-we," Steve whispered as he took ginger and deliberate steps through the house, going straight to where the invisible gloom cloud was heaviest. He weakly opened the door that led to the basement rec room they had spent some happy hours in. The fear intensified and it broke Steve's heart that his arrival was making her feel such things. "Darcy, sweetheart, please. Talk to me?"

He felt his entire balance waiver on the short flight of carpeted steps leading down and the edges of his vision went black and blurry. He felt like he was asthmatic again, with the heavy weight on his chest, the breath fluttering and not enough as he gasped for a breath.

"Love you," he whispered. "We love you..."

"You shouldn't."

Her whisper was muffled and barely heard. Steve managed to stumble down the rest of the steps and stared at the couch they had slept on and kissed on and talked on for hours. She had the old man pajama shirt over top of the pretty blue flowered blouse she had worn when she'd arrived and the maternity jeans that flattered her every dimple and curve. She was a tiny ball of a person, every hideous crotched, mustard colored pillow that had been in the rec room was surrounding her, like a yarn moat.

"There's my Tiger," Steve gasped out. "Want to ease up on me a little? I---I like it better when you send the naughty, blue stuff my way."
"I'm TRYING to stop," Darcy sniffled, a fresh wave of devastation coming off of her that stole the breath from Steve's lungs. "I can't control it."

"Alright," Steve gasped out. He held out his arms, just barely and whispered, "Come dance with me, Tiger."

The look that she gave him conveyed the little spike of utter, ridiculous disbelief and it eased some of the weight of the crushing depression. Steve advanced on her with his arms open, the smallest of smiles tilting his lips up, his eyes locked in on hers as he continued to stumble towards her before falling to his knees right in front of her little nest on the couch.

"Hey," he whispered, before slumping towards her, his body easily displacing one of the crotched monstrosities that the retirement community called pillows. His face landed on her chest, his arms lifelessly around her.

"Bucky was right, you're an idiot," Darcy whispered, putting one of her hands on the back of his head as if it were a reflex. Steve groaned low and long as her fingers rifled through the already overgrown hair on the back of his head. "You've got no sense of self preservation in that stupidly beautiful head of yours."

Steve could feel the awful, desolate fog lift slightly, bit by bit as he sprawled bonelessly against her. Her other arm came around him and her hand fisted his t-shirt in her hand, holding on tight as she tried to tamp down on the misery she was pushing out. He maneuvered his head so that his lips could press against her pulse point on her neck, kissing against it repeatedly while it slowed down from the unnaturally fast rate.

"Do you know?" Darcy whispered. "Did someone tell you?"

The fear ramped up and Steve placed a lingering kiss against her skin.

"Doesn't matter," he assured her.

"I---I feel like my mistakes trapped you," the tears soaked through her words as the hold she had on the back of his t-shirt became tighter and more resolute.

"Not your fault," Steve packed all the pleading and earnest honesty he could into the words as she
brewed like a storm, a hurricane ready to rip everything in its path apart. He was cradled against her body, right in the middle of the maelstrom, desperate to calm her and ease her mind.

"Sometimes I wonder why I'm still alive," Darcy admitted.

Steve managed to find renewed strength at that, pulling away just enough to look into her eyes again. Tears dripped down her cheeks, but she appeared calm. It was too calm and it made Steve's own dread rear up, overpowering whatever Darcy was sending him at the moment.

"If they would have just killed me instead of making me into---this," Darcy turned to look at him and gave him a very small, very sad smile. "Screwing up lives, hurting people that I don't want to. Knowing that because of me, your life isn't your own anymore."

Steve swallowed and disentangled himself from her, pushing up from the couch on his fists until he was standing above her. She looked fearful now. Embarrassed at having said too much. Chagrined at revealing what she only thought about briefly before moving to easier things.

She was shocked when Steve pulled her up and off the couch, holding her in a tight embrace. He began to sway with her, a gentle back and forth motion that was meant to mimic some kind of dancing, but was far too slow to match to any real music. She couldn't help but cry against his chest, and he let her, letting her get as much out as she could, sniffing only minimally as it hit him too.

"Without you, I think I would have nothing," Steve mumbled into her hair, his voice a scratched, broken thing. When she scoffed at him he sighed and held her tighter, "The Winter Soldier saved you, and you brought him back to me. When everything was happening with the Accords and Tony---I had something. Bucky had something. Someone to fight for and to get home to. Someone who saved him just as much as he saved her."

Darcy melted into him a little, exhaustion seeping into her finally after too many hours of projecting her feelings out into a five mile radius.

"Tiger, what you're feeling, I'm not going to argue with it," Steve promised her. "It'd do none of us any good to try. But just know that I'm so happy you're here. I'd send Hydra a dozen roses for not killing you."

"You're just saying that because I'm having your demon spawn," Darcy argued.
"Hey, hey," Steve shook his head, pulling away from her so he could hook a finger under her chin, bringing her face up to look at him. "This all happened to you without your consent. So guess what? You get to decide who gets to father that baby you're building."

Darcy's eyes flicked back and forth on his face, trying to get a read on his emotions and intentions. Steve gave her a guilty little shrug and leaned in to kiss her forehead.

"I'm an idiot who trusted SHIELD to use what I gave them for science experiments. If I had known---" Steve sighed.

"Neither of us wanted it," Darcy answered.

"Yeah, but now the power is yours, okay?" Steve gave her an encouraging squeeze. "If you just want to have Bucky be the father, then---then alright. I'm bein' honest, Tiger, the biology of your baby didn't matter to me before and it doesn't matter now. Please believe me."

"I---I believe you," Darcy couldn't understand how she believed Steve, but she did.

"But know this, before we found out, I knew, without a doubt that I WANTED to be a part of all of this," Steve swore. "I wanted to be just as much the baby's father as Bucky is. But that's your choice to make. Just know, that I want everything you're willing to give me. Forever. Because I love you."

Fear rose up and Steve rapidly shook his head and before kissing her forehead again.

"I love you," he promised. "Gonna prove to you that you can love me back."

"How---how are you real?" Darcy whispered.

Steve laughed at that and shrugged, "Sweetheart, I spent a lot of time wanting, half my life wasted with it. It makes a fella good with plans and plots to steal a perfect girl's heart."
"You have it," Darcy whispered, then blushed, looking down. She gestured to her clothes and said, "I took all the money I could find off of---well everyone. I should put the cash back in Herb's freezer. He really shouldn't keep money like that in the freezer---"

"I have it?" Steve couldn't focus on Darcy's rambling about the filthy nature of money being mixed with cube steaks and pizza rolls. "I have your heart, Tiger?"

"I was gonna leave, Steve," Darcy admitted. Before he could look wounded, she quickly added, "But I couldn't."

"Yeah?" Steve prodded gently.

"It's no fun being left behind," Darcy whispered. "Or having someone run away."

"No, it's not," Steve agreed.

"And I'd never want to hurt you like that," Darcy continued diligently. "Because I'm falling in love with you. You have my heart, Steve. And I---"

Steve's kiss interrupted her words, but it wasn't unwelcome as he seemed to regain all of his strength back, hoisting her up so their lips were level with one another. His kiss was a celebration and Darcy feted it with fireworks of her own. It was a clumsy mess of lips and teeth and tongue, but there was joy in it. The lack in finesse and smoothness was made up for by the real, genuine excitement.

"Wait---finish that thought," Steve pulled away looking down at her, his eyes open and happy.

"When Jane told me, I think---I was so ashamed because I was so happy," Darcy admitted. "Because---because I wanted it that way. And you didn't get a say in it and---"

He kissed her again, too wet lips that were too loose thanks to his urge to grin like a loon.

"We're okay," Steve promised. He put her back on her feet and put his hands right above her baby bump, just hovering there without touching, "I can---"
"Yeah," Darcy nodded, bringing his hands down on her bump, smiling when the baby fairly danced beneath his touch. "Hey precious little bastard, guess what? You're so special you get a Papa and a Daddy."

Steve huffed out a strangled laugh, before leaning down and kissing her again.

Thunder rumbled outside and Darcy furrowed her brow, pulling away once more.

"It wasn't supposed to rain today."

"No, well, it probably wasn't. But Thor is here, Jane---she, long story," Steve shrugged. "He brought me back."

"Oh," Darcy looked a little confused.

"He'd like to see you, I think, but he can wait," Steve assured her before kissing her again.

"Yeah, for how long?" Darcy wondered, a hint of that buoyant impishness coloring the turn of her lips.

"Well, we should---"

The thunder boomed and the power in the house flickered out as lightning hit SOMETHING.

"Little Darcy!" Thor shouted from outside. "I am able to move again. Are you alright? Why---why do I feel as if you are kin to me? What the fuck happened while I was gone?"

"Hey, pal? Can you stop shoutin'?"
Thor wrinkled his nose and glared at Steve, who had been the one to greet him instead of Darcy, who he was most impatient to see. For years now, Thor had often thought of Darcy, the little Midgardian who had felled him at his weakest moment (a feat of some magnitude, even if he had been pitiful back then). He had been sad to hear that Jane's little handmaiden wanted to run fast and far away from all things related to him and the Midgardian superheroes he considered friends.

He knew, of course, that his brilliant Jane was not ideally suited to keeping friends. It was what made them a great match. Thor was excellent at keeping friends, no matter how far and how long they had been separated. He had FELT what Darcy was going through just ten minutes prior, and he wanted to do something to put her heart at ease. He wanted to assure her that had he known she was in danger, nothing could have stopped him from ripping apart whoever had dared to put her in such places.

And now Steve Rogers was standing in front of him instead of the girl who had been so wronged by so many. His friend from work was looking no worse for the wear, even though Thor himself had felt devastated and immobile with the misery that Darcy was somehow forcing on other people. Steve's shirt was wrinkled and there were wet spots on it and he still had the audacity to look slightly amused.

"You're hogging Darcy," Thor grumbled.

"Get used to it," Steve flipantly tossed back, giving Thor a smile. "Look, she's had---she's had a helluva a day. A helluva time."

"I want to make amends," Thor insisted, looking a little eager. "I wish to explain that I didn't---it would have never happened if…"

He shrugged and let out a small sigh, lost for words. Steve gave him a knowing look and nodded.

"You want her to know that it's not your fault," he finished.

"Yes," Thor looked ashamed at that but bolstered at his own humility being exposed. "And I think I could help bridge the gap between Jane and Darcy. Jane is---"

"You know, I'm sorry, Thor, but I don't really care about Jane at the moment," Steve interrupted.
"Rude," Thor chastised.

"She sent me to the belly of a giant alien beast!" Steve reminded him incredulously.

"Only because she cares about Darcy!" Thor defended inanely.

"She's got a real funny way of showing that, pal," Steve looked ready to lay into Thor about Jane before he stopped and shook his head. "Look, let's--this should be left to the ladies to sort out."

Thor's shoulders drooped and his face briefly flashed sour before acknowledgement colored his features.

"You can't go around making everything right with a smile and good intentions," Steve said softly.

"I think you're quite wrong there, I've managed to do that for a lot longer than you've been alive," Thor shot back with a smirk.

"Yeah, well, my girl is still hurting, and rightfully so," Steve stood a little straighter, willing to do anything to make Darcy happier and more comfortable, even if by just a fraction. "She's not ready to talk to Jane. And Thor, I'm sorry, but she's not ready to talk to you either."

Thor's eyes widened and looked astonished. He wasn't very used to being told no. But the thought of what little Darcy had been through in such a small period of time, it sobered him and he nodded.

"Please, please tell her when she's ready, I will be here," Thor said with the grace of a future king.

"I'll do that, just let her recover from this latest thing," Steve smiled softly. "And don't worry too much, that woman, she's got such a good heart."

"I know," Thor agreed readily. He looked stern very quickly and gave Steve a steely eyed glare. "I may not have stopped her previous pain, but know that I will take quick revenge on any who
"I know," Steve nodded.

"You know, if you were ever mean to her," Thor clarified.

"I know," Steve reiterated.

"That means you and the other one that Selvig told me about had better watch your step," Thor continued, puffing up a bit more than necessary. "If you ever make her---"

"THOR, I know, now get outta here," Steve laughed. "Go on so I can take care of my girl. And her heart."

Thor narrowed his eyes and began to turn away, and Steve couldn't help himself.

"And every other part of her body."

"Louse!"

Chapter End Notes

So. I'm sorry I won't be commenting on everyone's comments from here on out. Thanks for everyone supporting me.

See you in two weeks. With a very special chapter. I hope.
Once Darcy’s gloom cloud had receded, it was very clear that she had expended herself completely and totally. Steve experienced firsthand what Bucky had alluded to regarding Darcy and her nature. She may have been in a deep, scary dark mood for hours on end, but once she had accepted Steve’s words and promises, it was clear that she lifted, nearly immediately. And with that lift came back the playfulness and irreverence that Steve really did love.

But she was exhausted. So exhausted that she was swaying on her feet as if she were completely drunk off her ass. She consented to Steve putting her down for a ‘senior citizen approved nap’, but the entire time he carried her up to their bed, she contented herself with lazy tickles of his jaw and a nonstop commentary of sleepy, incoherent pick up lines.

“Your mama must’ve been a drug dealer cause you are dope.”

“Your eyes are so blue. Like the ocean. And I’m lost at sea and badabababa I’m loving it.”

Steve had just gotten her into bed, pulling off her shoes and then going for the jeans as she sleepily sang a wordless, baudy stripping tune. He managed to get the blouse off and her preferred pajama top back on when she put her hands over his and looked up at him with a surprisingly serious face.
“Steve, please, I need to know how you like your eggs,” she whispered.

“You take a nap, Tiger, and I’ll cook us up some breakfast,” Steve promised.

“Well, I’ll take my egg fertilized,” Darcy looked at him with impossibly wide eyes, breathlessly waiting for his reaction.

Steve snorted with laughter before slapping his hand to his forehead, trying desperately to keep in his laughter.

“YES, this is going to be so perfect, so good and so perfect,” Darcy rambled as Steve maneuvered her delicately under the covers and tucked her in tight. “Don’t—”

“Just getting my shoes off, sweetheart,” Steve promised, doing just that.

“And the shirt,” Darcy whispered.

“Sure,” Steve nodded, shucking that off too.

“Might as well just get down to straight up naked, cause when I get my strength back, I’m gonna ride you like a pony on a super pretty carousel,” she mumbled. Then immediately snored.

Steve laughed and nodded, wasting no time in discarding his clothes save for his boxers and climbing into their bed. He wrapped his arms around her and felt some measure of calm go through him when she immediately melted into him in her sleep, burrowing her head into his neck and tickling his skin with edges of hair and deep, even breaths.

Sleep overtook him before he could realize it was, and when he opened his eyes again, the gray light of the Thor-induced stormy afternoon was gone, and it was the dead of night. Darcy hadn’t strayed from his hold, and his heart lifted at the feeling of her close and safe and warm.

He felt a jolt go through his side, where Darcy’s belly rested against him, and then her stomach let out a whining, angry sounding hunger gurgle, followed by another jolt that went entirely through
him. He moved slightly to get gentle, worshipful fingertips on the smooth expanse of the child that Darcy carried and he hummed an aimless melody that might have been something his own mother had hummed for him nearly a century ago.

“Sorry baby, I know you’re hungry, but if I try and go get your ma food now, she’s gonna be sad and cold,” Steve whispered into the darkness.

Darcy’s stomach gurgled in response.

“It would be swell if your Papa were here, we could send him to make us some snacks,” Steve looked pridefully smug. “Cause he’s on my shit list right now, and that means I get all of your ma’s sweet cuddling and he gets the chores.”

A jolt of agreement, or what Steve was interpreting as agreement thrummed against his fingertips and Steve let his lips twist up in a sleepy smile. He continued to stroke against Darcy’s skin, reveling in her warmth and the weight of her, soft and supple as she lay half on top of him. He was getting nothing but sleepy, warm contentment from Darcy at the moment, coupled with an enormous helping of cool, sweet relief and a dash of beautiful, shining hope.

“You know, back in the day, your Papa would take pretty good care of me. Sure, it was so I’d be healthy enough for foolishness and schemes, but he’d still take good care of me,” Steve murmured into the night. “He’s a good man, your pa. Even if me and your ma are upset with him right now. He’ll make it right and we’ll be okay. I promise.”

Steve’s stomach gurgled in concert with Darcy’s then and he sighed and managed to move just minutely enough to have Darcy almost entirely off of him. He waited a few moments, easing Darcy so she was lying alone on the bed, careful to make sure she didn’t hit darker emotions in her sleep.

“I’m gonna take a munch of that butt,” she mumbled in her sleep and then let out an aggressive snore, causing Steve to laugh and have no choice but to lean back in and place small butterfly kisses all across her brow. 

“Keep your ma company, little one,” Steve whispered, taking the pillow that he had been resting his head on and putting it in Darcy’s greedy grasp. “I’ll be right back.”

He flew as fast as his feet could carry him down the half level of stairs, rushing to the half bath and
then the kitchen, keen on piling a tray with all kinds of foods he could (hopefully) hand feed to his
girl when her hungry stomach finally woke her up. He only ran into one problem when he
investigated the kitchen.

Between the trusty private chef, Thuy, Erik, and all of the well meaning teammates and retirement
community members, their fridge, freezer and pantry were now stocked to the gills with an
overabundance of food. Aside from starting in on toasting bread and getting a jar of marmalade
(one of eight) from the fridge, he didn’t know how to handle his embarrassment of riches.

He grabbed the stock pot that had been left out on the counter top from one of the chef’s earlier
forays in the kitchen and began loading it with containers and baggies of food. Homemade granola
bars, zip-lock bags full of small bite sized cookies, the entire contents of the fruit basket on the
island were all carefully placed in the stock pot before the first little tendril of longing hit him
square in his gut.

It was like all the loneliness and neediness he himself remembered feeling when Bucky first went
to Basic training back before the war had started. It was a mirror of how he felt when he woke up
in this new century, stuffed into an apartment by SHIELD and expected to make his way in a very
nearly alien world on his own.

Steve panicked and didn't want those feelings from Darcy to bloom faster, so he took a cold,
analytical look at the kitchen, knowing that despite it's dated and cozy decorations, and despite the
fact that it still smelled of nutmeg from the cooking marathons that people had been doing for
them, that the entire house was essentially a safe house set up by the world's most prepared and
overly cautious secretary.

Retta Archie had dealt with Peggy Carter for DECADES of active duty. The only way to survive
was to adapt for every intense, insane situation that Peggy had willingly dove head first into. Steve
had read all eight volumes of Peggy's file, and he'd simultaneously laughed his ass off and also had
the good grace to appreciate that he hadn't of been awake and kicking at the same time.

They might have brought about the apocalypse sooner.

He saw the place where the ironing board should have been hidden, an inconspicuous little cabinet
by the doorway to the kitchen and pulled it open. He juggled the stock pot in his hands and saw
that just like his instincts told him, there was indeed a false bottom to the cabinet. Underneath was
stockpiles of non-traceable cash, ammunition, two gun cases, and the motherlode of water cleaning
tablets and endless MRE packets.

He inspected one handful of the foil pouches and saw that a few of them were specially
formulated, shelf stable yogurt smoothies, made specifically for super soldiers who burned through
calories quickly. Retta really did plan for every damned thing.

Steve felt like there was no time to try and pick out his favorites, so he just began grabbing them by the fist full and placing them in the rapidly filling stock pot.

Something must have changed upstairs, because the tendril of loneliness tickling at his senses rapidly turned over and something much different invaded his brain. He felt the warm pooling swirling sensation in his gut, not enough to get him hard or get him off, but just enough to be really, entirely, very enjoyable.

"I can deal with that," Steve murmured, pausing to revel in the pleasurable feeling of female arousal assaulting him. Before, when she had been with Bucky, he hadn't known what to make of the feelings that had been mysteriously hoisted upon him. Now that he knew they were from his girl, his girl who told him she was falling in love with him, it was so much better.

He marveled at the sensation of pleasure licking at his subconscious. Darcy was all satisfaction and hedonistic intentions all at once, ramping up quickly. Steve stood in the kitchen, his one hand holding a twenty gallon stockpot full of homemade treats and foil covered MRE’s, his other hand crammed into a hidden closet full of guns and cash and essentials, and he just let all the good, pure sexual desire wash over him in ever increasing waves, until his mouth was slack and drool was running down the side of his chin.

"ROGERS!" a voice echoed from the closet, sounding tinny and canned and distorted.

"I didn't do it," Steve answered back dreamily.

"No shit, Sherlock," Retta answered back from the transmitter in the emergency closet. "You hit the button. Is there an emergency?"

"NO---I uh, she's hungry---we're, we're hungry," Steve stammered, feeling his cheeks redden.

"Yeah, uh huh, she's hungry for something alright," Retta answered back. "Look, I'm doing an emergency evacuation."

"What? Hold on---I'll go and get her," Steve finally went into action at that, pulling out the last of the MRE's and not hesitating to grab a load of cash and a gun while he was at it.

"No, you stay here and you take care of that girl's hunger," Retta answered back smartly. "For all
things. Even 100 year aged salami."

The tinny transmitter echoed with Retta's chuckle and mutter of, "some girls have poor taste buds."

"Some ladies don't like salami at all, so their taste buds shouldn't be consulted," Steve sassed back.

"Well, regardless of my well documented distaste for any and all salami, I expect that with how strong she's been running lately, and how good Peggy used to say you were in a utility closet, that you might detonate a Darcy laid bomb of orgasmic feelings," Retta rattled off nonchalantly. "And believe me, Herb doesn't need the feelings viagra. We took his prescription for real viagra away months ago because he didn't know how to stop."

"Where will you go?" Steve wondered.

"To safety, don't worry about us. I have a plan," Retta promised.

"You always do," Steve smirked.

"See you on the other side," Retta said calmly. "And Rogers? Make it real good for her, alright? Because Thor is adamant about staying here, and he might be pissed if you don't."

"Ah ah ah, did I say you could move?" Darcy's voice was a melody, teasing and light, lilting and beautiful. But it didn't mask the steel underneath the reminder of the command. Her face was the same story as her voice, just in technicolor. Sparkling mischief in her eyes, but that perfect pout was set in such a way that brooked no argument.

This was his punishment. She said he couldn't move.

So the Soldier took over and sat back on the ridiculously comfortable oversized couch, the crocheted pillows were an irritant on his left flank and he wanted to move it (he WANTED to destroy it. he despised the hideous pillows, but his beloved darling pet said they held sentimental
value now, so undestroyed they remained).

His pet looked at him in such a way that challenged him to question her rule, as the idiot Bucky always did with a sassy comeback and a whining, accented plea for leniency.

"It's not him, Tiger," Steve concluded.

STEVE. The soldier glared at him automatically, not moving at all, because he didn't dare disrespect his Pet, but he could disrespect STEVE all he wanted. His eyes darted to the man holding Darcy so prettily. His ridiculously sized arms wrapped around her waist, his right hand gently caressing that spot on Darcy's expanded, swollen midsection that never failed to have her purring, his left hand supporting the belly from underneath, with his fingers petting closer and closer to that pretty little pussy that was the SOLDIER's and not this abomination’s.

"Definitely the soldier, look at how much he hates me," Steve sighed, although the mirth that was present in Darcy was present in Steve as well. "Didn't hate me so much LAST NIGHT pal when I jerked you off underneath the canasta table, did you?"

"You go over there and remind him how much he actually likes you," Darcy encouraged. "Our guy has a memory problem and it can only help. I'm gonna go get the toys so I can spoil you proper, okay honey?"

"Mmmm," Steve hummed in approval before squeezing Darcy and nibbling at her neck. "Best Tuesday night ever ."

Darcy drifted up and out of her beautiful, sinful dreamworld to the feeling of comforting, heavy warmth plastered to her left side, a light tickling of slightly chapped lips and soft unshaven scruff against her jawline, and the smell of savory meat drenched chili.

"Hmmmm, good dream," she mumbled.

"Yeah?" Steve answered back, his lips dragging deliciously on her pulse point. "You don't say?"

"Uh huh," Darcy's voice was surprisingly low pitched, scratched with sleep and music to even her
own ears at that point. "I was going to peg you while you gave Bucky the most torturous blow job ever and he wasn't going to be able to move a damned muscle."

"Oh Tiger, you're perfect," Steve cooed in her ear, sounding incredibly delighted.

"You are," Darcy answered back, turning her head and planting a sloppy kiss, unapologetic about her morning breath but overly enthusiastic as Steve answered her back in kind, his tongue licking right into her mouth eagerly. She felt a pleasant fuzziness at the base of her neck, all the warmth and pleasure and excitement centralizing there as she arched up off the bed to meet him touch for touch as he enthusiastically explored her mouth.

Just when it was getting really, REALLY amazing, he pulled away and suddenly had a silver pouch in front of her face.

"I'm NOT eating chili before sex," Darcy stated plainly, and then scowled when her stomach answered her declaration with a pitiful, hungry whining. She wiggled on the bed, blushing prettily when Steve's gaze darted hungrily for the best wobbly bits before looking back at her with a sassily arched eyebrow.

"Believe it or not, the chili mac is mine, it's the tastiest one," Steve answered smoothly. "This is a yogurt pouch, pretty tasty, and packs enough calories to keep a super soldier going for a few hours."

Darcy opened her mouth to make a smart comment, but her fuzz and kiss addled brain caught up and she looked at Steve shrewdly, "You would DENY me the chili mac?"

"Tiger, you just said---"

"But you would HORDE it for yourself? What if Chili mac is my new favorite thing?"

"Little lady, you are in for a surprise if you think---"

"The MOTHER of your child?" Darcy gasped and then immediately shrieked with laughter as Steve abandoned the yogurt pouch to rest on her bosom and let his hands immediately attack the sides of her breasts with just the right kind of tickle. She didn't scream for him to stop, she simply revelled in the teasing, pleasant tickling, but even more so she focused on Steve's face.
His tongue was poking out between his lips and there was a youthful exuberance there that really didn't belong on a 100 year old man's face. But she knew she was putting it there, she was the inspiration behind that happiness that Bucky had told her Steve deserved. And boy, did she really, really believe it now. The sparkle in his eyes shifted though, as he kept stealing glances at the way her breasts moved as she wriggled beneath him, and before she knew it he stopped tickling all together.

"Eat the pouch, Tiger, please?" Steve asked breathlessly, as if he was the one that had just been pleasantly tortured with tickles for five whole minutes. He waited until she grabbed the pouch and began slurping it down.

It was lemony and fresh and sweet and she couldn't help but give a little approving moan. Steve grinned, bright as the sun before nodding and shifting on the bed in the next heartbeat. Darcy stopped sucking down the tasty treat as he maneuvered those broad shoulders between her legs and brought her thighs up to act as really effective ear muffs for his ears.

"What're you---" she tried to ask, but stopped abruptly as he dove in with the same enthusiasm he had kissed her earlier with. She violently twitched as his tongue swiped up twice in quick succession, flat and broad against her and providing the loveliest of tickles.

"Just finish your pouch and be careful not to choke," Steve advised with another cheeky raise of his eyebrows before diving back in.

At first, Darcy didn't want to do what Steve asked out of her trademarked sheer spite, but after her second embarrassing, guttural groan of pleasure as Steve enthusiastically ate her out, she did as she was told, sucking down the tasty treat as her eyes slid closed and she floated on the bed with ony Steve's hands on her thighs to anchor her.

She couldn't help but compare Steve with Bucky in her head, and while their techniques were worlds apart, with Bucky so technically sound and fearsomely precise in every calculated move of his tongue and nose and chin and even his every breath--- Bucky took enjoyment out of the job well done.

But Steve was all eager enthusiasm and unpredictable joy in his seemingly rewarding task.

Bucky was the elegant cat expertly leaping onto her shoulder and getting the perfect nuzzle. Steve was the overly exuberant and over sized puppy who gingerly jumped around her repeatedly in order to get a cuddle.
And Darcy had always loved cats and dogs equally, even as a tiny terror.

Her right thigh twitched of its own accord and Steve gave an anticipatory muffled noise before his nose nudged her clit just right and his tongue swirled and prodded at the source of where all of her eager wetness was coming from.

Darcy was flying very quickly and nearly choked on the yogurt pouch she had been eating. She managed to get the little plastic nozzle out of her mouth before her entire body seized with a fierce and sizeable orgasm. Her moan turned into a stuttered cry as her legs spasmed and shook around Steve’s head. He lay his tongue flat against her, prolonging the little aftershocks for as long as she could stand them before she pushed against his forehead so that his cheek was resting on his thigh and his previously hard working mouth was wearing a shit-eating grin.

"And now you know why you couldn't have the chili mac, you would have definitely choked,” Steve’s words were slurred and drunken and he looked about ready to dive back in when she reached for him with eager, grasping hands.

He’d never be able to turn down her slightest request, so up he went, tossing the empty yogurt pouch off the bed entirely. Darcy’s face was flushed and her eyes were dazed and dreamy as she stared back at him. He couldn't help but lean in and kiss the splotch of yogurt that had wound up on her cheek.

“Delicious,” he praised.

“Don’t even think about using me as a plate, I know how much you can eat!” Darcy giggles, still feeling weightless and carefree.

“I’d cover you in butterscotch and lick it right off of you,” Steve promised.

Darcy let out a bark of laughter and started mumbling about senior citizen desserts and hard candies and Steve was simply content to watch her snort and giggle to herself, a look of awe and wonder on his face.

She sat up very suddenly, displacing Steve completely and the sudden spike of panic felt like a dangerous wave reverberating off the wallls.
“Whatsit, Tiger?” Steve asked very cautiously.

“The people—all the old people. Oh my god I just sex napalmed them. Oh no!” Darcy panicked and Steve felt himself sway at the self-recrimination she was burying herself in.

“S’okay, Tiger. Calm down.”

“Calm down?!? Steve, honey, they have PACE MAKERS!” Darcy shouted. “I probably just murdered them!”

“Calm. Down.”

Darcy’s eyes went wide, because that was not sweet, puppy dog, adorable Steve. The man who had just told her to calm down was a battle hardened soldier giving a direct order.

And for the first time in her life, Darcy obeyed.

"Breathe," Steve whispered, the command running through the word like steel.

Darcy inhaled and held it automatically for two seconds before expelling it out of her mouth. She was on her back again, and she didn't remember getting there, but Steve was leaning over her, most of his body hard against hers, supplying pressure and warmth and something solid and unmoveable to connect to. She sucked in another breath and held it, staring back at Steve's eyes while the unbridled, panicked hysteria slowly ebbed away.

"You didn't hurt anyone," Steve's voice was soft. "Retta evacuated because she had a feeling this is what we'd be doing."

"Smart," Darcy nodded, tearing her eyes away from Steve's unwavering gaze, her thoughts going gray again easily, thinking of what she had done and how she had put a whole community of great grandparents in danger because---

"NO."
The command in his voice had Darcy's spine going rigid and immediately made her lose grip on the depressed, self-flagellating thoughts. She looked back at Steve and he was giving her that beautiful, hopeful boyish smile.

"We're going to control this," Steve promised. "We're going to figure out a way for this to be as easy for you as turning off a faucet, alright?"

"Yeah," Darcy nodded. She managed to get up on her elbows a little and placed a lingering, beautiful kiss on Steve's chin. She pulled away and some of her happy playfulness was back when she said, "Bucky may be a dumbass most of the time, but he was right. You're a helluva guy, Steve Rogers."

"Not much to look at, but I got a real lovin' heart," Steve parroted back Bucky's favorite thing to use as a line to prospective gals back in the day.

"You do, and I like it when you boss me around, but don't you DARE tell Bucky that," Darcy warned.

"Promise I won't," Steve nodded, placing his forehead against hers so that their noses pressed together. He soaked in the calm, the undercurrent of joy coming from her, tinged with her trademark impish nature and that strong feeling of warmth in the pit of his stomach. He moved his body so that his own unfulfilled erection pressed against her thigh and he whispered, "We aren't done here, are we?"

"You are a cheater, I think, reading my mind and whatnot," Darcy smiled, bright and happy as anything. "You're sure there's no one around for me to torture with this?"

"Not a soul," Steve shook his head. He furrowed his brow and thought better of it, remembering Retta's warning that Thor would be staying behind, presumably with Jane. "Not a soul that can't handle a little pleasurable torture."

"Well, alright," Darcy nodded. And Steve recognized the spike of mischief in the air surrounding him and he recognized the glint in her eye and tilt of her lips just a split second before he was flipping in the bed and on his back. She yanked his boxers down quick, but mindful of his aching erection and then promptly straddled his thighs.
His eyes were wide as he stared up at her, watching as she grinned that particular gap toothed grin down at him, twirling his emancipated boxers on her right index finger.

"I TOLD you, I was going to ride you like a pony on a super pretty carousel," Darcy reminded him with a helpful wink.

Steve surveyed the hideous orange bed sheets and comforter and looked back at her with a look of disbelief.

"Giddy the fuck up," Darcy let out a little cackle before shimmying on the bed up his body. She took his fully erect cock in both of her hands and gave it an exploratory pump, delighting in how he shivered beneath her.

"That's a good feeling," Steve observed, feeling the infallible pride and giddy desire coming off of her. "Nobody else deserves it."

He groaned when she spread the pre-cum down his shaft with nimble fingers, then used both of her hands to smear it up and down with steady, strong strokes.

"Send it all to me, Tiger," Steve asked. Politely ordered. "Please, sweetheart?"

He let out a choking little gasp and nearly spilled over in her hands when it hit him full force. She was so damned smug, and it was pretty and well warranted as she worked him in her hands like an expert. There was something gleefully anticipatory too in the wave of feelings she was giving him. And he could feel that eagerness twice over as he couldn't wait to be inside the wet welcoming warmth of hers that he had tasted just a few minutes ago.

"You make the prettiest sounds," Darcy cooed at him, watching as his abs flexed and strained as he resisted the urge to buck under her hands. “You’re as pretty as a picture.”

He was so damned needy in that precise moment. He wanted it, every last ounce of everything she had to give. He wanted what he wanted and he wanted what she wanted. It was even more powerful than the gloom she had set upon the retirement community the day prior and Steve was really thankful that Retta had had the presence of mind to get everyone the hell out of there. Darcy was a powder keg of want and needs and greedy, selfish desire in that moment, and he had happily
struck the match and lit the fuse.

"Alright, I can't wait any more," Darcy declared, hopping up on her knees and positioning herself so she could rub the leaking head of his cock through the wet and ready lips of her welcoming cunt.

He knew he was---sizeable, to say the least. And he felt her pride and his mingle as she lowered herself down on him inch by pleasurable inch. It was a heady thing, to be feeling her pleasure full force singing in blissful, perfect harmony with his own. He felt a fullness deep inside, friction and heat and pure, absolute delight all the while, sinking deep into her heat, surrounded by velvet and a fluttering grip on every inch of his skin.

"Oh fuck, shit, oh, Steve!" Darcy cried out.

Steve blinked and looked around, confused, because she was still on top of him, but she was in the throes of a powerful orgasm as she rode him, or more accurately, as she held a precarious grip on his pecs while he leveraged his feet on the bed and pistoned his hips up into her with relentless enthusiasm.

He didn’t know how long he had been doing it but she collapsed against him and he felt a bit of alarm that he had been so swept away in the overwhelming whirlwind of hedonism. He stopped his hips even though he was probably two strokes off of his own orgasm and pulled out, flipping them in the bed and staring at her in concern.

There was no earthly definition of the feeling she sent him. It wasn’t pain or hurting or discomfort. But if it could be put into words it would have been

‘You keep fucking me, Steven Grant Rogers or I will murder you dead right god damned now.’

“Ma’am, yes ma’am,” Steve answered back verbally, reaching down and cloning himself back up with her welcoming warmth. He groaned at the feeling again, doubling his pleasure and excitement.

He fought like hell to stay in the moment and not be swept away into mindless unconscious pleasure, grunting and moaning as a result. Her clever little hands offered some distraction, rifling through his hair and giving the gentlest of touches on his face.
His toes lost a precarious grip on the bedsheets and his body was a leaden weight on top of her, her legs wide to accommodate him. He found some purchase with his knees and managed to thrust into her at a slower pace. Each pass of his hips felt like he was desperately trying to get deeper inside.

And then he couldn’t help but laugh. Because she was so excessively fond of him in that moment, so amused that the laugh just bubbled up in him mid thrust.

“What?” Steve giggled in spite of himself.

“You are so gosh darned adorable,” Darcy murmured at him.

“Give a fella a hand, Tiger,” Steve asked breathlessly, as wrecked with desire and adoring worship as he could get. He managed to get his near powerless hand to hers and tried to draw it between their bodies so she could get off one last time.

“Oh no, I’m good,” Darcy declared. “You ruined me with that last one. I just want to watch you.”

“But—-But,” Steve stammered and then made a long drawn out vowel sound as she hit him full force with an echo of the orgasm she had just had.

His spine snapped and he buried himself deep inside of her, coming immediately. And he just kept coming. It felt like his whole body detonated with release, and he was riding a never ending wave of the best endorphins known to man.

“Fuuuuuuuck,” Steve managed to whisper before collapsing on top of her, his cock still twitching inside of her as three more smaller spurts of cum coated her walls.

Darcy hummed a wordless tune in his ear as she went back to petting his hair and face as he lay like a useless two hundred and thirty pound brick on top of her.

“Tiger?” He whispered some time later, not having moved a centimeter.

“Hmm?” Darcy asked back, sweet and far from complaining.
“Just how strong are you, sweetheart? Cause honestly you’re gonna have to push me off you, I can’t move,” Steve whispered.

Darcy hummed a few more bars of her nameless tune and swiped her hand over the back of his head.

“That’s alright, Steve. I’m perfectly happy right where we are.”

Chapter End Notes

That felt nice.

Okay. This is the logical end to this “book” in the story. So in two weeks we should be moving on a bit. Maybe. I quite like my Steve and Darcy alone time.
Thor was chafed.

He was a God of Asgard. He had survived more world ending events than any living soul currently on Midgard. He had been raised by the vicious hand of Odin and had come out the other side as a mostly normal, level headed Thunder God and protector of Midgard. He'd once been thrown in a pit of hungry Vunterslaars and had come out without a scratch on him.

He'd grown up with LOKI and come out mostly unscarred.

And now, forty-eight hours into his stay in this odd community of elders, Thor's thighs were so chafed that it hurt to walk.

So instead, logically, he was crawling. Inch worming, really. On his back. As to avoid the unbearable chafing on his thighs.

The persons primarily responsible for the unholy amalgamation of delicious bruises and tingling brush burn on his thighs were currently fast asleep in what the tall, loud, delectable lass named Maya had said was a nap room in the retirement community. The elder leader, Rhetta, had advised them to leave the area before lifting off in a stealth quinjet, but Thor had scoffed at her warning. He was determined to be there for Darcy.

There hadn't been TIME to be there for Darcy. Because a few hours after his conversation with the good Captain, he and his remaining companions had been laid low by what could only be Darcy's power. At first, Maya had giddily and breathily declared that the 'giant horny tsunami was so so so
so so so much better than crying like a baby'. Thor had agreed. And then immediately and helpfully suggested that Jane act on her attraction to Maya, make her their personal royal concubine and shut a stammering Maya up with her mouth.

Jane had been very happy and eager to comply.

The three of them had continued to utilize their mouths. And their hands. And every part of their bodies they possibly could. And just a few extra moving parts that were not biologically a part of their bodies.

Thor had sworn his own fealty to Maya as he had panted underneath her machinations, even as Jane was underneath HIM pledging her mind, soul, heart and body to both of them.

When the dust had settled after the first round, Thor had persuaded both women to enter into a bonding ceremony with him. Maya was giddy to be the concubine of Thor and Jane, giggling madly and triumphantly about how dreams could come true. Then they had passed out. When they had stirred again hours later, they were already in the throes of passion.

Maya had had to crawl to the nearest water cooler and roll an entire ten gallon bottle towards their love nest so that they could sustain their endeavors.

It had been two straight days of the same. Rest periods followed by a half hearted effort to keep themselves hydrated and fed followed by intense love making until exhaustion overwhelmed them.

"Oh, Midgardians are lovely, are they? They are just little balls of fluff, is that right, father? Not dangerous at all," Thor muttered as he struggled down the well manicured, abandoned lane to the house where Darcy and Steve were.

His rear end hit a particular rock and he winced, knowing it had hit a particularly red hand shaped print on his ass.

"You were wrong, you one eyed son of a bitch," Thor said, his voice scratchy from all the pleasurable shouting he had been doing in the last forty-eight hours. He wrinkled his nose and blinked one eye shut in an imitation of his father, "Don't be foolish son, no Midgardian could ever satiate the Prince of Asgard, you can't mate with them for life without breaking them."

Another wince as a rock hit another hand shaped red mark.

"My ass!" Thor hissed.

He felt a sleepy wave of want rush over him, powerful and all encompassing and he could do nothing but lay on his back in the middle of a driveway, covered with a crocheted blanket and nothing else. A whine began in the back of his throat, slow and uncoiling much like the arousal in his gut.

"I'm going to put her in a chastity belt," Thor spat out his annoyance over Darcy’s insatiability winning out over his concern for the little human. "Wanton little hearthkeeper..."
He whined again and realized he was well and truly screwed, because both of his own wanton little
ladies, Jane and Maya, were so far away from him and he was going to have to experience this
desirous hell on his own.

"Well. Damn."

There was nothing quite like waking up with Steven Grant Rogers' face between your thighs.

"Better than Folgers, I'm gonna make a jingle," Darcy murmured a moment after waking from the
warm tingling that was happening with every lazy, leisurely swipe of Steve's tongue against her
clit.

"Good morning, Tiger," Steve murmured into her skin before diving in with more enthusiasm than
before, now that he had successfully been her sex alarm clock.

For the last two days they had been on a cycle of sorts. Steve would manage to wake before her,
rush downstairs and fill up the stockpot with nourishment and water bottles before coming back
upstairs and coaxing her into wakefulness with his mouth and fingers in all of her most fun areas.
They had taken a few baths, lingering until the water was cool and they were completely dirty
again. They had managed to even make it downstairs into the family rec room in the basement,
christening the hideous sectional couch properly.

And the folded up ping pong table in the corner of the finished basement.

And the bean bag chair. Twice. (Scott Lang would not want to call dibs on it now).

They'd succumb to exhaustion and sleep a few hours before the cycle would blissfully start over
again.

Steve was something of an addict at this point, and Darcy was too happy to be the supplier to
complain. Clearly a firmer hand was needed to steady the till, because the two of them would
probably eschew all other human interaction for as long as they could possibly do it in order to
keep on in that never ending loop of shared pleasure and new love and whispered stories and giddy
giggles and lingering touches.

"Where's my yogurt pouch?" Darcy demanded, knowing that she would need the calories to
continue on with Steve's unsaid plan of eating HER for breakfast.

"Ran out," Steve's muffled response elicited a full body shiver from her.

"Damn," Darcy sighed before she arched her back and gave out a stuttered cry as Steve's lips
latched onto her clit and sucked gently. She forgot about the yogurt pouch completely and gripped
the hair at the sides of his head, shamelessly grinding herself against his face.

The sound Steve made in response, groaning and guttural and full of need was like a beautiful
symphony in the mid-morning sunshine filled bedroom. Darcy knew he was getting every last
feeling she was feeling, and at that moment it was pure, unfiltered glee, along with unrestrained,
passionate hedonism. She wanted to live forever with Steve's mouth on her cunt and she didn't give one damn about anything else in that moment.

"Best part of waking up, is Steve Rogers---something something--fuck," Darcy softly sang before giggling and then shrieking in delight as Steve added his long, well practiced fingers into the mix. He curved them inside of her just so, dragging along her front wall and all hope of finishing her jingle flew out of the window as Steve coaxed her into a good morning orgasm.

"Yes, yes, yes," Steve chanted, his body vibrating from where he lay between her thighs. He didn't need to be told what to do, her demand floated through the ephemeral waves of feelings she was constantly pushing onto him and he wasted no time in crawling up her body and cradling her hips with his hands and lifting her just so that his twitching cock brushed against the wet lips he had been worshipping moments earlier.

He couldn't help the grin, coming from both her feelings and his as the bump of her baby brushed against his skin. They had just a month or so before this position wasn't feasible anymore, thanks to the ever growing baby that Darcy was doing such a good job of building.

Their baby. The baby that would be raised by he and Darcy and Bucky. One beautiful golden thing to come out of all the hell that Darcy had gone through.

"Slow?" Steve panted, practically begging.

"Hmm, I'll take you however I can get you, honey," Darcy promised, moaning when Steve did go slow and strong, pushing into her velvety warmth in a way he could tell she loved as she doubled the feelings back onto him.

Darcy loved what she was capable of doing to Steve. As a matter of fact, she didn't think she had ever really been grateful for the nebulous powers that Hydra had forced upon her until she had finally given Steve all of those good feelings when he touched her. He was cocooned in sinful pleasure and it showed over every inch of his face. The sensations were stuck in an echo chamber, bouncing off of her to him and back and forth until one of them passed out.

"STOP!" came a weak shout from outside. "Or no, don't that felt really good, a little higher please?"

"FUCK OFF!" Steve yelled immediately, before settling more firmly on Darcy, his hands going to grip the bed frame and use it as leverage as he thrust in and out of his beautiful girl.

"I will---you---oh God," Thor, because it was Thor outside of their house, gurgled and they could hear concrete breaking slightly as either his hammer or his FISTS flailed about in the pleasure induced attack.

"Hold on tight, Tiger," Steve whispered, a delighted, impish smile lighting up his eyes. All thoughts of going slow and steady evaporated and Steve began moving his hips into her with precision and speed. He winced slightly at the delectable onslaught of pleasured feelings from her and looked to stutter in his movements before slurring a hushed request, "Can y-can ya send it all to him, sweetheart?"
Darcy moaned in response and Steve continued to piston his hips in and out of her, his arms flexing in a way that distracted her as her fingers gently ran over his biceps. He felt the pit of his stomach flip when he realized the pleasure he was feeling was his and his alone, not hers as well any longer. The wood of the bedframe began to crack as his grip tightened, his pursuit of her orgasm the only thing that mattered.

Thor made another garbled yell, this one a combination of some swear word and a high pitched gleeful sound.

"Oh, oh, oh," Thor shouted out, so loud and regal in his unadulterated bliss. "Don't you dare stop, don't stop it, you---yes. Yes. Yessssssssss." 

Darcy began laughing shortly before the giggles took over Thor too, but Steve remained unaffected as she concentrated her power on Thor alone. If anything that single minded determination his girl was displaying made everything even hotter. He leaned in and placed open mouthed kisses all over her neck with the direct intent to mark her up as thoroughly as possibly. He felt her lovely thighs tighten around his hips and he grinned against her skin.

Thor was louder and more ridiculous than Darcy's lovely moans and gasps in his ears, and he tried to tune his teammate and fellow Avenger out.

"OH YOU BASTARD. It's so good?" Thor whined. "I'm. This is--this isn't going to make things weird, is it?"

Darcy laughed straight through her orgasm and Steve ground his hips against her tight and let go too, the feeling was strange after two days of feeling her as well. He hummed against her skin while she petted his arms and nuzzled the side of his face.

"Hey," she whispered.

"Hey," Steve grinned, unable to contain it.

"I kind of love you," Darcy told him.

"Lemme feel it, Tiger, please," Steve begged, pulling away and watching her intently as she carefully switched her output from Thor to him. He felt the warmth, the true affection envelop him like an embrace.

It was exactly what he was feeling. Only doubled.

"Guys? You're done for now, right? Can---can someone bring me a rag? Some kind of---damp cloth?" Thor called out. "Also, some sort of ointment for the brush burn would be nice."

**Wakanda**

"Are you sure this is going to work?" the White Wolf whispered, looking around nervously. He appeared to be a curious blend of the weathered, hardened soldier and the more integrated side of
himself. Together, they made for a very cautious, guarded man.

It was hours before dawn, and M'Baku and Bucky Barnes were standing at the entrance to a jet that they intended to commandeer. It was just a few hours after Shuri had told him that the arm he had worked so hard for had been awarded to him.

He'd flown through the exercises she had asked him to complete, proving that the arm was now even more coordinated, strong and amazing than whatever Hydra could have tried to do. Already, Bucky could tell that the vibranium arm was a part of him. M'Baku had explained that it was because he had earned the vibranium, so now it WAS truly a part of him.

"You worry too much," M'Baku grumbled. "You sound like my grandfather."

"I COULD be your grandfather," Bucky shrugged, his eyes darting to the new arm and the left corner of his mouth lifting in an approximation of a smile.

"Are you saying that one of my beautiful grandmothers would have lain with a white man?" M'Baku demanded, his eyes snapping into that wide eyed glare that spoke of instant pain via head smashing.

"Fuck off," Bucky answered back smartly, just as if M'Baku was a Howling Commando that had been trying to get his goat back in 1943. "Plenty of elderly Wakandan women have been staring at my ass these last few days."

M'Baku tried to hold the glare and take a step forward to intimidate the former Winter Soldier, but Bucky would not be cowed and only held up a vibranium middle finger in his unexpected friend's face.

The bark of laughter from M'Baku had Bucky stepping forward and slapping a hand over his mouth. "You trying to get us caught?"

"I saved the baby King, he owes me," M'Baku shrugged Bucky off. "Besides, he let insane little Princess Shuri go to America. This should not be any kind of problem with his royal Majestic pain in my behind."


"Now, we will have approximately five minutes of cover as the shields shift," M'Baku peered up at the horizon.

The two men quickly hopped onto the jet and M'Baku began to casually being flipping switches, starting up the flight tutor.

"M'Baku, leader of the Jabari," M'Bali intoned. "You are not scheduled to take a flight today."

"Hello M'Bali, it has been too long," M'Baku cheerfully replied. "I have a great mission to accomplish in America, and would appreciate you keeping silent and not telling our King."

The computer program remained silent and M'Baku only grinned menacingly at the front window, his face full of mischief and secrets that Bucky couldn't hope to read.

"Alright," M'Bali said softly. "Just this once."
"How in the hell did you do that?" Bucky hissed.

"She remembers me from training in my youth, computers have a long memory," M'Baku shrugged. "She doesn't want to risk being wiped out again, I would imagine. Even computers can have fear."

"Fear of YOU," Bucky shook his head in disbelief. "Alright. Let's get me home to my girl."

"Of course," M'Baku nodded. "Just---one stop first."

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**Asskicker Meadows**

"Again."

The giggles started fairly quickly. Three distinct giggles, two deep and male and hearty and one feminine and husky and breathless. Darcy sighed and wrinkled her nose, causing the giggles to stop and three other people to sigh in an echo of hers.

"STOP DOING WHAT I'M DOING!" Darcy demanded hotly, sitting down on the gazebo bench and crossing her arms under her chest.

They had finally managed to make it out of their sex den, only because Thor had refused to leave their driveway, and had threatened to heartily enjoy each round of sex they would try. Once Thor had promised that Jane would keep her distance until Darcy was willing to see her, Darcy had consented to going down to the recreation center in an attempt to get some kind of control over her powers.

It had been two and a half days now since Retta and the rest of the senior citizens had abandoned their community. Darcy felt terrible about it and was willing to do almost anything to try and make it right somehow.

Even have Jane watching her intently from inside of the community center as they worked outside of it.

"Easy Tiger," Steve gave her a gentle smile before nodding. He squared his shoulders and his voice dropped an octave, "Make Thor laugh only."

It was a command, everyone recognized that. The Captain giving out an order on a battlefield. And Darcy, who had never been great at following anyone's orders, nodded and concentrated.

Thor giggled happily and Darcy couldn't help but smile in return.

"I liked the sex rays better," Maya offered.

"You lost so much fluid that you had to have an IV drip," Steve reminded the granddaughter of Rhetta Archie.
"Helluva way to go though, Cap," Maya shrugged. "I mean---there are orgasms, and then there are THORgasms."

Darcy giggled with such sudden ferocity and joy that she couldn't control where it went once more, and her laughs were echoed by her audience. She stamped her feet and wrinkled her nose, obviously angry and annoyed at the slip up.

Thor reached out and shoved at Steve's shoulder in response.

"Hey," Steve snapped back.

"Uh oh," Maya mumbled, sounding annoyed as well. "Don't do it, Cap. Don't be hurtin' my man."

"This is YOUR fault," Thor accused Steve. "She is kin to me now, properly, and I should take a brother's revenge over what you've done to her."

"Yeah baby, kick his ass!" Maya encouraged. "Let me go get your hammer, thunderbae, then you can smash him."

"STOP IT!" Darcy screeched as Thor and Steve began to grapple and Maya decided against going for the hammer and just launched herself on Steve's back.

Darcy stood up from the bench and stamped her foot and with the stamp came a wave of invisible energy, knocking all three of her self proclaimed tutors up off of their feet and into the air. They landed with a thump on the ground, Maya sprawled out over both of the superheroes. Steve winced and obviously fought against the wave of self loathing that Darcy had emitted, but Maya was not so strong and she rolled off of the blond superheroes and began yanking at the grass on the ground while she struggled with tears.

Thor himself was staring up at the sky, tears leaking out of the side of his face, no cute words on the tip of his tongue as he tried to work through the complicated bit of annoyed bitterness he was feeling towards himself.

"I never have felt such a way," he whispered.

"Cause you lack humility, big guy," Steve mumbled, struggling to sit up. He looked at Darcy and gave her a soft smile. "Stop it. Please, Tiger."

Darcy sniffled and got it under control. She put two hands on her baby bump and drew in small little breaths as she tried to calm herself. The vitriol she was feeling for her inadequacy faded and only self pity and sadness remained as she looked at Steve with an apologetic smile.

"It's only going to work if you're here to tell me to turn it off, I think," Darcy whispered.

"Shackled to you forever?" Steve grinned, bright as the sun at her. "What a world to have at my fingertips, Tiger."

"Stop being cute," Thor sniffled. "I forget to be intimidating when you're cute."

"Alright, again," Darcy squares her shoulders and drew from some endless inner well of her dogged determination. She met Steve's questioning gaze with a determined little nod. "I can't give
up, honey. I've got to get this."

Steve shot to his feet and was across to Darcy in the next heartbeat. He wrapped her up in an embrace that lifted her feet six inches off of the ground and kissed her like both of their lives depended on it.

"Awww," Maya muttered from her place on the ground. She wriggled immediately and rolled towards Thor, wasting no time in straddling the Asgardian and leaning down for her own kiss.

"For fuck's sake," a little voice echoed from behind Darcy and Steve.

Darcy was swept up in Steve's kiss, completely preoccupied with her tongue hungrily lapping at his tongue, she didn't even hear the footsteps behind her. Steve was preoccupied too, doubly so, since the whammy coming off of Darcy was hitting him hard and he was eager to have it that way too.

Darcy DID notice when two warm things were placed over her ears, covering them completely. And she did notice when the immediately recognizable guitar notes began rapidly playing, quickly followed by the rhythmic and dramatic drumming of "Maps" from the Yeah Yeah Yeah's.

The effect was immediate and devastating. Steve was blown back from the wave coming out of Darcy, who turned and put everything full force onto the person who had put the headphones over her ears. Jane Foster went flying through the back post of the gazebo, landing in a crumpled heap amongst splintered wood.

"JANE!" Thor called out, rushing towards her, quickly followed by Maya.

Darcy hissed out and closed her eyes. Focusing everything in her and finding a way to turn all the feelings off. Just like a faucet.

Steve was next to her once more and put a gentle hand on her shoulder. He mouthed something, but Darcy couldn't hear him with the noise cancelling headphones that were blaring one of her favorite songs in her ears.

"You controlled it?" Steve questioned again.

"It's the music," Jane revealed, sounding slightly winded as Thor and Maya supported her between them. "When I needed her to focus---when she needed to focus on one thing instead of a million things, she'd blare music in her ears. She always got the data entry done after that."

Darcy nodded, not hearing Jane, but understanding what she had done. She took a deep calming breath and concentrated, finding that she could boil it down to a laser focus and guide her power.

Steve let out a breath of relief. Followed by Thor. Then Maya. Then after a moment, even Jane took a trembling breath, looking like the world's greatest weight had been lifted off of her shoulders.

And then it shut off and everyone could feel their own feelings.

Jane gave Darcy a shrug and her mouth made an attempt at an aborted smile before thinking better of it and nodding at Darcy instead. She held her breath until Darcy managed the slightest of nods back at her.
Darcy turned to Steve and looked up at him before shouting over the sound of her headphones, "Take me home, Steve? I'm tired. We can---we can do more tomorrow."

"Alright Tiger," Steve nodded, wrapping his arm around Darcy and walking away back towards their house at a steady pace.

"Good job, boo," Maya stroked Jane's hair as they watched Darcy and Steve walk away. Thor wrapped a beefy arm around both of the ladies, with Jane in the middle. "Your sugar tits is proud."

"I would be curious, if Darcy can keep this contained for an evening," Thor began slowly. "What it might be like for all three of us, without her hedonistic influence."

Jane couldn't help but smile slightly, looking at Maya as the taller woman continued to gently stroke her hair. Jane leaned forward and let her lips brush against Maya's chin, feeling a sound of interest come from Thor.

"C'mon Sugar Tits, let's get hydrated. Just in case things get crazy again."

Chapter End Notes

Thorgasm. Heh. I have never been more proud of myself.

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