For students Jemma, Leo, Darcy, and Skye, it is their last semester at the prestigious University of S.H.I.E.L.D. And all is well until Skye, majoring in music, discovers that the class she originally signed up for has changed from woodwinds to piano. Taught by Melinda May.

Complete, finally.

Notes

So this is my first attempt at posting a WIP so I can get feedback as I am working on this from someone other than one friend. I promise to do my best to update at least once a week.

I am going to own up to knowing nothing about taking music classes in a university setting right now, so if I mess anything up to badly, PLEASE let me know. This was inspired by a dream so the chances of things being not quite right is pretty high.
“To our last semester of undergrad!” Darcy almost shouted, clinking her shot glass of tequila together with Skye’s, Jemma’s, and Leo’s.

Jemma and Leo both coughed and sputtered after swallowing the shot while Skye and Darcy slammed their glasses down on the round table.

“Alright, time to do the traditional schedule spew.” Skye announced, digging around in her purse for the paper with all her classes printed on it.

“You know, I really don’t understand why we do this. It’s not we ever have any classes in common or know the professors.” Jemma huffed, digging around for her own paper.

“Religion, Violence, and Conflict Resolution with Maria Hill. Constitutional Law 2 with Maria Hill. God, does Hill ever sleep? I feel like I have had her at least twice every semester since I have started. Intro to Astrophysics for non-majors with Jane Foster. Russian 2 with Natasha Romanov… fuck, I failed the first god damn time because I couldn’t stop staring at her long enough to learn anything! And self-defense with Sif Norway… what kind of name is that?” Darcy rattled off, looking at her own schedule.

“I’m taking Intro to Astrophysics with Jane Foster too!” Jemma announced happily, before looking back down at her schedule. “Medicinal Chemistry with Dr. Bruce Banner. Biophysical Chemistry Laboratory with Clara Franzini-Armstrong. Religion and Myth with Thor Odison, oh that’s adorable, his name is myth. And Protein and Nucleic Acid Biochemistry with Dr. Bruce Banner.” Jemma finished.

“Oh god Jem, you’re going to die this semester, none of that sounds fun.” Leo said, patting his best friend on the back, like it might help. “Alright, let’s see what I have here. Computer Architecture with Tony Stark. Electrical Engineering for Circuits 2 with… Hm, no bloody clue how to say that.”

“Don’t look at me.” Jemma said as the paper was passed her way.


Jemma giggled. “Your semester doesn’t sound any better than mine.”

“I’m taking self-defense with you, Darcy.” Skye said with a smile that quickly faded. “Mother fucker!”

All three turned to look at the girl, confusion clear on their face.

“I signed up for a selected topics to fill one of my last requirements, and when I signed up for it, it was Woodwinds, and its Piano now, with Melinda May. You have to be kidding me, this is the last performance class I have to take!”

“What’s wrong with Piano?” Darcy asked, having missed when Skye had to take the mandatory piano classes at the very start of her education.

“We don’t talk about Skye and piano.” Jemma whispered.

“It’s a different prof this time, right? Maybe it will be better?” Leo tried to offer.
Skye all but growled, but looked back at her schedule. “Intro to Philosophy with Phil Coulson. And ASL 2 with Clint Barton.”

“At least the rest of the classes don’t sound too bad?” Jemma asked, trying to soothe her friend.

“Yea.” Skye sighed. “I’m never going to graduate.”
Chapter Summary

First day of classes

Syllabus day was always boring.

So as Skye slid into her seat in ASL 2, she pulled out her phone, prepared to kill the almost two hours allotted for the class by playing Angry Birds.

“Good morning.” Clint said from the front of the room, his deaf accent clear. “After today this will be a silent class, just like ASL 1. Just be aware that I can hear well enough thanks to the cochlear, so none of that turning and hiding you’re talking.”

Skye sighed and slid the phone back into her purse.

“I assume you can all read, so I won’t insult you by going over the syllabus like you can’t. Take one and pass the stack to the person next to you, sign in on your way out and progress monitoring is due before next class on BlackBoard. I’ll respond to e-mail almost instantaneously if it is sent at a respectable hour. If you run into any problems e-mail me, otherwise I will see you Wednesday.” Clint finished before sitting down and putting a sign in sheet in front of him.

Skye was the last one to get a syllabus, and she took the time to read it before leaving. As such she was the last out of the room, but she was still getting out an hour early so she wasn’t that peeved about it.

“You were in Catherine’s class last semester.” Clint said as she signed her name on the sheet.

“I was.” Skye responded, slightly curious as to why it mattered.

“I love getting students from her. You don’t pass her class without knowing your shit.” Clint said, with a bright smile. “First few weeks will be easy for you, while I catch everyone else up.”

“Good to hear.” Skye said.

“I’ll see you Wednesday.” Clint said, dismissing her.

Skye nodded before walking out, slipping the phone back out and shooting a text to Jemma, Please tell me you got out of class early too.

A minute later her phone chirped. Nope. Clara is still going over lab protocol like we have never been in a lab before.

Skye sighed, making her way to Philosophy, hoping at least the room would be open early. She was lucky there, managing to steal a seat in the back of the room. She was cursing left right and center at the damn pigs and their sly tactics, completely absorbed in the tiny screen when a throat clear distracted her and she let a bird fly completely off screen.

“Are you here for philosophy?” The man asked, he was starting to bald but it didn’t look bad on him.
“Yea. I take it you’re Coulson?” Skye said, hitting the restart button for this level for the sixth time.

“I am.” He responded, sitting behind the podium at the front of the room. “You know, normally people get to class early for the front row, yet you are sitting in the very back cursing at your smart phone.”

“Yea well.” Skye said with a shrug.

“Why don’t you come take a seat in the front?” He posed it as a question, but Skye wasn’t so dense as to miss that it was a command.

With a sigh she picked up her purse and bag, sliding out of her seat only to fling herself into one in the front row. “Happy?” She asked snidely. Her mood was only getting worse as she realized after this she had to go to piano.

“That remains to be seen.” He answered, turning his attention from her and to his lecture notes for the first day.

By the end of the class Skye was in a slightly better mood. Coulson had a dry humor that suited the subject and did his best to get the class involved, up to and including just letting them shout at each other over what the meaning of life, that was until Skye’s nerdy side from hanging out with Jemma and Leo reared its ugly head and she had shouted, “The meaning of life is 42!” and he told everyone else they could go home now, she had won class for the day. As she was gathering her things, he walked by, putting his hand on her arm and leaning in so no one else could hear.

“I believe I can say now that, yes, I am indeed happy to have you in my class, Miss Avery.”

The walk across campus to the music building did nothing to tame the bile rising in her throat though. Every step was taking her closer and closer to the class that would keep her from graduating, and a semester of being told she was awful at playing the piano. Maybe this woman would take pity on her, and herself, and just give Skye the ‘C’ she needed to pass and graduate. Skye sighed, pushing the double doors open to the piano room knowing there was no way in hell she would be that lucky. Not with this being a selected topics class, it was one thing for the professors for the four piano classes everyone had to take to give her the ‘C’ just to get rid of her and her awful playing, but for a selected topics professor to do it would be next to unheard of.

“Good afternoon. There is a syllabus on each of the music stands for you to take. Today you are going to take a music reading test to ensure that no freshmen that have no business being in my class are here. On your way out sign up for a slot tomorrow for your performance for me.”

Skye watched the slight Asian woman, and knew her fate was sealed. She would pass the reading test with no problem, but tomorrow when she sat down to play, that would be it.

Melinda moved around the room, passing the tests out, making eye contact with each student, and when she got to Skye she felt the familiar joy of seeing the fear in a student. This one, she thought, this one will break.

“You have fifteen minutes. If you can’t finish the test in fifteen minutes, leave. Do not waste my time and show up to play for me tomorrow. Drop the class.” Melinda announced, taking her seat on a stool at the front of the room. “Start.”

Skye breezed through the test, it really was there only to weed out the freshmen that had no business being in the class but through some clerical error managed anyway. When she handed it over, it took all her will not to shake like a leaf, and when she bent down to sign up for a time slot for the
following day, she had to take three deep breaths to keep her hand from shaking enough that she could actually scrawl her name.

“I’ll see you tomorrow, Avery, at 1:30. Do not be late.” Melinda said looking at the paper.

“Y- Yes ma’am.” Skye stuttered out, before all but fleeing the woman and class.

By the time she got to the gym for the self-defense class with Darcy she had managed to calm herself down only to work herself into a rage over her reaction. Maybe it was a good thing she was taking a class to teach her to beat the fuck out of people right after that piano class.

When Skye slid into place next to Darcy, the rest of the girls in the class shifted slightly away from them as if the rage was literally pouring off of her and they didn’t want it to touch them.

“Jeeze, what do you have before this class?” Darcy asked, looking at her friend with concern.

“Piano.” Skye all but growls.

“You going to be a big green rage monster every time you come to this class?” Darcy asked shifting from side to side while they waited for their professor to show up.

“I am not a ‘big green rage monster’.” Skye spits out.

“Whatever you say homie.”

Thankfully a very muscled, tall, brunet walked in, saving the two girls from what was going to inevitably be a fight about Skye’s attitude.

“Welcome to self-defense!” Her voice was demanding as she stood in the middle of the circle the class had made. “There is no syllabus for my class. All I care about is making sure everyone last one of you can take down an obnoxious football player getting handsy at some frat party. Alright, in the future bring gym clothes, sports bras and yoga pants are preferred so you don’t limit your range of motion and don’t mess up your legs when you go sliding across canvas. For now go grab a pair of wraps for your hands.”

Once everyone had their hands wrapped, she pointed them to the punching bags.

“Go work your anger out girls! If you’re not angry get angry! There is not a single boy in this class, what does that say about society? I’ll come around and help fix your stance.”

Darcy and Skye took the last two punching bags in the row and listened as Sif walked around correcting everyone else, while slowly working over their own bags.

“You’re not angry, you are mildly annoyed.” Sif said to the girl next to Skye.

The girl huffed and stood back from the punching bag.

“What’s your name?”

“Rosaline.” The girl answers.

“What makes you angry Rosaline?” Sif asks, moving to stand behind the punching bag but still being able to look at the red headed girl in the eye.

The girl pulled her lip into her mouth before shrugging.
“No, come on. Be honest, what makes you angry? I don’t care what it is. Do you have a crush on a
professor that you can’t do anything about because of stupid red tape because you’re an undergrad?
Are you tired of being told you will be poor because you want to major in English?”

Without warning Rosaline took two steps closer to the punching back and threw all of her weight
into the punch.

“So what makes you angry?” Sif asked, moving away from the punching bag.

“Right now? You.” Rosaline growled before throwing more punches at the bag.

“Brilliant!” Sif said laughing as she clapped the girl on the back. “Make sure to keep your feet spread
so your center of gravity is lower.” Turning her attention to Skye, Sif watched with approval. “Well
you certainly have the rage. But you’re going to hurt yourself with the way you are punching. Take
your thumb out from under your fingers, you’re going to break it if you haven’t already.”

Skye quickly made the adjustment and went back to laying into the punching bag with all her force.

“I’m quite curious as to what has such a mighty rage within you.” Sif started but Darcy quick got her
attention, shaking her head.

Sif shifted over to her, watching her form for a moment.

“How ‘m I doin’?” Darcy asked, panting a bit from the workout.

“Less rage than that one, but more control. Good.” Sif said, nodding in approval. “What is her
problem anyway?” She asked, whispering.

“We don’t talk about Skye and piano. Or at least that’s what Jemma told me.” Darcy said, panting as
she hunched over, her hands on her knees.

“I can hear you. And I’m going to kill you.” Skye threatened.

“You might wish to run.” Sif said, half joking.

“I room with her, I’m so dead. If I don’t come to class you’ll send a search party right?”

“Absolutely, little one.”
At 1 the following day, Skye was hunched up on her bed, over her tablet while she flipped through digital scans of sheet music to play. Nothing seemed to be perfect, or right enough to lay her soul out for this woman to judge her. But she knew in reality it wouldn’t matter, no matter how perfect it was she would mess it up. Just like always. She could read music perfectly, but the minute she has to sit down and be conscious of both the treble and bass clefs, and sing, she couldn’t do anything.

“You alright?” Darcy asked as she opened the door, Jemma and Leo trailing in behind her.

“Perfect. I have half an hour to suddenly become a master pianist so I don’t fail the last fucking course I need to graduate. Why wouldn’t I be perfect?”

Jemma flinched before coming to sit next to her on the bed and taking the tablet. “Why don’t you play Jar of Hearts? I think it’s one of your better ones.”

“It’s still not amazing.” Skye murmured.

Jemma leaned into her, wrapping her arm around Skye. “I know, but it’s one of your best. You have to go in with a good attitude about this. Tell yourself you are going to rock this. You are going to make this woman want to do naughty things to you because you’re so amazing.”

“Jem.” Leo groaned.

But Skye was smiling. “Yea! You’re right.”

“Drinks tonight after you get through this? We can talk about our classes, get sloshed out of our mind, within reason.” Jemma suggested.

Skye nodded, pressing a kiss to Jemma’s cheek. “Always brilliant, Jem. I’ll see you guys after.” Skye said before taking her tablet back and sliding it into her bag and leaving them.

And to Skye’s credit, she really does believe Jemma’s pep talk for her whole walk across campus to the music building. And she might have even had some faith in it until she quietly pushed open the double doors to the piano room.

But then she saw Melinda May in all her glory, sitting in front of a piano, swaying slightly as she played Human by Christina Perri, belting the lyrics like she owned them. Skye leaned on the wall, letting the lyrics wash over her.

I'm only human
I'm only human
Just a little human

I can take so much
Till I've had enough

Cause I'm only human
And I bleed when I fall down
I'm only human
And I crash and I break down
your words in my head, knives in my heart
You build me up and then I fall apart
Her final notes played, Melinda turned on her seat. “You’re early, Miss Avery.”

Skye nodded. “You play… you’re amazing.”

Melinda permitted a self-satisfied smirk to breach her normally stony expression. “We’ll see if I can hold the same opinion of you.”

“Doubt it.” Skye muttered.

“What was that?” Melinda asked, knowing full well what Skye had said.

“Nothing ma’am.” Skye tried to cover, pulling the tablet out as she walked over to the piano. Taking a deep breath, she slid the tablet onto the music stand and waited for Melinda to move off of the piano bench.

With a raised eye brow she looked at Skye. “Well, what are you waiting for?”

“I – uhm- right.” Skye stuttered, sliding onto the bench, effectively pushing her body tight with Melinda’s.

She didn’t see the smirk Melinda had before shifting slightly to give Skye more room to get comfortable to play.

Skye was proud of herself, she managed to get all the way through the first line, pouring as much emotion into the lyrics as possible before she started messing up. Terribly.

“Stop. Stop.” Melinda commanded. “Start over.”

Skye took a deep breath, forcing the tears to stay back, and started again, making is a few bars further this time before messing up.

Melinda sighed and rubbed the bridge of her nose. “My office hours, get familiar with them. We need to do something about this. You’re not stupid, you can read the music. So what the hell is the problem?” Melinda said, ending the question by dropping the test from the following day in front of the tablet, the score of 100% circled on the top.

“I don’t know.” Skye said, burying her face in her hands. “I signed up for woodwinds god damn it!”

“I’ll see you tomorrow at my office hours, Miss Avery.” Melinda dismissed her. No one would ever say Melinda was any part warm and cuddly, and dealing with a student that was less than thirty seconds away from having an emotional break down two days into the semester was not on her list of things to do.

Melinda watched the girl stuff the test and tablet into her bag and drag herself out of the room, shaking her head. A discussion needed to be had with who ever had taught the poor girl her mandatory piano classes’ freshman and sophomore year, because the ability was there, it just hadn’t been nurtured.

Three hours later, Melinda had chopped her class of twenty down to eight. She had no interest in teach those who felt they already knew everything there was to know, especially when they came in playing simple pieces, but the remaining eight, those she could work with. Even Skye Avery, even
though she had a gut feeling that trying to fix that girl was only going to end in disaster.

Locking the door, she slipped out her phone, finding the text thread between herself and Phil. *Bar. You, me, and whoever else you want to drag along.*

A second later her phone chirped. *Bad day?*

Melinda snorted, pulling her hair back into a pony tail one handed, something that still flabbergasted Phil when he watched her do it. *You could say that.*

When Melinda walked through the doors of the bar less than fifteen minutes later she cracked a small smile at her group of friends. Pepper and Tony sitting near each other, the red head talking loudly at Tony, probably about the cost sustainability of some idea he had, but Melinda knew it was almost exclusively for her own health now. Bruce was on Tony’s other side, but hunched up with a book in front of his face. Sif looked out of place even as she tried to chat easily with Maria, probably about some sport that Sif would fake understanding of until Maria got up to go to the bathroom. Then she would frantically ask someone to explain whatever the sport of the night was. Natasha was whispering something in Phil’s ear, which was never good, but Clint seemed to be missing for now so things wouldn’t get to bad, or at least that’s what Melinda hoped as she took her drink from the bartender and made her way to her seat by Phil.

“Phil was just telling me our little excursion was for you tonight.” Natasha said, taking the chair on the other side of Melinda so she was sandwiched between her two best friends.

“Performance evaluations were… Awful.” Melinda said with a sigh.

“How many did you cut?” Phil asked.

“Twelve of the twenty. It really should be thirteen.”

“Then why isn’t it?” Natasha asked, her head cocked slightly to the side.

“I took pity on her.” Melinda answered, trying to keep her own disgust at herself out of her voice.

Natasha’s eyes widened, but she stood up on here chair and Melinda watched her in horror.

“Attention everyone, attention. Melinda May does have a heart, the ice queen of piano has a heart!”

“Get off that chair before I pull you off it!” Melinda threatened.

Natasha rolled her eyes before sitting back down of the chair.

“Always knew you had a heart in there somewhere, Mel.” Pepper said from across the table with a smile before going back to lecturing Tony about sustainability and profit cost ratios.

“Seriously though, why did you take pity on her?” Phil asked only to be cut off by Sif slamming her mug of beer on the table.

“Maria, you have to be kidding me. The Browns? The Cleveland Browns? They are awful.”

“I have a thing for underdogs!” Maria tried to argue back.

“There is underdog and then there is the Cleveland Browns!”

Melinda shook her head, watching Bruce discretely mop up the beer that had come flying out of the mug.
“I don’t know. Avery, man she’s smart. She got a 100% of the music reading test, and she can sing, but it’s like you put everything together and she implodes.” Melinda answered, rubbing the bridge of her nose yet again.

Sif’s attention switched over from Maria to Melinda at the mention of Skye’s last name. “You say Avery, as in Skye Avery?”

Melinda nodded slowly.

“That girl has some rage at you, Melinda. She’s in my self-defense class, I think right after you. I have never seen someone go at a punching bag so hard for so long, except maybe Steve and myself.” Sif said, raising her glass to clink it with Melinda’s. “Good luck.”

Melinda sighed and threw her head back to stare at the ceiling. “Such a fucking mistake.”

“She’s in my philosophy class too. She seemed fun, was the only one to pull the meaning of life is 42 on the first day of class.” Phil offered. “Maybe everything will be fine?”

“Fat chance.” Melinda groaned, before Natasha’s fingers pulled the hair tie out of her hair and ran her fingers through the black hair.

“It will be fine, Mel. If your gut says to give her another chance, you are rarely wrong.” Natasha reasoned.

When Skye, Jemma, Darcy, and Leo walked into the bar an hour later, Melinda was curled up next to Natasha, giggling with a light buzz.

Leo caught sight of the table of professors before any of the others. “Blood hell, Stark and Potts are here.”

Jemma looked where he was looking. “Banner as well.”

Darcy followed suit. “Hill and Sif…Fuck and Romanov”

Skye had just gotten her crying under control and now she was going to have to deal with being in the same bar as the woman responsible for it. Not that it was really Melinda’s fault that she couldn’t play, but it was a hell of a lot easier to be upset at the woman than to deal with her own failings.

“May and Coulson.” Skye whispered after a moment.

“Don’t they know there is like an unspoken rule about only being friends with people in your own department?” Darcy said, wrapping her arm around Skye’s waist and pulling her to the only free table in the bar, which left them in plain sight of their professors.

“So much for getting sloshed.” Jemma said with a sigh, sitting down and passing a bright pink drink to Darcy and Skye.

“Which one is Romanov? If you get to ogle her all semester I should at least get to tonight before I go to my death tomorrow with May.” Skye asked, elbowing Darcy.

“The bright red, red head. May is the Asian right?”

Skye nodded. “They look pretty comfy with each other. Think they’re fucking?”

Darcy and Jemma both blinked like deer in the head lights at Skye while Leo face palmed hard.
“Can you all stop with your lesbian fantasies?” Leo growled.

“Like you weren’t thinking it anyway.” Skye says with an eye roll.

“Fine.” Leo huffed before getting up to get another glass scotch.

As he sat back down, the four students watched as the football coach, Grant Ward, walked up to Melinda and Natasha, and even through the chatter in the bar could hear the exchange.

“Is this why you keep shooting me down, Mindy?” He asked, and it was clear he was running on a few glasses of liquid courage.

Melinda sat up and away from Natasha as she stared Grant down. “Well on the list of reasons I won’t date you, your instance on calling me Mindy is pretty high up there.”

“Come on, Mindy. Just a drink with me.” Skye and Darcy tensed, Darcy digging around in her purse for her Taser. Melinda may have not been their favorite person, but weren’t going to let the drunk football coach hearse her either, the whole female solidarity thing.

“I do not ever want to have a drink or anything else with you. How many ways do I have to say that until it makes it through your thick skull? Or will you only take my no seriously if I am fucking Natasha? What about Phil? Maybe me and Sif have something going on?” Melinda went on, her voice getting louder and louder and the people at the closest tables had quieted completely to watch.

Grant took a step closer, getting in Melinda’s personal space now. “I’m a good guy, Mindy.”

“Jesus Christ, how many times do I have to tell you not to call me Mindy?” Melinda yelled.

Before Grant could respond Darcy was up and so was Sif. Sif had grabbed his arm and twisted it painfully behind his back, slamming his face on the table between Phil and Melinda.

“I believe the woman said no, you uncultured swine.” Sif hissed as the whole bar quieted to stare at the woman taking out the football coach.

“You want my Taser?” Darcy asks hold it out to Sif.

“No, that’s quite alright. Thank you.” Sif said with a smile as she unceremoniously lifted Grant from the table and half carried, half pushed him out of the bar.

When Darcy sat back down she turned to Skye and sagged in her seat. “You have fun in office hours, she seems snarky.”

Skye groaned and put her face on the table.
Ain't It Fun

Chapter Notes

Italics are signed, anything that is done letter by letter is being finger spelt, or they are text message conversation.

Clint was true to his word thankfully, because Skye wasn’t sure if she would have been able to pay attention to the lecture and learn new signs after spending most of the night on her knees getting sick with nerves.

*No sleeping in class.* He signed to her before she left, a smile playing across his features.


*You have time to talk? You want to talk?* Clint asks, not wanting to send a student away who was obviously having such a rough time early in the semester.

*No time. P-H-I-L-O-S-O-P-H-Y.* She signed back, a sad smile on her face.

*You need a friend, e-mail me. We’ll go get coffee.* Clint offers before waving good bye to her.

*O-k, thanks.* Skye signed quickly before getting as close to running as she could without actually doing so, trying to make it to the philosophy class.

“Miss Avery. How nice of you to join us.” Phil said as she slid into the room, only stopping because she grabbed the doorframe. He removed his suit jacket from where it was laying on the desk she had sat at on Monday. “Have a seat.”

Skye quickly tried to weave her way to the front of the room, but everyone was staring at her like the naughty kid, making it that much harder for her to move. By the time she sat down, her face was a bright red, but Phil just slid back into his lecture, occasionally side eyeing her.

He finished the lecture early and dismissed everyone but Skye. Leaning against the podium he stared her down. “I won’t keep you here long enough to be late for Melinda’s class. Mostly because I am more scared of her than just about anyone else. Maybe Natasha…” Phil said after a moment.

“So I’m free to go.” Skye said, pulling her bag and purse up on her shoulder and getting ready to flee.

“No.” He deadpanned.

Sighing, Skye fell back into her seat. “What do you want?”

“Why were you late to my class?”

“Professor Barton stopped me after my last class.”

Phil chuckled. “Clint. That man never seems to remember there are classes other than his own. Why did he keep you?”
“I was falling asleep in class.” Skye admitted. If Coulson was on a first name basis with Barton, he must be part of their little group, and Skye was not going to get caught in a lie. She was pretty certain that would have been much worse.

“Why?”

“You have to promise never to speak a word to her about this. I know you, her, and Romanov are close, but you have to promise me. It’s bad enough I left her fucking performance evaluation in tears yesterday.” Skye looked at him, trying to load an unspoken threat with her words but failing.

“I swear.” Phil said with a nod. “Watch the language though, you are still my student for five more minutes.”

“I see what you did there.” Skye said with a smirk.

“What I did where?”

“Never mind. I was up most of the night getting sick, I am so nervous. Professor May, she’s amazing and I can’t even play a basic song.” Skye admitted, picking at her pants, trying to remove invisible imperfections.

Phil looked at her with an eye brow raised.

“Look, I didn’t mean to take her class. I suck at piano. Like suck with a capital ‘s’. And now she wants me to go to office hours, and I’m just nervous. Okay? Happy?”

“Well not particularly, but thank you for explaining. Don’t be late again.” He answered, dismissing her.

“Wait, what?”

“Go, before Melinda tans my hide for making you late. Her bark is worse than her bite, Skye. Well mostly. She wouldn’t be spending office hours with you if she didn’t think there was hope for you.” Phil said with the smallest quirk of his lips, and Skye figured that would probably be as close as she ever got to seeing the man smile.

“Thanks, Sir.” Skye said with a tight smile. “You’re probably right.”

Two hours later Melinda was staring at her phone impatiently, waiting for Phil to respond to her text.

What do you mean where is Miss Avery? Finally came in, confirming her gut feeling that the girl was not tied up in some stupid meeting with Phil.

I mean the girl that I should have removed from my fucking class didn’t show up today. Melinda texted back.

Melinda, I swear she’s not with me. I sent her your way right after I found out why she was late to my class.

Melinda was scowling at her phone when it vibrated again.

Go check the bathroom nearest your class.

Melinda shoved the phone in her back pocket before searching out the nearest bathroom. Pushing the door open, the familiar sounds of someone getting sick met her.
“Miss Avery?” Melinda called out.

“Leave me alone.” Skye responded, but all the fight was long gone in her voice.

“Have too much to drink last night?”

“No, go away.”

“Are you at least going to show up to my office hours? Or was taking a chance on you a completely idiotic choice?”

“I don’t know yet.”

“Well I’m starting to get an idea, show up or withdraw from my class and I’ll see you next semester.” Melinda barked, before turning on her heel.

_Taking a chance on her was a mistake Phil. A big one._ Melinda typed back to him, as she stalked back to the piano room.

Skye slumped against the wall of the stall, her arms wrapped around her stomach. This was ridiculous, she had made it all the way to right outside of the piano room doors before her nerves took hold again and she had been in the stall ever since.

Shakily, pushing herself to her feet, she made the decision to skip self-defense; at least then she could go sleep for a few hours before she had to decide if she was going to May’s office hours or not.

Making her way back to her dorm room had been more challenging than expected, she left like a strong wind would have knocked her over as it was, and light snow flurries started when she was about half way to the dorm. By the time she reached the room, she was exhausted, and just barely managed to kick her shoes off before falling on her bed and passing out.

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“Skye.”

“10 more minutes.” Skye groaned turning over and trying to bury her face in her pillow.

“Wakey wakey.” Jemma sing-songed before Skye felt the bed dip. “Get up sleepy head.”

Groaning Skye flipped over and barely opened her eyes to see Jemma sitting on the edge of the bed, holding what looked suspiciously like a cup of coffee.

“Is that coffee for me?”

“If you sit up, it can be.” Jemma responded with a smile.

“Fine, fine.” Skye answered, pushing herself up to sit on the bed, taking the warm cup of coffee gladly. “Time?”

“Half an hour before you are supposed to go to office hours.” Jemma said pointing to the massive schedule hanging on the back of the door. Skye didn’t remember putting it up, but then it was probably a FitzSimmons brain child.

“I don’t think I’m going.” Skye admitted, letting her fingers dance over the warm mug.

Jemma’s face scrunched up before she wiggled around on the bed to be pressed into Skye’s side,
both of them leaning on the pile of pillows. “Well you have already skipped one obligation for the
day. I don’t think this should become a habit.”

“Technically I skipped two.” Skye muttered, looking down into her coffee like it held all the
answers.

“What else did you skip beside self-defense?” Jemma asked, disappointment clear in her voice,
although Skye sometimes wondered if that was just a British thing and she perpetually sounded
disappointed. Like Hermione was always disappointed with Ron and Harry.

“Piano.”

“Skye…” Jemma dragged her name out until Skye was fidgeting like a scolded child.

“I tried to go. Really, I did.” Skye tried to argue back.

“What happened?”

“Coulson gave me this great pep talk about how May obviously saw something in me if she was
going to spend office hours with me. And I set off like I was going to be fine, and then I got to the
room and I heard her correcting someone while they were playing some classical piece. My nerves
ate me alive, Jem. I spent the whole two hours puking my guts out in the bathroom, and then she
came and found me, and assumed I was just hung over from drinking last night, which how is she
not? She drank way more than I did and the way she was pawing all over Romanov and Coulson
when we left I was sure she was canceling class and office hours today. And she told me if I didn’t
show up to office hours to withdraw from the class, which maybe isn’t a terrible idea.” Skye
explained before pressing the cup to her lips and take a long drink of the black coffee.

“He’s right you know.” Jemma offered. “And Leo has forbid me from speaking of your professor’s
behavior last night. Something about how if I am not going to put out for him then discussing May
and Romanov in any way that might even be remotely sexual, being a form of psychological
torture.” She said with a giggle at the end.

“Are you ever going to put the poor boy out of his misery?” Skye asked.

“Well that depends doesn’t it, Miss Avery.” Jemma answered a small smirk playing across her lips. It
was an old game now, Jemma playing bisexual chicken with Skye.

“You love him, Jem. He’s your other half, put the poor boy out of his misery.”

Jemma nodded. “I know, I’m nervous to change our relationship though.”

Skye pulled her into a one armed hug. “You’ll be fine.”

“Thank you, Skye. Don’t think I have forgotten that you have twenty minutes until you are supposed
to be in May’s office.” She said sternly.

“I don’t want to go.” Skye said with a sigh. “What’s one more semester right?”

“No.” Jemma declared standing up and holding her hand out. “Come on, put a jacket on, we are
going. If I have to walk you to her office myself and stay there until she comes out and tells me you
are permitted to leave.”

“Fine, fine. But you have to stay now.” Skye said, putting her now empty mug on the bed side table.
Quickly she found her shoes and jacket in a pile at the end of her bed and in under five minutes she
was ready to leave.

“You’ll be fine.” Jemma promised, pulling her awful grey hoodie on that had in rainbow letters ‘Baby, are you a DNA helicase because I would let you unzip my genes?’ on it.

“I can’t even tell you how much I want to burn that hoodie, Jem.”

Jemma rolled her eyes before linking her arm with Skye’s.
Chapter Summary

Skye’s first office hours with Melinda.

All the music offices were in the basement so that they could be sound proofed thoroughly, and every time Skye had to walk down the stairs into the basement for anything she had the distinct impression that they were trying to intimidate their students to death.

“I hate you. I hope you know that.” Skye said before opening the door for the labyrinth that was the music offices. At one point she had managed to lose a whole day just wandering around the basement trying to find every office, and when she finally gave up she was still missing number 120 through 129. Finding 101 to 119 had been no problem, and then finding 130 to 160 had been cake, but she was convinced the other offices actually existed in another dimension.

“You do not. Where is her office?” Jemma responded.

Skye quickly pulled out the folded up syllabus. “127… Figures, one of the offices in the wormhole.”

“We could ask someone?” Jemma suggested.

Looking around Skye found an open office door, thankfully occupied by the woman who had taught her piano the first go, Scarlett Shane. Knocking lightly on the door, Skye tried to smile.

“Office hours ended twenty-five minutes ago.” The woman answered without looking up from what was bound to be the first homework assignment.

“I’m really sorry to bother you Mrs. Shane, but I need to find Professor May’s office.”

Scarlett looked up, only to smile upon seeing an old student. “Skye, honey! How have you been? Did you say May? Why would you punish yourself that way? I remember your playing and, honey, why?”

Jemma couldn’t believe this woman. Even with her sitting at a desk in front of her, Jemma simply could not believe this woman fucking existed and so carelessly said things to students. “Excuse you. Can you just point us to her office, ma’am?” Jemma’s voice was dripping with irritation.

“Right, right. Keep going down this hall, take a right, the first hallway on the left, go down that, second on your right after that and her office is down there.”

Jemma smiled tightly at the woman before grabbing Skye’s hand and following the directions before Mrs. Shane could say something else to make Skye feel even worse.

“Who in the bloody seven hells designed this floor? This is bloody bonkers!” Jemma muttered as they moved through the floor.

Checking her watch as they came to a halt in front of the closed door, Jemma breathed a sigh of relief, two minutes to spare.
“I feel like I am going to be sick.” Skye murmured, swallowing hard.

“Hey, hey, it’s fine. We got here a few minutes early, it’s fine. I’ll be out here reading the fascinating world of religious myths, you’ll be fine.” Jemma said, pulling Skye into a tight hug, rubbing her back in small circles. “Shh, don’t go in there upset.”

Skye nodded slowly, and had just pulled out of Jemma’s hug when Melinda opened the door, surprise quickly playing over her features before the stone mask dropped back into place. Turning quickly she walked back into the office. Skye squeezed Jemma’s hand before following into the office.

Skye really wasn’t sure what she expected May’s office to look like, but looking around she decided it felt right. Except for the plethora of cooking books on her desk. The only items on the walls were programs from when she had been playing concerts or accompanying people. The piano tucked on the wall next to her desk was painted a dark cherry, the only hint of color in the black and white room.

“Sit.” Melinda said, sitting back behind her desk, all but melting into her chair.

Skye looked around quickly and realized the only other place to sit was the piano bench. Shrugging her jacket off and bag, she sat down.

“Who is she? Another music major?” Melinda asked, tilting her head to the door that was closed.

“No ma’am, bio-chemical medicine. She’s one of my best friends.” Skye answered.

Melinda hummed lightly before tapping a dull finger nail on the desk. “I want you to sing through first.”

“What?” Skye asked turning to face her.

“I said sing through first.” Melinda repeated.

“What am I singing exactly?” Skye asked after a second.

“You didn’t bring the music from your performance evaluation?” Melinda asked, an eyebrow arched. Without waiting for an answer Melinda slid open a drawer and started pulling through files. “Jar of Hearts right? Here. Sing.” Melinda said, handing over a paper copy of the music.

With a sigh, Skye got comfortable and ran through the lyrics with ease.

Melinda hummed again. “Now play the bass cleft lines.”

Skye rolled her shoulders before putting both hands on the keys. Her left hand danced across the keys easily, until her right hand tried to join in, striking notes out of sync.

“Stop. Stop.” Melinda said holding her hand up. “Put your right hand behind your back and try again.”

Skye sighed, and did as she asked and attempted again. Without realizing it, her right hand had come back to rest on the ivory keys and she was attempting to playing both the bass and treble clefts at once again.

“Stop.” Melinda commanded, standing, the sharp sound of her heeled boots startling Skye a bit. Melinda stood behind her. “Hand behind your back.”
Skye complied, and this time slender fingers wrapped around her wrist.

“Play.” Melinda commanded.

Skye nodded and started to play, and this time it went effortlessly. Notes flowing from one to the other, her mind falling into the music like it would when she was playing the guitar or almost any other instrument.

“Switch.” Melinda commanded, letting go of her grip on Skye’s wrist.

Skye quickly switched hands, and felt the fingers wrap around her left wrist. And once again Skye fell into the music, no mess ups. When she finished she wiggled her fingers slightly against her back and Melinda let go.

“Who was your teacher for piano 1 through 4?” She asked after a moment.

“Scarlett Shane.” Skye said twisting on the seat to look at Melinda.

Melinda hummed, before nodding. “Your problem, it’s all up here.” Melinda said, tapping her own temple with her index finger. “You can play and play wonderfully, so the issue is figuring out what is going on in your brain and fixing it.”

Skye nodded slowly.

“Give me until next week. I’ll have figured out something to try.” Melinda said, sitting back down in her chair, and picking up a green pen to circle the following Wednesday on her calendar. “Don’t miss another class because you are hung over either. I feel like Miss Bio-Chemical Medicine out there probably already lectured you about the disadvantages of drinking in excess, so I will at least spare you that.”

Skye looked at Melinda like she had grown another head. Here was the woman who had had at least enough to drink to get handsy with her friends (Or were they in some complex poly relationship? Skye permitted herself to wonder for more time than she wanted to admit), and she was lecturing Skye on her drinking habits.

“Go. I’ll see you Monday in class.” Melinda dismissed, never looking up from where she was flipping through the department schedules.

Melinda waited until she heard the door click shut behind Skye before she looked up from the papers in front of her and grabbed the cookbook she had been flipping through before. That night was looking like a better-than-sex cake type of night.

You up for some sex cake and wine after I go chew Shane out... for the hundredth time. Melinda quickly texted Phil.

Since when are you offering me sex again? Was the first response, but was quickly followed by, Shit never mind, yea sure, I’m down for cake and wine.

Melinda chuckled, sliding the cookbook into her bag and digging out her keys. Satisfied that she gave Skye and her friend enough of a head start she wouldn’t run into them she slipped out of the office and locked the door.

You can invite Natasha and Clint if you want.*wink* Melinda shot back, weaving her way through the maze to find Scarlett’s office.
Proposing 4somes now, tsk tsk. Tasha is with Pepper tonight, but Clints in. Came in right before she got to Scarlett’s office.

“Scarlett.” Melinda said, sliding into the other woman’s office without actually being invited.

“Melinda.” The woman said, looking up from the homework she was still grading.

Melinda had always wondered how the woman managed to assign and grade homework three days into the semester but that was another conversation.

“Skye Avery.” Melinda said, challenge clear in her voice. She wanted an explanation and she wanted it yesterday.

“Lovely girl. I had to point her to your office actually. Feisty little British girl with her.” Scarlett said.

“Let’s pretend for a minute you really are that stupid and have no idea what I am talking about. Avery, you passed her, for all four piano courses, but the girl can’t play a full song. Why?” Melinda said.

“She’s smart, she can play just about every other instrument. What was the point in trying to fix whatever psychological block she had on one when she can play all the others? It’s just piano.” Scarlett tried to argue.

Melinda tilted her head back and counted, slowly to twenty, before looking at Scarlett again. “I should have your ass. I should be taking Skye’s performance recording to Fury and have your ass fired. In fact…”

Melinda turned around without giving Scarlett enough time to react, digging in her bag one handed for the recording she had made of Skye’s performance. She was halfway to the administrative building when Scarlett came running up behind her.

“Come on, Melinda. Let this slide. It’s one student.” Scarlett begged, snow and wind whipping her brown hair around her face.

“It’s not just one student, Scarlett. This is a link in a chain of many, I’m done. I am going to take the time and figure out how to make her into the amazing player she can be. Despite two years of you telling her she couldn’t be amazing or worth your time.” Melinda bit back, before stalking the rest of the way to Fury’s office.

He looked up when she entered, some poor secretary trying to tell her that she couldn’t go in there without an appointment, but Fury was not a stupid man, and even with only one eye he could see the Asian woman who had just stormed his office was in no mood.

“Its fine, Chloe.” Fury said, turning his attention to the woman in front of him. “Who are you and what can I do for you?”

Melinda didn’t waste any time, dropping the CD on his desk. “That, is a recording of a student I have in my selected topics class for piano, which means she passed piano one through four. She should have never passed. The woman who was her professor should be here in, 5…4…3…2…1…”

And right on cue, Scarlett burst into the office. “Please, Sir, I swear, it was a one-time thing, it will never happen again.”

Fury heaved a great sigh. “You fucking music people.”
Melinda looked at him with a raised eyebrow.

“Look, I wouldn’t know my ass from a tuba. Is what she’s saying true? You passed someone, not once, but four times, who shouldn’t have passed?” Fury asked, his deadly one eyed stare on Scarlett now.

“I, well…” She was ringing her hands.

“I can’t just fire you, fucking unions. This is really a case where I want to look at them and tell them that I have heard their decision but given that is a dumb ass decision, I have chosen to ignore it, but I can’t. You are lucky they are going to cover your ass lady. Buck up and be a god damn teacher.” Fury said, looking at the CD Melinda had thrown on his desk. “How much hearing damage am I going to take if I listen to this?”

“I sat through the live performance and I still seem to have perfect hearing don’t I?” Melinda responded.

“Touché. This is going in an official file, and the board is going to review it at the end of the semester, lady. I suggest you get your shit together.”

Melinda smirked, before turning around on her heel. It wasn’t exactly what the outcome she wanted, but close enough.
Pumpin' Blood

Chapter Summary

The gym holds some startling revelations of Darcy and Skye.

Chapter Notes

It's been a particularly productive weekend so here, have two updates in as many days :D

“Want to go to the gym with me?” Darcy asked.

Skye looked up from the philosophy paper she was typing, disbelief clear on her face. “You want to go to the gym. On a Saturday. For fun. What happened to Darcy? You know the girl who enjoyed eating college student food, and watching a whole season of a show with me at once on Netflix.”

Darcy shrugged. “I just figured you would want the workout too, after missing self-defense this week.”

“I’m not buying it for a second, but fine. Get me away from this stupid paper for a while.” Skye said, snapping the keyboard off the tablet before standing and looking down at her wardrobe. Her top came off quickly and she pulled on a sports bra laying at the end of the bed, before pulling on a tank top. Yoga pants were typical Saturday fare, so she only had to pull her running shoes out of the closet before slipping into her warm boots.

Jackets pulled on and running shoes in their hands the two girls made the short hike from their dorm to the gym, thankful when they finally hit the warm air again. Skye was done with the snow and shitty winters. 110% done.

The only thing that Skye hated about their gym was that it was attached to the gymnastics training rooms as well, so it didn’t matter how good she felt walking in, she would always end up standing and watching through the glass windows as their gymnastics team practiced, and she would feel like shit.

Being with Darcy, she figured maybe they could walk by without incident, but a flash of bright red hair caught her attention.

“No way…” Skye said back tracking a bit to get a better look through the window.

Sure enough Natasha Romanov was jumping to grab ahold of the lower bar on a set of uneven bars, throwing her body into perfect motion.

“Darcy!” Skye called out, when she realized her friend hadn’t seen. Darcy turned around and quickly took a spot beside Skye, her mouth dropping open.

“Holy crap.” Darcy hissed watching Natasha gracefully shift from the lower bar to the higher one.
“Does she know she is a walking stereotype? Russian gymnast.” Skye said, shaking her head in mock disappointment.

“I don’t even care.” Darcy said, resisting the urge to clap when Natasha twisted in the air and landed on her feet perfectly.

Skye rolled her eyes but they both stood rooted to the spot watching Natasha go through various routines on the uneven bars before she shifted to the beam. They probably would have stayed there for the rest of the time Natasha was practicing, if slightly calloused hands didn’t come to rest on their shoulders, making them jump.

“Admiring Natasha little ones?” Sif said, standing just slightly behind them. “I don’t blame you. She is quite amazing to watch. She fights dirty though.”

“What?” Darcy asked, turning around.

“Natasha and I spar often, she fights dirty.” Sif said by way of explanation.

“Come on Darcy, I think I need to run a few miles.” Skye said, pulling her friend away as soon as she noticed Darcy staring at Sif with doe eyes. Doe eyes that normally lead to come to my room eyes, which lead to sex eyes, which lead to Skye not sleeping while Darcy found god between the legs of whoever was in her bed that night, which then led to ice cream and Darcy crying. Because without a doubt, Darcy would have actually liked the person, and they just wanted her for sex.

Sif scrunched her face up at Skye’s sudden change, but let them go before slipping into the room with Natasha.

“What was that?” Darcy asked trying to turn around to look back through the window.

“You were giving our professor doe eyes, Darcy!” Skye said, pulling the girl to the treadmills.

“So, she’s hot. And she could pin me down-“

“Shut up!” Skye cut her off.

“It’s not like she would ever be interested in me.” Darcy said as they stepped onto their respective treadmills.

“I wouldn’t be so sure. She doesn’t seem to care too much for that red tape that keeps professors and students out of each other’s beds.” Skye said, recalling the conversation she had heard the first day of class.

Darcy quickly jabbed the pause button on the treadmill before turning to look at Skye. “What?”

“When she was talking to the girl beside me in class, it just didn’t sound like she cared too much about those stupid unwritten but taken as law rules. And I mean, they are stupid.” Skye said, keeping her pace on the treadmill.

Darcy blinked hard before turning the treadmill back on and falling into her run again. They had both just cleared three miles when they saw Natasha slip under the ropes on the ring in front of the line of machines, Sif following her a second later.

Both girls continued to run as they watched the two circle each other, nothing particularly flashy or damaging until Natasha caught Sif’s punch in one hand, twisting slightly before using her as leverage and swinging her body around Sif’s, her thighs on either side of Sif’s head as she pulled them both
backwards onto the mat.

“OH MY GOD!” Darcy and Skye both screamed, pulling the emergency stop on the treadmills and just keeping themselves from running up to the ring.

By the time they get to the edge Sif is tapping the mat to concede victory to Natasha.

“You fight dirty!” Sif boomed, sitting up as Natasha rolled to the side to sit on her knees.

“Holy crap are you okay?” Darcy asked, wide eyed.

“She’s fine.” Natasha said, rolling her eyes at Darcy. “I wouldn’t hurt a friend.”

Sif smiled before laughing, a deep belly laugh, falling backwards. “Natasha could have killed me before you got over here if she really wanted to.”

“That’s not funny! That’s creepy!” Darcy argued, new found fear for her Russian professor blooming through her.

Sif stood up, pulling the ropes apart. “Come on, you and Skye could use some extra practice.”

Skye rolled her eyes, 100% sure that was true for herself, but Darcy had been adamant about learning how to defend herself when she was in high school and she was only taking the class for the easy A and semester hour filler.

Skye pulled herself into the ring behind Darcy and watched Sif pair off with her, which meant Natasha was going to be Skye’s partner.

“Please don’t kill me?” Skye almost begged before a roll of tape was thrown at her.

“Wrap your hands.” Natasha instructed, bouncing from foot to foot on the springy canvas.

Skye did as she was told, looking up to watch Darcy and Sif. If there was any doubt about Sif’s feelings on the don’t sleep with your students rule it was quickly laid to rest. Sif was carefully wrapping Darcy’s hands with bright blue tape, smiling at Darcy with everything she had.

“Is Darcy going to hurt her?” Natasha asked, standing beside Skye.

“I’m more concerned about her hurting Darcy.” Skye said, crossing her arms.

“Sif doesn’t do casual sex, but I know Darcy does.”

Skye almost snorted. “Darcy doesn’t. She likes to pretend she does, but I have split more gallons of ice cream in the past three years with her over people she took to bed thinking that they cared, when they just wanted a quick lay.”

“Good. Come on, I’ll teach you how to do what I just did to Sif.”

Two hours later, Skye had managed to pull Natasha to the ground once, after swinging her body around Natasha’s and her muscles were screaming at her as she dropped into the warm bath.

“Don’t use all the hot water!” Darcy yelled from the bedroom.

“It’s not like you got slammed into the mat over and over like I did. Sif was too busy trying to make sure you didn’t get bruised!” Skye argued back, before sighing as the warm water cocooned her.
“She was not!”

“Jesus Christ, ask her to dinner Monday and get it over with. You already have Natasha’s blessing, and I think that’s the only one that really matters.” Skye argued back.

“Fine.” Darcy said, standing in the doorway. “You think she’s actually interested in me?”

Skye nodded, closing her eyes. “And if you break her heart, I think I got the highlight reel of what Natasha will do to you for fun.”

Monday went without incident for Skye. Even piano went by without issue, the class being a theory lecture on composing music for piano. But self-defense was the class she was looking forward to, even with the bruises that would be visible with just a sports bra and yoga pants.

Standing in the room, stretching she realized just how bad the bruises must look when one of the girls in social work came up to her.

“Skye, you know if you ever need help…” The girl said, looking at her back and arms.

“Oh god, no. I went a few rounds this weekend with Sif and one of her friends. I’m fine.” Skye quickly responded, looking over her shoulder at the mirror and wincing seeing her back. Most of her back was one giant bruise from her falling over and over, and her upper arms had small bruises shaped like Natasha’s fingers. She really did look like a battered woman, and really Natasha had battered her a bit, but now she could do that awesome thigh thing. If she didn’t think about it too hard.

Darcy was fidgeting with nerves where she sat on the floor, attempting to stretch her muscles out, but she tensed up as soon as Sif came in.

“Skye! I think we should do a demonstration of what you learned this weekend since you missed last class.” Sif said with a smile, clapping Skye on the back lightly.

“That’s really – I mean, I don’t even know if…”

“Nonsense. Come on.” Sif said, gently pushing Skye to the center of the room. Taking a few steps back and bouncing from foot to foot, Sif smiled at Skye. “Same move combo.”

Skye watched for the moment she would be able to grab Sif’s clenched fist, and launched into the move sequence quickly, throwing her body up and around Sif’s until they were both laying on the floor. Skye panting and cringing from the force on her back, and Sif rewarding her with a deep chuckle.

“Excellent!” Sif said, rocking up to her feet and pulling Skye with her. “Alright, let’s break off and do some simple sparing today.”

And for the first time Skye was surrounded by people asking to be her partner. She quickly found Darcy and pulled her off to the side.

“You’re going to ask her right?” Skye asked as Darcy wrapped her hands.

Darcy nodded stiffly.

“Come on, I just took her down in front of the whole class and she acted like it was nothing. If she’s
not interested it’s not going to be a thing.” Skye insisted, bouncing on her feet before taking a quick shot at Darcy, only to end up in a head lock. “Ow ow ow! Okay! I give!”

They exchanged blows until Sif was calling time and telling them to hit the showers.

“Go on, while everyone is leaving.” Skye urged, pushing Darcy at Sif.

“I hate you.” Darcy muttered over her shoulder before realizing Sif was staring at her.

“Something wrong?” Sif asked, hands on her hips.

Darcy quickly licked her lips, trying not to stare at Sif’s abs being framed by the black bra and yoga pants. “I – well, uhm, I was wondering if you would like to have dinner with me?”

The smiled Darcy got in return was bright enough to erase any doubt Darcy may had felt.

“That would be lovely!” Sif responded.

Skye smiled and turned to go pull on a hoodie and go back to their room. At least if Darcy and Sif wanted to have sex, they wouldn’t be coming back to the dorm room.
Where my Demon's Hide

Chapter Summary

Melinda's demons and their backlash

By the time office hours on Wednesday rolled around, Skye was almost excited to go. She wanted to
see what May had come up with to help her mental block on playing and deep down she realized she
just wanted to please the other woman. She was taking a chance on Skye, and not many people had
done that for her.

“Do I need to drag you to office hours again?” Jemma said with a smirk from the doorway.

Skye looked up from the pile of clothes she was digging through to find a shirt that wasn’t drenched
in sweat and would cover her bruises without making her overly hot while she sat in the office.

“No, but if you want to be my buddy and walk with me in this shit-tastic weather I won’t bitch.”
Skye answers.

“It’s amazingly silent down there. I have some reading I could get done.” Jemma said with a smile.

Skye grinned, going back to digging through the clothing until she found a form hugging black shirt
with three quarter length sleeves. Changing shirts was a harder task than she anticipated though. The
bruises were an ugly purple color now, and every time they started to fade into a sickly green, she
would end up doing something to add new black and blue bruises to them. The most recent on the
list was teasing Darcy about her date Friday night while they were practicing leg sweeps. Stupid,
stupid, stupid, stupid, decision. Over and over Darcy had brought her to the ground, never giving Skye the
chance to return the favor.

“Ready.” Skye finally says, after fighting with the shirt and loosely linking her arm with Jemma’s.
It’s not a terribly long walk normally, but the ice starting to build up on the sidewalks makes it take
longer. “So you and Leo?” Skye asks.

“Me and Leo what?” Jemma responds, pretending to be blissfully ignorant.

“You goin’ to do somethin’ or what?”

“Probably not.” Jemma admits. “Haven’t you learned your lesson about nudging people to do things
in their relationship?” Jemma asked, patting Skye’s back a little harder than was probably necessary.

“Ow, ow. God okay. Fine. I’ll stop asking.” Skye said, holding her hands up before pulling open the
door to the music building.

“I don’t believe that for a second.” Jemma said walking past her, and down the stairs.

Jemma slid down the wall in front of May’s office, pulling her book out to cradle it in her lap.

“You know you really didn’t have to come.” Skye said leaning against the other wall.

“I know. But the girl I am rooming with never shuts up and if I stayed in the room Leo would have
come and bothered me. And then I would have been up all night reading.” Jemma said, opening the book.

“You can always come crash in my room if you need quiet.” Skye offered.

Jemma smiled looking up with her. “Thanks.”

Skye let the silence over take them while she waited. They had left early but she didn’t think they left that early. She was about to push off the wall and knock on the door when May opened the door, a book still in her hand, like she had been reading intently.

“Good book?” Skye asked.

“Hmm?” May answered, before a quick look of horror passed over her face and she quickly shut the book and shoved it behind her back.

“What are you reading, fifty shades or something?” Skye teased when she noticed the reaction.

“God no.” May said holding the door open for Skye to walk in. The book still tucked behind her back, making sure Skye couldn’t see the cover. It wasn’t Fifty Shades of Grey, but Thirteen Hours wasn’t much better, and the cover wouldn’t help matters. Melinda made a mental note to get the digital version in the future, after she returned the physical copy back to Pepper.

“I mean, no judgment. I think we have all at least picked it up.” Skye continued to ramble. “Actually, if you ignore the feeble attempts at plot, it’s not bad porn. Not great BDSM though…”

“Miss Avery…” Melinda trailed off.

“Right, right, my porn reading habits are not appropriate student-professor conversation.” Skye said with a smirk.

Melinda quickly stepped behind her desk, dropping the book face down on her desk before picking up a small round case with ear plugs in them.

“I think you might be overloading your brain, so I want to try having you play without hearing. No singing, just playing both lines.” Melinda explained handing the small case to Skye, eager to change the conversation from whatever porn they may respectively be reading.

“I need to hear to play though.” Skye tried to argue.

“No. You don’t. I’ll stand behind you and tap the time for you.” Melinda explained, Jar of Hearts still sitting on the music stand.

“You think this will work?” Skye asked, flipping open the case.

“I honestly have no idea, but it’s the best I could come up with for this week.” Melinda answered.

“I’ll give it a shot.” Skye relents, sliding the ear plugs into her ears and adjusting to the full silence. It was different from the silence in her ASL classes, where she could still hear the little ambient sounds, but now there was nothing. Briefly she thought this is what it was like for her professor for years before he got the cochlear, filing the feelings away for later.

Melinda put her hand on the middle of Skye’s back, a gentle pressure, and while it didn’t hurt out right, it wasn’t comfortable, but Skye managed to ignore the slight twinge on pain from the pressure on the bruises. Really it wasn’t any worse than putting her bra on a bit too tightly.
Then Melinda started tapping her fingers on Skye’s back to get her in the right tempo. Skye managed to keep the hiss of pain she wanted to let go in while she internalized the beat before starting to play. And she went through the whole song, and then started again, and again, and by the fourth play through every time Melinda’s fingers tapped on her back it felt like she was being stabbed with tiny needles. And she finally couldn’t take it anymore. She flinched, arching her body away from Melinda’s hand.

She saw Melinda’s mouth moving before she could hear her. Quickly pulling the ear plugs out, Skye was dropped into hearing with Melinda all but yelling.

“ – I do? Did I hit something?”

“May, it’s fine. I’m fine.” Skye tried to soothe the woman, but apparently that was the wrong answer.

“Fine? Fine? You flinched from my touch. That is not fine!”

Before Skye had a chance to really process what was going on, Melinda’s hands were fisted into the hem of her shirt and pulling it up, forcing Skye to face forward again.

“Oh my god, Skye.”

Skye closed her eyes and figured that if Melinda hadn’t had her fingers tangled in the fabric of the shirt, a hand would have come up to cover her mouth.

“Who did this to you, Skye?” Melinda asked, finally uncurling one hand from the fabric and holding her hand out just millimeters from Skye’s bruised skin.

“No one.” Skye tried to assure her.

“Please don’t lie to me, Skye. I’ve been there. We’ll get you help.”

And Skye realized for the second time that she looked like a battered woman, and before Skye had the thought process to explain, Melinda had let go of the shirt and was opening the door, hauling Jemma into the room.

“You! Did you know about this?”

Jemma was blinking like Melinda had just hauled her from another dimension.

“What are you – oh…” Jemma said, seeing Skye with her shirt bunched up as far as it would go, highlighting the black, blue, purple, and sickly green bruises.

“You knew? What kind of friend are you?”

“Whoa. Professor May, what are you talking about?” Jemma asked, confusion clear in her voice.

“What kind of friend lets their friend get beat up like that and not do something?” Melinda accused.

“Melinda!” Jemma yelled, shocking the professor into silence. “No one is abusing Skye. She went a few rounds in the ring with your girlfriend. And she keeps antagonizing our friend Darcy in their self-defense class, so Darcy hasn’t been going easy on her.”

Melinda’s face scrunches up with confusion. “My girlfriend?”

“Yes, of course that’s the only part of that you heard.” Jemma huffs. “Blood hell, pull your shirt down, Skye.” Jemma commanded before putting her hands on her hips. “Yes, your girlfriend. You
know, Russian, red head, you were pawing all of her like she was a piece of meat while you were intoxicated.”

Skye gingerly pulled her shirt down, thanking small graces that Jemma had come with her, because had Melinda saw the finger shaped bruises on her arms, Skye was sure she would have been sitting in a domestic violence counselor’s office by the end of the night.

Melinda stared at Jemma for a moment before rubbing the bridge of her nose. “Natasha isn’t my girlfriend. She is just a friend. And she did this?” She slowly turned her attention to Skye.

Skye nodded. “Have you ever seen her spar? She taught me to do that thing she does with the thighs and the head. Which meant I was falling a lot on my back. And Darcy, well, maybe I deserved Darcy’s beat down.”

“Oh god, I totally over reacted.” Melinda whispered, putting her hand over her mouth.

“It’s fine, really.” Skye responded. “You were concerned, it’s fine. Maybe we can call office hours for this week though?”

Melinda nodded. “It didn’t quite work, but it was progress.” She quickly sank down into her chair, the warmth of embarrassment over her actions washing over her. She watched Jemma usher Skye out before letting for head hit the desk.

Sighing she sat back up and shoved the book into her bag while digging her phone out at the same time.

*You still have that list of law students that owe Maria a favor or six?* Melinda quickly texts Phil.

*Melinda, what did you do?* Comes in a few minutes later.

*Accidently sexually assaulted a student during office hours I think.*

*What? I’ll be at your house by 7. I want home cooked dinner, some wine and an explanation.*

*You’ll bring the list?*

*Yes.*

Melinda dried her hands off on the towel she had tucked in her front pocket of her jeans when the doorbell rang.

“I brought another bottle of wine for this.” Phil said as soon as she opened the door, holding the bottle out for inspection.

“Lasagna is in the oven, will be out in less than ten. I was just washing up.” Melinda said over her shoulder while she walked to the kitchen.

Phil sat down at the breakfast bar, pulling two wine glasses from their spot by the wall and filling them.

“Want to start explaining now or after dinner?” Phil asked, pulling a folded piece of paper from his pocket and putting it between himself and Melinda like a betting chip - perhaps bargaining chip was more appropriate.
“After. I worked hard on that lasagna, we are not going to ruin it with my…” Melinda trailed off, waving her hands around, still unsure how to categorize what happened in her office.

They sat in silence waiting for the lasagna, both sipping the wine until the timer went off. Finally sitting on the stools with food in front of them, Melinda tries to find something to talk about.

“How’s Clint? I haven’t seen him since we got together for Christmas.”

Phil shrugged, but Melinda caught how his eyes light up a bit.

“You finally ask him out?”

Phil shakes his head, swallowing his bite of lasagna. “I’ve started learning a little bit more sign though.”

“ Took you long enough.” Melinda chastises him.

“Yea, well, I held out as long as I could for a certain Asian piano protégé.” Phil said with a pointed look.

“I’m still sorry about that, Phil.” Melinda responded.

“No hard feelings.” Phil said, pushing his plate away. “I wish I understood why but in the grand scheme it’s not that important. Although I guess I still harbor a little bit of hurt that the only time you asked me to bed ended with you curled up in the sheets crying, and you weren’t even subject to my awful sexual escapades.” Phil offered, trying to lighten to mood a bit.

“Well, maybe now it’s important. Maybe I should finally explain.” Melinda murmured.

Phil just turned on the stool to look at her. “This feels like a couch discussion.”

Melinda nodded, grabbing her glass of wine and moving to the dark red couch that sat in front of a cherry coffee table, in front of a TV that was excessively large. Phil followed her a second later, both bottles of wine being sat down on the table.

“Alright Mel, spill.”

Melinda curled up tight on herself but nodded before setting into an explanation. Before her and Phil were friends, she had been dating a guy who thought her musical talent was a waste, and had no qualms telling her so, but she had stayed with him anyway because other than that she thought they were perfect together. Until he started questioning when she stayed late at work for a student, or why she wanted to go to department parties, which quickly escalated into him using her as a punching bag. Which lasted a year longer than it should have, but until Natasha started teaching at SHIELD, no one noticed. Natasha had noticed the signs right away and helped Melinda leave, but now it was a hair trigger for her.

Phil was slowly sipping his wine, trying to absorb all the information.

“You don’t trust men, not in relationships anymore anyway.” Phil said it without a hint of question.

“I had always been a 3 on the Kinsey scale, but I just, it’s hard.” Melinda responded.

“Okay, so how does this play into today?”

When Melinda finished explaining about Skye and what she did, Phil simply whistled.
“Mel…”

“I fucked up.” She said, tipping the rest of wine into her mouth.

“It came from a great place, and I have been wondering why she’s been moving so stiffly this week, but that’s weird if a male professor notices… Anyway, did you explain to her why you flipped out and, well you did kind of assault her?”

Melinda chewed on her lip. “She said it was fine, but women and fine, it rarely means things are actually fine.”

“I hate that word.”

Melinda nodded her agreement. “I need to call one of those law students don’t I?”

“It would probably be best.” Phil nodded in agreement. “I don’t think she would file anything against you for inappropriate conduct but…”

Skye was putting the final touches on her article summary for ASL, on Sunday, when the notification for a new e-mail sprang across the top of her tablet screen. Quickly saving her work, she opened the e-mail.

To: SAvery@UOS.edu

From: MMay@UOS.edu

Subject: Office Hours

Good Afternoon Miss Avery,

I really don’t know how to start this e-mail other than to say I am so sorry for my behavior Wednesday night. My legal counsel has advised me against speaking to you outside of class in case you have decided to file against me for inappropriate conduct with a student but I couldn’t not explain myself.

I was being honest when I said I had been there and it’s a touchy subject for me now, and seeing the way you flinched… I couldn’t let you walk out of my office if you were being abused. I am well aware that there are at least five hundred better ways I could have handled that suspicion, but like I said, it’s touchy for me. And the person who ultimately saved me has the social graces of bull, so all of my cues come from her.

I know it’s no excuse, and you are completely within your rights to file against me, and I would understand if you did. I hope to see you in class tomorrow, and office hours Wednesday, I really do believe you could be an amazing pianist.

Sincerely,

Melinda May

Skye sat back reading the e-mail over and over again. If she had to take a guess Natasha had been the one to save Melinda, which really did explain the over stepping. Skye pulled her bottom lip into her mouth and chewed on it. She had no intention of filing anything against Melinda, but class was
going to be awkward as hell now. Not to mention office hours.

Groaning she all but slammed her head back against the head board.

“You okay?” Jemma asked from where she was curled up with Darcy going over something for astrophysics.

“May just sent me an e-mail, and I’m really not sure what I am supposed to do with it.” Skye answered.

“What’s it say?”

“Mostly how sorry she is for what she did, and an explanation of why she did it, with the understanding that that doesn’t excuse her from any wrong doing.” Skye summarized for Jemma.

“What are you going to do about class and office hours?” Jemma asked.

“Not a fucking clue. I guess I’m still going and I am just going to hope things aren’t weird. If they are I will figure it out then?” Skye meant to sound sure of her decision, but it came out as a question.

Jemma nodded. “You know we’ll be here for you.”

Darcy nodded her agreement before pulling Jemma back into some homework problem.

“Thanks guys.” Skye responded before closing her eyes and repeatedly telling herself that this would only be a thing if she made it a thing.
Going to be 100% up front about this, not in love with this chapter but it serves the purpose, sorry if it feels off.

Skye was relieved to find that she was right. It would only be a thing if she made it a thing. Class on Monday and Wednesday went without incident, other than Coulson side eyeing the fuck out of her like he was afraid she was going to snap at him for something.

“Do you want me to leave the door open?” Melinda asked, holding the door open while Skye sat down for office hours.

“I trust you. It’s fine.” Skye said.

Melinda hesitated for a moment, before shutting the door with a small wave from Jemma.

Skye sat backwards on the piano bench, her back to the piano so she could look at Melinda.

“I was never going to file some stupid thing on you. You know that right? You were worried about me, and I am never, ever, going to punish someone for caring about me. Not a lot of people have in my life.” Skye said, trying to make eye contact with Melinda.

“I’m sure that’s not true.” Melinda said, finally sitting at her desk to pull through her music to find something new for Skye to play.

“The foster system isn’t exactly warm and fuzzy.” Skye admitted with a shrug.

Melinda’s fingers paused over the music she had pulled out hearing the comment, before shoving it back in the drawer and finding something else. It was a good song, but after that confession, Melinda figured it would probably hit a little too close to home for Skye right now.

“So I am going to record you playing this week, that way you can hear the difference even though you won’t be able to hear yourself playing it.” Melinda said, trying to change the subject to things that were office hours appropriate.

“So we’re doing the ear plug thing again?” Skye asked.

Melinda nodded, handing over new music for Skye to play. “I want to try it for a few weeks and see how things go.”

Skye turned and found the ear plugs sitting on the ridge of the piano that held the music as well, slipping them in she looked at the music for the first time. It wasn’t a song she had played before, but she had heard it often enough on the radio, Everybody Talks by Neon Trees.

Melinda stood hesitantly behind Skye and settled for marking time on her shoulder this time.

“You’re not going to hurt me.” Skye said after a minute, taking one ear plug out. “If you don’t tap harder I can’t feel the tempo.”
Melinda hesitated. And that hesitation scared her. Melinda had made it her job to be 110% sure of every decision she made after she left Michael, and now Skye was making her hesitate. But ultimately she filed that thought away to analyze at a better time and started tapping a little harder.

Skye smiled and slipped the ear plug back in, starting to play.

When Melinda finally sent her away, arm in arm with Jemma and with the recording on her tablet, Melinda picked her keys up, ready to curl up on her couch and deal with her feelings in private.

Four spoonsful of cookie dough in, Melinda realized why she was hesitating. She cared about Skye. And not just in the professory sort of way.

“Oh no.” She groaned, letting her head tilt back.

Melinda tucked the thoughts and feelings far away with the intention of never revisiting them ever again. And that worked fairly well until she needed to find a new way to fix the last little hiccups Skye was having with her playing. The only idea she could come up with is making Skye’s mind believe she was the one playing perfectly.

Which is how Melinda May found herself sitting on the piano bench, with Skye’s front pressed tightly to her back, chin resting on her shoulder, and hands resting overtop of hers. And Melinda was breathing just a little too shallowly.

“You do the singing, don’t break my ear drum though.” Melinda reminded Skye before starting to play the opening notes of Human, Skye’s hands over top of her own.

Melinda quickly realized it was a terrible idea to have Skye singing essentially in her ear. There was not a cold enough shower in the world.

By the end of the song, Melinda was having to concentrate more on not panting like a teenager then the actual music. Pulling away quickly, Melinda stood up.

“Alright, now you try.” She instructed, gesturing towards the piano.

Skye inched forward so that she was more comfortable on the bench before starting to play again.

Melinda watched in fascination as Skye managed to play perfectly.

“Well, I think we figured it out.” Melinda said, excitement clear in her voice.

“Should I try Jar of Hearts?” Skye asked, barely containing the excitement in her voice.

Melinda nodded. “I believe Jemma would say that would be the only way to properly do an experiment.”

Skye took the music from Melinda and started playing, still stumbling a bit but not nearly as bad as even a week ago.

“Not perfect, but I think a few more weeks and you will be able to play in the final piano concert.” Melinda offered.

Skye smiled, standing up and pulling Melinda into a tight hug. “Thank you so much! You have no idea how excited this makes me.”

Melinda awkwardly patted Skye’s back, trying not to melt into the hug.
When Skye left the office, she didn’t notice she left her tablet behind, too excited to share the good news with Jemma. She probably wouldn’t have noticed at all if it weren’t for walking into her dorm room only to promptly turn around and slide down the wall, digging in her bag looking for something to do while Darcy and Sif put clothes back on.

Skye was still sitting in the hallway, debating if she left it in her room or at Melinda’s office when Melinda walked down the hall, aforementioned tablet in her hand.

“You left this. I thought you might need it for classes.” Melinda said holding it out for Skye.

“Oh thanks. You didn’t have to bring it all the way to me. I thought it was still in there.” Skye answered, throwing a thumb over her shoulder to indicate her room.

“Why are you in the hall instead of your room?” Melinda asked, an eye brow raised.

“My roommate is, uhm, indisposed.” Skye answered.

“Your roommate is having sex and couldn’t even put a sock on the door. That’s just poor taste.”

“Right?” Skye agreed, but the conversation was cut short by the door opening and Melinda and Sif coming face to face.

“Sif?”

“Melinda!” Sif boomed, obviously still bathing in after glow.

“I’m – I’m going to go.” Melinda said, nodding, getting ready to turn around and leave only for Darcy to poke her head out.

“Hun, you forgot these.” She said, a lacy red thong hanging from her index finger.

Sif blushed lightly before grabbing them and shoving them in her jeans pockets.

“I won’t say anything.” Melinda said, her face bright red as she turned and fled.

Sif turned and gave Darcy a quick kiss. “She won’t say anything. At least not officially I don’t think. I might get a tongue lashing later though.”

“I could give you one now…” Darcy suggested, wiggling her eyebrows.

“Come on! Go to Sif’s place if you want to spend the rest of the day in bed! I need to be able to study.” Skye said, pushing her way into the room.

She had her own emotions to process, like how amazing it had felt to pull Melinda into a hug.
Melinda and Skye come to some startling revelations.

Check it out guys, finally earning that M rating :)

Melinda slammed the copy of Thirteen Hours that Pepper had lent her eight weeks ago on her bedside table. Wednesday’s had become her most hated and loved day since two weeks ago when she first had Skye pressed into her back while they played.

And now she was frustrated. Which, admittedly, was mostly her own fault. Reading porn was not the most helpful way to get rid of the lingering heat in her lower stomach after having Skye pressed into her back for an hour.

With a grunt, Melinda rolled on her side and yanked the bedside table drawer open and fished around in it until she found the two items she was looking for, a small bottle of lube – not that she thought she actually needed it but she was always one to be overly prepared – and the purple rabbit vibrator.

Rolling back onto her back, Melinda dropped both items on the bed beside her before wiggling out of her sleep shorts and tank top, leaving herself bare in the cool air from the fan in her bedroom. The cold air pebbled her nipples quickly, and as she trailed fingers across her breasts, her breath hitched. Reaching quickly for the bottle of lube, she lipped the cap and squeezed enough out to cover two fingers before reaching between her spread legs and trailing her finger tips across her clit. A whisper of a moan escaped from parted lips before she left her fingers slide further down, teasing at her own entrance, while her eyes fluttered shut and she let herself imagine that it was someone else’s hand.

Sliding the two fingers in easily, she curled her fingers to hit that magical spot that sent sparks through her body while she imagined a wavy haired brunet woman kneeling between her thighs was doing the work, not bothering to put a face to the woman.

Groaning, Melinda pulled her fingers out, dragging them over her clit before she reached for the toy, needing more stimulation. Sliding the toy in, Melinda couldn’t hold back the hitch in her breath, and when she finally clumsily hit the buttons at the base to turn on the vibrations and the slight rotation of the shaft, she arched her back, trying to force the toy deeper. Eyes screwed shut and hips twitching while one hand shifted the toy and the other palmed one breast, grabbing and squeezing, Melinda imagined her fantasy woman was taking care of her. Moans were being pulled from her throat uninhibited, and when the cold fire spread through her whole body as muscles tightened with a sharp arch in her back, Melinda hissed out one word.

“Skye!”

It was like ice water being poured all over her body, pulling her out of the post-orgasmic haze.
sharply. Fumbling with the toy, Melinda turned it off, gently pulling it from her body, resulting in a hiss at its absence. Looking at the ceiling of the dark room, Melinda made the realization that she was fucked, and most assuredly not in the good way.

She cared about Skye, but apparently she was now also the woman who materialized in her fantasies. Grabbing the extra pillow from the other side of the king sized bed, Melinda pressed it against her face and screamed. She couldn’t do this. She couldn’t have feelings for a student. And most assuredly not one that she spent an hour with in her sound proofed office with every week, and most recently with said student pressed into her back singing in her ear.

Sitting up, Melinda found her tank top and shorts, pulling them back on before slipping out the sliding glass doors that lead to the back yard. When she first moved in and realized she shared her back yard with Pepper, she thought it would be an issue, but she was never as grateful as she was in that moment.

Tapping on Pepper’s sliding glass doors, one arm wrapped around herself, having forgotten that it was still early spring and walking across the back yard in shorts and tank top was a bad idea, Melinda hoped that nine wasn’t too late to be having a crisis.

After her second round of tapping on the glass, she was reward with a very irritated Natasha walking through the kitchen, a silk bathrobe still being hastily tied, and Melinda immediately felt guilty and embarrassed. Natasha got to the door, and upon seeing Melinda, unlocked it and slid it open, pulling her into a hug.

“Pep!” Natasha called through the dark house. “Put a robe on honey, Melinda’s having a crisis.”

Natasha guided Melinda to the couch before going to the kitchen, turning the lights on and turning the kettle on for tea. Pepper came padding down the hallway, a red silk robed wrapped around her, before sinking down onto the couch with Melinda and pulling her close.

“What’s going on honey?” Pepper asked.

Melinda just wrapped her arms around Pepper, waiting for Natasha to finish with the tea before she sat sandwiched between the two of them, the warm mug in her hands.

“I think I have feelings for a student.” Melinda admitted, staring at her tea.

“Oh, god, Mel, is that it? Look at Sif and Darcy.” Natasha said, a bit of humor slipping through.

“Is that it? Natasha, I can’t have feelings for a student! It’s against the rules, and the rules are there for a reason. Sif and Darcy, it’s different… It’s not like Darcy is taking a major class from her.” Melinda responded, shocked at how easily Natasha just pushed it off.

“What made you realize this?” Pepper asked, rubbing a small circle Melinda’s back.

Melinda blushed bright red, staring at her tea.

“Oh. Well do you have feelings beyond those kind of feelings for her?” Pepper asked, reading the blush for exactly what it was.

Melinda nodded, pulling her bottom lip into her mouth. “I care about her. A lot.”

“You said she’s in your class… Is it Skye? That girl who you thought was a mistake at the beginning of the semester?” Natasha asked, her hand joining her girlfriends rubbing small circles on Melinda’s back.
Melinda nodded, pulling her knees up to her chest. “I said her name, and god, it’s been a long time since I’ve… that hard. And I want to take care of her, and I have spent the last three Wednesday’s with her pressed against my body for like an hour while I basically remapped her brain to be able to play. What am I doing?”

Pepper pressed a light kiss to Melinda’s temple. “You are, for the first time since that ass hole, letting yourself be in love with someone. She told you she trusted you at some point, didn’t she?”

Melinda nodded again.

“I figured. If she doesn’t feel the same way there is nothing to do about this, right?”

“Right.” Melinda murmured.

“So, keep your panties on until she graduates, and it’s not a problem. Go invest in some good toys to get you through the next eight weeks, until you can have an honest conversation with her about this.” Pepper suggested.

Melinda nodded, taking a long drink of her tea. “When did you two start…?” Melinda asked, her face scrunched up in confusion. It was easier to focus on not knowing one of her best friends was in a relationship than her own crap for the time being.

Natasha shrugged. “We have been on and off for years. I just finally decided I would rather have a more concrete on.”

Melinda smiled, pressing a kiss to both of their cheeks. “I’m so happy for both of you. I can’t think of two people who deserve each other more.”

“There was an insult in there.” Natasha accused.

“There was.” Pepper agreed, narrowing her eyes at Melinda. “And to think, we stopped our mind blowing sex for your crisis.”

Melinda almost chuckled, but just pressed another kiss to Pepper’s cheek. “And I am very thankful that you did.”

Darcy was straddling Skye when Skye blinked awake.

“Um, does your very scary girlfriend know you go around straddling your friends in bed?” Skye asked.

“I don’t know, does your piano teacher know you moan her name in your sleep? Kind of loudly too.” Darcy asked.

“I – what?” Skye asked. Darcy had to be lying, or teasing her.

But then Skye remembered the dream she had been having right before she woke up. Melinda’s face buried in between her legs, lapping at her like she was the source of all things good in the world. And then the dream had changed, they were in bed, and the bed had dipped around her with the pressure of Melinda kneeling, and then there had been that strap on – or at least the was the best classification Skye could come up with for it, she had seen one online once along with the explanation that your partner held it inside themselves on one side while the other was used on you.
“Oh god…” Skye felt her face flame up as she realized her supposed mortification sounded more like a moan.

“Remembering a particularly good dream?” Darcy asked, climbing off the bed.

Skye nodded, dragging her hand across her face. “I got it bad don’t I?”

Darcy nodded. “Whatcha’ going to do about it?”

“No clue, but if I keep going to office hours, and having to press myself into her back like I have been…”

“You think she likes you?” Darcy asked, bouncing back onto her own bed.

“I have no idea. God, I hope so.”

“So what are you going to do?”

“Well it’s not like I can just push her against the piano and have my way with her.” Skye said.

“That was awfully specific there, Skye.”

“Well I can’t, can I?”

Darcy shrugged. “I think maybe you should aim for a kiss first.”

“Good plan.”
Someday

Chapter Summary

Skye has a plan. That's just as scary in this verse as in the normal verse.

“What if I ask her to come out and get drinks with us? Like a celebratory thing. She fixed me after all, well mostly. That’s worthy of like celebratory drinks, right?” Skye asked, tapping her pen against her lip.

“Do you think she would go?” Darcy asked looking up. “I mean it’s the middle of the semester. Doesn’t she have shit to grade or something?”

“Can’t hurt to ask right?” Skye asked.

“No, probably not. This is your last office hours with her right, at least officially she is cutting you lose?”

Skye nodded, and Darcy didn’t miss the look of sadness on her friend’s face.

“Hey, just because she is cutting you lose doesn’t mean anything other than you can play up to her insanely high standards now.”

“It will be weird to go back to classes after spring break and not have her twice on Wednesdays.”

Darcy wiggled her eyebrows at Skye. “You mean three times.” At Skye’s confused face, she continued “Honey, you moan like you’re having life affirming sex with her on Wednesday nights.”

Skye blushed bright red. “So, um, drinks Friday. I’ll invite her to that. Tell her it can just be a big group thing.”

“You sure you want to give her free reign to invite professors?” Darcy asked.

“I want her to be comfortable.” Skye argued.

Darcy grunted. “Fine. I’m staying with Sif for spring break so you’ll have the room all to yourself.”

“I’m sure Melinda has a house.” Skye retorted. “One with a much better bed.”

“You’re awful cocky about being in it before the end of break.”

Skye shrugged her answer, before pulling her jacket on and her bag. “It’s all about goal setting right?”

Darcy laughed before going back to the paper she was hammering out before spring break so she could focus completely on Sif for the week.

Skye blew Darcy a kiss before leaving, meeting up with Jemma in the hallway, linking arms with her.

“I’m going to miss the silence.” Jemma said, sadly once they started their walk to the music building.
“I’m going to miss her.” Skye admitted to Jemma.

Jemma stopped dead in her tracks pulling Skye back when she attempted to continue to walk without her. “You’re what?!”

Skye blushed and looked at her feet before pulling them back into motion. “I like her Jem, a lot.”

“That’s against the rules!”

“You didn’t lecture Darcy!” Skye argued back.

“That’s different. Sif isn’t responsible for Darcy graduating like May is with you. And of course you are now in lust with the woman I had to drag you to go see for the first office hours. It’s almost poetic!” Jemma was almost shouting now as they walked across campus.

“I’m going to ask her to come out for drinks to celebrate.” Skye said after a moment.

“Rules are there for a reason, Skye.”

“I’m just going to ask. She can say no. And we are celebrating, spring break starts Monday and I can officially play piano.”

Jemma shook her head, but kept quiet as they walked the rest of the way, hiding in her book as soon as she could.

Melinda’s face crinkled up in confusion when she opened the door and saw the two girls determinedly ignoring each other. Skye pushed off the wall to follow her into the office.

“Lovers quarrel?” Melinda said with a smirk. “You two are never that quiet.”

“We don’t agree over a decision I made. It’ll be fine.” Skye said with a smile. “So, what am I playing for my last office hours before you cut me loose and deem me fixed?”

Melinda clicked her tongue, before smiling. It had taken a bottle of wine and Pepper and Natasha both telling her she needed to stop spending time in a room with Skye on their own, for Melinda to make the decision to cut their standing appointment. Now with Skye standing in front of her, she was finding it much harder to actually end the appointments after this one.

“Players pick.” Melinda said with a smile.

“Really?” Skye asked, before pulling her tablet out and flipping through the now very extensive collection of piano music. Her fingers hovered for a minute over the music for Kiss by Prince but figured she would be pushing her luck to sing such a flirty song before trying to ask Melinda out to drinks, going back to quickly flipping through the music. Pulling her lower lip between her teeth, Skye finally settled on a song, Someday by Rob Thomas, meaningful but not blatant enough to scare Melinda, at least she hoped.

Melinda pulled her legs up to sit cross legged in her desk chair while she watched Skye hesitate over a song before moving on, wondering what she had hesitated over first.

“Alright, so what are you playing?” She finally asked, trying really hard not to drum her fingers on the desk while she waited.

“I want to see if you know it.” Skye said, not really sure what she was looking for in a reaction, but the she remembered the first time she watched the music video for the song, and for months it had
been like a comfort blanket. Bouncing around in the foster system she had enough to deal with, without dealing with the mess that was self-exploratory sexuality, but seeing a pride parade with the words of the song had been soothing. And she quickly found out that almost everyone she ever talked to at pride meetings held the song pretty closely to their heart as well, even if Same Love and She Keeps Me Warm were encroaching on its territory. And maybe deep down Skye wanted to make sure Melinda was at least bisexual before she started throwing herself at the woman, and asking would be rude.

Rolling her shoulders, Skye started playing.

> You can go
> You can start all over again
> You can try to find a way to make another day go by
> You can hide
> Hold all your feelings inside
> You can try to carry on when all you want to do is cry

Melinda sucked in a deep breath, the song settling in her stomach, remembering listening to it on repeat when she was staying with Natasha while she was trying to figure out what the hell she was going to do with her life. And then she remembered when Natasha had finally showed her the music video, and how she had cried until there was nothing left. Which had been the first time she said out loud that she was bisexual, which ended with more tears, and Natasha holding her until she stopped crying again.

Melinda waited for Skye to finish singing the chorus before joining in to sing with her, rewarded with a bright smile from Skye when she turned her head to glance at her.

> Now wait
> And try to find another mistake
> If you throw it all away then maybe you can change your mind
> You can run, oh
> And when everything is over and done
> You can shine a little light on everything around you
> Man it's good to be someone

By the end of the song both had a few stray tears that had escaped trailing down their face.

“I am going to assume you know the song,” Skye said, with a shaky laugh.

“I don’t think I’ll ever forget that song.” Melinda admitted, realizing a second too late she had shared more than she intended to.

“Me either.” Skye admitted softly. “So, um…” She rubbed the back of her neck before continuing. “I was wondering if you wanted to come out for a few drinks with me and my friends, and you can invite people, this Friday. We are celebrating spring break, and we can totally double it up as celebrating me not being a wreck at piano anymore.”

“You’re really far from a wreck now.” Melinda said, almost in reflex, before processing the rest of her sentence. Could she say yes to going out with them? She would just invite Phil and Natasha and let them have free reign and it would be fine. Natasha and Pepper wouldn’t let her get out control.

“Sure, it sounds like fun, and we should celebrate.”

Skye looked up and smiled. “Really? Awesome. Same bar.” She quickly said before going back to looking at her music to pick a few more things to play. Melinda had said yes, and she was pretty sure
Melinda was bisexual, maybe spring break would work out exactly how she wanted.
Do You Wanna Touch?

Chapter Summary

Operation Spring Break is a go.

“I can’t believe she said yes.” Jemma said from her chair, sandwiched between Skye and Leo.

“She might not show up.” Leo chirped up, only to be proven wrong by the group of people entering the bar. Phil and Clint were the first ones in, followed by Natasha and Pepper, Thor and Jane and finally Sif and Melinda. The students watched as they stopped by the bar to get their first round of drinks before coming to fill in the blank spaces on the table, Melinda taking the only seat left next to Skye, after Sif took her seat next to Darcy.

“I’m glad you came.” Skye said, turning her attention to Melinda.

“I made the mistake of telling ‘Tasha. Lesson learned, don’t tell the Russian a bunch of college students have an open invitation to go drinking, she will leap at it so hard you get whip lash.” Melinda was trying desperately to cover how excited she had been about the whole thing as well.

“Yea, blame the Russian. I’ll remember that the next time you have a crisis in the middle of my sexy times with Pepper.” Natasha teased.

Skye was taking a sip of her bright pink drink right as that was said, and had to focus on swallowing the liquid instead of sputtering it all over the table.

If looks could kill, the look Melinda shot Natasha should have had the woman doubled over with the flesh slowly peeling away from the skin.

“Once. That happened once. And you didn’t even tell me you were dating Pepper.” Melinda argued.

Leo looked up from his scotch. “Wait, the rumors in the CS department say Dr. Stark and Ms. Potts are dating.”

Pepper actually snorted. “Honey, if you are drinking with us, first names. Secondly, Tony and I are the best of friends, but that’s where it ends.”

And with that they fell into easy conversations. Thor and Sif being much too loud as the debated something from Norse mythology and their home land, Jane quietly working on something she had thought up with Leo and Jemma, Pepper and Natasha arguing about something, but Skye was pretty sure it was playfully. The best was watching normally stoic Phil fumbling as he attempted to sign with Clint.

Skye leaned over to Melinda and tried to discreetly motion between Phil and Clint, but she saw Clint’s eyes twinkle when she did it. “Are they a couple?”

Melinda shook her head. “Working on it though, if Phil ever pulls his head out of his ass.”

“Clint seems like he’s up to play ball.”
“That was a terrible, terrible innuendo. You should really be ashamed.” Melinda said with a smirk.

“That was a brilliant innuendo.” Skye argued.

“If you think so, I am really going to have to re-evaluate my feelings for you.”

Skye stopped with her glass halfway to her lips. What feelings exactly was Melinda referring to?

“And what feelings are those exactly?” Skye asked putting the glass back down.

“It’s just an expression.” Melinda answered, sending a look at Natasha to save her, she had opened her mouth and said something stupid.

“Come on Mel, karaoke is starting.” Natasha stood up, pulling Pepper and Melinda away from the table with her.

Skye turned her chair to watch the stage, dragging her fingers around the rim of her glass. It was just an expression, it didn’t mean anything, no matter how badly she wanted it to mean something. She was so lost in her own thoughts she almost missed Jemma leaning in next to her, trying to get attention.

“Are you okay? I told you this was a bad idea.” Jemma said.

“I’m fine. Everything is fine.” Skye tried to dismiss.

“I know you’re lying.” Jemma said, bumping her shoulder with Skye’s.

“I’ll be fine. When are you and Leo leaving for the UK?”

“Tonight. We only have a little while to hang out.” Jemma answered.

“You finally going to tell him how you feel? I mean for Christ sakes Jemma you are spending half of spring break with his family and he is spending the other half with yours.”

“I think one of those is enough for you.” Jemma said, taking the glass away from Skye and going to the bar to switch it out for water.

“You are just dodging the question.” Skye accused, taking the glass of water from Jemma when she returned.

“Well, you aren’t being particularly honest either. Don’t let her hurt you, Skye. Particularly if she doesn’t even know what she’s doing.” Jemma urged before turning back to Leo and the paper they were scribbling on with Jane.

When Natasha, Pepper, and Melinda returned to the table after an amazing performance of Do You Wanna Touch, they fell into comfortable conversations again, everyone slowly switching to water so they could get home responsibly.

Leo and Jemma left first, giving tight hugs to Darcy and Skye, and receiving wishes from everyone else for a safe flight, Jane shoving the paper they had been working on into their hands, with promises when they got back they would discuss it more. Jane and Thor left shortly after them, Thor mumbling something about how he needed to get in as much time with his brilliant scientist as he could before her new favorite science friends came back. Sif and Darcy left after them, Sif arguing that she had no one to talk to anyway other than Darcy, and Skye pretended to be hurt as she watched them leave.
“Don’t take it personally. She can’t look me in the eye anymore, and I think that’s extended to you.” Melinda leaned over and whispered.

“Oh.” Skye uttered, in time to see Phil make a fool of himself, mixing up the sign for coffee and make out. In his defense they are one wrist motion apart, but Clint looked like he was going to explode between emotions.

Phil looked around, trying to figure out what he did.

“Sir, you mixed up coffee and make out, you totally just asked him if he wanted to go make out with you.” Skye offered.

“I didn’t.” Phil groaned, putting his face in his hands.

“You did.” Clint said, patting his back. “I assume you were asking if I wanted to go get coffee though.”

Phil nodded.

“I was going to say yes either way.” Clint smirked, grabbing Phil’s hand.

“Oh.” Phil blinked, looking every bit an owl.

“Bye.” The remaining four women said, shooing them out.

Skye watched Natasha trailing fingers over Pepper’s arms, occasionally leaning in to whisper something in her ear, only for her eyes to dart over to Melinda, only for Pepper sigh but nod understandingly. It was starting to make Skye feel uneasy.

“Are you sick or something?” Skye asked in a hushed voice.

Melinda shook her head. “Why?”

“Natasha keeps looking at you like you’re going to pass out or something, and then Pepper sighs and nods.” Skye explained, and watched a bright blush creep up Melinda’s chest and neck, the black tank top she was wearing doing nothing to hide it. “The blush on you says it’s something embarrassing. Are they watching what you drink so you don’t, I don’t know, dance naked in the street or something?”

“No.” Melinda groaned. “I most assuredly do not ‘dance naked in the street or something’. It’s much worse, she thought to herself.

“Then what?” Skye prodded.

“I asked them to make sure I wouldn’t do anything I might regret, but I think they want to go home and celebrate spring break with each other.” Melinda whispered back.

“Well, I can make sure you don’t drive drunk or something. Tell them to go on.” Skye offered.

Melinda pulled her lip between her teeth, before rubbing the bridge of her nose. “That wasn’t what I meant.” Taking a deep breath, Melinda figured it was now or never, if anyone asked she could chalk it up to the very, very light buzz she had left. “I asked Natasha to make sure I didn’t do something I would regret, with you.”

Skye blinked a few times, trying to make sense of what Melinda had told her. “What do you mean?”
“You’re a student and my feelings for you…” Melinda trailed off.

Skye leaned in as close as she could. “Take me home with you.”

It was Melinda’s turn to blink hard before she was forcefully pushing her chair back and grabbing Skye’s hand.

“Mel?” Natasha asked looking up.

“I’m sure.” Melinda said, answering the unasked question.

Skye smiled, being led from the bar and to Melinda’s car. They drove in silence, Melinda focused on the road as she weaved between traffic to get home, and Skye watching the traffic pass by while she tried not to focus on the fluttering in her stomach.

When Melinda finally parked the car and led Skye to her front door, Skye smiled, squeezing Melinda’s hand.

“Are you sure? I can leave, no hard feelings.” Skye whispered, before Melinda could unlock the door.

“I have never been so unsure and sure about something in my life.” Melinda admitted, pushing the door open and pulling Skye in after her.

Skye closed the door behind her, only to find her back being pushed into, Melinda pressing her against the door to kiss her. Soft lips that tasted faintly of the alcohol Melinda had been drinking, pressed against Skye’s and she tangled her fingers in the silky black hair at the nape of Melinda’s neck.

“I don’t want to treat you like some cheap date.” Melinda said, once they broke apart to breathe.

Skye stuck her lower lip out. “Does that mean I don’t get to see what your bed looks like tonight?”

“I never said that. We have a whole week to do that stuff, tonight you are sleeping in my arms.” Melinda said, sliding their hands together and walking backwards through the house to lead Skye to her bedroom.

Skye sighed in contentment seeing the king sized bed, before realizing she didn’t have anything clothing with her. “Um, Melinda, not to be a raincloud here but…”

“But what?” Melinda asked.

“I don’t exactly have an overnight bag anywhere here, and jeans and a tank top is not my idea of comfortable sleeping.” Skye said with a grimace.

“I’m sure my stuff will fit for at least tonight.” Melinda said, pulling out a drawer in her dresser and finding a large t-shirt to give to Skye.

“Bathroom?” Skye asked, taking the offered shirt.

“That door.” Melinda said, pointing at the door on the far side of the room. “I’ll change in here.”

Skye nodded before slipping into the bathroom. Pulling on her own purple tank top and black jeans, she turned around looking at the large bathtub and almost drooled. Dorm living was killing her. Pulling her bra off last, Skye slipped into the large t-shirt, and looked at herself in the mirror, and couldn’t help smiling. The large shirt was from a band Skye wasn’t familiar with and hung just low
enough to barely cover the black lacy panties she was wearing. A light knock on the door brought her back though.

“You okay in there? I can drive you back to campus if you’re having second thoughts.” Melinda asked, sincerely hoping that wasn’t the case.

Skye smiled before opening the door and scooping up her clothing and Chucks. “I was coveting your shower. I wouldn’t wish dorm living on my worst enemy.”

“Coveting my shower, going to make a lady feel unwanted.” Melinda said with a smile, before sliding her arms around Skye’s waist.

Skye leaned forward, as much as she could with the bunch of clothing and shoes in her arms and pressed a light kiss to Melinda’s lips. “Never. Now where can I put these so I can covet your bed and you at the same time?”

“Chair in the corner is fine.” Melinda said pulling back and moving to pull the covers down on the bed.

Once they were both comfortable in the bed Skye found herself being spooned by Melinda, who was gently tracing patterns on her stomach through the shirt.

“So, tell me about you.” Melinda said, only for Skye to turn over to face her.

“What do you want to know?”

“Everything, anything.”

“That’s really broad, Melinda.”

“Okay, is Avery your last name or an adopted name?”

“I officially changed it. One of the foster families I was with, they were going to adopt me until they died in a car accident. It was the first time I felt like I was home, so I changed it to Avery. Your turn, is May a married name?”

Melinda shook her head. “All mine. Favorite ice cream?”

“Ben and Jerry’s half baked.”

“Why don’t you just eat the raw cookie dough?”

“I have been known to do that. I take it cookie dough is your preferred form of sugar?”

Melinda nodded with a smile. “I was working my way through a tub of it when I figured out I had feelings for you.”

“Ooo, you win. I apparently was having dreams, that Darcy felt the need to torment me about.”

“Oh really?” Melinda said with a raised eyebrow, and Skye blushed.

“I’m not sharing.” Skye said, with a little laugh.

Melinda smiled but they fell easily into just talking about their favorites and little things about their past, staying away from anything too heavy. By the time Melinda was yawning, Skye was more than ready to turn back over and let Melinda hold her while they slept.
Skye rolled over and patted the bed next to her only to meet cold sheets. Frowning in her sleep, she rolled over to face the side of the of bed that Melinda had slept on, inhaling deeply to make sure it hadn’t all been a dream, and she just went home with some random woman. The slightly floral scent that always seemed to cling to Melinda greeted her, and she smiled, pulling the pillow tighter under her head. She was almost back to sleep when the door to the bedroom creaked open, making her flip back over to see Melinda holding a tray that had steaming food on it.

“Good morning.” Skye murmured stretching her arms out.

“Sleep well?” Melinda asked, sitting back on her side of the bed and putting the tray between them. Fresh made pancakes and eggs sat on plates with cut fruit in a bowl off to the side.

“Mhm. I thought this was a very good dream though when you weren’t in bed next to me.” Skye said, pushing herself into a sitting position to take a chunk of strawberry to eat.

“I get up early to do tai chi, and I thought breakfast in bed would be, mphf.” Melinda fumbled as a chunk of strawberry was shoved in her mouth.

“Perfect. It’s perfect. Homemade food is more than enough to win me over, you don’t even have to bring it to me in bed.” Skye said, grabbing one of the plates and a fork to dig in.

Melinda chewed slowly before picking up her own plate to dig in. When they finally put the empty plates back on the tray, Melinda moved it off the bed.

“You’re dressed.” Skye pouted, curling up on her side and wrapping her arms around Melinda’s middle.

“I can’t do tai chi in just a t-shirt and panties.” Melinda answered, rolling her eyes.

“Can I watch you do that one day? That sounds hot.” Skye said with a chuckle.

“It can go on the list of the things I might do.” Melinda relented.

“Yay! So what are the plans for today, now that you have feed me?”

“Well, I was thinking I could take you back to your dorm to pack a bag, and then we could come back here and watch TV order take out for lunch, and let me cook for dinner.” Melinda said, absentmindedly stroking Skye’s hair.

“Mhm, that sounds like a really great day.” Skye responded, nuzzling into Melinda’s stomach.

“That means you need to get up and get dressed, unless you want to go outside in just a t-shirt and panties. I would appreciate the view, but…”
“Right.” Skye answered, pulling herself away from Melinda to pull on the clothing she had been wearing the night before, in the privacy of the bathroom, before folding up the shirt and putting it on what she had already labeled her side of the bed.

Melinda slid behind Skye, wrapping her arms around Skye’s middle and resting her chin on the younger woman’s shoulder. “I quite like the way that looks.” Melinda said, tilting her head just a bit to motion towards the made bed with both of their sleeping clothes sitting on their respective sides.

Skye turned her head to kiss Melinda’s cheek, before reminding her that they had a day planned.

Skye was careful to pack a little bit of everything while Melinda watched from the doorway, before they made their way back to Melinda’s house. Melinda took the bag before Skye could even reach for it and disappeared into the bedroom, leaving Skye to stand in the living room and look around. Sitting on the couch, Skye took in the few pictures spread around the room, mostly of Melinda and Phil or Melinda and Natasha. There was one picture of what Skye assumed was Melinda and her family, standing in front of Carnegie Hall, a giant flower arrangement in her arms while her family squeezed in from either side.

“So, what’s the verdict?” Melinda asked before dropping down on the couch with Skye. “Am I still normal enough for you to like me?”

“I don’t know, what did you do with my bag?” Skye said, pulling her legs up on the couch.

“Hung the dresses you brought over and separated everything else out and put it on the chair in the corner so you don’t have to dig as much.”

“Hmm, then yea, I think you can still be normal enough for me to be pretty head over heels for you.”

“Good. That means I am at least getting you through both Kill Bill’s before you run.” Melinda said teasingly, getting up to go put the first DVD in the player. They only paused for bathroom breaks and to answer the door for the Thai food they had ordered, both women yelling at the screen when something stupid happened. By the time Melinda put an end to their movie marathon, they had managed to watch both Kill Bills and the first Charlie’s Angels.

“Do you cook?” Melinda asked over her shoulder while she washed her hands.

“No one ever taught me, but I am pretty sure I can make a mean bowl of ramen noodles.” Skye said from where she was taking a seat on a stool at the bar.

“Oh no, that won’t do. Get your ass in here. I’m teaching you to cook.”

“I am starting to think you just like fixing me.”

Melinda paused, wondering if that really was just what this was. She was doing an awful lot of fixing Skye, even if she didn’t mean to. Was the reason she was interested in Skye was because she could make the girl rely on her, she could be completely in control? Shaking her head, she extended her hand to Skye. “I just don’t want all my hard work getting you to be able to play piano go downhill because you can’t feed yourself once you graduate.”

“I could totally live on ramen noodles and take out.” Skye argued, but moved around the breakfast bar to the kitchen. “I mean I have for most of my life anyway. Breakfast was the first homemade meal I have had since the Avery’s died.”

Melinda turned around to look at her, grabbing the dish towel to dry her hands. “When did they die?”
“I was nine or ten.” Skye said with a shrug.

Melinda shook her head before moving away from the sink so Skye could wash her hands. “Well, that won’t do.”

“What are we making for dinner?” Skye asked, scrubbing her hands.

“Stir fry.” Melinda answered, digging in the refrigerator.

An hour later, they were sitting at the breakfast bar, over full plates of beef stir fry in teriyaki sauce steaming in front of them.

“There was no rhyme or reason to that. You just started cutting things up and throwing it in the pan, and at some point called it done.” Skye accused.

“That’s how you make stir fry. Once when I was in school, I made it with half a bowl of left over ramen, left over salad, a jar of teriyaki sauce, and my roommate’s tofu.” Melinda said before eating a fork full. “Being able to make it with actual food, well that tastes much better.”

Skye put a fork full in her mouth and nodded. “Okay, yea, that’s really good.”

Melinda smiled, easing into small chit chat while they ate. Washing dishes together after dinner might have been so sickeningly domestic that Melinda let her mind play with the fantasy of them getting married, not that she would ever admit it. Glancing up, through the window in the kitchen, she smiled seeing Natasha and Pepper standing over the sink, apparently doing the same thing.

“They are disgustingly cute together, but I feel like they are one of those super couples that would burn the world if they put their minds to it.” Skye said, seeing Melinda watching her friends.

“I think you’re 100% right. So, speaking of super couples, Jemma and Leo…”

“Are too dense and scared to do anything about it.” Skye finished.

“For being so smart they seem awful, stupid.” Melinda said, dropping the last fork into the dish rack to dry.

Skye nodded her agreement before turning to wrap her arms around Melinda’s shoulders and lean in for a kiss.

It started innocently enough, small light kisses, but Melinda was walking Skye backwards to the breakfast bar before putting her hands on Skye’s hips and helping her up onto the bar, falling into place between Skye’s legs a second later.

When they broke to capture their breath, foreheads resting together, Melinda sighed. “God, the things I want to do to you.”

“So do them.” Skye offered.

Melinda shook her head. “I’m not going to treat you like you’re cheap. I meant that last night.”

“God, Melinda! It’s not treating me like I am cheap if I’m telling you to do it.” Skye argued back.

Melinda sighed and put her hands on Skye’s hips, helping her jump off the bar. “Just a day or two more, I promise. Then, you are going to be begging me to let you leave bed.” Melinda promised, giving Skye one last quick kiss.
The sigh that Skye let lose was like her whole body deflating. “Fine. I do want to go out to dinner with you, maybe a movie, at some point this week.”

“That sounds great. Thursday?”

Skye nodded. “Now, I need to go spend some alone time with your shower since you’re leaving me high and dry tonight, after starting one of my dream fantasies.”

Melinda raised an eye brow in question.

“Oh no, no, no. You do not get to ask about it if you are going to hold out on me tonight.” Skye said, one last kiss being placed on Melinda’s lips before she slipped away to drown her arousal in the shower.

When Skye finally came out of the bathroom, Melinda was laying on the bed in the t-shirt from the night before, her knees pulled up to balance a stack of papers for her to read while she tapped a red pen against her chin.

“What’cha grading?” Skye asked, rubbing her hair with the towel to try to get the last bit of water out, while she walked to the bed, her own shirt from the night before on.

“The theory of comp papers. Yours isn’t even in the pile so don’t go looking. I did it first.” Melinda said, going back to making marks on someone’s paper.

“So, what did I get?”

“98.”

“What? What did I miss points for?” Skye asked dropping onto the bed and putting the towel in her lap.

“Spelling errors. You know, rereading what you write it advised. Word won’t fix things that are technically spelled correctly but used wrong.” Melinda lectured her.

“You know, that lecture, much hotter when I’m getting it from someone only wearing a t-shirt and panties.”

Melinda made her last marks, flipping back to the first page of the report and circling the grade before dropping the stack on the floor beside her nightstand. “Mmm, is it?”

Skye nodded, leaning over to capture her lips in a light kiss. “Don’t start things you’re not going to finish.”


Skye tossed the towel into the hamper across the room, letting out a small whoop of victory when it went in. “Man, we do a lot of talking. You would think we are married with a brood of kids running around, not a college student and her slightly older lover getting together for the first time after pinning after each other for like two months.”

“I was not pinning for two months. Maybe a month.” Melinda tried to defend, before looking over at Skye. “Is that something you want? A brood of kids running around, never letting us have sex?”

Skye shrugged. “I kind of want at least one. Or to be a foster parent.”

“You want to give a kid what you never got.” Melinda supplied.
Skye nodded, curling up close to Melinda. “What about you?”

Melinda chewed on her lower lip, debating how to answer the question. And really she should have expected Skye to ask it, so she should have prepared an answer. Finally, after debating in her head for almost a full minute, Melinda huffed and decided the whole truth would be best.

“My feelings on having kids, it’s complicated.” She admitted, carding her fingers through Skye’s damp hair.

“You don’t have to tell me you know. It’s not like we are getting married tomorrow or something, you just asked so I figured I would ask back.” Skye said, tilting her head to look up at Melinda.

“No, I want to tell you. So, before Michael, I wanted kids more than anything else, except playing Carnage Hall, and well I had already played Carnage Hall right after I graduated with my masters. You know, I was a completely different person before him…” Shaking her head, Melinda got back on track. “Anyway, before him I had lists of names picked out and binders full of ideas for kids rooms. I let myself dream about teaching a little girl how to cook, or watching my little boy make the football team, or maybe the soccer team.”

When she paused, Skye moved so that her head was in Melinda’s lap, looking up at the woman while fingers played in her hair.

“Michael changed all of that?” Skye asked.

Melinda nodded. “I burned the binders about a month after the first time he beat the shit out of me, and the name lists with them. I hung onto the dreams for a little while longer, but after about half a year I let those go too. I spent a long time convincing myself that I didn’t want a family. I couldn’t bring a child into that relationship, so I just told myself I didn’t want kids.”

“And now?” Skye asked, finding Melinda’s free hand to grasp it over her stomach.

“Now, I don’t really know. I fight about it with myself a lot.” Melinda admitted with a tight smile.

“Well, like I said, it’s not like we are getting married tomorrow.” Skye said with a smile.

“Sorry.”

Skye sat up, moving to straddle Melinda’s middle. “What are you apologizing for? I asked you a question and you gave me an honest answer. It’s not like I like you any less for it. I mean, Christ, Melinda, we haven’t even had sex yet. We could have sex tomorrow and it be so terrible that we both walk away going, phew glad I dodged that bullet.”

“Sorry things got so heavy.” Melinda murmured.

“Hey, I told you I hadn’t eaten a home cooked meal in like 10 plus years, things were bound to get heavy tonight. We did all the easy, light, talking last night, all that’s left is the heavy, if we aren’t going to do the sexy.”

“Tomorrow.” Melinda promised, gently pulling Skye down to lay beside her. “Can you be the big spoon tonight?”

Skye kissed her cheek before the got comfortable with Skye spooning Melinda. “Of course.”
Chapter Summary

Melinda made promises, now it's time to fulfill them. Also known as, here, have some smexy times.

Skye heard the door creak open this time, when Melinda tried to slip out to do her tai chi.

“You promised me multiple times that we would have sex today. Which means I’m not leaving this bed if at all possible, and I would really like your tight ass to be back in bed too.” Skye said never opening her eyes.

Melinda paused with the bedroom door open, quirking an eye brow. “You know, for my ‘tight ass’ to remain such, I need to go do my tai chi.”

“There is an insult in there about my sexual prowess.” Skye said with a yawn.

“There is not.” Melinda said with a sigh closing the door, already resigned to the fact that she was never getting her tai chi in.

“Totally is. Something about me not being able to make you work up a sweat.” Skye said with a yawn, stretching. “What time is it anyway?”

“Six thirty.”

Skye groaned and threw her arm over her eyes. “Why on earth do you get up so early?” She asked as the bed dipped and Melinda sat next to her.

“Because I’m an adult who has shit to do during the day.” Melinda responded and Skye had to pull her arm away and open her eyes to look at Melinda in the low light of pre-dawn, to see if the woman was joking or actually meant it to sound as mean as it did.

Skye smiled seeing Melinda was smirking. “And so am I, I just start my day at normal fucking hours.” Skye retorted.

“Normal fucking hours?” Hmm, that sounds like I should get out of bed and go do my tai chi, since those tend to be late at night.” Melinda teased.

“I’ll settle for us getting out bed for breakfast if you change back into that t-shirt and teach me to make some breakfast food.” Skye bargained.

“Or, you can put on some clothes and I can teach you to do tai chi with me, and then we can make breakfast.” Melinda retorted.

“Breakfast and then marathon sex.” Skye said with a grin.

“What makes you think my ‘slightly older’ self can keep up with your young ass and its ideas of marathon sex?”
“Well, if you can’t, I’ll just have to aim to make you come until you black out.” Skye said, pushing herself up to sit and stretch out.

Melinda’s breath hitched before she got off the bed, pulling clothing off to put herself back in the t-shirt she had been sleeping in. “I think we have breakfast to make. Carb loading for our marathon.” Melinda said, holding her hand out for Skye to take it.

Which was a mistake.

Skye took her hand, but used it as leverage to pull Melinda back into the bed and on top of her. She quickly tangled their naked legs together, hands going to Melinda’s ass while Skye kissed her for everything she was worth.

“Who knew carb loading would sound so sexy.” Skye whispered when they finally had to break away to breathe.

“We need to get out of this bed and make breakfast now, or it’s never happening.” Melinda groaned, forcing herself to roll over and off of Skye.

“Breakfast. Not the highest thing on the list of things I want to eat right now.”

Melinda groaned. “Stop. We need to eat food.”

Skye huffed before forcing herself out of bed and padding out of the room, making sure to add some extra sway to her hips with the t-shirt sitting in the small of her back so the lacy cheeky shorts and her ass were on display, making sure Melinda had a show.

“That’s not fair!” Melinda yelled from the bed, before forcing herself up to follow Skye into the kitchen.

Melinda taught Skye how to make pancakes, with chopped banana and chocolate chips in the batter. They ate mostly in silence, the morning news playing from the living room TV, with the occasional comment from one of them about something the news was reporting on. Dishes got done, with slight hip bumping between the two of them, and once everything was back in its place, Melinda turned around and pushed Skye to the breakfast bar, lifting her up to sit on it.

“I think you said last night, that this was a start to a fantasy.” Melinda said before leaning forward to press kisses to Skye’s chin and up her jaw.

Skye put her arms around Melinda’s neck, making a noise of conformation.

Melinda paused, letting her hands trail down Skye’s sides to the hem of the shirt, eyes questioning. Skye nodded her consent and a second later the band t-shirt went flying across the room to land on the couch. Melinda felt her breath hitch in her throat. Skye in her dreams was nothing compared to the girl in the flesh. Melinda slowly dragged her nails across Skye’s ribs before leaning forward to capture Skye’s lips in a demanding kiss, slipping her tongue between Skye’s lips, the taste of bananas and chocolate still lingered, while her hands moved up to wrap around Skye’s breasts. And they fit perfectly as Melinda gently squeezed, earning a low moan of appreciation from Skye.

“So what am I doing in this fantasy?” Melinda asked pulling back from the kiss, but continuing her attention on Skye’s breasts.

“Mhm, this.” Skye instructs.

“What else?” Melinda asks before carefully pulling a stool under herself with a foot so that she can
sit and be just a head shorter than Skye. “What about this?” Melinda asked before leaning forward, removing her right hand from Skye’s breast and placing her mouth around the nipple instead, sucking gently.

“Oh god, Melinda!” Skye threaded her fingers into Melinda’s hair, pushing Melinda tighter into her while she sucked at her nipple, occasionally tapping her tongue against the hardened bud.

Melinda pulled back, keeping the suction up until the very last second, releasing with a small pop. “You like that?”

Skye nodded feverishly, trying to guide Melinda to the other breast that had been neglected. Melinda happily followed her guidance, wrapping her lips around the other nipple, teasing it much in the same way she had the other.

Melinda finally had to pull back when Skye started pulling her own shirt off, flinging it over her shoulder to the living room. Skye’s hands found their way to Melinda’s breasts, giving them the same treatment before Melinda slid off the stool and out of Skye’s reach. Hooking her fingers into the sides of Skye’s panties she tugged gently until Skye planted her feet on the vacated stool to tilt up so Melinda could remove them. Quickly the panties went the way of the shirts over Skye’s shoulder before Melinda started kissing her way down Skye’s body, nipping lightly at the skin every so often. Each kiss and nip making the heat pulling in Skye’s stomach just a little hotter, made her grip the bar just a little harder.

And just when she thought Melinda was finally going to get to the main event, Melinda shifted, kissing her hips and then down her legs.

“God, Melinda. Stop. Teasing. Me. And. Fuck. Me. Already.” Each word spaced with a moan or hiss, depending on what Melinda’s mouth was doing.

Melinda grinned from where she was all but kneeling now before licking a long strip from Skye’s ankle to the crease of her thigh and hip. Wrapping her hands around Skye’s hips, she moved her forward a bit but frowned when she realized the height difference on the bar was too much for her to kneel, but still too short for her to stand.

But Melinda May was a problem solver, so a second later Skye found herself quickly wrapping her legs around Melinda’s small waist and her arms around the woman’s neck, while arms that she would never imagine being so strong carried her to the coffee table on the other side of the bar. Once her ass was on the table, Melinda was kneeling in front of her, carefully moving one of Skye’s legs over her shoulder while she placed kisses on the inner thigh. Melinda moved quickly up her thigh before nuzzling her lower stomach, placing light kisses on the trimmed pubic hair.

Skye wrapped her fingers into Melinda’s hair, nails scratching against skin while she tried to urge Melinda down just a little further. Melinda places a few more kisses to the trimmed hair before wrapping her left hand on Skye’s hip and using the other to drag a finger through Skye’s absolutely sopping folds. She briefly lets herself wonder if there is a puddle on the bar and how big of one will be on the coffee table.

Melinda must have just brushed over Skye’s clit in the motion because Skye’s heel was suddenly digging into her shoulder blade and the nails on her scalp scratching a bit harder than before.

“Fuck, Melinda.” Skye hisses, shifting her hips on the table to try to be able to open her legs wider.

“Who am I to deny.” Melinda says before placing an open mouthed kiss to Skye’s clit while sliding her index finger into her, torturously slow. Skye’s answering groan echoed in the room while
Melinda drew intricate patterns over Skye’s clit with her tongue, finally adding a second finger. Curling her fingers to look for that spot she knew would send Skye over the edge, and the whine that ripped itself from Skye told her that she found it. Two well-placed taps over Skye’s clit in concert with the pressure from Melinda’s fingers had Skye screaming and her muscles pulsing around Melinda’s fingers. Melinda kept her fingers moving slowly in Skye but removed her mouth, licking her lips and savoring the slightly tangy taste that was going to ruin her for anyone else.

Skye finally grabbed Melinda’s wrist, gently pulling her away from her throbbing center, where everything felt too sensitive. “Mmm, stop, Mel. I can’t take anymore.” Skye begged, before laying back across the coffee table, her head resting on the couch cushions. After a few hard blinks she realizes Melinda had moved to sit on the couch, pulling Skye’s head into lap. “How do you still have panties on? Better question, how are they not utterly ruined after you did that to me?”

Melinda grinned. “They are ruined, because your o face... God, Skye.”

“That was... I’m going to need a minute, then I’m returning the favor.” Skye nodded.

“Want to move back to bed for that? You know, being ‘slightly older’ I don’t think my back can take coffee table sex as well as yours did.” Melinda teases.

“Never letting that one go hu?”

“Not a god damn chance.”

Skye grunted but forced herself up to stand and move back to the bedroom, holding her hand out for Melinda. Melinda grabbed it, standing up and following her to the bedroom, removing her black boy shorts as soon as she was in the room.

“So, how do you want me?” Melinda asked, a slight quirk to her lips.

Skye drew her lower lip into her mouth like she was seriously going through the *Karma Sutra* mentally to find something suitable.

“It wasn’t a trick question, hun. Hands and knees? On my back?” Melinda said sitting on the bed, acutely aware of her own arousal now.

“Back.” Skye decided, crawling up the bed to kneel between Melinda’s legs. “Tell me what you need.”

“Fast.” Melinda begged.

“I don’t get to tease you like you did me?” Skye pouted before bending down, putting her hands over Melinda’s breasts to squeeze them and nuzzle at the apex of Melinda’s thighs.

If Melinda had any intention of forming an intelligent response it disappeared once the nuzzling began, and instead she was reduced to small moans while her hips rolled to try to force touch where she needed it the most.

Skye quickly took pity on Melinda and moved her hands down Melinda’s body before sliding them under her to tilt her hips up so Skye could focus on Melinda’s center, making a mental note to ask her if she waxed or shaved. Skye took one experimental lick up the length of Melinda’s center, her eyes closing to savor the more sweet than tangy taste, before setting to work on Melinda’s clit, spelling her name and then the whole alphabet with her tongue, over the tiny nub. Satisfied with the moans and whines coming from Melinda, Skye moved down slightly to be able to tongue at her opening, and apparently that was it for Melinda.
Her breath hitched and her back arched off the bed as she came and Skye found her face soaked, while a high pitched whine finally clawed its way from Melinda’s throat. Melinda finally dropped back to the bed hard, a few tears slipping from the corner of her eyes before she looked down to see Skye dragging her fingers across her face before sucking on them.

“Damn, Mel. Warn a girl you’re a squirter before she goes down on you.” Skye said rocking back to sit on her knees.

That woke Melinda up enough to blink. “What?”

“You didn’t know?” Skye asked, carefully getting off the bed to find a towel in bathroom to put on the bed to sop up the liquid that wasn’t on her face. Finding one, she came back in, drying her own face off before lifting Melinda’s ass enough to slip the towel under her.

“No. That’s never…” Melinda muttered, rubbing her face. “Shit, I’m so sorry.”

Skye couldn’t stop the laugh that bubbled out of her before she dropped back onto the bed next to Melinda.

“Are you seriously apologizing to me right now because I was the first person to make you come so hard you squirited, because if you are you need to stop? Because, I am riding on a glorious high from that knowledge right now.” Skye said, laying on her side, getting ready to pull Melinda into a kiss before stopping. “What’s your policy on kissing after I eat you out?”

Melinda rolled her eyes and pulled Skye in to finish the kiss as her answer.

That pretty much set the tone for the rest of the day, an orgasm a piece before eight in the morning. The only time they left the bed after that was to call for takeout, and to answer the door for it, which had Melinda throwing her robe at Skye, hissing at her that she couldn’t answer the door naked. Skye thought it was a perfect idea to retort they wouldn’t have to tip the delivery man then.
Chapter Summary

Date night has an unexpected hang up.

Four days of sickeningly domestic activities interspersed with rounds of life affirming sex, had Skye going a bit stir crazy.

“You said Thursday, for dinner and movie night. It’s Thursday.” Skye said leaning on the bathroom doorway, watching Melinda stretch in all her naked glory on the bed.

“So it is.” Melinda said finally moving to get it up. “What do you want to see?” She asked looking at the alarm clock on the night stand to see it was just after noon.

“The view from here isn’t too bad.” Skye said with a smirk, extending her hand for Melinda to take it.

“You’re insatiable.” Melinda responded, taking the hand and allowing herself to be pulled tight against Skye’s body.

“Aw, you can’t keep up? Besides, we haven’t had shower sex yet, and that’s totally on my to-do list.”

“You keep making comments about my stamina like that, and you’re taking that shower by yourself.” Melinda threatened, letting her hands travel over Skye’s back to grab her ass and pull them closer. “Movie, what do you want to see?”

“Is Blue Jasmine still in theaters?”

Melinda shook her head. “Been out for a bit.”

Skye hummed. “What about Labor Day?”

“You want to make this as date nighty as possible, huh? Yea, I think that one is still there.” Melinda said, slowly walking Skye backwards into the bathroom.

“Yea, I expect a nice dinner after the movie too.” Skye teased.

“What, my cooking hasn’t been nice dinners?” Melinda accused reaching around Skye to turn the shower on to warm up.

“You were the one who spent two days not having world changing sex with me because you kept insisting you didn’t want to treat me like I was cheap.” Skye responded playfully, stepping over the lip of the tub and pulling Melinda in after her.

“Mhm, so I was.” Melinda agreed, slowly moving them against a wall so that she could kiss Skye before moving her way down Skye’s body with open mouthed kisses, gently pulling at skin.

When the finally got out of the bathroom it was almost one, both of them towel drying hair while the
picked out what they would wear. Melinda finally settled on a dark red, spaghetti strap, curve hugging, dress that ended mid-thigh, while Skye pulled out a similar black dress with lace trim.

Melinda had her phone out when Skye came out of the bathroom again, her hair piled up in a very messy bunch on her head.

“I preordered our tickets for the 3:45 showing.” Melinda said tossing the phone on the bed. “You are really going to test my ability to keep my hands off you all night looking like that.”

“Right back at you.” Skye breathed out, taking in Melinda’s appearance. She had pulled her hair back into a tight bun at the base of her neck and put on just enough make-up to add to her beauty without over doing it.

“We should leave before we just end up back in bed.” Melinda said, slipping into a pair of strappy black heels.

Skye nodded her agreement before finding her black flats and slipping them on and following Melinda through the house for her purse and car keys. The drive the movie theater was mostly quiet, only broken by Melinda’s cursing when someone cut her off or did something equally as stupid.

The movie kept their attention mostly, and they had a good laugh when one of the characters looked like Phil’s long lost twin brother. The few other people in the theater shot them a look, but Skye just flipped them off. Once the ending credits rolled, they made their way out into the setting sun.

“So, where am I taking you to dinner?” Melinda asked once they were settled into the car.

Skye shrugged. “Carrabba’s?”

Melinda nodded her agreement before pulling into traffic.

The restaurant was dimly lit when they sat down in a booth across from each other, quickly placing their orders for pasta bowls, Melinda getting shrimp in hers and Skye chicken, before they settled into small talk.

“The movie was good.” Skye said after the waitress walked away.

Melinda nodded. “We’ll have to go see something else soon. Maybe make this a standing date night.”

“I’d really like that.” Skye said with a smile.

“Maybe mix it up with something silly, like ice skating.”

“Do you know how to ice skate?”

“God, what kind of Asian stereotype do you think I am? Of course I know how to ice skate. I took lessons until I was 16.”

“I didn’t want to assume.” Skye said laughing. “You really are an awful stereotype.”

“I made that argument so often when I was little. My mother had the same response, every time, ‘Now, Melinda, stereotypes exist for a reason.’ I rolled my eyes so often as a teenager.” Melinda said, laughing.

“What about your siblings, are they all awful stereotypes?”
“Nah, I was the oldest so they made me do everything. Michaela ended up skating and she teaches it now, but she got to pick that. And my brother is an engineer, but I and he don’t really get along. The last time I talked to him, god I think it was at our parents’ funeral.”

“Shit, sorry, Mel.” Skye said, playing with the piece of bread she was holding. She hadn’t meant to drag up things, and now Melinda was smiling sadly at her.

“Hey, it’s fine. I’m a big girl, and it’s been six years since they died. They died together, which I think is better than one of them living. I only wish they hadn’t died thinking I was getting married to Michael.” Melinda said, her voice a bit distant.

“Are you and Michaela close?” Skye asked.

Melinda shrugged, “As close as we can be living in New York and L.A. respectably.”

“Oh.” Skye breathes out.

They were saved from trying to salvage the conversation by the waitress coming back with their bowls in hand. They were eating when Melinda’s head snapped up so quickly, Skye thought she might have given herself whiplash.

“Hey, what’s wrong?” Skye asked putting her fork down in the bowl.

Melinda was looking right over her shoulder, to where the door would be, her face tight. She yanked her hand back from where it had been laying on the middle of the table, Skye’s under it.

“Mel, honey, what’s wrong?” Skye begged before turning around to see the group of people she was staring at. Skye immediately recognized Nick Fury, the university president, but the group around him was a mystery to her. She thought she recognized the tall brunette standing by a tall, muscled blonde man, from the first night at the bar, but she couldn’t be sure. Melinda must have heard them talking when they came in.

“We need to go.” Melinda finally said.

Skye turned around to look at Melinda, and her half eaten bowl of pasta. “Why? There isn’t an official rule about this. We can always lie and say we were both stood up and decided eating together was less ego wounding.” Skye offers even though it killed her. It was just like being back in the foster system, the families being ashamed of her, wanting to hide her away, or giving her back. And that’s what this was, Skye knew without a doubt, Melinda was ashamed.

“No one is going to buy that.” Melinda snapped, before softly adding, “God, who would stand you up.”

Skye rolled her eyes up, trying to keep the tears away as her stomach felt like it was going to reject the dinner. “I’ll, uhm, I’ll go wait by the car while you take care of the check?”

Melinda nodded, and Skye pushed herself out of the booth, making sure to keep her steps slow and calm while she walked around the group, still waiting to be seated and talking about the brunette woman’s research.

Melinda watched Skye walk out, quickly putting her credit card down on the table so the waitress didn’t think she was getting stiffed and made a dash to the bathroom, because she was going to get sick. She just managed to sink to her knees in front of the toilet before her dinner made a reappearance.
Just when she thought she was finally done, the bathroom door opened.

“Melinda, was that you?” Maria called out.

“Oh god, just kill me.” Melinda groaned before pushing up and leaving the stall.

Maria grabbed her arm as soon as she stumbled out of the stall. “Something not sit right? Should I go tell Steve and Nick that we need to go somewhere else for dinner?” Maria asked.

Melinda shook her head. “Food is fine.”

“Are you sure?” Maria asked, rubbing Melinda’s arm.

Melinda nodded, desperately searching for a way out of this. “I really haven’t been feeling too well.” She lied, mentally rolling her eyes at herself.

“Well, if it makes you feel better you look stunning tonight, Mel. You on a date?”

Melinda almost choked on her own spit, coughing and pulling away from Maria. “Um, yea, I was. She left already though. We aren’t really compatible.” Melinda wanted to take the words back, because that wasn’t true. Spending the last six days with Skye had proven exactly the opposite. They were two halves to a very rough whole, both with scars and baggage but never shying away from it with each other. Cooking dinner with her was so easy and right, even if most the time she was standing behind Skye, guiding her hands to cut something. They were so compatible it physically made her ill to try to hide her away.

“Aw, damn, Mel. I’m sorry. You’ll find someone.” Maria tried to console her, and Melinda just smiled tightly back.

“I- uhm, I’m going to go.” Melinda said, washing her hands before sliding past Maria. By the time Melinda got back to her table the check was just waiting for her signature, along with the rest of their food boxed up. She quickly scrawled her signature on the paper before putting her card back in her wallet and picking up the boxes. Looking up she made sure she had a clear walk to the door before darting out to the parking lot.

Skye was leaning against the car, playing with her phone, and Melinda felt sick all over again. She hit the unlock button, and Skye jumped away from the car hearing the locks.

“I- uhm, I’m going to go.” Melinda said, washing her hands before sliding past Maria. By the time Melinda got back to her table the check was just waiting for her signature, along with the rest of their food boxed up. She quickly scrawled her signature on the paper before putting her card back in her wallet and picking up the boxes. Looking up she made sure she had a clear walk to the door before darting out to the parking lot.

Skye was leaning against the car, playing with her phone, and Melinda felt sick all over again. She hit the unlock button, and Skye jumped away from the car hearing the locks.

“I should have taken the keys. My bad.” Skye said over the roof.

Melinda swallowed hard. “I should have thought to give them to you.”

“Well, I mean with the way you locked up with shame, I can see how it slipped your mind.” Skye spat before yanking the door open and sliding into the passenger seat.

Melinda sighed before sliding into the driver side. The ride back to the house was silent and the rolling in Melinda’s stomach wasn’t showing any signs of easing.

“I’ll go back to the dorm tonight, just let me pack my shit up. I was delusional to think this would work.” Skye finally said when Melinda pulled into the driveway.

“No, Skye.” Melinda tried to protest.

“No, Melinda. We spent almost a week playing house, and getting to know each other, and having life affirming, amazing sex, but when it came down to it, you are ashamed of me. I have had enough
of that in my life.” Skye spat.

“Please stay, for at least tonight. It’s almost eight, we can finish eating, and I’ll explain, and I’ll sleep on the couch, just please stay.” Melinda almost begged.

“You were ashamed of me!” Skye yelled, and in the closed confines of the car it was deafening. “What is there to explain?”

“Please stay.” Melinda whispered.

“Fine. Tonight. Tomorrow I am going back to my god damn dorm.” Skye spat.

“Thank you.” Melinda whispered before grabbing the boxes of food from the back seat and getting out of the car.

Skye followed her into the house, sitting at the breakfast bar while Melinda put the boxes down and grabbed forks for them.

“You said you wanted to explain, fucking explain. Because I spent years bouncing from place to place with people who didn’t want me after a few weeks.” Skye said before shoving food in her face.

“I’m not ashamed of you. I, just, it’s my job, Skye. I can’t lose my job.” Melinda murmured, pushing her food around, still afraid to eat.

“There is nothing official in the rule book about it!” Skye yelled, throwing the fork down.

“But it’s frowned upon, and if Fury decides to fire me for it, there is not a union in the world that is going to back a professor who is fucking a student she is directly responsible for graduating!” Melinda yelled back.

“He can’t do shit unless I complain! Which I’m not going to do.” Skye argued.

“Yea, he can, Skye. I just, can we not do anything public until you graduate?”

“Fuck that.” Skye said, shaking her head. “I have no interest in being your dirty little secret, Melinda. None. You are either with me, or you aren’t.”

Melinda pulled her lower lip between her teeth, biting at it trying to stop the tears but it was useless. “That’s all I can offer you right now.” Melinda said, angrily batting the tears away.

“Yea, I figured.” Skye said, pushing away from the bar and getting off the stool, walking into the bedroom.

Skye had never packed up crap so quick in her life, throwing everything in her bag, almost taking the shirt she had slept in the past few nights, but left it on the bed. Putting the bag on her shoulder she walked back into the kitchen, where Melinda was still sitting on the stool.

“You said you would stay. Please stay, please.” Melinda begged.

“Why? Why do you want me stay so badly, when you can’t even go out to dinner with me without spazzing out if people you now happen to be in the same restaurant?”

“Because, Skye, you are my other half.” Melinda said.

“Then why can’t you eat god damn dinner with me in public?”
“If I lose my job, what are we going to do?” Melinda argued back.

“God, I know!”

“Then why are we fighting about this! It’s less than two months, Skye. We can do two months of you staying here on weekends, and then after you graduate, we can do all the romantic date nights and stuff.”

Skye huffed and took her spot back next to Melinda and dropped the bag at her feet. “Because, I don’t want to be a dirty little secret. Melinda, look at me.”

Melinda turned, their knees slotting together and Skye took her hands.

“I want to wake up every morning with you in bed, or doing tai chi in the living room, but I refuse to feel like I am doing something wrong by wanting that. And you making me a secret, even for two months, it’s going to make me feel like absolute shit. So, maybe we need to walk away, maybe we aren’t meant to be.” Skye said, her own tears marring her makeup and face. “So, I need you to make a decision, am I worth the risk?”

Melinda blinked hard, before turning away from Skye, because she knew if she was looking at her, she would buckle and say yes. “No.” She whispered. “I can’t risk my job for us.”

“Okay then. Can you drive me back to campus, or call me a cab or something?” Skye asked, letting go of Melinda’s hands and wiping away her own tears.

“Yes, um, I’ll drive you back.” Melinda said, grabbing her keys.

That night Melinda slept in the shirt Skye had been using and on the side of the bed Skye had been sleeping on, breathing in the cinnamon scent that was left from Skye’s perfume, while the pillow hid her tears.
The following day, Skye sends Darcy a text, begging to be distracted and Sif and Darcy showed up thirty minutes later, grabbing the bag she hadn’t unpacked from Melinda’s.

“You shall stay at my place until the end of break with Darcy.” Sif declared, while all but man handling Skye into her car at just after ten in the morning.

“I don’t want to intrude.” Skye tries to argue from the back seat, only to be shushed.

“Nonsense, Darcy has informed me that you rarely ask to be distracted, so it must be important.” Darcy nodded from the passenger seat turning to look at Skye. “If you are important to me, you are important to Sif, got it? So is this cookie dough level of distraction required?”

Skye nodded, feeling the urge to cry well up.

“Oh honey.” Darcy reached back to grab Skye’s hand, squeezing it. “We’ll stop at the grocery store on the way back, right Sif?”

Sif nodded. “Of course. One with a RedBox as well.”

Darcy smiled, and Skye tried her very best to smile back, but ended up with something much less than a smile and significantly closer to a grimace.

By noon, the three women were curled up on the couch, Skye in the middle holding a tub of cookie dough with three spoons sticking out of it, while *This Is the End* played on the TV.

“If Emma Watson doesn’t show up soon, I’m calling bull shit on this whole movie!” Darcy declared before shoving a spoon full of cookie dough into her mouth.

“She was very present in the trailers, I feel they mislead us.” Sif agreed, tentatively taking a spoon full of cookie dough. “I greatly regret following the warning about not eating raw cookie dough prior to this.”

Darcy shot her a grin, but stopped when she saw tears running down Skye’s face. While she was watching the start to the stupid comedy, her mind had wandered, and staring down the cookie dough she remembered lying in bed with Melinda and debating the merits of just eating it instead of surrounding it in ice cream.

Darcy silently wiped the tears away. “When you are ready to talk, we’ll listen.” Darcy promised.

Skye shook her head. “Just you and me. I don’t want to do anything that might hurt their friendship.”

Darcy scrunched her face up, but Sif beat her to it, wrapping an arm around Skye.

“If that’s what you want, but the offer is open if you change your mind. You just tell me when to get lost and I will go for a run or something.” Sif promised.

“Th-thank you.” Skye said, her voice shaking a bit more than she wanted to ever admit.

By dinner, Darcy was starting to worry about giving Skye the option to not talk and just exist between herself and Sif on the couch. Sif had gotten up to answer the door, dropping the bag of take out on the coffee table on her way back to the kitchen for plates and forks, when Skye put the long
empty tub of cookie dough on the table in front of them.

“I think I want to talk about it.” Skye finally whispered, fingers picking at the blanket in her lap.

Sif came back with the plates and forks, reclaiming her seat, only to receive a sad look from Darcy.

“I need to make myself scarce?” Sif asked, looking at the food longingly. Sif liked the cookie dough well enough, but she really just wanted to stuff her face with noodles and shrimp.

“We’ll eat first.” Skye agreed, grabbing a container of take out and shoving rice and chicken into her mouth.

They ate in silence, the last bit of some movie that Skye hadn’t been paying attention to playing on the screen. When Sif finished off her lo mien with shrimp, she gave Darcy a quick kiss before retreating to the bed room, with the brief instruction to come get her if they needed her.

Skye put the still mostly full container of chicken and rice on the table and sighed. “What’s wrong with me? Why doesn’t anyone want me?”

Darcy stopped with the fork half way to her mouth, dripping sweet and sour sauce on her hand that was cupped under the piece of chicken. “Who said there was something wrong with you?”

Skye huffed, wrapping her arms around her knees after she pulled them up to her chest. “No one said anything. No one ever fucking said anything. They just gave me back.”

Darcy finally shoved the chicken into her mouth and was chewing slowly while trying to figure out the connection. She wasn’t sure if Melinda had actually taken Skye home, but she was starting to get the idea that she hadn’t, and that maybe Skye had been beating herself up since Saturday over it. But that didn’t explain the already packed bag they had brought with Skye to the house.

With a sigh, Darcy looked at Skye. “I don’t think I am following, cutie.”

“She said I wasn’t worth the risk.” Skye answered, tears slowly edging their way out, despite her best effort to keep them locked away.

“Who said that?” Darcy asked, wanting confirmation before she started planning ways to inconspicuously murder a piano professor.

“Melinda.” Skye answered, breaking down to sob into the top of her blanket covered knees.

Darcy moved over and wrapped her arms around Skye, trying to get her to calm down enough to talk more. “Shh, stop crying, you need to bitch it out, babe. Get angry.”

Skye managed a snort before pulling her head up. “God, you and Sif are made for each other. Anger is always the better emotion for you two, hu?”

“Makes for some amazing sex.” Darcy teased, which earned her a shaky smile from Skye.

“What’s wrong with me, Darcy? Why does no one want me?” Skye asked again.

“Nothing is wrong with you. They are the ones that are wrong. If she can’t see how fucking amazeballs you are, fuck her.”

“That’s the problem. And the cooking together. And the stupid little coupley things, like lying in bed with her while she graded papers. And talking about kids. And it all just felt so fucking right. Like I finally found my home, ya know?”
“That sounds like you moved kind of fast.” Darcy admitted.

Skye shrugged. “You know, we didn’t have sex for like two days, because she didn’t want me to feel like she was cheapening it. And then, when we did, god it was mind melting. I just…” She trailed off with another shrug. “It felt so damn right.”

“So, if everything was rainbows and sunshine, what the hell happened?” Darcy asked.

“We went to a movie and then dinner, and while we were eating, the president of the university and two other people came in, and she freaked out. So we left, and we had an awful fight at her house. She begged me to stay last night, but she wanted to keep me a secret. Darcy, I’m done being someone’s secret. Too many foster families would take me in but I wasn’t allowed to have friends over or go out with them. I was a paycheck to them!” By the end Skye was sobbing again, angry and upset.

“You shouldn’t have to be anyone’s secret. If she can’t love you in the open, she doesn’t deserve you.” Darcy tried to comfort her.

“She said she couldn’t risk losing her job because of me, and I get that. I do, but I just want to be worthy of someone’s love.” Skye cried, turning to bury her face in Darcy’s shoulder, while they held onto each other for dear life.

When Sif tip toed out of the bedroom almost an hour later, Skye was still hanging onto Darcy like she was a life preserver, and she was lost in the middle of the ocean.

“Hey, am I safe to come back out?” Sif asked, leaning over the back of the couch to place a kiss to Darcy’s cheek.

Skye pulled away to look up at Sif, her eyes bright red and puffy. “I’m so sorry, you were supposed to have a great week with your girlfriend and here I am crashing it.”

Sif patted her head. “You’re fine, Skye. Are you okay?”

Skye nodded, slowly pulling herself away from Darcy. “You two should go have some coupley time, I’ll be fine on the couch.”

Sif looked like she didn’t quite believe her, and Darcy was matching the expression.

“Go.” Skye insisted, her smile still not quite meeting her eyes, but Darcy stood up from the couch.

“You come get me if you need anything.” Darcy insisted before following Sif.

Skye got comfortable on the couch, content to pass out for the night, but she couldn’t help the smile when she heard what was probably Sif hitting something, followed by a very aggressive, “I’ll kill her”.
The first day of classes after break had Skye mostly sitting in silence in her classes. Clint gently patted her shoulder, reminding her that he was willing to be a shoulder if she needed it. Phil, mercifully left her alone, instead of trying to goad her into a debate in class, and Skye wondered if Melinda had said something, but chalked it up to looking like hell. They devoutly ignored each other in class, Skye never making eye contact and Melinda making sure to never get in her space or really talk to her. Self-defense was her haven, Sif sparing with her after she got the rest of the class started. Darcy tried to get Sif to ease up after she watched Skye fall into the mats for the tenth time, but Sif shook her head, sending her back to spar with the other girl.

“She doesn’t get it.” Skye said, when Sif bent down to help her stand.

Sif shook her head. “The physical pain is better than the emotional. It’s a coping mechanism. Hopefully she’ll never have to get it.”

Skye nodded. “Exactly. Again.” She said, before falling into the fighting stance and motioning for Sif to attack her again.

It took two weeks before Skye would look up in the piano class, and when she did, her breath caught. It was clear Melinda wasn’t doing much better than she was, dark circles had settled under her eyes and where she used to be full of life while she lectured, she was just going through the motions now. Melinda caught her eyes, before glancing away to continue lecturing on the importance of feeling the music.

If Sif noticed that Skye was going harder than ever before while they were sparing that day, she didn’t say anything. Because Melinda was allowed to be the sleepless one, who couldn’t carry on, she had been the one who made the choice. But Skye couldn’t even make herself hold onto the anger that long. She wanted to be mad, she really did, but deep down she felt like crap, because she could be looking forward to a weekend with Melinda, both of them curled up on the bed while Melinda graded papers while Skye tried her best to distract her. If only she had agreed to be a secret.

She had been avoiding Jemma and Leo since they all got back, and it wasn’t really on purpose, but she couldn’t bring herself to look at them in a happy relationship, but when she and Darcy walked into their dorm room, she really didn’t have an option. Jemma was sitting on her bed, probably doing homework while she waited, and Skye silently cursed that their RA would just let Jemma into their room without any questions. The woman had once tried to defend herself, by explaining that Jemma was just too terrible at lying for her to believe that the girl would be there if she wasn’t supposed to be.

“Goodie!” Jemma all but squealed, seeing the two girls.

“Goodie?” Skye repeated, questioning what exactly was going on.

“We are going to go out, and you are going to have fun, and probably go home with some random woman, because I know you are avoiding me and Leo because I finally listened to you and asked him out, and you are not in a good place.” Jemma word vomited with a smile.

“And you think taking me out to, what, a club, and having me go home with someone random to have, what will probably be, subpar sex, is going to fix that? No thanks, Jem.” Skye said before claiming the bathroom while Darcy was distracted, for her post workout shower.

Skye heard Jemma and Darcy talking, but did her best to just ignore them while she stepped under
the hot water. She couldn’t believe Jemma had thought going out for girl’s night would make it all okay, but then again, it wasn’t like she knew what Skye was thinking anyway.

She was mad, but not so mad that she didn’t want Melinda to move on. She kept thinking back to the conversations they had, and Skye made a decision. She grabbed her wallet on the way out of the dorm room, never telling the other two where she was going.

So three weeks after what Skye would probably always refer to as The Fight, with capitals and bold print, Skye brought a box to her piano class with her, waiting for everyone to leave before she put the box on Melinda’s desk.

Melinda looked up at Skye, confusion clear on her face.

“You, uhm, give me a head start before you open it?” Skye asked.

Melinda nodded, looking at the box, it wasn’t overly large, but it was big enough that she was really starting to wonder what was in it.

“Thanks.” Skye breathed out, before grabbing her stuff and leaving.

Melinda watched the door close and counted to fifty before she opened the box, pulling out the sheet of paper that sat on top of a baby pink binder.

Melinda,

*Please start sleeping. You look like shit.*

*I’m not over you. Not really sure if I ever will be, you gave me something that felt like home for the first time since the Avery’s died, but I need you to be better for yourself. So, these are for you. There is room for you to add stuff.*

*I wanted to give you back something that had been taken from you. I want you to live again. Be happy again. Or try to be.*

*Please, do that for me.*

Skye

Melinda bit her lip and reached into the box, pulling out a baby pink binder and a baby blue one. Opening the binders, Melinda couldn’t have stopped the tears if she wanted to. Skye had taken the time to separate things by color pallet, but she had essentially built Melinda new baby binders, complete with a sheet at the front for Melinda to fill out baby names.

She closed them, slid the short letter into her bag, and hugged the binders to her chest while she walked to her car.

In the privacy of her own living room she sat down with a bottle of wine and flipped through the binders, and realized she had made a much bigger mistake than she was willing to admit. She had told Skye she wasn’t worth the risk, and here she was with proof of the exact opposite sitting in her lap. Each picture had things circled, and Melinda wasn’t sure if they were things Skye had liked or things she had thought Melinda would like, but most of them were right on spot.

Melinda was shaking trying to hold back her tears, but eventually she fell asleep on the couch, holding the binders to her.
She wasn’t sure what time it was when she woke back up, but she was fairly certain it was the middle of the night. Without much further consideration than the thought popping into her head, she grabbed the bottle of wine that was still mostly full and her keys. She hadn’t been able to sleep with Phil before, but maybe now, with a little liquid courage and a whole lot of despair she could give him what he wanted.

And had Melinda not pulled into the driveway at the god awful hour of 1:53 in the morning, focused on that one goal, with probably a little left over liquid courage from before she had passed out, she would have noticed the extra car. With the bumper sticker that Clint had gotten made after being slammed into the hood of his car one too many times by a police officer who didn’t care to realize he was deaf, not being an ass, which said “Deaf Driver”. But she didn’t notice, so she was standing on his doorstep, knocking on his door.

When it finally opened, Phil looked a little beyond pissed, which was slightly amusing to Melinda, because how pissed can a man really look when his last bits of hair were sticking up in all directions and he was wearing flannel sleep pants with a faded army shirt.

“What?” He hissed, only to realize Melinda was looking at him like a kicked puppy while holding a bottle of wine. “Shit, Mel, it’s almost two in the morning.”

Melinda sighed before leaning forward, wrapping her arms around his shoulders and pressing her mouth to his, only to pull back confused when he didn’t respond.

“Melinda, what the fuck are you doing?” Phil hissed, trying to push her away without hurting her by forcing her down the stairs backwards.

“You?” She tried, but it sounded flat even to her own ears.

Phil dragged his hand across his face before pulling her into the house, closing the door behind her. “What the hell, Melinda?”

Which was when she saw Clint. Standing in the bedroom doorway in only boxers that had Scooby Doo on them. And for the second time in less than 24 hours, Melinda was one hundred percent sure that she had fucked up, hard.

“God, why do I keep fucking up?” Melinda asked to no one in particular as she fell onto Phil’s couch, holding the bottle of wine still.

“Phil?” Clint asked, only for Phil to kiss him and tell him to go back to bed, he would be there soon.

“What are you fucking up, Mel? Beyond apparently trying to fuck me while I am trying to have a relationship with Clint, I don’t see anything else. But then again, I am pretty sure that you might be a bit drunker than you are going to admit if you are willing to try to get in bed with me again after last time. Which has me really worried about you driving here.” Phil asked, dropping onto the couch, rolling the kinks out of his neck from where he had been curled around Clint, using the other man’s chest as a pillow.

“Skye. God, Phil, I fucked up so bad.”

“Is that why she looks like someone killed her dog?”

Melinda nodded, before explaining what had happened. Up to and including Skye’s gift.

“Well, you sure did fuck up.” Phil said, patting her on the back. “And now you are going to sleep on the couch, and tomorrow we are going to have a conversation about you trying to get drunker and
have sex with me, and then about how the hell you are going to fix it with Skye. Good night, Melinda.”

Melinda nodded, grabbing the afghan off the back of the couch and curling up.

“You’ll fix it, Melinda. She obviously likes you.” Phil promised, patting her shoulder.

“I can’t even look at her without wanting to cry. I can’t sleep without her… Her side of the bed, it hasn’t smelt like her for almost two weeks, and I can’t sleep.” Melinda said, pressing her face into his stomach where he stood beside her.

“You better buy her one hell of a graduation gift, Melinda. Because you got it bad, honey.” Phil said, kissing bending down to kiss the crown of her head before pulling away.
Highway To Hell

“You are a hard woman to track down, Miss Avery.”

Skye looked up from where she was sitting at the base of a tree, to see the dark haired man with a goatee, pulling off a pair of sunglasses. It was the first nice day of April and she was going to take in as much sun as she could in the next month before she graduated.

“And you are?” She asked, closing the book she had been working in. It was going to take her forever to get the internal music back to finish writing the notes down, but there was nothing to be done about it now. And she had three more weeks before she had to turn it into Melinda and play it for the final.

“Tony Stark.” He said, tapping the stem of his sun glasses against his lips. “Do you ever read your damn mail?”

“Depends on where said mail is getting sent.”

“The group home you have listed as your permanent home address?”

“Haven’t gotten my mail from them since summer.” Skye said. “Why?”

“You are one of two recipients of the Maria Stark Foundation Scholarship for the arts who is graduating this year. I wanted to invite you perform at a concert after you graduate. You can play as much or as little as you want, on whatever instruments.” Tony explains.

“I am?”

“Jesus, did you not wonder where the money for virtually everything came from?”

“I assumed it was loans.” Skye said with a shrug.

“Well, are you going to play? Week after graduation.” Tony asks, his impatience growing.

“Yea, sure, whatever. How did you find me?”

“Hacked into your cell phone and pinged your GPS location. I’ll have a card sent to your dorm with the details.” He said before turning around, slipping the glasses on and walking away.

Skye sat there, stunned for a moment. “Wait! You did what?” She yelled at his retreating form.

If he heard her, he didn’t give any indication, but he was busily texting as he walked away.

Skye pulled her tablet out and did some quick research about the scholarship she wasn’t even really aware she had. Maria Stark had been a great musician, playing mostly stringed instruments behind classical musicians until she met Howard, and had Tony. She had every intention of going back to playing professionally once Tony was in school, but fate was cruel and on the way home from a meeting with an artist who wanted her to play on the next short tour, she was t-boned by a semi-truck and died instantly. Tony had been eight at the time. Howard set up the foundation in memory of his wife and every year they selected four students to have everything paid for while they were in school and apparently Tony wanted to add his mark to the foundation, finally, by hosting concerts for the graduates from now on.

When Skye returned to her dorm room, there was a card tapped to her door with the other to-be
graduate’s name, along with the official date and time for the concert. Skye knew Lena from a few classes, the woman favored the cello and they had spent a lot of time together working on duets. She was a slight black woman, and last Skye had heard she was dating a girl in the criminal justice program, Stefanie.

“Hey, Lena.” Skye said, wedging her phone between her shoulder and ear.

“Skye! Tony got you to say yes to the concert?” She asked excitedly.

“Yea. So I was wondering, did you want to do a cello duet for it? I saw this nifty duet on YouTube for an idea.”

“Yea, that sounds great!” Lena agreed. “Do you want to work on it over the weekends?”

“Yea. That sounds great!” Skye agreed.

After hanging up she found the sheet music for herself and Lena, then picked two songs to play on the piano. Melinda hadn’t said anything about the gift, and Skye was starting to wonder if she stepped over some line that she had agreed not to cross when they split, but she wasn’t stupid, she was still harboring feelings for Melinda. And if this was going to be her last chance to play for Melinda, well, she was going to pour all her emotions into it. Hitting print on the music, she almost wondered if she was making a stupid mistake to pick her music based on wanting to the play them for Melinda, when she wasn’t even sure Melinda would be showing up, but shrugged before heading out to the practice rooms.

Skye ended up spending the rest of the semester only seeing Darcy right before they went to sleep for the night, and all her free time either practicing the two songs she was going to play on the piano, trying to school her emotions so she would turn into a sobbing mess or with Lena, practicing their duet.

Two days before graduation, Darcy and Jemma finally cornered her. “Are you mad at us?” Jemma asked, clearly worried that Skye was really mad.

Skye shook her head. “No, I’ve just been busy. You guys are coming to the concert right?”

“What concert?” Darcy asked.

“The one I am doing with Lena, after graduation. I know I invited you.” Skye said.

“No. You didn’t.” Jemma responded.

“What about the piano final performance thing?” Darcy asked.

“I’m not doing that.” Skye said, digging in her bag to for the invitations for them, shoving it into their hands. “I am playing a cello duet and two piano solos. Stark has promised me and Lena that there will be stupid amounts of alcohol.”

Taking the invitations they nodded. “We’ll be there, Skye. Are you sure about playing the piano though?” Darcy asked.

Skye shrugged. “No, but I still love her, Darcy. One more attempt to get her to realize I am worth fighting for.”

Darcy hugged her, understanding. “If she doesn’t realize that, she’s stupid.”
Skye nodded, before pulling away to finish packing up her half of the room.

Graduation went off without a hitch.

Much to Skye’s disappointment, she didn’t get to see Melinda, beyond a flash of black hair disappearing around a corner.

She wanted to make sure Melinda was coming to the concert, but Darcy was pulling her to the bar before she could find her and make sure.
“Ready?” Lena asked Skye.

They were standing off stage, holding their cellos while Tony Stark made their introductions to the audience.

“I feel like I am going to get sick.” Skye admitted.

The two of them had coordinated their outfit so Skye was back in the little black dress she had worn out with Melinda, only with three inch heels this time, her hair pulled up in the same messy bun. Lena on the other hand was wearing a lilac dress, in a very simple cut that hugged her curves, her hair pulled up to the top of her head, a large band holding it in place and giving it the appearance of a poof.

“We are going to do amazing. And then I am going to sweat my ass off playing more complicated cello pieces while you cool off, and then you are going to murder them with those piano pieces.” Lena said, just in time for Tony to swing his arms towards them.

“And without further ado, your entertainment for this evening, Miss Lena Adams and Miss Skye Avery.” Tony’s voice boomed.

One of her first performance classes had told her that walking on stage was like walking into a bomb zone, it was way too fucking loud and way too quiet all at one time, and Skye really had to agree in that moment. She had never been so happy I her life that the electric cellos were light as she walked across the stage to take her seat and plug the amp in. The guy they had practiced with was already sitting behind the drum kit, attempting to draw as little attention as possible.

A quick glance at each other to make sure everything was situated, and Lena drew her bow across the strings, making the opening notes of Highway to Hell echo in the auditorium. By the end they were both half standing, their bows frayed, and sweat was dripping off of both of them.

But the roar of the audience was totally worth it.

Holding the instruments up, they both took their bows, bows across their stomach.

“Well ladies, I think you have earned a bottle of water and my undying gratitude that you actually know good music.” Tony joked, walking back on the stage.

They both grinned before slipping back of stage for Lena to grab her normal cello to play stupidly complicated classical pieces that actually required her to have the music in front of her.

Skye was watching her, shooting her little reassuring looks when she looked over, when Darcy came to stand by her.

“Hey, so, I don’t want you to look out and freak. Melinda’s here. She’s sitting between Natasha and Phil, like dead middle.” Darcy said, squeezing Skye’s hand.

Skye took a deep steadying breath, before nodding. “Thanks. I, well, I wanted her here. Putting it all out there.”

“You’re going to kill it. That cello duet was the shit.” Darcy said, placing a quick kiss on her cheek.
“Thanks.” Skye said again before she had to pull away to take her spot at the piano, Lena having just finished.

“And, to end this evening, at least before the bitching party, Miss Avery is going to play two songs on the piano for us.” Tony announced, and Melinda watched Skye sit down on the piano bench, looking every bit as lovely as she had the night they went to dinner.

Phil’s hand found hers, clutching it. “You okay?”

“This was a stupid plan. She’s not going to want to hear my excuses.” Melinda muttered.

“You got Tony to agree to pay for the party, so even if she doesn’t it’s still a win.” Phil argued, only to have Clint lean forward and look at her, agreeing.

She didn’t mean to but, she gripped both Natasha and Phil’s hands tightly when Skye started playing.

Say something, I'm giving up on you
I'll be the one, if you want me to
Anywhere I would've followed you
Say something, I'm giving up on you

And I am feeling so small
It was over my head
I know nothing at all

And I will stumble and fall
I'm still learning to love
Just starting to crawl

Melinda stopped listening, not on purpose, tears trying to fight their way out. Watching Skye sway, while she played the simple chords but poured every ounce of emotion into the lyrics.

“Hey, I think she is singing to you.” Phil said, leaning in.

Melinda shook her head, but the song was ending and any doubt she had was erased.

She says I smell like safety and home
I named both of her eyes “Forever” and “Please don’t go”
I could be a morning sunrise all the time, all the time yeah
This could be good, this could be good

And I can’t change, even if I tried
Even if I wanted to
And I can’t change, even if I tried
Even if I wanted to
My love, my love, my love, my love
She keeps me warm, she keeps me warm

What’s your middle name?
Do you hate your job?
Do you fall in love too easily?
What’s your favorite word?
You like kissing girls?
Melinda was up and pushing her way through the row of people. She was going to be up on the stage and pulling Skye into her arms if it was the last thing she did. Because even though she fucked up, Skye still wanted her. Was singing to her, or about them.

Skye saw Melinda get up, but not where she went, so when she stood to take her bow at the end, she was crying silently.

Tony clapped her on the back, pretending to wipe away his own tears. “Really moving, sweetie.”

Skye smiled at him tightly before turning to go off stage and saw Melinda standing there. And she ran. Well as quickly as she could in three inch heels.

Melinda wrapped her arms around Skye, swinging them around. “I’m so fucking sorry.” She cried into Skye’s neck.

“I am too.” Skye cried, forcing their mouths together once they stopped spinning.

“I should have never asked you to be a secret.”

“I should have never made that a line in the sand. God, I fucking love you, Melinda May.”

“And I love you, Skye Avery.” Melinda cried, putting their foreheads together. “Such a good idea.”

“What was?”

“This. I asked Tony to put this together.” Melinda explained.

“You coned me into playing for you?”

“No, I was going to scream my love for you on the stage afterwards if I couldn’t get your attention. This is much better.”

“Agreed.” Skye said, chuckling, and pressing another kiss to Melinda’s lips.
“Shh, don’t wake up mommy.” Melinda whispered, trying to sneak out of bed, the eight year old little girl she and Skye were fostering pulling her hand to wake her up for Christmas morning.

“Too late.” Skye murmured, stretching on the bed. “Come here munchkin.”

“It’s Christmas!” Tara yelled, jumping up onto the bed between them.

“It is, but you have to wait for everyone to get here. Aunt Jemma and Uncle Leo and your cousins.” Skye said.

“And Tasha and Pep, Phil and Clint and their little girl. Don’t you want presents from Uncle Tony?” Melinda said.

“They are all already here!” Tara argued.

“What?” Skye asked.

“They all got here this morning, but they made me wait to get you guys up.” Tara explained, and Skye cracked her eyes open to see Tara was indeed dressed already.

“What time is it?” Skye asked, and Melinda looked over at their alarm clock.

“Almost noon.”

“Oh crap. Go on munchkin, we’ll be out in just a minute and we will do presents.” Skye said, nudging her off the bed.

Tara nodded, bounding out the door, closing it behind her a little harder than strictly necessary. Melinda and Skye moved quickly, getting dressed, before Skye stopped, holding a small box that had been wrapped but not put under the tree.

“Are we sure?” Skye asked.

“Absolutely.” Melinda promised, pressing a kiss to Skye’s forehead.

“Let’s do Christmas then.” She said with a smile, moving out of the bedroom, making sure the gift would be the last thing Tara opened.

Their living room was overly crowded with everyone sitting on every available surface. Pepper standing behind Natasha, arms wrapped around her, Tony standing beside them, looking mopey, which meant Bruce hadn’t shown up yet. Jemma and Leo sitting on the floor, their two year old twins, Willow and Xander, running in between them. Clint and Phil sitting with Anya, acting as her interpreters whenever necessary, but for the most part the thirteen year old could lip read her way through any situation.

Presents were opened at rapid speed, and when finally everyone had settled down, Skye pulled out the last box for Tara.

“This one is really special, okay, munchkin?” Skye said, handing it to her.
She nodded, taking the box from her and carefully opening it. In the box sat a picture of the three of them together, the words *Right Where You Belong* on the frame. Tara lifted the picture out of the box and saw a pile of paperwork under it.

“*What is this?*” Tara asked, looking at the pile.

“*Us, officially adopting you. If you want. We just have to go make it all official in front of a judge.*” Melinda said, kissing Tara’s head.

“*You want to keep me? Forever?*”

“*And ever.*” Skye answered.

Tara launched herself at Skye, wrapping her little arms around her.

The chorus of ‘aw’ that erupted in the room were all but ignored by the family, to busy soaking up each other, finally being a whole.

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