Love Like A Sunset

Summary

Darcy or Darlene, she wasn't sure anymore. It all felt the same. It just meant catching up on some things she might have missed in the meantime. And deciding how she was going to date two men at the same time.
Chapter 1

Chapter Summary

If this is your first time here, hi! Thank you for stopping by. The warning for "Rape/Non-con" was added by me once the 21st chapter was published - please take note of warnings I incorporate at the beginning of said chapter and the 23rd chapter of this fic.

The asterisk (*) in the chapter titles as seen on the full list indicate consensual smut only - rape is not a kink in this fic.

Part 1:

Darcy
Darcy figured she must be crazy.

That’s the only explanation that stuck. Every snippet of that something that she kept in the back of her mind, she never told anyone about.

Not her parents, not her friends growing up.

Not any boy she had in her bed.

The few boys she let get that close to her, she never told them the truth, that every kiss and touch was compared to something she couldn’t quite put a finger on.

The lingering suspicion she had when she lost her virginity that she’d done this before. She knew it was impossible, so she put that down to some kind of insanity she could never admit to.

The visions she had, the splices of something, were too vivid to be just her imagination. These weren’t things she pretended she was seeing.

She saw hands, smiles, lips that she kissed in her dreams. She’d wake with her hand down the front of her panties and felt sad and alone.

How could she suffer from heartache that she couldn’t rightly place?

And yet she did.

So she grew up confused, mostly. About her place in the world, about where she belonged. She was a flaky, drifting girl.

And as a young woman she wasn’t any more settled.

She met Jane and Erik and felt herself become… close.

Close to just being.

After Thor left for the second time, she and the intern moved in together.

But it didn’t last. Like everything else in Darcy’s life.

She wasn’t too bitter about it, but missed the excitement Thor brought. The terrifying thrill of every moment that made her forget the confusing pictures, the strange dreams.

So when Jane decided she was going to move to New York and work with Tony Stark after all, Darcy said yes the second Jane finished her sentence.

To hell with whatever other safer opportunity that could possibly pop up.

But when she met Captain America, face to face, he did a double-take.
“Darlene?”

Darcy felt her heart hammering, it roared in her ears.

“Her name’s Darcy,” Jane corrected, looking confused, if not a little annoyed her assistant’s name hadn’t been properly remembered since she only introduced her a moment before.

Rogers, Captain America, Steve – whatever Darcy was supposed to call him – faltered, gaping a little.

“I’m sorry. You just look so much like someone I know.”

Darcy blinked.

“Someone I knew,” he amended.

A fleeting look of realising this Darlene he knew was dead, like everyone else he knew from the 1940s. He quickly concealed his grief for their sakes, Darcy suspected.

“I’m sorry.”

He left without another word, and Darcy felt like crying.

She couldn’t figure out why.
Darlene had grown up in the same neighborhood as Steve and Bucky.

She was as short as Steve and just as skinny for the longest time, until the summer she turned fourteen and got curvy as a Coke bottle.

Steve always knew she was smart as a whip, but she was undeniably beautiful. Not just pretty, not just sexy. But beautiful to him.

She had long chocolate hair that fell in loose waves past her shoulders. Sometimes she wore braids or threw her hair into a bun. Steve’s favourite days were when she walked to school – the one on the same block as Steve and Bucky’s, but only girls went there – and she had her hair down, the wind blowing her tresses out behind her.

She was always kind to Steve. Since they were neighbours, she knew he lived with Aunt Maggie (not his real aunt, just someone who helped run the boys’ home), and knew he had his asthma and his scoliosis and his anaemia.

She was the one who went to see It Happened One Night no less than eight times, and made Steve go with her for her second time. At the end she turned to him, eyes wide and shiny and she grinned. She said she had the biggest crush on Clark Gable and she made Steve laugh.

She wasn’t noticed by the other boys then, but even in those days her lips looked so kissable, and her mouth was like a cherry in a bowl of cream. Steve was pasty, but Darlene was porcelain.

When Bucky met Darlene at fourteen it wasn’t technically the first time he’d met her. She’d babysat for the Barnes’ several times when Bucky was off playing baseball.
According to Bucky, Darlene was babysitting his sister Penny while his mom was out running errands that July afternoon, when he came home to find her in the kitchen fixing Penny something to eat when Bucky barrelled in, eager as anything for something himself, and he stopped dead in his tracks at the sight of her.

Penny, who was five at the time, worshipped Bucky. She had her two front teeth missing at the time but smiled at him just the same.

“Bucky!”

“Hey, Henny Penny,” he said, ruffling her hair and looking down at her bowl. “You having stew?”

“It’s very thin stew and your mother’s out getting bread,” Darlene said to Bucky.

“Darlene’s been playing hopscotch with me!” Penny cried, smiling again.

Bucky said to Steve he’d pay to see that, Darlene hopping around in her little sundress. Steve didn’t like the way Bucky talked about dames, but it wasn’t as bad as what he’d heard in the boys’ home.

Truth be told, Bucky had so much lust in him he didn’t know what to do with it. At least that’s what Father O’Loughlin said often enough, and Steve had to agree.

Bucky said Darlene wasn’t letting him get too close to her so soon.

“Does my reputation precede me?”

(“You did not say that,” Steve scoffed as Bucky told him the whole story. But Bucky grinned at him, nodding, and said, “She liked me being smart with her.”)

Darlene rolled her eyes and laughed a little. “Your own mama warned me in case you showed up to not give you any ideas.”

They were talking like this while Penny was still in the room, playing with her little doll called Sally made out of rags.

“Why don’t I take you to see a movie, huh? I’ll be a gentleman.”

“A gentleman? You’re sixteen, Bucky Barnes,” Darlene countered, and she looked him over.

Steve didn’t need to be told Bucky would have liked her teasing him, giving him the once-over with her big blue eyes.

“Well, I’d consider you a lady,” Bucky said, hand on heart and everything.

Darlene just laughed softly, a blush growing on her cheeks.

Bucky had the thought, Where has this girl been my whole life? He relayed this back to Steve, which he had to admit hurt a little.

It wasn’t just because Steve had a crush on Darlene. Everybody loved her, and every guy by the end of that summer had a crush on her.
Except everybody knew that Bucky had his eye on her, and that meant game over for every other guy. It was gross and childish, but he’d basically marked her as his, and a part of Steve wished he had first, when she was just his friend.

Not that he had a real chance with her.

But the truth was Bucky silently signalling dibs hurt in more ways than one, but it wasn’t something they always spoke about.

There was one night when Bucky talked his way into Steve’s pants – or, he put his hand in Steve’s pants and didn’t stop until Steve made a mess in his friend’s hand, his lip between his teeth and with his heart feeling like it could hammer out of his chest.

That was before Darlene.

Steve thought he’d only feel that way about Bucky, and most likely he’d burn in Hell for it, but Darlene made him want to touch her, too. He wanted her hand in his pants some nights, but felt so guilty for betraying her like that, for making their friendship seem like nothing.

A year later, and Darlene had been on dates with Bucky.

They hadn’t even kissed, just held hands. Darlene had turned into a flirt but was still hadn’t gone past first place with any boy.

If she had, everyone would have heard about it. Bucky wanted her all for himself, but there were other guys she’d let walk her home from school or take her to Coney Island.

She still babysat for the Barnes’.

One day they all skipped school and the three of them went on a picnic. Actually, they just took a blanket and decided they’d nap in the sun and just talk about everything.

The three of them together were the happiest moments of Steve’s life because he could escape the home with them.

Bucky wouldn’t stop teasing her about her date he’d heard she was on last Saturday.

“What, I love the movies and when a guy says he’s gonna take me, I go!”

Darlene had her brows furrowed but didn’t seem too fazed by Bucky, who was rolling his eyes dramatically.

“But I gotta hear it from Jimmy Flanagan that my girl’s been out with some other fella?”

Darlene shoved at him. “I am not your girl, Bucky Barnes!”

Steve laughed a little at her annoyance, which was a big mistake. Bucky glared at him.

“I’d sooner be Steve’s girl than yours, anyway,” Darlene added airily, her gaze swivelling to Steve who was sitting opposite them on the blanket.

Steve didn’t feel pride. He felt the sting of humiliation. She was joking, and he was the butt of the joke.
“Darlene, don’t.” He lost all humour. To his credit, Bucky didn’t laugh at the joke, either.

“What?” She looked from Steve to Bucky and back again. “No, wait. I’m serious.”

“What?” Bucky snapped. “Since when?”

“Since,” Darlene bit her lip. “Since always. He didn’t need me to… change to pay attention.”

“I didn’t either!” Bucky retorted, visibly hurt. “I was always picking on ya when you came by with your stupid jump rope.”

“That doesn’t mean anything!” Darlene said, and they were all finally back to laughing.

Steve shook his head at her. “It means he liked you, Darlene.”

“And you didn’t?”

“Of course I did,” Steve said, feeling his face grow hot. “But look at me.”

Quick as a flash, Darlene shuffled over to Steve on her knees, and leaned over and kissed him on the mouth, leaving both Steve and Bucky stunned.

Darlene didn’t even look like she’d expected herself to do that, because she stared wide-eyed at Steve, her voice wavering.

“There.”

“What the hell was that?” Bucky cried, and he pulled her back toward him. “Just wait a minute!”

It felt suddenly weird for the three of them to be sitting there. It should have been a private moment, Steve’s first kiss with a girl – because it wasn’t his first kiss.

That happened a year before, soon after Bucky got him off for the first time, after Steve had the shit kicked out of him (Bucky’s words, not his) during recess.

The two boys were in the bathroom, missing class, while Bucky dabbed at Steve’s bloodied nose, worried it was broken.

(It wasn’t broken, Steve knew what a broken bone felt like.)

Bucky leaned over and kissed Steve full on the lips, and Steve felt like he couldn’t breathe.

So when Darlene kissed Steve, it wasn’t just his first kiss with a girl. She admitted it was the first kiss she’d ever had.

“But what about Jimmy Flanagan?” Steve found himself asking. “He said –”

“I’ve heard enough about Jimmy!” Darlene spat. “He’s a dirty little liar and a creep.”

Bucky wasn’t so concerned about boys telling lies. He crossed his arms.

“Let me get this straight. You like Steve.”

“Yes.”

“But you’re seein’ me.”
“I see you sometimes.” Darlene added. “I like you, too, Bucky.”

Bucky burst into a smile, all forgiven. “Oh.”

Steve hadn’t quite recovered from the kiss. He thought he’d fallen right into another one of his dreams, and he’d soon be waking up with a shameful hard-on he’d have to quickly hide from the other boys that slept on the floor beside him.

Darlene was frowning at him, tucking her hair behind her ears. Steve knew this was a nervous habit of hers.

“Oh, brother,” she said. “I’ve shouldn’t have done any of that.”

They sat in silence for a few moments while they thought it over.

Bucky was the first to speak, like always.

“We can work it out. We can be friends. But sometimes…”

“You can kiss us?” Steve tried, and Bucky nodded his approval.

Darlene flushed.

“Oh! That doesn’t sound… so bad.”

---

Chapter End Notes

I love the enthusiasm for this so far. :) I also can't stop daydreaming about this fic, which must be a good sign. Am I writing Steve okay? It's my first time writing him paired with
anyone, let alone two different characters. What do you think of Darlene? You'll learn more about her as we go along, I promise.
Chapter Notes

I can't help myself. I know this is a third chapter already, and I barely broke a sweat. It feels like this is writing itself. The following is a bit pwp but hey, who doesn't like a little smut first thing in the morning? We all know Darcy does. (I do!)

From now on, all chapters with smut will be marked with an *.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Part 3:

Darcy

"Stars fading but I linger on dear
Still craving your kiss
I'm longing to linger till dawn dear
Just saying this

Sweet dreams till sunbeams find you
Sweet dreams that leave all worries behind you
But in your dreams whatever they be
Dream a little dream of me..." - Ella Fitzgerald

Darcy tried sleeping and only got a couple hours here and there during her first week at the Tower.

Each day was interesting. She met Tony Stark and Dr. Banner.

Jane was still kind of struggling to share her research with others. Ever since SHIELD intervened that time when Thor first landed to Earth, Darcy’s favourite scientist was a particularly cautious
creature, and understandably so.

Darcy stuck to data entry mostly, and kept to herself since that initial encounter with Rogers left a bad taste in her mouth.

(Only figuratively. Truth be told, the moment he stepped into the room two days later to ask Banner a question, Darcy felt all the air being sucked out of the room and her cheeks burned. Her arousal was so sudden and embarrassing, she had to turn away from everyone while she gathered herself, pretending to read on her phone. She was so sweaty and weird.)

Rogers looked uncomfortable, and Darcy felt his gaze burning into the back of her head.

(If those walls could talk. If those walls could talk.)

“What did he want?” Darcy asked Bruce, who was at another desk in their shared lab.

He looked up from his papers, eyebrows raised.

“How do you care?” Jane butted in.

She got like this when she was too preoccupied with work – all tact threw out the window. Bruce tended to be kinder, though he was himself just as absent-minded as Jane.

“No reason,” Darcy snapped. She sighed. “Kind of hurt he called me Darlene the other day.”

“Is that all?” Jane said, going back to her whiteboard and erasing that morning’s calculations.

Darcy dropped it.

She dropped it because if she elaborated, they’d see her get too caught up in it. She didn’t want Jane or Bruce to see her get upset over something so minor.

Even though it hurt her deep inside like someone twisting something in her gut sharply.

That night she Googled too much and didn’t sleep at all.

She searched ‘Darlene’ and ‘Captain America’ with no results. So then she tried ‘Darlene’ and ‘Steve Rogers’, and all that showed up was a Steve Rogers on Reddit talking about some porn star named Darlene Sweet which made Darcy cringe and cross out fast.

This was a stupid quest. Darcy put her phone on its charger and rolled over to make herself sleep, with no success.

It didn’t sit well with her that she looked so much like some dead chick.

No, that wasn’t fair.

She was probably someone really important to Steve and Darcy should show some respect.

(Why did she care, and why couldn’t she get his face out of her head now?)

She snaked a hand into her underwear and felt around, but she was dry as a bone.

She gave a frustrated growl and withdrew her hand, and glared up at the ceiling in the dark.
She must have drifted off, but she didn’t remember closing her eyes.

The dream was one she’d had many times, but this time she didn’t just observe it.

She felt the skin she was touching. She was sitting on her knees and kissing a boy – a young man. He was the same size as her.

He had soft lips and sighed when she slipped her tongue into his mouth.

She could smell his skin, he was that close to her.

“Darlene.”

Darcy shot up, gasping.

She was back in her room, the sun rising above Manhattan.

She felt her face, ran her hands over her arms. There weren’t any marks, no signs of spit like she’d been kissed.

She hadn’t seen a face before in a dream.

It was Captain America’s face. But not… him. Not his size now.

“Jesus Christ,” Darcy whispered.

Suddenly inspired, she got dressed and went to find Rogers. She told herself that if she asked him about Darlene, he could put her mind at rest and she could carry on working with Jane in the lab and not want to crawl into a pit every time Rogers was mentioned.

She got to his floor and knocked on his door.

After a moment, he opened the door. He must have been up already. Darcy realised it probably had just gone six AM.

She felt ridiculous, and blushed furiously.

You played yourself!

“Hi!” she squeaked, and her hand shot up to give a jaunty wave.

(So stupid. What the hell was wrong with her? Couldn’t she play it cool for five seconds? She felt sorry for everyone who’d ever met her.)

“Darcy.”

Steve was wide-eyed and staring back at her.

He towered over Darcy, but she could see his cheeks were turning red as he scratched the back of his head awkwardly.

“I’ve got some questions.”

“Okay. Shoot.”
Darcy took a deep breath and willed herself to calm down. It would all be over if he noticed how sweaty she was suddenly under her arms.

“Who was Darlene?”

Steve looked up at the ceiling.

“Um.”

“You said I looked like her.”

“I could be wrong. It was a long, long time ago.”

He gave a small sheepish smile and Darcy had the sudden urge to kiss him.

(Where the hell had that come from? What was her deal?)

“I had a dream last night I was kissing you!”

The words fell out of her mouth and Darcy wanted to run for the elevator and never look back. She’d call up her mom and beg for her to let her come home because she was definitely never going to live that down.

Darcy looked anywhere but his face and cringed. “I mean, it looked kinda like you. I tried finding Darlene by myself.”

“Why are you telling me this?”

Darcy was relieved he didn’t sound scared or disgusted, just really confused.

“I’m trying to establish trust or something!”

She felt his hand on her shoulder and she looked down to see his massive mitt squeeze her gently.

“Darcy, it’s okay.”

“Oh, I’m a mess.”

“Okay,” Darcy said, finally looking back at him again. She sighed. “I’m a mess.”

“Join the club. I thought a dame I’d just met had stolen my best friend’s face.”

There it was again, that hurt. Maybe he was smiling at her and being so nice because she reminded him of this Darlene.

There was a beat.

“Darlene grew up with my friend Bucky and me,” Steve said.

A faint smile played on his lips.

“You even sound like she did.”

“I’m not related to her,” Darcy said, and she found herself blinking hard. “There’s no-one in the Lewis family named Darlene. Never was.”

“It must be just a coincidence, then.”

“I doubt that.”
She said it before thinking. “I mean, I don’t think it is.”

“You’re probably right.”

They stared at one another.

Another beat. Darcy could feel her hands becoming clammy.

“You want to come in?”

Rogers gestured behind him with his thumb, and Darcy tried to shrug, tried to be the picture of nonchalance.

“Sure.”

Darcy pushed past him and went through his front door, looking around.

His room was just as bare as hers, and Darcy had only just moved in. There was hardly a mark that anyone was living there, except for the box of cereal on the kitchen counter and the small TV in the living room.

There wasn’t even a kitchen table or a clock.

Before she could ask, Steve spoke up.

“I grew up during the Depression and then I was in the army,” he said, crossing his arms and looking around like Darcy had. “I’m not one for creature comforts.”

“Not me,” Darcy said, shaking her head. “I like everything to be very homey.”

“You’re going to hate me for saying it, but Darlene was the same.”

(She didn’t hate him. She wanted to kiss him. And of course Darlene was like that. She sounded wonderful.)

“She made stuff out of newspapers to hang around her family’s place. She made me draw pictures for her to stick up on the walls. She—”

He pulled himself back from the fond memory in time to see the tears escape from Darcy’s eyes and fall down her cheeks.

“I’m sorry.”

He sounded as flustered as the first time her met her that week.

“I should go.”

She had to get away. She had to hide. The urge was too strong to hold him but he didn’t know her. She didn’t want to ruin his morning.

“Shit,” he muttered, which was very un-Captain America-like of him. “Don’t go.”

Darcy was walking to the door but he blocked her path.

“Darcy, please. I’m sorry. Don’t.”

Darcy stopped, only because she didn’t want to push past him again. It didn’t stop her from feeling
like the walls were going to cave in on her.

She let out a shuddering breath and swiped at her eyes with the back of her hand.

“Your face, I think it was you. Before the serum.”

Rogers let out a breath Darcy hadn’t realised he was holding. She’d been too busy trying not to look his way.

“I was kissing you in this tiny bed. It felt so real.”

Steve didn’t say anything.

Darcy bit her lip and squeezed her eyes shut before pressing on.

“I’ve had those dreams all my life. These fragments.”

She blinked back more tears.

(If she told him and he thought she was crazy, the worst that could happen was he’d avoid her forever, but she might get over it.)

She felt his arms pull at her, pulling her closer. She opened her eyes in shock and let out a surprised sound as he reached to cup the back of her head and kissed her on the mouth.

It felt like nothing Darcy felt before.

The boys she kissed in school and college and beyond. It was never like this.

Their lips didn’t slant together like this. They didn’t fit together so well.

She didn’t sigh and moan like this with them when their tongue was in her mouth.

She was making out with Rogers now, one arm at her waist and his other hand in her hair.

It was such a hard and demanding kiss that she couldn’t help returning.

She closed her eyes and felt something break apart.

She sucked his bottom lip and he groaned.

“You even taste like her,” he murmured. “How can that be?”

A young man, definitely Steve Rogers. She knew that now for certain. He was holding her hand, and so was someone else. Taller, with dark hair. He didn’t turn his face to her.

The images flooded her mind’s eye and Darcy pulled back suddenly.

“Coney Island,” she breathed. “Oh, my God.”

“Darlene.”

“I’m,” Darcy struggled to fit it all together. “I’m her. I’m not. But… I am.”

“How can that be?” Steve said again.

He was stroking her face, his eyes blown and lips wet and swollen from kissing. He pressed his
forehead to hers.

Darcy shook her head hopelessly.

The feeling of being hungry for days and scrounging together every coin the three of them could find and going to Coney Island. They stole away for a day. Darlene was aching between her legs. Had she popped her cherry last night?

Darcy felt a flurry of things she couldn’t properly name.

Steve kissed her neck and she whimpered in his ear.

It was enough for him.

They had sex.

It wasn’t unlike Darcy to rush things. She had a habit of hooking up with guys quickly. This felt like a natural progression, despite having met Steve only a few days ago.

And yet she’d known him forever. He was in her dreams, with that other person Darcy didn’t quite recognise.

Steve carried her to mattress in the other room, falling on top of her and pressing against her.

He was all broad shoulders and muscles and Darcy felt lost in the sensation of it all.

She couldn’t keep herself quiet, but she was sure Steve didn’t mind.

He took off her clothes, kissing each exposed bit of skin tenderly. Darcy had never felt worshipped like this before. But something about this felt so familiar.

“Steve.”

He took off his shirt and tossed it aside, and Darcy gulped.

“Darcy.”

He said her name this time. It was a relief.

They kissed again, skin on skin. Her chest was pressing into his, and she rubbed herself on his bare thigh.

She let out another whimper when he knelt between her legs and kissed her clothed mound.

She always dreaded other guys going down on her. She always anticipated a disappointment with them, but she was growing wet with just the thought of him being close to there.

If this was a dream, she never wanted to wake up.

He moved her panties to the side and gave her lips a long lick, before shoving the material further back and pushing his arm down onto her hips to steady her.

Darcy’s legs were already shaking. Just the swipe of his tongue made her jump.

Steve let out a groan as he licked into her, between her lips before sucking her clit into his mouth. Darcy moaned long and loud, realising he was enjoying this as much as her.
He added two of his large fingers and it wasn’t long before Darcy crashed over the edge with a hoarse scream of his name on her lips.

(Did she taste like Darlene down there, too? She had to. The way he was looking at her made her think she was exactly who he wanted. It was almost too easy.)

He was up again and kissing her, the taste of her on his mouth and Darcy felt giddy from it all.

She pushed him off to take off her bra.

Steve kissed her there, too, sucking a nipple into his mouth and rolling the other with his fingers.

Darcy reached around to his boxer briefs and tried pulling them down for him, but he stopped her hand by wrapping his own fingers around her wrist.

“You sure?”

“You’re seriously asking me if I’m sure, Steve?” she shot back at him, and he smiled, kissing her lightly.

“How did I get so lucky?”

“Shut up,” Darcy said, managing to get her hand loose and shoving the fabric down to his thighs and looked down to see his cock standing to attention. “And fuck me.”

He kissed her again, hard and wet.

“That’s what you said last time.”

Darcy felt the knowing nag that she had said that before, but to a different version of Steve. He was smaller and his skin looked paper thin across his bones. She hadn’t treated him like he was delicate then and she hoped he didn’t treat her like she was delicate now.

She grabbed his cock in her little hand and squeezed, stroking him up and down. He was long and thick and she hummed in appreciation at Steve’s moan of pleasure.

“I’m bigger there too, now.”

“You were never tiny in that department anyway,” Darcy murmured, lining him up with her.

Steve pushed inside her and made a choked sound as she clenched around him.

“Fuck,” Darcy moaned, as he filled her up and bottomed out.

He pressed his forehead to her shoulder and managed a chuckle. “I can’t believe I almost forgot what this felt like.”

“Me either,” Darcy breathed, and she moaned again as pulled out only to slam back into her.

He went slow at first, but that didn’t last long at all, especially because Darcy couldn’t stay quiet if her life depended on her. The way his pelvic bone grinded against her clit had her making keening sounds and grabbing at him to steady herself.

He felt so big and good inside her she could barely stand it.

“I’m gonna come,” she wailed, her chest heaving.
He pressed onto her clit with his thumb and she felt apart, shuddering all over and only pulling him closer to her with her legs wrapped around his waist.

All she could hear was the sound of his flesh beating against hers, skin slapping hard and wet with sweat.

He was relentless until he let go himself – hot and pulsing inside her and shuddering with his own orgasm as he held her hip flush to his.

When he pulled out, they both groaned a little at the sensation.

He collapsed beside her on the mattress.

His underpants were still around his ankles, and Darcy noticed she was still wearing a sock.

Chapter End Notes

Clearly, I have no chill. So, there's that. Thanks for the nice comments and kudos I've been getting. I'm hoping to update this again soon. Let me know what you think!

Edit: Any mistakes you find are my own as this is un-beta'd. I usually find these after I publish a new chapter, so please be patient while I tidy behind the scenes.
Chapter Notes

Just more pwp, but purely Steve x Bucky this time. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 4:

Steve

"Two bros, sittin' in the hot tub, five feet apart 'cause they're not gay!" - Anthony Padilla

Was it considered cheating if they were all in love with each other?

Steve wasn’t sure. Because he and Bucky weren’t absolutely truthful with Darlene.

They couldn’t ever be.

Steve knew there was good inside her. That was obvious to everyone.

She couldn’t know this, though.

(No-one could. Steve wondered if he’d die with this secret.)

They stayed in the park all afternoon, that same afternoon Darlene kissed Steve and he felt his heart grow in his baby bird chest.

She didn’t turn to Bucky and kiss him, too.

For whatever reason, Darlene was keeping him at a safe distance.

Steve did the same.

Bucky got him to come back to the Barnes’ place, and checked to see if anyone was home.
They had time, and Bucky pulled Steve into his room he shared with his two brothers.

“Time for what?” Steve said, though he knew he was only playing dumb.

Bucky kissed him with the kind of desperate force Steve knew he was probably saving for Darlene.

They fell onto the small mattress on the floor, which they knew would bruise.

Steve wanted this so badly but hadn’t said a thing to Bucky.

He couldn’t bring this up easily, and he didn’t know why.

Except maybe he couldn’t handle the rejection if he asked to be touched.

Bucky’s tongue was in his mouth and Steve froze.

“What is it?” Bucky asked, drawing back.

His hand was already under Steve’s shirt, feeling his skin.

Steve felt like he was on fire but something wasn’t right.

“What are you doing?”

Bucky’s hand stopped gliding up Steve’s skinny chest.

“Do you want me to stop?”


He pushed Bucky away, who looked suddenly alarmed, like he’d been caught doing the wrong thing.

Steve hated it.

“Are you doing this because Darlene won’t touch you?”

Bucky laughed at that, long and loud. He had to cover his mouth.

“What should my answer be to that, punk?”

Steve didn’t know what he was feeling. It was a tangle of jealousy and possessiveness he’d never felt before this strongly.

He felt like punching Bucky. But for what, he wasn’t sure.

“If you said yes, I think I’d understand,” Steve mumbled. “I wish I could –”

“Are you trying to say you’d fuck Darlene, Stevie?” Bucky teased.

Steve felt his cheeks burn. “Yes.”

“So… so what if I want to make you feel good right now?” Bucky retorted, suddenly defensive and void of humour. “I want to touch you, too.”

“I’m not her!”
“I know that, punk.”

Bucky sighed and moved away from Steve, sitting up and running a hand through his hair.

“I don’t know who I’m more jealous of. You or her.”

Steve pulled him back down and kissed him, pushing his own tongue into Bucky’s mouth this time, much to Bucky’s surprise, because he made a disbelieving chuckle against Steve’s lips.

“You will sleep with her eventually.”

Bucky didn’t sound upset. He just sounded matter-of-fact.

Steve shook his head. “She was just being kind.”

“She told me that the other week, alright?” Bucky was shaking his head now. “Just give her time. She’s only fifteen. But she’ll be grateful if you treat her with respect. Not like a piece of meat like I would.”

“That’s not true, Buck,” Steve mumbled. “You wouldn’t be like that with her.”

Bucky was pretending it didn’t affect him as much as it did. Steve could see the genuine hurt in his eyes when Darlene kissed Steve right in front of him.

“Enough,” Bucky grunted, and his hand was making its descent to the waistband of Steve’s shorts.

Steve whimpered as Bucky wrapped his hand around his cock.

He jerked into his best friend’s fist, craving the friction.

Bucky moved away only to take off his shirt, and Steve followed suit, toeing of shoes and socks, his own shirt and shorts.

When Bucky pulled off his underpants without shame, so easy, Steve blushed at the sight of Bucky’s own cock beneath a thick thatch of dark hair between his legs.

Bucky wrapped Steve in his arms and kissed him again, biting a little.

Bucky pressed him into the mattress, grinding his cock into Steve’s thigh.

Steve saw how sticky and shiny the tip was and squirmed a little under Bucky, way too excited.

They were kissing and grinding against each other, the mattress scratchy on Steve’s bony butt.

Steve wished he was taller. He could match Bucky’s strength, then.

He couldn’t think.

It was too hot that day. The sweltering humidity was making the room feel like a swamp.

Steve knew now what the smell of sex was like.

(He couldn’t believe this was happening with Bucky. It was really happening.)

Steve opened his eyes to see Bucky’s long lashes – long like a girl’s, long like Darlene’s – against his cheek. His cheekbones prominent and his lips full and wet.
“Steve,” Bucky’s voice was low and rough. “Touch me.”

He sounded wrecked. Steve obliged, his hand shaking as he started to stroke Bucky.

He did it like he’d done to himself.

But he wasn’t sure even now if he was doing it okay.

“Like this?”

“Yes,” Bucky pressed into his palm. “Shit.”

Steve just kept stroking, squeezing a little harder and twisting his wrist as he went up and down. He watched as Bucky started huffing a little.

“Shit,” Bucky said again, almost in alarm. “I’m gonna –”

He came in white, hot spurts all over Steve’s fist, spilling on his own stomach and a little on Steve, too.

Bucky shoved Steve’s hand away, and for a moment, Steve thought he’d done something wrong.

He gave Steve just a second to collect himself before his hand was on him again, pumping hard.

“Oh.”

The sensation always came like a surprise to Steve.

It was because he didn’t have the privacy to touch himself that often in the home, so when his own orgasm came only a few moments after Bucky’s, it was like it was being wrenched out of him.

It was like Bucky had wrung him out, and he suddenly felt so exhausted.

Bucky dabbed at them both with his shirt.

“I’ll wash this somewhere. Where Mom won’t see.”

He threw the offending shirt aside and kissed Steve again, softer.

They lay together in a sweating, sleepy tangle of legs and bodies on the mattress, and Bucky tucked Steve’s head under his chin with his arms around him.

They couldn’t tell anyone.

That went without saying.

They went out the fire escape later so Steve could get back to the home.

It was too late for baseball.

“Do you wanna live with me, when you leave that dump?”

Bucky wasn’t being a jerk. It really was a dump.

Some of the boys joked there were rats that lived there that were bigger than Steve.
Steve felt a little bloom of hope. They were both seventeen now.

Almost grown.

(Steve stopped growing two years ago, but they never mentioned that. He hated his body so much sometimes that it made him want to spit acid.)

“Sure. That sounds swell.”

They don’t kiss goodbye when they arrive.

Bucky gives him a look like he wished he could.

He winked and sauntered off, whistling to himself.

Chapter End Notes

Yeah, so I just used a Vine as a quote for a chapter. Apparently that's something I do. Why bother something poignant like Anne Sexton when you can use memes brah???
(I'm the worst and I'm only slightly sorry.)

Next chapter will be Bucky's perspective. Which will be... a challenge for me.

P.S. I have a writing Tumblr. You can follow it here. Thanks for the kudos and comments.
Chapter 5

Smut - also, my first time writing from Bucky's perspective. Please try to ignore any errors or typos you may find as this is un-beta'd and I usually find them later. I swear I'm getting better at editing before I publish. Thanks! x

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 5:

Bucky

"...and so I'm through with... baby, I'm through with love." - Marilyn Monroe

Bucky knew the week was going to be a doozy.

It might have been the fall coming so fast that everyone wondered where in the hell summer went.

It might have been Steve already having chilblains.

(Anything like that made the worry curl around and squeeze Bucky’s heart because there wasn’t anything he could do to stop Steve’s ailments no matter how much he tried.)

When he smoked on the fire escape, he wasn’t sure what was smoke and what was just frigid air.

When he woke on the hard mattress, his cock hard and insistent, almost pleading – he didn’t know what to do with it.

Or even who it was for.

There were girls going back years now – but none of them he really cared that much for.
He didn’t try to impress them as whole-heartedly as Darlene.

She never gave him an inch but managed to smother Steve in kisses like it was what she was born for.

It made something inside Bucky burn.

She owed him nothing. He knew that.

But to tell him she liked him the same as Steve - that felt cruel.

He would have let it go but he was already sunk into this.

So on a Thursday in September when the guys from the neighbourhood were walking to school, and the rat bastard Flanagan spoke to him –

He wasn’t going to dignify that cretin with any answers.

It wasn’t until Flanagan got graphic that something just snapped.

“Hey, Barnes, since I know you ain’t gettin’ any tail…”

His stupid weasel face came into view and Bucky rolled his eyes, shoving his hands back into his jacket pockets and walking on with Steve.

“My fingers, Barnes! Lemme do you a favour and tell ya what Darlene’s cunt smells like!”

Barnes wheeled back around, taking all but three strides to meet Flanagan.

He didn’t even have to think.

“Fuck you,” he snarled, punctuating his words by popping Flanagan right across his face.

He fell to the ground, but Bucky wasn’t done.

He heard Steve’s warning but he didn’t care. He wasn’t even there anymore. He was above them somewhere, and Flanagan’s words were still ringing in his ears.

He smashed into the other side of his face with his left fist. He grabbed the back of Flanagan’s head by the hair and threw his skull to the ground, hard and unforgiving.

“BUCKY, STOP!”

He was back to Earth and Steve was pulling him off with all his strength, pleading him to go.

“Shit,” Bucky muttered, realising the bloody mess he’d made of Flanagan.

(He wasn’t sorry.)

They dashed off, some of Flanagan’s friends yelling after Bucky that he was dead meat, but it wasn’t like he hadn’t hurt that shit before.

They didn’t have Darlene with them, which Bucky thought was probably for the best.

He didn’t realise he’d split his knuckles until they got to the park and threw themselves onto the grass.
It hurt, but it wasn’t the kind of pain Bucky minded. Knowing how it got there was enough for him to see them as keepsakes, but Darlene didn’t see it that way.

She found him in an alley by her house, after he walked Steve home.

“I heard what happened,” she said, arms crossed and her mouth a hard line.

She didn’t bother with any kind of greeting.

Sometimes he liked that Darlene was straight to the point, but that night he wasn’t expecting her to be this mad at him.

“Did you hear what he said about you?” Bucky snapped, and then realised his mistake.

“What did Jimmy say about me?” Darlene asked.

She looked so angry she might strangle the next person who spoke to her funny.

“You don’t need to hear it,” Bucky said.

He gave her a pointed look that he meant to convey some kind of warning.

“I really want to know.”

“No, you don’t,” Bucky muttered, sighing. “It doesn’t matter.”

“You’re right! For once,” Darlene said, her voice heavy with sass. “There is nothing that matters enough to risk your education over me.”

“Don’t give me that shit!”

Bucky was surprised by his own yelling. It came on like it was bubbling under the surface and he hadn’t realised, and neither had Darlene.

She flinched, and for a second, Bucky thought he must be the worst guy in the world.

Instead of apologising for biting her head off, he took out a cigarette and lit it with a matchbook he kept hidden from his mother at all times.

He took a deep drag from it and blew it out his nose to steady himself.

“So what now?”

Darlene’s voice was weaker, more tired and sad.

“I finish school, go work at the docks,” Bucky took another drag and felt the familiar pang of jealousy that had become his closest friend that past year.

“You’ll marry Steve.”

Darlene’s eyes grew wide. “Bucky.”

“Come on, doll,” Bucky said, the pet name completely lacking affection because he was on a roll.
“We knew you’d leave me for him anyway.”

They hadn’t even kissed. Hadn’t even kissed. So Bucky kept waiting and hoping, kept trapping Steve into whatever it was they were, wanting Darlene and hating himself for not letting go just even a little.

“That’s not true,” Darlene said, her voice now barely a whisper.

She sounded like she was trying not to cry and Bucky willed himself to not react by touching her, to comfort her.

Bucky flicked ashes to the ground, shaking his head.

It wasn’t that she owed him a roll in the hay or something. It was because all the while she never gave him any indication. She was just words now, and words weren’t enough for Bucky.

“How come you don’t just dump me or somethin’?”

Darlene hesitated. Bucky spotted a tear escaping but she swiped it away with her sleeve.

“Because you… scare me.”

Bucky let out a disbelieving huff of a laugh.

He hadn’t even squeezed her knee or pinched at a curve like he had a few years ago at dances and behind the church with other girls, the ones that talked and got him nearly castrated by his mom.

“I can’t win,” he muttered, throwing down his cigarette and grinding it into the ground, not caring anymore. “I tell you to dump me but you’d rather spare my feelings by necking with Steve every weekend like I can’t see it happening right in front of me.”

Darlene gulped.

“And I let you do it to me!” Bucky finished, throwing a hand up. “Goddamn it, Darlene.”

He turned to leave, but she shot out a hand and grabbed at his jacket.

“No! That’s not –”

“What? Let go, Darlene.”

“I’m scared by what you make me feel, okay? Do you understand?”

Bucky stared down at her, her furrowed brow and full lips with her bright blue eyes.

Bucky fought against all doubt and grabbed her by the waist, turning them both towards the brick wall and pushed her against it, their noses brushing.

“You say the word and I stop,” he hissed, his breath blowing the hair out of her face. “I’ll stop, Darlene.”

“Don’t.”

She kissed him, and it felt like everything he ever wanted. Her tongue slipped into his mouth, and her moan went right to his cock.
His hand tangled into her hair, and his other arm wrapped around her middle, pulling her hip flush to his. The grip of his fist in her hair tightened as he pushed her against the brick again, and she gave a little gasp that made Bucky want to eat her alive.

She liked this. She liked him rough.

He moved his lips to her throat, pressing open-mouthed kisses there, and she gasped some more.

He felt breathless and dizzy with desire.

“Bucky,” she breathed into his ear. “This is how you make me feel.”

She took his hand off her waist and tried guiding it between her legs, but even over fabric Bucky knew better.

“Darlene,” he snapped back to reality, and his own erection was painful in his pants. “Baby.”

Darlene purred, but he whipped his hand away before he can even cup at the material.


“But I want you,” she said, her eyes hooded and tempting him.

(It was scary how much Darlene and Steve sounded the same at a time like this. It was Bucky’s own fault for corrupting them.)

“I’m not going to pop your cherry in an alley way,” he murmured, and she was kissing his face.

It was everything he wanted but it wasn’t right.

She kissed his neck on tiptoe and he had to physically push her off.

“Baby.”

Darlene stopped finally, sighing dramatically. “Alright.”

Her hair was all mussed and her lips looked wet and swollen but Bucky was sure he doesn’t look any better.

He shoved his jacket down a little to cover the front of his pants and Darlene was cheeky enough to giggle at his suffering because she’s Darlene and wants to kill him.

He walked her home when he’d calmed down enough, and then he went home to his mom who was already waiting to give him a real slap on the cheek for fighting again.

He did detention for a month but when he was done every day Darlene was waiting for him, and sometimes Steve was there as well.

Sometimes Steve gave them space, and Bucky was so grateful he couldn't put it into words.

It was Darlene’s idea to fool around when her parents aren’t home.

It just happened Bucky was there to inspire her.

He knew she’d used her hands to get Steve off a few times, and Steve returned the favor
enthusiastically.

“I want it to be you,” she said in an off-handed way that had Bucky thinking he’d missed half a conversation while on a date – the three of them that time.

Bucky’s got his arm around her shoulder and gives her a confused look.

Steve doesn’t look confused, and that should have told him everything.

“I want you to be my first,” Darlene said, and Bucky looked right at Steve.

“She told you this?”

“Yeah. And I’m okay with it.”

“Are you sure?”

(It’s like she isn’t even there, not on the bench with them in the park where they’re freezing their asses off.)

“Yeah,” Steve said with a little laugh. “We thought about it enough.”

“You came up with this just the two of ya?” Bucky said, pointing at Steve and then Darlene.

“Yes,” Darlene said, her voice low. “And I want it to be you. So what are we going to do?”

Bucky wanted to whisk her off somewhere that second like he did with Steve, but it wasn’t supposed to be quick and easy like with two guys.

He expected, being a dame, she needed the time and patience she deserved.

(Sometimes he really did wish he’d been less demanding of Steve in that sense so quickly, but it wasn’t like Steve ever told him no. And he asked him.)

So one afternoon when there wasn’t babysitting or parents to be found, Darlene snuck Bucky into her place, pulling him through the front door before her neighbours could come out to see who was making her giggle so much in the hallway.

She caught him off-guard by cupping him through the fabric of his pants, his dick already half-hard just from being around her.

He panted a little when she didn’t stop rubbing him, shoving him into the front door that closed just moments before.

Darlene made him tingle all over, but the way she moaned stopped him in his tracks every time he kissed her.

When they made it to her room, Bucky was already taking off his own clothes, toeing off shoes and peeling off his shirt.

“Bucky,” she whispered, so fond, at his sudden naked chest.

They hadn’t seen each other so bare before. All the fumbling kisses were close to fully clothed, save
for a bit of fabric pushed aside to kiss.

Bucky knew if he saw her naked before that day, he’d have a hard time saying no to her.

She raked her nails down his chest, gliding fingers through the bit of hair on his chest.

He kissed her lightly, testing the waters as he reached to unbutton the front of her blouse.

Darlene nodded her consent, her eyes bright with anticipation.

His hands shook a little – he couldn’t help it. He’d waited over a year for this. He was sure his nerves would get to him, for the first time ever.

Darlene helped him, understanding and patient herself. She was a saint. He couldn’t understand how she gave him the time of day, she was so spectacular.

Her skirt came off, too.

And then his pants.

Just his boxers and her underwear between them.

Her generous chest spilled over her brasserie and Bucky pressed her into the mattress, kissing the tops of her breasts with slow pecks, nuzzling the sensitive skin.

Bucky heard the hitch in her breath as he pulled the material aside and sucked her nipple into his mouth, breathing in her smile.

“Your nipples,” he murmured, as Darlene grinned at him. “Are fantastic.”

“Thank you,” she purred. “Lose the pants.”

The blood was all but in his dick by this point. He rested his face on her chest for a second to collect himself.

She wriggled away and bold as ever, peeled off what was left to cover her before flopping down beside him on the bed, giggling at his astonishment.

The curve of her chest, the dip of her waist – Bucky couldn't get over how she was built. Her soft stomach, and the flare of her hips – and just the creamy colour of her made him want to slide right into her there and then but –

He laughed a weak little laugh and suddenly felt self-conscious.

“Baby,” Darlene whispered, tilting her head up to his. “Come over here and love me.”

It sounded like something out of a dirty book that could circulate the neighbourhood boys – but Bucky knew it was purely her.

Purely Darlene.

He cradled her face in his hands and kissed her, just because.

One hand gliding down her thigh and bringing it over his hip, she shivered at his touch and Bucky decided to make her do that again, whatever it took.
Darlene was pale all over except the rosy lips of her pussy beneath the thatch of hair between her legs.

When his fingers first glided over her there, she jumped a little at his touch.

He was gentle, just barely dragging his digits through the wetness, before circling the little bud at the top.

Her breath hitched and Bucky watched her eyes widen a little, but she moaned.

He watched her face as he tried circling a few times, and she sounded surprised by the sudden pleasure.

“Good?”

She bit her lip and nodded.

She moaned louder when he pressed down on the bud, sliding one finger to her entrance before working himself in slowly.

It took a lot out of him to be gentle and slow. He wanted to throw her down and just go for it. Darlene kept looking at him with a kind of impatience after a while.

“Come on, Bucky.”

He kissed her again, slow and tender.

(He was as nervous as her. She had to know that because he was shaking too.)

Her little hands grabbed his boxers and shoved them down a little, so his ass felt the cool breeze coming in and he groaned against her mouth.

His underwear was thrown away too, and Darlene stared at him now, speechless.

“Baby. You’re makin’ me second guess this.”

“I’ve never seen one out like that is all.”

Her hand reached again, lower, and cradled his balls that he could already feel tightening.

He sputtered a little in surprise.

(Darlene was going to kill him.)

“Gentle. Darlene,” he warned. “Please, baby. Do you have the…?”

“The rubber?” Darlene quipped, looking amused at his discomfort. “Sure.”

She had it hidden in a secret pocket sewn inside her coat the whole time.

There was an awkward pause while Bucky rolled it on, before lining them up.

“This is gonna hurt,” he murmured.

Darlene looked giddy with excitement by then and just coaxed him forward.
It most likely wasn’t what she expected because the second he was inside her just further than the tip, she covered her mouth with her hand and hissed.

She was wet but she wasn’t used to it. Bucky tried not to feel like the worst guy again for doing this to her.

Her back arched and her gasp was not the same ecstatic hitch like before. It was sharp and barely enough for her to breathe.

Bucky pulled back. He tried moving back out but Darlene locked him in with her thighs, quick as anything.

“Darlene, you gotta let me stop.”

“Ah,” she whimpered. “Just stay.”

Bucky relented, sighing as he stroked her face. He knew this would happen – he’d hurt her and then she would have wished Steve was the one who did it because he was careful and not an ape like him.

She relaxed enough and nodded again, egging him on.

He went slow because he couldn’t stand her crying in pain because of his cock.

To his utter surprise, Darlene rolled her hips a little and sighed contentedly, bringing him down to kiss her again.

“You feel good,” she murmured, and that’s what set him off.

He got faster and more urgent, wanting to really go for it but still holding off.

Darlene made the most incredible keening sound after a while that took him over the edge in only a few more strokes.

When it was over, his forehead resting in her hair and breathing her in, he suddenly knew.

“I love you.”

Chapter End Notes

I probably need to stop listening to so much Jeff Buckley because then I think I'm being poignant when it's mostly just me trying to describe Bucky's dick or Bucky's butt so excuse me while I roll my eyes repeatedly at the next to zero plot in this chapter, too.

Thanks for the comments and kudos as always!
Darcy caved and decided to confide in Jane.

“So, I’ve been reading stuff,” she said vaguely, as her diminutive boss gnawed off a chunk of her granola bar and chewed absently, her eyes glued to her laptop screen.

Darcy was sitting beside her at the bench, Bruce’s Bunsen burner pushed aside to make room for her own lunch – a bowl of ramen and a cup of black coffee - and the other doctor wasn’t in the room, which meant it was an ideal time to bring this up.

“Oh huh,” Jane said, swallowing with a hard gulp.

Damn if she could throw those things back bar after bar without gaining a pound.

“What is it, Darce? You look – hey, you actually look really good today. What’s happened?”
Darcy could tell her it was Steve and her wearing each other out for the third night in a row last night, but they hadn’t discussed disclosing their trysts to anyone else.

(But that was it, probably. Being fucked into a mattress in such a way that left her glowing.)

“I’m drinking more water.”

“Oh. You were saying?”

Now that Jane is actually looking at her Darcy knew she could talk without being ignored unintentionally. Jane usually meant well but sometimes had selective hearing especially if she had a breakthrough.

“I’ve been reading about reincarnation,” Darcy said.

She waited for Jane to give her a suspicious look but she remembered she saw Jane searching about having a moon in Virgo the other day just for the sake of learning something new. She also Googled a lot of different actors whose names she often forgot.

(“You know! He’s that guy from the… other show… damn it! I have to look him up.”)

“And what have you found out?” Jane asked.

“Well, the people who claim to be reincarnated have freakishly good memories of their past lives,” Darcy said, “I mean, like, they can tell you exactly where they died and how and when. Even done to where on the body they suffered a killing blow or a bullet.”

There was a beat. Jane nodded.

“So what does that say about reincarnation?” Darcy asked Jane.

“That people are more inclined to believe in clairvoyance than the rebirth of a soul,” Jane concluded, and Darcy gave a dramatic sigh.

“Exactly.”

Jane finished her granola bar and threw the wrapper in the nearest trash can before rolling her shoulders and looking back at Darcy with a significant look.

“You got a reason for researching that?”

“Kind of.”

Darcy bit her lip but decided to dive in.

“I sometimes have these, uh, pictures in my head that I can’t explain.”

“So you think it’s from a past life?” Jane said, eyebrows hiked up in such a way that Darcy felt like an idiot for saying anything.

She thought about back-pedalling but she’d already got this far.

The time that she spent with Steve, however brief it had been, made her believe that the feelings and inklings she’d had before meeting him weren’t fleeting and unimportant.

They were memories, but she wasn’t sure if she could prove it to someone like Jane.
“I guess so. And don’t look at me like that.”

“Look at you like what?”

“Like I’m stupid or ridiculous,” Darcy mumbled, crossing her arms. “I could point out that you and I have witnessed plenty of fantastical things.”

“Yes, and I was the one to point out to Erik that science and magic can go hand in hand.”

“How do you explain something so vivid like what I’m describing, then? Scientifically.”

Jane paused, obviously thinking how to phrase something in a non-condescending manner.

“I’d call it… a transference of energy from another lifeform. An interpretation of that energy’s information to your subconscious.”

“God, Jane,” Darcy said, laughing a little. “You make everything sound so sexy when you put it like that.”

Jane humored her enough to have her run some tests on Darcy.

Darcy put on this little hat with wires all through it, some of the wires had to be stuck to her head and face, which she didn’t like.

Bruce watched with interest and then started helping with the experiment.

Jane didn’t betray Darcy confidence by not telling Bruce exactly why they were measuring the activity from Darcy’s brain.

“Okay, so now think about the… thing,” Jane mumbled, and Bruce and her watched as Darcy closed her eyes.

She meant the memories. Darcy had to think about Steve and the other guy, who had to be his friend Bucky holding her hands and walking her through the crowds at Coney Island back in the 1930’s.

The sun was shining, and people were jostling past each other.

She could smell the carnival food.

“Slow down!” Darlene called to Bucky, who was dragging them behind him as they head towards the Ferris wheel.

“She’s lighting up,” Jane said, bringing Darcy back to the lab.

“Is the she in this the machine, or my brain?” Darcy asked.

“Both,” Jane and Bruce said together.

There wasn’t anything unusual happening so Jane insisted on an MRI. Tony Stark happened to have one on another floor.

“What the etiquette for using this kind of equipment?” Darcy wondered aloud afterwards as she and
Jane were walking back the elevator.

“Do I buy Stark a glazed ham or something like that?”

Jane smirked. “I think a card should do.”

Once they were back on their lab floor, they almost collided with Steve.

Darcy felt her heart swell just at the sight of him.

His whole face lit up, but she could tell he was supressing it a little in front of her boss.

“Hey, I was looking for you. Banner said you weren’t in,” he said, and Jane’s eyebrows hiked for the umpteenth time today.

“You were?” Jane said, and Steve looked a bit bashful.

“I think he meant he was looking for me,” Darcy said in a low voice.

Jane narrowed her eyes slightly. “I gathered as much.”

She walked off, leaving Steve and Darcy in the hallway.

“Can I take you to dinner tonight?”

They hadn’t actually been on a proper date. Darcy didn’t count any kind of horizontal dancing they did. Not that they limited themselves.

They christened the shower, the couch and the kitchen counter.

(Steve always said “I love that I can throw you around now”, and Darcy would explode into giggles only to be suppressed by an accompanying moan seconds later.)

“Sure,” Darcy said, lips quirking up. “We ran some tests.”

“You okay?” Steve said, suddenly concerned.

“Yes, I’m fine. It’s just Darlene stuff.”

Steve looked behind them through the glass doors and watched Jane open up her laptop and start typing.

“What does she know?”

“Just that I see things I can’t explain. She’ll probably just chalk it up to being an over-active imagination.”

Darcy tried laughing lightly but failed.

If she was honest, she was disappointed by the lack of answers.

“The other guy I see is Bucky, right?”

Steve’s head whipped back around at the name.

“Yeah.”
“You said we did everything together. But I can only remember you and I together in bed. I don’t even see his face when I remember Coney Island.”

Darcy was blinking hard again.

She was sick of trying not to cry all the time. She was so emotional these days she could hardly stand it.

“We both dated you. You were sleeping with him, too,” Steve said. “Not to be crude, but we shared.”

“And you were okay with that?” Darcy couldn’t help sounding astonished. “That was way ahead of your time.”

Steve shrugged. “Well, we both love you. Loved you.”

That awkward correction that made Darcy feel what he felt – sadness, loneliness and loss.

(It was the kind of isolation she couldn’t ever describe properly. It was immeasurable.)

“I love you, Steve,” she said, and he smiled again, slightly less miserable looking.

They went to a pretty tacky 1950’s themed diner that night that made Darcy cringe a little because the Elvis impersonator host sang off-key and the burgers were ridiculously overpriced for what they got.

Steve ate two mains plus a milkshake and dessert.

As they ate their apple pie with ice cream, Darcy felt she had to say something.

“I can’t explain this, any of this,” she said, and Steve didn’t have to ask what she meant.

“I can’t either.”

“Do you believe in God?”

“Yes,” Steve said, without hesitation. “Do you?”

“I don’t know,” Darcy admitted, putting down her spoon and sighing. “Because I think if I did, I’d say God was cruel.”

Steve nodded slowly. “I can’t see it any other way. But that’s me.”

“What kind of God makes you an orphan, Steve?”

Darcy’s eyes are suddenly filled with tears as what she said suddenly hit her.

“Why does He make Bucky die like that, and makes you frozen for the rest of a century?”

Steve looked puzzled and stopped chewing. “Darcy.”

“It’s not so much that I’m angry,” she pressed on, shaking her head. “I just want to understand. I want to understand how He can justify leaving me alone for all my life, never quite remembering who I was, or who the people in my dreams were.”
“I don’t know, Darcy,” Steve said, and now he sounded troubled.

It made Darcy want to cry even more.

“I’ll be right back,” she said, and got up from her seat to retreat to the bathroom.

She stared herself down in the mirror and willed herself to cut it out.

She wasn’t going to ruin a perfectly good date.

But it wasn’t like either of them could pretend they weren’t missing that other part of their three.

She didn’t remember Bucky too well. Maybe she would soon.

She knew her grief would hit her like a tonne of bricks and there’d be little to no way of explaining that to Jane if she suddenly fell apart.

The random crying she could handle, but not the black moods.

She realised just then, and felt stupid for not doing so quicker.

She had a whole other set of parents back in the 1930’s she’d find out about.

When she got back to their table, Steve was staring into his bowl with a glazed expression on his face.

“How?” Darcy tried, laying a hand on his shoulder.

“Can we get out of here?”

His voice sounded so small Darcy thought her heart would break.

They threw down some notes – probably an absurd amount for what they got – and left without another word between them.

They rode back to the Tower in a cab in complete silence, their driver chatting on his Bluetooth as Darcy watched Steve stare out the window.

“Do you want me to stay tonight?” Darcy whispered, clutching his hand in hers.

Steve nodded, frowning.

They went to bed without so much as a kiss, which made Darcy feel small and scared. She had to be brave for Steve, though.

Something told her this was just the beginning, and she was right.

She awoke to him thrashing beside her, having a nightmare of his own, his eyes screwed up and his whole body tensed.

“Steve,” she said urgently, trying to stroke his face.

Maybe if she could soothe him, she’d calm down too.

He was scaring her.
“Bucky,” he groaned, and his eyes shot open, his breath coming sharp and short.

He seemed to remember where he was, when he was now.

He looked right at her with bright wide eyes and said, “Darlene. You’re still here.”

“Yeah, I’m here,” Darcy said, though her voice was choked. “I’m here, baby.”

She leaned down and kissed him, pressing him into the mattress hard to ground him.

“I’m never going to leave you.”

Their kissing grew deeper, and she clutched his face in her hands as she straddled him.

“Do you promise?”

Steve was sounding choked, too.

(Her heart. Her heart was breaking.)

Her hands scrambled around, to pull his sweat pants down and her own pyjama shorts.

She wasn’t wet enough and it stung, but she sank onto him.

“I promise,” she whispered.

He pushed up into her and she shuddered.

“Fuck.”

It was rough and hard and didn’t last long at all, but Steve whimpered desperately as he came hard inside her, leaving fresh bruises from his fingers on her hip while his other hand was tangled in her hair.

(If only she could fuck away the pain.)

The next morning when Darcy arrived at the lab, Jane was still under the impression she and Steve had their first date last night, and that everything was still casual.

“How was it?”

“The pricing was abysmal,” Darcy said with a dramatic roll of her eyes. “But he paid. It was fun.”

“Not bad considering you hated the guy the other week,” Jane muttered.

Darcy looked over at Bruce and he exchanged a look with her from behind Jane, but Darcy put a finger to her lips.

Jane could really miss some obvious things sometimes.

“Yeah, funny that,” Darcy said. “I never said I hated the guy. He’s really cute.”

“Oh,” Jane said.

She went back to her laptop, and for some time there was complete silence until Jane piped up again.
“Hang on. He’s not your type.”

“He’s the same kind of build as Thor whom I’ve never said wasn’t attractive to me.”

“You know what I mean,” Jane said. “He’s not the kind of guy you’d hook up with. You like those weedy nerdy types.”

Darcy could have laughed out loud but chose to just nod at that and shrug. Steve from the 1930’s was exactly those two things – nerdy and weedy, though she’d never ever describe him as that herself.

It wasn’t that she was suddenly attracted to Steve now because he was his post-serum self. It didn’t hurt, was all - his arms looked like that and he could lift her above his head.

With the conversation dropped, Darcy retrieved a small card from her desk and held it up. It had a picture of a tank with a sheep next to it.


Jane snorted, rolling her eyes before getting back to her notes.

“I thought it was cute,” Darcy muttered.

“I think it’s cute,” piped up Bruce, who gave her a small smile.

“Yes, Dr. Banner!” Darcy said, and mimed high-fiving him, which he returned. “Nice.”

“By the way,” he added, as he got up from his desk with his mug of tea. “Little late – Tony told me to pass on ‘you’re welcome’.”

“Oh,” Darcy said, but she knew she’d give him the card anyway. “How did he know that?”

“Friday,” Bruce said, and he walked off, probably for a refill.

Darcy turned to Jane. “Speaking of Friday, when are we moving to the compound like everyone else?”

Jane looked up. “Soon. I was just testing the waters here first.”

“And the verdict?”

“I think my research is safe with these guys. And your boyfriend.”

“He’s not my boyfriend,” Darcy said. She tried to sound a little defensive.

Though Steve was. It was hard to pretend he didn’t mean much when he did. Darcy had to tread a fine line without attempting to explain destiny or fate.

But what did any of that mean, anyway?

After the brief navel gazing at their first date, Darcy attempted further questioning a few days later while she sat on Steve’s couch, with his arm across the back of the couch behind her.
They were watching The Wizard of Oz.

“Is it destiny, or fate?” Darcy asked, and Steve shrugged.

“Maybe. Do you think it is?”

“I have no idea,” she muttered, frustrated. “What even happened to Darlene?”

Steve looked at her in the eye for a second and she saw a flash of something.

“Uh, she moved to California.”

“What?”

Why on Earth would she do that, when she had what she had with Steve and Bucky?

“I don’t remember any of that.”

“Well, I tried to look her up when I –” Steve cleared his throat awkwardly. “When I woke up.”

“And?”

“Nothing. She vanished. There’s nothing. I don’t even think she married.”

She couldn’t stop thinking about that half of a look he just gave her.

“Steve, What happened?”

Steve sighed, and paused the movie to properly engage. He turned to face Darcy.

“Bucky convinced her to leave. She wanted –”

She knew the answer before he said it.

“To be an actress.”

“Yeah,” Steve put a hand on her leg. “You remembering now?”

She struggled with a feeling like resentment inside her.

“She – I – was hurt. Bucky said he was going to enlist, right?”

“Yeah. Everyone wanted to. I tried.”

She was aware of him getting hit back so many times until he was selected for the top-secret program that made him a super soldier.

“How come I didn’t marry either of you?”

Steve smiled, a little bitter beneath it all.

“It meant you had to choose between us. You couldn't marry us both.”

“What about my mom and dad? Who were they?”

“Just your mom, Charlotte.”
And just then, she saw a face.

Why did she feel like running to find answers? These people were long dead. The only person Steve knew from his past that had still been alive when he was found in the ice, that was Peggy, and she’d died last year.

“This whole thing makes me feel sick,” she mumbled, and she pushed off the couch to get a glass of water.

Steve followed her, and for the first time she was irritated.

“You’re so calm.”

“I’m not,” he retorted. He sounded hurt. “I keep thinking this can’t be real.”

This wasn’t fair of her, and she knew that. She was acting like such a princess, and he definitely wasn’t calm that other night he had the nightmare.

“I’m sorry.”

Steve shook his head.

“Bucky’s dead,” she said suddenly, her eyes filling with tears.

“Yeah, he is,” Steve said, and he reached for her.

He folded his arms around her, just holding her still.

“I don’t even remember all of him.”

“You will. And it’s going to hurt like hell.”

She should have listened.

She should have expected the blow.
Chapter 7*

Chapter Notes

So I thought I knew where this way going but then it kind of got away from me. Enjoy!

P.S. Please ignore any errors you may find. I will be quickly fixing these behind the scenes but I was way too keen to get this chapter up.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 7:

Steve

- Rhett, if you go, where shall I go? What shall I do?

- Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn.

- Gone with the Wind

It was raining after school again.

Art school. Steve needs to specify better when he talks about his life, because a lot of people still thought he was still a kid in high school on account of his height.

(He never blamed them.)
He hoped he didn’t get any of his papers wet, and he thought his messenger bag was pretty good at preventing that.

They lived together now, him and Bucky. They had for a few months.

Darlene was an almost constant fixture in their lives.

The week they moved in, Steve and Darlene slept together for the first time.

She was under the impression he was a virgin, but Steve hadn’t considered himself one for years.

Whatever he and Bucky hid away and did together – that counted as something to him.

He wasn’t expecting her. He went straight to his room after spotting Bucky at the kitchen table, throwing back a beer.

(He squeezed his shoulder on the way to his bedroom.)

When he opened the door, Darlene was under the covers, looking like she was wearing nothing.

(Steve was right, she was naked and waiting just for him.)

“Hey, Steve.”

Steve gaped a little and then his face broke into a smile.

“Hey.”

“Had a good day?” Darlene asked, head tilted.

She had the sheet wrapped around her, but Steve could easily make out the shape of her.

Steve nodded, looking at her face, then her bare shoulders.

Darlene let the sheet fall a little, giving him an eyeful of her bare chest, and Steve felt his heart in his throat.

She was just stunningly beautiful and he wanted to touch her everywhere.

(It was crazy how both she and Bucky had this strong an effect on him. It was like something in his blood.)

“Do you want to join me?”

Darlene had the wicked look in her eyes Steve recognised more easily these days. She usually got it around Bucky when he didn’t wear a shirt.

(He could swear Bucky did that to tease them both.)

She got that look in her eye when they kissed. She usually told him his lips were pretty or something along those lines.

“Sure,” Steve said, voice kind of small.
He looked behind him, where he saw Bucky sitting at the kitchen table.

Bucky’s eyebrows rose and he mouthed “Traitor.”

Steve supposed his friend was only half-joking and he shut the door, leaving himself and Darlene alone. He figured he’d pay for this somehow later but it was worth it.

Darlene giggled a little, beckoning him to her.

“Bucky let me in.”

“I’ll give you a key for next time,” Steve said, starting to unbutton his shirt.

He didn’t know where that came from but his cheekiness made Darlene giggle once more.

There were few things that made him happier than that sound, and she was still making it as he settled down beside her, slipping under the sheets.

“You’ll have to let me sketch you sometime.”

“Oh?”

Steve reached for her and kissed her cheek, soft and sure. Darlene moved to kiss his lips, breathing him in and sighing.

He looked down at her beneath the sheets.

He had some idea of what she looked like, underneath her dresses. She was curvy and soft everywhere he’d touched before now.

The first time he’d touched her between her legs she squirmed and shook and Steve thought his dreams had come true.

This was a girl he had over Bucky for a while.

Not that Darlene was a thing, and not a person, but some base, Neanderthal part of his thinking made him proud that he was the first person to make her come apart like that.

(Every time that happened, he just wanted to do it again and again and again and again.)

Her breasts were round and larger than his hands, and as he slid his palm across her bare shoulder and lower to glide across the soft skin there, too, Darlene shivered.

Her nipples were hard in his fingers as he massaged slowly, with Darlene watching him do it.

Her own hands wandered to the fly of his trousers, and slid the zipper down.

“You better sketch me nude,” she whispered, and then her hand was cupping him through his underwear and Steve felt his heart stutter start.

He bit back a moan as she delved further, pulling him out to stroke his cock.


“Whatever I say?” Darlene echoed, a sly look spreading across her face.

(She really was gorgeous but she was always up to no good, just like Bucky.)
“Yeah.”

She stroked him a little faster, harder.

Steve grabbed at her chest just to keep himself grounded.

“I say climb on top of me, Steve Rogers. Right now.”

That’s all it took, and Steve knew no matter how crappy the weather was outside, Darlene was sunshine and bright and home.

He never thought anyone as enchanting as her would ever let him touch her like this, but she wanted to touch him, too. She wanted him to feel just as special as her.

He manoeuvred himself out of his pants and boxers and let them fall to the floor by the bed, and he did exactly as instructed and climbed between her thighs, his stick arms bracketing her face.

Their kissing was deep and just the kind of desperate that made Steve a real mess pretty quick. It made him feel spurred on. He felt incredible. He felt almost like he wasn’t so sickly.

“Your eyes are so beautiful, Steve,” Darlene murmured, and then Steve made her gasp a little as he slipped two fingers inside her with ease.

How long had she been waiting for him in his bed?

(Did Bucky get her ready for him? Steve wasn’t sure if that made him jealous or turned-on.)

“Shit,” Darlene gasped again, all light and breathy as he circled the little nub at the top of her pussy with his thumb.

She’d showed him how to do this well enough. Steve watched as her hips rolled and her eyes flew shut.

He kept this up, the rubbing, the glide back and forth of his fingers, until her moaning was loud enough for Bucky to definitely hear – and maybe their neighbours, too.

“Sorry,” Darlene said, sheepish. “Just. Please don’t stop.”

She covered her mouth with a hand and shuddered, clenching down on his fingers with a muffled whimper.

She kissed him again, hard and wet and all tongue and teeth. Steve could barely breathe.

He pushed her back a little.

“You nervous?” she asked, and he realised she took his gesture as an indication that this was going too fast.

“No,” he said. “I mean, yes.”

He had to pretend, and the guilt began to coil in his gut. He was such a liar but he had to be a good friend to Bucky.

He didn’t dare imagine what could happen if Darlene found out about them.

He was sure she’d never hurt them deliberately, but he didn’t think it was paranoid to expect that if it
got out that he’d been fooling around with Bucky since before they were even both teenagers, it would ruin so many lives.

They could get arrested, or worse.

“It’s okay, Steve,” Darlene whispered, running her hands over his face to soothe him, because he probably looked really scared thinking about his biggest secret getting out.

“Okay.”

She had a rubber hidden under his pillow, and helped roll it on him. This was definitely new. And it felt a little strange, but he didn’t want to risk anything.

He remembered the week Darlene’s mom Charlotte made sure her daughter knew that if she was ruined by any man, that she was the one who was going to suffer, and not Bucky.

To most people, Bucky had been the only one dating Darcy for some time and Steve was just the guy who tagged along like always.

“Steve, you with me?” Darlene prompted, and Steve focused on the job at hand, once more.

He was determined to get lost in this, and just let go.

He reached between them, and lined himself up with her. Darlene smiled again, eager as anything, and Steve just focused on her face as he pushed inside.

This did feel really new. She was so warm and tight like a glove enveloping him, and the glide was so smooth and wet it left Steve a little delirious.

Darlene sucked in a breath as Steve filled her to the hilt, and then she let out a pleased little sigh.

“Doesn’t that feel good?” she murmured, her breath hot in his ear.

“It feels…”

He’s honestly lost for words.

“I know,” Darleen purred, and then he started moving a little faster.

“Oh. My God,” he groaned.

He didn’t make it a habit of saying the Lord’s name in vain, but this was as good a time as ever.

Darlene chuckled, and began meeting his thrusts.

The build-up was the best part. Save the best part. But Steve wanted to linger a little longer before finishing.

It was in the feel of her hips cradling his, their bodies pressed together, small and matching except for the obvious characteristics.

It was in the way he could feel the pull beneath his navel, his balls growing tighter and the sweat gathered between them.

“Steve.”
Darlene was whimpering his name.

He felt so strong and powerful with her beneath him.

He got the crazy feeling he could conquer anything, and then some.

Inspired, he found the little tense bud that throbbed beneath his fingertips and pressed down, slowly rubbing Darlene like before.

She was cursing softly, closer and closer to the edge.

It felt like forever, and yet, it felt like no time at all when her brow furrowed and she gave a hoarse little cry and came – clenching now on his dick and Steve thought he was going to pass out.

She kept going as he sped up, chasing his own release.

He groaned, his forehead pressed to hers, his toes clenching and his vision went white.

(This happened maybe once before, with Bucky above him, having built him up for so long and then letting him fall.)

He collapsed on her, and all he could focus on was their rapid breathing. It was like they’d both just ran five blocks.

Everything came back – the room, the feel of the sheets that were sticky with sweat – and Steve pulled out of Darlene and pulled off the rubber.

He did anything to get it away, just so he could lie down and recover.

(It ended up on his desk.)

They held each other, their breathing gradually returning to normal.

Steve groaned as Darlene moved to get out of bed.

“Steve, I have to go to the bathroom.”

He released her, sighing.

He closed his eyes and rested his head on his pillow, waiting for her return.

He woke sometime later, to hear voices raised in the next room.

He screwed up his face and rubbed his eyes, realising he’d probably slept through dinner.

He recognised the voices a second later.

“Is that why you came, to ruin my night?”

“Bucky.”

“Or possibly ruin my life? Or both?”

“Stop it! I love you and I love Steve. You know that.”
There was a slam, and Steve knew Bucky had smacked his fist on the table.

Steve flinched at the sound, but wasn’t going to let the conversation get any worse. Darlene and Bucky always fought but this sounded more deliberate than usual.

They could go from screaming at each other to making out seconds later. It was nuts to Steve but he didn’t try to understand what he wasn’t a part of.

He grabbed his shirt and boxers, and then his pants and quickly dressed just as they started up again.

“How many times do I have to say it? I love you. I’m here and I love you.”

Steve whipped the door open to find Darlene standing over Bucky, who was sitting at the kitchen table with a lit cigarette in hand.

Darlene’s head whipped around and Bucky craned his neck to look at Steve.

“What’s going on?”

“I’m sure you heard most of it,” Bucky muttered, taking a drag and narrowing his eyes at the curling smoke surrounding him. “Like I heard you two before.”

He was angry, but it was more than that. Steve couldn’t place what he was feeling, though. Because every time something like this happened, and Darlene was there, they only ever had half a conversation.

This was the version where they were fighting over the same girl, and nothing else.

“Oh, stop it. You let me in. You told me it was fine. Every other time I’ve felt like a greedy little whore I’m assured that it’s all swell,” Darlene snapped, rounding back on Bucky again.

Steve and Bucky exchanged a look. They were the greedy ones.

“Don’t call yourself a whore,” Steve said, and Darlene shot him a look.

“Fine. But if Bucky isn’t okay with this arrangement, we change it.”

Bucky tapped his cigarette ash into his empty beer bottle, shaking his head.

“We can’t stop this.”

“I can stop this. I choose one of you and we stick to it.”

There was a flash of anguish across Bucky’s face and he lost all bravado. “No, baby.”

Steve didn’t see Darlene’s face but he already knew she was close to tears by the sound of her voice.

“But I keep hurting you. Hurting you both.”

She must think she’s evil, Steve realised, and rushed to her, turning her around to pull her into a hug.

“Darlene, it’s okay. We’ll get through it. We love you.”

*And we love each other just as much*, a conspiring little voice said inside his head that made him feel sick.

When Darlene does leave a little while later, Steve’s guilt coiling in his gut as Bucky kisses him like
he’d wanted to for hours.

It went on for years.

Sleeping together in between sleeping with Darlene.

Darlene close to finding out maybe twice when they weren’t expecting her. Steve feeling like if he asked for her key back she’d have questions he couldn’t answer.

Aching for her and aching for him.

Sometimes Steve was a mess about it, and sometimes he was blissful.

They’d watch Bucky’s fights and Steve would paint and draw and read. Darlene wouldn’t shut up about the movies, wouldn’t stop going to see them all the time.

They saw The Wizard of Oz. Darlene cried.

They saw Gone with the Wind. Darlene cried harder.

Holidays and birthdays and weekends spent just at home, the three of them.

And then one day, when things felt ordinary enough for Steve, war broke out.

He didn’t even have to ask. Bucky was going.

He couldn’t imagine a life without him there. He was lost just when he didn’t know precisely when he was coming home.

Darlene was distraught to say the least. She and Bucky had their biggest fight ever and Steve spent a whole week being the mediator, passing messages between them until Bucky relented, and in his own words, went crawling back to Darlene’s place and begged her forgiveness.

She forgave him. Three times that night on their kitchen table and Steve wished he had earplugs.

(He was annoyed only enough to ignore his throbbing arousal when he sat at his desk and tried to study.)

Bucky hadn’t changed his mind, and Steve hadn’t either.

He wanted to serve, and as cruel as it was to Darlene for them both to leave her, she understood there was no way she could convince them otherwise.

“If I could, I’d go and shoot Hitler and then everybody’s sons and sweethearts could just go home.”

She sounded so earnest when she said it, but Bucky shot her down, still holding her hand.

“But, Darlene, you’ll never serve.”

Steve felt a pang in his chest. He’d just been knocked back at the recruitment center.
Darlene wasn’t upset about that, and neither was Bucky.

“I want you here, with her,” Bucky said, nodding at Steve and then Darlene.

They were sitting at the dinner table, food going cold. Later, Steve couldn’t remember what it was they had for dinner, just that Darlene made something special.

“So that’s it, then?” Darlene shouted, tearful. “You go to Europe and you die –”

“Darlene, I’m not going to –”

“Don’t promise anything like that! Don’t you dare!”

She was up from the table and running off, leaving behind her coat.

Bucky let her go. That was the first time he ever did that.

Steve figured out why.

“You want her to be angry,” he murmured, after the unbearable silence finally got to him.

“It helps if she stays pissed off,” Bucky admitted. “She’ll be better off.”

“That’s… really mean, Buck.”

“She’s right though, punk,” Bucky said. “I shouldn’t promise her that I’m coming back.”

The tears are hot and unexpected. Steve hunched over, his face screwed up.

“Steve. Steve,” Bucky leaned across and grabbed his shoulder. “Please.”

He couldn’t stand it. Steve felt like their private little world was being ripped apart.

“I can’t take care of her alone,” Steve sobbed, tears falling onto the table and on his shirt. “I need you, Buck.”

Bucky’s own face screwed up, like he was struggling to hold himself together. Steve had never seen him like this before.

“I love you.”

Bucky yanked him from his seat and kissed him with a kind of violence that scared Steve a little, beneath his tears.

Bucky didn’t stop kissing him until they were a shaking, naked heap on the floor together, and he still rolled Steve onto his back just to kiss him again, this time more patient and tenderly.

Bucky’s cock was neglected this whole time, and Steve wanted him still, despite being exhausted already.

Before Bucky could protest, he dropped down and kissed him right on the shaft of his dick, which made Bucky jolt.

“Punk,” he growled, jerking up as Steve stroked him.

Steve took him in his mouth, sucking and swirling his tongue around the tip.
Bucky’s utterances just turned into a series of threats and curses, his hands balled into fists by his sides.

“Jerk,” Steve retorted, his voice muffled.

He swallowed as much as he could before Bucky hit the back of his throat but he forced himself to relax, before squeezing a little around him, his throat muscles making Bucky moan.

The sound made him feel so alive. It was almost enough to make him forget this could be over soon. All of it.

Bucky made him feel dangerous and electric, but somehow, amongst everything, like he was safe.

When Bucky came, he growled, his hand pulling Steve’s hair a little as he held his head in place, his hips lifting off the kitchen floor.

“Shit.”

He went slack, and Steve swallowed every last drop, watching Bucky go into his foggy post-sex phase.

Darlene came to them with the idea of California.

This was the day after she stormed off, and Bucky frowned at her while she sat with them all on Bucky’s bed.

(Steve slept there last night and wondered if Darcy’s nose was good enough to smell him there, too.)

It horrified Steve, if he had to be honest.

The idea of him being alone in Brooklyn while Darlene was thousands of miles away in one direction, and Bucky thousands of miles away in the other.

He knew, too late, that she’d built a wall in the last twelve or so hours, and Bucky handed her the plans.

She wouldn’t let Steve come, too.

“Stay here and look out for my ma. Drop her a line every once in a while,” Darlene said, her hand on Steve’s.

He knew she manipulated him a little, during the last days with her still there.

Fuck that, he wanted to scream. You’re staying here. You both don’t get to leave me.

“Sure,” he said, tasting bile.

Bucky pretended like his heart wasn’t broken better than Steve ever could.
Their last time together in bed, she was performing. Any time her lip quivered he’d stop, but she’d chuckle and kiss him again.

Her moans were real. So were his.

“Come over here and fuck me.”

(Come back here and let me live.)

“How did I get so lucky?”

He was genuine. There were tears in her eyes.

He wasn’t in the apartment when she went to Bucky’s bedroom. He left the second Bucky gave him a blank look, kicking his door shut behind him.

Steve went for a walk, and tried again to enlist.

He failed again, and walked back to a dark home with absolute silence coming from Bucky’s side of the place.

She left in the morning. Steve forced himself to stick her on that bus. The one that’d take her partway there. She had friends along the way, people Steve never heard of until recently.

He hoped she could trust them like she’d trusted him.

It hurt too much to kiss her goodbye. That’s why Bucky never saw her off. He went straight to Goldie’s gym and didn’t come back until three in the morning, stinking drunk.

Steve put Bucky to bed, and then went back to his empty bed and lay there for hours, hoping this was all a nightmare he could wake up from.

He closed his eyes and remembered meeting Darlene Foster, way back.

She was eleven. He was nearly thirteen.

Even then, with her jump rope – when she was all knees and elbows.

Her smile.
This honestly turned out way sadder than I ever meant it, and I'm sorry. I can't promise things will get any easier.
Chapter 8*

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry and... I'm sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Part 8:

Steve

"The ones who love us never really leave us."

- J.K. Rowling

It was the train dream again.

He saw Bucky fall nearly every time he slept.

If there was a week where he was on a mission and away from the Tower, he could sometimes get a few nights of dreamless sleep because he was exhausted beyond comprehension.

Only occasionally did his mind give him a vacation.

Every time he told Sam about his nightmares, he’d get this look on his face.

The frequency of them was enough for Steve not to bother announcing he’d hadn’t slept well every
time it happened.

It was sad, but there was nothing he could do.

Even with Darcy now sleeping beside him, he woke drenched in sweat, his shirt soaked right through.

And every time, he made sure to change his shirt so as not to scare her later in the morning when he woke.

It didn’t always work. She didn’t sleep too well, either, and he had the nasty habit of waking her without meaning to.

That morning, it was before dawn when he shot awake, but he’d slept naked.

Next to him, Darcy was sleeping on her side with her back to him.

For a little while, Steve just looked her over, the pale shape of her glowing in the soft blue light that crept in through the curtains.

His gaze traveled from her shoulder blades to the dip of her tiny waist and then to the wide flare of her hips, her buttocks just barely covered, the curve of her ass just peeking above the sheet.

To calm himself, and to be a little selfish, he reached to touch her back, and slide his fingertips just along the smooth expanse of her.

She stirred, and he watched as she began to turn over towards him, and he moved closer to Darcy as she blinked away her sleep.

“Steve?”

Her voice sounded slurred with sleepiness. Steve cupped her cheek and kissed her full on the mouth, slipping his tongue in between her plush lips and conquering her.

She gave the softest moan and kissed back, pulling him flush against her.

“What’s – uh – gotten into you?”

Her words sounded a little desperate, like she struggled to get them right as they tumbled out, and Steve had to wonder, what had got into him?
He didn’t like the look on her face she sometimes got, seemingly out of the blue, where she might have thought of something from before, from before all of this life. Steve always saw her feel something, then pack it away.

She hid behind sarcastic quips and dirty jokes instead of telling him she was in pain.

He wanted to start off his day well – for her to start of her day in a pleasurable way, in every sense of the word.

Steve didn’t answer, and instead chose to replace his tongue with two of his fingers.

Before the serum, two fingers didn’t seem to stuff Darcy like they did now. It was like she’d somehow got smaller, even though he knew she’d stayed remarkably the same.

She gave a low whine as he felt her stretch around his fingers. If he added a third or a fourth like another time, she’d probably end up cross-eyed, and Steve figured it was probably too early and too soon to do that to her.

She was coming within a couple minutes but he knew that a tongue and fingers weren’t usually enough to satisfy her, and it was only a matter of time before he was sliding home, having flipped her over onto her stomach with a pillow tucked beneath her hips.

Her breathing ragged, she scrambled for purchase below him as he slammed into her.

She let out a cry and he froze, worried he’d hurt her.

“Darcy.”

“It’s okay. I can take it,” she hissed, and she pulled at him from behind her, pushing his thighs into the back of hers. “Fuck me. Fuck me. Fuck me.”

“You’re killing me,” he muttered, and quickened his pace and deepened his thrusts.

She always had a mouth on her. He knew what she could do with that pretty little mouth now, too. She never did take his cock in her mouth back then.

He just guessed she never learned, and he and Bucky weren’t likely to teach her.

Steve just put it as being a different time, and these days, in this century, people were more open to the variety of different ways they could release that tension, or unfurl that coil from deep within.

His skin was smacking against hers, making the most delicious sound Steve knew. Darcy was nearly constantly moaning, and the louder she was, the closer Steve knew she was to coming again.

He slid a hand around to her front, found and pinched her clit.

She was screaming in a few seconds, with his other hand still keeping her hip firmly in place. He didn’t slow down and Darcy was soon shuddering and simultaneously pulling at him toward her and trying to move herself away.

He let her clit be and Darcy turned her head to look at him, her eyes flashing.

“Are you gonna come for me, Steve?” she panted, looking him up and down.

“Yeah.”
“Are you gonna come for me?” she asked again, firing it back at him, encouraging him.

“Yeah.”

“Are you gonna –”

He huffed, and kept fucking her harder, with sharper thrusts that made a keening sound come from Darcy, that filled his ears, that filled the entire room.

The release is so strong Steve fumbled his grip, and his hand slipped from the sweat on her lower back, and he fell partway on top of her.

Darcy laughed as he quivered, spilling inside her.

“I’m sorry,” he said, getting off her and moving so she can roll onto her back beside him.

Darcy waved him off, still amused.

That was where the humor stayed for the rest of the day, because once he came back from his run an hour later, she looked haunted, and he knew.

He knew exactly what she was thinking.

She simply turned to him, clutching a photo in her little palm.

It was an old army portrait he kept in a box under his bed.

He told her to go through his things when she was ready.

She wasn’t ready but did it anyway.

“He…”

Her voice trailed off. She was crying, still naked and wrapped in a sheet.

Bucky’s face peeking out from behind fingers, forever young and beautiful.

Steve felt the shame of his secret that died with his friend when he fell from the train so long ago.

Darcy breathed in a short, shrill way. She was hyperventilating.

He grabbed her shoulders, touched her face.

She didn’t stop.

“Darcy, it’s okay. I’m here.”

“You – watched – him - die.”

Her words sounded stunted and her breathing reckless.

He clung to her.

“Just try to breathe.”
“I can’t. When I close my eyes, all I can see is his face. I can feel him. Inside me. The first time and our last time and everything —”

She was trembling and struggling like a baby bird, and then she shoved him off.

“Darcy, it already happened. It’s over.”

“Fuck you! I’m living it now. I’m living it all – everywhere.”

(Everything stung. Steve wished he could say something worth hearing for once in his life.)

She fell to the floor, sobbing.

“Oh, my God,” she wailed, and Steve had worst thought.

*I wish I’d never been born. I wish we’d never known each other. She’s burning me from the inside.*

All he could do was wait for her sobs to subside, and they did.

It just took a good half an hour or so.

Friday came through with a phone call. It was the message that automatically generated when there was a high alert for the Avengers team.

Darcy had dressed and was drinking a glass of water Steve handed to her.

She wasn’t angry with him, she was just angry at God again.

If this was a lesson, it was beyond Steve what on Earth it all meant, and whether it was worth a whole other person going through the grief he’d endured years ago.

Friday urged Steve to prepare to depart. Information was omitted since Darcy was in hearing distance.

He’d soon find out on a quinjet where they’d be going.

“I can’t leave you here,” he said, squeezing Darcy’s shoulder.

“You have to,” Darcy said, her voice flatter and her eyes still watery.

He dressed and turned back to her, and she was still staring off into the distance.

“Don’t die,” she called, when he was on his way out.
Chapter End Notes

This was mostly filler but it all adds up in the end. Thank you for the comments and kudos, and thank you for reading.
The moment Steve left, she dove for the shoe box full of trinkets.

She only picked up the photograph of Bucky before and then everything fell apart.

Now, she leafed through it all until she found another photo.

It was her. It was Darlene.

She couldn’t argue now that she wasn’t Darlene.

So, Darcy or Darlene, it didn’t even matter anymore.

Not with trauma being a unique form of time travel that left her feeling like she’d been rubbed raw.

It was if the tears had been lingering her entire life and just now they were really here.
When she thought of Bucky now, how was she supposed to live the same?

Darlene was smiling in a cheesy black and white portrait with a sailor hat on.

“What the fuck,” Darcy muttered, flipping it over.

The date read 1942. Then there was some smudged writing.

*Missing my soldiers over there! Xoxo Darla Singer*

“Gross,” she said.

But it put another puzzle piece into place. She’d been going under a new name by the time she sent this.

She raked through the images in her mind’s eye but she was coming up empty.

She had several things to do that day.

Darcy stalked into the lab to find Jane, who sat at her desk with her laptop open, steaming cup of coffee by her elbow.

“Hey,” Jane greeted absently, but Darcy wasn’t having it.

She snapped Jane’s laptop shut, and her boss made an incredulous sound but stopped dead the second she saw the stony look on Darcy’s face.

“You need to answer some questions for me.”

“What the hell, Darce? Are you okay?”

(That was the million dollar question. Was she? No. Absolutely not.)

“Darlene Foster. Is there anyone in your family called that?”

“I dunno. I’d have to ask my mom.”

“Great. We’ll call her.”

Darcy grabbed Jane’s phone from her desk and her hands fell over the keypad. She knew every password necessary. She was just barely crossing a line, or that’s what she told herself as she accessed Jane’s contacts, before pressing on Judy Foster’s home phone number and handing the phone back to Jane.

Jane just stared at Darcy and waited on the line.


“She’d be too young. Her mom might know,” Darcy spoke in a low voice, crossing her arms.

“Does Nana know?” Jane glanced at Darcy again, shrugging. “Oh. I don’t have Nana’s number.”
Jane scrawled it on the corner of a newspaper and Darcy tore it out.

“What area code is this?”

“Los Angeles.”

“What?” Darcy snapped, and Jane looked lost.

Darcy didn’t slow down when Jane hung up a few moments later. She looked toward the ceiling.

“Friday, I need a quinjet. Or Tony’s jet.”

“Darcy, what the hell is going on?” Jane demanded. “Did something happen with Steve?”

(What didn’t happen with Steve?)

“Yes. No.” Darcy screwed up her face. “Friday?”

“Darcy!” Jane yelled.

She hardly ever got this angry with Darcy. She only ever got a little annoyed and they bickered, but she never was this upset.

“I can’t – explain it!”

“Try me,” Jane countered. “If it’s Steve – ”

“It is not Steve Rogers. Will you listen to me? It’s something I can’t explain! And what do we already know about things I can’t fucking explain?”

Darcy hated herself a little for taking that tone.

“Friday, get us Tony’s jet,” Jane said, just looking Darcy over.

She’d gone back to being protective, and that was fine with Darcy.

Darcy explained a little of what she could on Tony’s jet. They got one of the Stark Industries employees to fly them out.

“First his MRI machine, now his jet,” Jane muttered, her head in her hands. “What does this have to do with Darlene Foster?”

“She’s the cousin from the East coast, right?”

Jane nodded, still looking unsure.

“I need to talk to your nana about her,” Darcy said, turning in her seat to grab her backpack with the photographs inside she’d pilfered.

“We should do this over the phone.”

“I think it’s better if I talk to her face to face.”

Darcy handed her the Darla Singer publicity shot, and Jane just stared at it.

“What’s this?”
Darcy pointed to herself.

“I can see that.”

Darcy flipped it over for her, pointing at the date.

“Darcy…”

Jane actually laughed. She thought this was all an elaborate prank. She looked over her shoulder at the doorway towards the cockpit.

“I know what it looks like. But you need believe me because people have died.”

“This is really weird. When did you even have time to make this?”

“I wouldn’t know. I took that back in 1942, but I only remember half of the memories Darlene had.”

Jane just stared at her, saying nothing.

“When we get back from your nana’s, you can be the first one to call the men in the white coats, okay? If I’m wrong, that is.”

Darcy even surprised herself by how calm she was about all this. Just that morning she’d been hysterical. But her best work was always a rollercoaster.

“Darcy, are you okay?”

Darcy touched Jane’s hand with a small smile beginning to show on her tired face.

“No,” her voice was cracked. “But I just went through the worst. So I’m not scared.”

They got an Uber to Nana Foster’s house. It took nearly two hours in the traffic, and Darcy’s knee jiggled nearly the entire time, but Jane had seemed to have accepted that this was their day.

All of it.

Jane knocked on the front door. They looked around the front yard as they waited. The lawns were immaculate, and Darcy spotted a neighbour spying on them from across the road.

“She’s very old,” Jane muttered.

“Most women in their eighties would be considered old,” Darcy muttered back, attempting to lighten the situation a little.

“You know what I mean. Be nice to her.”

“That’s not what I’m worried about –”

The door opened, and Jane burst into a smile.

“Hey, Nana!”

“My God! Is that little Janey?”
Nana Foster somehow made Jane look tall, and in turn, Darcy as well.

They towered over the tiny woman, who wore long glass bead necklaces with rings on each finger. Her grey hair was in tight curls like steel wool. Her lips were thin, but perfectly painted with coral lipstick.

When Nana Foster looked over at Darcy, she frowned.

“Oh?”

“What?” Jane said, and Darcy felt the dread sinking into her stomach.

“Hello,” she attempted, and gave Nana Foster her hand to shake.

She didn’t take it.

“Who is this woman, Jane?” she snapped, and Darcy wanted to head for the hills.

She wondered how long it would take to run to the airport. She wished she had Steve’s superhuman speed right now.

“This is my assistant, Darcy Lewis,” Jane said, and Nana finally took Darcy’s hand in hers, only to hold it a moment before letting it go, a perplexed expression on her little face.

Darcy felt something like an itch, but it was inside her head. It was difficult to describe exactly why she did what she did next, but it made Nana Foster stare wide-eyed with a gaping mouth.

“I taught you how to tie your shoes. You hated me putting your hair in braids, but it’s what your mama wanted,” Darcy said. “You wanted a bunny but it we were worried about it getting stolen so we held off.”

“Darlene?”

Nana Foster was blinking fast and tears were suddenly falling.

Darcy remembered a little girl with no front teeth, just like Penny Barnes had been like when she still babysat her. Nana was Margaret back then. She was her little baby second cousin.

“Nana, I see her, too. This isn’t in your head.”

Jane sounded like she finally understood everything. Or understood enough to believe Darcy.

Nana Foster turned to Jane and slapped her arm.

“I know I’m still sharp as ever! Where do you think you get your wits from?”

“Not me, that’s for sure,” Darcy said.

They all started to laugh even though they were crying.

They drank tea in Nana Foster’s kitchen table. She kept holding Darcy’s hand in hers.

“How is this possible?”

“I’m not sure. I used to think it was a hell of a coincidence, Maggie.”
Nana Foster snorted. “You’re so young. How come?”

“I’m a whole other person. But I’m still Darlene, except there’s gaps still missing.”

Nana Foster nodded, tutting sympathetically.

“I remembered one of my sweethearts this morning,” Darcy said, a sad smile on her face. “He died during the war.”

“Who was he?” Jane butted in, and Darcy weighed up her options.

She didn’t see why she shouldn’t just be honest.

“Bucky Barnes.”

“The… guy from Steve’s squad in the 1940s?” Jane sounded on the edge of incredulous again.

“We grew up in Brooklyn together, the three of us.”

Nana Foster nodded. “You talked about those boys a lot. My mom always told me growing up not to invest in men like you had.”

“Why?” Darcy said, suddenly a little hurt.

“You were so torn. Her words,” Nana Foster said, sipping her tea.

They sat in silence for a while, and Darcy gulped the last of her tea.

“Maggie, I need answers.”

“Mm-hmm.”

Jane looked from her grandmother to Darcy warily. “Darcy, why don’t you remember growing old?”

Darcy felt her heart start to hammer.

“Tell her,” she muttered to Nana Foster.

Darcy knew the answer before it was said aloud.

“She died young.”

Darcy felt her eyes prickle. She didn’t exactly know who she was crying for. Maybe just because it was a sad story.

“Did I die badly?” she whispered.

Nana Foster clutched her hand.

Darcy tried to focus on her breathing.

“Yes.”
On the flight back, hours later, Darcy's eyes were no drier. Jane made her rest her head on her shoulder.

She went over what happened in her head. She had to figure out how to tell Steve when he got back from his mission.

Because there was no *if* involved. He was coming back. And he would learn the truth, too, and Darcy dreaded his reaction.

Nana Foster took Darcy’s hand and they all piled into her Toyota Corolla.

For a woman in her mid-eighties, Nana Foster was just as sharp as she said, with no issues driving them down several blocks to a backroad that looked overgrown, the houses condemned.

“They’re tearing all this down,” Nana Foster said with a wave.

It looked like such a lonely spot to take them, but Darcy could feel the sticky fear seeping through her limbs, and she knew this place was where everything ended.

“Darlene was walking home – you were walking home,” Nana Foster said.

She parked the car and they got out, Jane shielding her eyes from the sharp setting sun.

Darcy squinted around.

“I went looking for her, because she was late. It was always so dark around here. The street was barely lit.”

Darcy’s heart sank.

“A car hit you. But they drove off,” Nana Foster said, looking around at the ground. “Left you around here.”

“You died all alone?” Jane whispered, and Darcy saw her boss start to sob.

“I found you eventually,” Nana Foster said. She sounded far away.

“Oh, God, you found me?” Darcy said, and she raked her hands through her hair. “And I couldn’t look this up online, because I was under my stage name then?”

Nana Foster nodded. “You couldn’t be revived. People around were asked what they knew, but everything came up short.”

“Oh, my God,” Jane sobbed, and Darcy stared at the ground, unsure what to do.

When they got back to Nana Foster’s house, she said she didn’t blame her if Darcy wanted to leave.

“There are ghosts around here,” she whispered into her ear as she hugged her tight.

(I’m the ghost. I live as a ghost.)

“You *call* me, okay? You have to call me all the time,” Darcy said, pressing kisses to Nana Foster’s brow.

Darcy somehow managed to fall asleep on the flight home. Jane was shaking her awake, handing her
a glass of scotch, something from Tony’s cache.

Darcy gulped it down and winced.

Everything seemed to ache.

“Friday called,” Jane said. She took a deep breath.

“Steve was shot in the stomach.”

Darcy dropped her glass.

Chapter End Notes

So... how's it going? *winces*
I hated writing this chapter but I knew I couldn't let it be that somehow all three of them (Steve, Bucky and Darcy) couldn't all make it out of the 1940's alive. I fought with myself over this, but this is what I chose. I hope you can forgive the tragic circumstances.
To recap: Darlene Foster was the cousin of Jane's great-grandfather, and Margaret Foster is Darlene's second cousin, who was a kid in the 1940's.
Thank you for your support of this story. <3
Chapter 10*

Chapter Notes

Oh, boy. Here goes nothing...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Part 10:

Steve

"St. Jude, the patron saint of the lost causes
St. Jude, we were lost before she started
St. Jude, we lay in bed as she whipped around us
St. Jude, maybe I've always been more comfortable in chaos..."

- Florence and the Machine

Steve saw Bucky at his worst.

For about three days after Darlene left for California, his best friend was constantly drinking and smoking, alone in his bedroom.

Any time that Steve stuck his head around Bucky’s door to check on him, he was reading comics or the paper, hunched over in his sheets and scowling.

His eyes were red and creases set under his eyes.

Neither of them slept much.

Then, seemingly out of the blue, Bucky was back in the kitchen, fixing himself coffee and heading out to meet someone.
The names changed each night – but they were all girls that they knew during high school and even beforehand, but they were forgotten when Darlene pushed in to make them a trio.

Girls named Angela, Ginger, Polly, Sally, Dolores, Mary and more.

Steve never thought he’d get this angry again, but he was. His hands were fists and sometimes his fingernails dug so hard into the flesh of his palm that he left marks.

He was angry because Bucky was pretending like Darlene was nothing to him.

He was angry because he was jealous of everyone – Steve was jealous of Bucky because he was able to ignore his heartbreak by grabbing the nearest girl available without trouble. He envied every girl he heard under Bucky at night.

Boys were going to war and the girls weren’t waiting until marriage. It was like the impending apocalypse was the ultimate aphrodisiac.

He was angry because Bucky was so obvious.

“Come out with me tonight,” Bucky said one morning, exactly a week after Darlene’s departure.

(They were eating breakfast at the table and ignoring the spare third seat between them.)

“Why?” Steve mumbled, chewing his toast with a frown.

“Because I can’t take two girls out.”

*Two people wasn’t a problem for you before,* Steve thought, his toast mushy and intrusive in his mouth. He wanted to spit it out, his words, too.

“No, thanks, Buck,” Steve said. “I’m busy.”

“Don’t tell me you’re going to the recruitment centre again.”

Steve avoided his gaze, knowing it would be a bossy one. Bucky couldn’t ever not try and tell him what to do, and usually Steve didn’t mind it.

But it wasn’t cute anymore.

He lost his patience so much more these days.

“Fine, I won’t tell you.”

Bucky sighed. “You’re going to get yourself killed.”

“Funny that. We are at war.”

Bucky stood up and left without another word.

Steve spent the day sulking in silence.

Much later, in the dead of night, Bucky slipped into Steve’s room, and would have been quiet if he hadn’t knocked his knee on the metal edge of Steve’s bed.

Steve rolled over and squinted in the dark, while Bucky cursed the bedframe, rubbing his knee and stumbling in the dark.
“Get out.”

“I need to talk to you, punk,” Bucky settled on top of him, and Steve tried to reel back and away, but knew that if Bucky started touching him it would all be over.

“Get out, jerk. You’re drunk.”

“I’m not. I haven’t had a drop,” Bucky hissed, and he moved off him to sit instead.

In the dark, Steve could just make out his face. He looked glum.

“Bucky.”

He shook his head, before dragging a hand through his dark hair.

Neither of them said anything for a while. Steve just listened to Bucky’s breathing.

“Fine,” Bucky said, as he rose from the bed.

Steve realised he should have said more. He felt torn. He could tell him how he felt, but he risked Bucky rejecting him or telling him a lie, that he wasn’t in pain.

He wanted to tell Bucky that time was running out for everyone, and why didn’t they just make the most of it?

He wished they’d go on dates. He wished he could kiss and dance with Bucky without getting arrested or beaten to death.

He was still called a fairy by most of the guys in the neighbourhood. He even embraced it a little. So what if he liked being with Bucky? It felt great. And he knew he was good at making Bucky feel good, too. He was in love with him, just like every other girl they knew. Just like Darlene.

So why did everything sting so much?

“Wait,” Steve grabbed at Bucky’s hand, and he saw his friend’s eyes swivel back to him below.

“Please. Just wait.”

Bucky sat down again, this time reaching for Steve and stroking his face, pushing his hair back and studying his face.

Steve felt like his chest was about to split open.

“Why are you doing this to me?” he whispered, at a complete loss.

Why did they have to make everything so much harder for themselves so long ago, back when they were kids?

He probably would hate Bucky, if he didn’t love him so damn much.

Steve realised he was crying, and hated being like this again so soon after the kitchen floor. He hated the idea of Bucky looking down at his wet, scrunched up face.

But Bucky just held him, stroking his hair.

After some time, Steve tilted his head up towards him and Bucky slanted his mouth over his, and he knew he could taste his tears.
Steve gave a raw little gasp as Bucky’s tongue slid into his mouth, massaging his. He felt his cock harden in seconds, painful in his pyjamas. He squirmed a little under him, as Bucky lay on top of him once again, grinding their hips together.

He felt how hard Bucky was, his cock poking his stomach as he managed to wrap his little legs around his waist.

Bucky groaned, kissing him with more force, his teeth grazing his lips.

Bucky’s hand was between them, rough and grabbing Steve’s cock through his pyjama pants.

(If Bucky wanted him to beg, he could. Steve really could beg right now.)

“Let’s get these off,” Bucky muttered, and hooked his thumbs under the waistband of Steve’s pants and pulled them down, tossing them aside, before grabbing Steve’s ass and rocking their hips together once more.

Steve moaned unabashedly, wishing Bucky would palm his cheeks again with his rough, big hands.

They pulled off each other’s shirts.

Then Bucky pulled down his pants, shucking them off.

Steve found the head of Bucky’s cock through his boxers and squeezed a little, Bucky’s eyes flashing above him.

Now they were both naked and grinding together once more, Steve’s moans becoming higher in pitch the more worked up he got.

For whatever reason, Bucky seemed to have trained himself to be quieter. Or at least, not be so loud so soon, but Steve couldn’t help it.

He supposed Bucky had more practice.

He did talk a lot, though.

“Do you want my hand, my mouth? What?” Bucky asked between sloppy kisses, the sweat gathering between them.

Their hips kept rocking together, but Steve got a wicked idea.

“Um, your hand.”

Instead of letting Bucky stroke him, Steve pushed up on him and rolled over, his ass up and his face burning.

“Like this?”

Bucky stopped in his tracks, eyes flicking from Steve’s obscured face to his rear.

“Steve, I’m not doing that –”

He stopped mid-sentence, looking flustered. “I want to. I just – I don’t think it’s such a good idea.”

Steve had read about it enough. There was a lot of it in ancient art, and therefore, books about ancient art. At first when Steve read about the idea of a man penetrating another man that way, he
felt a little sick. Mostly just because it sounded painful, but his curiosity got the better of him.

He didn’t need Bucky inside him. He just wanted to know a little what it was like – without resulting in a really weird hospital visit. He couldn’t imagine himself lying successfully about how an injury like that had taken place.

“No!” Steve said, a little louder than he meant. “I just mean…”

He beckoned Bucky closer, placing his friend’s hand on his cock to stroke.

“But you lie down,” he added, sounding bashful.

“Oh!” Bucky said, not bothered in the least. “Okay.”

Bucky lay down behind him, curling himself around Steve, his mouth at his ear.

Steve felt his skin break out in goose bumps as Bucky’s hip hit against his ass.

Bucky slid down a little further – and he was definitely resting his cock in the crevice between Steve’s ass cheeks.

Bucky’s hand was on Steve’s cock again, stroking slowly.

Steve’s breathing hitched as Bucky’s wrists twisted on the down stroke.

“Wait,” Bucky whispered, his breath hot in Steve’s ear.

Steve heard him spit into his spare hand, and then the smoother glide of Bucky’s warm cock against his skin, going up and down.

“That’s better,” Bucky whispered, and then went back to stroking Steve as well.

Steve couldn’t help it – he whimpered – caught up in the sensation of Bucky slick against him and being stroked so expertly.

Bucky knew just which buttons to press. He knew him that well. He knew him in his blood, he knew him in his head.

(If only Bucky was inside him, then he’d know every possible part of him.)

“You’re close.” Bucky sounded hoarse. “I can tell.”

Steve squeezed his eyes shut, nodding frantically. He felt Bucky pull him back against him to kiss him.

It was clumsy and desperate. Their teeth clacked.

Steve whimpered again as Bucky stroked faster.

“I’m gonna come,” he babbled. “Ah, oh. Oh, God!”

His breath was coming in sharp puffs, and he felt his whole body tense up as he came.

Bucky milked him, as Steve moaned, toes curled and vision turning white.

He just seemed to keep going, and Bucky didn’t stop or even slow down.
“There’s more! There’s more,” Bucky growled, and then he sunk his teeth into Steve’s shoulder, watching Steve spill all over his tight fist over and over.

Steve just outright wailed, squirming against Bucky, who was coming as well moments later.

“Jesus,” he groaned, his mouth still against Steve’s skin. “Fuck!”

His hand stopped, Steve’s softening cock now laying against his stomach. Instead, he gripped Steve’s right ass cheek and seemed to choke a little.

There was a splash against the small of Steve’s back, and Bucky was shuddering, muttering to himself.

“Trying to fuckin’ kill me, I swear to God. Fuck…”

Steve gave a weak little laugh, pleased with himself, and feeling like he was floating.

After a few moments of silence, Bucky was pulling at Steve again and rolling him onto his back, kissing him fiercely.

“Don’t even think for a second that I’m not gonna do that again the second I can get hard.”

Steve laughed.


The rest of that night was spent tangled together, mouths and hands, sticky and loving and everything Steve had ever hoped for.

Months and months later and Steve was suddenly more a man than a mouse.

(Though he was never not willing to die for what he believed in.)

Colliding with Bucky and he was suddenly so much taller and it felt weird but somehow right, because he could finally push Bucky as hard as he could before hurting him.

He could grab and hold his own.

They were rough and desperate for each other, and the second they were alone at night, it started up again like nothing had changed, even though everything had.

Steve was the one worrying about his friend this time, because when he found Bucky he looked so bloody and frail, like he shouldn’t still be standing, but he was.

Whatever Zola did changed him, and he was okay, despite all of Steve’s constant concerns.

(How much he wished Zola paid for everything he didn’t decades later.)

Sneaking around was nothing new but Peggy was there and he had to be especially careful.

They almost felt bad about it, but Steve was just glad they were both alive.

A picture of Darlene was passed around, sometime in ’42, amongst the men.

She was beautiful but the smile was so fake it made Steve sick to look at the new Darla Singer.
Her picture was there like the others to keep up morale.

She was what they were meant to be fighting for, but Steve and Bucky both knew she wasn’t even happy in the slightest that her boys, the two of them, had left her far behind.

It’s why she ran to family in California, to beat them to the punch.

Steve probably would have done the same, if he was a woman Bucky was going to leave.

But he was a man, and fighting alongside him – making love at night and whenever else they could sneak away, the fight in them making every sensation all the more intense.

The last day, the very last day – he didn’t kiss Bucky at all.

They didn’t have a second to lose. They didn’t dare risk ever being found out by the rest of the squad.

As Captain America, he could be a beacon of hope, but God help him if he was ever himself.

Crying and wishing he was dead was just the tip of the iceberg when Bucky hurtled toward death.

Seventy-something years passed and he was fighting HYDRA men in the forest, his shield the only thing between him and a knife, a bullet – whichever came first.

Their leader was masked, knife raised and swiping at Natasha, who was comfortably dodging and throwing her own punches back at him.

It was a deadly dance Steve watched in between throwing his shield toward the guy who tried to sneak up on Wanda –

A thump from nearby – Natasha had swung her legs around the HYDRA man she fought, in attempt to strangle him with her thighs.

He had inhuman strength, grabbing her too easily and ripping her off.

Natasha fell but bounced back a second later.

“A little help, Cap?” she called, her bright scarlet hair in her face.

The leader turned for a moment, and she took it as her chance to knock him off his feet, but instead her foot just knocked his mask askew –

It fell to the ground, his eyes flashing.

Steve stopped dead in his tracks, and remembered to catch his shield as it spun back his way, Wanda safe.

“Nat!” He yelled. And he didn’t know why, but he had to warn her.

She gave a cry as the leader managed to grab hold of her by the neck and shake her off.

She was choking.
Steve didn’t think, just closed the gap between himself and Natasha by dashing forward, and threw a punch at her attacker.

He hit him as hard as he could, and the man staggered, letting Natasha go.

“Jesus,” he muttered, in English.

He looked up at Steve with a face he knew.

Some might say, better than his own.

Since he saw it nearly every night in his dreams.

“Bucky?”

“Who the fuck is Bucky?” the man managed to gasp, trying to shake something loose in his head.

Steve just stared, feeling like the Earth could swallow him up without him even noticing.

A voice broke out in the surrounding rukus.

“STEVE!”

Wanda screamed, pointing. Another HYDRA man was aiming his pistol at him, catching Steve completely off-guard.

Next, all he felt was hot metal and a sharp – almost impossibly so – sting just above his navel.

The wind was knocked out of him, and he fell to the ground beside Natasha.

He was fading, gasping, looking around to see Wanda fight people off, fierce and glowing.

He saw Bucky above him, wide-eyed.

“No, no. No! Steve! No!”

Chapter End Notes

Because we all know Bucky really would have said "fuck" instead of "hell" in CA:TWS, right?

*kicks down door into own intervention* I don't have a problem...

But clearly I do because I'm addicted to this pairing. Help. SOS. For real.

Thank you for reading! xoxo
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Part 11:

Darcy

"Rummaging in our souls, we often dig up something that ought to have lain there unnoticed." - Leo Tolstoy

Darcy’s eyes were stinging from crying.

She had mostly just panicked her way through the last day.

The plane ride back to Manhattan was rerouted abruptly as they headed instead to Washington, where Steve was meant to be.

Darcy dropped her empty glass on the floor in shock, and looked up.

“Friday, patch me through to Steve.”

“Miss Lewis, I am unable to -”

“Fuck – just do it already! Transfer me through to his comm right this second or I’ll –”

(Or what, she’d beat up an AI?)

“Miss Lewis, Captain Rogers is being prepped for surgery as we speak.”

The calmness of Friday’s tone didn’t settle her, because her heart sank anyway.

“But he’s…” Darcy stammered. “H-He’s alive?”
“Yes,” Jane piped up, who came toward Darcy again for the umpteenth hug that day.

“What happened?”

It turned out HYDRA happened.

When they landed in Washington, Darcy and Jane were whisked away to the med bay where Bruce, Tony, Sam, Natasha, Wanda, Clint and even Vision were. They all crammed into the floor to ceiling white hallway.

Everyone looked shaken. Darcy’s eyes flitted over their faces, and all of them were looking at her with an odd expression on their faces.

“How is he?”

Her own voice sounded odd to her. It was cold and measured, because she’d been running through each scenario in her head on their way there.

“Good, considering,” Bruce murmured. “He lost a lot of blood.”

“How is he?”

Darcy’s voice broke toward the end and she covered her mouth with her hand, to stifle her sob. Everything was blurry because of the tears.

“They were going to tell us,” Tony said, looking worse for wear. He had a cut above his eyebrow that was taped up.

Jane sprang into action. “I’ll go check. I’ll find a nurse.”

She sauntered off, everyone watching her leave. Darcy felt all eyes on her again and wanted to be alone.

Wanda cleared her throat. “I should have stopped the bullet. We got distracted.”

“How come?” Darcy snapped, and then screwed her face up at her outburst. “I mean, why?”

Tony opened his mouth but Wanda shot him a look.

“Steve said to wait for you. He wants to tell you.”

Tony opened his mouth but Wanda shot him a look.

“Tell me what?” Darcy said, her tone back to being angry.

Wanda shook her head, lips together.

“Somebody write a list. Let’s do a coffee run,” Tony said, in an effort to lighten the mood. “I promise no Starbucks. Only the best.”

“Vodka,” Natasha intoned, and everyone knew she was only half-joking.

She muttered something else in Russian, probably something to do with her feet killing her.

“Bourbon for me,” Clint deadpanned. “No ice.”
It was bizarre watching a bunch of people in Kevlar give coffee orders and then shuffle around with a piece of paper trying to decide where to go.

Jane came back just as everyone was finding chairs and Tony left with Bruce for the coffee.

“Nurse said Steve’s in recovery down the hall,” Jane said, a smile on her face. “He’s okay, Darce. He’s asking for you.”

Obviously having missed the exchange before, Jane didn’t understand the look of dread on Darcy’s face.

“Wait here,” she muttered. “I put you down for a soy latte.”

Darcy walked off, in search of her soulmate.

She figured Steve was that to her when she heard he’d been shot. She thought of all the horrible possibilities of the coming hours.

If he died, she’d have no-one.

Well, nearly no-one.

But it would mean becoming closer to complete and then losing Steve again.

The more she was around him, the more she remembered, and a lot of it was painful toward the end. Her dreams were a swirl of anger and heartbreak.

Remembering Bucky had felt like a physical blow to her body. Having to go through that along with losing Steve –

She didn’t dare think about it anymore.

There was a woman in a white lab coat standing outside an open door way around the corner, looking over a chart.

“Steve Rogers?” Darcy asked. She wiped her face with her hands and tried to find her normal voice.

“Are you Darcy Lewis?”

Darcy got out her ID and showed it to the doctor, her hand shaking a little.

“Can I see him, please?”

She was ushered inside.

“He’s sleeping now,” the doctor said, sighing a little. “Hell of a specimen. We can never really get over how the Captain’s built. He’ll probably be fine to leave in a day or two.”

Darcy looked over the shape of Steve before them. He blankets were pushed off a little, revealing his hospital smock underneath.

He had a monitor stuck to his finger.
From the little knowledge Darcy had, his pulse seemed strong and steady.

“The painkillers will probably only knock him out for a little while longer,” the doctor added.

She left Darcy with Steve, closing the door behind her.

Darcy grabbed the chair beside the bed and dragged it closer to Steve, the legs of the chair scraping the floor.

She winced at the sound, but Steve remained still and unbothered.

She sat down, looking him over again.

She wasn’t a fan of hospitals. She didn’t like the smell, and she didn’t like being told what to do by the staff.

She remembered Steve being in hospital a lot as a kid. He’d go away for weeks at a time, and return with another ailment added to an ever-growing list.

Darcy knew all his scars were gone now, the ones from over half a century ago.

She figured she just hated hospitals because they were creepy, but she knew now it was because they kept Steve away from her a lot growing up.

Thinking of Steve in his smaller body made her eyes prickle.

He had always been so brave, even when it looked like his body got the better of him.

One time, Darlene was convinced Steve wouldn’t make it through the night, the one winter he got pneumonia. But she and Bucky stayed with him for as long as they could, and he hung on.

This, now, wasn’t much different. It didn’t feel so different, even if he was larger and stronger. He was still laying in a hospital bed.

She clutched his hand, kissing it, pressing her forehead into it.

The hand moved, tilting her head back up again and stroking her cheek.

“Darcy.”

Darcy blinked back tears. “Hey, honey.”

She was up and standing over him, kissing his cheek and then moving to his lips, soft and tender.

“What the hell did you do?” she hissed, and he pushed his tongue into her mouth, grabbing at her to pull her against his chest.

They kissed for some time, until Darcy pulled away, a little breathless.

“Trust you to want to fuck in a hospital bed,” she muttered, and Steve laughed.

His smile quickly faded, however. He looked Darcy over, stroking her face.

“You’re shaking.”

“I’m so scared.”
Her face crumpled, and he pulled her on top of him, cradling her, soothing her.

“Shh, it’s okay. I’m okay,” he whispered softly. “It’s okay, baby.”

It was the first time he’d ever called her that. That had always been Bucky’s word.

“I love you.”

Once she was calmer, she sat back down on the seat, holding Steve’s hand between hers in her lap.

“Wanda said you’ve got something to tell me.”

There was flash of worry on Steve’s face, but he frowned a little to cover it up.

“She didn’t tell me anything,” Darcy added. “Tony got close to blabbing, I suspect.”

Steve nodded, looking a little unsure.

“What’s up?” Darcy prompted, squeezing his hand.

Steve moved to get up, and grabbed the pair of sweatpants at the end of his bed. He pulled them on, grunting a little.

His hand touched the spot where Darcy supposed his bandage was under the smock, and his fingers prodded a little.

He sucked in a little air, wincing.

“I’m okay,” he said, more to himself than Darcy.

He took Darcy’s hand again, making his way out the door.

“I think it’s better if I just show you.”

Darcy kept looking at Steve’s face as they rode the elevator down to the basement.

“You shouldn’t be up,” she muttered, but she knew it was all futile. “They took a slug out of your gut.”

“Trust me, this is something you’ll want to see,” he said, and he was even smiling a little.

“Steve. I have things I need to tell you, too.”

*It’s Darlene,* she wanted to say. *I was dead in a ditch somewhere.*

She couldn’t imagine getting that far, though, and shook her head when Steve looked at her with a puzzled expression on her face.

“It’s nothing. Just something dumb that happened in the lab.”

Why was she lying?

(Don’t ruin this day for him. He seems happy.)

The elevator came to rest, the doors flying open to reveal the darkened basement corridor.

There were two guards in front of a metal detector.
They went through without hassle. Steve’s face had that advantage.

Next came another doorway with a keypad that Steve’s fingers flew over.

They were waved down another corridor.

Finally they came to another completely white room, this one somehow brighter and glowing from within.

It was unsettling.

Steve turned to Darcy, placing his hands on her shoulders.

“I need to… prepare yourself.”

“What?”

Darcy blinked.

Steve’s face looked so bright and hopeful, but she felt sick.

“Can’t we just go back to your room? We can share Jell-O and watch Murder She Wrote. It should be on soon.”

She felt like a little kid.

“Trust me,” Steve said again, and Darcy knew she had to.

He opened another door, and there was a bed like his own in the centre of the room, monitors hooked up to it.

The man that lay in the bed, he –

Darcy blinked, letting go of Steve’s hand and felt herself gasp, but she wasn’t in her body.

The large eyes that stared back at her beneath the curtain of brown hair, were filled with horror.

“No,” said the man, in his voice. “Not her.”

Steve stepped closer, shielding Darcy.

She averted her gaze to the floor.

“Bucky, it’s okay. You’re not seeing things,” Steve said, hands up. “It’s Darlene.”

But I’m Darcy, she thought. I’m Darcy, I’m Darcy, I’m DarcyDarcyDarcy –

It had to be Bucky, or a version of him Steve recognised, too, since he called him by that name.

“Where did you find him,” she murmured, not looking their way still.

“He was with HYDRA,” Steve seemed to hesitate. “He might have concussion.”

Darcy’s eyes darted to the bed again, deciding to sneak a look.

His eyes were wild, now. Full of rage.
“Who. Is. That,” Bucky spat. “Why does she have her face?”

Steve gaped a little, thrown. “It’s Darlene. But – but, she’s Darcy now.”

*Why didn’t you get my name right the first time?* Darcy wished she would snarl.

“He doesn’t remember me,” she said, her voice flat.

She glanced at him again. He looked like he could flay her alive without blinking.

“Yes, he does. He remembered me.”

There was another nasty thought in her head before she could stop it.

*He loves Steve more than you, and that’s why he remembers him and not you.*

She had been the last one to join their trio all those years ago. And she was the first to leave.

“Do you remember me?” She asked, narrowing her eyes at Bucky.

He didn’t deign to answer her. He just looked at Steve, shaking his head.

“But he just said –” Steve protested, at a loss for words. “It doesn’t make sense.”

“None of it does,” Darcy deadpanned.

Her actions betrayed her attempt at a cool exterior.

She threw up a few seconds later.

---

Chapter End Notes

I feel like maybe Bucky’s initial reaction was harsh, but I’m trying to keep in mind how muddled he is. He just saw Steve for the first time, and Darcy has his other soulmate’s face. Who knows how much he knows about what has been going on?

Hoping to update the next chapter ASAP. Stay tuned! Also, please ignore any typos or errors. And thank you for reading! x
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Part 12

Steve

“What is a friend? A single soul dwelling in two bodies.” - Aristotle

Just a few weeks ago, Steve had no soulmates.

Now he somehow had two.

They were soulmates because Darcy said so – she coined it when they lay in the afterglow one lazy Sunday morning.

But that was when there was just two of them.

“Face it, you’re stuck with me,” she whispered, a smile spreading across her face.

Steve loved the fullness of her mouth, and how her teeth seemed so brilliant and shining.

He loved to kiss the lipstick off her face when she tried to do her makeup. She rarely left for the labs without having to reapply it, to fix it back into place.
She came hurtling into his life like a comet. She somehow didn’t burn up in the atmosphere, but he couldn’t say the same for Bucky.

When he was lying on the forest floor, there was a flurry of confusion.

Natasha pushed Bucky back, convinced he was trying to kill Steve.

“Nat, it’s Bucky,” Steve garbled, trying to grab at Bucky’s hand and pausing once he reached it.

“Where am I, Steve?” Bucky interrupted, shaking his head again. “Am I dreaming?”

Natasha whirled back on him, her own dagger now poised to strike.

“Back off, Мудак,” she hissed, “Cap?”

Steve coughed. “Bucky, we’re in Belgium.”

“Of course,” Bucky said, like that answered anything, because it didn’t seem to.

Steve chuckled a little, and heard someone break their neck.

Wanda appeared now, a wry smile playing on her face.

“Captain,” she murmured. “Didn’t see that bullet coming?”

“I guess not,” he said, wincing again.

His hands were going numb. But then he remembered he was holding Bucky’s hand and looked down.

“What the ---?”

Hulk roared somewhere close by and Bucky had to repeat himself and said, “It’s metal.”

“What?”

“My arm. It’s metal.”

“Cap,” Natasha said again, sharper the second time. “We have to get you out of here.”

“He still good at taking a bullet?” Bucky said, and Natasha seemed to soften a little.

“I’m not that good at bullets, Buck,” Steve said, and he coughed.

He looked at Natasha.

“Darcy can’t know about him,” he said, there was another stab of pain, an urgent reminder he was losing blood. “Bucky. It’s complicated.”

She cursed in Russian and Bucky’s eyebrows rose.

He must have passed out, because he blinked and then he saw everyone above him, in a large circle. All different shapes and sizes.
“Hey, man.”

Sam was talking to him. Steve can’t help screwing up his face a little.

“Does no-one have morphine?” he muttered.

“I managed to staunch the flow a bit,” Sam muttered, pressing the compress to Steve’s middle. “But you’re metabolising everything too fast.”

Bucky was sitting beside him on the ground, still holding his hand.

Their entwined fingers are sticky with congealed blood but Steve felt a pang of something in his chest, and forgot his pain for a second.

“Let’s go,” Steve rasped, forever the leader. “Where’s Bruce?”

“Curdled up in the quinjet, ready to go,” Natasha murmured with a slight smirk on her face. “But you look worse than him right now.”

“I can get up,” Steve mumbled, and he struggled to lift himself up onto his elbow, his whole body shaking. “So let’s go.”

“You heard the man!” Sam cried.

Sam took off in a gust of wind. Everyone else started to peel off, and Steve felt someone help lift him to his feet.

It was Bucky.

(Of course it was Bucky.)

He threw Steve’s arm over his shoulders and walked with him, his arm wrapped around his waist.

Steve was sweating so much he was suddenly conscious of his wet armpit that close to Bucky.

He probably would have blushed if his body would allow it, but there was only so much blood he could spare.

“Jesus, you’re heavy,” Bucky muttered. “I can’t believe I almost forgot how heavy you are.”

“Jerk,” Steve whispered.

Bucky paused, but still walked him toward the quinjet.

“…Punk,” he said, the word drawn out, like he was remembering something.

Again, he drifted off or something because Natasha’s face is in his again, wiping away sweat.

Steve looked around to see he was on the floor of the quinjet now, a jacket for his pillow.

Bucky was back to holding his hand and squeezing it hard.

“Steve, we’re not far from Washington.”
“Someone call Darcy. Friday, call…”

“Shh,” Natasha said, smoothing back his hair.

Steve did feel a bit better already. It probably helped that there was a bag of blooding being sucked into him, Bruce holding the bag above his head.

“Who’s Darcy?” Bucky asked.

“My girlfriend,” Steve slurred, not thinking. His eyes shot to Bucky’s.

There’s a look on Bucky’s face that is unmistakably hurt and disappointment.

“Who the fuck is that?” Tony said, and Steve hadn’t realised he was in the background eavesdropping.

He pointed at Bucky.

“A friend,” Steve said, already on the edge of defensive.

Bucky looked embarrassed, or at least like he wanted no-one to look at him. He slowly crossed his arms, but he didn’t seem to intimidate Tony much.

“A HYDRA friend?” Tony added, eyebrows quirking. “Interesting turn of events.”

“He’s the Winter Soldier,” piped up Natasha. “And I’d keep your mouth shut for once, Tony, if I were you.”

“If you were me, you’d never let this guy get on the jet,” Tony snapped, eyes flashing. “We could be endangering everyone.”

“You let me on here.”

Natasha was suddenly on her feet. She looked at Clint, who nodded.

They had some kind of secret language no-one else was part of.

“That’s because I know you’re on our side!” Tony yelled. “We’re about to be on US soil with a HYDRA assassin.”

“Shut up, Tony,” Clint snapped. “If Natasha is vouching for him, and Steve is too, just let it go.”

Tony just glared at Steve, pointing again at Bucky.

“You…keep an eye on him, Rogers.”

He stalked off to the other side of the jet, not before yelling:

“And please don’t die in the meantime, Cap.”

The operation was a success, but before that Bucky had to be taken into another room and examined. He looked frightened when agents rounded on him, and Steve had to watch from his stretcher as Bucky was steered away and down the corridor.
His heart was aching. He hoped with every part of him that he hadn’t imagined everything that had transpired in the past few hours.

He thought of Darcy then, and how she would be ecstatic to have Bucky back, too.

They could be like before.

The bloom of hope in his chest, followed by the coil of guilt in his gut.

Nothing had really sunk in, not for weeks.

He couldn’t grab at the threads unwinding.

He didn’t know what to do when Bucky looked at Darcy so disgusted and furious.

She vomited, without warning, and all Steve did was stare at her, and then Bucky.

“Buck, she’s… She’s everything,” he whispered.

Darcy was wiping her mouth and groaning. “Don’t.”

(Was he making it worse? Probably.)

“I can’t – place her,” Bucky said, frowning. “I’m sorry.”

“He didn’t mean it – didn’t mean to get so frustrated so fast – but he did anyway, because he could be such a brute nowadays.

Bucky gulped audibly, and looked straight at Darcy, who was leaning on Steve now.

“I’m sorry I don’t remember you.”

Darcy gave a little gasp, like she’d been hit.

She shoved past Steve and went right up to Bucky now, and he sat frozen with wide eyes regarding her.

“I – I’m Darlene,” she implored.

It hurt just to watch, just to listen.

“I was all alone and then Steve was there,” she babbled, and Steve watched as she moved closer and closer, her hand out to touch Bucky.

He shuffled back.

Steve should stop this. He hung back, hoping something would jog Bucky’s memory.

Darcy just lightly slid her fingertip down Bucky’s face.

“Then I remembered you, and my heart broke.”

Bucky’s metal arm, his left arm, shot up and he clamped his fingers over her wrist, holding her in place apart from him.
Darcy was just crying silently and gasping, like did when she held Bucky’s portrait in her hand.


Bucky didn’t shove her backwards but let his hand fall to his lap, releasing her.

Darcy just stared at him, blinking.

“Why don’t you remember me?” she shrieked, making Bucky flinch, his hair in his face again to obstruct their view.

“I’m sorry,” Bucky said again, looking away and at Steve instead.

Darcy gave a disbelieving laugh, dripping with bitterness.

She flung herself toward Steve, pushing back past him to the doorway.

“Darcy, wait. Maybe it’s too early to tell. He could be like you.”

“He can’t be like me. Nobody else here is like me,” she snapped, and Steve managed to pull her back to face him.

She blew her hair out of her face, glaring at him.

“I can’t be here,” she muttered, “I can’t look at him again.”

She was going to do something impulsive, Steve knew it. She always was like that.

She was always leaving, always running off to be alone with her feelings.

He tightened his grip a little on her shoulders.

She wasn’t looking him in the eye, either.

“I need to get back to Manhattan, Steve,” she whispered.

She seemed to be settling herself again, putting the bricks back in the wall. She sighed a little, leaving Steve horrified by how normal she was making all this seem.

She’d been dealing with this solace her entire life, and he was only just the beginning another chapter, but Bucky was meant to be part of it, too.

“Please stay,” he whispered back.

“Can’t,” she said, a small smile playing on her lips. “Won’t.”

She leaned toward him and kissed the corner of his mouth, and he breathed in her smell, seeking comfort from her.

She drew back, and he let her go.

When the door shut behind her, Steve turned his head to see Bucky staring back at him, the same kind of hurt expression on his face from before on the quinjet.

“She’s very pretty,” he murmured. “I shouldn’t have grabbed her like that.”

Steve felt uncomfortable with Bucky talking like he didn’t know her.
He raked a hand through his hair, and chose to sit in one of the chairs near Bucky’s bed.

“What do you remember?”

His voice managed to pull through. He wasn’t sure where he was going with any of this.

Bucky seemed to try to gather his thoughts, pausing to look up a few times while he scoured his brain.

“You and me, and Brooklyn,” he murmured.

His metal hand flexed, the plates clicking together as the limb moved.

“You mom Sarah,” he added. “The boys’ home.”

Steve let out a breath. “Okay.”

He was relieved he remembered enough to know he was friend and not foe. When he smacked the side of his head, Bucky seemed to come back to himself. Before then he was pretty determined to kill Natasha and everyone else there, and he never spoke English, usually a mixture of Russian and German, depending on which HYDRA agent he was ordering.

“What do you remember about HYDRA?”

Bucky’s face went blank, a lot like Darcy’s had just done when she quickly pulled herself together to leave.

“The Widow’s right,” he said, nodding. “I am the Winter Soldier. It’s what they call me.”

“You know Natasha?”

“Know her well enough to try to kill her a couple of times,” he muttered. “She was always memorable.”

“How are you alive?”

“Cryo,” Bucky said. “Uh, I was frozen.”

Steve just stared at him. “Me…too.”

Bucky even smiled a little at that, though it was a small one.

Bucky frowned. “I can’t remember her, the girl.”

“We were both dating her,” Steve said, and Bucky’s eyebrows rose.

“I shared you with her?”

Steve felt his heart start to hammer faster. “No… you and I were a secret.”

Bucky stopped to collect himself again, and nodded slowly.

“Yeah, I remember that.”

Relief washed over Steve. But then his heart sank.

It was relief Darcy wouldn’t have, because Bucky had completely rejected her.
“Steve, are you okay?”

His eyes flickered to Bucky, and he was sitting up in his bed now, the covers drawn back, and he looked like he was planning to get up.

“Stay there,” Steve warned, putting up a hand.

“Why?”

“Because I don’t know what will happen if we get too close to each other.”

“Steve.”

Bucky was up and closing in on him, pulling him up to meet him by grabbing the front of his smock.

Steve could feel him, that close to him, the heat radiating off him.

“Stop.”

Bucky froze, letting his arms fall to his sides, where his hands balled into fists.

Steve faltered, and raised a hand to touch Bucky’s face.

Please let me, he thought.

“The cameras,” he blurted, his hand still. “Where are they?”

Bucky didn’t even have to turn to look.

“One behind you in the left corner. One behind me.”

Steve heard himself say what he said next without feeling like he could control it.

His mouth barely moved.

“Bathroom,” he whispered, swallowing.

His fingers brushed the hair out of Bucky’s face.

He was staring back at him with dark eyes Steve knew so well.

“There’s one just there,” he said, his eyes darting to the door right next to the exit.

Steve didn’t wait, didn’t even think.

The blood roared in his ears as he crossed the floor to the bathroom door and opened it, ducking inside.

People would know. They would see he and Bucky went into the same room one after the other.

But Darcy didn’t know.

And maybe people would just know and not say anything. Maybe he could get a copy of the tapes.

This was a monumentally stupid thing to do.

He leaned against the sink, breathing heavily.
The door opened again and Bucky slipped inside, looking Steve over once again, searching him to
gauge his thinking.

“I can hack if we need to,” he said.

(Since when did Bucky know how to use a computer?)

Steve didn’t overthink it.

If he did, his chest might split open.

He’d only been shot a few hours ago. He could blame that for this.

But he couldn’t – and he knew it.

He could stop this.

He should stop this.

“Steve, I –”

Steve took the one and a half steps to reach Bucky and crowded him against the door, crashing his
lips into his and groaning.

“God, you’re real,” he babbled, and it hurt somewhere inside.

It tended to always hurt when they kissed.

“Course I’m real, punk,” Bucky muttered, and the tip of his tongue touched the seam of Steve’s lips.

“Open your mouth. Open it.”

Steve obliged. His tongue was in Steve’s mouth and he groaned, his cock starting to throb in his
sweatpants.

Bucky wasted no time, his hand slipping into the front of Steve’s pants and pushing them down with
his other, metal one.

Steve was exposed, his pants down to his thighs. His hips rocked a little as Bucky’s wrist twisted,
going up and down with rough strokes.

“Yes, this I remember,” Bucky hissed, grabbing his balls, too. “Your pretty cock.”

They kissed again, Bucky’s teeth grazing his lips. Combined with his hands, Steve had to moan.

He fumbled a little getting to Bucky’s cock in his own matching sweatpants. He pushed him into the
door again, and Bucky groaned.

Bucky looked flustered, suddenly hesitating when Steve began stroking him back.

“It’s been so long. I’m not gonna last.”

Bucky pushed him back, and Steve let himself stumble a little and lie down on the tiles, and Bucky
darted to him, mouth slanting over his.

He was back to stroking Steve, watching him draw closer to the edge.

“You gonna come for me?”
His voice was rough with want.

(Why did those words always get Steve off so fast?)

“Shit,” he hissed, and his hips were off the tiles, his whole body clenching up as he came – laughing a little in disbelief toward the end, spilling into Bucky’s fist.

Steve felt like he was going to pass out again. He watched Bucky watching him, and he kissed him again, rolling them so Bucky was on his back and pressed into the tiles beneath him.

He gasped Steve kissed his stomach, then his hip.

“Fuck, and I’m already so close,” Bucky whispered, shaking his head.

Steve dipped below and took his cock in his mouth, humming.

Bucky bit back a moan.

“Shit.”

Steve went all the way until Bucky hit the back of his throat, and paused, relaxing into it.

When he started moving again, Bucky couldn’t stop the moan escaping his lips and bucked a little into his mouth.

His metal fingers went into Steve’s hair and pulled a little.

It made him tingle all over.

“Steve, I’m gonna—”

He huffed, and then spilled into Steve’s mouth, way more than he expected.

Some dribbled out his mouth but he wiped it away, swallowing Bucky’s seed.

He thought he’d never taste him again.

He didn’t realise how much he missed it.

Bucky collapsed on the tiles, panting, his right hand still sticky from Steve. His metal fingers pushed back his hair from his eyes and he sighed, getting the same old drowsy look on his face of post-orgasmic bliss.

*I did that to him,* Steve thought.

He did think of Darcy before, and he thought of her then, too.

He’d crossed a line.

Before, she’d been excluded from something that was already going on.

But now he had cheated on his girlfriend.

*Because you’re not a good person.*

*Because you’re a coward.*
Adulterer.

LIAR.

Chapter End Notes

Please just... let me throw all morals out the window, like confetti. I don't even know any more. Please don't hate me for an infidelity story line. Steve can't, and won't, stop. 'Cause apparently I can't, either!

(Also, when did I become so emo?)

This is the second update for tonight. This and chapter 11. If you’ve got this far, let me know. Thank you for commenting, reading, and giving kudos.

(Мудак = asshole.)
But I thought this wouldn’t hurt a lot,

I guess not." - MGMT

Darcy doesn’t cry.

She’s surprised by this, expecting she’d crumble and fall down in a heap.

She doesn’t do any of that.

She rode the elevator back up from the basement, her heart pounding and her breathing a little shallow, but on the surface she seemed fine.

She strode over to the team all sitting in their chairs and they look at her, expectant.

She turned her eyes to Jane.

“We’re going,” she said, and she meant to sound calm.

She must have seemed eerily so, because Jane looked her up and down, a little confused.
“Already?”

Darcy nodded, and Jane got up, her coffee cup still in her hands.

“Okay, let’s go,” Jane mumbled, and she followed Darcy off toward the exit.

Everyone seemed a little thrown by their sudden departure, but Darcy was past the point of caring if she’d been rude.

In the elevator once more, she looked at Jane, who didn’t say anything for a while.

“They found Bucky Barnes when they were in Belgium,” she said, and watch Jane process her words, her eyes turning wide.

“How?”

“Didn’t stop to ask that,” Darcy said, biting her lip a little. “I kind of ran when he didn’t recognise me.”

“You always run away,” Jane muttered, taking a sip of her latte.

“What was that?”

“You always run away, Darcy,” Jane said, a little louder. “It must be exhausting, always running away.”

Darcy flushed, and looked away.

“Look, I found out you’re my blood today,” Jane went on, and Darcy felt her hand being squeezed and saw Jane’s little fingers wrapped around hers.

“Not with this body,” Darcy said, and she didn’t know why, but she wanted to ruin a little of the sentiment.

Her mood wasn’t allowing her anything kind to herself or anyone around her.

She didn’t know how to sit with these feelings.

(If she screamed, would she exorcise herself?)

“You’re family,” Jane said, firmer.

When they got back to Manhattan, they got out Jane’s stash of tequila and sat in the dark lab together, doing shots.

They weren’t miserable drunks. Most people didn’t know it about her, but Jane was a party animal. She threw herself into everything, not just science.

“Cheers!” Jane cried, for the fifth time already.

They clinked glasses and threw them back.

They kept giggling at each other, especially when Jane put the lime into her mouth, pretending she
didn’t notice how absurd she looked.

Their laughter died down once Darcy looked over at the boxes piled up around the lab. They were putting all inventory away for the move upstate.

Darcy had spent the last week coordinating lists and boxes.

She even helped Bruce pack up.

It made the place look so bare.

“I feel like such a side character right now,” Darcy mumbled, playing with a piece of her hair.

She was blinking slower than usual. She hadn’t realise she was that drunk until just then.

“I know what you mean.”

Jane slurred a little when she spoke. “I haven’t seen Thor in two years.”

Darcy realised Jane hadn’t mentioned Thor in ages. “Oh, yeah.”

London had been interesting but there was no doubt Jane and Thor were made for each other, despite every obstacle. Except even Jane had an inkling things were too difficult to constitute a healthy relationship with a literal god.

“He’ll come back,” Darcy offered, not really sure what else to say. “He has to.”

“Sure, if Loki does some dumb shit on Earth again,” Jane muttered, and she poured herself another shot and threw it back, sighing. “Not that I want that, though.”

“How long are you gonna wait?” Darcy blurted, and then she cringed. “I just mean –”

“Yeah, I dunno,” Jane muttered. “Can’t say I’m holding my breath, but I don’t want anybody else, you know?”

She hiccupped.

Darcy burst out laughing, because Jane had never done that before, in all the years she’d known her, and it was adorable.

When the hiccupping subsided a little, Jane looked Darcy over again with concern.

Darcy had never recognised it before, but she was certain after that day that Jane had always been highly maternal toward her, from the very start, and fiercely protective.

“I’m fine,” Darcy said, patting Jane’s hand.

Steve was back and forth from Washington for a couple weeks, until he and Bucky moved upstate with the rest of them.

The compound was obscenely cool in some parts, and each section of living quarters was tailored to fit each person.
Darcy loved her automatic blinds, and Friday putting on her music in the shower, which had fantastic water pressure.

Not that the Tower had been a dump, but the compound had room to run around outside, and Darcy put in a few terrariums and an herb garden in her little kitchen.

Each day Darcy was spending with Jane and Bruce in the lab.

Steve and Bucky turned up in the middle of a Wednesday, right after lunch, and Friday announced their arrival.

Darcy felt her hands grow clammy and she fumbled with the papers in her hands, before putting them down.

“Darcy, you gonna go see Steve?” Jane offered, but Darcy shook her head.

When she had seen Steve, he always seemed distracted.

She had so many questions about Bucky but Steve seemed to avoid talking about him.

He must have assumed she was torn up about everything.

She did run away all the time, like Jane said. So it seemed natural that Steve would pretend there was nothing wrong like she always did, too.

“It’s okay. I’ll see him later.”

Steve came and found her much later, when she was getting Jane another coffee, watching as the espresso machine whirred happily in its spot beside the massive toaster Darcy was sure Tony bought specifically with the purpose of Pop Tarts in mind.

His hand glided over her shoulder and she jumped, spinning around.

“Oh!” she cried, and covered her mouth. “Wasn’t expecting you.”

“Hey,” Steve said softly, with the old affectionate look on his face that made Darcy’s mood better every time she saw it, no matter what.

“Hey yourself,” she echoed, and stood on tiptoe to kiss him.

He wrapped an arm around her waist, drawing her closer, and Darcy sighed, cupping his face.

“Hey,” Jane called, and Darcy’s head whipped toward her voice.

“Sorry,” Steve muttered, looking a little bashful.

“You can leave, Darce. We’re done for the day,” Jane said, with a wry smirk.

Darcy and Steve left without another word, walking back to Darcy’s place, his arm wrapped around her shoulders.

“How’s Bucky doing?”

She hadn’t said his name in ten days. Not out loud.

Her dreams were worse, now. They were all about the moments she had before with him, wrapped
She remembered more and more how angry he made her, especially when he acted out of jealousy or possessiveness.

Before, they were memories she craved to visit, to relive a happiness.

Now they were unwanted ghosts.

Steve looked awkward, his fingers tightening around her.

“We figured out how he got here,” he said. “He was frozen like me, but cryogenically. He was only awake to assassinate threats to HYDRA’s cause.”

“Like who?” Darcy demanded, and she watched Steve falter a little.

“A lot of people, Darce.”

Darcy gave an uncomfortable little laugh out of habit, shrugging. “So like, JFK or something?”

Steve actually stopped walking when she said that and her mouth fell open, turning back toward him.

“No! I was just throwing a name out there.”

“Well, he did,” Steve said, frowning. “He told me a lot.”

She felt a pang of jealousy, that they had that together without her. It was a nagging, irritating feeling that made Darcy even a little angry.

“Why didn’t he kill you in Belgium?”

“I figured I smacked him hard enough to come out of his mind control,” Steve said, looking troubled. “But then, he didn’t react like I expected him to with you.”

Darcy started to walk off again, huffing. “Well, that’s just how it is, I guess. I’m dead to him.”

“Don’t say that, Darce.”

Darcy turned on her heels and yelled, “Well aren’t I? I may as well be!”

Steve gave her a pained look. “Baby, it’s not that simple. He’s really unwell.”

“He remembered you fine, don’t you see how insignificant that makes me feel?”

“You’re not that to him. You are everything to him.”

“Not anymore.” Darcy voice dropped to a whisper. “I’ve still got you, though, thank God.”

Steve looked away from her then, and she realised he was trying not to cry.

Darcy reached for him, squeezing his hand. “Baby.”

“I’m fine.”

Her heart ached, because how many time had she said that in the last few weeks and not meant it?

(Every time, and it was too many times.)
“Come on, let’s go back to mine,” she whispered, tugging him.

When they got to her place, they didn’t even make it to the bedroom.

He had her stretched out on the floor below him, licking her all over while she shivered, her hips rolling.

He buried his tongue inside her, and her eyes rolled back, her core throbbing with each stroke.

He pushed inside her, filling her to the hilt and shuddering along with her.

“I love you so much,” he mumbled, his face in her hair as he thrust inside her short and hard.

“Fuck,” she moaned, the word drawn out. “I love you too.”

He pressed onto her clit with his thumb and she whimpered.

They were a gasping, heaving mess together, and he pulled out to spill on her stomach, panting and then collapsing beside her on the floor.

He didn’t look any happier, though.

Darcy got up to pee and clean herself up, leaving him lying on the carpet and staring up at the ceiling in silence.

When she returned, he was dressed again and sitting in front of the TV flipping through channels.

“Tell me more about Bucky,” she said as she sat beside him. “I want to know.”

Steve told her about how Bucky got to this century.

He fell from the train and didn’t die – somehow surviving because of the experiments that when on with a guy named Zola – someone from HYDRA.

He lost an arm when he fell, his left one – and Darcy recalled seeing the metal replacement when she implored Bucky to remember her back in Washington.

He didn’t age much because he was taken out of cryostasis. He was maybe thirty now, like Steve. He was meant to be HYDRA’s equivalent of a super soldier.

He was an elite assassin, who forgot every part of himself until the incident in Belgium.

Darcy cried a fair bit while she listened, understanding what people meant when boys didn’t ever come back from war.

Maybe Bucky had died in a way, when he fell from that train. Steve died a little too, that day.

She spent the next couple of days figuring out how to deal with it all.

She avoided Bucky mostly, until she was at the gym on a treadmill and she saw a shape in the mirror in the distance – and realised it was him, looking awkward as she spotted him.

He froze, looking like she was the last person he wanted to see.
He turned to leave.

“Bucky, don’t.”

Darcy smashed the emergency stop button on her machine and stumbled off, panting.

“I should go,” he grunted, and she shook her head.

“Don’t be stupid, you can stay. I’m not gonna –”

She struggled to say something without sounding harsh toward herself or him.

“Look, I… I get it, I think.”

Bucky stared at her, his grip tightening on his towel.

“Steve explained a lot,” she soldiered on. “I think I’ve just got to get used to this, like it is now.”

“Oh, he said, sounding like he still wanted to leave.

He looked her over, seeming to consider something. Darcy waited for him to speak, but he stayed tight-lipped and brooding.

She let out a little laugh, a kind of bitter one she couldn’t help making.

“I’m in love with you.”

His eyes went wide like the last time they met, and she felt her face grow hot.

“Darcy.”

It was the first time he’d ever said her name to her, and she hated his tone. It sounded almost pitiful.

“I know it’s not what you want to hear, but I do. Did. Love you,” she amended, clearing her throat.

“Darcy, I’m really sorry –”

“Don’t,” she snapped. “Don’t do that. I’m going. I just wanted to say it and now I’m going.”

She called Nana Foster that night and they spoke for three hours.

______________________________

Each day was less painful, but it never really went away. If only he didn’t look like the other Bucky, the one who loved her back despite everything.

Darcy kept noticing Bucky’s eyes on her when they were in the same room. She guessed he was trying to figure her out, or she just interested him enough to hold his attention.

Sex with Steve wasn’t anything that tender, because she didn’t allow it to be too serious. When she was overthinking, everything usually went to shit, so she made sure they were fucking every time, and not making love.

Steve would turn and look at her afterwards and he’d stroke her face or do something else just as tender and she’d want to cry, but never did.
(She hadn’t cried in weeks.)

She and Jane were closer than ever. She told her everything and didn’t shy away from her feelings when she was with her.

Jane began to outright beg her to tell Steve about Darlene’s death since it made Darcy’s sleep lighter than ever –

The memories of her time in California with little Maggie, working in the factory and walking home at night –

She shoved everything deeper down like swallowing a dry pill.

And then, somehow, everything got worse.

She meant to meet up with Steve so they could watch a movie at her place, but he was nowhere to be found in the gym or any of the common rooms.

She walked over to his quarters, sure she’d find him with his sketchbook in an armchair, the afternoon having got away from him –

But he wasn’t in his living room, or the kitchen.

She walked through to his bedroom, and –

She stopped short as the bedroom door swung open, and she saw them both, Steve and Bucky.

They were shoving back on clothes, both wide-eyed and caught red-handed.

The air smelled of sex and Darcy pulled back, her hand out to catch a place to steady her –

Because the world was tilting, or swinging right of its hinges –

(Oh, you stupid bitch.)

“Darcy,” she heard Steve say.

Chapter End Notes

Oooof. I mean, I knew I was going to be brutal but when I started writing this part today I got so far ahead of myself that it happened sooner than I expected, but it happened.

Thank you everyone for your comments and kudos. This story is becoming an angst-filled mess but I'm loving the ride.
Chapter 14

Part 14:

Bucky

"Can you still show me the way?
Can you show me a light?
'Cause I was only a kid when I fell and you tossed me aside, hey
What can I do when the fire goes out?
'Cause I don't know if I can live without..."  - Gang of Youths

"Bang bang, he shot me down
Bang bang, I hit the ground
Bang bang, that awful sound
Bang bang, my baby shot me down..."  - Nancy Sinatra

"Your famous friend, well I blew him before ya!"  - Franz Ferdinand
Her hand was up, shielding herself.

“Darcy.”

“Please – just. Nobody say anything for a minute.”

All he could do was watch as Steve and Darcy breathed, her hand still up.

Bucky straightened his t-shirt a little, and saw Steve’s jaw tick.

Her hand turned into a fist at her side, and she took a deep breath to steady herself.

“How long,” she asked, her eyes darting from Steve’s face to Bucky and back again.

“Darcy,” Steve pleaded, and Bucky knew it was time for his girl to collect.

It was over – Bucky knew, by the look in her eye – it was finished.

He wasn’t sure how he felt about it, since he didn’t remember this bond Steve kept talking about. But he knew they were both in the wrong.

It didn’t seem like anyone was going to get out of this unscathed.

“How long have you been fucking around?” Darcy hissed, her voice like ice.

“A while,” Steve admitted, and he frowned.

He hesitated, but then he said:

“Since about 1930.”

Darcy let out a breath. It didn’t seem to be what she expected.

And then she started laughing, a low laugh that was cruel and void of any joy.

“Right.”

She just nodded, and turned – to back out of the bedroom completely, to get away from them, but Steve didn’t let her get away that easily.

He grabbed her wrist, and Bucky knew he made a mistake.

She wrenched herself away like he’d burned her.
“Don’t touch me!” she snapped. “Don’t fucking touch me!”

Steve held up his hands, defeated. “Alright.”

Bucky hung back, not sure he was supposed to witness any of this. But he was a part of this, still. Even if he didn’t fully understand it.

“Darcy, I’m sorry —”

“Are you?” she yelled. “Are you sorry about it?”

“It was wrong,” Steve added. “I should have told you when we met up again.”

“You’re right,” she said. “I feel like the biggest fucking idiot for ever believing I ever meant anything more to you than a good lay.”

Steve looked hurt by that.

“Darcy, I do love you. I always have.”

“Pretty fucked up way of showing it!” she retorted.

Bucky felt himself squirm a little. She was so loud, and so angry – she had a right to be – but he wasn’t sure how to make himself not want to duck out and leave them to it.

“I’m sorry,” Steve said again, a little clearer. “I am sorry for everything.”

“You’re sorry you got caught. I’m sorry you ever decided to lead me on as a kid. What a dumb little girl I must have been to never pick up on it.”

Her breathing was sharp and short. Her lip trembled a little.

“We were really good at keeping it secret,” Bucky said.

It was the most he’d said all day. He hadn’t even said much when he came to Steve’s place to fool around after they trained.

Darcy’s fierce gaze locked on him, looking like she wanted to rip him a new one for having breathed a word.

She raised a shaking finger.

“Don’t.”

Bucky gulped, and looked at the floor.

There was a heavy pause, and Steve looked like he might cry.

“Darcy, it was illegal.”

“I know that!”

“We could have been arrested. We could have been murdered. We didn’t tell you because we didn’t know whether it was worth the risk —”

“Is that how you always justified lying to me? By telling yourself not to trust me, of all people?”
She stabbed at her own chest with her finger, huffing.

“Is that how you sleep at night, telling yourself that by not telling me anything, you weren’t really lying?”

Steve flinched, because he must have felt that at one point. That it was okay as long as she didn’t outright ask. But they were lying by omission.

“So what, you started when you were twelve, thirteen?”

She looked at them both.

Bucky spoke up. “Twelve.”

“What were you doing – kissing? Did you give each other hand jobs?”

“Darcy.”

“Did you suck each other off? Did you fuck him?”

Steve blushed. Bucky’s eyes flitted to Darcy’s face.

“Did Bucky fuck you?”

Steve stammered. “Darcy, w-why are you asking this?”

“Because I want to know every detail, just the same as you two were about me!” she screamed, and Bucky winced a little at the sharpness of her voice. “Don’t think I didn’t know exactly how much you two knew about my body and how far I’d been with either of you.”

Bucky couldn’t imagine it – sharing this girl with Steve. He couldn’t imagine allowing himself to see Steve with anyone but himself, but it must have happened, because why otherwise was Steve sure they were all destined to be together?

It sounded like a cruel joke, now. For their fate to be tied together when they’d caused each other so much pain.

“I bet that if I’d asked you two, you’d have flipped a coin for my virginity.”

She swiped at her face, irritated by her own tears.

“I’m sorry, too,” Bucky said, and he didn’t know why he thought it was a good idea to speak. He probably should have thought it through.

Thinking for him didn’t seem to help much either way, those days.

“I mean, I know that I must have done it, been part of the lie. I just don’t remember it. I just know that when we started fooling around it was my idea. I felt like I’d molested Steve when I touched him the first time.”


They stared at each other for a moment too long, because Darcy decided to depart.

Steve darted in front of her to block the doorway.
“I need to fix this,” he said, looking down at Darcy. “I have to fix this.”

“There’s nothing to fix, Steve,” Darcy said, going straight for the knife. “My entire life, my whole two lives, are a complete lie.”

Steve swallowed, blinking back at her.

He moved out of her way, just staring after her as she left.

They didn’t see her at all for a couple days. There was no sign that she was even around, and when Jane walked up to them in the middle of their workout, her hands on her hips and scowling, they knew she was long gone.

“Darcy’s staying in California. She’s taken off the next month.”

“Oh, okay,” Steve said, nodding. “Thank you for letting us know.”

The dirty look on her face didn’t falter. “Don’t try and call her. Talk to me if you want to talk to her.”

“Oh, okay,” Steve said again, sounding emptier by the second.

Steve hadn’t taken it well, his separation from Darcy.

But he kept talking about how he was a coward and she deserved better. He even said she was better off not ever knowing him at all.

He said this as they sat together drinking beer and watching TV one night a week after she left.

“Didn’t we all make each other happy once?” Bucky asked, and Steve just took a long gulp from his bottle, jaw ticking.

“Everything she said was right. Her life was based on a lie. Even if we made each other happy, it was only half the story.”

Bucky remembered climbing into bed with Steve when the Barnes’ apartment was empty, encounters in bathrooms at school.

He did remember sleeping with girls. He wasn’t gay. He knew he had genuine attractions to women, and Darcy was definitely the type of girl that would have turned his head back in the day.

But that didn’t seem relevant anymore. Even if he did remember her, she didn’t want either of them anymore, as far as they knew.

“I hope she’s okay,” Bucky said, looking over at Steve who was staring at the TV blankly.

“Me, too.”

Bucky just watched Steve for a while, watched him lost in his thoughts.
“She said she was in love with me,” he blurted, “before she caught us.”

Caught. It was the right word to use. The more he thought about it, Steve was definitely going to crack and confess everything to Darcy eventually, but fate had that hurry along sooner than he expected.

“How did she tell you that?”

“She sounded like she just wanted to get it out of her. I think she wanted to move on.”

“I guess she will now,” Steve muttered, sounding miserable.

Bucky had never seen Steve like this before. He was knocked down by a lot of things, and he was always getting himself back up again, but he never had been so fixated before on his mistakes.

Bucky supposed they were more than mistakes. They were conscious, poor decisions they’d made and Darcy’s feelings were in tatters because of them – but Steve wouldn’t let any of it go.

He supposed it was because Steve loved her that much.

He thought his possessive streak had died a long time ago, that HYDRA had beaten it or scraped it out of him, but it was there and stronger than ever.

---

Speaking of HYDRA, they hadn’t even so much as lifted their heads to sniff the air in weeks, and it didn’t sit well with Bucky.

It couldn’t be that easy to leave. It wasn’t their style.

Those fucking fascists would skin him alive eventually. This felt like a brief window in between suffering, but Steve wouldn’t listen.

“I’m not gonna let them take you away from me again.”

He said this with his arms around him when Bucky had a nightmare – one that was just a blur of metal and blood with screaming and the smell of smoke – and Bucky just curled in on himself, wanting to feel warmer.

Steve the protector.

Steve the stubborn.

---

Bucky ran mile after mile, sometimes not stopping to breathe enough until he felt high. Natasha would scold him in Russian when she spotted him from her window looking over the track.

She kept looking at him and talking to him like she knew him, but she didn’t. It wasn’t until she told him more about herself and the Red Room that he saw the shudder he knew too well – the one of memories that clung to her shoulders and pressed down, threatening to flatten her.
“Did they sterilize you, too?” the redhead asked, flipping said hair out of her face when she decided to box with him one afternoon.

“Yeah,” he grunted, a little annoyed she was being so personal so soon.

“Does Steve know?” she asked, and he shook his head.

“Hasn’t come up. Why’d he care, anyway?”

She faltered, frowning. “Bucky, any one of us would care if HYDRA did that to you.”

These people didn’t know him well enough. If they cared, they just were ignorant. He’d done things that would make them sick to their stomach.

“You should tell Steve anyway,” she added, and he shook his head again.

“Don’t think too much about it, sweetheart. I try not to.”

“There’s your problem,” she said, and threw a punch that Bucky registered as above average in force. “You don’t think enough.”

They fell into routine. Steve and Bucky slept in the same bed and spent most of their days together. In the afternoons, Bucky was usually by himself while Steve went to train the elite squad he sometimes went on missions with.

The other Avengers did their own thing, usually coming together every so often to party, or hang around together in one of the common rooms.

The brash, rich one that Bucky knew was Howard Stark’s kid was always running around New York or the compound, usually getting up Steve’s nose about things just for the hell of it.

Bucky thought he liked the one called Banner the best because he asked the least questions, and made the least amount of conversation.

It was hard to explain to the most understanding of people why Bucky hated holding a conversation. He had some vague idea that he was an outgoing young man way back during the war and even earlier, but now it was like pulling teeth every time someone asked him along to a get-together.

There was literally nothing in it worth anything to Bucky. It felt like a waste of time. He knew he’d only go along to hope he could leave the second people stopped talking at him.

He did it once, for Steve.

Darcy was still in California, doing whatever it was she needed to do. She’d taken her month and then some, showing no signs of returning any time soon.

Everybody seemed to make it especially awkward because it was a known secret now that Steve and Bucky were a thing. Jane was nowhere to be seen, probably out of some loyalty to Darcy, which Bucky knew was fair.

Natasha was trying too hard to include them both in conversation. Something about cars that Bucky didn’t follow.
He didn’t laugh at jokes when he was supposed to.

The crowd, however little it was in reality, began to overwhelm him.

Steve was good at putting up a front, and was talking comfortably with everyone, beer in hand while Bucky watched him, feeling completely disconnected.

Someone touched his arm, and the beer bottle in Bucky’s metal hand snapped in half, spilling beer all over the carpet.

Wanda, the one who’d touched him, looked mortified, grabbing some napkins to help remedy the situation.

“I’m so sorry,” she babbled, in accented English. “I shouldn’t have done that.”

“It’s fine, Wanda. Don’t worry about it,” Steve said, shrugging a little.

Bucky wanted to shake him.

Nothing was fine. Nothing was ever fine. Whatever delusion Steve was living under, Bucky wouldn’t ever be a part of. He couldn’t be.

His body wouldn’t let him anymore.

Bucky backed out of the room and practically ran to the gym, went around the back of it and climbed onto the roof.

He ran his hands through his hair, hating the feel of it in his face.

He couldn’t imagine cutting it shorter, though. That’d be too weird.

He couldn’t stop thinking about how Steve hadn’t mentioned Darcy unless Bucky brought her up. But Bucky was the one who had to deal with his misery firsthand.

He was the one who felt like their sex was mindless because Bucky took over every time.

Steve just seemed too distracted.

Bucky frowned, staring up at the stars.

He had a really bad idea in mind, but Natasha was the one who said he needed to think more, instead of doing nothing.

He had an objective. So the mission was clear.

He got out his new phone, one that Steve gave him and pressed the button for Friday.

“Is Darcy letting calls come from me?”

“Miss Lewis only disallowed Captain Rogers from reaching her,” Friday said, not troubled at all.

Friday was probably doing a million things at the same time but she sounded so real to Bucky it still left him feeling creeped out whenever he spoke to her.

(It. Whatever. At least it seemed nice.)

He cleared his throat awkwardly, his voice mostly unused those days so he sounded out of practice
every time he opened his mouth, and it was embarrassing.

He supposed talking more would help change that, but he rarely felt the need to say anything.

“Transfer me through to her. To Lewis.”

He waited, and after a brief couple of rings, she picked up.

There was a rustling on the other end, and Bucky strained to hear what else was going on, and he could make out crickets chirping in the background, which seemed fitting.

“Hey,” she sounded a little strange, like she didn’t know what to say either.

“How are you?”

Because he did actually care, he realised. He cared if she was okay, even if she had been sleeping with Steve. Even if it was easier for him to have Steve all to his own now.

(Because she was a human being.)

“I’m okay,” she said, still sounding thrown by everything. “Is that why you called?”

“Kind of,” Bucky muttered. “Keep thinkin’ I don’t know what I’m doin’.”

She sighed, sounding a little tired but knowing.

“I can’t come back there, Bucky. I’m not ready.”

“When do you think you’ll be ready?”

“I don’t know.”

“I can’t look after him alone,” he admitted, finally giving the feelings a name. Doubt.

“He’s a grown man.”

“So am I,” he retorted. “Except maybe he needs you, too, not just me.”

He was surprised they got this far. He half expected her to tell him to fuck off the second she picked up, and hang up on him.

She was so caring, considering.

Bucky felt something churn in his gut and coughed a little, uncomfortable.

“Maybe, Bucky,” she said, her voice sounding further away, like she wasn’t on Earth. “Maybe not.”

They sat together on the phone, but still miles and miles away from each other. If she was there, Bucky wasn’t sure what he’d do.

But he wished they’d done everything differently.

He and Steve didn’t deserve her.

Bucky sure as hell didn’t deserve her respect, but she was being so patient even now.

“You didn’t have to pick up, but you did anyway,” he heard himself say.
“Bucky, are you okay?”

God, she was amazing. He hated HYDRA, with every part of his pathetic little icy heart. He was covered in so much scar tissue now it was like he was raw all over.

His eyes prickled. He was horrified to find himself sniffling a little, and he covered his mouth so Darcy couldn’t hear him.

“Bucky?”

“It’s weird to hear people call me that,” he said, remembering what Natasha told him.

(Think more. Do more.)

“I know it’s my name but I haven’t been called it in so long.”

Darcy paused, seeming to consider what to say next. She sighed a little.

“Please don’t call here again for a while. Okay?”

“Okay,” he echoed, and hung up.

He lay back on the roof and listened to the music from far away. He wondered how long it would take Steve to find him up there.

Chapter End Notes

I'm pretty emotionally invested in this story, as I am sure you can tell. I'm very dedicated to making this story not seem like a constant cop-out, like, no... Darcy would not forgive anyone easily who hurt her like Steve and Bucky did. But she's human, and she's in love. And she's decent. I can see her still doing a lot for those around her that are even callous.

I have to have the story move forward somehow, but I am sensitive about the reality of her feelings, because they are valid. I'm not going to ignore the struggle that's coming, or the fact that it's a lot to forgive.

Anyway, the songs mentioned above are all HIGHLY recommended, especially the one by the Australian band Gang of Youths. Please listen to it here. The Nancy Sinatra one I think everyone knows well, but I felt it stuck to me like glue. The Franz Ferdinand reference is a little tongue in cheek, but I'd been thinking about it too much to not include it.

Thank you to everyone for reading this, for commenting and taking the time to give kudos. I am very grateful and aware that emotions may be running high.

I'll see you in the next one! <3
Edit: This chapter originally stated Steve and Bucky had been "fooling around" since about 1932, when it actually would have been 1930, when they were both 12, as mentioned a couple lines later. In this fic they were both born in 1918, and Darlene in 1920.
"I'm waiting for it, that green light, I want it!"  - Lorde

Darcy hung up and placed her forehead to the kitchen table she was sitting at – and Nana Foster just patted her shoulder, shaking her head.

“Honey, I know that look,” she intoned, “and I’ve seen you with it seventy years ago when you were heartbroken the first time.”

“Ugggggggggggggggghhhhh,” Darcy groaned, smacking her head a couple times and then resurfacing, wiping her eyes. “Why am I crying? I’m so sick of crying.”

Maggie – because Darcy could never call her Nana or even Margaret – got up because her timer went off for the oven. She’d made another casserole with little bacon bits in them she knew Darcy liked and started sectioning off a bit for her on a plate.
She returned with their dinner, not bothered at all by Darcy’s tears.

“I figure the things we do to get through the night are worth it. So cry if you need to cry.”

“It just gets so tiring. I thought I’d have run out of tears by now,” Darcy mumbled, before taking a bite and chewing glumly.

“What did Bucky want?” Maggie asked, her eyebrows knitted together.


They ate in silence as Darcy thought everything over, and she couldn’t help analysing the entire phone conversation, though it was so brief.

She’d been at Maggie’s for nearly six weeks. Jane came most weekends, unless there was something dire going on in the lab, but that didn’t happen often.

Jane told her anything she asked, like how Steve seemed.

“He seems depressed,” Jane said, but she was void of sympathy. “Selfish asshole.”

It was easy to be angry at them both – Steve and Bucky – but it was hard to maintain that sense of rage over time. Darcy wasn’t the type to hold grudges. It didn’t serve her well this time around.

If only Darcy could be one of those girls who left the second they were hurt. But not her. She and Steve didn’t talk about their problems, didn’t communicate – didn’t hash anything out until the moment she caught him just out of bed with Bucky.

She wasn’t as angry at Bucky than Steve. She figured that was her weakness, that she couldn’t stop herself from seeing it from their perspective.

Bucky had no memory of her and felt no loyalty to her. It wasn’t his concern whether he hurt her, because he didn’t care.

HYDRA seemed to have done a really great job of wiping away any sense of shame he had.

Well, that’s what she thought until she told him she loved him at the gym and he didn’t look at her like she was scum.

And just then on the phone, he sounded so lost and afraid. He sounded like he was dying to talk to someone but wasn’t sure how to start.

“Darlene, you don’t owe them anything. A woman owes nothing to a man,” Maggie hissed, her fork pointing at Darcy as she ate. “Never forget that.”

She sounded like the hero Darcy always needed.

She was right; she didn’t owe either of them her time, worry, effort – nothing. But it wasn’t easy to separate herself from them, even after everything.

She wished she could just drink hard liquor and move on from whatever horrible thing that bothered her. Like yeah, fuck men.

Fuck Steve and Bucky, man.

(Fuck those stupid pricks, I’m a goddess.)
“Is that why Jane never took her dad’s last name?” Darcy asked.

She’d wondered how it was that Jane had the same last name as her maternal grandmother.

“She wanted her mama’s name. My name, too,” Maggie said, a little smile playing on her face.

Her bracelets clacked together because she moved her little hands a lot when she spoke.

They got their nails done together at the salon yesterday. They had matching pink nails like talons, and Darcy loved tapping things with them.

Like the phone that lay beside her.

She grimaced. “Goddamn it, Maggie. I wish – I just wish –”

“What, Dar?”

Maggie alternated from calling her Darlene or Dar, which Darcy never minded.

“I wish I hadn’t come back because of them. Why couldn’t they just tell me they were together so we could have worked something out? I came back for them?”

Maggie shrugged. “Life doesn’t start with a man, you know that.”

Darcy groaned exceptionally loud that time, and Maggie just nodded like, yeah. She knew how she felt.

It’d been weeks but they had conversations like that all the time, seeming to get no further.

Darcy looked at her phone again and shoved it away.

“I’m going for a drive.”

“You want me to come, too?”

Maggie was a spry little thing but Darcy wasn’t sure what she was going to get up to, not really. She shook her head, trying to seem nonchalant.

“I’m okay. I’ll be back soon. Just need to clear my head.”

She deliberately left her phone at the table with her leftovers, and took Maggie’s keys.

When she drove off down the road, she found herself going back to where Maggie drove her and Jane the first time she came here.

She parked the car on the side of the road and stepped out.

It was dark now. Dark like it had been the night she died.

“What the fuck am I doing,” she muttered, to no-one in particular.

There was long grass all around. It was a neglected part of the neighbourhood. People must walk past there all the time, having no idea a body lay there once.
She wished she had her phone. But maybe if she had it now she’d call Jane and start crying again and she didn’t want that.

Her parents from her second life, they didn’t understand. She didn’t ever explain properly to them why she left for her internship all those years ago.

Also, they didn’t ask. It wasn’t as if they showed much interest in the things they didn’t understand, which was Darcy.

She was a person who was there but no-one asked after much.

It used to not hurt that much when she was running around with Jane and Erik in the desert. But now, she had no desire to tell them her discoveries.

(Mom and Dad, I have a whole other family. Remember when you said I had an old soul? Funny about that. Also, my boyfriends were having a secret affair I never knew about.

Also, I died in a ditch.)

She was older now than she ever was as Darlene. That only hit her just now.

She looked at the ground, and kicked at it a little.

“Why the fuck am I here?”

Why couldn’t she just have died and stayed dead? Why did she have to be reincarnated to a family who wasn’t the Fosters and have a boyfriend cheat on her knowingly?

Why couldn’t she just hate the pair of them?

She kicked the ground again, harder, flicking dirt around and she growled.

Enough. She was done feeling sorry for herself.

She stalked back to the car, slamming the door as she sat, looking over the dashboard and sighing.

She sped off, back to Maggie’s house.

Maggie was putting dishes away and looked up when Darcy stormed in.

“What year did I die?” Darcy asked.

Maggie blinked a few times. “’43.”

Darcy darted for her phone, and opened up the Friday app.

“Friday, I need to search Darlene Singer. She was in California in 1943 when she died.”

As Friday began searching, pulling files from out of the ether, Maggie stared at Darcy with wide eyes.

“Darlene, what are you trying to do?”

“I have to figure this out. Because I want to sleep tonight,” Darcy snapped, huffing a little. “I’m sick of always being in the dark.”

She tapped her long nails on the kitchen table and watched as the holograms began jumping up from
the projector port in her phone, the articles Friday found hung in the air for Darcy and Maggie to see.

There were no faces, just some names. Hardly enough information to warrant a eureka moment exactly, but Darcy skimmed them anyway.

Maggie squinted a little, as she put down the mug she was drying into the rack.

“‘No leads’?“ She read, her eyes narrowing further. “What?”

“People had no idea where to start,” Darcy explained. “No-one saw anything. And how am I meant to find a witness now when everyone there that day is probably dead?”

“With the exception of this kid,” Maggie added, jutting her thumb at herself.

“My death was listed as an accident,” Darcy read on, scanning more of the snippets Friday found.

The date the article was published made her pause, narrowing her eyes a little.

“Maggie, I hate to ask, but when was my death date?”

“April… late April. 28th.”

(It can’t be. But still…)

Darcy felt her stomach drop.

“Steve. When he crashed his plane –”

“Friday,” Maggie said a little hesitantly, still getting used to the technology. “What day did Captain America crash into the Arctic?”

“Captain Steven Rogers crashed into the Arctic on April 28th, 1943.”

Darcy thought she might be sick. She threw herself into a chair and with her face in her hands. The blood in her ears was roaring and everything began to feel fuzzy and far away.

This wasn’t even funny anymore. She could see how everything tied together, but she didn’t want any of it. She didn’t want this feeling.

She was trapped. She was alone.

For the millionth time she thought to herself, how could he do this to me?

To love and hate someone this much – it was too much.

She felt too much.

He was everywhere. He’d permeated her entire existence.

She wasn’t sure how, but he was the reason she died. That was the only explanation she could come up with.

She didn’t believe in coincidences anymore, at least when it came to her life.

“Dar, honey.”
Maggie’s hand pressed onto her shoulder and Darcy gulped the air, remembering where she was.

“Friday, I swear to God,” she muttered, wanting to take this out on someone else.

“Would you like me to notify Sergeant Barnes of your distress?”

“NO,” she yelled, glaring at her phone. “I’m going to sit with this. Because that’s what I do, I sit. I’m a sitter.”

Maggie patted her, in an attempt to soothe her.

She said what Darcy knew she was going to say.

“You need to go back, Dar,” she whispered, “And not because you’re not welcome here. But you need to move on from this, in whatever way you can.”

“I know,” Darcy groaned, and she sighed.

She packed up everything that night and had Friday ask Tony if she could please borrow his jet again. He just sent back a thumbs-up emoji so Darcy figured it was more than fine.

She thought about giving him a fruit platter when she got back.

The flight itself was uneventful.

She’d promised Maggie a top-of-the-line Stark phone of her own when she got a chance to grab another from the compound.

Tony was practically giving those away, and it was funny to watch Maggie talk to Friday at length, and play with the holograms.

When she arrived in the lab, Jane ran to her and hugged her, swaying a little. Bruce even smiled at her a bit.

Wanda came by the lab and cheered. “I heard you were back. Yay!”

She didn’t have to explain her absence to anyone; everyone seemed to know enough not to ask, and not make an ass of themselves.

She didn’t see Bucky or Steve for several days. They seemed to be avoiding her. She wasn’t sure what to do about that exactly, but she remembered what Maggie said.

She didn’t owe them any comfort. They felt bad about what happened, that was obvious. But they should, so that’s how it was going to remain for now.

Being in the lab was fine. Things were at a certain level of okay that didn’t feel exactly fake – she wasn’t suppressing feelings or dodging personal questions that Jane was asking.

She didn’t even care if Bruce overheard anything. He was sweet and caring.

She didn’t mean to, but she thought of Bucky calling her like he did that night, troubled and so vulnerable. The only other time he’d ever been like that with her was the last night she was in
Brooklyn before leaving for California in 1941.

They were both so angry at each other for being that in love – and Bucky was the kind of guy who kept up a front constantly. He never, ever let someone see his cards, because showing them scared him to death.

Darcy was walking to the lab one morning a fortnight after she got back when she almost collided with Bucky, who was coming from the direction of the field behind the compound.

“Sorry,” he grunted, dodging her.

Darcy had ex-boyfriends. She just hadn’t had to deal with them like this before, where everything had to be carefully manipulated so she didn’t have to see either of them – when she worked so closely to them both.

She cringed, and spun around to call after him.

“I don’t give a shit anymore, alright?”

“What?”

He stared at her, and Darcy saw the glisten of his sweaty skin in the morning sunlight and hated that she was still that thirsty and pathetic.

(What was it about men? Oh, yeah. That.)

He must have seen her eyes rove over him but he didn’t return the look with the kind of sauciness the old Bucky had. He just narrowed his eyes a little, puzzled.

“I don’t care if we’re in the same room anymore. We work together. Kind of.”

“Okay,” Bucky said, another low grunt.

His towel tightened a little in his metal grasp.

“I’m just trying to be professional.”

“Okay.”

She stalked off, trying to hide her blush.

She still didn’t see them much. The team was away a lot, for missions or whatever, though Bucky wasn’t included as being part of the Avengers yet.

Apparently he still needed to get over some hurdles, or that was at least what Wanda told her.

“His memories are a mess,” Natasha added. “He recognises Cap but not much else.”

Darcy didn’t know why she wanted to know all this – they weren’t hers to look after anymore. But she was curious. Some would say too curious for her own good.
The first time she saw Steve in the flesh, Darcy wanted to drop and roll away from the common room, but she remained cool and complacent as she nodded a greeting at him, chewing on her Pop Tart.

“You’re back,” she said.

He was in Africa with Bruce and Tony. He looked tanner, but Darcy could tell he was restraining himself a little around her.

He looked really good, truth be told, but Steve never looked in bad shape.

“Yeah,” he said, his voice kind of light. “Wanda said you were back, too.”

He must have known she was there ages ago, but didn’t want to seem too creepy, Darcy realised. He didn’t want to make things worse.

Darcy swallowed her food, shrugging a little. “I was staying with my cousin.”

“Is that the cousin from way back?” Steve asked, because he couldn’t help himself.

Maybe she didn’t hate him, but it was easy to be annoyed by his nosiness. He didn’t care enough before -

That maybe wasn’t fair. He did ask about California, but he was already cheating on her then.

Darcy didn’t answer his question.

“I kept a lot from you,” she said, instantly regretting it, because it made her sound stupid.

He was obviously the big fat liar.

“Darcy –”

She put up a hand to silence him. “I know. You did worse.”

He closed his mouth, nodding. He took a second to reply. “I did.”

“But I’m not going to leave my job because of some stupid guy.”

Good. That made her feel a little more powerful, reducing him to that, trying to hurt his feelings a little. Darcy liked being petty.

She appreciated him not talking to her unless he was spoken to.

“Back to work, I guess,” she added airily, licking her fingers and turning away to walk off, knowing Steve’s eyes were on her.

She didn’t know when she was meant to tell him she died on the day he fell into the ice. If she did say anything at all, it’d mean she cared what he thought, or cared about what it all meant.
She wasn’t ready for that. She was sick of caring about his fucking feelings.

She was okay, and then she got a shot of venom in her whenever she saw Steve and Bucky together, training or just walking around.

They never were that affectionate in public. She figured that was Bucky’s issue more than Steve’s.

She thought of Bucky’s eyes on her and –

No. She wasn’t going to even entertain a fantasy in her head. She didn’t even want the idea of hate fucking getting her off when she was alone in bed, staring at the ceiling.

Not when those two were in their own bed together, probably having worn each other out, like she and Steve used to be.

There was a small party in the common room because Tony bought a ridiculously expensive cache of sake in Kyoto when he visited there the week before – and he felt like sharing it.

Darcy adored Tony’s generosity, but found she wasn’t really in the partying mood when Steve was there as well, though she chose to not stare daggers after him.

That was the plan, originally, with Jane – except Bucky wasn’t there so it didn’t feel as good.

Darcy didn’t feel like dancing like Jane did, and shook her head at her boss, suddenly feeling drained.

She told Jane she needed the bathroom but ducked out completely, deciding her Netflix queue was a better idea than trying to socialise anywhere near Steve.

Darcy was still holding her glass and drained it while she walked back to her place, occasionally glancing up at the moon.

There was a scraping sound above her head and she jumped, squinting up in the dark.

“Bucky?”

He was staring down at her, looking slightly embarrassed but mostly his moody self.

He was smoking on the roof above the gym, having managed to climb up there somehow. Darcy looked around, and saw the window ledge he must have used, and decided to try.

She could blame it on being a little drunk. Even though climbing wasn’t the best idea while being tipsy, and being around an ex definitely wasn’t either.

She pulled herself up, and she felt Bucky’s metal arm reach down and pull her up the rest of the way with ease.

She didn’t say thanks, just stared at him in the dark.

He took a drag from his cigarette and blew the smoke out his nose like he used to.

Darcy shook her head a little to dislodge the memory, not wanting to get caught up in that right now.

“Why aren’t you at the party?”

“Why aren’t you?” he grunted back, flicking ash on the roof.
“I got tired.”

Bucky nodded, shrugging. “Same, I guess.”

Darcy looked him over, realising something. “When you called me that time, was that from here?”

“Why do you care?” he grunted, and Darcy decided she hated him.

He was a fucking jerk.

“Guess I don’t care,” she snapped. “Or I shouldn’t.”

“Probably not.”

(God, he was irritating.)

Darcy sat down beside him, rolling her eyes.

“Truth is, I couldn’t stand the idea of being in the same room with your boyfriend.”

Bucky stamped his cigarette out under his boot.

“Oh.”

They sat in silence, as Darcy looked him over. His cheeks were bristly and he had bags under his eyes. She wondered if he’d slept any better or any worse when Steve was away in Africa.

She cared. Goddamn it, she cared about the pair of them anyway. It made her feel weak.

But this wasn’t about her, the exhausted look on Bucky’s face.

Steve may have been sad about it, but Bucky had bigger problems.

“You ever think about before?” Darcy murmured, her voice a little cracked.

He looked at her like he knew she meant before HYDRA, before the war.

“Sometimes,” he said, his voice softer, less curt.

Darcy very carefully put hand close to his. Not on him, but close enough that he saw the gesture for what it was. A little white flag.

Because fuck her feelings. She cared anyway, even when she didn’t want to. Even when she thought she might die from caring about other people this much.

“Liar,” she whispered.

Bucky’s eyes flashed, and he leaned closer to her, his breath on her face.

“You miss Steve?”

Darcy’s eyes widened a little at how close he was to her. If he slipped right now he’d be on top of her.

“No. Not anymore.”

“Liar,” Bucky shot back, and then he moved back, getting up.
He left her on the roof to stare up at the moon, the tears falling before she could stop them.

Chapter End Notes

[sing-song] I don't know what I'm doing anymore!!!

Hey, so thank you so much for the feedback for the last chapter. I feel like I'm trying to write more complicated emotions now and I'm scared I won't be able to pull it off tbh. I don't want it to be like Darcy's completely forgiven everybody because HELLO. NO. Reality would say otherwise!

Help me because I am addicted to writing this fic.... <3
Chapter 16*

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Part 16:

Steve

"Take me to the distant past, I want to go back,
Save me from the distant past, I want to survive...” - Everything Everything
Steve noticed Bucky being something else other than himself.

He knew things were different when they met up again. He was sneaking around to be with him.

They were caught and Steve got what he deserved – an ex-girlfriend who always looked at him now like he was worth nothing more than something stuck to the bottom of her shoe.

Somehow worse than bubble-gum or dog shit.

Bucky would have nightmares and more than once woke up grabbing a hunting knife from under his pillow and put it to Steve’s throat before realising where and when he was –

And then he’d be so apologetic and upset by the outburst that he’d retreat further into himself and refuse to leave their shared quarters.

Things were worse with just the two of them to worry about, somehow.

Of course Steve worried about Darcy, but it was more than a little late to try and show that he cared. This was the kind of mistake he’d sit with and feel no closer to accepting what he’d done without wishing for a time machine, feeling like a stupid kid.

The adult solution would be to apologise in every way he could, not just in words, and then live with the biggest mistake of his life, forever.

Because that’s what it was – the worst thing he’d ever done to someone else.

Each day when he saw Darcy she’d chip away at what they were before, like such a master sculptor – and he’d just have to take it, swallow it down deep inside him and let it rest there.

“I’m not going to leave my job because of some stupid guy.”

That’s what she said the first time, which was more than fair. She was right on the money.

A couple days later she was with all the other ladies, who were sitting together in the common room drinking wine and laughing together.

Darcy made sure he heard her say:

“From my experience, dating a meathead is totally overrated. It’s like my brain cells were calling out to me for help.”

He was sure that after that night, everyone knew he’d cheated on her with Bucky. Not that anyone was giving him the evil eye (save Jane, but that was a given).

Just that his hearing had him overhearing something Wanda said to Natasha and it made him stop in his tracks when he was walking to the gym alone.

“I knew there was an overlap. But it’s awful.”

It would have been better for everyone to just hate him instead of pretending they didn’t know – except Tony didn’t pretend for a second like he could ignore how flawed Steve suddenly was.
On the way to Africa with Bruce, Tony leaned over to Steve and said to him in a low voice:

“I heard you might be more like my old man than I thought.”

Steve watched as Bruce deliberately looked away and out his window, probably wishing the plane was bigger. It was a room in the sky he couldn’t escape from.

“How am I like Howard, Tony?” Steve asked, knowing exactly where everything was going.

Next Bruce was going to look like he wished he was dead, or at least like he wished he could have his own plane or be back in his lab with Darcy and Jane.

Steve supposed that no matter what, Bruce was on Darcy’s side, even if he’d fought alongside Steve for years now.

It wasn’t Bruce’s style to not defend the underdog, which he guessed Darcy was in this scenario.

(Not that there was even a real winner, especially when Bucky looked like he wanted to kill himself or Steve or both most days.)

Tony cleared his throat, a little mischievous smile on his face.

“I mean about Darcy.”

“Right,” Steve said, nodding.

His jaw ticked and he sighed. Then something happened that he didn’t expect.

“How could you do that to her, man?” Bruce asked, sounding like he was feeling for Darcy as much as Steve expected him to.

“I’m trying to gauge exactly what he did, though,” Tony said, eyebrows hiking up. “I heard you have wandering eyes – or hands. Whichever.”

Tony had no shame. Or if he did it was about very specific things that Steve didn’t care to know. The way he bantered with everyone was almost on the flirtatious side, until he said something out of line, and then usually Steve snapped.

He supposed it was because he was ancient by comparison and until recently he probably came across as almost too self-righteous and had to be made fun of.

“He cheated on her with Bucky,” Bruce said, frowning. “And I’m sorry, it’s been bugging me for a while. But she comes in and acts like it’s all fine and then she gets this look on her face…”

Steve knew that look. He winced a little at Bruce’s words.

“He’s right. I was unfaithful,” Steve muttered, resting his face in his hands and sighing. “I had an affair with Bucky for years. Not that it makes it okay.”

“You realise it’s okay to be gay now, right? If Darcy was just a beard,” Tony said, shrugging.

“She wasn’t,” Steve snapped, aware of the meaning of the word. “I love her.”

Bruce let out a nasty laugh that Steve had only heard him make a few times before whenever he spoke about the Other Guy or General Ross.
Steve kept going.

“And I’m not gay."

Tony exchanged a look with Bruce. “So you’re what – bi?”

“Sure,” Steve muttered.

He felt his cheeks go pink. He’d never used that word to describe himself before.

“Did my dad know?” Tony blurted.

“No,” Steve said. “He just saw me falling for Peggy.”

“But weren’t you and Bucky still together during the war?”

“Yes,” Steve said slowly, drawing the word out and feeling his blush redden further. “We were careful that no-one found out.”

Bruce laughed a little, shaking his head. “So lying and sneaking around with Bucky isn’t exactly a recent thing.”

“No.”


“I’m a coward,” Steve said, blinking a few times. “And I don’t want anyone on my side. Whatever she needs to get through this, I’d give it to her.”

Bruce’s face softened a little.

There was an awkward silence and Tony drained his glass of scotch, sighing.

“Just let her shoot you. I’ve heard that helps. She has a taser, too. I heard that from Jane.”

Steve felt a little helpless but nodded anyway.

He knew about the taser and sometimes wished she’d just use that on him until he passed out.

Maybe do it a couple dozen times a day until he didn’t hate himself so much.

Or until he hated himself more.

When they got back from Africa, Bruce wasn’t so mean but he kept to the lab mostly like before.

Whatever happened in there was obviously more fun for Bruce, and Steve didn’t mind.

Because suddenly Bucky was completely out of control, and not much else mattered.

The second he got back to his place after the sake night, Bucky was on top of him, kissing him with the kind of desperate force Steve remembered from when they were teenagers and he didn’t hesitate before putting his hands in Steve’s pants and stroking him hard and fast.
He didn’t even say a word, just went straight into sex like he was waiting the entire time Steve was gone to get back to it.

Steve could barely hold on – especially when Bucky was shoving him over the edge of the couch and lining them up.

He didn’t use enough lube. Steve didn’t want to be there. It wasn’t that it hurt –

Which it did. It stung and Steve whimpered more in pain than in pleasure.

Bucky was hitting him in the right spot but almost mindlessly like he wasn’t altogether there and Steve felt that realisation all over his body, with that vice grip on his chest.

Bucky came inside him with a growl, and pulled out too fast.

“Shit,” Steve muttered, his lip between his teeth.

The horror dawned on Bucky’s face.

“Oh, fuck. Did I hurt you? Shit. I’m sorry, Steve.”

Steve lowered himself to the floor, shaking his head. “It’s okay, Buck.”

Bucky reached for him, for Steve’s cock, but he brushed him aside.

“Don’t worry about me.”

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Bucky snapped, starting to shake.

“What?” Steve retorted, failing to keep his voice steady. “What is it?”

“I feel like I’m just waiting all the time,” Bucky hissed.

Bucky huffed.

He was close to crying again. Steve was making this worse. He should have come already so Bucky wouldn’t feel like such a villain all over again.

“Waiting? What do you mean –”

“Waiting for you to fucking get rid of me or somethin’!” Bucky roared, and then he snapped his eyes shut, shaking his head. “Why can’t you just send me back to HYDRA already? Get it over with.”

Steve felt his heart hammer, and he rose to try and hug him, but Bucky backed off, picking up his pants to cover himself again.

“I’m not going to send you away.”

“Why not?”

“Because I love you, Bucky,” Steve whispered, that same helplessness coming over him again.

Bucky shook his head, looking anywhere but his lover’s face.

“This is all my fault,” he mumbled, looking lost.

He looked around the room.
“Can’t you see I don’t belong here?”

“But you do –”

“Fucking just – will ya listen to me?” Bucky snapped, and Steve clamped his mouth shut.

A tear escaped, falling down Bucky’s cheek and Steve watched as he wiped it away, frowning.

“You weren’t a liar before I met you. I made you –”

“You think what happened with Darcy was your fault?” Steve blurted, and Bucky nodded curtly.

“How else can you explain it?”

Steve shook his head, and tried to take Bucky’s metal hand in his. He snatched it away.

“You can’t blame yourself for that, Buck. That was all me.”

Bucky just kept shaking his head, and then Steve saw him put a hand to his chest – his flesh hand that was shaking like the rest of him.

“I don’t feel so good.”

“Bucky,” Steve tried, and Bucky shoved him away that time, his breathing starting to become rapid.

“Buck, where does it hurt?”

“My chest. I can’t breathe.”

“Buck –”

Bucky was hyperventilating, sinking to the floor. He was wide-eyed and scared like a little boy and Steve tried to ignore his own rising panic in his chest.

“Bucky, please just breathe.”

He kept saying this over and over, waiting for him to calm down -

He must have said “I love you, just hold on” at least thirty times.

Finally, somehow – Bucky settled enough for Steve to help him pull his pants back on.

“I’m not going anywhere. I’m staying right here. I’ll fix you something to eat.”

“Not hungry,” Bucky whispered, shaking his head and balling his hands into fists.

Steve looked him over. He didn’t risk trying to embrace him again.

He touched Bucky’s knee with a finger.

“I’ll be right back.”

He needed to clean himself up. He felt Bucky’s seed leaking out of him. He felt so stupid suddenly like – well, he felt like a pervert, mostly.

Like he just couldn’t help himself – he had to have his mentally ill boyfriend fuck him in the ass right then.
He was like lightning cleaning up, and returned to see Bucky sitting on the couch now, hunched over. His eyes darted over Steve and he grimaced.

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay. You don’t have anything to be sorry for.”

He thought of Darcy then, a couple months ago when he woke in the middle of the night, and she fucked him back to sleep because he was so hysterical.

Was he like Bucky?

So how could he do all that to her, and then betray her like that?

He was the worst, Steve decided. He was the worst friend, the worst boyfriend. The worst kind of leader because he was such a hypocrite.

He remembered begging Darcy to never leave him, when he’d just been dreaming of Bucky and the train.

He was fucking pathetic.

But he couldn’t wallow anymore, because Bucky was in trouble.

He fixed him a bowl of cereal and they sat together as Bucky chewed and swallowed slowly like he was barely conscious.

He kept bringing him glasses of water and looking over at him.

Bucky had cold sweat settling on his brow that he was choosing to ignore.

He managed to coax Bucky to bed.

Steve managed to confiscate the knife from the other time.

But Bucky could make a weapon out of next to nothing, and he himself was a weapon, which Steve learned each time the hard way.

Bucky would snap awake and be that close to slipping his metal hand around Steve’s throat to throttle him –

But he’d get the same look on his face of horror, having realised what he’d done, and he’d shrink back, looking for his knife.

Someone knocked on their front door, probably because of the noise.

Steve hesitated, hanging back as Natasha’s voice called out.

“Fellas – you okay in there?”

“We’re fine, Nat,” Steve replied, hoping Bucky didn’t think of the hiding places he’d come up with.

He secretly asked Friday to lock every drawer while he tried to think of what to do next.
Bucky had another panic attack.

He was convinced he was going to die, but didn’t specify how.

“I think I might kill ya, Stevie,” he whispered, and his shaking hand shot out, but just to stroke Steve’s face a little, as he nodded. “They’re gonna make me do it.”

“Who is?” Steve asked, blinking back tears in the dark of their bedroom.

“HYDRA,” Bucky snapped, sounding annoyed by Steve’s ignorance.

He sounded delirious. Steve commanded Friday barred everyone from entering.

He spent the entire morning with Bucky in bed, watching him cry and cling to himself.

Bucky would shake and sweat, and only slow down for several moments before starting up again, like he was recharging only to panic all over again.

This was Hell. Steve watched Bucky’s mind deteriorate before his eyes.

There was a knock, much louder than Natasha had been at 2 am.

Steve got up, slowly backing out of the bedroom to hear whoever was outside in the hallway.

“Friday, no one can come in right now.”

He was clutching at straws. He didn’t know what to do. He couldn’t consider what might happen if he tried to move Bucky.

“Steve.”

He knew that voice. His hand faltered by his side.

“Darcy,” he whispered, though he knew she couldn’t hear him.

“Steve, let me in.”

He screwed up his face. She couldn’t be here.

“Darce, I can’t.”

“Yes, you can,” she called, sounding clearer the more he listened.

Being in such a state for so many hours meant everything around him felt out of control, but she sounded steady and sure.

He went for the front door, and opened it just until the chain grew taut, still shielding himself a little from her fierce gaze.

“Nat sent me,” she said, instead of hello. “Bucky needs a doctor.”

“He can’t. He – He –”

Steve couldn’t imagine somehow surviving all this if he cried right then. He wiped his face with the back of his hand, trying to stop his stammering.

“I’m doing the b-best I can –”
“Steve,” Darcy said clearly, her big blue eyes staring up at him, keeping him in place. “Allow me to be crystal clear. You are going to let me bring Bruce in there right now.”

Steve let out a shaky breath.

“Okay.”

“Okay?” Darcy repeated. “Good.”

She turned her head, probably to Bruce who was somewhere down the hall.

Steve unlocked the door, and pulled it open, squinting at the sunlight that poured in.

He closed his eyes, moving aside for Bruce and Darcy to enter, and he felt her hand brush his. He could have imagined her squeezing his hand briefly in hers before they moved into the bedroom, where Bucky lay.

“Steve, tell them to fuck off,” Bucky grunted.

Despite everything, a little smirk played on Darcy’s lips. Steve looked at her and felt his heart ache. He was a moron. He lost his heart, and it was all his fault. He hadn’t listened enough to Bucky, and he betrayed possibly the kindest person he’d ever known as well.

“Can I examine you, Bucky?” Bruce asked, not looking too comfortable, but he had always been very brave.

Bucky scowled at him.

“Don’t fucking touch me.”

“Bucky,” Darcy said sharply, crossing her arms over her chest.

Steve could have sworn he saw Bucky’s eyes linger on her ample chest, and he felt something curl in his stomach.

He wasn’t sure what the feeling was. Everything was too foggy and strange then to try and figure it out.

“Okay,” Bucky mumbled.

They watched as Bruce began to look him over, pulling out his stethoscope.

Darcy signalled to Steve for them to leave them be.

“Bruce can handle him. I think you forget that,” she said, like she could read his mind.

They waited on the couch, Darcy looking right at him while Steve stared at the blank TV screen, pretending she wasn’t drilling under his skin with her gaze.

He didn’t know what to do, or what to say.

“Steve.”

“What?”

He narrowed his eyes a little, wishing the tears from before would just go away.
“Thank you, for letting me help you.”

His eyes shot to hers, staring. “Don’t. This is all my fault. All of it.”

Darcy cleared her throat a little. “Maybe. But I know you’re trying to help Bucky the best you can. But you don’t have to do it all by yourself.”

Steve felt something in his chest squeeze harder.

“I kept thinking I was helping but I’ve made him worse than ever.”

“You can’t think like that.”

“How am I wrong?” he snapped, and he regretted his tone immediately. “I’ve screwed everything up. It’s all I seem to do.”

Darcy squirmed a little. “For fuck’s sake, Steve. Stop being so stubborn.”

He clamped his mouth shut at that, stopping himself from saying more.

“Most likely Bucky will need to stay in hospital for a couple days,” she continued. “Just for a rest. And then you can move on from this together. But slowly.”

“I know I can’t force his recovery,” Steve muttered, looking at his calloused hands.

“You can just be together, okay?” Darcy added, sounding a little strained for the first time. “Be yourselves for the first time in your lives.”

Steve felt his heart sink.

“Sure.”

(Why did that sound so sad to him, just being the two of them together?)

Darcy was struggling with her words, he noticed. She kept clearing her throat like she had a tickle, and she shook her head a little.

He knew then that the happier times were gone for her. Maybe as far back as Brooklyn was that badly tainted by Steve’s cowardice.

“Maybe I’ll just always be this stupid but I’m not as angry as I’d thought I’d be,” she admitted, looking at Steve’s hands as well. “I thought I’d be happy to see you suffer. But I guess I’m not built that way.”

Steve stared at her.

“I love you.”

Darcy laughed a little, a sad one that broke his heart. “Yeah. And I love you, too.”

She reached for him, their noses brushing. She pressed her lips to his, cradling his face in her hands and breathing deeply.

It lasted for maybe ten seconds, and then she drew back.

“But I don’t want to be with you.”
He felt it like a punch to the gut, and yet he wondered why he was surprised at all, given what he’d put her through.

She moved off the couch, leaving him there.

She went to check on Bruce, and Steve listened as they talked, the three of them together.

Bucky sounded calmer. Darcy was back to sounding light and untroubled.

“I’ll talk to Friday,” Darcy said finally, as she remerged from the bedroom with Bruce in tow.

It was decided that Bucky was going to leave, without Steve this time.

He clutched Steve’s hand, apologising yet again, and yet again, Steve refused to accept each profuse apology.

“Sam will go with you,” Steve said, and Bucky rolled his eyes.

He wasn’t Sam’s biggest fan.

“Okay,” he muttered, relenting.

As the plane took off, Steve watched it go with Darcy beside him, her hand resting on his arm.

“He’ll be okay.”

Steve hoped she was right.

It didn’t stop him thinking maybe he could have stopped it from getting this bad.

“Don’t flatter yourself, Steve. It’s not all about you,” Darcy said, for good measure.

Her voice didn’t have the same bite to it anyway.

Chapter End Notes

First of all, if you or anyone you know is experiencing distress, there is help available. Here is a list of international suicide hotlines. The Thoughts Room is also a place where you can vent freely (here) if you’ve got a lot on your mind.
Secondly, thank you everyone for your understanding and your patience as this chapter is all kinds of fucked up. It kind of goes without saying, but Steve makes a lot of mistakes I would nooooooooot recommend in a relationship with someone who is suffering from a mental illness. He will learn, I promise.

I'm not going to gloss over anything, either. I just had to keep it to one perspective per chapter. PTSD is not something I could ever portray lightly. I've suffered from it myself and am particularly sensitive about the depiction of trauma in fiction.

Lastly, how much do we love Darcy? So much. She is so wonderful. And you're all so wonderful with your commenting and kudos-giving.

Thank you for reading. :) <3
Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

Honestly, I don't know what the fuck I am doing. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 17:

Darcy

"God knows I tried to feel happy for you,

Know that I am,

Even if I can't understand..." - Demi Lovato
They drank a lot of wine together.

It was Darcy’s idea to get all the women together after work and gossip. She wondered how successful they’d be, considering none of them seemed very well adjusted people.

Jane even hesitated when the idea was brought to her.

“You know me. Labs are my thing,” she said, waving her hand around to indicate her workspace, which included Bruce at the time, who was drinking tea at his desk, his reading glasses fogging up.

“But you’re so good at drinking,” Darcy said, winking at her boss. “Plus, I thought we could play Twister.”

“Interesting choice,” Jane said, nodding.

A smile crept across her face. “Sure. I could try.”

Jane seemed to be making more of an effort when Darcy got back from California. She didn’t talk down to her anymore and was always encouraging Darcy’s ideas for getting back at Steve and Bucky.

The wine night went well. Wanda got a bit out of sorts and had to be carted off by the end of it. They danced a lot and sang along to Jane’s 80’s playlist. Twister started but got forgotten about after three or so drinks.

“Kids these days,” Darcy muttered as Natasha carefully slung Wanda’s arm over her shoulder and escorted her out.

“Please. That was you like, two months ago,” Jane retorted, cackling.

Darcy was getting better at not bringing up Steve or Bucky without being prompted, but when Natasha returned she looked a little concerned, she had to ask why.

And of course it had to be related to those two boneheads.

“Bucky was screaming at him,” Natasha hissed, looking over her shoulder. “Can’t you two hear it?”

“No, we don’t all have your hearing,” Jane slurred a little, giving the redhead a pointed look.

The Psychedelic Furs were blasting though the speakers above their heads in the common room, and Darcy and Jane had been dancing the time away.

“Music wouldn’t help,” Natasha muttered. “Steve said it was okay.”

“Oh, sure. Since Steve said it’s okay,” Jane sneered a little. “I can’t stand him.”

Natasha opened her mouth, but closed it again, seeming to rethink her words.

“What?” Darcy asked, her hand reflexively on her hip as she gave Natasha the side-eye.

Natasha gave a long sigh and shrugged.
“I understand that cheating is bad. I’ve been cheated on and it sucked, but I feel like in every situation there are exceptional circumstances.”

Jane glared at Natasha while Darcy just blinked, trying to properly process the words, and she couldn’t help scoffing a little.

She was the exceptional circumstances. Her life was exceptional. She hadn’t told Wanda or Natasha just how exceptional everything was, or how a coincidence didn’t mean the same thing to her anymore.

“I’m not taking his side,” Natasha added hastily. “But he’s never done something like this before. I think Bucky is his kryptonite.”

That was one way to put it. Deep down a part of Darcy knew that feeling. She was the one who long ago decided one man wasn’t enough, that she wanted them both.

Except she’d been completely honest with them the entire time.

“Sure,” Darcy quipped, holding her tongue a little.

Jane rolled her eyes elaborately and moved off to dance again, this time alone while Natasha and Darcy sat drinking on the couches.

“What were they yelling about?” Darcy asked Natasha in a low voice, as more Robert Palmer blasted over the speakers, muffling their conversation a little.

“Not sure,” Natasha returned, looking Darcy over. “I shouldn’t have said that other thing. Like I would know anything about relationships.”

“It’s okay.”

Darcy paused, looking down at her wineglass.

“Maybe I’ll check on them later.”

Natasha stared at her, shaking her head.

“I wouldn’t if I were you.”

“Well,” Darcy attempted a lighter tone, no matter how fake it felt. “Maybe I’ll enjoy eavesdropping on them fighting.”

“I didn’t take you for the schadenfreude type.”

Darcy blushed a little, because Natasha was a spy and could see through a lot of the bullshit easily.

“Doesn’t hurt to try a different tactic. I’m sick of wallowing in self-pity.”

She got up then and danced with Jane again.

The next morning, she was in the common room and found Wanda sitting hunched over a bowl of Froot Loops, grimacing at every little noise Darcy made as she made her toast.
“Hung over, kid?”

She smirked a little at Wanda, who promptly flipped her off.

“Who taught you to do that?”

“Please. I’m my brother’s sister,” the Sokovian quipped, wincing as Darcy’s knife drew across her toast to butter it.

Natasha came rushing in, grabbing Darcy’s arm.

“Friday won’t let me near Steve’s room. I heard Bucky screaming.”

Darcy felt the panic come so fast and strong that she fumbled her knife, and it clattered to the floor as Wanda groaned at the sound.

“What?”

“Steve’s not letting anyone near them.”

“Have you tried overriding Friday’s protocols?”

Natasha gave her a look that meant, who do you think you’re talking to?

“Maybe something’s wrong with Bucky.”

Natasha nodded. “I’ll get Bruce.”

Oh, good. So if Bucky tried to murder them all, at least Bruce could make a Hulk-sized hole in the wall and beat him into submission.

Darcy hated that idea, but she nodded back at Natasha anyway.

Wanda seemed to rouse herself from her alcohol-fuelled haze, but Darcy shook her head at her.

“It’s okay, just stay here. I’ll call you if I need you.”

Darcy raced off, Natasha going the other direction to find Bruce.

She got to Steve’s door about the same time as Bruce, who hung back a little.

“This could be suicide,” he muttered, “For you, I mean.”

“Whatever, it would have been worth it,” she snapped, going for the doorknob, with no luck.

It was definitely locked.

“Friday, please let me in. It’s a safety concern.”

“Miss Lewis, Captain Rogers maintains authority over his own domain.”

“Oh course he fuckin’ does,” Darcy muttered, her old Brooklyn accent she thought she’d grown out of coming back a little while she seethed.

(It didn’t seem possible to have characteristics from another life but there she was.)

She banged on the door.
There was no answer.

“Steve.”

When Bucky was safely away, Steve gave her a look that she knew would have made her melt at any other time.

He looked he really loved her, and was in awe of her.

It took all her willpower to push him back again.

“Don’t flatter yourself, Steve. It’s not all about you.”

She stalked off, aware his eyes were on her.

His lips had been on hers just hours ago.

She knew that if she told him to fuck her right there and then, he would have whisked her away just barely stripping off clothing to get to her.

But it wouldn’t have been worth it. She didn’t like the idea of getting his hopes up only to crush them to do something for her ego.

It just wasn’t her style.

“So what is your style?” Jane asked, and of course Bruce was present as well.

He had become an honorary judge like Carson Kressley. Darcy valued his opinion, since she and Jane just seemed to spur each other on.

And he wasn’t related to her. It felt a bit more objective somehow.

“My style is be nice to everyone!” Darcy cried, putting on the ditsiest sounding voice she could muster, tossing her hair and giggling. “Because that always works out in the real world.”

“Good Lord,” Jane muttered, shaking her head. “I respect your choices, anyway.”

She’d helped her exes save their relationship and send one of them off to seek professional help. She kissed the other one and didn’t immediately slap him for it.

“You did the right thing, Darcy,” Bruce piped up, shrugging a little. “Barnes was in real trouble.”

Jane grimaced a little.

“Shit. Does that mean you’re giving them your blessing?”

Darcy felt her boss’ words sink in, and realised she must have. She bit her lip.

“I guess so. If it had finished in a murder suicide I would have hated myself.”

“But it wouldn’t have been your fault,” Jane said, sounding a little confused.

Darcy shrugged, feeling a little stupid. She couldn’t make sense of it, but she knew her blowing up in front of Bucky like she had and then confronting him on the gym roof hadn’t probably helped.
He was in a bad place and she felt like she didn’t try until just yesterday when she barged into Steve’s apartment.

“Steve told me he’s got himself referred to a psychologist.”

Darcy looked up at Bruce’s words, staring at him.

“Oh. Well, that’s – good for him.”

When Bucky got back a few days later, he looked really tired, but not pale and sweaty like Darcy saw him last.

She ran into him as he walked back from the gym. She decided the treadmill was calling her after all the chardonnay she’d consumed that week.

He didn’t immediately shy away from her. He was carrying his towel like always.

“You’re back.”

“Yeah.”

Darcy looked him over, and smiled. She couldn’t help it.

“How do you feel?”

Was she supposed to ask that? Or was she meant to keep to herself like before, except not glare so much when she ran into either of them?

She felt all kinds of lost. The knot twisted in her stomach a little.

“More grounded, I guess,” Bucky replied, not so much a grunt this time.

“Oh, that’s great!”

By some miracle, there was a flash of a smile briefly on Bucky’s face, but he chose to suppress it once it broke out but his eyes still contained the same warm glow.

“How’s Steve?”

“Why don’t you ask him?” Bucky retorted, not exactly mean.

Darcy faltered a little, looking at her shoes before looking back up at Bucky. His gaze had that old disarming quality she all but forgotten.

There was always some narrative playing out behind his gaze that she’d always longed to know, but it wasn’t her place anymore.

She wasn’t sure if she wanted Bucky to remember her, she decided. It would probably just cause more pain, and he’d had plenty of that already.

She didn’t hate him. She wasn’t exactly angry with him, either.

Probably because she was too soft.
But she didn’t hate herself for caring anymore.

“I don’t know, Buck,” she murmured, and he looked at her again with those searching eyes and she sighed. “Don’t look at me like that.”

“Like what?”

“Like you’ve got more to say. Just say it.”

“Thank you, Darce. For helping us,” he said, clear and kind.

Darcy felt a flutter in her stomach, and then the dread – knowing she still felt something for them both and it wasn’t going away any time soon.

Against her better judgement, she screwed up her face a little and asked him anyway:

“Do you want to hang out?”

He looked her over, trying to assess her, probably to figure out if she was being sarcastic.

“What did you have in mind?”

They sat together in the common room, like Darcy and the girls had when they had their dance parties.

Wanda came by and then promptly exited, smirking a little, the little conspirator that she was.

Darcy put her own playlist on, and they sat drinking, occasionally talking about the music that played above their heads.

Sometimes Bucky would make a face as a new song came on, because he didn’t know it and disliked it, or because he was straining to understand the lyrics completely.

“Jesus, grandpa. It’s a good song.”

“I didn’t say it was bad,” he retorted, taking a sip from his beer, the metal of his arm shining under the lights.

Darcy got up then, feeling kind of stupid but still going for it anyway.

“No, come on. To appreciate it, you need to dance.”

“I don’t dance.”

He held up a hand, shaking his head.

Darcy rolled her eyes, starting to move to the beat by herself, encouraging him.

“Come on. I remember you being great on the dancefloor way back.”

“Exactly, way back,” Bucky said drolly. “Seventy years ago.”

“Big whoop,” Darcy countered, dismissive.
She flapped her hand at him, and he hesitated, before taking it in his metal grasp and letting her pull him up to dance with him.

“Just bounce a little.”

“I don’t bounce –”

“Alright!” Darcy snapped, still bopping up and down with his hand in hers.

She pretended she wasn’t nervous to be this close to him, but she could feel the heat from his body being close to hers and her stomach flip-flopped as she drew him closer still.

“We’ll waltz. You remember waltzin’, right?”

Bucky froze a little as she placed his hand on her waist, and gulped a little.

“This song is too fast for waltzin’,” he muttered, looking away from her.

Friday promptly skipped the current song to another, slower ballad that made Darcy sigh a little.

“Who’s this now?” Bucky asked. “I like it.”

“It’s Frank Ocean. He’s the future,” Darcy said, with a broad grin that had Bucky’s lips twitching a little in return.

They fell into step with each other, and Darcy kept looking up at him and smiling, trying to play the situation off as nothing too deep.

Her heart hammered in her chest as Bucky looked at her mouth and then back up into her eyes.

The spun together close and slowly, and then Bucky surprised her by reaching out with his flesh hand and drawing his fingers across her neck, to pull her hair back and away from her, exposing her skin to him.

He leaned forward, but instead of kissing her, he dipped her low.

Darcy froze, feeling like she was trapped – but she wasn’t upset about it.

This was a bad idea, all of it. She shouldn’t be this close to either of them.

It was too dangerous.

He brought her back up again, and Darcy let go of him, laughing a little nervously.

“Shit.”

Bucky just blinked at her, and she saw the echo of hurt on his face.

“I’ll go,” he grunted, and Darcy felt her heart sink at the tone of his voice, sounding embarrassed and even a little ashamed.

“No. Don’t. Please.”

He stopped, and Darcy sighed.

“Where’s Steve.”
“He’s at training.”

Bucky looked outside, where the stars were coming out. “He might be back by now.”

“I need to talk to him,” Darcy babbled, and she felt like she was going to cry.

She was going to do something stupid, she knew it. But it felt right to do it now. She didn’t want to lose her nerve.

“I’ll get him to come here.”

Bucky was talking softly, but he second guessed himself too much and touched her hair for a second, seeming to want to comfort her. He probably wanted to hold her.

He left her alone, not before looking back as he turned to leave.

“Please. I just need to talk to him,” Darcy whispered, and he nodded.

She waited a few minutes, chewing her lip and feeling sick.

She thought if Jane was there, she’d probably be screaming at her to stand her ground and give them both the middle finger.

Jane did have her best interests at heart. Darcy wasn’t so sure about herself.

Steve came with Bucky in tow, looking like he ran from wherever they came from.

He was wearing his usual SHIELD outfit, sweat in his blond hair and his eyes bright.

“I’ve got something to say and I know you’re going to take it badly.”

Steve nodded slowly. “Okay.”

“So when I was in California I stayed with my cousin Maggie. She’s in her eighties. I knew her back when I left Brooklyn, when I stayed with her parents for a couple years.”

Steve nodded again. Bucky leaned against the wall and stared into space, but Darcy didn’t think for a second that he wasn’t deliberating over every word spoken.

“She told me I died when I was walking home from work one night.”

Steve’s mouth fell open.

“Darcy –”

She held up her hand. “Please, no interruptions. I’m only going to tell you both once. And then I’m done. I’m done with all of this.”

Bucky looked over at her at that moment, right into her eyes.

It would never be over.

“It was 1943 when I died.”
Steve looked at Bucky now, and they had a wordless exchange. It was the year Bucky fell from the train, the year all their lives were ruined.

“April 28th, Steve,” Darcy said, and watched as the realisation dawned on Steve’s face.

He covered his face with a hand, shielding himself.

“I checked with Friday. It’s the same day as when you fell into the ice.”

Steve nodded, knowing this.

“Yeah,” he said, his voice ruined.

Bucky’s eyes flickered over to hers again and he looked away, probably feeling out of place.

“So you died the same day he did. In a way,” Bucky said, and his own voice sounded wrong.

Steve sat down on the couch, still covering his face.

“Jesus Christ,” he whispered.

Darcy spoke up, making sure nothing she said was missed.

“I found that out after I knew about you two. I thought you should know.”

“Is that your way of getting back at him for cheating on you?”

Darcy felt herself start to shrink at Bucky’s words. He probably didn’t even mean to sound like he was angry with her.

Her timing was way off, she’d give him that.

“You have the right to know.”

“What is he supposed to do with that?” Bucky demanded, and Darcy felt the tears spring in her eyes.

The evening had started out so differently and she had to drag it down to her level every time.

“I don’t know,” she gasped, and she began to sob.

Steve looked up from his spot, his own face wet with tears that he’d hidden away.

“Bucky, leave her be.”

“Fine,” Bucky snapped, and he looked a little thrown by the tears. “I’m sorry. I am trying to look out for both of you.”

Darcy buried her face in her hands and wailed, shuddering.

She felt arms around her, and she knew Steve was holding her, trying to keep her grounded. She returned the gesture, feeling her chest ache a little as she shook with her tears.

She drew back, remembering Bucky was there and it wasn’t right to do this in front of him.

She even shoved at Steve a little for him to get the message.

“Steve, don’t.”
She immediately regretted it – he looked like pure devastation, completely at a loss of what to do now.

Bucky was staring at them, his arms crossed as he leant against the wall again.

“Go to bed,” she said to Steve. She looked back at Bucky, who was glaring into space. “You, too.”

Steve looked like he wanted to say more, but he didn’t seem to know where to start.

Darcy didn’t either. Saying sorry only did so much.

He left, and she and Bucky were alone again.

“What the fuck was that?” he snapped, and Darcy wiped her eyes and shrugged.

“I don’t know.”

“We were dancin’ five seconds ago, and you got guilty, so you had to do that? What’s he meant to do with that, huh? How can he make it up to you?”

Darcy was suddenly so annoyed she balled her hands into fists.

“Guilty? About what?”

Bucky pushed off the wall and walked right up to her, his eyes locked on hers.

“You tell me, sweetheart.”

“Don’t call me that!” she spat. “And I don’t know what he’s meant to do about it! But he had the right to know.”

“Why, because otherwise Friday was dying to tell him he’s the cause of your death? You can’t have been more than, what – twenty-two when you died?”

Darcy bit her lip. “So what?”

Bucky laughed loud at that – very bitter and frustrated. “Jesus Christ – so what? So fuckin’ what? Twenty-two when you died on the side of the road. What the hell kind of life is that?”

Darcy felt her eyes well up again.

“Stop it.”

“You honestly think it was an accident?”

Darcy faltered, shaking her head. “No.”

“So what is Steve supposed to do now with that kind of guilt? Hate himself even more?”

Darcy felt her face growing hot. “I didn’t know he felt that way.”

That was a lie, and a really bad one at that. And Bucky could see it on her face.

“Don’t do this shit to him. You can hate me all you want. But he’s not the bad guy.”

Darcy scrunched up her face a little, confused amongst the tears.
“I know that. And I don’t hate you.”

Bucky’s face slackened a little and he stared at her, confused now, too.

“Then you’re dumber than I thought.”

Darcy supposed that should have hurt, but she just stared after Bucky as he stalked off.

She kept thinking about how his eyes had dilated when she said she didn’t hate him, how his whole face seemed to soften into some kind of relief.

She didn’t know what to make of any of that.

She wasn’t the best at this game, pretending like she hadn’t noticed how Bucky looked at her, despite him being the one who didn’t remember being in love with her at all.

Chapter End Notes

I started this chapter having no idea what I was doing. I still don't, and I feel like that was a fucking mess from start to finish but since you've got this far I really appreciate it. I mean, yikes. This fic is now past 40k words and I'm honestly stumped. It's not a humble brag, and I really am very thankful for everyone who takes the time to read this because I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M DOING.
P.S. The songs at the wine party that played were Love My Way by The Psychedelic Furs (which I cannot for the life of me stop listening to all the time) and Bad Case of Loving You (Doctor Doctor) by Robert Palmer. Then probably it was Love My Way again when Darcy asked Bucky to dance and then the slow sexy Frank Ocean song would have been Pink + White. Pretend this is a universe in which Frank Ocean brought out his albums more recently than 2016/2017.

Edit: This chapter originally stated Darlene was 23 when she died, when she would have been 22. She was born in June/July 1920.

Also, the Carson Kressley reference is a RuPaul's Drag Race reference more than a Queer Eye reference.

Thank you for reading. See you soon. <3 <3 <3
Chapter 18*

Chapter Notes

If you're at all squeamish when it comes to suicide themes or discussing suicide, please don't read. It's not graphic, but I don't want you to read anything that catches you off-guard if those themes are a concern.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 18:

Bucky

"There's a wolf in my heart for you..." - Voxhaul Broadcast

When Bucky got back from Washington, he felt wrung out like a rag, and people were talking to him like he was made from tissue paper.

Except Darcy.
She smiled and made him feel more.

Just *more than*.

Dancing with her had been a mistake. They got too close, and yet he didn’t feel sorry about it at the time.

It was only later when he was retreating with Steve back away from Darcy and the common room that he realised his monumental fuck-up.

It was like taking two steps forward and three steps back every day since.

Bucky kept each conversation with Sam as civil as he could, but the guy asked a lot of questions, and Bucky didn’t like having to pour over every little detail.

Even the language that he used was analysed by the doctors in Washington, and he hated being called paranoid and erratic.

(Could they fucking blame him?)

They asked him a lot about risks. Was he a risk to himself? How likely was it that he had a plan for suicide already figured out? And would he tell anyone if he was planning to harm himself or others?

A couple times Bucky gave them honest answers, and then he learned not to do that as much, since it got people worried.

“If I really meant to kill myself, do ya think I’d let people know so they could stop me?”

And then another time:

“I’ve thought of ways you didn’t.”

There were the obvious ways, so anything sharp was taken from him when he got to Washington. He had no belt, no laces. He couldn’t even keep a plastic bag in his room.

Then other things people didn’t think of, like him having a mirror in his room. He thought about it because that was just how his mind worked.

If it really came down to it, how could he destroy himself so that HYDRA never got to him again?

He could have smashed the mirror at any point during those two days at the facility, but he didn’t. He could have pulled the sheets apart and made a rope.

To create a short sharp drop, so to speak.

Not that he ever told anyone. Not even Steve after he got back. He didn’t want to scare him any further.

He recognised the stress he’d put him under. And Bucky needed to act more like a boyfriend and partner and less of a burden.

Sam was annoyingly determined to point out his negative self-talk was probably contributing to his self-esteem issues.

So Bucky snapped at him, wanting to end their conversation, “Next you’ll tell me I’m havin’ nightmares ‘cause HYDRA made me murder innocent people. *No fuckin’ shit, Sherlock.*”
Bucky stalked off yet again to get himself to the gym, just so he could lift weights or punch something until the blood in his ears drowned out everything.

Sometimes he hated being on the compound because he kept running into her.

She was back again, on the treadmill she always chose to run on, and Bucky’s eyes flickered to her ass that was bouncing along as she kept going along – like her body didn’t do that.

It wasn’t her fault. There was nothing wrong with her. Bucky noticed her body because it was there for him to see, and he was a man who was attracted to women who looked like her.

Well, most people liked beautiful women but there was something about her that made an alarm bell go off somewhere in his head and he hadn’t figured out yet if that alarm was for avoidance or attraction.

He didn’t know what to do with that feeling, like he wanted to figure her out but was scared to get too close.

The dancing the other night was way too close.

When he dipped her, he admitted to himself he was trying to impress her. He convinced himself he was trying to be a friend and not an asshole for once, but when she looked at him with her big blue eyes that seemed to go on forever and her curved plush lips –

He felt like he’d done that before. Not just with another woman, but with Darcy. But he couldn’t think about that too much without opening some can of worms no-one wanted right now.

It messed with Bucky’s head in ways he couldn’t properly explain. He told Steve about it eventually, feeling guilty about dancing with someone else and not him.

They’d vowed to be more honest with each other.

“We danced. Before I came and got ya from trainin’,” he muttered, while they were watching TV.

Steve hadn’t been doing so great since Darcy divulged that new information about her death. He kept staring into space, but then he had also started with his own therapy.

To his credit, Steve was getting better at not keeping everything to himself.

“She kissed me. The day you went to the ward.”

Bucky’s eyes avoided his, worried if he looked too much at Steve he’d be able to read his thoughts, but he was suddenly wondering what it would be like to kiss Darcy.

(No. She wasn’t his to touch.)

Steve must have misread something, because he got really apologetic.
“I’m so sorry, Buck. It was wrong. I shouldn’t have done that.”

Bucky’s gaze swivelled to Steve’s, narrowing his eyes a little. “She kissed you, though, right? So it ain’t all your fault.”

Steve looked thrown by Bucky at the time, but they didn’t squabble. They barely ever fought, it was too bizarre at times for Bucky to handle.

In the gym with her now, Bucky can’t decide if he’s mad. Or if he’s mad, why he would be anyway.

Darcy looked up from her phone, and detached her earphones.

Bucky could hear the music she was blaring into her ears. It sounded really fast and Bucky thought about how she’d probably be killing her ears, doing that to them.

“Bucky, hey,” she panted, breathless.

He had to get himself away from her. He couldn’t stop his mind from going to the gutter, and how she probably sounded all breathy like that after an orgasm. Or maybe she was drowsy like Bucky knew he got, or maybe she went like a bunny, all night.

Bucky gave a weird little wave and walked toward the bench. He decided his chest would be a good place to start.

He did about twelve reps each set, and barely broke a sweat with the 100 lbs dumbbells. The place really needed something more challenging, because those weights weren’t cutting it.

“God, you make that look easy,” Darcy called, and she was suddenly standing over him, patting her towel to her face. “I wish I could do that.”

Bucky focused on doing the exercise right, and then dropped the dumbbells with a loud thud on the floor, and propped himself up to rest for a little bit while Darcy refilled her water and drank from it, still panting a little.

He did think of her when he was in the ward, reading books but mostly sitting around and thinking too much. When he was there, he couldn’t not think of the regrets he had, and maybe he wished he knew her like she knew him.

She’d helped him, not because she wanted to get on his or Steve’s good side, but because she was a good person. It was weird that people still did things like that for him, even after everything.

The second he thought he knew how things were, like now, where he’d go to training and therapy every day and slept and had his meals with Steve – when everything seemed to make sense, she’d show up and seem to ruin everything.

It would be easier to hate her, for just making everything confusing. But because she was her and not anyone else, he couldn’t.

So he looked at her in the gym while he sat on the bench, hunched over and starting to sweat, but not because of exercise, he said:

“Steve told me you kissed.”

Darcy let her hand fall that was holding her water, and she looked a little flustered like she hadn’t been expecting to be called out like that.
“Yeah. We did.”

Bucky stayed still, just looking at her fail to remain contained and calm. She was visibly shaken by the sudden change of subject.

“Shit, I’m sorry, Bucky.”

He almost rolled his eyes. She didn’t deserve to be treated like a homewrecker, because that’s what he was, even though Steve kept telling him that wasn’t helpful – but Bucky wanted her to stop pretending like she wasn’t still in love with Steve, because it was obvious to everyone.

“Why’d you kiss?” he fired back, and Darcy let out a little nervous chuckle like her body was panicking and it was the first thing it thought to do.

“He told me he loved me. I told him I loved him back.”

Bucky hadn’t expected her to be that honest. Darcy wasn’t part of their honesty pact, and if anything she was getting better at concealing her inner monologue, until the other night when she said she didn’t hate Bucky.

Which he thought was kind of naïve of her. Not that she was stupid, but he wanted her to keep him on the side of the antagonist, and it wasn’t working.

“I know it doesn’t make a difference, but I said I didn’t want to be with him,” Darcy added, looking down for a second to collect herself.

Bucky nodded. “You’re right, it doesn’t make a difference.”

Darcy sucked in a breath, but Bucky didn’t scowl at her to make it worse.

He had to get this off his chest and then he might be able to be in same room with her without considering tackling her or scaling the wall to get away. Maybe. He doubted much would change.

“You helped us. We both said thank you. We live close – but you can’t be a tourist in our lives anymore.”

Darcy frowned a little at that.

“I don’t want to date Steve,” she muttered, sounding a little annoyed, and a little too fast.

“Sure,” Bucky said, and she glared at him for that. “But you can be our friend.”

Darcy hesitated, biting her lip.

She did that a lot, Bucky noticed.

She didn’t say anything to his suggestion, so instead of continuing in the gym, Bucky figured he could go for a run instead outside, leaving Darcy to it.

The next morning he was in a better mood, getting up before Steve for once to make breakfast.

When Steve stirred awake, he called out for Bucky.
“I’m in here. Got you some scrambled eggs.”

Steve came into the kitchen, scratching his head, his hair sticking up, looking surprised. He beamed at Bucky, who was putting some bacon on a plate.

“Wow, Buck. Thanks.”

“No problem,” Bucky muttered, suddenly feeling a little self-conscious, but they sat together at the table, quietly chewing together.

Bucky thought things would be different, and they were, but maybe he was a little stupid to think it would be easier to see Darcy and Steve talk together.

Bucky didn’t socialise every time Steve did, but he got into the habit of joining everyone for drinks after work on Fridays before slipping back to the gym or the field for a run.

In the labs, Jane and Bruce had been apparently analysing more of Steve and Bruce’s blood to compare the two. Jane was talking a lot, probably exacerbated by the chardonnay she drank, making inside jokes with Darcy.

Bucky kept looking over at Darcy while he drank, feeling like a creep for doing it. She wasn’t his to look at, but since the gym they hadn’t been alone together and he missed her.

At one point, Darcy actually came over to chat to Steve, Natasha as the buffer between them, and Bucky just watched as they debated playfully about modern hip-hop, saying a lot of names Bucky didn’t recognise.

He felt like throwing it in their faces, how obvious their flirting was. Even Jane kept looking over at them, probably monitoring Darcy to make sure she didn’t get hurt again.

Bucky didn’t blame her.

Darcy tilted her head a little as she spoke to Steve, hardly acknowledging Bucky was there beside him and looking at her, too.

“You sound like a dinosaur when you open your mouth, Steven,” she teased, and Natasha nodded, smirking a little.

“Oh, really? Thanks, Darcy,” Steve replied drolly.

They weren’t doing anything wrong, and yet Bucky felt like he suddenly had no backbone and he wasn’t sure who he was madder at.

Natasha because she was meant to be keeping this a platonic work gathering.

Steve because his posture was too familiar.

Darcy because she wasn’t shrinking away from Steve like she did with Bucky.

Bucky turned away from them, putting his beer bottle aside and walking off to get some fresh air, but not too quickly so nobody worried too much.
Of all people, Jane followed him out.

“I know we don’t really talk,” she said. “I come in peace.”

He wasn’t sure what to make of her. She was short and thin, but somehow scarier than most people Bucky had come across in his long life of murder and espionage.

She was maternal but terrifying at the same time.

She had given him the stink-eye for weeks, probably for Darcy’s sake. Now she was handing him another bottle of beer, her own wine glass refilled.

She clinked their drinks together and took a little sip.

“Darcy’s told me a lot about you.”

Like what? Bucky didn’t want to know. But Jane elaborated anyway.

They leant against the railing on the balcony just off the common room, the sun setting behind them as the music blared in the next room, probably some of the music Darcy and Steve were arguing about earlier.

“She said you were really sweet about her and Steve.”

“Sweet?” Bucky grunted, in his voice he used with everyone save Steve and Darcy. “That doesn’t sound like me.”

“Fine, you were okay about it,” Jane amended, looking him over. “You’re not the jealous type?”

“Sure I am,” he muttered, taking a swig from his beer. “As much as the next guy.”

“I told her off for kissing Steve like that.”

Bucky’s eyes shot up, narrowing slightly. “Why? She’s a big girl.”

“She hasn’t had this happen to her, before,” Jane said, not sounding as friendly.

Bucky felt the air change, feeling like he should evacuate as soon as possible.

“She hasn’t been heartbroken before. She hasn’t been cheated on before, either.”

Bucky wondered if he jumped off the balcony how much of a fuss that would cause. He’d only jump to get away from Jane, not to hurt himself.

“Then she told me she’s basically dead to you because you don’t remember her from before.”

Jane knew about all that?

Of course she did. They were close. Maybe he should try pulling his head out of his ass every once in a while.

“I don’t remember a lot,” Bucky countered, feeling his voice change to a little sadder.

He was giving himself away again.

“I remember Steve. I remember the people I killed. It says more about me than her that I don’t remember her. Darcy.”
He gulped, looking away.

Jane seemed to change a little once more, less acidic. “Why do you say that?”

“She’s a nice girl.”

He tried drinking his beer casually, but Jane snorted.

“A nice girl? Oh, boy,” she shook her head at him a little, seeming to see something he didn’t want her to. “She’s not gonna like that.”

“What?”

He snapped a little without meaning to. He probably should have left by then. The air felt heavy with the unsaid things that lay between them.

“I’m trying to help her,” Jane said with a sigh, and their heads both turned as the familiar sound of Darcy’s laugh broke out in the next room.

Bucky and Jane had eye contact and he turned away, dread in his gut.

“Maybe we should have gone back to Norway,” Jane mused.

Bucky reacted too quickly. It was a trap. When he looked at Jane again with wide eyes, she’d been waiting for him to respond just like that.

“Oh-oh. Interesting.”

“No, it ain’t.”

“How long?”

“Nope. No,” Bucky grunted, forcing everything back into place as he chugged his beer. “I’m not talking to you anymore.”

He bailed, deciding to take the stairs instead of just jumping off the balcony –

He walked past everyone, not daring to look Darcy’s way.

He kept thinking about Darcy patting her sweaty skin, the way her lip curved at Steve, the way she looked back at him as he dipped her in the common room.

How long?

The second he was alone in the apartment, he got to the bathroom and locked it behind him, running his hands through his hair, before catching a glimpse of himself in the mirror above the sink.

He cringed, looking away and sighing.

He undid his belt and jeans, giving in.

He pulled himself out of his briefs, fisting his half hard cock roughly, biting his lip a little.

He leant against the back of the door as he stroked.

He tried to think of Steve, who knew how to get him off in no time. He thought about what Steve looked like on his knees with him in his mouth, how Steve would moan as he sucked hard on his
He jerked a little in his fist as his mind went to Darcy and her round, perfect ass, how it looked in those pants at the gym that fitted her curves like a second skin.

He thought of them together, Steve and Darcy, thinking Steve’s cock probably made her scream, how Steve would cup her tits in his big hands and bury himself in them while she moaned beneath him, above him, every which way they fucked.

He focused too much on Darcy in his mind’s eye, her enigmatic looks and full lips driving him closer to the edge as he gripped tighter, stroking harder, almost painfully.

He thought of what shape her face would take as Bucky thrust inside her, and he came with a shuddering breath, come spilling over his fist.

He sank to the floor, panting, lost.

He put his face in his dirty hands.

Chapter End Notes

Writing from Bucky's perspective is so lonely. It reminds me of high school when I wasn't out and had to pretend I was heterosexual and happy, not depressed and
bisexual...

In all seriousness, I've been in Bucky's situation myself, when I've been in hospital a couple times after suicide attempts. I'm trying not to put any of those details in for the shock factor, or to make this like torture porn or something... I had a mirror in one of my rooms and wondered if I could smash it because my brain was just going there anyway. If you're squeamish, please don't read. You can stop. I'll continue to label chapters with an asterisk if they contain smutty material for the people who came here for what really matters - the porn. (I'm not judging. I am you.)

Jane is... well. I write her like a fond friend, I swear. She's trying to look out for Darcy but probably comes across as controlling. She's not, I swear. She's just trying to help. She and Darcy will talk more soon about boundaries and what Darcy wants (or WHO Darcy wants!).

Thank you everyone for reading and commenting. <3
Chapter Notes

Be prepared for a dialogue-heavy mess.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 19:

Darcy

"It's never over,

My kingdom for a kiss upon her shoulder

It's never over, all my riches for her smiles...."  - Jeff Buckley
Darcy’s eyes darted to follow Bucky’s retreating back at the party and she found herself wondering where he was going, and what made him leave.

He came from the balcony, and Jane was soon returning to her side, a little smirk on her face.

“What did you do?” Darcy hissed, and Jane shrugged.

“Nothing,” Jane said, her eyes flickering to Natasha and Steve, who were watching this play out.

“Jane.”

Jane shrugged again elaborately, and promptly floated away with her chardonnay, and Darcy took it as a signal to follow her cousin out.

(Second cousin, but whatever. Like that mattered.)

She pretended like she wasn’t aware that Steve was watching her go.

She was getting good at pretending they were friends in her head, even though during the entire conversation they shared earlier Darcy just wanted to pick a fight that probably would have ended in a blow job –

She shook her head a little, really feeling her margarita Natasha made her.

She drank too much, probably. But still she never went as hard as Jane, though they brought the worst out of each other. The tiny woman still managed to stay upright when Darcy felt like the floor was calling her name.

Jane was back out on the balcony, looking like she could barely contain her excitement.

“I know you’re struggling at the whole friendship thing with those two idiots –”

“Jane!” Darcy snapped, but she smirked a little anyway. “Keep your voice down. Steve’s hearing!”

Jane stifled a giggle, nodding as she lowered her voice.

“I told Bucky we could go back to Norway and you should have seen his face.”

“Jane!” Darcy chastised her, but instantly felt her interest peak. “What did he say?”

“You saw him. He freaked out and ran.”

Darcy felt her stomach flutter and backtracked a bit. “Wait, but what did he say? What did he say?”

“What do you care?” Jane retorted. “I thought we agreed you wanted to move on.”

But that was before –

Darcy stopped herself before she spoke, her thoughts a jumble.

“We danced the other week, right after he got back from Washington,” she blurted, and Jane made a face – kind of like a grimace but also with a nervous laugh.

“Oh, boy.”

“What did he say?”
“Something about you being a big girl,” Jane muttered, rolling her eyes a little. “Because I was doing my den mother thing again.”

Darcy sighed, looking over the balcony at the field, letting herself bathe in the fresh air to clear her head.

“Look, I know what you think about Steve and me kissing him.”

Jane blinked, nodding but keeping her mouth shut.

“I don’t regret it. Though it was kind of a shitty thing to do to Bucky.”

“Kind of?” Jane blurted.

“So you’re on his side?”

“Kind of. You should have seen him watching you and the Captain flirting like that.”

Darcy cringed.

Why was she like this?

Actually, why was she like this with specifically superheroes? What was her deal?

It was like the second Steve or Bucky were anywhere near her she became as shameless as she was when she was three drinks in, which she was dangerously close to becoming.

Steve had cheated on her, knowing she was bound to him.

If he had known she died the same day he crashed in the Arctic, would he have done it?

She wasn’t sure. And still she wasn’t sure about Bucky, either.

Because she danced with him even though she knew it was a bad idea, and she knew how close waltzing would make them and did it anyway.

Was it because Bucky looked just like he old self when his eyes lit up at the sight of her?

Because she couldn’t ignore that.

Sometimes he looked like he wanted to climb into the vent like she knew Clint did sometimes, just to get away from her, but that was when they were alone.

And in the corner of her eye tonight, she was aware of how left out he seemed. That was kind of mean of her, but she was actually trying to be civil and keep some kind of distance.

It was the least she could do after making Steve feel like absolute scum.

She wasn’t sure if she did it for revenge. It wasn’t beneath her to do something that vile, and yet she was sure she didn’t mean for him to take it that badly.

She thought maybe it was a test of hers, to see how much she really meant to him if he knew that awful truth.

And Bucky had just reacted accordingly.

“What am I supposed to do?” Darcy groaned, losing all humour about this situation.
“Be professional. Be nice. But distant.”

Jane seemed to have sobered up significantly at Darcy’s kind of tired angst.

“Let me just pout about it, when I see them together.”

“What are you sad about, really?”

Darcy bit her lip, shaking her head.

“Darcy,” Jane said, placing her hand on her shoulder to rub it.

Darcy let out a shuddering breath, and she was suddenly sobbing, leaning against Jane as the tears fell.

“I died the same day as Steve.”

Jane’s grip slipped. “What?”

“The day Steve’s plane went down in ’43 – it was the same day I died in California. Your nana told me. Friday confirmed it.”

“How? Darce, what does that mean?”

Darcy gave a shrug, wiping her nose on her sleeve. She couldn’t even talk properly, her voice was all over the place and close to wailing.

“It’s so fucked up. My death was listed as an accident. Then Friday got me the forensic notes after I asked her nicely to hack the coroner’s –”

“Darcy.”

“And then I had to decipher this fuckin’ chicken scratch.”

“Darcy,” Jane said again. “Just sit down.”

Darcy complied with a huff and leaned against the railing, listening out for anyone who might come by, hoping this conversation could remain somewhat private.

She shouldn’t be doing this right now but her excuse was that she was kind of drunk and in love with two people.

She admitted it then, she had feelings for the pair of them still. She hated herself a little for it, like she had to make it more complicated for herself somehow.

But really, some of this shit wasn’t her fault, like the infidelity.

Would she have cheated on Steve with Bucky?

“Maybe my heart gave out. Maybe I just stopped breathing and dropped dead and then Maggie had to find me.”

She broke down again in sobs, shaking all over.

Jane just pulled her into a hug.

She couldn’t get the thought out of her head:
Would she have cheated on Steve with Bucky?

She wiped her eyes, pulling away from Jane and wanting to leave.

Yes. Yes. Yes.

The look on his face when Bucky dipped her –

Yes, she would’ve.

The lines were blurred, she told herself. She was fucking drunk, she wasn’t in her right mind.

She walked back with Jane into the party, moving toward the exit.

Steve was there, without his beer this time, eyes widen a little at Darcy.

She probably looked like a wreck. Her face always got so red when she cried.

He moved toward them, and Darcy put out a hand to catch his, squeezing it.

She didn’t care who saw, didn’t care if people thought it wasn’t right.

Steve didn’t rip his hand away.

He was looking down into her face, softening at her touch.

“I’m going. I’m okay.”

“You sure?”

He looked over at Jane behind her, but she didn’t turn to see the look on her boss’ face. She probably couldn’t handle any further disapproval from her.

“Yeah, I’m just drunk.”

It wasn’t as simple as that, and she could see Steve think that just by the look on his face.

She wanted to hit him, she wanted to kiss him –

The alcohol hadn’t helped.

She wanted to find Bucky and –

What? She didn’t even know where to begin. If he grabbed her with his metal hand to hold her away from him like the first time, when she begged him to remember her –

No. That might actually kill her.

Jane steered her away, and Darcy let Steve’s hand fall, missing the warmth, remembering those hands on her all those times, as teenagers, and now.

She had been broken up with him longer than they’d been together now, and she was no further away from him.

For a little while, before Bucky came back, she thought they would be together forever. She even told him so, kissing him in their bed – that same mattress that Bucky and Steve shared now.
She rounded on Jane when they got back to Darcy’s place, sitting on the couch with glasses of water to calm down.

“How come you brought up Bucky like that?” Darcy snapped, and Jane looked guilty for the first time.

“Some stupid part of me thought maybe you’d appreciate the fact that they’re not happy together just the two of them.”

“What?” Darcy snapped again. “I don’t want them to be miserable.”

“But they’re miserable without you!” Jane cried, and she was sounding suddenly like an advocate for open relationships. “Bucky looked horrified at the idea of you being back in Norway.”

Darcy rolled her eyes. “He and Steve are guilty about what they did. They’re just remorseful.”

“You call what Steve is simply remorseful?” Jane countered. “You don’t tell someone you broke up with that you love them because you feel sorry for them.”

Darcy screwed up her face. “I can’t talk about this anymore. I can’t handle this.”

“I know you’re scared,” Jane began. “But—”

Darcy took a deep breath. “You don’t know. You don’t get it. You’re not me.”

“So help me understand.”

“Why? So you can try and manipulate me into being single? Fucking miserable like you?”

Jane actually gasped a little. “Jesus, Darce.”

Darcy felt her cheeks burn, this time with shame. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry – I’m not thinking.”

Jane got up, putting her glass aside. “Okay, maybe I’m pathetic waiting for Thor, but I’m honest, aren’t I?”

“I never said you were pathetic,” Darcy said. “I can’t explain what this feels like.”

Jane let out a little laugh, kind of annoyed. She hadn’t done that in a while, not since before they found out they were related and were more drawn to one another, and protective.

“The only guy I’ve ever wanted is from another universe,” Jane said. “And you think I don’t know what it’s like to feel lonely.”

“I thought I was crazy!” Darcy cried. “All my life. Every day I’d wake up from these batshit crazy vivid dreams and I’d have to go about my day like everything was normal. This constant ache. I wanted to d—”

Darcy stopped herself, shuddering.

“You wanted to kill yourself?”

Jane had gone back to shaken, sitting down beside Darcy again, placing a hand on her shoulder.

“Darcy. Talk to me.”
“It felt like it was always going to feel like that. It was like I was broken. Something just wrong on
the inside. I wanted to die.”

Jane just nodded, holding back to let Darcy bare herself.

“Before I met you and Erik, I didn’t care. About anything – it’s why I needed six credits. I just kept
drifting. And then things kind of felt okay enough to go on.”

She looked away, shaking her head.

“And then I met Steve. The first time we kissed, everything came flooding back, like it’d been there
the whole time.”

She was crying again, damn it.

“When Steve cheated, I felt stupid, like I should have seen it coming. I felt like I’d misread
everything, like he’d lied about how important I’d been. Like he’d lied he loved me.”

“But you know he does.”

“Yeah,” Darcy said, a kind of wry smirk on her face. “Then I fucked it up some more by telling him
about me dying because of him. Then I figured Bucky hated me if he didn’t already.”

“He doesn’t hate you, Darce,” Jane said, giving her hand a squeeze. “I don’t know what’s the right
thing to do here. I don’t want you to get hurt all over again.”

Darcy stewed a little, thinking about how Steve’s hand felt in hers and how Bucky left so suddenly.

“Darce, what do you want?”

Darcy frowned. “It’s not as simple as that.”

“Forget about the rest. Pretend like I’m not the most annoying worried female friend you have and
just state your wishes.”

Jane leant back, trying to make things a little lighter. “Go on, shoot.”

Darcy hesitated, but then thought of a stupid joke she couldn’t help making.

“A time machine. You think Tony’s built one, yet?”

“Okay,” Jane said drolly, exaggerating her eyebrow’s expressions. “What would you do with a time
machine?”

“I’d probably go back to Brooklyn and be like, hey, I don’t care that you’re together. Just keep me in
the loop about it.”

“But the war would have happened still. Also, do you realise the kind of Catholic guilt those two
would have been going through because of their secret gatherings?”

“Hello! Yes, I was Catholic,” Darcy said. “Before.”

Jane snorted.

“Father O’Laughlin was always screaming about Sodom and Gomorrah. All the neighbourhood kids
called Steve a fairy ‘cause of his size. It was awful.”
Darcy paused to take a sip from her water.

“What about you – were you as liberated as now?”

Darcy knew what Jane meant. There were times in the desert when she’d find a guy in the bar and leave with him within minutes, impressing Jane with her outrageous efficiency.

“Not exactly. My mom hated that I was sleeping with Bucky. She didn’t know about Steve. Can’t imagine what she’d had thought if she knew I was sleeping with two men outside of wedlock.”

Jane snorted with laughter.

“She was this close to calling me a whore. She didn’t though. I guess she didn’t want me to hate her.”

Darcy rolled her eyes, thinking of her mom wanting to be her friend but struggling with wanting to keep her safe, even if it meant disapproving of her like Jane did now.

“Maybe it’s better that Bucky doesn’t remember me,” she muttered. “Less pain to deal with, I guess.”

Jane had the audacity to say:

“Oh, boo hoo. He’s probably eager to find out. The way he bailed when I asked him how long.”

“How long what?”

Darcy couldn’t stop her heart hammering in her chest.

“How long he’d had a crush on you.”

Darcy blushed, looking away. “The fuck is this, middle school? He doesn’t like me.”

Jane let out a loud exaggerated laugh. “Uh, we both know he does.”

Darcy didn’t know that. The way men looked at her, they all kind of looked at her anyway, but it varied between fascination to a kind of confusion.

Steve even when they met up again and she hadn’t remembered him fully, looked overwhelmed by her. But he also blushed a lot.

Bucky didn’t blush. He just got all dismissive and aloof like he always was. He barely spoke anyway.

“How are you so sure?”

“Um, because I’m not fucking stupid,” Jane retorted, jutting her chin a little.

“You’re wasted,” Darcy added, sort of fond.

“Yes,” Jane conceded. “But I’m making more sense than you.”

Darcy found herself looking out for signs that Jane was right. She didn’t see Bucky for most of the next few days, except once in the common room but he didn’t stop to chat.
Not that he ever did that anyway. He looked all brooding, staring out the window with his mug of black coffee, but his eyes only flitted over her when he noticed her come in to get Pop Tarts.

He left without saying a word and Darcy felt robbed of an opportunity, but to do what, she wasn’t sure.

She saw Steve, and told him it was okay to come by the labs again if he wanted. He was allowed.

“Okay, just don’t be playing any of that music we talked about if I do.”

“I will play nothing but that music when you come by.”

The threat didn’t deter him, and he came by to ask about his blood samples and if Jane needed more. That was his excuse, at least, Jane said with a smirk when he left.

She missed Bucky.

Even if all he did was sit in a corner and say nothing, she wished she could see him. But she wasn’t sure about asking him to come socialise, because if he turned her down –

Darcy didn’t want to think about how hurt and stupid she’d feel if Jane was actually wrong.

She found herself hoping she was right, even if it was just a little bit, how much he liked her.

The few chances she got to see him – she couldn’t deny he was actively avoiding her.

Every time she came across him, he’d head in the other direction or ignore her.

She figured it would be like a Band-Aid but it was more like pressing on a bruise, like she was dwelling on it deliberately and making it worse for herself.

She wanted his attention badly, and it was starting to show.

Natasha was teaching her some firearms basics one afternoon and Bucky could be seen in the distance outside, running around the track as they exited the firing range.

Darcy hadn’t actually fired the gun, yet. She told Natasha they’d have to be slow at it for both their sakes, and there was no way she was using live ammunition anytime soon.

Natasha kept telling her to stop being so critical, and helped her practice lining up her sights and not actually squeezing the trigger.

Darcy felt Natasha watch her as Bucky run by, speeding up a little as his eyes slid to Darcy for a fraction of a second.

Darcy sucked in a breath and gave Natasha a pointed look.

“Don’t.”

“Just tell them how you feel,” the redhead said, shrugging a little.

She was always so blunt Darcy spent less time explaining the ins and outs of everything because
Natasha seemed all-knowing.

To her credit, she was a spy and trained in deducing at a rapid-fire speed.

“Them?”

Darcy liked to play dumb for the sake of it, to annoy people. To make people spell out exactly how she was doing wrong, every fucking time. Because she was still that petty.

“Steve and Bucky. Tell them how you feel.”

“They know how I feel.”

“Maybe,” Natasha said. “Maybe they’re waiting for you. Bucky gets this look on his face and then I know he’s seen you beforehand. Kind of like –”

“I don’t want to know,” Darcy snapped, making for the other end of the compound so she could put her feet up and get back to her Netflix queue.

Maybe if she watched a shitty horror movie she’d sit back and think, shit – things could be worse.

“Kind of like he’s torn. And Steve’s always talking about you.”

Darcy glared at her. “Gross.”

“Don’t worry. I’m seguing into something more fun.”

She walked with Darcy, pulling off her jacket that Darcy was convinced made her look like a sleek little otter, tossing her hair a little.

She made everything seem so easy. Darcy wished she could be more like her.

“Like what?” Darcy asked, and looked behind them for a second to not see Bucky at all, since he probably ran away to the moon just to get away from her.

“Manhattan. Night clubs. This weekend,” Natasha punctuated each word with a tap to Darcy’s shoulder. “My tab.”

Darcy grinned. “Nice.”

Natasha pulled together everyone, and Tony was all for it, declaring the weekend a team exercise everyone should participate in, the labs included.

Darcy missed the city a little. She hadn’t been clubbing in the longest time, and Jane was always fun to dance with.

The Saturday night they all went to a nightclub called After Hours, which had a huge light-up dancefloor teeming with people grinding to dance music Darcy could feel vibrate her sternum –

She felt good, and she hadn’t even drank much. She had one shot of tequila with the other girls, most of the men remaining in the VIP section overhead.
What Darcy didn’t expect was Bucky to come along with everyone.

The loud noises and flashing lights seemed like the perfect combination for a panic attack, but he hung back with Steve, Bruce (who didn’t seem too happy to be there, but he wore a new shirt and everything) Clint and Tony sitting around their table with their drinks.

Bucky didn’t look happy, but neither did he look miserable. Darcy saw him take note of the exits, and she shook her head a little, heading toward the dancers with Jane linking their arms.

Darcy wore a new dress, one she managed to find that afternoon – it was black and kind of short, with thin straps and backless, covered in metallic sequins. Her hair fell in long tresses, her makeup kind of simple with a shining red lip and perfectly drawn eyeliner thanks to Natasha.

Wanda even did Darcy’s nails like hers – short and a deep cherry purple. Wanda was already dancing, with Vision sort of hovering around, looking kind of out of place (for the venue) but not left out exactly. Wanda turned to him and pulled him into the crowd, and Darcy giggled at the site.

The song changed to a boppy, more pop-inspired track, one with Sam Smith that made Darcy cheer along with the crowd, and she tossed her hair back and moved to the music with Jane beside her.

She was lost in the flashing lights, swaying her hips and twisting –

She looked up at the VIP section and immediately saw Bucky staring back down at her.

She moved closer to a guy beside her and toss her hair again, a smile spreading across her face.

She knew she was up to no good. She felt dangerous.

The guy was probably barely in college, and he slipped a hand around her waist.

He was cute, and Darcy liked the attention. She liked that he wasn’t the only one looking at her, though.

She looked back up at Bucky, right in the eye, and smiled again, her eyes hooded as she grinded to the music.

Maybe she’d tell them.

Okay – she *would*.

She’d tell them tomorrow how she felt, that she didn’t want to be apart from them. Whatever that meant.

Once the song finished, she moved away from the crowd, feeling a little hot. She made her way toward the bathrooms, smiling and waving to Natasha on the way, who was sitting with a man in a white suit that looked mesmerised and already lovesick.

She waited, and then got into a cubicle. She thought maybe a shorter pair of heels would have been a better choice, and she sighed, sorry for her calf muscles.

She got up again and flushed, and there was a sharp knock on her door and she froze.

“Wait a sec.”

There was a bang, like someone was hitting against it. Darcy shot back, wide-eyed.
“Jesus Christ –”

The door threw back – the lock falling and Darcy gave a short scream.

The guy from the dancefloor was crowding her, pushing up against her.

Darcy saw the metal of a Glock being raised, and he carefully fit the nozzle under her chin, grabbing a handful of her hair.

“Say a word and you’re dead.”

“I’ll fucking scream,” Darcy bit out, but then she whimpered as he pressed it lower, so it the metal lay against her neck, her pulse beating against it.

“Let’s go, little girl,” he hissed, and pulled her back.

The bathroom was empty –

Darcy realised it had been emptied, everyone waiting behind her suddenly gone.

He pulled her by the arm, the gun pressing into her back as he walked her toward the sinks where the windows were above them.

One hung open, a dark shape lingering outside in the street.

Arms pulled at her, and the other man pushed her up and out, leaving behind her shoes.

There was a car in the street.

The air hit Darcy and she gasped.

Someone smacked her across the face and she fell to the ground, clutching her brow where she’d been struck.

This was happening, but everything somehow felt delayed.

She was going into shock –

“Get up.”

She was grabbed at again and Darcy screamed that time. Another blow, this time to her stomach that had her doubling over.

The back door of the black Jeep threw open and more arms were grabbing her – stranger’s faces were leering at her, other faces like unfeeling stone –

A hand was over her mouth and she struggled, managing to bite down as hard as she could.

“You fucking cunt!” The guy from the dancefloor screamed, and she was wrenched in another direction, being gagged by something wet.

Her eyes watered, but she chuckled a little at the sight of the bite marks she left on him, his eyes like wildfire.

There was a sharp pain in her arm like a cut and she cried out, seeing the needle.

There were a few seconds of her watching as they looked her over, waiting for her to pass out.
The faces swam, and she fell on her back on the floor of the car as she felt it sped around another corner, a million miles away.

Chapter End Notes

Yikes, this chapter grew to 4k really fast. I'm sorry, but also - I'm sure the length isn't what you're upset about. I am not the biggest fan of cliffhangers and I didn't necessarily want to end this part like this, but... you know. I'm also *that* extra.

AIIIISSSSSSSSSOOOOOO look at me, using Jeff Buckley because I'm emo and he exacerbates the angsttttt I'm going for.

A lot will be explained in the next chapter - just about what the fuck just happened, mostly - from Steve's perspective. Hang tight, I hope I won't take long to update! xoxo
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

This might come across as next to no payoff but don't worry, I'm already working on the next chapter. <3 HOW ARE WE ON CHAPTER 20 ALREADY? This is nuts...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 20:

Steve

"And like the blade you stain,

Well, I've been holding on tonight..." - My Chemical Romance

"I rise from my worst disasters. I turn, I change." - Virginia Woolf
How does Darcy make him feel?

That question was hard to answer, depending on who asked it, who wanted to be really told –

Who wanted to be lied to.

Bucky didn’t get lied to anymore. Steve told him how Darcy made him feel, her lips quirked and her eyes shining up at him.

(She walked around like Steve couldn’t possibly recall that she’d come all over his face before.)

Bucky wasn’t angry, just kind of quiet about it like he wasn’t sure where to start if Steve asked him.

How did Darcy make Steve feel when she went missing in the nightclub?

Like pure panic. Frantic and doomed –

The dread sank into Steve’s skin and he felt the world turn upside down.

(That was the only way to describe it, like Earth was suddenly swinging of its hinges and taking everything with it.)

They were sitting in the VIP section when Bucky got up suddenly, looking down at him with wild eyes.

“Where’d Darcy go?”

Steve could barely make out what he was saying, and he had his super soldier hearing. The club was that loud, everyone on the dancefloor seeming to heave with the bass.

Steve scanned the dancefloor and didn’t see her. He watched for a second earlier, when she looked like the moon glowing under those lights –

“Maybe she went to the bathroom.”

Bucky pointed with his metal index finger, and Steve saw the out-of-order sign, and general lack of women hanging around.

Bruce looked their way.

“What’s up?” he yelled over the music, even though he’d complained constantly about losing his voice already.

“I can’t see Darcy,” Bucky yelled, for once not looking embarrassed to talk about her, or to talk at all.
“I saw her go to the bathroom,” he added, eyebrows raised. “Haven’t seen her since.”

Darcy was obviously worth losing a voice over.

Bucky didn’t look back, just took off with Steve in tow, racing down to the ground floor and looking for one of the other girls to talk to.

They found Natasha and she spun around, the guy she was sitting with looking miffed.

“You seen Darcy?” Steve managed to get out, just as the white suit stalked off, and Natasha gave Steve a pointed look.

“No. Did you see who I was with?”

“He’ll come back for you later,” Bucky snapped.

Natasha gave him a glare for good measure, before getting out her cell phone and pulling up Darcy’s number to call.

“No answer,” she said, after putting the phone to her ear for a few rings.

Bucky shook his head again, annoyed. His hands balled into fists.

He gave Steve a look that seemed to mean, *I don’t like this.*

“Can you check the bathroom for us?”

Natasha looked around the crowd and frowned a little at the sign by the door, but got up anyway and the three of them made their way to the bathroom door.

Natasha ducked in, and seconds later was back with a small purse Steve recognised as Darcy’s. She pulled out the phone, biting her lip.

“Maybe she left with somebody?” she offered, but Steve could tell even she doubted Darcy would just leave her phone behind, drunk or otherwise.

Bucky shook his head, unconvinced. “Not with Friday on there. She’s smarter than that.”

Steve stared at the phone in Natasha’s hand and then took off, because he felt sick.

If he got kicked out for being in the ladies’ bathroom, that was too bad. The nightclub wasn’t exactly his kind of joint to hang around in.

He pushed through the door, and looked up to see the window wide open above the sinks.

Bucky was right behind him, and he went for the waste paper basket by the sink, and pulled out –

Darcy’s stilettos. They were undoubtedly hers. Steve remembered her wearing them more than once. It wasn’t that there was anything particularly unique about them, they were just patent leather and black. But she kept them on one time they had sex on his kitchen bench in the Tower, and he remembered the scuff at the back Darcy never had fixed –

“Hers?” Bucky rasped, and Steve nodded.

Bucky’s face fell. “*Fuck.*”
Natasha gasped. “I’ll go around the front.”

She dashed out, and Bucky climbed out of the window with ease, not caring too much if Steve was keeping up with him.

They looked around the alley, trying to find more clues. Natasha arrived, with Jane this time.

“What happened? Someone tell me,” Jane demanded, and her giddy glow Steve saw on her earlier had vanished, and she looked pale as a sheet.

“Gone,” Bucky muttered, crouching over a cigarette butt before he put it to his nose to sniff.

“More syllables, please!” Jane snapped, and Bucky didn’t look up at her. “Did she leave, or- or-”

“Jane. It’s probably not what you want to hear,” Natasha said, and Jane threw her a particularly venomous glare.

“I know that but I have to know, don’t I? Has she been taken?”

“Yes,” Steve said, not recognising his voice.

The alley was empty, and the only signs of life were the garbage cans Bucky was going through. All Steve could hear was the music from inside, and his own breathing.

Bucky threw the cigarette butt away, and then he suddenly punched the side of the building with his flesh hand, and Jane gave a little cry.

“God, wasn’t I enough?” he snarled, and when he looked at Steve again his eyes were shining. “They had to take her, too?”

“You mean it’s HYDRA?” Jane asked, her voice sounding younger, higher and scared. “How are we supposed to find her?”

“They won’t kill her,” Bucky snarled, in his own world. “Yet. They’ll probably hurt her first –”


“They’ll make it slow. Just to fuck with us –”

“BUCKY!” Natasha roared, and then something else in Russian Steve didn’t know –

Bucky’s mouth was a hard line, his fist bleeding and his nostrils flared as his breathing got sharper, more rapid and panicked.

Why hadn’t Steve said something more intelligent and sincere when he last saw her?

He couldn’t quite consider that it may have been the last time he ever saw her, that afternoon, when she pulled her dress out of a plastic bag as they stood in the hallway together.

For old time’s sake, they all got ready for the night in the Tower and Darcy was on the same floor as Bucky and Steve, but she was with all the other women, laughing with them and looking her absolute best even though she would have said otherwise –
“Sparkly realness, yes, girl!” she cried, making the sequins flash in the light as she shook it.

“Cute,” Steve said.

Now, in the alley, he grimaced, wondering if she’d make it to a HYDRA cell, or if they’d just dump her body in the Hudson or throw her under a train at the subway –

He had that dream often enough, the ones that featured her death. Ever since she told him Darlene’s death coincided with his crash.

He did it again, now. Because how was he not responsible for this, too?

He drew a target on her back the second they met up again.

“I’ll find that security footage,” Natasha said, and Steve was back again.

“I’ll come too,” Jane added, and Steve noticed she was crying.

Bucky still looked out of control.

“We need to move.”

“It’s a trap,” Steve said, stating the utter fucking obvious.

Bucky looked like he might actually bite Steve’s head off.

“That doesn’t change anything,” he snapped, and he patted himself, remembering he wasn’t armed.

“It changes everything. We have no idea what you’re going into if we find the right cell.”

“I can handle it,” Bucky muttered, “And if I get switched, you put a bullet between my eyes.”

It was Steve’s turn to glare at Bucky.

“I can’t do that, Buck.”

“I know,” Bucky retorted, almost light. “So we take everybody else with us who can.”

They got back to the Tower, Natasha having found footage showing cleaners ushering patrons away, and one of them mysteriously hanging around the sign outside the bathroom door before ducking in as well.

It was almost laughably bad in terms of execution, but Steve supposed HYDRA wasn’t trying too hard.

They knew who they wanted – Bucky – and they were going to get him back when they caught him trying to help Darcy escape.

Jane was in a state of panic, and Wanda was the one attempting to comfort her, along with Bruce as they got back to the Tower to prepare for their attack on HYDRA.

“She could be in about a dozen places,” Natasha lamented, placing a finger on a map they threw on the floor.
They each suited up, with Bucky putting his trusty hunting knife in his boot. He’d pulled on Kevlar and was quietly calculating in his head, from Steve could make out on his face.

“They won’t be taking her to any cell in North America,” Steve said, and all eyes were on him.

He picked up his shield and put it on his back.

“What makes you think she’s even alive?” Jane asked, sounding strained.

Bucky and Steve shared a look.

“They want me back. An eye for a fuckin’ eye,” Bucky bit out. “They’ll keep her as long as I’m free.”

He wasn’t free. Not really. Not in the sense that most people were, something they took for granted. He hadn’t been suicidal for a little while, as far as Steve could tell, but he wasn’t ever free.

“Pardon the interruption, but I’ve received a message –”

Friday’s voice managed to cut through the chaos, but Steve knew what she was going to say, and he looked at Bucky with wide eyes, shaking his head.

“You don’t have to listen to it.”

“They’re not going to trigger me when I’m nowhere close to a cell,” Bucky snapped. “Play the message. I know what they’ll say. I’ve heard them make the videos long enough.”

Steve hated to think what it was like being stuck in a body he couldn’t control, to have to listen and participate in the things that kept Bucky up at night –

“I’m against Bucky being present,” Tony piped up, his hand raised. “I’m just suggesting he doesn’t put us at risk.”

“You’ve all been at risk for months,” Natasha snapped. “So let him listen, Tony. He won’t walk away. Not with Darcy where she is.”

Tony relented, still looking a little apprehensive. “Play the message, Friday.”

Steve and everyone else waited for the other shoe to drop.

The voice was American.

Young.

It was her.

She almost sounded robotic, except for the quiver in her voice as she struggled to maintain composure.

“Maybe we will take a finger. Maybe we will take an ear. M-maybe we will take – take a breast –”

Jane gasped, covering her mouth as Wanda held her.

It was like all the air had been sucked out of the room, and all Steve felt was the weight of the metal against his back –
“Maybe her tongue. Maybe an eye.”

Bucky looked down at the pistol in his hand, breathing in huffs through his nose.

“We want our Winter Soldier back.”

There was a scuffle on the audio, and then it cut off.

“Trace it. I’m done sitting around,” Steve hissed, and Bucky’s eyes flickered to his.

It wasn’t that they wanted her back. They did, but that wasn’t the point.

Darcy was innocent, and Bucky had been, too.

Steve was done pretending like he wasn’t on a knife’s edge.

Something had been awakened, and he and Bucky were going to put the Hulk’s wrath to shame.

Chapter End Notes

Listening to literal emo music because I'm emooooo but not even in the ironic sense. (There are photos from when I was 13, so I've been there, we've all been there, let's not judge.) Honestly, My Chemical Romance is a bunch of jams.

Next chapter will probably be horribly misogynistic, in the sense that people from HYDRA will be disgusting but please hang in there. It will probably be a bit of a mind fuck but I'm hoping you get through it. You'll see what I mean.

Thank you for reading and helping me get past 50k words - which is the most writing I've produced EVER. I LOVE YOU and thank you for spending your time here. <3

P.S. Feel free to message me at either one of my Tumblrs - grimeysociety (my writing one) or vibranium (my cooler, gayer one).
Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING for mentions of sexual violence, and a brief sexual assault that takes place in this chapter. Please do not read if you could be triggered - it's not worth it. There is also brief graphic violence which may also be upsetting. The asterisk marking this chapter is ONLY to indicate explicit CONSENSUAL content (which takes place towards the end of the chapter) and will never represent rape as porn.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Part 21:

Darcy/Darla/Darlene

"Tell me you love me,
Come back to haunt me,
Oh and I rush to the start..." - Coldplay

"Time means nothing,
Say that you'll stay..." - We Are Scientists
She got up that morning at dawn to do her exercises.

Her roommate Sally would watch her lifting the little weights with a cigarette between her teeth, rolling her eyes a little as Darlene lifted it high above her head at the end, with a warrior cry sure to wake up their neighbours that made Sally snort into her coffee.

“Show off,” Sally scolded, smiling.

“You get me the paper or what?” Darlene asked, putting the weights aside and tossing her hair out of her face, scooping it up and pulling it into a bun on her head.

They were on an assignment, their photographer friend Freddy in another hotel room a couple doors down, and Darlene wasn’t planning to be out of the loop while they were away from Los Angeles.

They worked all day, and Darlene wasn’t paid per photo – it depended more on what the agency thought when they got back whether she got paid much.

She probably should have stayed in the factory but she hated standing all day. She wasn’t one of the girls who set out to do good for the nation. Darlene was probably a terrible example to her cousin Maggie who was no more than ten years old, who listened to the radio every night with the family, who went to school with all the kids whose fathers were away.

Maggie’s dad was in the Pacific.

“Paper’s here, Your Highness,” Sally said with a smirk.

She handed it to Darlene, who jumped at the photograph that graced the front page.

“Good Lord,” she murmured, and spotted someone standing in front of a line of chorus girls. “Who the hell is that?”

“Captain America,” Sally said, her eyes bright and her smile wide. “He’s a real tall glass of water.”

“What’s he doin’?” Darlene said, laughing a little as she read on.

Apparently he was a sight for sore eyes with the mission of keeping morale up amongst the troops in Europe.
Darlene wondered what Bucky would have made of that clown. Parading around like there wasn’t a war on.

Except maybe she was a little harsh – he seemed decent enough. He was from Brooklyn and punched a Hitler look-alike at every performance.

“Damn, I wish I was one of those girls,” Sally said wistfully, shaking her head a little. “Instead of stuck here.”

“Gee, thanks a lot,” Darlene retorted, sarcastic.

She tossed aside the paper and sighed.

Sally’s face fell at Darlene’s change of mood.

“You’re thinking about him again, ain’t ya?” she whispered, and Darlene nodded.

She explained a little of what had happened in Brooklyn, that her sweetheart had enlisted and she left for California to get into the movie business.

Sally looked up again, suddenly frowning.

“Now, wait,” she said, in a voice unlike her own. “You wouldn’t have recognised Steve there?”

She tapped the picture of Captain America, and Darlene shook her head.

Darcy shook her head.

“No. I hadn’t seen him post-serum before.”

She shook her head a little. “Wait, I didn’t tell Sally anything about Steve, even when I did recognise him later when he was with Bucky and their squad.”

Sally’s face turned into the guy from the nightclub, who shook his head again.

“I think we’ve gone too far back.”

Darcy felt sick to her stomach, swiping at the air like she was struggling underwater.

“Give her another hit.”

There was a ripple along her skin and Darcy shrank away, falling back onto the floor of the hotel room, heavy as a stone.

Her mouth was dry. She huffed, trying to pull herself back up again but failed, over and over.

“Jesus, this is sad to watch.”

She looked up at the man, his razor burn suddenly more obvious to her. His teeth were crooked and he smelled sour, like sweat and dirty cigarettes.

“No powers, no armour. You’ve got nothing but you’re giving it your best shot, and it’s not even a good one. Fuck.”

He was laughing, watching her struggle against the invisible weight.

When had this kid been radicalised? He looked barely old enough to vote, let alone be a part of
HYDRA.

“What’s worse is you’re a fucking woman. That’s your problem.”

He leaned over her and his breath was in her face. She turned away, or tried to, and failed as he grabbed at her face.

Darcy felt it, but it was delayed, like there was a slight disconnection from what she saw and what she felt.

“Called you a little girl when we got you, but you’re anything but. Jesus.”

He pawed at her, and Darcy felt her face burn with rage as he grabbed at her chest, squeezing hard and twisting until she cried out.

“Giant fucking tits,” he growled.

She couldn’t speak. She couldn’t push him off –

“Enough.”

There was another voice, and the nightclub guy got off her, looking like he was disappointed someone had interrupted him.

Darcy tried to look around, to see if Sally was still there, but she was long gone.

She didn’t want to be in this place anymore. It was a horrifying memory and nightmare hybrid. How could she be there and be here as well?

Complete blackness flooded the room and Darcy was gone.

She woke, kind of like she’d been wrenched out of the dark, and she gulped the air.

Looking around, she was in a lab. But not her beloved lab she shared with Jane and Bruce.

(God, she wished she wasn’t so alone.)

The décor was much older, from at least fifty years ago, mostly green tiles and fixtures.

She was strapped to a chair, and her back felt stiff. She was wearing a hospital gown.

“We got rid of your skanky dress,” came the voice of her least favourite person in the world, the guy from the nightclub.

Darcy swallowed, realising what being in different clothes meant. Someone had taken her out of her dress when she was out cold.

“Hey, look at me.”

Her eyes shot up to his, and she blinked back tears, shuddering a little.

“You’re here now. No point crying about it.”

*It’s my party and I’ll cry if I want to*, Darcy felt like singing back at him.

Her head was a wreck.
“You owe me an apology,” he said, coming up to her again, and Darcy spied the flash of metal from his knife in his hand and attempted to move away.

She shuffled a little to the side but barely moved an inch in her chair, the restraints keeping her mostly still, unable to stop herself from whimpering a little as he raised the knife up toward her left hand.

He showed her his hand that was wrapped in a bandage.

Darcy didn’t realise she’d bit him that hard. She felt a burst of pride, and it must have shown on her face because he placed the knife’s edge closer to her arm now, and she whimpered again.

“ Fucking bitch,” he muttered, and pressed it to her skin, not quite breaking the surface but still Darcy was so aware of it – wishing she’d go back to the darkness –

“You cut me, so I’ll cut you,” he mused.

The words began escaping her lips:

“Please don’t. Don’t. Please! Please – no!”

She screamed then as he slashed at her arm, the bubbles of blood forming and spilling over as the cut wept.

The pain was –

Well, Darcy felt pain before. But it usually happened because she fell over, nicked her leg while shaving, stubbed her toe –

The pain was cold.

So cold it burned, and Darcy kept on screaming, until –

“What are you doing?!?”

It was the voice from before, and Darcy turned her head toward it.

There was an older man standing in the doorway with a lab coat on, his glasses falling down his nose as he stared at the scene before him, shaking with anger.

“How dare you mutilate that girl!”

He pulled out a pistol and pointed it at the nightclub guy, who moved back from Darcy lightning fast, hands raised.

“Just trying to get some answers like before, Doc.”

“Gregor, I told you before.”

They fell into Russian, and Darcy squinted at them, trying to make out any word she could recognise Natasha use before, failing to understand them at all as her arm throbbed.

They were arguing, from what she could make of the body language. The lab coat lowered his weapon but didn’t put it away.

Gregor kept pointing at Darcy and spitting the same word over and over, and Darcy was five
seconds from rolling her eyes, but her sense of humour was still a little off because she was bleeding and –

“Why don’t you use a word I’ll actually understand, like ‘whore’?” She snapped, and they fell silent at the interruption. “Or even, puta?”

The lab coat even smirked a little at that, much to Gregor’s annoyance, who promptly slapped her across the face.

Her ears ringing, she could just make out the lab coat chastising Gregor again, in Russian once more. She glared up at them, huffing.

Her arm was sticky, slippery against the arm of the chair now, and the lab coat came over to her, examining her cut as Gregor watched on from behind him, scowling back at Darcy.

“Don’t touch me,” Darcy slipped out, and she bit her lip.

“You’ll need stitches.”

“It’ll teach her to answer questions when we ask them,” Gregor snapped, looking pleased with himself again.

Darcy knew that the way his face lit up at the sight of her blood would be burned into her retinas forever.

The lab coat looked up again, going for a drawer full of gauze and bandages, and started to cut one for Darcy’s wound.

He looked up from Darcy’s arm again, right at Gregor and said without blinking:

“If you touch her again I will kill you. And don’t think I won’t shoot you in the back if I catch you.” Gregor’s face fell a little, before morphing back to disgust.

“Fuck you, old man.”

“Charming,” the doctor retorted. “Run along, Gregor.”

Gregor stormed off, and Darcy looked back at the doctor as he returned to her arm, mopping at the blood a little, making her wince.

“Did he rape me?” Darcy asked, her voice flat and exhausted. “Gregor.”

“No. I’ve been monitoring his interrogations for the last two days and the only time he touched you was yesterday. And just now.”

“I was in a hotel yesterday,” Darcy said, before realising it had slipped out, and that what she said didn’t make any sense.

She’d obviously been in this room the entire time, judging by the bedpan beneath her that lay shiny and untouched.

It was probably replaced recently.

Maybe if she could figure out when the guards changed over –
“You won’t get very far,” the doctor said, a little smile on his face. Not mean or teasing, just knowing. “If you tried to escape. We’re in a very secluded area. And there are bears.”

He last part he made sound almost light, and Darcy stared at him.

“Are you Zola?”

“No, I am not, my dear. Though I would say the drugs we’ve been using have gone to your head and will remain there for some time – your sense of time seems off.”

Darcy frowned, just as he began to clean her arm with something that made her sting and cry out a little with surprise.

She recovered, breathing heavily through her nose as he turned away and opened another drawer, producing some needles and solution.

“It’s anaesthetic,” he said, and Darcy nodded, deciding to believe him.

He pulled up a stool and sat beside her, pulling across a little metal table, which was laden with surgical equipment.

“How are you if you’re not Zola?” Darcy breathed, looking away as he drove the needle in to numb her.

The needle didn’t hurt as much as the cut itself.

“My name is Doctor Saveliy Yurievich,” he said, and they shared eye contact for a moment before Darcy looked away, feeling sick all over again.

“Are there really bears out there?”

She tilted her head toward the doorway, which was shut now, and most definitely locked.

“Just bad seeds,” Yurievich conceded, beginning to sew her back together.

Darcy watched him work for a few moments, not feeling altogether connected to her arm.

“I suppose that’s what happens in a worldwide organisation such as yours,” Darcy drawled, wishing she could scratch her nose. “My side is a little more selective when it comes to granting our memberships.”

“But Gregor was right, you have no powers. You’re not enhanced in any way.”

“So why am I here? Is it the Avengers?”

The doctor gave a short laugh. Harsh, like he was a little disgusted.

“No. It’s our Winter Soldier.”

“You’re holding me for ransom over Bucky Barnes?” Darcy snapped, wanting to rip her arm away from him.

“We have no reason to keep you, my dear,” he said, his voice like ice.

The air was sucked out of the room as Darcy’s heart beat faster. It was all she could feel as she gulped.
“The Winter Soldier was found with your picture in his coat pocket when he fell from the train in 1943.”

Darcy’s stomach dropped. “Is that what Gregor wanted to know about me?”

Yurievich pushed aside the table and moved closer to her, his voice low.

“Zola always had trouble with Darla Singer imprinting on the Soldier. It took months to fully break him down, and then rebuild him, brick by brick.”

He looked over her face, searching.

“Your photo was exquisite. But up close you seem to be fiercer than we ever anticipated. Sort of rougher like him, the Soldier.”

Darcy remembered to breathe, and began to suck in air through her nose again, not daring to even blink.

“Before, during the war. When he wasn’t ours yet.”

_He’s not yours, he’s Steve’s._

_He’s mine – No! He’s –_

“Gregor will be back shortly. Most likely it’s goodbye from me for now. He’ll put your under for the rest of the night, and it’s my time to sleep.”

Darcy knew what he was implying there. He would be gone, which meant Gregor would be unchecked –

The panic rose in her chest.

“No. Please don’t go. Don’t leave me with him,” she babbled, and she watched him take her in, her panic, her sweat –

She struggled again in her chair, her bandaged arm rubbing against the chair.

“I’ll – I’ll do anything, just don’t –”

He was standing over her, and he looked her up and down with dark eyes.

“What will you do?”

The heat on her cheeks, Darcy swallowed hard, forcing herself to calm, to settle. She rolled her hips a little with the range of movement the restraints allowed her, and she looked up at Yurievich through her lashes, trying to put a little smile on her face.

“You could – you could keep my legs apart. I’m not wearing underwear. You could touch. You can touch me. I could use my mouth –”

A loud hysterical laugh rang out and Darcy whipped her head around to see Gregor back in place in the doorway, and she froze while he kept on laughing.

“Jesus Christ. I leave for five minutes and you’re opening up to him like a fucking flower –”

“Gregor, enough,” Yurievich said quietly.
Gregor walked up to them, looking Darcy over and shaking his head.

“Were you going to take her up on her offer?”

Darcy’s eyes flashed with a rage from deep inside her. She wanted to hurt that kid. Badly.

“No,” Yurievich snapped. “I would never.”

“Oh yeah, I forgot you were a faggot.”

Something about that word made something in Darcy rise up and want to skin him—

She sucked in a breath and remained still, unblinking.

“I’m a widower,” Yurievich countered. “And I don’t rape.”

Gregor sniffed dismissively. “Too bad. Especially with her. Damn. She looks like she would have really put her back into it, too. Girl with the ‘please come on me, Daddy’ tits.”

Darcy looked away, angry tears in her eyes. “You got something to ask me, or what?”

Gregor’s eyebrows rose, and he nodded.

“She’s learning.”

“She’s crashing,” Yurievich added. “Put her under, already.”

Her eyes locked on his. “Don’t leave.”

“I won’t this time,” the doctor said to her, and she nodded a little, wanting to believe him.

She didn’t remember the sting of a needle— but she must have gone under because she was back in the hotel room, Sally on her bed opposite Darlene’s, her leg crossed over her knee and her smile still in place.

“He’s a real tall glass of water,” she said again, the same way Darcy remembered it.

“And he likes dudes, too, whaddaya know!” Darcy exploded, so infuriated to be back in the hotel room again and not in the deep dark instead. “Bet I never told you that one.”

Gregor took Sally’s place, staring back at Darcy and sneering once again.

“We already knew that one. It’s in Barnes’ file.”

He stood up from the bed, looking around.

“Fact is, we were paid handsomely to not spread that around.”

Darcy screwed up her face. “What?”

“Might take a few seconds to sink in, but your boyfriends’ secrets were sold back to the US government. And for that, Oswald took the fall.”
“That’s not true,” Darcy said. “You’re wrong.”

“He’s telling the truth, my dear,” came the voice of Yurievich. “And we want the truth from you.”

“You both said it. I’m nobody. I’m expendable.”

“We like tying up loose ends,” Gregor hissed, and there was another ripple.

Momentarily, Darcy was back in the chair, trying to pull away from the hotel room in her mind and break free.

“Enough with the adrenaline. She’ll have a heart attack.”

Yurievich was checking her pulse just as Darcy was brought back, her head ringing.

Darcy screwed up her face, wanting to rub her eyes. The edges around everything were black and she could barely see.

“Why would our Soldier have a photo of you in his pocket in 1943 when you’re here now seventy years later?”

“And you’re not related to Darla Singer, we checked,” Gregor added, putting aside another needle, the one that brought her back to the present.

“I don’t know.”

“You know,” Gregor hissed, leaning closer to her.

Yurievich gave him a warning glare, but there was no knife to be seen, no reason for her to flinch in her chair.

“We found each other. I was – I am – Darla Singer and Darlene Foster and Darcy Lewis.”

Gregor frowned at that. “No. What is she saying?”

“She’s saying she’s lived two lives,” Yurievich concluded, “Something only people dream about.”

Gregor snorted, standing up. “Jesus. She’s cracked.”

“Maybe,” Yurievich said, looking her over. “But we don’t have any other explanation for there being two identical women connected to our Soldier.”

Stop calling him that, Darcy wanted to scream.

There was so little fight in her anymore. She went up and down so fast she was crashing again, suddenly too exhausted to continue.

Her eyes drooped.

“She’s gone,” Gregor said, and Darcy heard him light a cigarette.

“Put that out,” Yurievich hissed.

He muttered something else in Russian and Darcy’s eyes fluttered shut.

“Better still, leave her to sleep for a while.”
She heard them both leave, not before she felt ash fall on her foot from Gregor’s cigarette and Yurievich brushed it away, muttering under his breath.

“Yeah, yeah. Report me,” Gregor sneered, and he left them alone.

That was the last thing she heard, the door shutting behind Yurievich, after he vowed to watch over her.

She woke in a small bed with a metal frame, a dog barking outside the window in the street.

She knew this bed. She spent years sleeping in it, but it wasn’t hers.

It was Bucky’s.

She sat up, looking around. She was Darcy.

She had to be, because Darlene was standing with Bucky in the doorway, leaning against it as they stared into one another’s eyes.

Was that really what they looked like together?

(Darcy’s heart ached.)

She was gone – Darcy was gone, or, she melded with Darlene and was standing opposite Bucky, his hair shorter and his gaze fiercer.

He looked more full of life, less sad – though he seemed upset now.

She remembered – this was the night before she left for California.

Steve slept with her maybe an hour earlier. Her bottom lip quivered as she failed to cover her stark grief, because she’d convinced herself her life was over and she had to pretend the sex was nothing but great and lustful like she was pretending to be.

Steve told her he loved her and she had tears in her eyes.

They were there again as Bucky stared at her.

She turned back for just a second, to see Steve looking on.

She whipped her head back away from the sight of him, and she heard Bucky kick the door shut behind them.

She turned to him, grabbing for his jacket and pulling his lips down to hers.

They slanted together, and she moaned – like he liked her to – but then Bucky pulled back, grimacing.

“What are you doing?”

“What you want me to do.”

He pushed past her, looking out the window instead.
“I want you to stay with him.”

“I can’t have one of you, and not the other. Okay?”

She was crying already and she saw Bucky wince at the sound, turning to look back at her.

“I’m selfish, you know that,” she gasped, brushing away tears with her thumbs.

Bucky scoffed a little at that. He never let her do that to herself, making herself some kind of criminal. He always objected even when he was jealous.

“Not as selfish as me,” he muttered, and grabbed her wrist to pull her toward him, and his mouth was on hers.

She attempted to touch his face, but his hand kept her wrist steady and away from him.

“Is this what you want, Darlene?” he whispered, his voice low and rough.

She didn’t moan for the sake of the sound in his ears. She moaned because he put his fingers in the gap between the buttons on the front of her dress, skimming over her brassiere, finding her nipple.

She shook against him, feeling like one giant nerve.

“Yes. Like you mean it,” she breathed, and she opened her mouth to him, deepening their kiss.

Like he meant it? He did everything like he meant it – Darlene never understood why she said that. Probably to spur him on.

She probably meant she wanted him to not hold back, and he didn’t.

Clothes were off in seconds, and he was knelt between her legs on the bed as she lay spread for him, sucking that tense little bud into his mouth as she shuddered.

He was drawing this out longer than usual. He was working her over in unhurried, loving strokes, his fingers pumping in and out of her. It made her chest feel like it was about to split open.

God, she was glad she wouldn’t have to see his neighbours again because the sounds she was making –

The thought of her leaving made her gasp a little, and a sob escaped.

Bucky stopped, looking up at her.

“I’m here,” she assured him, nodding. “Please, just – I’m ready. Please.”

Usually he’d say something cheeky like, well, since you asked so nicely – but now he just looked up at her with a look she wasn’t expecting.

He’d been so mad at her the past few days, when he found out she was leaving. He kept shoving her and Steve together, withdrawing more as each day went by.

But now, the bravado was erased, and he gazed at her with shining eyes, and she realised he was close to tears. And she’d never seen Bucky cry.

“Come for me first, baby.”
She was his baby, she remembered that. The last word rang out in her ears and she nodded frantically, and he went back to sucking her, licking her – *kissing* her there –

She shuddered, wanting him closer.

Her hand fell to the back of his head, pressing him against her pussy as she could feel herself closer to the edge –

She came, clenching around his fingers, and she heard him groan as she did.

Her chest heaving as she panted, she felt the sweat settle in her hair and over her body as she waited, watching him draw back from her and wipe his mouth and chin.

He moved up, crowding her as he settled between her legs, arms bracketing her head.

She closed her eyes, savouring the feel of him just rocking against her a little, the rumble of his groan as her naked pussy rubbed against his stomach, leaving her slick against him.

“Rubber’s behind your head,” he said, and she nodded, retrieving it from under his pillow.

He’d hoped for this to happen. He only hid the condoms under his pillow when she came by, and she knew there were more in his drawer by the window.

They’d been caught out a few times when she turned up without much notice, and his and Steve’s faces would always light up at the sight of her, and Darlene couldn’t help returning the grin.

“Unless you don’t want it,” he added, but Darlene nodded again, ripping the packaging and pulling it out to roll on him.

As she did so, he groaned a little, looking her over with his warm, dark eyes she got lost in.

“Love me,” she said, wrapping her hand around him and giving a few strokes.

“I do,” he said, kissing her, the kind of way that left her breathless.

She rocked herself against him again, her legs tightening around his hips.

“You know what I mean. Make love to me.”

“I just wanted to say it. I love you.”

Darcy faltered. “Okay. Are we pretending I’m not leavin’ in the mornin’?”

She cringed a little at her own words.

Bucky nodded.

“Sure.”

Her legs fell, her hips still cradling his. He lined them up.

“Say it.”

“I love –”

Her words escaped her as he suddenly filled her to the hilt, and she gasped.
He cut her off, kissing her as he set a punishing pace, and she broke apart from him.

“Jesus. Bucky. Shit.”

She kept babbling, unable to keep quiet. He groaned, as she whimpered in his ear:

“Fuck. You feel so good.”

She loved it, the snap of his hips, the way he kept bringing these words out of her like she couldn’t control it, the way the sweat gathered between them.

He cupped her tits and she moaned.

“Bucky, you’re going to break the bed –”

“You gonna wait for me?”

Darcy was thrown, no longer moaning and close to laughing. She blamed her heightened senses, the fact that Bucky was hitting her in that spot –

When she didn’t say anything, he stopped moving completely, grabbing at her face now as she frowned.

She whimpered, and thought maybe it was because his eyes were full of tears.

“I can’t stay here.”

“But when I come back –”

He was talking like there weren’t people dying overseas. He said when not if.

It scared Darlene.

“You’ll meet a girl in Europe.”

Bucky shook his head. “No! I want you. You’re the only girl I’ve ever wanted.”

He didn’t know what he was talking about, because Darlene was certain he’d had a few girls before her, and he’d definitely wanted them.

“Bucky.”

The tears started to fall and Darlene wrapped her arms around him, desperate to make him stop.

She’d done this.

She’d hurt him that badly.

“Let’s just pretend.”


Darlene stared up at him.

“When I get back, I want us to – to-”

“What, baby?” she asked, and he stroked her hair, his tear tracks shining against his skin.
“I want us to have babies.”

Darlene knew her heart was broken then. It was either the war or her own fault it was broken, but it didn’t seem to matter anymore.

“I want you to have my babies.”

She kissed him again, on the side of desperate, and Bucky’s tears were in her mouth – the salt mixing with the taste of him.

He pushed inside her again, and he let out a little groan as he filled her once more, his forehead buried in her neck.

She loved him, she loved the feel of him inside her, all around her – how his skin felt against hers. How he smelled – his voice.

She was brimming with her love for him.

She loved him.

She loved him.

“Will you fill me up, when you get back?” she murmured, her breath in his ear and they rocked together, and he pulled his head up to look her in the eye.

“No rubber, just – just so I can –”

“You’d do that?” he whispered.

She nodded.

“Yes.”

He kissed her hard, their teeth in the way. It hurt.

“Do it like you would then,” she added, meeting his thrusts. “Like you would when you’d fill me up. Fuck me like that.”

“Jesus,” he groaned, and he was at the same pace as earlier, hard and fast, like he could break her.

She was barely holding in beneath him, a keening sound being ripped from her lips as his hand came between them to touch her little bud –

He moved forward, kissing her as she came, muffled by his mouth against hers.

She’d been a pinpoint. Her entire body contained in that little bud between her legs.

Her whole body shuddered as she clenched around him.

Bucky was close. He was making the kind of desperate sounds she loved so much, wanting to keep them in her memories forever, knowing she made him fall apart like that.

“God, you’re so beautiful.”

He nuzzled her shoulder, eventually biting down.

“Bucky, look at me.”
“Baby, I can’t.”

“Please.”

He looked at her, detaching himself from her shoulder and blinking hard.

“I wanna see you when you come,” she whispered.

She watched as he complied, and a few short thrusts later his eyes squeezed shut anyway and he gave a guttural groan, his whole body tensing up before he released, collapsing on top of Darlene, still inside her.

He tried to pull away after a few moments, but she locked her thighs around him.

“Stay a little while.”

“Need to clean up,” he muttered, and then she relented, putting her legs down and he pulled out, carefully making sure the condom didn’t slip.

He turned away, disposing of it.

With his back to her, he looked younger. He could have been sixteen.

Or seventeen, the year she lost her virginity to him.


She got up to pee, not hearing Steve if he was awake. She considered knocking on his door, but knew he was planning to get up to see her off.

She returned to Bucky, who still sat up in bed, his back to her.

“Buck.”

“I think if you sleep here, I won’t let you go.”

Darlene sighed a little. That seemed fair.

“Please let me stay.”

He looked over at her, at her nakedness.

“Okay.”

It didn’t take much for him to change his mind. She knew she had that advantage, of usually getting her way with her boys.

She exploited that, she knew. Now more than ever.

They lay down together, and he slipped his arms around her, resting his head on her chest and breathing her in.

“I don’t want to go to sleep.”

“I don’t know how much longer I’ll stay awake,” Bucky murmured, and he yawned. “But I know how you feel.”
Like he didn’t want to lose a second of his last time with her.

Darlene held him a little tight to her, trying to memorise the sensation of him against her.

“I don’t want the dream to be over.”

Bucky didn’t hear Darlene.

Actually, it was Darcy who said it – because just then, Brooklyn was gone.

Chapter End Notes

I feel like I’ll never say enough about this chapter. I felt like I was taking pieces out of myself and threw them together, like a Franken-fic where all I ever cared about was having people be in love and I'm throwing curve ball after curve ball, and not just at the characters, but at myself as well because that's what I do to myself when I wrote this part.

First and foremost, I want to apologise for anyone disgusted by me, for this torture stuff. I am a rape survivor as well as a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, and I know reading this is never easy.

I felt possessed, like Gregor had to come out that way, like he couldn't just be a HYDRA grunt that we never heard from again. It felt like he needed to be a real enemy. I guess that's my main excuse.

(If you clicked away, I wouldn't be mad.)

The scene between Darlene and Bucky was like taking out little bits of my heart and lying them on a table to decide which parts I wanted to keep and which ones were worth writing about - and I know that's super dramatic, but that's me. That's what I do. I can't write something without shaking later because of nerves idk.

I think I listened to The Scientist on repeat for about four hours while writing this. It just got stuck there.

Thank you for reading all the way through (if you did). Thank you for commenting and being generally an amazing audience. <3
Chapter Notes

I'm sorry and... I'm sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 22:

Bucky

"Leave all your love and your longing behind,

Can't carry it with you if you want to survive,

   The dog days are over,

   The dog days are done,

   Can't you hear the horses?

'Cause here they come..."    - Florence + The Machine
Bucky watched as Steve smashed his fist right through the punching bag, his hand pulling back the sand that spilled out of it.

“Shit,” Steve muttered, looking down at his fist.

He probably didn’t mean to do that so fast.

They were on one of the lower floors of the tower, waiting for Friday to get back to them about the message and the location of its sender.

Friday hadn’t managed to find any specific location, much to everyone’s annoyance.

Bucky and Steve got away, or more, Steve left everyone and Bucky decided to follow.

He knew they had to eat to keep their energy up, but Bucky had no appetite, and trying to eat a burger before – it tasted like nothing in his mouth.

His stomach was in knots. He vomited before and hoped no-one noticed. He couldn’t get the feeling out of his head like this was entirely his fault, and Darcy was all by herself, scared and probably hurting –

“Goddamn it,” he muttered, and the tears sprang up in his eyes before he could stop them.

Steve looked over at him, dusting off the sand.

“Buck?”

He waved him off.

He was a mess.

He looked up, willing the tears away and he groaned.

“We’ll find her,” Steve said, for the fifth time that hour.

It had been three hours since the nightclub. Bucky nodded stiffly, wishing he could do something instead of sit around.

“Friday, any news?” Steve asked, and Bucky waited, his head in his hands while he sat on the floor.

Friday’s voice sounded sadder than usual.

“Unfortunately, I am unable to trace the message. I will continue to attempt to do so, Captain Rogers.”

Steve nodded, annoyed.

Bucky looked away. They must have bounced it off other servers, keeping their connection incognito. He tried thinking of the most likely places they could have taken her.

“What about Belgium?”
Steve’s eyes locked with his. “Where we found you?”

“Yeah,” Bucky cleared his throat. “Can’t hurt to check.”

“Friday, the cell in Belgium where we found Bucky. Can you pull some satellite images?”

They cleared that place out, Bucky remembered. If there was any sign of life, they had no reason to not investigate.

They weren’t just waiting for Friday – Jane and Bruce in the lab had formulated a putty to act as a superior noise-cancelling device.

Basically, just earplugs that would actually work for Bucky’s enhanced ears, and Jane went back to the compound for them with Bruce.

The plan was to eliminate the chances of Bucky being switched – if he had the putty and they made sure that they disabled whichever PA system the cell contained, they may be able to get by.

Bucky didn’t listen when they were arguing about whether he should even come on the mission.

He was going. He had to.

If he didn’t, he could never make things right.

“I’m pulling the images now. Please refer to the projections.”

Near the light above their heads was a little black port where the holograms came from, and they showed a layout of the Belgium forest where they all fought months ago.

It felt like a lifetime had passed since then, except Bucky was right back there again, feeling like he could crawl out of his own skin –

“Buck.”

He nodded, looking over the map. There was one black shape, which had to be a car, sitting underneath a tree.

It seemed like a mistake, but Bucky knew HYDRA grunts were often shot for far less, so he frowned at it.

“They’re not even trying,” Steve snarled. “It’s like it’s a joke.”

“Because they hate the Avengers that much,” Bucky said, sighing a little. “They don’t want to expend that much effort when they could get me faster.”

“Where are Jane and Bruce?”

“They’re already on their way back, sir. ETA is thirty minutes from now,” Friday answered, and Steve shook his head at Bucky.

“We have to wait, Buck.”

“We need to leave right now!”

He roared at Steve so suddenly, and he hadn’t expected himself to do that. He was shaking all over, overwhelmed.
“I know that,” Steve said, soft and undisturbed by Bucky’s outburst. “I want to leave right this second but we can’t without those earplugs. We need you to be with us.”

Bucky got up, walking right up to Steve and glaring at him.

“I will put a bullet in myself if I have to. I don’t want to kill any more innocent people.”

Steve grabbed him by the shoulders. “I know. I know, Bucky.”

He didn’t want it to come to that, Bucky knew that. He didn’t want to risk losing him to HYDRA again. Bucky couldn’t go back.

He wouldn’t.

“Honesty pact,” he felt himself say.

Steve looked at him, considering.

“Darcy – she’s…”

“What, Buck?”

“She’s important to me.”

“Okay,” Steve said. “That’s fine. She is important.”

Bucky looked away, feeling foolish. “But I don’t know if –”

“What, Buck?”

God, it must have been like pulling teeth with him. Bucky hated how hard it was to articulate his feelings at the best of times, and this was horrendous.

He waved his hand around a little, his flesh one, and gave an awkward half-laugh.

“You and her have a connection. With her death being so close to yours…”

Bucky screwed up his face a little.

They hadn’t been explicit about they wanted from Darcy.

But he knew that it was obvious she meant something to him, and Steve was always honest and missing her – that, too, was obvious.

Steve just stared, looking like he was keeping himself from smiling.

“I don’t have a chance with either of you.”

He said it. Either of them. Both of them.

He said it. He said it –

“Buck, I love you,” Steve said, and he pulled him into a kiss, and Bucky relaxed a little against him, relief washing over him.

They broke apart, and Steve nuzzled at his face.
“I always have. Since we were kids. And I know Darcy never stopped loving you. She just kept away from you for both of your sakes.”

“I don’t know how to compete with that, is all.”

“I’m the shitty ex, remember?” Steve added wryly. “I’ve still got to make it up to her.”

Bucky was still unsure.

He moved away from Steve, who just looked him over and shook his head a little bit.

“You’re very handsome. Always were. Always.”

This time, Bucky shook his head. He wasn’t great with mirrors, and when he did see himself, he felt strange, like he was unrecognisable.

He also always looked so sad and vacant. It seemed hardly appealing, especially to people as beautiful as Steve and Darcy.

And especially Darcy because she had Steve to look at, to flirt with.

Bucky could barely manage to string together full sentences around her most of the time.

“We have to get her back,” he whispered, and Steve nodded.

“We will.”

“What if she’s dead?” Bucky slipped out, instantly regretting the idea being shared like that.

He didn’t want to consider it, but he had to – because maybe he was going to die soon, too.

Steve screwed up his face at that, balling his hands into fists.

“We still find her, and then we burn it all to the ground.”

Bucky knew he meant it – he was shaking, too, with the kind of anger Bucky hadn’t seen in forever.

Close to forever – when he saw how hurt Bucky was when he’d been captured by Zola the first time and Steve helped him escape.

Bucky’s hero was his best friend from Brooklyn suddenly transformed, but still so much the same.

He had the earplugs in his pocket as they rode in the quinjet.

“The second we land, put those in. Then Wanda will disable the PA system. Stick with Natasha so you’re not alone for a second,” Steve ordered, and Bucky nodded.

He wasn’t going against the plan. He knew Natasha would be willing to disable him if it came to that.

Everyone was ready. They’d all been anxious, waiting to go get Darcy.

Jane stayed behind, sent back to the compound once again to wait for them and any updates.

Steve didn’t want to, but if he had to, he said he’d be the one to tell Jane if they found Darcy dead.
Steve swallowed, his jaw tight. Bucky reached out and squeeze his shoulder.

“Till the end of the line.”

He didn’t care who heard, or what anyone made of this statement. It wasn’t for them to hear, it was for Steve, who looked back at Bucky with bright eyes.

His heartbeat went into overdrive the second they landed. Moving through the forest brought back memories, and not just of him fighting on HYDRA’s side against the Avengers.

He took double agents out here before to put them down. He strangled failed experiments of Zola’s they couldn’t control –

He remembered to breathe deeply, to check his surroundings.

He and Natasha sped off around the side of the building as the rest of the team ran straight toward the front, Wanda breaking off at the last second to head toward the surveillance building to the side.

“Time for a reunion,” Natasha hissed, and she raised both her pistols, as two HYDRA men came toward them, already waiting for them.

The ear plugs were in – shoved all the way until all he could hear was his breathing, everything else was muffled, including the gunshots that rang out into the surrounding forest.

He fought alongside these men before, but they weren’t anything other than faces because he was nothing more than a machine at the time, so he felt next to nothing when he shot one of them, Natasha shooting the other.

They found the door, and he used his left arm to wrench it open with ease –

He got a kick out of using HYDRA’s weapon against them like that. They sprinted down one corridor, Natasha putting down two men without armour.

The third one emerged and Natasha holstered her weapons, instead adopting her lithe and deadliest state, pouncing on the man and wrapping herself around him, breaking his neck with her thighs in a few movements.

He dropped to the floor and Bucky stared at her.

Seeing that never got old, no matter what side he was on.

“Okay, I’m showing off a little,” he read her lips say.

They moved on, turning a corner as she whipped the hair out of her face.

Bucky put out a hand to stop her, remembering where he was.

He put a finger to his lips.

She froze, looking down the corridor. He carefully signed to her:

*There.*
She nodded, and they started to creep toward the first door, the one Bucky knew was a lab he’d been in countless times –

It wasn’t the lab where he’d been in cryostasis, that lab was in Siberia, but in this one he’d had a lot of adjustments on his arm and watched people get poked and cut up.

It was usually his job to make sure subjects didn’t escape.

Subjects, not people. They were things. He was a thing to be altered, contorted – deformed –

White hot rage rose up inside him and he gripped his Glock tighter, nostrils flaring as his jaw ticked.

They got to the door, and Natasha stood aside as Bucky ripped at the metal frame, pulling it back far enough to create a hole in the door and pull it open.

It was heavier than the first door, and Bucky even strained a little to budge it, but once he did, he was so glad.

Darcy was sitting in a chair on the other end of the room, her head lolling on her shoulder.

They rushed to her, Natasha looking her over as Bucky began ripping the restraints off her, throwing straps away as he saw her breathe, her hair curtaining most of her face –

But she breathed, and he felt a wave of relief that left him partially dazed.

He rested his head on her knee for half a second, just so grateful she was alive.

Natasha nudged him, pointing to his ears.

“Wanda just gave the all-clear through the comms.”

He heard about half that sentence as he wrenched the earplugs out.

He looked up at Darcy’s face again.

“How’s she doin’?”

“Dehydrated. Stoned out of her mind, probably.”

“Burning Man,” Darcy croaked, and Bucky felt himself break out into a smile at her voice.

She seemed to right herself, shaking her little head and seeing him properly.

“Bucky.”

There was a scream, and Darcy grabbed Bucky’s hand in fright, and Natasha turned away, back toward the door.

“Sounds like Wanda.”

“Go check on her,” Bucky said, going for his canteen on his hip and uncapping it.

From his crouching position, he moved the canteen toward Darcy’s lips. “Drink.”

“I shouldn’t,” Natasha muttered, looking over the two of them.

“I’ll be fine. PA’s down,” Bucky murmured. He kept looking at Darcy, who did look worse for
wear, but her eyes were set on him, a little smile playing on her lips.

He just wanted her to himself.

He’d never learn.

Natasha groaned. “Okay, I’ll be two minutes. Don’t go anywhere.”

“I don’t think we can anyway,” Bucky replied, looking Darcy over as Natasha sprinted off.

“I don’t know about your legs, sweetheart,” he murmured, and then he acknowledged the horrifying fact that she wasn’t wearing her dress from the nightclub.

It made his blood boil, thinking of them undressing her like a doll when she was sleeping.

He winced, remembering what she said the last time he called her by that pet name.

“I can move, maybe,” she managed to say, after she gulped down some more water. “I just need a coat.”

No shoes, either. Bucky looked around, wondering if there was something to –

He spotted the white coat on the back of a chair, and took it, a weight in its pocket.

It was another Glock, the safety off.

“No.”

“What is it?” Darcy asked, and she looked down at the coat and bit her lip.

“Yurievich is here?” Bucky hissed, feeling sick.

That man was –

Sometimes he made Zola look like a kitten. He was the kind of cruel that made Bucky struggle to sleep at night. He was meant to be in Siberia.

They must have flown him out just for this, to keep Darcy like this and lure Bucky back.

Darcy sucked in a breath. “Bucky.”

She looked scared, starting to tremble, and he put the coat around her shoulders.

“Did Natasha show you firearms, baby?”

It slipped out, that word – baby – he didn’t know where that came from. He felt like he was all over the place, trying not to panic and kept Darcy calm enough as well.

She didn’t seem bothered by the word, in fact, she smiled a little wider at him, not looking so scared.

“Yeah. But in theory.”

She sounded far away, like she wasn’t altogether there.

He faltered, feeling like his chest was being compressed, because she looked so beautiful but bruised standing there in the lab coat with the gun in her little hand.
She read him, moving closer, her hand suddenly on his face and he flinched, instinctively –

She leaned to kiss him, but he moved back.

Not like this. He couldn’t have their first kiss happening in a place like this, not when she was in this state.

He kissed her forehead instead, hoping her feelings weren’t too hurt.

Russian broke through his reverie, freezing Bucky in place.

“Soldier, you have returned.”

Bucky grew wide-eyed, his gazed swivelling to the doorway once more, and Yurievich stood there, smiling back at him.

His nightmare came to life.

“Speak English so that she understands.”

The words tumbled out of her mouth, and he shuddered, not wanting to even look at the man, not even wanting to speak to him, recognise him –

“Alright,” Yurievich breathed, his hands raised.

He didn’t seem to be armed.

Bucky couldn’t stop the rising panic, mixing with his rage from earlier.

The fact that the doctor was anywhere near Darcy made his stomach curl –

Bucky raised his Glock, struggling to still look at Yurievich as Darcy held his metal hand.

She suddenly stepped aside, away from him, putting her own pistol to her head.

“Darcy, stop!”

She remained steady, finger resting on the trigger. She just had to squeeze or slip and -

“No!” Bucky roared, realising.

She kept going, and he let out a shuddering breath, heartbeat pounding –

“She will kill herself if you do the same,” Yurievich hissed, as Bucky put his own pistol to his head, wincing.

She was inside his head, reciting the words like a prayer, and he watched in horror as she worked
through the list, unblinking –

Yurievich must have trained her, spent hours abusing her until she understood and pronounced each word with a sick fluency –

“Семнадцать. Рассвет. Печь. Девять.”


“You want her to die because of you, Soldier? She’s inside your heart like she always has been. You want your Captain to be without her?”

Bucky should have just shot Yurievich just for that. He was so stupid. He deserved to die for being tricked so easily, but the doctor was right.

He knew –

He knew he couldn’t do it.

He couldn’t have her shoot herself because of him, and that was his biggest weakness, she and Steve.

The people he loved, and he couldn’t kill them.

He screwed up his face, letting his Glock fall from against his head to the floor, and he was on his knees as she said the rest:

“добросердечный. возвращение на родину. Один. грузовой вагон.”


He was there, in the dark. In the deep dark, away from Darcy and everything he ever cared for.

Chapter End Notes

It’s a little contrived but HEAR ME OUT. Bucky was always going to switch - the odds of that happening are pretty high, you probably just weren’t expecting it to be Darcy who did it in the end.

Next chapter will have a better explanation because I know this was *contrived* af.

Thank you for reading. <3 And the responses to the last chapter were amazing so thank you for helping me stick with this story and give it my all.
Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING for sexual assault and sexual violence themes. More graphic violence as well in this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Part 23:

Darcy

"Look like th'innocent flower,

But be the serpent under't..." - William Shakespeare

Darcy was cleverer than people often gave her credit for.
It was fine – she worked with Jane and Bruce, two people whose IQ’s were each over 180.

It was more these HYDRA guys, acting like she was just decoration, with her body and her face.

She knew what she looked like – and men liked to look at her.

She didn’t appreciate their stares now, because she knew their intent.

Staring that will do that to you, when you’re tied up.

She wondered how it must have felt for Bucky, spending so long being interrogated and manipulated with all those people standing around him.

She was closer to understanding why he wasn’t so great with people anymore.

Once she awoke from her Brooklyn memory dream, she saw the lights were still on in the lab, and that she was alone.

She wasn’t really alone, there was a camera above the doorway, and she looked up at it for a second and squinted.

She had no idea what time it was. She supposed that was supposed to keep her disoriented – not knowing how long she’d actually been there.

According to Yurievich, she’d been in that chair for two days.

It wouldn’t take the Avengers that long to find her. She couldn’t have been taken from the nightclub without her purse or her shoes for them not to know she was kidnapped – especially because people saw her go into the bathrooms, and she’d like to think they noticed soon enough that she was missing.

She looked around the lab, assessing it. There was a syringe to the left of her which Gregor had used on her.

He had the decency to keep everything clean, though he had flicked ashes on her earlier.

She knew the parts they were playing – and they must have planned ahead before she’d woken up the first time in the lab –

Yurievich was the good cop. He was the one who meant to secretly be on her side, protecting her from Gregor and stitching her up.

She remembered what Maggie said, that she owed men nothing, and she didn’t owe Yurievich for sewing her back together and not leaving her alone with Gregor.

He meant for her to see him as her protector, as her secret saviour.

She knew the game, she just had to play it in her favour, like tucking a card up her sleeve to add to her hand.

She didn’t trust either of them for a second, because she saw the look on Yurievich’s face when she offered her body to him to save herself.

He only stopped because Gregor interrupted them, and Darcy bet her the entire sum of her college loans on that.
She shuddered, thinking of the doctor’s face, and she wished she could roll her shoulders properly.

The hallucinations she could live without, too. Seeing Sally in the hotel room with her fake smile with the newspaper beside her – Darcy hated thinking of that time.

She was so lonely then. Even with her family surrounding her and the agency giving her those opportunities – it felt hollow because Steve and Bucky weren’t there.

But it had been her choice to leave them both. She should have seen through it better, that it wasn’t really her idea – Bucky was the one who pushed her away, to save her.

He didn’t save her. She died anyway.

She couldn’t get it out of her head, what Yurievich said about Bucky:

“Zola always had trouble with Darla Singer imprinting on the Soldier. It took months to fully break him down, and then rebuild him, brick by brick.”

It made the hairs stick up on the back of her neck.

The door suddenly swung open and she looked toward it.

Of course, it was Gregor.

She grimaced, knowing what this meant. Yurievich was going to push her as far as he could, and she’d have to let him, for now.

She had no way of defending herself.

He said nothing to her at first, just taking the syringe aside to sterilize it and fill it with another solution, from a little bottle on a shelf.

She watched as he filled the syringe, and looked at her arm where the bandage lay, probably still proud of himself for doing that to her.

“Doc wants you to have this,” he muttered.

“What is it?” she asked, and he narrowed his eyes at her.

“What do you care? You’re fucked anyway.”

It stung as he stuck her with it, pushing too hard.

“You’re kind of cute when you’re scared,” Gregor murmured, looking at her mouth.

She needed water but she knew she didn’t want to miss her chance, so she promptly spat in his face, glaring at him –

She almost missed him because she was suddenly so heavy and weak like before. Whatever Yurievich planned to put in her rendered her completely defenceless.

What did Gregor think he’d just given her? He didn’t seem trained in any medical sense –

He smacked her across the face for her outburst, and she whimpered.

“Better,” he hissed, as she struggled, panting –
He grabbed her face, his fingers like a vice on her jaw.

She whimpered again, reading him right, because then he growled:

“\textquote{The more you struggle the harder I get.}”

His breath was in her mouth, hot and invasive, but she didn’t bite when he put his fingers in her mouth, making her cough and gag.

She let him do it, letting him think for a second she wasn’t going to fight him off.

“It’s painkillers,” he whispered, his fingers sliding back and forth as Darcy’s eyes watered and she struggled to breathe –

Yurievich knew Gregor would do exactly this. He was a bystander – actually worse, he’d orchestrated this.

She willed herself to relax, hoping her eyes would dilate or something, because Gregor was making her eyes leak and she was sure she’d throw up sooner or later –

He withdrew his fingers, wiping them on her gown before giving one tit a squeeze and massage, almost affectionate if he didn’t have that awful look on his face, like he wanted to \textit{wear} her or \textit{split her in half}.

“You’d probably try and bite my dick off if I tried face fucking you.”

\textit{Bingo}, she wanted to reply, but remained silent.

“But you were right before. You aren’t wearing underwear.”

Could she do this? Could she let him touch her, pretend like she didn’t want to die? He probably figured since she didn’t scream he was in the clear, so that was why he moved his fingers lower, toward the bottom of her gown to get under it.

She whimpered for real. She didn’t want this. She didn’t know what she’d do if he did touch her there.

“Your legs have been hanging apart for hours. I was getting ideas.”

(\textit{She wanted to kill him}.)

The panic clawed at her insides as Gregor’s hand slipped under, his fingers gliding up from her knee to her inner thigh –

“Gregor, you know what I told you.”

Yurievich had timed it perfectly. He stood behind them with his Glock raised once again.

This was the part where Darcy was meant to believe he was rescuing her.

Gregor lurched back and away from her, facing Yurievich with wide eyes.

He was probably told this was fine. Maybe he’d done it before to someone else and nobody had said a thing, no-one reported him.

The doctor looked at her, and Darcy felt a tear fall from her eyes – they were frightened tears she
saved up for Gregor’s final assault. She’d probably should have screamed earlier, but that wouldn’t have stopped him from touching her, she was as aware of that as she was aware of her stitches in her arm that Yurievich had made.

“Say goodbye to Gregor, my dear,” Yurievich said, cold and distant.

He’d planned this from the beginning, Gregor’s death. She wondered how long it took him to come up with this little theatre piece.

“Goodbye, Gregor,” she whispered.

There was the crack of the gunshot, and the sound of metal hitting bone and flesh, and Gregor stumbled, falling to the ground, his brains and blood spraying Darcy as she gave a little cry.

She deliberately looked away, mimicking hyperventilation, so that Yurievich came over to her and put his hands on her shoulders to comfort her.

She had to act like a real damsel in distress, so she looked up at him, her eyes wide and grateful.

“Thank you. Thank you,” she whispered, as more tears fell.

She was crying for herself, because she was so tired and alone, and not because he’d just saved her life.

“I’m sorry you had to go through that, my dear,” Yurievich murmured, and Darcy felt a flicker of rage lick at her insides –

You did that to me, you evil bastard, she thought, but kept her the expression of gratitude plastered to her face, teary and wide-eyed.

“I was preparing for our training exercise. I was not aware that Gregor was back on duty.”

His hand cupped her face and she froze, feeling him against her skin and wanting to bite him for violating her.

“What exercise?” She asked, hoping she sounded a little shy and not so much pissed off.

“I think we may be able to get your Sargent to remember you, finally.”

“He won’t ever remember me,” she murmured, hoping she sounded sad and hopeless, even though he’d peaked her interest. “It’s impossible.”

“Perhaps not, my dear,” he said, with a small smile.

He pushed his glasses back up and moved away, not before brushing a finger on her lips, which made Darcy want to dislocated all her joints to just get out of the chair and destroy him –

He began to move Gregor’s body out, and Darcy looked away, not acting anymore since she didn’t enjoy the site of dead things, rapists or otherwise.

Yurievich must have thought he was so clever, and that she was so stupid.

She had to act gullible, but not too dumb to raise suspicion.

She tried a new tactic when he came back, to clean up the stains, including the splatter on Darcy’s legs.
She ignored his touch as best she could, but knew that if he got low enough, he could see right up her gown. He was the type to pretend he wasn’t the type to take advantage of her, but Darcy was just waiting for him to do the very same thing.

Loathing was building in her heart and spreading all through her body, seeping into every part of her, but she had to hold on and play the part.

When he sat down again, Gregor and the blood taken care of, she blinked at him.

“What makes you think I can make Bucky remember?”

“Our Soldier was always haunted by the ghost of Darla Singer, ever since we found the picture on him all those years ago,” Yurievich replied, sounding almost wistful. “He always named you when prompted. But he couldn’t name you when he wasn’t activated.”

The same way that he couldn’t recall their love now, Darcy concluded.

A part of him was too disturbed to have the two personas merge, and so she’d been kept away in his memories, and he hadn’t been switched since Belgium.

“You said you were a widower,” Darcy said, and Yurievich stopped in his tracks.

“Yes,” he murmured, sounding reluctant to discuss it further. “But we’re not talking about her now, my dear.”

“How did she die?” Darcy asked, hoping she came across as insolent.

Yurievich hesitated, pushing his glasses back up again.

“There were attempts to replicate our Winter Soldier. One subject strangled her. Our Soldier was unable to save her –”

“That’s awful,” Darcy murmured with a little gasp.

How much did he really care for Bucky if he wasn’t able to save his wife? Did he even blame Bucky for it a little bit?

Darcy looked at Yurievich and wondered, was he trying to trick her in more ways than one?

Maybe it was such a gamble –

“What would it take to turn him? For me to get the chance for him to remember me?” she asked suddenly, hoping she sounded desperate enough.

“You would need to know his trigger words, and be pitch perfect,” Yurievich said, as if he was waiting for some time for her to ask.

He sounded rehearsed.

“It will take hours.”
“I could do it,” she murmured. “But I don’t feel so great. Gregor, he injected –”

“What do you need, my dear?”

She fixed her face into a shy expression, looking away before looking back at him.

“Um, I’m just not feeling as light as before. Did you have some more of that stuff from earlier?”

The stuff that was making her see Sally and feel like she was in another world.

That stuff.

“You can’t abuse your body like that for too long, my dear,” he murmured.

He made it sound like she was the one pumping her with drugs earlier, not him or his goons.

“But I’ll oblige for now,” he added, and went to retrieve the substance and a new needle.

She waited, running through each outcome.

If she triggered Bucky and he didn’t know her, what was she supposed to do, then?

Maybe that didn’t matter. But she had to get out of this alive.

She wasn’t going to go through all this to end up dying in this fucking chair.

She was more than this.

She bit her lip as the needle sank in, and she breathed deeply, letting her head fall back and she sighed, contented.

It did feel good, that wasn’t acting. But she wanted to put on a show for Yurievich just the same, that she was that stupid and believing.

She was back in the hotel room, Sally sitting in front of her with a cigarette in her hand and the generic smile on her face.

The next few hours played out in front of her.

Sally said the words over and over, perfect each time, and Darcy attempted to mimic them.

They became a blur, no longer a language but a feeling, and Darcy was running out of time.

She had to get it right.

Yurievich interrupted Darcy and Sally, and she was back in the lab with her back stiff and her mouth drier than ever.

He actually put a straw to her lips and she drank water from a cup, panting a little.

“Thank you,” she whispered, through her long lashes.
She didn’t pretend she was exhausted, she definitely was. She felt hungover – and felt the cold sweat on her body that stuck her gown to her body.

“You will need him to be trapped to switch him,” the doctor said, in a low voice.

She supposed he meant her to believe he was on her side, now. That she could trust him to know exactly what she needed to set Bucky free. He probably wanted her to believe he was only just holding back from telling her how to escape, because there was the camera watching them.

“How do I do that?”

Yurievich explained that she needed to threaten Bucky with suicide, to get the gun from the lab coat Yurievich would leave behind and make it that Bucky felt welcome enough to let his guard down, to do something irresponsible, like let himself believe they were safe.

“When I give the signal, you will recite the words like you practiced,” he said, and he placed his hand on her knee. “But I need to believe you will do that, my dear.”

Revulsion coursed through her, but she levelled his gaze, not moving an inch as he stroked her.

If she let him do it – would it give her away?

Was he smart enough to know she was playing him?

It seemed like a test.

She took a deep breath. “Don’t take your hand away.”

His froze, gripping the flesh of her thigh, staring at her.

“Why?”

He was testing the waters. He had watched her with Gregor earlier, to know when to jump in at the right second to save her.

Maybe he saw her force herself to be still for Gregor – so she had to come up with something, quick.

“Put your hand closer. To me. There,” she murmured, looking down at her lap and waiting for him to break. “Touch me there.”

He pretended to hesitate. There was a tiny switch that occurred that was barely detectable, but Darcy saw it.

Or maybe she just wanted to see it, because even though he paused, his hand slid up her thigh and she was sure that in seconds the thumb would be on her –

“No. Wait,” she gasped. “Stop.”

His hand withdrew.

“I’m not in my right mind, I’m sorry,” she murmured, and she willed her eyes to a glazed state, her head lolling a little.

She tried not to exaggerate it, and he seemed to believe her.

“You saved me but we shouldn’t sleep together. For Bucky’s sake.”
He nodded slowly, looking her over once more.

She hoped she hadn’t pissed him off too much for denying him.

He cleared his throat, changing the subject.

“The Avengers will arrive soon. We’ve had word that they tried to locate us using the message we recorded for them.”

Yurievich told her that Gregor wrote the words, but Darcy wasn’t so sure anymore. She didn’t remember reading them aloud, and didn’t want to consider the gaps in time she missed –

She didn’t give herself the chance to wonder what could have happened to her when she wasn’t conscious.

“What will Bucky do to everyone? Will he kill them?”

She *really* playing dumb now. Of course he was going to try and do that when she triggered him.

“It’s the only way to get him back, my dear,” Yurievich replied, attempting to soothe her.

“You could come with us,” she blurted (or pretended to blurt), attempting to sit up in her chair once more. “After this is all over. Join us.”

He sat still, and made sure he was facing away from the camera.

He nodded, and Darcy thought the execution was near perfect.

There was no way he was leaving this lab once he came in later.

She didn’t believe his lying HYDRA ass for a fucking second.

She simply nodded back, and waited for him to leave.

Alone again, she decided a nap was in order. She’d done enough.

It would *have to* be enough.

---

Hours later, she was awakened by some bangs in the distance – gunshots ringing out in other rooms above, below and outside.

The team had arrived, and she’d just have to sit still for a few minutes.

The door banged, like someone was knocking the metal surrounding it repeatedly.

There was a scraping, and Darcy watched through the curtain of her hair as an arm wrenched the door aside.

She closed her eyes, waiting.

She felt exhausted, so it wasn’t hard to pretend she wasn’t altogether there still.
She had to get this perfectly right.

Fingers touched her arms, and metal grazed her skin –

_Bucky._

Her chest felt like it could burst. She felt him rip the restraints away, and someone else feeling her pulse, checking her body.

Darcy took a deep breath, her hair still in her face, and she felt something warm on her knee, something solid –

A shuffle.

“Wanda just gave the all-clear through the comms.”

Natasha. It was Bucky and Natasha.

“How’s she doin’?”

Bucky’s voice was a low rumble that made Darcy want to sigh a little. He sounded better, like he wasn’t sad to be near her.

“Dehydrated. Stoned out of her mind, probably,” said Natasha.

Darcy said the first thing that came to mind. “Burning Man.”

Her voice sounded so hoarse. Her throat was killing her, and she’d been ignoring that for some time.

She shook her head, blinking several times and saw the pair of them crouching by her chair, looking her over.

“Bucky,” she whispered, and his face changed at her saying his name.

A scream rang out in the distance, and she grabbed Bucky’s hand, and he looked down at their hands together as Natasha looked over her shoulder, toward the open door.

“Sounds like Wanda.”

“Go check on her,” Bucky said, and he was reaching for his canteen on his hip.

He uncapped it and handed it to Darcy, and she gulped from it greedily.

“I shouldn’t,” Natasha muttered, sounding unsure.

She looked at them both, considering.

“I’ll be fine, PA’s down,” said Bucky, not looking at Natasha, but Darcy instead.

She felt a smile creep across her face, and she saw the fondness in his returning gaze.

Natasha seemed torn. But then she relented, groaning.

“Okay, I’ll be two minutes. Don’t go anywhere.”

“I don’t think we can, anyway,” Bucky replied in the same low rumble as before, but Natasha was up, running out the door and down the corridor.
“I don’t know about your legs, sweetheart,” he explained, and Darcy knew what he meant. She hadn’t stood up in a day. She might struggle to now, but she made sure she’d wiggled her limbs hourly to keep the circulation going as she waited.

He winced a little, probably because the last time he called her sweetheart she’d bitten his head off.

“I can move, maybe,” she said, and she chugged a little more water. “I just need a coat.”

She watched as he looked around, seeing the white coat Yurievich left behind. He picked it up, feeling the weight of the Glock in its pocket and stared at it.

“No.”

“What is it?” Darcy asked, feeling sick.

He knew.

“Yurievich is here?”

She felt herself start to panic.

Panic because the doctor would be there in a few moments and she had to do what she promised, and she started to shake.

Maybe she should tell Bucky to run.

“Bucky,” she whimpered, unable to stop herself from shaking.

He looked scared, too, but he was trying not to show it, and put the coat around her, handing her the Glock.

It was heavier than she expected. The one she remembered holding before with Natasha in the firing range was smaller, and much lighter.

“Did Natasha show you firearms, baby?”

He just called her baby, and he didn’t even remember her –

“Yeah. But in theory.”

_He called you baby._

She couldn’t help smiling at little at him, and she saw him look her over again, wanting to say something. He got that look on his face often enough around her for her to recognise it.

She lifted her hand to stroke his cheek and he recoiled a little, not expecting the contact.

She leaned toward him, to kiss him, because she just wanted to.

_In case this somehow didn’t work out. And because she was selfish that way._

_And maybe just because she wanted to kiss Bucky, whether he remembered her or not._

He moved back, and instead pressed a kiss to her forehead, and Darcy wanted to stay in that moment for as long as possible, but –
Yurievich was in the corner of her eye, speaking Russian.

Bucky looked physically ill, like he was the one strapped to the chair, his eyes wide –

“Speak English so that she understands.”

Because he respected her enough to want her to hear everything.

Bucky shuddered, looking away at the floor.

He looked like he wanted to be sick.

“Alright,” Yurievich murmured, his hands up.

Bucky raised his own pistol to point at the doctor, breathing heavily.

She looked down at his metal hand she clung to with her spare hand.

She gripped the Glock in her other hand a little tighter.

She stepped away, letting Bucky’s hand fall as she pressed the gun to her head, shuddering a little, because the look on Bucky’s face was enough to break her heart.

*I always loved you,* she said in her head, wishing he knew.

“Darcy, stop!”

She let her finger rest on the trigger, breathing through her nose and looking at Yurievich.

“Now, my dear.”

She began to recite, and watched as Bucky realised – roaring with pleading eyes.

“No!”

Bucky winced as he put his own pistol to his head, his eyes screwed up.

“She will kill herself if you do the same,” the doctor warned, his voice like ice. He looked completely calm.

Darcy didn’t dare blink, continuing the list, watching Bucky struggle.

“You want her to die because of you, Soldier? She’s inside your heart like she always has been. You want your Captain to be without her?”

That was a masterstroke of manipulation and Darcy had to hand it to him – Yurievich was really good at his job.

Bucky dropped the gun, and Darcy finished:

“добросердечный. возвращение на родину. Один. грузовой вагон.”

He was on the floor, collapsing against a weight no-one could see, and she had to watch. She owed him that.

He stirred, and Darcy remembered to breathe. She whispered the greeting.
“Доброе утро, Солдат.”

He slowly pushed himself up from the floor, and he looked blankly ahead.

When he spoke, he sounded close to unconscious:

“Я готов отвечать.”

“Introduce yourself properly, Darla Singer,” Yurievich said, and Darcy head whipped toward him.

“I’m Darla,” she whispered, and Bucky looked in her general direction, not too interested.

She cleared her throat, letting her gun fall from her head and resting by her side.

“I’m Darlene.”

Bucky’s eyes narrowed, and she turned his head properly, giving her as significant a look as she could ask for.

“Darlene,” she said again. “And I’m alive.”

There were footsteps outside the door, and they all turned toward the sound, and Steve stood there, his shield raised, with Natasha at his heels.

“He’s turned,” Darcy said, her voice kind of faint. “I just wanted to see if I could pull him back.”

Yurievich looked at them all, as if just realising his predicament.

He said something in Russian to Bucky and he threw himself at Steve and Natasha, pushing their fight into the corridor.

Darcy staggered over to the doorway to watch as they all fought.

The second she felt Yurievich take a step, she turned, her pistol raised, pointed at him.

“My dear,” he began, but Darcy shot him a look, her act blown.

“Don’t speak. I don’t want to hear your voice.”

He gulped, and she felt a little thrill at the sight of him being afraid.

“What do think would happen if I told the Soldier what you and Gregor did to me?”

He opened his mouth to answer, but she went on, her voice a little louder.

“I don’t think he’d be merciful if he knew – even if he thinks he’s on your side.”

She knew what Bucky would do. He’d probably tear him apart with his metal hand, making it slow and as painful as possible.

Steve came running back in, a cut on his face and his mask off his eyes –

“Nat led him outside, but he’s out for blood,” he said in a rushed way, like he was out of breath.

The sight of her being this way must be scary to look at.

Darcy finally cracked her neck. She wanted to do that for hours.
“Steve, this is Doctor Saveliy Yurevich,” she said, looking from one man to the other.

She was holding the pistol as hard as she could, like she was trying to crush it in her hand.

“Say goodbye to Yurievich, Steve,” she said, and the doctor’s eyes grew wide.

Steve didn’t tell her to stop. Didn’t try making it easier.

“Goodbye, Yurievich,” he said clearly, and Darcy squeezed the trigger.

Her arm threw back from the recoil, which she expected, but describing it and living the experience were two very different things.

The same thing could be said of the act of killing somebody.

The moment between Steve speaking and Yurievich seemed drawn out, like she was watching a film with a long tracking shot, and she couldn’t look away, and she had to experience it all.

She watched him try and spit out a “Hail Hydra” just as she cut him off, the bullet entering him just above his eyebrow and exiting out the back of his head –

She didn’t look away. She watched as the blood and brains fell behind him, as he crumpled into himself and fell to the floor.

She was panting and sweating again, and Steve grabbed her by the elbow, pulling her out of the lab, picking her up so she was in his arms as he ran down the corridor and out a back door.

Steve stopped as he got out, panting like Darcy was.

“Hey,” she said, and kissed him on the lips.

Just a short peck but he looked alarmed just the same, and set her down.

“It’s just Bucky who’s left,” he said, and Darcy saw the back of his neck was pink.

“You killed everyone else?” Darcy asked, and Steve just looked at her.

“Yeah.”

“Oh.”

She had just killed someone in front of him, without remorse, so perhaps she wasn’t one to judge.

Considering what they would have gone through, knowing she was missing and then knowing she was taken by HYDRA –

Steve touched his earpiece and sighed.

“Bucky’s out of control.”

“My fault, sorry.”

“He was meant to be wearing those earplugs Bruce and Jane made.”

Darcy remembered those. They actually modelled them on Steve’s sense of hearing when he came by a few times, and Darcy laughed at his discomfort at the idea of sticking putty in his ears.
“Was he?”

“Yeah. But he took them out.”

Bucky must have done that when he eyes were still closed, when Natasha told him what Wanda did.

Darcy screwed up her face. “What was the point of having the earplugs, then?”

Steve seemed mad. “Yeah, I figure we need to talk about that soon, the whole team.”

She burst out laughing, not able to help herself.

Fuck, she was so tired. She grimaced, and Steve looked at her again, worried.

“Where’s Bucky?”

“Around the corner.”

“Let me see him,” she said, and Steve looked horrified.

“No. I can’t let you get that close to him.”

“He won’t hurt me,” she countered. She showed Steve the Glock again. “Also, I think the Winter Soldier recognised me.”

“What makes you think that?” Steve snapped, obviously being annoyed by his teammates a lot that day already.

He was a grumpy leader most of the time.

“He didn’t try to kill me.”

He stared at her for a few moments. He was considering it.

He sighed, more like a groan. He put a hand through his hair, his old habit.

“Fine. Just – I have to be there, too.”

“Okay,” she murmured. “I’m not going to die, honey.”

He gave her a look that meant, Don’t call me that right now, I’m mad.

They set off together, this time Steve was giving her a piggyback around the building, and she spotted Sam, Natasha and the Hulk all circling Bucky as he fought them.

“Jesus, he does not let it go,” Darcy whispered, and Steve had to laugh a little at that under his breath.

They got to the edge of the forest where everyone stood watching the fighting, and Tony’s mask went up.

“You okay, kiddo?” he asked her, and Darcy nodded, Glock still in her hand when Steve set her
down on the ground again.

All eyes were on her, and Wanda looked relieved at the sight of her friend.

“You okay, Wanda? You screamed before.”

“I do that,” she murmured. “I’m okay.”

Darcy nodded, and decided to quit stalling.

She set off with Steve beside her, and she was barefoot in the dirt, her heart in her throat.

Hulk turned and grunted. He probably didn’t recognise her too well, but she hoped Bucky would, if she tried hard enough to get his attention.

“Soldier!” She yelled, and the fighting seemed to slow down as Natasha and Sam spotted Darcy.

Bucky didn’t stop – just looked over his shoulder at her before trying to land another punch.

“He’s out of bullets,” Sam called, and Darcy nodded.

He wasn’t going to give up anyway. He was still on a mission.

And so was she.

She ran up to them, Steve still beside her, and she got to Natasha and yelled it again:

“Soldier! It’s Darlene.”

Bucky skidded, like he’d tripped on something.

He looked up at her, eyebrows furrowed. “You shouldn’t be here.”

“Probably not,” Darcy said, near delirious.

He was talking to her.

“But you remember me?”

Bucky stood still, looking her over in her little hospital gown and white coat, barefoot with a gun in her hand and her lips dry and chapped –

“Of course.”

She took a deep breath. “You let him remember me, too?”

“I don’t know if it works like that,” Natasha hissed, and Darcy looked at the redhead, who was shaking her head, a smear of blood on her brow.

“Maybe it’s too much for him to remember you as Bucky,” Sam piped up, and Darcy felt her heart sink a little.

Sam was probably right – Yurievich had said Zola struggled, toiled away for months to make Bucky a new person altogether.

Suddenly inspired, she shoved past Natasha, escaping everyone –
People called out her name, but she went right up to Bucky.

His defences were down. Like they were before he was switched earlier.

His weakness was always her, no matter who he was.

Maybe she could take it as a compliment, but for the time being –

“Hulk, knock him out.”

With little more than a flick, the Soldier was down once he was struck, falling to the ground.

Darcy stared down at him, and felt hands on her, pulling her away.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to Lady Tippi (ygrite_huntress) for the direct quote "What is the point of having the ear plugs then?". I mean, I think we all felt that way. Like, who is this dummy?????? And why didn't we prepare better for this???????

Btw I had the "Goodbye Gregor" and its callback in my head for weeks, wanting to use it. I've literally spent ages with that on my to-do list.

Thank you everyone for reading. <3 And if anyone's confused or has questions, just comment here or message my Tumblr here.
Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

Shorter part this time.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Part 24:

Steve

"History repeats itself, it fails to die..." - Amy Winehouse

Bucky was face-first in the ground and all they could do was stare – before Natasha and Sam pulled Darcy away, and the Hulk took hold of Bucky and they began to walk back toward the building.

The building full of ghosts.

Steve wondered how many bodies were buried in the forest behind them.
He’d have to come back later with another team, and not with Bucky or Darcy.

He knew now he couldn’t trust them not to rebel against him.

Whatever Darcy did – she needed to explain it. He was more annoyed with Bucky for not being safe at all, letting his guard down like that before they’d even got her out of there.

He could have killed her.

Okay, so annoyed was probably putting it lightly.

Especially when the second Bucky was conscious again and asking for Darcy, Steve grabbed him by the front of his shirt and pulled him up, pushing him against a wall.

“What the hell was that?” he yelled, and he noticed he was shaking.

“Oops, trouble in paradise,” Tony said, and they both turned to him, forgetting their own quarrel.

“Shut the fuck up, Stark,” Bucky said, just as Steve hissed:

“Tony, I swear to God!”

The others departed, leaving Steve and Bucky alone outside.

“She could have died,” Steve said, looking Bucky over and letting him go, letting him be apart from him again. “You both could have.”

Bucky opened his mouth to argue but stopped, conceding.

“Alright. I’m sorry.”

He didn’t seem that sorry – and Steve could feel it in the air, like Bucky was going to argue the second Steve let him, but he wasn’t going to let that happen this time.

He wasn’t going to bail Bucky out for this one.

“She put her gun to her head and made me listen to her.”

Steve stared at him.

“She wasn’t brainwashed, though,” he said, frowning. “When you switched, she killed Yurievich.”

Bucky gaped back at him.

“She – she shot him?”

Yeah, Buck,” Steve said, quieter.

They looked at one another, and Steve remembered Darcy’s ruthlessness – how she struck Yurievich down like that, like she’d been planning to for a while.

“She must have tricked him. Made him think she was willing to do anything to get your memories back.”

Bucky stayed quiet, looking toward the side entrance.

“I think she figured you trapped Darlene with the Winter Soldier. You must have protected
Bucky looked like he might cry, as he stared past Steve, unblinking.

“Do you remember what you said the first time you saw Darcy at the hospital?” Steve asked, and it was like Bucky was waiting for him to ask.

“I said, ‘No. Not her,’” he murmured.

He closed his eyes and Steve watched him try to put the pieces back together –

“We don’t do this anymore. We tell each other how we feel,” Steve said. “Honesty pact.”

Bucky just nodded.

“You don’t get to avoid telling me how you feel anymore,” Steve added, his voice a little harsher.

Bucky nodded again. “Okay.”

“And not after today,” Steve finished, and his voice cracked a little.

He took a few breaths, and Bucky was holding his arm to steady him.

“Fellas.”

Bucky let go of him at the sound of Natasha’s voice.

“We need to get clean up down here. And we need to leave,” she said, looking them over.

Steve just nodded.

“You’re not on the team anymore, Buck,” he said suddenly, and Bucky looked a little hurt, but understood.

He obviously wasn’t fit for any other mission, no matter what he said.

And no matter who he was sleeping with.

When they got back to the compound, there were doctors there to look over Darcy and make sure she didn’t need any further treatment.

She kept looking over at Steve and somehow not crying at all –

There were a couple moments where she stumbled but she said it was because she was exhausted, and Steve knew denial on Darcy when it was there.

She did it so well when they were together, before Belgium the first time.

“I also said, “why does she have her face”,’” Bucky added under his breath, referring to the hospital and the tearful confrontation, and Darcy’s heart being ripped out.

“So maybe you remembered still a little,” Steve said, as they were running the next day. “Because you’d just switched back.”
Bucky didn’t sound too enthused by that idea.

He’d been beating himself up over everything, and Steve allowed some of it – he had to learn he couldn’t go against any protocol.

He was set for a session with Sam that afternoon, much to his annoyance, but he was doing it.

They spotted Jane in the common room after.

“She’s okay, she’s resting,” Jane said, and she headed back toward the lab.

Steve didn’t think she was okay but he couldn’t just barge into her room.

It wasn’t his place to do something like that, even if she had kissed him.

He didn’t know what to make of that because if he invested too much, he’d probably end up rejected, and rightly so – she’d managed just fine without him and he was the one who cheated.

By the end of the day, when he was alone in his apartment and unsure of what to do, he caved.

“Friday, where’s Darcy?”

“Miss Lewis is on the roof above the gym.”

He stopped mid-pace and tilted his head.

“Come again?”

“She is sitting on the roof on top of the gymnasium.”

He walked off toward the gym with his stupid hoodie on, the one Darcy liked to steal when they were together –

He stopped, seeing her and Bucky sitting together, and he felt a pang in his chest.

Bucky wasn’t with Sam. He was with her.

They saw him below, and Darcy gave him a sheepish look, and Bucky looked like he wanted to hide.

“Thought you were seein’ Sam today, Buck,” he called up to them, and then he took the few seconds to scale the side of the building and get up to them.

Bucky had a cigarette in his hand and flicked it away, shrugging a little.

He was being such a child and Steve just wanted to –

What? Probably just push him up against and wall and kiss him because he didn’t want to fight, but he didn’t know how to get him to listen.

“She was here first,” Bucky grunted, like that made a difference.

Darcy just nodded, looking like she wanted to hide, too.
“So you decided to miss therapy, after we agreed we’d both go?” Steve asked, and Bucky winced a little, caught out.

“And you can stop pretending,” he added, speaking to Darcy.

She narrowed her eyes at him.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, Captain.”

“Yes, you do! Enough, okay? You don’t have to pretend like you have to do all this alone, because you don’t! You don’t have to.”

He’d been holding on to that for a while, and Steve felt only like a bit of an asshole for finally saying it.

He was sick of things being left untouched.

“You killed a guy, Darcy,” he said, and she looked away, biting her lip. “I saw you shoot him without even blinking –”

“Stop it,” Bucky said, on the edge of desperate.

“You can’t put your heads in the sand about it, alright?”

Steve huffed a little, looking at Darcy again, who was crying.

“Shit,” he muttered, because he didn’t mean for that to happen.

(Never mind. He was an asshole.)

“I’m not mad at you,” she murmured, wiping the tears away and staring back at him.

“Well, you can’t ignore each other anymore. I feel like I was interrupting something, so ~”

Steve moved to jump off the roof, and Darcy began to follow him.

He heard her lighter footsteps behind him, and he turned, seeing Bucky remaining on the roof and watching them.

“We weren’t even talking, just sitting together,” Darcy said, grabbing Steve’s hand.

He stopped, looking down at her.

“I’m not mad at you, either,” he said.

She stroked his skin with her thumb.

“What do you want me to do?” she asked, and they both looked back at Bucky, who seemed to be smoking again, and frowning.

“Quit waitin’ for him,” Steve muttered, and Darcy blushed –

He hadn’t seen her do that in a long time and she was adorable.

“I don’t know how to do that. Start.”

“You did a lot more in that lab, to get out. Funny how getting the guy you’re in love with to –”
“Steve!” she hissed, and her face was a deeper red. “He can hear.”

“I told him it’s okay,” Steve said.

They’d basically said as much to each other. Steve wasn’t sure how he was meant to handle it, but it was that way, and they couldn’t pretend anymore like the pair of them weren’t missing her.

“I have to tell you about Yurievich some time,” she murmured, sounding suddenly sad. “He didn’t – but he was close to –”

Steve just let her speak, but she gave up.

“I can’t talk about it just yet.”

Steve nodded, and he let go of her hand, tucking her hair behind her ear.

He dreaded that conversation, because he was sure it was all awful, no matter what Darcy said.

Her speech was still broken, and she sighed.

“I love you, still,” she said, and Steve swallowed.

“I love you, too.”

She didn’t kiss him or take back his hand.

“How are you meant to – not get hurt?”

He was hurt. He hurt all the time. He saw the two of them together, his brown haired, blue eyed twins and felt like he didn’t fit with it, because of his mistakes.

But he couldn’t take Bucky being so longing anymore. And he wasn’t doing it to get her back.

Because Darcy was still kind of there, in a way.

He shrugged a little.

He walked back, and looked up at the last second to see Bucky staring back at him.
It's my birthday tomorrow (the 20th) so my present to myself is letting my ideas just run their course before I get back to you all with bigger and better chapters than this one.

I honestly don't know whose part I want it to be next, but WinterShock is closer than ever, so... let a lady know what you think!

I know this was a bridging chapter but - things needed to be said somehow.
Part 25:

Darcy

"In a room without a door
A kiss is not enough in
Love my way, it's a new road..." - The Psychedelic Furs

The seconds dragged.

Darcy learned that early on – somehow she missed that after Thor first came and then after when he came back –
She thought too much. She was stuck.

Dreams were intrusive. She was practically praying for one night without them, but they were memories and nightmares, that blend she knew so well from her childhood.

Except now, she saw things that didn’t happen, that *could* have happened –

And they were enough to keep her awake for days at a time.

Sometimes she opened up her phone and got a satellite image up of the building she was in for that day, and she’d just stare at it, unsure of what to do.

She’d think about the animals, the people who may come across it - having no idea what had taken place in and around that stack of bricks.

The amount of hope lost there, that could never return.

During the day she ran on caffeine and her own stubborn nature, insisting she was fine. She knew it was stupid and not helping her at all, but she didn’t know how to start asking for help just yet, because it was a lot to even sit with those feelings in the daytime with people around her, let alone at night like now.

Yurievich was shot in the head but got up again, killing Steve and Darcy – and then having Bucky kill everyone else.

The dream didn’t make sense, but they were immersive enough for that not to matter. They felt real enough that Darcy bolted upright with her sweat having soaked her bedsheets, leaving her shivering alone in the darkness.

This happened every night.

After a week of it, she had a particularly graphic nightmare mostly featuring Gregor and his fingers in her mouth again.

She missed the Steve sex dreams, even. All that time she was meant to be hating him, but kept having steamier memories crop up while she slept, but then she was in Yurievich’s lab and her body didn’t let up.

It was like she was shutting down, because the Gregor dream had her lying numbly, staring at the ceiling, remembering that sadist’s rank scent of filth and cigarettes.

“Friday, what time is it?”

“3:23 AM, Miss Lewis,” replied the AI, and Darcy didn’t even groan, she had done that enough already every other morning she asked.

She walked through to the common room, shivering a little because she left her apartment without shoes, or even socks, just in her tank top and pyjama pants.

When she got to the common room, someone was already sitting in the dark, watching TV, their back to her.

The second she stepped in, Bucky turned, but not in fright.
He probably even heard her coming, scuffing her feet.

Whenever he looked at her, it was like –

Well, he seemed cautious, or like he was holding back, even though Steve encouraged her to go for it, whatever it was supposed to be with Bucky.

He also barely spoke. He was so quiet Darcy felt so intrusive every time she talked to him.

The other afternoon right after she got back, Bucky found her on the gym’s roof and joined her without asking, lighting up and staring out into space.

They were alone – together.

She sat beside him on the couch now, fully aware of his body beside her.

She could feel his heat, was aware of his smell.

(Which was kind of musky. He probably sweated recently, like she had, but from exercise and not a nightmare.)

(She wasn’t sure if he ever went to bed with Steve anymore other than to fuck.)

(Actually, he smelt of sex yesterday and she thought of what she would have smelled like to everyone else before when she slept with Steve. Probably like her vanilla perfume and come and Steve’s underarms.)

She should stop thinking about it. She looked ahead at the TV screen.

Bucky was watching infomercials.

She wondered what kind of a whirlwind that would have been like - for a guy who listened to radio, mostly being out the rest of the last century, never having experienced television –

She grimaced a little.

She looked over at him, sitting and staring blankly, hardly acknowledging it at all.

Darcy looked away, her heart sinking.

She thought of going back to her room, because this all felt too sad, but she wasn’t sure how she was going to bring herself to do that, to return to sleep when all she dreamt of was her own torture.

The sob bubbled up and she covered her mouth with her hand and whimpered, suddenly embarrassed.

She was so tired, but too awake and aware of her feelings to let go –

She squeezed her eyes shut, her shoulders sagging.

She felt Bucky move beside her and then she opened her eyes.

He was settling with his head on her lap, his metal arm wrapped around her knees and his other around the back of her.

It wasn’t sexual, it wasn’t something happening to her –
It was just nice, that he didn’t ask her questions she couldn’t answer, didn’t demand she calm down.

She kept crying, but not as hard, just quietly as they stared up at the ads.

She looked down at him, and put her hand on his head for a second.

He sighed.

He fucking sighed at her touch, and she felt her heartbeat pick up speed, wondering what to do.

They watched TV.

She must have fallen asleep because the feel of Bucky against her was gone and she looked around, the sun up and someone using the coffee machine, and Darcy’s head whipped around to see Jane, who had an odd expression on her face while Bucky was standing near the couch, having been probably discovered on top of her –

Darcy blushed, and saw Bucky see her do it, blushing more –

He started to walk away, and Jane raised an eyebrow.

“So, how’s it going?”

“Really?” Darcy snapped.

“Truce, I made this for you,” Jane added, and Bucky was gone.

Darcy narrowed her eyes from the couch, but took the mug once Jane sat beside her.

“What did you two do last night?”

“Nothing,” Darcy mumbled, taking a sip. “And don’t start. It’s too early for matchmaking, or whatever.”

Jane just looked her rumpled cousin over with a quizzical brow and shrugged.

“Maybe so.”

Darcy grimaced, realising it was already time for work. Jane continued to watch her, obviously wanting to say so much more.

“He got up like you were a hot potato or something.”

“That tends to happen with him,” Darcy replied, mumbling again.

She was disappointed, but she wasn’t sure how she was meant to remedy that without pushing Bucky too far – he had boundaries and she had already violated them before by triggering him last week.

He probably was struggling with his feelings, wondering if she was worth the hassle she caused.

(Darcy wasn’t sure herself.)
“Are you going to elaborate on that?” Jane blurted, and Darcy had to laugh – even though it was a bitter one that popped up.

Darcy shrugged a little, still peeved.

“I can’t sleep. Or, when I sleep it’s all – the lab.”

She cleared her throat.

“And Bucky was here, so I just sat down at like, 4AM and here we are,” she finished, getting back to her coffee while Jane’s face turned into the worrying kind Darcy had come to dread.

Jane swallowed, brushing some of the hair out of Darcy’s face with her hand.

“Have you told him how you feel?”

Darcy shook her head.

“He keeps being kind, but I can’t tell if –”

Jane was back to her old self, sounding a little exasperated.

“What’s he got to do for you to see he’s got feelings for you, Lewis?” She cried, giving a dramatic sweep of her hands.

“It’s not as simple as that.”

Jane snorted. “Ohhhhhhkay. Except this is the slowest I’ve ever seen you, and we both know you’ve got game.”

Darcy blushed yet again and groaned. “It’s different because I’m trying to be careful. He rejected me the first time, remember?”

“Yes, but Steve told you to go get him, so…what’s the problem?”

“I’m scared!” Darcy exploded, getting up from the couch to stand over Jane. “Is that what you want to hear? I’m scared. I’m scared. I’m scared –”

“Alright,” Jane said, and she was up and hugging Darcy, the mug between them hard against Darcy’s chest. “I’m sorry.”

Darcy didn’t let herself cry, just hugged her back.

She slept with Steve in the Tower the first time, two days after she met him. Granted, that was just as she remembered being in Coney Island with him and Bucky and emotions were high, but Jane was right.

She was like a snail now compared to any other person she’d been romantic with, serious or otherwise.

Later that morning, when Darcy was resting her head against her desk while Bruce was off getting her coffee, Jane planted herself on the edge of her workspace and smacked her lips.

“I was thinking, when did you remember Steve?”

“When we kissed. I had this dream the night before of us in bed together.”
“And that was a memory?” Jane asked, to clarify.

“Yeah.”

Darcy lifted her head, rubbing her eyes. “Why?”

“Did you maybe consider it was the kiss that prompted you?”

Darcy stared at her, kind of annoyed they were already back onto the Bucky problem.

She looked around in case Bruce was any closer with her much needed caffeine and shrugged.

“Not really.”

“Okay, so you believe in past lives but not in true love’s first kiss. Sure.”

(Jesus, Jane was sassy that morning. Finding her and Bucky on the couch must have kicked her into top gear.)

Darcy looked away, biting her lip.

“You risked a lot last week, remember?” Jane went on, and Darcy tried to not wince at the thought of Bucky crying out for her to stop reciting his trigger words –

“Yeah,” she replied, and she sighed.

“It’s worth trying?” Jane added, trying not to sound bossy but failing mostly.

That night when Darcy couldn’t sleep, she went straight for the gym and scaled the wall.

Not as quickly as Steve or Bucky ever did, but she got there in the end.

She sat there, looking at the moon and feeling nervous.

There was a familiar scrape of metal on concrete and Bucky emerged, standing while she sat on the edge with her back to him.

“Friday said you were here.”

Darcy nodded, allowing a small smile. “Sure.”

“I figured – you’d be – I figured you were here since you weren’t in front of the TV like yesterday.”

His voice sounded rough, underused.

He sounded uncomfortable.

He sat beside her, and Darcy scooted closer so her arm touched his –

He wore his hooded jacket, the non-descript one Darcy liked on him. It was navy blue and soft against the skin of her arm.

“I’m sorry for what I did,” Darcy heard herself say, unsure why she felt she had to ruin the moment a
little by bringing up Belgium again. “Because I know it hurt you, to have that happen to you again when it hadn’t in a while.”

Bucky shook his head. “You – you did that to survive.”

There was a lump in her throat. “It hurt. To do that to you. I spent hours practicing with him.”

She didn’t say the doctor’s name.

“I figured I had to go along to – to –”

She huffed, trying to get the words out. “To kill him.”

She hadn’t said that out loud before, that she planned to murder Yurievich, that she wouldn’t have let anyone take her away before she did that.

She swiped at her eyes, knowing she was crying and Bucky suddenly took her hand and put it to his mouth.

He kissed her palm, his eyes shut.

Darcy realised then, he was grateful for her doing that – for killing Yurievich because he hadn’t had the chance to.

The look of horror on Bucky’s face when he saw Yurievich again after being his old persona, it wasn’t something Darcy would ever forget.

Bucky started talking again and Darcy let him, not daring to stop him or interject.

“When you told us about dyin’ like you did – there was this brief second where I thought I could go there myself to get answers, to have someone pay for what they did…”

He held her hand in his, looking down at their fingers twined together in the moonlight.

“But it was stupid. Who could have been around to remember you lyin’ in the street?”

He chuckled a little, and Darcy felt her stomach flutter at the sound.

“Then you said how it happened.”

“Bucky, I’m past that,” she murmured, and they gazed at one another, and he squeezed her hand a little tighter.

“I’m not,” he retorted, his voice broken.

They sat in silence, and Darcy tilted her head and looked up at the moon again.

She let her head drop to Bucky’s shoulder and rested it there, sighing.

Sleep would be nice.

She turned, smelling his neck and sighing again. She wanted to bury herself in him, but pulled back, blinking –

Suddenly his metal fingers were in her hair, pulling her toward him as they slid down to cup her cheek and she felt his breath on her lips.
She felt a whirl of nerves, knowing they were edging toward that line, and she swallowed, and Bucky’s dark eyes just stare and stared.

“You better make a move before I do,” she whispered, and –

His lips crashed into hers, and in seconds she felt his tongue on the seam of her lips and she sighed, opening up for him, and he swallowed her moan –

His hand was still in her hair, the other on her waist and pulling her whole body closer, riding the wave along with her, groaning against her mouth when the teasing graze of her teeth registered –

Her hand landed on his chest and he froze.

“Wait,” he murmured, pulling away.

They were both panting, and Darcy stared, wondering what she did wrong.

“I want you to know this isn’t an escape – I’m doing this because I want you for you –”

She cut him off, kissing him harder, and he chuckled a little at her enthusiasm, a low rumble in his chest that she felt against her own.

He spun them so Darcy was on her back beneath him as he landed chest-to-chest, and he wasn’t gentle about it, either – and Darcy moaned again, craving him between her legs as she cradled him in her hips –

He moved down, kissing her neck and watching her writhe against him, his eyes blown. She leaned on her elbow, her other arm wrapped around him, fingers in his hair and pulling –

She knew how her nipples were poking through her tank top, she saw him look, saw that look in his eyes she only could read as need over want –

She felt between them as he rocked against her, finding his hard cock in his pants and gasping a little when he sucked the top of her left tit, his breath shuddering.

They weren’t going to make it back to her room. She wanted him now, and didn’t care if he remembered her or not – because this Bucky wanted her back, and she was here now with him.

“I wanna touch you,” she murmured, pulling at him to come back up to meet her face to face, and he obliged, kissing her, pressing against her, grinding –

He stopped her hand as she attempted to go right down the front of his pants.

“I’m gonna explode,” he panted, and she only smiled at him.

“Good,” she threw back, and then yanked at the waistband to get proper access.

“Fuck,” he groaned, once Darcy wrapped her hand around his naked cock –

Because apparently, he didn’t wear underwear to bed in this century, either.

She wanted this for so long, just to touch him, just to make him bend and move toward her.

She stroked and he kissed her again, greedy – knocking the wind out of her once again.

He was half out of his pants, beginning to hunch over as he was built up –
He reached for her but Darcy shook her head.

Another reason she’d hesitated – she wasn’t ready. Even though she wanted him that badly, could bet anything that she’d be wet if his fingers went anywhere near her slit – she wanted to draw this out just that bit longer.

This was enough, though.

“Soon, soon,” she murmured, and he nodded, understanding.

_God_, he was so hot when he looked like he could barely hold on, his feet scrambling for purchase with his eyes heavy-lidded and panting, this lips shining –

“I’m gonna come,” he gasped, and she stroked with a tighter grip, faster.

He huffed, his forehead pressing against her cleavage.

She watched what she could see of him when he felt apart, with a long shuddering breath against her – and he came over her fist, a little getting on her top, which for some reason she wanted more of –

She didn’t think giving Bucky a hand job would do that much for her but it _did_.

“Fuck.”

He panted, and she let him go, looking down at the mess he made, and he just looked at her – kept _looking_ at her.

It was over so fast and Darcy knew that if he was anything like Steve he’d be good to go in five minutes anyway for another round but she thought it was enough.

It was a start.

She licked the come from her fingers, not taking her eyes off him and he just watched, and she knew her skin was blotchy from her blush, but she willed herself to relax.

He pulled his pants back on, and noticed the stain on her tank top.

If he was anybody else, she would have taken it off, but she instead swallowed hard, tasting him – remembering she’d never done that before with him, even in Brooklyn.

He reached for her and kissed her, lazier now and slow, and she sighed.

Chapter End Notes

... I mean, finally?

LOVE MY WAYYYYYY IT'S A NEW ROAAAADD....

Thank you for reading and the sweet birthday messages. You happy? You good? Or at
you like me and want them to become the OT3 we're all here for?

(It'll happen. Soon. Just - you know, wait.)

Jane: *Maybe so.*
Chapter Notes

What am I doingggggggggggggggggggggggggg?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Part 26:

Bucky

"This maybe the night that my dreams might let me know

All the stars are closer..." - SZA
No-one warned him:
This is going to hurt.
Falling for someone so hard will do that to you, Bucky knew that.
He’d loved Steve since he was twelve.
This was different.
He kissed her with the taste of him on her lips, and she sighed against him, and for the first time she shivered, the blotches of colour still in her pale cheeks.
They both weren’t waiting for it, him remembering her.
(That was another mistake.)
He wanted to touch her back, loved how she responded to him when they kissed and pressed together on the roof, but he respected her and understood enough that she wasn’t ready to have him return any favour.
Not that it was a currency – an exchange or whatever.
He just wanted to touch her.
Her skin was so soft he was sure each time he touched her, she rubbed off on him – but she didn’t. Not visibly, at least.
Her smell would linger, sweet and female.
The way she tasted his spill on her fingers with her round dark eyes made his cock stir with interest within seconds, and he was near delirious from desire again, but held back, afraid he’d offend her or scare her off.
They couldn’t stay on the roof. Eventually the sun would be up and they’d have to go their separate ways.
He wanted to believe this could last forever.
He felt a little guilty, knowing Steve was alone in their bed, but remembered he had permission, and Darcy had chosen to kiss him back.
He felt lucky, like he was waiting for her to backtrack and run off. She did that a lot, and he knew he did that, too.
It was her defence mechanism – that term he learned through therapy and his annoying talks with Sam.
He probably should have gone to his last appointment, but Darcy was sitting on the roof looking so sad the other afternoon he just wanted her to know he was there, no matter what.
He thought Steve would always be the one for him, the only one. And then she was there, unflinching over time and wanting to be around him even if he was emotionally stunted and socially inept.
Darcy looked him over, pulling back from their kiss and smiling, like she couldn’t contain herself.
Bucky felt himself returning a grin, hesitant at first and then broad and making her giggle under her breath.

God, she was adorable. And so infectious. He couldn’t believe he got to touch her, to have her touch him like that just moments ago.

“You were hiding for so long,” she said, and he nodded a little, thinking he might know what she meant.

“Yeah.”

He looked at his hands in the moonlight, and she took his metal one in hers, brushing her lips on the knuckles.

He was aware of her, but not quite feeling her warmth. It was strange, but it was like that was okay, now. He didn’t mind his arm so much if she didn’t.

“I didn’t know if you’d let me get close.”

“You had me from the start,” he murmured, and then cringed a little at the corniness.

“It sounded like a line.

“I mean, you were so kind to me, even when you were on the phone in California,” he added, and Darcy nodded, sighing a little.

“That was the night I found out my death date.”

He hated that he sent her away, even if he couldn’t remember it.

It wasn’t about what was deserved – even though she didn’t deserve that kind of death – because it had happened anyway, and Bucky suspected they both knew Steve was never going to stay in Brooklyn even if she’d stayed.

And if Steve had never gone to war –

So that was where his thinking was now. Bucky hated that he wasn’t more mature back then but it had already happened.

“What was I like, back then – with you?”

His question was hesitant, but she didn’t reject it, didn’t put her walls up.

“Well, first of all, you never shut up, so this is quite the turnaround,” Darcy said, leaning closer to him and nudging him, and he chuckled.

Darcy looked away, up at the moon again.

“You were a spitfire,” she mused, and then she looked back at him again. “And we drove each other crazy.”

Bucky frowned a little. “Oh.”

“We were kids,” she added hastily. “So I allow for some of it.”

“I sound like a real jerk,” Bucky muttered, and Darcy smiled a little at that.
“Maybe,” she said, shrugging. “But I think you only pretended to be bad, and let Steve be the good guy most of the time.”

Bucky snorted. “He wasn’t.”

“Yeah, I think we both discovered that. Not that I knew about you until… well, recently,” Darcy said. “So who made the first move with you two?”

“I put my hand down his pants. Felt guilty about it for ages because Father O’Laughlin was always saying degenerates burned in Hell and I’d made Steve my accomplice.”

The words fell out of him easily but Darcy grew horrified.

“God, that’s terrible. You weren’t doing anything wrong.”

“We weren’t honest with you, though, were we, sweetheart?”

The word slipped out but Darcy was back to playful, trying to supress her smirk and failing.

“I recall me trying to get you to deflower me in an alleyway seventy years ago.”

Bucky stared at her. He picked up his jaw and gave a disbelieving laugh, rubbing the back of his head with his hand.

“Yeah, you made that kind of sound when I tried to get at your cock, too.”

He blushed – and knew it was a deep one that spread all over the back of his neck as well as his face and ears, and he looked away.

“You don’t say,” he managed to mutter, and Darcy grinned, teasing him for his embarrassment.

He returned to Steve about half an hour later, having been kissed by Darcy many times in between the roof and the compound apartment blocks.

His cock was aching but he waited until he was alone in the bathroom to attend to it, and when he went into the bedroom, Steve was awake.

“I was going to ask if you needed help with that, but you’ve got it covered.”

Bucky laughed a little, feeling so light – but he lay down beside Steve and shook his head.

“All taken care of.”

They both knew he could go again in no time, but he lay beside Steve, just feeling his hand stroke his scratchy cheek.

“You want me to tell you what happened?” he murmured to Steve, after a full five minutes.

“You don’t have to if you don’t want to,” Steve said immediately, sounding wide awake again. Bucky rolled onto his back, sighing a little.

“I want to. It just feels a little strange.”
“It’s what you wanted,” Steve said, not sounding hurt – and Bucky couldn’t believe this was his life. He got to kiss and touch both of those beautiful people he knew, even though he was broken.

(For the most part.)

“I know,” Bucky said. “It’s just weird you’re so okay about this happening.”

He heard more than saw Steve shrug beside him.

“I understand. So what happened?”

“We kissed,” Bucky said, remembering it again, the way how she put her nose to his throat and smelt him, the way she moaned when he took her in his arms and kissed her like it was all he wanted –

And at the time, that was all he wanted. But he was lying with Steve now and thought about reaching over to kiss him, too.

It was a lot.

“Good,” Steve said, though Bucky noted the breath Steve took, like he was –

Was it with anticipation? Was he excited?

“We used to talk about her together – all the time,” Steve added, and he cleared his throat. “We talked about how good she made us feel. We felt so lucky.”

“I feel lucky now, too,” Bucky whispered.

There was a pause, with the question hanging in the air, and Bucky was afraid to ask it. Because it meant opening up something else, something more complicated and something that could hurt them all.

“If she asked you, would you go back to her?”

Steve grabbed his arm, and Bucky felt his eyes prickle –

“I’ll always want you, Buck.”

“That’s not what I –” He stopped to gasp, trying to get the words out. “That’s not what I asked.”

Steve settled his hand on Bucky’s chest, soft and assuring.

“Yes. I would.”

Bucky turned over, so he was suddenly on top of Steve and kissed him, rough and needy.

Steve groaned beneath him, and Bucky was hard again, seeking release.

He wasn’t sure why he was doing this – he was thinking with his dick again, which seemed to be the cause of a lot of Bucky’s agonies those days.

He felt there was something almost Neanderthal about him – that he couldn’t say no, that he responded with his hips wanting to drive against Steve whenever he could physically reach him.

He wanted Steve all the time. But he wanted Darcy, too.
So was he doing this now because he couldn’t slip inside her earlier?

Maybe Steve was thinking of her now, too.

“Did you get her off?”

Steve question answered Bucky’s own – Darcy was on both their minds as they moved together, pants being pulled down and shirts thrown aside.

“God, I wish,” Bucky said, and he groaned once Steve grabbed his cock hard and fast, and he leaned forward to bite his neck in return.

“What did she do to you?” Steve asked, and Bucky looked down at Steve’s fist his cock was fucking.

“This,” Bucky gasped a little and Steve chuckled, a low rumble.

Bucky kissed him, their breath hot together.

Steve slowed a little, moving his mouth away to speak, barely a whisper.

Even after all this time, he was a little shy.

“Fuck me, Bucky.”

Bucky turned around, not before Steve was at his throat, kissing him and trying to pull him back toward him once more.

Bucky had to laugh a little.

“Hold on, I need to get the –”

The lube sat in the draw on his side of the bed, the little grey bottle that promised a wetter glide, and Bucky shuddered a little once Steve took the bottle from him and sucked each of his fingers, enticing him.

Not that Bucky needed prompting.

He pressed the pad of his thumb to Steve’s hole and his lover shuddered.

“Just do it already,” he muttered, and Bucky watched him writhe a little as he pressed inside.

Steve was tight and hot. He always was.

He grew impatient, encouraging Bucky to go deeper, but he was enjoying watching Steve squirm a little against him.

“Come on, Buck.”

He huffed a laugh at that, and pushed further inside.


There was only so much Bucky could take, too, so he slid his thumb out of Steve asshole and lined his cock up, slicked with lube –

Steve made a kind of choking sound when Bucky began to ease the tip of his cock inside, achingly
They lay on their sides and Bucky watched the side of Steve’s face change – the gradual relaxing against him, the way his skin prickled like it did every time.

“You okay, Stevie?”

He nodded, sweat collecting on his brow.

Bucky moved a little inside him and Steve moaned, low and long, pulling at Bucky’s hip until he was full –

It was intoxicating, the feeling of Steve all around him, and Bucky pressed his mouth to Steve’s neck and kissed him, almost tender.

“You can go faster,” Steve whispered, and Bucky laughed, and then they were laughing together.

“Jesus, punk,” Bucky growled. “Tryin’ to fuckin’ kill me as always.”

“You never tried to stop me,” Steve retorted.

“No, I didn’t – ”

Bucky pulled out a little to slam back against Steve’s ass and a moan ripped from him –

“- and I don’t see that happenin’ any time soon.”

“Fuck.”

Steve had a mouth on him when Bucky was inside him.

Bucky’s hand slipped down to Steve’s front, and he stroked Steve’s cock, which felt hot and sticky in his hand.

“You gonna come for me, Steve?”

Steve chuckled, and then moaned again, the same low moan from before.

They both knew that line always worked on him.

“You know I do. Always,” he whispered.

He sounded emotional, like was caught up by everything happening in and around him as Bucky stroked, teeth grazing Steve’s shoulder.

He whispered into his ear:

“Come for me now, Steve.”

Steve moaned, and then his whole body tensed up, his ass squeezing around Bucky’s cock and threatening to scramble his mind permanently, the memory of the feeling burning in his mind forever –

Steve came in Bucky’s hand, and shortly thereafter, Bucky was milked completely, panting with his feet scrambling for purchase.
Bucky woke the next morning with his face resting on Steve’s naked chest, his hair sticking up and the room smelling of old sweat.

Steve sighed, kissing him lazily before getting up, to leave him for elite training before they had breakfast together.

Steve got dressed as Bucky watched.

After they showered last night after sex, Steve told Bucky he was never going to leave him.

Bucky knew that was true, but he still felt like Darcy and Steve could just as easily get back together and decide they were going to be exclusive.

He needed to tell them both he was sterile.

He kept thinking of it every time he saw Darcy and didn’t know why the urge to blab didn’t go away.

Steve and him never really talked about having kids, but Darcy might want them someday, and maybe she should know Bucky wasn’t capable of that.

If she knew, maybe she’d choose Steve over him. Bucky doubted Steve had nothing better than a premium sperm count.

Steve turned back to Bucky, pulling a clean shirt over his head.

“Why don’t you go see if Darcy wants to have breakfast with you?”

Bucky’s jaw ticked, and he felt pissed off.

“Stop tryin’ to set me up with her.”

It was like his thoughts on his own sterility were attempting to ruin their night together. They’d both acknowledged they wanted Darcy to join their relationship but his bitterness threatened to throw that away at every turn.

It was like he couldn’t help himself.

Steve’s smile faded immediately and he looked confused.

“Buck,” he murmured, and Bucky groaned.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry.”

Bucky was up and hugging him, apologetic.

Steve still looked a little hurt.

“She wants to spend time with you,” he murmured, and he kissed Bucky lightly on the lips, before grabbing his boots to pull on.

“For now,” Bucky retorted.

He felt like sulking alone. He felt like feeling good was only a pit stop before feeling like shit again.
Steve shook his head at him.

“Buck, just – give yourself a chance,” he said, and he kissed him goodbye.

Once he left, Bucky ate alone at the kitchen table, chewing with a scowl on his face.

He washed the sheets and then put them in the dryer, watching them turn.

“Sargent Barnes, I can notify you once your sheets are ready,” Friday said, and Bucky tensed up at the abrupt sound of the AI.

Friday was telling him that because maybe it was depressing to watch a man watch his sheets dry when he didn’t have to.

Bucky stalked off to the gym, and ran straight into Darcy.

“Oof!” she cried, and she grabbed his arm.

She didn’t immediately pull her hand away, and he stared down at her.

“Where are you off to this morning?” she asked, and Bucky knew she was just making conversation.

It was an obvious question, especially since he held his towel in his metal hand, twisting the fibres.

Instead of answering her, he blurted out what he couldn’t stop thinking about:

“I can’t have kids.”

Darcy stared at him, all humour gone.

“What?”

“I’m sterile,” he mumbled.

He looked around, wondering if anyone might come past.

The only other person likely to be up that early near the gym was Natasha, and she was nowhere to be seen.

She knew, anyway. He forgot sometimes how much she knew about him. She made it seem like she knew everything, anyway.

“Bucky, that’s terrible. Did HYDRA do that?”

He looked at her face on, and immediately regretted it. She looked stricken, and he felt like he was sinking, but played it off.

“Didn’t want me breedin’, in case the enemy got their own little Winter Soldiers, I guess. Oh, well. Can’t say I’d want another one of me runnin’ around.”

He attempted to walk off again, but her little hand reached out and stopped him, grabbing the sleeve of his jacket.
“That’s it?”

He shrugged.

“Bucky,” she murmured, and she took a deep breath. “Why’d you tell me?”

“Why do you think?” He couldn’t help snapping a little. “You should know in case you want to get involved with me.”

Darcy faltered, her hand dropping to her side. “Yeah. I guess so.”

Bucky’s heart sank. Was she already reconsidering last night?

He always made everything so much worse.

She was blinking back tears, and looked up at him again.

“There was a man in Belgium who was working for Yurievich,” she began, and Bucky felt himself tense up at the thought of that man, but listened.

“Gregor was his name,” Darcy went on. She bit her lip and wiped her eyes. “He didn’t even look old enough to buy a beer. HYDRA must have got him really young.”

She shook her head. “He assaulted me.”

Bucky felt the ice cold dread in his stomach, and then the rage. It was automatic – his metal fist ripping the towel and Darcy wasn’t even distracted by him –

“He groped my tits. He finger fucked my mouth. He wanted to rape me.”

“He didn’t?”

He voice didn’t sound like his own.

“No,” Darcy said, shaking her head. “He got pretty close, though. Yurievich killed him to make me loyal to him. I knew he meant that to happen to me, all the stuff leading up to it.”

“You mean your stitches, Gregor did that?”

Bucky was foolish enough to think that was some kind of accident. He should have realised Yurievich would have done anything to manipulate Darcy, to get to him.

Darcy nodded. “I figured Gregor was the bad cop.”

Bucky let out a strangled sound, so angry –

He couldn’t even hurt those who hurt her. He couldn’t even do that for her.

She was so strong. She got out of that lab all by herself, no thanks to him.

“Steve didn’t stop me when I shot Yurievich.”

“Yeah,” Bucky murmured. “He told me.”

“It felt good. I felt it – that Steve knew why I had to do it. So I knew it wasn’t over then.”

Bucky stared at her, and she just looked back, her eyes so wet.
“It just – it feels so good to say that,” she whispered. “I forgave myself for not hating him.”

Bucky just nodded, suddenly feeling like Steve should be there.

“Are you telling me this because of what I told you?” he asked, and she nodded.

“It seemed right. So what do we do now?”

Bucky looked away, shrugging.

“Are you going to tell Steve?”

Darcy sighed. “Eventually. But I’m focused on you. Because I want you, too. All of you.”

He turned, pulling her toward him and kissing her, even though he was convinced he still shouldn’t have her, that he was too lucky for his own good.

“I love you,” he murmured, staring at her mouth as she cried in his arms. “I want all of you, too.”

He picked her up, and her legs wrapped around his middle as he kissed her senseless, not caring who knew, not caring who saw them together.

She raced off to give Jane some excuse (and Bucky was sure he would have loved to see her try to lie about sneaking off for sex) and they met up at the front door to her apartment, Darcy having run from the lab, panting as she arrived.

She let them in, and immediately pressed him against a wall and kissed him, tongues stroking and their faces cradled in each other’s hands.

“You tell me when to stop, and I will, okay?”

Bucky watched her for a bad reaction, but she just nodded, and kissed him again.

He pulled back.

“Baby, I’m serious. Tell me if you start to freak out.”

Darcy smiled bright. “I love when you call me baby.”

It slipped out again, the pet name. It was weird how it felt right every time he said it, even though he doubted himself.

She kissed him again, her hand under his shirt with her fingers splayed on his stomach, feeling the skin there as she sighed.

“I haven’t see you without a shirt,” she murmured, pushing his jacket off his shoulders.

The scent of her on her neck made him dizzy with her this close.

He kissed her throat, and they fell to the floor, him on top of her once again.

He pulled off his jacket, tugging off his shirt next, as she watched him from below, her eyes hooded.
“You good, baby?”

“Just enjoying the view,” she murmured, before biting her lip and rolling her hips a little.

(He was going to kill him.)

He pushed his hair back as her eyes raked over him. He wondered about his scar tissue, hoping it wasn’t too ugly to look at. He hoped she’d ignore it.

They pressed chest to chest again and Bucky felt her fingers run down from his face to his left shoulder, gliding over the mottled skin.

He winced.

“Shh,” she whispered. “You’re beautiful. All of you.”

He kissed her as she stroked his skin, until she grew breathless and broke away.

“Let me up.”

He moved off, and she began undressing, pulling off her own jacket and shirt, revealing her bra – the underwear from this century was very small compared to what Bucky remembered seeing as a teenager.

He knew her tits were almost bigger than his hands, and nearly spilled out of her little black satin bra that squeezed them together.

He stared at her as her hands went behind her back and undid her bra, her nakedness almost overwhelming enough to make him come in his pants –

She was a goddess.

His kisses were desperate now, the feel of their skin pressing together driving him wild.

His hand glided down her front, fingers brushing her nipples before his right hand slid down her hip to pull her leg over his hip and he ground into her, and she moaned –

His cock was throbbing in his shorts and she was rubbing herself against him, spurring him on.

He cupped her ass, ducking his head to suck her nipple into his mouth, grazing his teeth against her skin and making her squirm against him.

“Take your pants off, come on.”

She sounded frustrated, and he chuckled, resting his face against her tit for a second before pulling away, one hand on his fly.

She was already moving to pull down her pants, and Bucky spied the little strip of hair between her legs above her pink pussy.

Her skin looked so pale compared to the dusty rose of her little snatch and Bucky swallowed, huffing a little as he took off his short with his boxers soon after.

“Are we gonna fuck on the floor?” Darcy gasped.

“No, just this,” he murmured, and lowered himself between her legs, throwing them over his
shoulders and putting his mouth on her, covering her clit and giving it a suck.

She sounded strained – sounded overwhelmed because he gave her so little time to wrap her head around the fact that he was down there.

He loved this. He loved her little pussy.

His tongue was inside her and she shuddered, one hand on her tit and the other playing with her clit as he started tongue fucking her –

He pulled back for a second. “All good.”

She nodded, her laugh a little broken. “I’m so close.”

He moved against her, guided her hand to his hair to allow her to grind against his face.

“Fuck,” she mumbled, and she laughed again. “I’m gonna come.”

A few seconds later, she let out a cry – falling apart. She shook all through her, and Bucky’s mouth and chin are wet.

He pulled back, wiping himself with his discarded shirt, looking down at her.

She settled, sighing, one leg drawn back and her knee swinging back and forth.

She got up, pulling Bucky with her, and he saw her from behind for the first time and wanted to tackle her, because he ass is even better than he imagined it to be under those skin tight pants she wore to the gym –

She pulled him into her bedroom, to her bed.

He fell first, on his back and bouncing a little.

She climbed on top of him, straddling him - her pussy brushing against him and he bucked, groaning at the contact.

“You mind if I’m on top?”

Why on Earth would he mind?

“Go ahead,” he managed to answer, and she held him by his cock and turned it upwards. “Wait, what about a condom?”

He realised his stupid remark – he was sterile, so what did it matter to her?

It must have shown on her face because she leaned to kiss him, still holding onto his cock.

“I’m on birth control,” she said, deliberately avoiding pointing anything out.

She was too understanding, too loyal.

Too good.

“Darcy –”

She took a second to sink onto him completely and his breath left his body, and he felt her around him, so warm and tight and perfect.
She bit her bottom lip hard between her teeth and closed her eyes, feeling like a glove for his cock.

She tilted her hips and he moaned beneath her.

Soon they were rocking together, his nails dragging down her back as he fucked up into her –

“Harder,” she hissed, and Bucky pulled her off to throw her back down again, making her cry out and clench around him.

Bucky flipped them so she’s spread out below him, his hips snapping and making her claw at him along his own back now, and he’s close, he can feel it building fast –

He’s relentless and she’s loud and unapologetic –

She panted and squeezed around them, and he saw her touch her clit again –

He tensed, his balls tight and he spluttered a bit, and let go –

He came and came and came –

He roared, his head pressed into the mattress and his muscles giving out –

He saw her again, but not as she was now. She was in a sun dress, standing by Penny…

“No,” he murmured, and he screwed up his face.

“Bucky?”

He was still inside her, but he’s soft now and he pulled back, not looking at her –

“Bucky,” Darcy said again, sounding worried. “What’s wrong?”

He opened his eyes, feeling like the world was spinning.

He couldn’t breathe.

He looked at her and cringed.

“Darlene.”

Chapter End Notes

So, surprise? Everything gets worse... Typical me. Sorry if you were hoping for something happier for your Friday fic reading session.

This was mostly smut and angst, the old recipe. I'm hoping for more plot now Bucky's, uh - compromised, I guess the word could be?
Thank you for reading. x
Chapter 27

Chapter Notes

This chapter is 5k and dialogue heavy so get yourself a Red Bull or something and have at it~*~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 27:

Darlene/Darcy

"You don't have a soul...You are a soul. You have a body, temporarily." - Walter M. Miller Jr.

"There ain't nothin' here for me anymore but I don't wanna be alone, dear desperado..." - Rihanna
Charlotte Foster had always despised Darlene’s romantic notions.

Charlotte married Darlene’s father when she was nineteen and it was torturous – for the few years that Joe Foster hung around, until he disappeared one New Year’s when Darlene was five and then Charlotte took the wedding rings (Joe’s was left by an empty packet of smokes) straight to the pawn shop the next day, her head high.

Darlene always understood life was hard. It was why Steve’s parents were dead, it was why Darlene’s own dad left them behind –

But she never figured love to be as lonely as Charlotte always described it.

Her mother made it seem like men were only cruel, and it was just their bad luck they were female in a man’s world.

Charlotte always liked Steve because he must have come across as harmless to everyone in the neighbourhood, and she never guessed her daughter would have a crush on him.

(Because Darlene did. A massive crush. He couldn’t stop making her smile.)

Steve would sometimes come by just to say hello. He was never imposing, and Charlotte always lowered her voice to talk about the boys’ home with him, asking him how it was.

It was always bad, but Steve never told any parent the whole truth. He didn’t like sounding ungrateful. It made Darlene feel really sad for him, because even though she was dirt poor like all the other kids in their neighbourhood, she had a family to go home to.

Steve had no-one, except her and Bucky.

When she met Bucky again after months of him going off to play baseball while she babysat for his little sister Penny, he did a strange thing.

Instead of just being like passing ships, he paused, drinking her in. She wore the sun dress her mom managed to swap enough ironing jobs for, and she knew now that every aching minute of hauling the laundry back and forth had been worth it, just for the look on Bucky’s face when he realised she existed.

Every girl on their block was sweet on Bucky. Every girl.

Darlene didn’t think she had much of a chance with him, since he always went for girls his age or even older. They were bolder, louder – they outshone Darlene, and she was fine with that. She was even friends with some of them, and they all relayed the same stories about Bucky, how he snuck into places to be with girls, how he first did it with a girl behind the church on the corner and Father O’Laughlin came screaming at him after his service because everybody could hear the girl he was with while they were doing it –

Darlene thought the stories were wild, and probably mostly untrue, but she liked that Steve’s best friend was Bucky, because he was always strong and protective, from what she’d heard.

Bucky maybe spoke to her twice before that summer, when her chest suddenly blew up and everything changed.

Being fourteen and then being fourteen were very different things after that summer.

He didn’t look at her like the men that looked at her, like she was something to look at even if she
didn’t want to be seen.

Bucky did a strange backpedal like he’d noticed her completely. He looked at her like he knew her.

Maybe that was the trick. Getting close to a girl just meant Bucky had to be familiar and then the girl would follow his lead, but Darlene had Bucky’s own mother tell her to not give him the time of day.

The guy’s own ma told her to ignore him!

Something about his eyes, what was behind them, must have made her stay.

Because he laid on the charm pretty thick, acting like he needed her more than anyone else he’d ever known before.

Penny was playing with her rag doll in between mouthfuls of stew and Bucky lowered his voice a little, aware of his sister’s ears.

“How come I’ve only seen you today?”

“You’re never here,” Darlene retorted, eyebrow cocked. “I’m here practically all week with Penny.”

Penny looked up at the mention of her name and grinned.

“You gonna walk home soon?”

“Sure.”

Darlene looked at him, just as he looked away from her, and he gave a chuckle but she didn’t know why.

He rubbed the back of his head.

“Can I walk ya home?”

Darlene felt her blush creep back up and gave a little smile.

“Sure.”

They waited until Bucky’s mom came home with bread, suspicious of the pair since Darlene had gone against her better advice.

They didn’t hold hands, they didn’t even touch at all. He opened doors for her and they walked down into the street, Darlene aware of the space between them, the scent of Bucky’s sweat dried on his skin while the air wafted it toward her.

She knew why girls were in love with him. He was handsome, confident, but not like any of the guys who’d been bugging her the last month when they finally spotted her, too.

Some of them were disgusting, making it out like she wouldn’t have to see them after she politely turned them down.

One guy she knew was Steve and Bucky’s age grabbed her by the waist and pressed her into the side of her building and she pushed him off, feeling scared and upset.

Charlotte hated the stories Darlene told her, but made it sound like it was normal.
“But it isn’t fair. They make it out like I’m a bad guy for saying no,” Darlene cried, angry tears in her eyes. “Since when do I have to care about their feelings over mine?”

“Just remember to say no,” Charlotte sighed, and Darlene gave a shocked little gasp.

“‘No’ doesn’t mean anything to them!”

“Darlene, all you can do is try and cover up. And don’t ever be alone with one of them.”

She was alone with Bucky but didn’t feel scared. It was still daylight, with kids playing in the street. Darlene was sure someone would already be passing around the fact that Bucky Barnes was walking her home – but she didn’t care.

He was looking at her like she’d hung the moon. It was like the dress was magic, but he was looking at her face, not her body.

(Though he definitely had looked her up and down in the Barnes’ kitchen just before.)

Darlene was so aware of her own body she was sure she wasn’t walking like she usually would with anybody else.

Even with Steve she didn’t feel this exposed. It probably helped that he’d known her and been her friend even when she had scabby knees and no front teeth like Penny now –

“You’re really good with her,” Bucky said, and Darlene looked up at him, and he was smiling a little. “Penny, I mean.”

“She’s a good kid,” Darlene said, tucking her hair behind her hair.

Their walk was pretty quiet, considering the kids in the street were screaming at each other and running around.

It helped distract her a little.

They got to her building and Darlene stopped, clearing her throat.

“Thanks.”

“You know I meant what I said, about takin’ you to the movies,” Bucky said, and Darlene stopped.

“I know you meant it?” she repeated.

Bucky looked like he meant to say more, but he was looking up above them and staring.

“Your mother is staring at me.”

Darlene looked and saw Charlotte glaring down at them from their window above, before moving away and out of sight.

Darlene let out a sigh. “She’ll do that.”

She knew she was going to have an argument the second Bucky left, so she drew the moment out a little longer.

“You can take me to the movies, Bucky.”
He lit up at her words. “Good idea.”

She smiled a little, wishing she didn’t have to go home and away from him, because he made her feel better. She could pretend her dress was her own that she bought easily and not something she had to work so hard to get –

But she couldn’t fool anyone. Everyone on their block could hardly make ends meet. But Darlene still liked the fantasy of her own imagine, pretending like things were better than they were.

“What will we see?”

“You want me to pick?” Darlene frowned. “Are you sure?”

“You’re not an idiot,” he said. “You’ll pick somethin’ good.”

She burst out laughing. “Alright.”

He departed, and once Darlene reached the apartment, her feet felt heavier, with the dread weighing her whole body down.

Charlotte just gave her a look and that’s all it took to make Darlene roll her eyes, and then they were off.

“I know all about that kid. Don’t think for a second that you’re special. I’m sure he has plenty of girls all over Brooklyn.”

“Mom – ”

“A girl on every street,” Charlotte continued, her voice getting louder to cover Darlene’s protests.

“He’s Steve’s best friend, and Steve doesn’t hang around with rotten people!”

“You don’t know that, he’s in a home!”

Darlene let out a harsh laugh. “He can’t help who he’s with.”

“No,” Charlotte said. “But you can. And it’s not a situation I want my daughter to get into.”

“What situation?”

Darlene put her hands on her hips, and her mother sighed.

“You know what. Trouble. I don’t want you in trouble.”

Darlene felt her cheeks redden. Her mom thought she was so stupid and naïve.

“So what?”

“Is that all you can say, ‘so what’?” Charlotte snapped. “You’ve got no idea what is comin’ to you if you act like that!”

Darlene just wanted to make it worse, since her mom had no intention of letting up. The vein in the centre of her forehead started popping up like it did when she lost her temper.

“He doesn’t care that I’m poor. We’re both poor. It wouldn’t matter if we just had each other!”

“Oh, sure!” Charlotte rolled her eyes this time. She slammed her dish rag on the table. “Why worry
about rubbin’ two coins together when you can be *in love*?”

“Not everything turns out the way it did with you and pa!” Darlene screamed, which made Charlotte stop in her tracks.

She covered her mouth, watching as the hurt bloomed on Charlotte’s face.

Someone banged on a neighbouring door for them to cut it out. It was probably the little old lady Mrs. Mason with her broom. She hated everyone.

“Mama, I didn’t mean it,” Darlene whispered, but Charlotte just looked away from her, blocking her out. “I’m sorry. I just thought you and pa were in love once.”

Charlotte glared at her. “We were in love for five minutes, behind the dance hall when I was nineteen. It was all it took.”

Darlene felt her heart sink. “What?”

Charlotte sighed. She sat down at their table, and Darlene copied, her heart beating faster.

“I wasn’t showing, but we got married after I was late.”

“Why haven’t I heard this before?”

How had the rumour mill missed that one? Wouldn’t everyone talk about her mother’s shame behind her back forever? It’s what happened to every Catholic girl who didn’t say no.

“Because I lost the baby. And then we had you two years later.”

Darlene felt her eyes prickle. “So it really was a loveless marriage?”

“What marriage doesn’t go loveless overtime?” Charlotte added. “Eventually girls get older and men go cold and wander off. Your daddy did.”

“That wasn’t because of you, ma,” Darlene said, and she took her mother’s hand in hers and squeezed. “He wasn’t happy. I don’t ever remember him being happy.”

Charlotte sighed. “So you think if you start going with Bucky Barnes that you’ll be happy together?”

Darlene drew her hand away, feeling her defiance coming back.

“You think just having each other is enough, but it never is. You will hate each other if you are starving with a little one on the way.”

The younger Foster frowned. “Wouldn’t you take me in?”

“How am I supposed to afford you and my grandchild if it came to that?”

Darlene started to cry. “Alright. I’ll be careful.”

“It’s not about being careful. It’s about waiting until marriage. Don’t make my mistake.”

__________

Anyone would think Darlene was raised by wolves.
She couldn’t just have Steve, she wanted Bucky, too. She went a whole year without even kissing Bucky after Charlotte scared her into thinking her urges were dangerous, that lust was dangerous –

With Steve she felt like she was on fire, but her thoughts didn’t stay just with him. They touched each other in secret places, and she moaned for him, longed for him, but she knew deep down that Bucky was there as well, waiting for her to either have him or reject him.

She took too long deciding and Bucky yelled at her in that alleyway, and she knew she’d really hurt him. She should have just been honest sooner that idea of sleeping with him or even getting close to that scared the hell out of her.

Steve didn’t take things too far. With Bucky, she wasn’t sure if she could ever say no.

And it wasn’t about waiting until marriage. She knew long ago that adults were mostly hypocrites when it came to purity or whatever antiquated notion it was that they had about young women.

Darlene waited until she was sixteen to have sex and it was with Bucky. Steve was convinced he’d somehow make it awful, and he was embarrassed sometimes by his own inexperience.

Bucky had slept with a few girls before. His first time was hidden behind a tree in the park with the girl’s skirts hitched up and his fly down – and apparently there was barely anything to see in the dark.

He said it was over too soon and that he was worried he’d hurt Darlene during her first time.

It hurt a little, sure. But it felt fantastic. She felt like she could drown in the feeling of him inside her, with their hips together, pushing back and forth.

When he collapsed onto her, spent, he told her he loved her.

It made Darlene feel invincible, it made her feel completely at ease.

He pulled out of her and they both cleaned up, and then they fell back down together on her bed, his arms around her with his chin pressed to the top of her head.

She breathed in the scent of his skin and rubbed his chest.

“I want to do it again.”

Bucky let out a surprised laugh. “I can’t go again so soon, baby.”

Darlene pretended to pout, moving up so their noses brushed.

Her hand slid down over his hip bone to his softened cock and stroked him lazily, and he groaned a little, his eyes flashing.

He couldn’t suppress his shiver and Darlene loved it – loved that he was hers to touch.

(Mine. Mine, mine, mine.)

Then he growled and kissed her with a kind of hunger that mirrored Darlene’s, and he rolled on top of her once more, and his own hand is between them to touch her –

“Unbelievable,” he growled, as he pulled back, her little hand still wrapped around the shaft of him.

She just laughed at his annoyance, and it just spurred him on, until he brushed the lips of her pussy
with his fingers and she stilled, waiting.

“Wicked girl,” he murmured, his voice like a rumble in his chest and she sighed, her cheeks burning, anticipating some comeuppance for her teasing him.

He pushed two fingers inside her with ease but she still gasped, grabbing his arms and feeling herself clench around him.

He looked down at his fingers sliding in and out of her like he was fascinated by it, and Darlene watched the way his cock twitched with interest at the feel of her on his fingers.

Darlene spread her knees a little further apart, feeling so free, that she could be this naked with a young man and not be ashamed of it –

His thumb was pressing onto the tiny little bud there and she grunted, biting her lip and rolling her hips.

“You sure we can’t do it again?”

She couldn’t help herself, and she hoped Bucky couldn’t either, but he shook his head and she sighed, letting her head fall back onto the mattress as she closed her eyes.

She felt him kiss her chest again, and then her stomach.

His fingers slipped out of her pussy and she felt the shift of his weight on her bed and her eyes flew open, and he was lying lower down between her legs, nuzzling at her hip bone while his hands slid down to push her thighs even further apart.

“Oh!” she cried. “Bucky, no. Don’t – ”

She wanted him to stop. It felt strange that his face was so close to her privates. It felt like it was too much, like maybe they were taking it too far.

He just kissed her inner thighs and Darlene could feel herself squirm a little, suddenly wanting him to push inside her again, his fingers or his cock, she wasn’t sure.

“Can I kiss you down here?” he murmured, and Darlene sucked in the air, feeling his breath on her pussy and she clenched – on nothing at all, wanting something –

She just nodded, a little dazed, wondering if this was a bad idea.

He kept planting kisses, slow and deliberate ones for her to remember, and she knew he was going to be slow to not scare her.

He kissed the top of her mound and she jolted, but then settled again once he paused.

He kissed the outer lips of her pussy, and Darlene bit her lip again, her hands sliding down to grab the back of his head, wanting to touch him back.

When he first kissed her centre, having pushed the lips a little apart, Darlene jumped again, feeling like one giant nerve.

She felt it like a shock, and then a tingle all the way to her toes. She shivered, and Bucky groaned against her, his hot breath between her legs.

Was it okay? What was he thinking right now?
She scratched his scalp with her fingers and then she felt the strong muscle of his tongue inside her as it darted out to taste her, and she moaned loudly.

She couldn’t control it, she felt desperate, like she was on the edge already. There was hardly a plateau in between. She needed to come.

“Bucky,” she whimpered, and he kept at her, licking and sucking at her.

She changed the angle a little by grabbing at his hair again and pushing up against his mouth, but he didn’t cry out, didn’t complain.

He seemed to enjoy it, because when he pulled back for air, Darlene saw he was hard again, his cock a deep pink shade and straining.

He wiped his chin, blinking at her. “You’re so beautiful.”

Darlene felt overwhelmed. She wanted him to shove her down and fuck her into the mattress because he’d been so gentle before – she wanted him desperate for her like she was for him –

“Shut up,” she mumbled, and beckoned him closer. “Come on.”

He sank to his knees again and went for it, his tongue inside her again and making her thighs shake all over, all the while cupping her ass in his hands.

When she came, it was because one of his hands had fallen down the bed and between his own legs.

Even just the thought of him touching himself made her crash over the edge, her whole body arching off the bed with her mouth open.

He pulled off her as she lay gasping for air, her chest heaving while she sweated, and she finally saw him clearly, stroking himself.

“Is that for me?” she murmured, and he let out a rough laugh, sounding strained.

“It can be.”

“Maybe you could just touch yourself for me?” she asked, and he smiled a little, almost shy.

She watched as he closed his eyes, getting rougher with each stroke, on his knees on the bed beside her.

He leaned over and kissed her, and this time she tasted what had to be her on his lips, and she deepened their kiss, twining her fingers in his hair.

He sighed, and then his forehead fell to her shoulder, and Darlene could hear the sound of his skin being rubbed. It sounded almost wet.

It sounded like it did when she touched Steve.

He suddenly missed him, wishing he could be there with them, but pushed the thought away. It wouldn’t be fair to Bucky to bring Steve up.

He took a little longer to get there, but Darlene was patient, just kissing him, stroking his face, stroking his hair. It was actually the quietest they’d ever been together.

He frowned a little and huffed.
“I’m gonna come.”

She smiled, watching him get clumsier with his pumping fist until he tensed up, and she wrapped her hand around the back of his neck, so they were almost pressed together again.

He let out a shuddering breath, spilling into his fist. There was a splash and Darlene felt the stuff get on her stomach.

“Sorry, Darlene,” he murmured, looking a little surprised. “Didn’t mean to –”

“It’s okay,” she said hurriedly, and she kissed him again. “I love you.”

It was the first time she’d said it to him, and he stared at her.

He kissed her, and he even whimpered a little against her mouth, his brows furrowed.

“Goddamn it, now I want to do it again,” he muttered.

The way he looked at her, over half a century later when he came inside her and then pulled out like he was afraid of something, Darcy felt the knot in her stomach tighten when he said her dead counterpart’s name.

“Darlene.”

It was sorrow, it was a desperate longing for something to not be true. But she knew then that Bucky remembered her, all of her, completely.

“Bucky, talk to me,” Darcy pleaded, and he moved back further away from her, as if realising she was still there.

“You can’t be here. You can’t know – what I’ve done –”

“But Bucky, I already know all of it,” Darcy countered, but he looked away from her, his hair falling into his eyes.

He looked like he wanted to hide away from her.

Did he really regret their lovemaking so easily?

She felt tears in her eyes and she blinked them away, wishing herself to be calmer.

“Don’t you do this, Bucky Barnes. Don’t you dare do this!”

She looked around for something to cover herself with, and found her terrycloth robe and wrapped it tight around herself, shuddering a little as she felt Bucky’s come start to drool out of her.

“It happened. You can’t take it back. We happened. You can’t take that back, either.”

He looked up at her pleadingly.

“Try and understand it.”

“I am! I’ve been trying to for months!” she yelled.
She didn’t know she was this angry but it felt like it had been on the surface, her frustration making her weary. Every little annoyance since Yurievich felt like a weight on her psyche.

“I didn’t want to remember because I know how much I hurt you,” Bucky whispered, and his shoulders hunched, and Darcy felt herself soften a little.

“Grow up,” she snapped, and then she turned her heels and left him in her bedroom.

Seconds later, he was behind her, trying to pull at her arm.

“No, don’t walk away from me.”

“Sure, pretend like this is me making this decision.”

She shoved him off, and he faltered.

“What do you mean?”

She bristled, and whipped back around on him, hands on her hips.

“What is so horrible about me wanting to be with you?”

“I’m – I’m bad.”

“No,” she retorted. “That’s a child’s answer. Give me a proper reason.”

Bucky looked almost annoyed. “Are you fucking kidding me, doll?”

They suddenly fighting like they always had back in Brooklyn. She didn’t budge, and neither did he.

“You think you’re the first person to screw up something? I left both of you behind. I could have stayed with Steve. But I wanted to be an actress.”

“After I made you want to leave.”

“Newsflash! I knew that the whole fucking time! But I did it anyway. I was a grown woman and I made my own decision.”

Bucky let out a huff. “Steve cheated on you with me.”

“That was Steve, not you. And I would have done the same.”

He let out a short laugh, like he was surprised. “What the hell is wrong with you?”

“What is wrong with you?”

All he did next was raise his metal arm. “A lot, apparently.”

She let out a howl of laughter, rolling her eyes at him.

“Oh, fuck off.”

“I thought I was fucking off already,” he snapped, and then he pushed past her.

A week ago she was tied to a chair, begging to not be cut open by Gregor. A week ago Bucky didn’t know her any better than anyone else on the compound besides Steve, and he was in love with her.
A week ago, she thought she was going to die and didn’t want to, because it all just wasn’t fucking fair.

But it wasn’t about fair. She had to think like Jane told her to, to just figure out what she wanted and go from there.

Yurievich was controlling this from beyond the grave, because Bucky felt that guilty about everything he did, and somehow his childhood sweetheart (his other childhood sweetheart) knowing all the ugliest parts of him was the worst thing imaginable.

But she wasn’t going to let that happen.

Yurievich didn’t get to win.

“Wait,” she said, and he stopped, looking back at her from near the door to the living room, his hand out to reach the knob.

She knew she was the one who threatened to leave just a second ago and she was still mad, but she couldn’t lose him again.

“Please don’t go. I’m sorry,” she murmured, and he walked back, shaking his head.

“I’m doin’ you wrong.”

Having a heart didn’t make him weak, but HYDRA must have beaten that idea into him over decades of torment, and Bucky was only just relearning.

“No, you’re not. I’m just angry. And I want you to listen.”

“Ohkay,” he said, and she took his hand, squeezing it.

“I did something awful, making you switch the other day. But you forgave me. Even though I did it for my own selfish purposes.”

Bucky frowned. “Baby, that’s not the same. What I’ve done was over decades. And you were kidnapped solely because of me.”

Darcy raised an eyebrow. “You think I don’t know that?”

Bucky kept frowning. “You act like you don’t.”

“You’re expecting me to reject you but I’m not going to.”

He let out another huff. “Alright. But –”

He cut himself off, hesitating.

Darcy frowned at him this time, wondering where this was going. Or was going to go before he stopped.

“What is it, Buck?”

He shook his head, pulling his hand away. “You’re being too easy on Steve.”

She didn’t know why, but that surprised her. She never expected Bucky to say anything against Steve, but times were changing. He’d just changed in front of her.
“So you definitely remember everything,” she murmured.

“Yeah,” Bucky said weakly. “And I can’t believe he did that to you, with me – after everything we’d been through.”

She couldn’t believe she wanted to, but she wanted to defend Steve.

“But you two were always together. He thought you were dead. You would have done the same.”

Bucky shook his head, looking troubled.

“No, Darcy. I – I couldn’t do something like that to you. To any person. I couldn’t do that.”

Darcy felt a flare of anger toward him so suddenly she thought about shaking him, but she just looked him right in the eye, unblinking.

“But you did do that already.”

Bucky just blinked at her, confused.

“To Steve.”

She knew her boys well, she knew Bucky as a teenager didn’t let anyone tell him what to do, and even Darlene could hardly manipulate him with physical affection.

It wouldn’t have been anyone’s idea but Bucky’s to run around after girls, all the while having Steve waiting in the wings for him, hoping he had half a chance.

Darcy imagined it took next to nothing for Steve to forgive him every time he came back from an escapade.

They’d been in love since they were twelve. It didn’t take a genius to figure Bucky pretended it didn’t mean as much as it did, even just for a little while when he was in denial about his feelings for another boy.

Bucky frowned, shaking his head.

“No, that’s not – that’s not the same.”

“I knew Steve before you asked me out. Did he have a crush on me?”

“Sure.”

Bucky sounded devastated. He sunk onto Darcy’s couch and she stood by, arms folded.

“But you two were already exploring each other’s bodies, right?”

“Yes.”

He put his face in his hands.

“You took him for granted for years. And then you both wanted me so I went for it, because I loved you both.”

Bucky pushed back his hair, his eyes shining. He knew everything she was saying was true.

“And when I left Brooklyn, you slept with other girls, right?”
“Darce, it was a long time ago.”

“Doesn’t feel like it to me,” she snapped. “None of this does.”

Bucky nodded, knowing. “Me, neither.”

They were silent for a few moments, and then Bucky sighed.

“Fuck, I’m the worst. I’m the worst.”

“You were just a kid. But you’re grown now. So don’t stick your heels in every time someone tries to help you.”

Bucky opened his mouth but Darcy went on a little louder:

“Do you want me to say ‘poor you’ every time you say no to therapy?”

“I was with you.”

“And I appreciate that, but Steve wants you both to do it.”

Bucky nodded. “Okay, so I’m fucking this up.”

Darcy shrugged. “A little.”

But what about you? The question lay between them.

When was she going to open up about Belgium and try and move on?

Soon, she told herself. But not too soon.

“I should get to the lab.”

“You don’t want to stay?”

“I had fun,” Darcy said, and she leaned over and kissed him on the mouth, short and soft. “But I need to do my job.”

Bucky just nodded, like she was making the most sense she ever had.

She watched as he looked away, thinking.

“What’s the earliest memory you’ve got now?” she asked, and he looked back at her, a little thrown by her question.

“You mean of you?”

“Sure, why not?”

He smiled a little hesitantly. “When I walked down the street on my first day of school. You waved at me.”

“Seriously?” Darcy said, eyebrows high.

She couldn’t even remember that. She must have been three years-old when that happened.

Bucky had known her since she was three.
“I love you.”

She felt like saying it. She didn’t know why. But she did.

“I love you, too.”

Chapter End Notes

(Man, I missed the flashbacks. Goddamn.)

So, this was a lot. I wrote and wrote and wrote and I'm hoping some if not most of this made sense.

It's been ages. I've been dying to write but my study has been nuts lately. It's not so much that I'm finding it hard to find the time, my mind just won't let me get ideas properly fleshed out as easily as before when I had more free time.

I love youuuuuu and thank you for reading. <3
Chapter Notes

This reads like... well, I dunno. Porn. It's porn. And also OT3 finally happened. This was also dirtier than I planned but WHATEVER. IT'S FINE.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Part 28:

Steve

"In middle of the night in my dreams,
I know I'm gonna be with you
So I take my time...
Are you ready for it?" - Taylor Swift
It hurt.

Steve was aware of his hurt all over his body. He’d pushed it back every time it came to the front, and he was happy for Bucky, he really was.

But it still hurt.

He was only human, like Tony said.

Bucky told him when he’d slept with Darcy – consummated this century’s version of their relationship.

Steve knew now that Bucky was on the same page as he was with Darcy – he remembered everything, in all its gory detail.

Darcy pulled him aside the day after to tell him what Yurievich had really done, and she respected his decision to not stop her killing him.

He figured if Gregor wasn’t already dead, Darcy would have gone to find him, too, and done the same.

He was happy for them – he was – it just took a lot not to sit and stare into space, wishing he’d done this differently.

(He went through about a dozen punching bags, not knowing really how to apologise to Friday properly, because all the AI could do was watch him vandalise things and then subtly replace them in a new online order.)

He had no right to feel sorry for himself. He was just frustrated, mostly. Darcy even said she loved him still, but it felt so wrong.

One night after a few weeks of Bucky sleeping with them both, Steve brought it up, and instantly regretted it.

“But I took you for granted. And I stole Darlene from you.”

Bucky simplified everything, always making out like he was the only bad guy, like there were no other shades of grey beyond his own but Steve was right there and couldn’t take it.

“You didn’t want to be gay. And we shared her.”

“Because I made you,” Bucky retorted, and Steve just sighed.

“It’s not as simple as that.”
“Why can’t it be? Darcy made everything simpler between us.”

Steve felt the pang of jealousy again, thinking of loving, trusting Darcy letting Bucky move on from himself –

“How?” Steve asked.

“She told me to grow up.”

Steve had to laugh a little at that, because that was Darcy in a nutshell. She was always close to being too understanding of other people. And maybe Bucky was her weakness the same way he was Steve’s.

Bucky looked uncomfortable.

“Steve, I can’t have kids.”

They were sitting at their table with their dinner growing cold the more they talked, and Steve looked at his bit of meatloaf on his plate and blinked several times as the words sank in.

He finally looked up at Bucky, who looked tired and sad.

“Buck.”

“HYDRA did it, when I lost my arm.”

Steve nodded, his Adam’s apple bobbing as he swallowed. He was trying to keep on the same level as a second ago, and not explode with this sudden feeling, but it was proving extremely difficult to not wish he could find every HYDRA cell they knew of and burn them all to the ground –

“Oh,” Bucky added. He swallowed, too. “HYDRA took my arm, too. I only lost about down to –”

With his flesh fingers, he rubbed a spot on his metal arm about an inch past his wrist.

“- here. HYDRA took the rest.”

A whole limb. Of course.

Why hadn’t Steve questioned that before?

“Darcy told me Yurievich said there were other Soldiers but none as good as you.”

Steve knew what he sounded like and winced.

“I mean, they weren’t the standard HYDRA required.”

Bucky nodded. “Yeah, I remembered that kinda. Except she kind of prompted me by mentioning Yurievich was a widower.”

“What happened to his wife?”

Bucky let out a breath. “She was strangled. I had to kill the one who did it.”

Bucky looked away, eyebrows going up.

“I don’t even think I knew their name. The one I buried because of that.”
Steve slammed his fist on the table, making Bucky jump.

Steve himself hadn’t expected it – and stared at the clear dent he made in the solid wood.

That would need replacing, too.

“Steve, it’s okay,” Bucky said, and they looked at each other. “I’m just telling you what happened.”

“It’s not okay. I hate that I can’t change any of this,” Steve snapped, and Bucky frowned at that.

“Is it Darcy?”

Steve closed his eyes, wishing he’d stop being such an asshole.

“Come on, punk,” Bucky said, “because when isn’t it her?”

Steve’s jaw ticked and Bucky let out a short laugh.

“You know, when we were kids I was jealous of her. Darlene.”

Steve stared at him.

“She was ten.”

“You didn’t shut up about her. I hated that she was takin’ up so much of your time.”

Steve wondered – was that first hand job when they were twelve Bucky’s way of marking what he thought was his alone?

Maybe. Teenage Bucky had that attitude.

“Why did we do it to her, lie to her all the time?” Steve blurted. “Why didn’t we trust her?”

“You trusted her,” Bucky said, emboldened by their honesty. “I don’t think I ever did. Not really. I thought she’d leave me. I thought you’d leave me. I didn’t think I was good enough for either of you.”

“That’s not true, Buck,” Steve mumbled, and Bucky shook his head.

“Try telling him that – that stupid jerk,” Bucky muttered. “Sam called it something the other day. Toxic something.”

“Does Sam know about the three of us?” Steve asked, bewildered.

For whatever reason, he didn’t think about that possibility. It seemed kind of stupid now, because Darlene or Darcy had been tangled up in their lives forever –

“Sure,” Bucky said easily, and Steve just stared at him.

“What does he say?”

“That you’re a dumbass,” Bucky muttered, and he took out his pack of cigarettes from his jacket pocket and lit one, taking a short drag and exhaling through his nose. “Which I concur.”

“Why am I a dumbass now? Isn’t it right that you and Darcy be together?”

“Sure, but Darcy’s in love with you, too.”
Bucky just smoked and gazed at his lover with the kind of know-it-all attitude he had back in Brooklyn, which usually drove Steve up the wall, or straight into bed –

“Toxic masculinity,” Bucky said suddenly, and Steve kept staring at him. “That’s what Sam called it. Younger me had it in his head that vulnerability was a bad thing so he never opened up to anyone else. Put up a front all the time. Got violent too easily.”

Everything he was saying was true, and it was so strange to Steve to see Bucky this way, being so open, but it had to be because of Sam –

No, it was Darcy, too. She made you want to be a better person. She made everyone happy and safe.

Steve felt it in his gut, how much he missed her.

“But you weren’t like that with me or Darlene,” Steve said, but Bucky shook his head at him.

“I didn’t tell you how much you both meant to me. Not often enough.”

He took another drag from his cigarette.

“But I would have thought – with Darlene –” Steve frowned. “She was –”

“Whenever I gave her something real it had to be ripped out of me like a splinter,” Bucky muttered. “ Usually after an orgasm. Figures that fucking made me remember her.”

He looked into Steve’s eyes.

“All I did was try and control her, try and cause her pain.”

“That’s not all you ever did.”

“But it didn’t help,” Bucky retorted.

He mashed the cigarette into his mashed potatoes.

“I’m gonna go see her.”

He got up without saying goodbye, leaving Steve feeling annoyed.

He’d been so honest but he hadn’t even considered Steve’s feelings –

It was staggering, and so confusing. Bucky was a jerk.

As Bucky left, Steve was up from his seat, inspired.

He marched out the door, fists clenched.

He knew where he was going, and fuck the consequences.

If Darcy didn’t like him interrupting them, fine. But Bucky leaving so suddenly like Steve was nothing but a doormat –

He rounded the corner to see Darcy and Bucky, pressed against her front door, and Steve froze at the sight of them.

Darcy’s leg was hooked over Bucky’s hip, their mouths together and Bucky’s hands under her shirt, the pair of them grinding together.
His brown-haired twins that fitted together so perfectly, Steve felt like –

“Hey.”

He wasn’t sure what he was doing.

Bucky pulled away from her, and they both looked at Steve.

Darcy pushed him off, moving toward Steve with purpose –

Steve felt himself back away, even now –

“It’s okay, it’s okay,” she whispered, and then she was reaching for him and –

“Mmph,” he replied, against her lips as she kissed him, pulling him down toward her.

Her tongue pressed inside his mouth and he groaned.

He was angry, and then jealous, and then confused, and now –

It suddenly made sense.

She was so soft and warm, the familiar scent of her permeating the air and making his brain scramble.

She wasn’t doing this to trick him, or make a point. She was doing this because she wanted to.

And Bucky had deliberately lead him away to Darcy.

Steve pulled back, noticing Darcy had slipped her hand around the back of his neck.

She just smiled up at him, and he saw in the corner of his eye Bucky opening her front door.

“Let’s go inside,” Darcy murmured, and Steve could only nod dumbly.

She pulled him by his hand, and Steve followed, his heart hammering.

His mouth felt dry.

He had butterflies in his stomach.

“Wait,” he said, just as the door shut behind him.

“He’s scared,” Darcy said, to Bucky this time.

They exchanged a glance.

“He is,” Bucky agreed. He looked at Steve. “It’s okay, Stevie.”

There may have been a hint of teasing to their tone, but it wasn’t malicious.

Darcy nodded, and she reached for him again, pulling Steve toward her couch and they sat down, while Bucky perched on the arm beside Darcy, watching.

“I missed you,” she murmured, kissing Steve again, slow and gentle.

She sighed as she stroked his tongue with her own, and he felt himself growing hard –
“Wait,” he said again. “What are we doing?”

He felt sixteen again, wondering what the hell he was doing and what the catch was. Darlene had always seemed so out of his league.

“Whatever we want,” Darcy replied, and he was back in the present, and she put her little hand under his shirt, feeling the hard muscle of his stomach. “We have all night.”

“Are you sure?” Steve asked.

Since when did she want to sleep with him again, after everything he’d done?

“I’m sure,” Darcy said, laughing a little.

Bucky suddenly grabbed her from behind, around her middle, kissing the back of her neck.

Steve watched, equally fascinated and overwhelmed by the sight of them together. He’d never seen the two of them together so explicitly.

Even back in Brooklyn Bucky would deliberately move out of sight to kiss her, for Steve’s sake.

Now he was sliding his own hands under her shirt, up toward her tits and her eyes closed.

“Her nipples are hard, Steve,” Bucky said, his voice a rumble. “Can’t say it’s because of me.”

“You would have helped,” Steve felt himself say, shifting on the couch.

Bucky chuckled at that, and Darcy’s eyes opened again and she sighed.

Steve felt the strain of his cock against the material of his jeans and Darcy looked down at his hard-on, a knowing look on her face.

“You want to touch her, Stevie?” Bucky said, and Steve looked from him to Darcy and nodded.

“Yes. I would like to touch you,” he said to Darcy, gulping. “Very much.”

She was up and out of Bucky’s arms in a second and climbing into Steve’s lap, licking into his mouth and making him moan.

When she got like this, it was like all Darcy could think of was her own need for release, and her partner’s.

Since there was the three of them, Steve wondered how this would play out.

His hands slipped down to cup her ass and bring her down against his crotch and she grinded unashamedly, her fingers in his hair and pulling at him.

It was painful, almost.

Her hands were on his fly and Steve felt Bucky come up beside him and kiss his neck, biting down a little and making Steve groan, distracting him –

He gasped as Darcy shoved her hand under the waistband of his boxers and wrapped her hand around his cock.

Bucky pulled his face away from Darcy, toward him – Steve had a second to register Bucky’s mouth
on his own, his metal grip on Steve’s jaw.

Steve opened his eyes to see Bucky staring back at him.

“I love you,” Bucky said, kissing him softer, still holding his jaw. “I love you, okay?”

Steve just nodded, and then whimpered as his own hand was pulled toward –

Darcy, with her leggings partway down and her warm cunt –

“Jesus,” he hissed, feeling how wet she was.

He looked up at her, and she had a wicked smile on her face.

“Never seen you two make out before,” she said. “Didn’t realise it would get my motor runnin’ like that.”

He was helpless, now. They were going to leave him ruined.

Darcy began stroking him as Bucky and Steve watched, and Steve felt himself buck a little, pressing his fingers inside her and making her eyes widen.

“Get your pants off, Steve,” Bucky said, his voice rough.

There was a shuffle and Darcy got off his lap while he lifted his hips and shoved down his jeans and boxers, just down to his ankles.

He looked at Bucky, who was still dressed and had watched them both undress enough to get at each other properly.

Darcy shed her leggings, her underwear along with them, and Steve’s eyes went straight to the dark strip of hair between her legs, and he knew Bucky was staring, too.

Darcy was breathing a little shakily.

“It’s a lot,” she said, looking shy for the first time. “Both of you lookin’ at me like that.”

She gave a little laugh, nervous, but she climbed back onto Steve’s lap, the naked lips of her pussy brushing his thigh and making his balls tighten already.

Steve felt his chest squeeze as she kissed him again, more urgent like before and like she wanted him to bruise her.

Without much warning, she sank onto his cock, her brow furrowed with her bottom lip between her teeth.

“Ah,” she gasped, and Steve felt near delirious with the feeling of her around him, so perfect –

She rolled her hips and he moaned, hands going to her waist and rocking against her.

His ass was scratching against the couch and Bucky stirred beside him, and Steve turned his head to look –

“No, it’s you and me right now,” Darcy murmured, and Steve fixed his gaze on hers, feeling her clench around him, possessive.
He just nodded, and then pulled her off to slam her back down, making her cry out, grabbing at him to pull his face to hers to kiss again, their teeth clacking.

It doesn’t take long until he’s sure he’s going to come, and Darcy sees it on his face.

“Sorry,” he muttered, a little embarrassed, even.

It was just too much, she was too much.

He’d missed her so much, he hadn’t anticipated this happening ever again.

If this was a dream, he was going to hate himself if he woke up –

“You’re here, with me,” she whispered. “And I want you to come.”

That was all it took, and he tensed, feeling the blessed release as he held her to him, shaking while she kissed his face, stroked his hair.

He was back, sweater and so glad this was real.

Darcy pulled off him, the mess Steve made inside her already beginning to leak out, and Steve shook his head.

“You didn’t come,” he murmured, and she nodded, agreeing.

Bucky was on his feet and pulling her toward him, kissing her once more with the kind of fierceness Steve wanted to return, but he was momentarily spent.

However, his cock was already twitching again, wanting to touch her again.

“I was hoping to –”

Darcy’s squeal cut him off, as Bucky tackled Darcy, falling to the floor as Steve watched them from the couch.

Bucky was between her legs and cleaning the come from Darcy’s pussy with his tongue, making her cry out and Steve felt a flare of arousal so strong he groaned in his seat, and then joined them on the floor.

They both kissed her, and Steve tasted his own seed, wanting desperately to be inside her again, to make more of a mess just for Bucky to clean up all over again –

He sucked Darcy’s clit into his mouth, making her gasp and grab at the back of his head, while Bucky pushed two fingers inside her, kissing her thighs.

“I’m gonna come,” Darcy wailed, and Steve knew how she felt.

It was a lot to wrap their heads around, what exactly was playing out.

She sounded like she was sobbing, and she came, her heels digging into the carpet.

It was messy. There was a wet spot they’d have to deal with later, but Bucky was already pulling at Steve’s shirt to pull it off, and he obliged, and now he was the one being crowded, with Darcy kissing the side of his face while Bucky took off his own clothes.

“He’s so pretty,” Darcy murmured to Steve, “Our Bucky.”
“Yeah,” Steve managed to say, just as Bucky shoved off his underwear and threw them aside, baring all.

They took a second, and then they were all naked, clothes strewn around Darcy’s living room like animal skins, and Steve felt drunk.

They were kissing his body, kissing each other, and then kissing Steve’s body again, Darcy’s hands cradling his face.

Steve pulled back, and Darcy looked puzzled.

“I want to see you – you two,” he breathed, and Darcy looked to Bucky, who was kissing down Steve’s chest.

“Are you turning down a blowjob to watch us fuck?” Darcy asked, and Bucky laughed at that, and Steve managed to nod.

“I guess so,” he said. “Do you mind?”

Bucky laughed again. “No. Just – you’re not gonna feel left out?”

“I dunno,” Steve admitted. “I just want to see –”

“He wants to see us fuck, how sweet,” Darcy murmured, a wicked smile playing on her lips.

Steve felt his cheeks burn. He wanted it, still. He couldn’t say why.

Bucky wrenched her away from Steve by her arms, and rolled her onto her back, and she laughed, her eyes bright.

It was so playful.

“Oh, wait,” Bucky murmured, and he manoeuvred himself and Darcy so he wasn’t obstructing Steve’s view, so that he could see them side on, their hips together.

“That’s better,” he whispered, and then he began talking to Darcy in a low voice, one that Steve knew he could hear because of his super hearing.

“How do you want me?”


Her tongue darted out to touch Bucky’s lips, and he chuckled at that.

“You’re a bad girl,” he said, and Steve felt the throb of his dick again, his heart racing.

“I try to be good –”

She gave a yelp as Bucky shoved into her, seeming to take her by surprise, and she ended her exhale on a moan, her eyes flying shut.

“Not trying hard enough, obviously,” Bucky muttered, and Steve stared at the snap of his lover’s hips, making Darcy cry out again.

He was being rough and slow, just like she wanted.
Steve watched as Darcy became more desperate, one foot coming up to push against Buck’s ass, to pull him further into her.

Steve felt a mixture of jealousy and intense desire.

Jealousy because he is neither Bucky nor Darcy in that situation, he’s just sitting away from them, and intense desire because he just wants, and wants.

“Jesus, Bucky,” she whimpered, and it sounds devastating in Steve’s ears.

Bucky picked up his pace, covering her mouth with his and Steve can only watch, all so aware of every touch, every glance his way that Darcy gave him because Bucky is so distracted –

He doesn’t blame Bucky. Darcy is distracting by nature.

All Steve can hear is the slap of Bucky’s flesh beating against Darcy’s until she began to whine when Bucky pinched her clit.

Steve watched as Darcy came apart, tears in her eyes, and she shuddered, trying to curl in on herself but Bucky held her to him, kissing her face.

“Bucky’s turn,” Darcy whispered, and Steve knew exactly what she meant.

He crawled over, pulling Bucky toward him with little resistance, because it seemed they were both waiting for this part.

“I’ve got a confession to make,” Darcy piped up, and the men broke apart, to see her on her knees and giving a little smile again, calculated but bright.

“What?”

Steve sounded hoarse, and Bucky bit his throat, his hand wrapped around his dick and stroking. Steve shuddered, and Darcy pushed in closer to kiss Bucky’s cheek, and Steve thought he couldn’t breathe, with them so close again.

“I’ve never gone down on Bucky,” she murmured, and Bucky’s face changed, turning toward her.

“Seriously?” Steve asked, and Darcy nodded.

Bucky lived a deprived life.

Darcy yanked Bucky by his hair toward her, kissing him and he groaned, letting go of Steve and falling onto his ass, and Darcy was kneeling between his legs.

Steve saw Bucky suck in a breath and he couldn’t help chuckling – and he got a glare from Bucky for that.

Bucky’s hand was in her hair, watching as she settled down to the task.

They both stared as she kissed his shaft, and then suddenly ran her tongue along the underside of Bucky’s dick and he groaned, low and long in his throat and Darcy kept licking up and down, and then sucked the tip into her mouth.

“Jesus Christ,” Bucky muttered, and he looked at Steve and then back down at Darcy with his dick in her mouth. “Ah. Shit.”
She let him go with an audible pop, grabbing onto him with her hand and stroking, and then goes back to licking, getting him wetter than ever.

Something stirred in Steve when he remembered she must be able to taste herself on Bucky’s dick.

He leaned over and gripped her leg, and she turned her head to look at him, surprised.

Steve had seen her do this before, had felt it himself, but it was another thing entirely to see her do it to someone else, to Bucky.

“He likes it when you suck his –”

She sucked one of Bucky’s balls between her shining lips and he groaned, cursing them both.

“Yeah,” Steve said, watching Bucky squirm. “Just like that.”

She fisted Bucky’s cock and Steve massaged her leg, and Bucky looked completely helpless, like he knew he was losing a battle.

Bucky’s head fell back, and he looked at the ceiling, moaning, “Fuck. Ah, fuck. Fuck!”

Steve watched as Darcy took him in her mouth, all the way, all she could manage and then –

Bucky looked alarmed, like he wasn’t expecting her to go so far, and his feet scrambled as she hummed, the vibrations most likely playing with Bucky perfectly.


Steve knew it took everything not to just fuck into her mouth, but Bucky managed to hold on, his hand falling from her hair for her own sake –

Darcy was relentless, and Steve could hear the rough urgency of it, that she wanted Bucky to come so badly even if it meant her losing her breath over it.

She sucked, and it was loud and wet in Steve’s ears, and Bucky sounded desperate, too, like he just can’t stop talking.

Steve felt himself smile, and he settled down by Darcy, kissing her neck as she sucked on Bucky, her mouth full and her eyes shut.

She opened her eyes, and she and Steve slanted their gaze toward Bucky, who promptly came with a roar.

Darcy pulled off, some of Bucky’s come getting on her mouth and she smiled, looking at Steve.

He kissed her, tasting Bucky on her and licking it away, wanting to slide inside her once again –

“Holy shit,” was all Bucky could say as he watched them roll around together on the floor.

It took very little for Steve to shove deep inside her again, to make to come with a scream on the floor while Bucky sat back.

They did it for hours, until Steve was between the two of them, Bucky inside him –

He didn’t know how he managed it, but he did, and Bucky rammed into him while Darcy’s slick, tight fit sheathed his cock, and they were heaving and sweaty, a tangle of limbs.
Steve blew hair out of his face, not sure if it was Bucky’s or Darcy’s, and came, with the kind of whimper that meant he was cracking up –

Bucky followed soon after, and pulled out slowly, but Darcy was the one who pouted about it being over, even though Steve lost count of how many times she came that night.

Her cheeks were pink, her mane a wild mess, and she kissed him, stroking him again away from softness –

“Stop, stop,” he said, and she did, but sighed, and he laughed.

Bucky was still panting behind him, his head resting on Steve’s shoulder.

Chapter End Notes

*blushes* Uh. (It only took me 28 freaking chapters!!!!!!! !!!!!!!11!!!!11!!!)

Thanks for reading! Your comments are appreciated.

I will never have chill.
Chapter 29

Darcy woke from another dream.

Weirdly, she didn’t immediately remember what she was dreaming of, but most likely they were memories again.

It was like her imagination was lacking, there was nothing ever original.

It got old fast. And stayed old.

She got up from where she was lying and saw the two men she’d been sharing their bed with.

Bucky had an arm wrapped around Steve, the pair of them facing away from her.

Darcy didn’t mind.
She was just glad they managed to sleep well enough together.

She made sure to move carefully off the bed, retrieving Steve’s shirt from the pile on the floor by the bed and pulling it over her head.

It barely covered her mound but she wasn’t that worried by it.

They’d fallen into the habit of sleeping at each other’s apartments, and last night it was Steve’s again.

Darcy had only been in Bucky’s apartment once, and it was depressing and bare enough for her to never want to return again.

She left for the kitchen, and got out a mug for the coffee machine. While she waited for her drink, she swiped across her Stark phone and looked through her schedule.

Her day wasn’t meant to be crazy busy, but she guessed Steve would be up soon and going to the briefing he mentioned yesterday.

Bruce was meant to be out of the lab for most of the day, so Darcy assumed it was Avengers business.

She heard Steve clear his throat before coming into the kitchen, fully dressed.

He did that to warn her he was coming, Darcy knew that.

Darcy hadn’t been properly diagnosed yet, but she knew she had a lot of the symptoms for post-traumatic stress.

It didn’t take a genius to figure out surprises scared her, so Steve made sure Bucky and Darcy weren’t ever snuck up on.

(The last time he did that by accident Darcy flung a glass across the room and it smashed against the wall.)

“Is Tony at the meeting today?” Darcy asked, instead of hello.

One of Steve’s eyebrows lowered and he shook his head a little, a wry smile on his lips.

“Yes. But that’s all I can tell you.”

“Will you be leaving?”

Darcy didn’t mean to sound so sad, but she did anyway.

Steve looked down at her, seeing his shirt on her for the first time.

Darcy watched him process it.

He still wasn’t like before.

Darcy knew that putting on his shirt and not her own clothes, and not Bucky’s either –

She knew what it meant for her to pick Steve that morning. She was putting out another signal and he was choosing to push back again.

The two of them were rarely alone, and Darcy suspected Steve wanted it that way. He didn’t do
anything overtly sexual with her when Bucky wasn’t there as well.

Even now, looking at her like he was, Steve didn’t linger in the moment.

“Bucky sleeping?” Darcy asked, and Steve turned away, to get some cereal and make his protein shake.

Steve shrugged. “Pretending to.”

Darcy bit her lip. She watched him avoid her gaze.

A blush crept over her cheeks.

Maybe it was a little too brazen first thing in the morning, but she decided to be bold and peeled off Steve’s shirt and let it fall on the floor.

When Steve looked at her nakedness he stared, frozen.

“It’s not a game. I’m not going to leave you.”

“Darcy.”

He looked like he wanted to say more but she cut him off.


He just gave a short nod.

“Alright.”

Darcy heard Bucky’s shuffle and she turned to him, his hair rumpled and his eyes squinting at her.

“What’s going on?”

“Just straightening something out.”

When Darcy decided she wanted to sleep with Steve again, she went to Bucky for help. He didn’t hesitate, understanding that she wanted to risk having the two of them with her.

Talking together now always felt like a team of two against one.

Steve was almost too easy to gang up on when she and Bucky got started.

“I’m not interrupting?” Bucky went on, but Steve shook his head.

“Wait,” Darcy said, and both pairs of eyes were on her again.

She swallowed, wondering how she was meant to not have this end in an argument.

“What do you need?” Steve asked, and she stared back at him.

*Your body, your cock – no.* That was the easiest answer, but not altogether untrue.

“You.”

Steve looked down at his bowl and then back up at her.
“I don’t think I’m good enough.”

“You asked me what I needed and this is what I need,” she retorted, and crossed her arms.

She became defensive too easily.

Charlotte used to call Darlene brazen.

“I’m not asking for you to yell it from the rooftops, but I want us to be together. I want to –”

She rolled her eyes a little at the lameness of her speech.

“- date you. Both of you.”

She told Jane the morning after she slept with Steve again, but didn’t mention how it happened over hours, with Bucky being there the entire time.

Or that she lured Steve back to her apartment with Bucky as bait.

She didn’t know how to answer questions. But she wouldn’t mind if people asked them.

Like, was she sleeping with Bucky and Steve at the same time?

And how did they feel about it?

Or, the question she wanted people to ask the most – who was Darlene?

Darcy or Darlene, she wasn’t sure anymore.

It all felt the same.

It just meant catching up on some things she might have missed in the meantime.

And deciding how she was going to date two men at the same time.

“I love you, Steve,” she said, and he lit up at that.

He couldn’t pretend like making her happy wasn’t something he loved to do.

“And I love you, Bucky,” she said, looking at Bucky who nodded, reaching for her hand.

The three of them were messy, but it was the mess Darcy wanted.

Steve came around, and ducked as she tilted her head up.

They kissed, uninterrupted. Darcy still held Bucky’s hand in her own.

Steve had to leave, but not before Darcy went down on him a couple times with Bucky in the next room.

Steve kept looking over at the doorway while Darcy knelt before him, her mouth full.
She pulled her mouth off him.

“You want him to come in?”

“No,” Steve paused, considering. “No. Just you and me this time.”

Darcy couldn’t ignore at the way he was looking at her, like she might push him back, like maybe she was about to change her mind.

Mostly, Darcy knew they never had enough time together.

There was just never enough time.

Darcy spent the day with Jane, distracted the whole time.

Jane just gave her a long look and Darcy felt guilty.

“I’m sleeping with both of them. Together.”

She blurted that last part. Jane’s eyes grew wide.

“What? Since when?”

“Since I slept with Steve again,” Darcy added, looking away.

She wondered what Bucky was up to right then. Probably at the gym or watching a movie.

“Hey!” Jane said, prompting Darcy with the snap of her fingers. “Back to me.”

“Sorry,” Darcy said, feeling bashful.

“No wonder you’re tired all the time.”

It felt weird to be talking about this with Jane. Ever since she found out they were related, she wanted to keep her sexual escapades a little cleaner to Jane’s ears.

“Steve keeps trying to convince me just be with Bucky.”

Jane rolled her eyes.

“Men.”

Darcy wished it was that simple. She knew Steve had a right to choose, the same as her. He never pushed her away, just kept her at a weird distance.

She’d been angry. He hurt her.

Badly.

But she loved him. He loved her.

Wasn’t that enough?

Darcy thought of Yurievich in the lab, falling back with his brains on the wall and Steve gathering her in his arms and running her away from danger, never criticizing.
When Bucky found her at the end of the day, he looked over at Jane whose eyebrows hiked and she waved back at him.

“She knows everything, huh?”

His mutter was barely audible, and Darcy knew he meant to be serious, and maybe that was what made her laugh out loud, because their situation was a strange one.

“Yeah,” she breathed, after her mirth subsided.

They walked toward Darcy’s place. They usually watched a movie together before making dinner. Darcy felt like pasta. She knew she’d need to make a lot if Steve was coming, too.

Bucky gripped her hand a little tighter once they were alone.

“Steve had to go back to Africa.”

“Had to? He already left?”

“Yeah – he called me from the quinjet.”

Darcy felt her heart sink. He hadn’t even told her when he was leaving. It wasn’t a good sign.

“Why is he going?”

Bucky waited until they were safely inside before answering.

“It’s HYDRA.”

Darcy watched as he spat the word out. Her guts twisted.

She started crying. She wasn’t sure exactly what set her off.

The fact that Steve was gone without saying goodbye, the fact that this fight with their enemies would never end, the fact that Bucky always looked that upset when HYDRA was mentioned –

It didn’t really matter.

Bucky drew her into a tight hug.

“I’m here,” he said, and Darcy sobbed.

“I miss Steve. I want Steve here, too.”

“Me, too,” Bucky murmured, his voice sounding tight.

When she woke hours later, she remembered her dream.
The images swam around her, sucking her in and choking her.

Steve, tinier and weaker in his hospital bed, white as a sheet and breathless. He didn’t move, didn’t grip Darlene’s hand while she squeezed his. She cried over his body, Bucky’s hands on her shoulders and trying to steady her -

Things that could have happened.

Bucky screaming as he realised his left arm was gone, replaced by the metal HYDRA cybernetic limb. A dark figure sticking him with more needles, putting him under –

The things that had happened.

The things that could happen. Or may never happen.

Bucky and Steve.

Bucky and Steve – Bucky and Steve dead with open eyes, blood and brains and screams of “Hail HYDRA!” ringing out –

The things that could happen, or may never happen.

She wasn’t going to take that chance.

Awake and gasping, Bucky was alerted instantly at her side.

They were naked. Darcy remembered where she was.

“Bucky, we have to leave.”

“Why? What is it?”

“I need to get to Siberia.”

“Why?” Bucky said again, a little louder.

“There are more Winter Soldiers.”

“What – what makes you think that?”

She got up, finding something to pull on.

It was the middle of the night, but as good a time as any to run off.

She was good at running. She just hadn’t taken someone with her before.

“Darcy!”

Bucky yelled this time, pulling her back from her thoughts.

Darcy froze, and Bucky was on his feet, pulling on his pants.

“I can’t let it happen. I need to find the lab.”

“We should wait for Steve. For the others to come back. It’s too dangerous.”

“You’ll be there. You can protect me.”
Bucky was at a loss.

“Baby. I can’t. Not if we go anywhere near a HYDRA base. Not in fuckin’ Siberia.”

“Then we – We have to – Yurievich said there were others.”

“Listen to me. I killed them all. They were all defective.”

Darcy swallowed, still looking around for her shoes.

“Then we go to Africa.”

“What?” Bucky barked, and he shook his head. “No.”

Darcy found her shoe but threw it across the room.

“Goddamn it, I can’t sleep! I can’t be like this. I need it to change.”

“You see a psychologist. You talk to Sam.”

Darcy shot him a look.

“It’s not like that. You know what I mean.”

She meant revenge.

She wanted to stand over an evil person’s body and know that she was the one to stop them. She had to feel like Steve wasn’t lost.

“I’m good at it,” she said, her voice fainter.

Bucky shook his head again. “You don’t want to be.”

“Yes, I do,” she murmured, and she felt the air change between them.

He moved toward her, but she didn’t let his face get too close.

She felt like if he tried to kiss her she’d stop her train of thought.

“I didn’t kill for you,” she said, sucking in a breath.

She looked Bucky in the eye.

“I did it for me.”

“You think I don’t know that?” he shot back, and let go of her arm. “You know who put you in that lab?”

He meant himself.

She shook her head this time.

“I dreamt you and Steve were dead.”

“I have that dream all the time,” Bucky said.

She shook her head again.
“I think the connection between us runs deeper than that.”

“How?” Bucky asked.

Darcy already looked identical to Darlene Foster, and had her memories. They were the same person, and she wound up being part of Steve’s and Bucky’s lives without even trying.

“I think I’m clairvoyant.”

Bucky stared at her.

Saying it out loud, maybe it was a little stupid. If she knew the past or the future, how come she didn’t see Bucky and Steve’s secret love affair from a mile away?

“Prove me wrong,” she said to Bucky, wondering what he would do now.

She wanted to be wrong.

---

Chapter End Notes

Hey, I feel like this has been forever again. I'm sorry but also I'm kind of stuck on the angsty path. I'm hoping to set things right. I've given myself a few more chapters to finish this fic. I think it will help me be less tentative.
Chapter Notes

I missed you guys so much D’:

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 30:

Steve

"You only live twice, or so it seems
One life for yourself, and one for your dreams..." - Nancy Sinatra
Steve.

A voice. It sounded anxious.

Steven, please.

His full name usually meant he was in trouble, from climbing something or running too fast. His mom was the only one who used his full name.

(Not that it made much difference. He still did what he wasn’t supposed to do.)

But it wasn’t Sarah’s voice he heard.

“Darcy.”

Did he say that out loud or in his dream?

He wasn’t sure. He didn’t surface from the fog just yet.

______________________________

He didn’t mean it to happen, but Peggy saw a photograph of Darlene Singer, the publicity shot that was swapped around by the company – and it made Steve a little sick because he knew the smile was fake.

There was his heart that he left behind, the one who literally got away.

It was in a stack of his mail. He was still sending Darlene letters every week, because it was the decent thing to do. The photograph had nothing to do with what he wrote, but it was in the same pile of things by his locker.

Peggy paused one day mid-sentence and looked down at the face peeking out from behind the papers.

Steve trusted that Peggy wasn’t intentionally snooping.

“Who’s that?”

Steve looked up from where he sat writing another report.

“What?”

He froze, as Peggy spun around with the signed photo.

He felt the panic rising in his chest, though he couldn’t understand why he was so uncomfortable. He supposed it made it harder to convince Peggy he wasn’t a creep for keeping cheesecake shots in his gear.

“Who is it?”

Peggy turned it over, reading the back.
“Darla Singer.”

“I know her,” Steve blurted, and Peggy shot him a look, narrowing her eyes.

“I knew her,” he amended.

He cleared his throat.

“Really?”

Peggy turned it over again, her face softening. “Steve, she’s gorgeous.”

“Yeah,” Steve said, and he felt relieved.

You are free, I release you. That was what she wrote back when she first got a letter from him overseas.

It felt like a betrayal, anyway, his feelings for Peggy.

“We grew up together, Darlene and me,” Steve added. “With Bucky.”

Peggy nodded, studying the photograph once more.

“It’s fake,” he said, and Peggy’s eyes shot up to meet his. “The smile.”

She nodded again, and Steve felt his stomach churn.

Even if he went back to Brooklyn somehow, Steve wasn’t sure how Darlene would take him in his new body.

Maybe it would make him feel worse if she appreciated his new look and size. Maybe that would break his heart.

When he plunged into the ice, he thought of them all, not just Peggy.

Bucky and Darlene –

Darlene was all by herself, then.

Steven, please stay safe. Come back –

Steve gasped, making Tony jump beside him as they sat on the jet.

“Jesus Christ, Cap,” Tony hissed, and Steve looked around, wide-eyed.

“Where are we?”

“We’re like, half an hour away. What is your deal?”

He roused Wanda and Bruce, who sat in their own seats within earshot.

“Captain?” Wanda rasped. Her voice was groggy from sleep. “What’s wrong?”
“I – Friday.”

Steve got up, taking out his phone.

He pressed the button for Friday, his heart hammering.

The anxiety felt so strong, but it was almost foreign. He recognised the feeling, but it was as though it wasn’t his own.

“I need to call Darcy. Please, Friday.”

He turned away from the several pairs of eyes watching him now.

Natasha and Sam had been playing chess and Vision was sitting cross-legged on the floor, while Clint even looked down at him from the overhead locker, where the archer had apparently perched himself sometime in the night.

“Captain, you are aware of Miss Lewis’ local time?”

Friday was loud enough for everyone to hear.

“Isn’t it, like, three AM?” Natasha quipped. “Darcy’s probably up anyway.”

Steve wanted privacy, wanted everyone to shut up, but wasn’t sure how to ask for any of that without there being more questions he couldn’t answer.

Because he had a bad feeling, and he never left things to coincidence or chance.

“Friday, please patch me through to Darcy,” Steve whispered.

A weird silence settled over the jet as Steve waited, listening as a dial tone sounded.

“Captain,” Wanda said again, and he looked at her, shaking his head.

“Poor girl,” Sam muttered, pushing his queen forward.

Steve supposed anyone would have figured Sam meant Wanda, and not Darcy, but Steve was aware of his conversations with Bucky.

He felt his ears burn, aware of Sam knowing everything –

He heard Darcy’s voice so clearly in his sleep, that was the main thing. She was in trouble, or something bad might be happening right now, and he had to know.

Worst case scenario, she’d chastise him for worrying so much and go back to sleep.

“Steve?”

She sounded clear enough, not like Wanda moments ago. She sounded very much awake.

“Darcy, are you okay?”

“Is that why you’re calling?”

There was a shuffle. “I’m with Bucky.”

Steve’s heartbeat was hammering harder than ever. “I figured something was wrong. I know it
doesn’t make any sense.”

“I was about to leave.”

“What?” Steve couldn’t stop himself from exclaiming, making Natasha fumble with her rook.

He was aware of every eye on him at that moment.

“Where were you going?”

There was a pause.

“Darcy.”

A sniffle.

“I had a bad dream.”

It couldn’t be a coincidence, his anxiety and Darcy’s own.

“What happened?”

Steve shuffled away from everyone, wanting to find a corner to sink into.

“You died. Both of you. It was like it was happening already.”

“Darcy, I’m okay.”

Steve glanced briefly over at Wanda, who stared at him, her eyes wide.

“I wasn’t going to let it happen, so I wanted to go find another HYDRA cell.”

This was reckless, even for Darcy, who fought her way out of Yurievich’s lab months ago.

“But Bucky stopped you.”

“Kind of.”

Another sniffle. “Steve. I can’t take it anymore. Waiting for HYDRA to pop up again.”

Steve felt the twist in his gut.

“We’re working on that.”

He usually wouldn’t divulge that kind of information, but if he was careful enough, maybe he could keep it uncompromised.

He heard her suck in a breath.

“Please hurry back. Please.”

“Were you saying that before?”

“What?” Darcy said.

“Telling me to come back. Calling me Steven. Did you whisper it, or –”
Steve sat on the floor, his voice lowered.

“I think I heard you say it, somehow. I know it sounds nuts.”

“Weirder things have happened, honey,” Darcy said, and she mimicked his whisper, which made Steve smile a little despite everything.

He couldn’t wait to hold her, to let her back in again.

It sucked being so stubborn all the time. He knew she wanted him back even after all he’d done. He shouldn’t deny what he wanted.

He wanted them both.

“Tell Buck I’ll be okay. Look after him, alright?”

There was a lump in his throat.

There was a silence, and all he could hear was the hum of the jet and Darcy’s breathing. He was sure the chess game was abandoned at this point.

“I wanted to check in. Please just stay put a little while. We can work it out when we get back.”

Darcy sighed.

Steve knew it wasn’t what she wanted to hear.

She always ran away when she said she would. It would be a major change if she stayed put instead this time.

“Please, Darcy.”

“Okay,” she murmured. “Are you going to be okay?”

Steve cleared his throat, the lump still there.

“Sure. I… I love you.”

“Love you, too.”

When he hung up, he remembered Bucky and cursed under his breath. That was kind of inconsiderate of him, but she got him so side-tracked.

He knew Bucky would understand.

Still –

“Hey,” Tony called. “Since when?”

Steve shot up from his spot on the floor, glaring over at Tony who had retrieved his decanter of scotch from the little cupboard by his seat and poured himself a drink.

“Huh?”

“Since when have you, Barnes and Darcy had this little ménage thing goin’ on –?”

“Stark. Come on,” Sam interjected. “Give the guy a second.”
Steve wanted to say it was none of his business, but everyone was staring at him.

By now, Sam and Jane knew the situation. He would bet Nat had an idea at least.

“We’re dating.”

“You and Lewis?”

“Yes,” Steve said, drawing the word out and watching everyone react, waiting for some kind of judgement.

No-one seemed to be scoffing or side-eyeing him. Clint was the most animated, just shaking his head and shrugging as if he could have been speaking –

“Wait. So, you three –”

“Yes,” Steve said a little louder to Tony.

He willed himself not to glare.

“Oh,” Tony just said. He took a sip from his drink, the ice cubes in his glass the only sound while everyone digested what was going on.

“It’s probably not my place to say, but it’s more complicated than you probably know.”

He didn’t mean to sound condescending, but he winced at his own choice of words anyway.

“Try me,” Wanda piped up. “Cause I got a feeling you’re not being honest just now.”

Steve looked at her, and – he just knew. Somehow, he didn’t know how… but Wanda knew everything.

“Darcy’s from way back. Uh.”

Steve looked at the ceiling. He chuckled.

“I don’t know how to put this.”

“Like I said,” Wanda added. “Try me.”

He went back to the start. He told the whole thing. He allowed the interruptions. There were still things he couldn’t explain.

“How come she got reincarnated to be younger than you now?” Clint asked.

Steve and Bucky were in their thirties though their bodies were close to one hundred. Darcy was turning twenty-six this year.

Steve shrugged. “I have no idea. And why make her die when I went into the ice instead of when Bucky fell from the train? It doesn’t make any sense.”

“Interesting,” Tony said. “How come she died in the first place? Technically neither you nor Barnes died in the 40’s.”
“I have no idea,” Steve conceded. He looked at Bruce now, who was staring into space.

“It makes sense now. She borrowed equipment and tested her brain activity. I guess Jane and Darcy were talking in code. They didn’t want me to know…”

Bruce let out a short laugh. “They didn’t want me to think Darcy was crazy.”

“We’re all a little crazy. I think it’s all relative at this point,” Tony quipped. “But reincarnation I haven’t heard of before.”

“It’s not so strange,” Wanda murmured. “I never read someone like Darcy before.”

Everyone turned to the Sokovian, who promptly rolled her eyes.

“Oh, please. Don’t act so surprised. It’s hardly mindreading when you’re all screaming your insecurities at each other at the best of times, anyway.”

She looked at Steve. “And I don’t even do it on purpose most of the time.”

“Does she remember dying?” Natasha asked suddenly.

There was a beat.

“I don’t think so.”

“Where was Bucky when Darcy died?”

“Nowhere near her. He was in a lab with Zola for years before he was let out for missions,” Steve retorted.

He didn’t like where this was going.

“She wasn’t murdered.”

“But you blame yourself?” Wanda asked.

She didn’t have to read his mind to suspect this.

“Yes,” Steve murmured, and he heard Wanda sigh.

Tony cleared his throat loudly, raising his hand.

“Do you think Darcy will appreciate you telling us all this?”

“Probably not. But I didn’t want to hide it anymore. She’s confused and burdened enough as it is.”

“Burdened with what?” Nat said sharply.

“Memories. Heartbreak.”

“She’s a big girl,” Natasha retorted. She even smirked a little. “Stronger than you think. I was half tempted to train her for the team.”

Steve felt a smile slip out before he could stop himself.

“I never questioned her strength. She’s stronger than me.”
One of Nat’s eyebrows rose.

“You know what I mean.”

Tony got up, walked over to Steve and clapped him on the back.

“So we land, go get the relic, go home, then we have a coming out party –”

“Coming out for what?”

“Darcy slash Darlene’s proper introduction,” Tony quipped. “Not that we really need an excuse for a party.”

“Well, first we have to get Cap back in one piece before celebrating,” Sam said.

“We should probably run some more tests on Darcy when we get back,” Bruce added, chewing his lip. “I still have a lot of questions.”

Chapter End Notes

_ Clint was the most animated_ (also my face while writing this, realising where this story was all going to end up eventually)

OKAY SO I know it's just as contrived as ever but I'm working on it, I promise. If you're scratching your heads at all like, "well that doesn't make any sense..." like, I KNOW. I'm well aware.
Thank you for reading. Thank you for sticking with me. <3
Chapter 31*

Chapter Notes

This chapter contains a character experiencing disassociation, so if you find this confronting, please click away. There is also violence in this part. This is a bit longer than the last two chapters (around 5,000 words).

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 31:

Bucky

"And now I finally understand what you were trying to tell me. The thing you've wanted since that very first day. To confront, after this long and vivid nightmare, myself, and who I must become.”  - Westworld

"Just tell everyone I know what I did, I did for us
And in haste, 'cause I'm terrified of dying in vain..."  - Gang of Youths

When Darcy hung up, all Bucky could do was reach for her and hold her.

They swayed a little, and it was like he was rocking her.

She stopped crying but didn’t seem far from doing it all over again, threatening to leave in the middle of the night.

To his surprise, she just sighed and wiped her eyes again, sniffling and looked him over.
“Are you okay?” she asked, and Bucky cupped her face in his hands and kissed her.

“I’m worried about you.”

She hummed a little at that.

“Honesty pact,” he said, and it made Darcy’s eyes narrow slightly.

“We don’t have that.”

“Why not?” he retorted, and kissed her lightly on the head, stroking her face. “It can’t hurt. I don’t want to keep anything from you.”

Darcy blinked a few times, looking like she didn’t know what to say.

“I don’t need to keep anything from you,” he amended, kissing her mouth again, soft.

She kissed him back, suddenly clutching him to her body and sighing once more.

She recognised the desire in her touch, the way she kept pulling at him.

She deepened the kiss, her tongue slipping into his mouth and stroking, insistent.

He wondered why she was doing this – was it Steve?

Did she miss him this much that she needed an immediate release?

(Was she wishing he was Steve?)

“Wait.”

He broke apart from her, panting, looking down at her round and hooded eyes.

“What’s wrong?”

“Are you doing this to distract me?”

A small smile broke out on her face. She shrugged.

“Maybe.”

She moved to kiss him again, but Bucky pulled back, letting his hands fall to his sides.

“Darcy, I’m serious.”

She just blinked at him.

“Are you going to run away again?”

He was genuinely scared that if he let his guard down, she’d take off and make sure he didn’t realise it had happened until she was long gone. And then he wouldn’t have anyone to help him if that happened, since everyone else was in Africa.

“I don’t think so.”

“Please don’t.”
Goddamn it. Bucky felt his eyes prickle. Darcy must have noticed it, too, because then she was soothing him, stroking his face.

“Hey, hey. Baby. I won’t.”

She kissed him, and he felt himself relax, wanting to hold her against his body once more.

“I promise, I won’t leave. Not without you.”

“What?”

A tear escaped, falling down his cheek. The anxiety was back again, coiling at his gut and making his hands go numb –

“What do you mean?”

“I want to visit Maggie, in California. But I want you to come, too.”

Bucky stared at her. “Steve –”

“He’ll be back in two days, right? So we can have a quick trip and then get back.”

“He won’t be okay with that.”

“He will. He would know I need this.”

Bucky had to physically push away from her to make her stop kissing his face. He scrubbed at his face with his flesh hand, frowning.

“We should tell him first. You just told him you’d wait for him.”

Bucky watched as she took out her phone again and ask Friday to patch her through the Steve.

He had to admit that he hadn’t recovered from the phone call just moments before. She was in the middle of packing her things to run out the door, and by chance Steve called them, asking whether she was okay.

It was as if he’d sensed something was run from far away.

Prove me wrong, that’s what Darcy said.

If she saw their futures in her dreams, then Bucky wasn’t sure how to fix it. Did messing with anything help at all, or was everything already decided?

He still didn’t know if he believed completely in fate, but the more that happened, he couldn’t ignore that a lot of things couldn’t just be a coincidence.

The girl from his childhood whose memories lay in the body of another girl who looked exactly like her –

No, they weren’t two different people. Darlene and Darcy were one and the same.

It would be insulting to think otherwise.

Darcy smiled at something Steve said on the other end, and Bucky felt relief.

Bucky decided to sit on the bed, running his hands through his hair, blowing it out of his face while
Darcy chuckled.

He did feel a little left out, but he wasn’t sure what he was meant to say to Steve.

*(Just get back here soon, punk, came to mind.)*

He just didn’t know how to fix this. But maybe California wasn’t the worst idea.

Darcy was suddenly crowding him again, her phone thrown aside somewhere.

She settled on his lap, pushing back his hair and kissing him again.

She was more forceful, and he couldn’t help it – he groaned against her lips and could feel himself getting hard.

Darcy knew right away, too, because they were still naked from going to bed a few hours ago.

She was so soft and warm – a comfort, despite his barely repressed anxiety.

She sucked his lower lip between her lips, and Bucky wrapped his arms around her waist and lifted her up slightly to readjust himself beneath her.

He felt she was wet when he gently stroked her between her legs.

She moaned against him, grinding.

It didn’t take much to lift her again and then lower her onto his cock.

He groaned at the tight feel of her sheathing him, blinking hard several times.

He had the distinct feeling that he was watching himself from across the room.

He watched the tangle of limbs, the way Darcy kept moving constantly, her hands never quite settling.

She kept stroking his face. She murmured something unintelligible and then gasped, pushing back his hair again.

Bucky watched himself bite her neck, digging his nails into her back like he knew she liked it –

She gasped again, the two of them rocking together.

Bucky’s throat felt tight; he almost felt a little out of control –

But sex did that to him, he felt barely contained, ready to pounce, ready to conquer.

He didn’t understand why he couldn’t connect with his own body.

He moved his head back a little to look at her face again, and raised his thumb to brush against her lips.

She kissed the pad of his thumb, before sucking it into her mouth.

She closed her eyes, but didn’t moan –

She frowned, and then stopped moving completely.
“No,” she said, quiet.

She swallowed, opening her eyes.

“No!”

She pulled off of Bucky completely and fell backwards on the floor before he could stop her.

He was back in his body again, bewildered.

“Baby, what is it?”

“Nothing.” Darcy mumbled, not sounding sure.

Her face was red, and Bucky was sure it was from embarrassment, not exertion.

“What’s wrong?”

She shook her head, and then her eyes were wet again.

“Just – Gregor. Your thumb, in my –”

She let out a shaky breath. “Your thumb in my mouth.”

Bucky remembered what Darcy told him, that the HYDRA guy named Gregor assaulted her in Belgium.

He felt like a piece of shit for not picking that up sooner.

He slid to the floor beside her and took her hand in his.

“You’re having a flashback.”

It made him think of the first panic attack he ever had when he and Steve were alone. That was one of the worst nights of their lives.

To his credit, Bucky did not push Darcy to feel better straight away.

He waited for her to push him away if she needed to, but all she did was sit in silence and breathe heavily, staring away from him.

“Fuck,” she whispered. “I don’t want this. I don’t want this feeling.”

She hit her naked chest with her fist once, huffing.

Bucky knew that feeling.

They sat together in heavy silence until Darcy calmed down enough to want to return to bed – but just to sleep, even though she kissed Bucky hungrily.

He pulled away, trying to rebuff her as gently as possible. He didn’t want to risk upsetting her again. He knew she was trying to initiate sex again to make it up to him.

She sighed, moving away to go pee before returning to curl up beside him.
He woke a few hours later. He hadn’t planned on sleeping. In the dark, the room was stone silent – except for Darcy’s breathing.

She sounded as though she was awake. It was the kind of stifled breathing he associated with her insomnia. She always made sure to make close to no sound because of Bucky’s and Steve’s sensitive ears.

“Darcy,” he murmured, and she turned toward him.

There was a sudden whipping through the air, like she was throwing a punch –

But then a sharp tear in his arm.

The cut stung, but he didn’t see the knife.

Bewildered, he looked over to her still form and then down at his arm.

His left one, which was now bleeding.

But his arm was metal –

Bucky woke with a start, gasping. Darcy grabbed at him, alarmed.

“Bucky, what happened?”

“Get off –”

He shrunk back, touching his cool arm, which wasn’t cut at all. He looked it over in the dawn light and gulped.

It was just a dream. He felt sweaty, his heart still racing. Darcy kept staring at him, and he felt a wave of nausea, and he retched.

He barely made it to the bathroom, feeling like his body was trying to shrink right into itself as he puked.

He coughed, eyes leaking as he was sick two more times, slower and painful than the first.

He felt Darcy’s little hands pull back his hair and stroke his back.

“ Fucking hell,” he mumbled, his voice a rasp.

“Was it your nightmare?”

“Must have been something I ate,” he lied. “I’m okay.”

He flushed, groaning, as Darcy got a washcloth and wet it before patting him over his face.

Her voice was quiet but sure.

“Bucky, I ate the same as you yesterday.”
He just nodded, not sure what to say. There was only so much she could deal with, and having a nervous breakdown would not help right now.

He lay down for another hour, Darcy fretting just the same, even when he told her he was fine – it was like no matter what he said, she’d contradict him anyway.

He thought of the nightmare version of her slashing at his arm and wondered what the hell that was about.

He hadn’t dreamed about his phantom arm in months.

She called her cousin Margaret while Bucky watched her with his head to the side.

When they landed, it was overcast. It was so humid the air was like velvet, and his long hair in such a climate made him grumpy. He needed to decide what to do with it, to tie it up or shave it off – because the days were getting longer and hotter and it stuck to the back of his neck.

Wordlessly, Darcy pushed his hair off the back of his neck and kissed his temple, which made him freeze completely, because he hadn’t said a thing out loud and he knew she had her head in her phone that whole trip, hardly looking his way.

If she could see the future, could she also see what was happening now? Could she even read her mind?

He fumbled with their bags before climbing into their Uber.

Maybe he should have spoken to Steve on the phone as well. Leaving the compound, he saw that not only were the original Avengers gone, but so was Wanda, Sam and Vision as well.

Maybe he should have even pulled Jane aside and asked her what to do. But he stayed quiet the entire time Darcy said goodbye, pulling the scientist into a tight hug.

Jane just nodded at Bucky, and he was sure she wasn’t altogether ready to be his closest, best friend right now.

He was aware of the fact that he was too lucky, to have Steve or Darcy. So to have them both almost felt like a crime, and he didn’t blame any dubious part of Jane that still lingered.

*Careful, now,* he thought. *The more you think it, the higher possibility of someone else thinking the exact same thing.*

He looked over at Darcy from her side of the backseat, and she just smiled faintly at him, before opening up her phone again to call Margaret to tell her they were on their way.

Once they arrived and Darcy knocked on the front door, Bucky wondered how long it would take before he was thrown out of the house. The thought crossed his mind before he could stop it.

He bit his lip, running his fingers through his wretched hair before they shot down again once the door swung open.

“Maggie!” Darcy cried, and the tiniest woman Bucky had ever seen pulled her into a tight embrace,
her long green metallic nails flashing in the feeble light.

As if on command, it began to rain and Bucky looked up at the sky for a second.

“Oh, boy,” the old woman murmured, shaking her head. “It’s a big one today.”

“I thought it never rained here,” Darcy said.

“It’s been known to happen.”

Darcy’s cousin turned to Bucky and gave him a sharp look.

“You.”

(Oh, shit.)

“Hello,” Bucky tried.

His voice cracked from lack of use that day.

“James Barnes,” she returned.

The look Maggie gave him was so undeniably Darcy-like that Bucky blinked a couple times to settle himself.

“Yeah.”

He didn’t mean it to sound like a grunt, but here they were.

“Maggie, this is my boyfriend. I have two now.”

Darcy said it so casually Bucky let out a nervous bark of a laugh, wondering if Maggie would just turn him away now before even letting him through the door.

“Oh,” Maggie said.

She narrowed her eyes at Bucky.

“He’s harmless.”

The way Darcy said it almost was convincing enough for Bucky, and he knew he’d murdered hundreds of people.

It was like describing a tiger as a kitten.

“Pleased to meet you,” Maggie said, before turning her back on them both and leading them into the house.

Bucky shot Darcy a look, mouthing, *Are you fucking kidding me?*

And Darcy just shrugged.

---

Sitting around the coffee table together was awkward at first. Maggie kept assessing Bucky, making
him sweat and scratch at the back of his head.

He drank from the mug she handed him, but wondered if he’d be asked to leave.

He had no idea what Maggie was like, how open-minded she might be.

She was from the same generation as him, but he didn’t trust she didn’t think he was an absolute scoundrel.

“We’ll just stay a couple of days,” Darcy said, dipping a biscuit and not showing any signs of being uncomfortable.

“You’re not a burden,” Maggie said. She looked at Bucky again. “Neither are you.”

Bucky just nodded shortly, looking away.

He spotted a familiar face on the mantelpiece. It was the photograph of Darla Singer he’d kept in his pocket while he was in Europe, before HYDRA ripped it away from him.

He remembered them shoving it toward him, demanding who she was, to find her and possibly use her against him, to blackmail him into complying.

He remembered being beaten for not telling them her real name.

He didn’t know she was dead, then. But he didn’t imagine he would have ever said who she really was, for her family’s sake as well as her own.

He gulped, and then realised both women staring at him.

“Are you alright, James?” Maggie asked.

Bucky stared at her. No-one except his mother ever called him that. There was an ache in his chest at the sound of that name.

It was for another man entirely.

“Uh, no. It’s just,” he paused, swallowing again. “There’s a lot of memories coming back all the time. Sorry.”

Maggie got up then, and left the room.

Bucky thought now she was going to call a cab and tell him to leave.

To his surprise, she came back with a few shoeboxes, and another packet of Oreos.

“You should see these.”

“Are those my letters?” Darcy asked, her voice sounding strained for the first time.

Maggie just nodded, putting the boxes on the coffee table before handing an Oreo to Bucky, who took it without arguing.

He could feel his palm becoming sweaty. Soon his hair would be sticking to him again.

Darcy pulled a box toward her, placing it in her lap. She pried it open, gasping.

“I haven’t read these in forever.”
So she read their letters. Thank God. Sometimes Darlene’s replies were so vague it felt like she was writing her string of chaotic thoughts without reading whatever it was Bucky or Steve wrote to her.

He never read what Steve wrote to her. There was that period when they were apart for months and months, around the time Zola caught him –

Bucky blinked hard at the thought of Europe again. So much happened then. Steve changed, Bucky changed – and not all for the better.

He remembered the night he was inside Steve for the first time, his chin tucked in Steve’s shoulder. Bucky felt the heat in his cheeks and shoved the Oreo into his mouth, chewing fast.

He swallowed hard as Darcy and Maggie seemed to take no notice.

Except then Darcy’s foot nudged his and Bucky spotted the knowing in her gaze.

(Fuck. She could read his mind.)

She looked away, reading a letter from Steve.

Bucky recognised the handwriting.

Steve’s was always far neater than his own.

Darcy handed the paper to Bucky pointedly. When he took it from her, she went back to rifling through the rest of the shoebox.

He turned the paper over in his hands. The edges were soft from being folded countless times.

Steve had written in pencil.

Darcy,

The fool you mentioned seeing in the Los Angeles Times – that was me. I didn’t tell you until just now because it’s so hard to explain. I’m sure a lot of what I write may be redacted. It’s classified. I went through a lot of changes in a short amount of time.

Think of it as like a second puberty.

Remember summer ’34? It was like that, but in the space of a few minutes.

I miss you.

Some of the writing had faded, making it harder to read, but then Bucky spotted the drawing of a monkey on a unicycle and felt a smile grow across his face despite himself.

He couldn’t stomach reading all of them. Going back to that time, even just mentally, really fucked with his emotions. It was hard to believe what was real, what had really happened, and that he was here now, in the 21st century with Darlene –

No, Darcy. With Darcy. He was with Darcy.
Even though she was the same as Darlene, and not even Maggie could call her by her newer name. She only referred to her as “Dar” or “Darlene”.

He watched Darcy unpack each box, going through the pieces of the past.

He picked up another one from Steve.

Heart,

That stuck in Bucky’s mind. He addressed Darlene as “Heart”.

Bucky swallowed hard and put the letter aside, not trusting himself with it, not sure what could happen if he went too far.

“This one,” Maggie interrupted Bucky’s reverie.

No-one had spoken in over half an hour.

They both looked at her, Darcy still holding yet another letter from Steve.

The guy must have written hundreds upon hundreds of them.

Bucky’s heart felt like a stone in his chest.

Maggie held up one envelope with the red stamped RETURN TO SENDER across its front.

“This got sent back. When Steve died.”

Darcy just stared and stared.

And then she looked away.

“I don’t want it.”

She looked Bucky’s way. “Read it if you want.”

Bucky wasn’t sure if he should. Whatever she wrote to Steve must have been after she heard of his own passing – or, at least, of Bucky’s accident when he fell from the train.

Because Bucky spied the newspaper clipping of his own obituary amongst Darcy’s piles of letters.

But he wasn’t that kid anymore.

Maybe he could try to watch himself from the outside again like he did last night. Maybe it would soften the blow –

The envelope landed in his own lap, and he picked it up, peeling back the fold to pull out the letter.

This deserved his full attention, so he decided to stay in his body while he read.

Steve,
My mother said to me that I have my whole life ahead of me. Which is the worst thing she could say, really.

I have my whole life ahead of me without you or Bucky.

The ink had distinct smudges, which had to be from tears.
Darlene was crying when she wrote it.

I want to say, come back – be here with me. Stay forever. I will love you forever. But it’s over now, isn’t it?
Life can’t ever be the same.

He looked at Darcy, who seemed frozen in time. Maggie sat down again, watching Darcy as well. Bucky knew he couldn’t keep looking at Darcy, so he went back to the letter.

I keep going to bed every night thinking things are only about to get worse.
And I can’t change it.

The leftover crumbs from the Oreo clung to the sides of his mouth like wet gravel while he folded the paper back and tucked it back in the envelope.

They sat in silence for a full minute.
Maggie cleared her throat.
“Maybe we could go out for dinner.”
The last thing Bucky wanted to do was eat, but he looked up at her, nodding.
“Sure.”

His voice sounded foreign, unrecognisable. He wasn’t sure who he was in that moment, and whether he wanted to remember everything after all, if all memories did was stain somebody like this.

They went to an Asian fusion place, something that was really out of Bucky’s as well as Maggie’s element.
The pair of them tried really hard to be light about the situation, but Darcy failed to fake a smile the same as Bucky or Maggie did. She kept staring into space and biting her lip, brow furrowed.
Bucky had to admit that being out in public was making him edgy. He wasn’t always sure of the
people around them, especially since he was the only enhanced one to defend them if the situation should arise.

Bucky wondered if he should call Steve again, but when he ducked into the men’s bathroom to use Friday, the AI told him Steve was not available, and probably deep into his mission in Africa.

The sickly dread seeped into every part of Bucky, and it didn’t take any super power to see he wasn’t comfortable, especially when he was sure some random stranger was watching them from outside the restaurant.

Darcy touched his arm, and when he looked back for the stranger, they had vanished.

So maybe Bucky was cracking up after all.

Which he still maintained was really bad timing on his part.

“Baby,” she murmured. “Can we leave?”

He looked at Maggie, who nodded.

“Sure.”

He threw down some notes despite Maggie’s protests, and they left.

Maggie drove them back, and the whole ride home Darcy’s hands were balled into fists by her sides, her knuckles white.

He sat beside her in the back, eyes flitting from her to Maggie and back again.

He reached out to touch her hair, wanting to soothe her.

Coming here seemed like a mistake. If it meant Darcy spiralling down into the darkness Bucky knew all too well, he wasn’t sure how to reverse any of it, and reading some letters his best friends wrote to each other seventy years ago was hardly worth her present misery.

They were going down one of the back streets, and he knew they were closer to Maggie’s now. He let out a sigh, and rested a hand on Darcy’s fist.

Maggie parked, and then turned around to look at the two of them in the backseat.

There was an almighty crack, and then the glass exploded on Bucky’s side.

“Get down!”

He couldn’t think, he had to see what was happening –

He had to protect –

Another shot ran out, this time hitting right where Darcy sat seconds ago.

They took one of Stark’s private jets to LA, but what was the point of private jets and weapons if he hadn’t armed himself when they left the house?

He had the hunting knife in his shoe beside his ankle, but that was all.

“Fuck,” he hissed.
Maggie and Darcy stay low, and Darcy’s eyes flashed with fury.

“We need to get out,” she said. “We have to get Maggie out of here. I have to fight.”

“We should call the police!” Maggie snapped.

“Somebody probably already has,” Bucky said.

Another shot. And then five more in a row.

How many guys were out there?

Bucky would bet anything that one of them was the guy from outside the restaurant, having followed them home.

He brought this to Maggie.

He would have to deal with the guilt later.

He tried to calculate what it would take to fight back, but it meant leaving them alone while he went out with his arm as a shield.

“Get ready to jump out,” he said. “I’ll cover you.”

Darcy shook her head.

“It’s suicide.”

“Well, it would be worth it,” Bucky said without thinking, and Darcy looked horrified.

“No, Bucky. Wait.”

He ignored her, knowing if he survived he might be in the doghouse because of it.

He risked a quick glance before ducking back down again.

There were three shapes behind a black Range Rover parked opposite Maggie’s house.

Bucky felt more than heard a bullet shoot close to his ear. It landed in the upholstery above his head.

Darcy glared at him.

“I have my Glock.”

“What?”

Bucky hadn’t expected that. He somehow missed completely that she was carrying anything, and when Darcy nodded towards her handbag on the floor, he grabbed the pistol inside and checked it.

“Yurievich’s.”

Darcy nodded, gripping Maggie’s hand in her own.

“When I give the signal, run.”

He took two deep breaths.
His hand crept up the door to the handle, and he looked at Darcy, nodding.

What happened next was just seconds, but Bucky only experienced it in a kind of slow motion world
that had each moment stretched out.

The seconds dragged as he landed on the ground, pistol raised.

He shot one guy fine. Then he threw up his left arm to block another shot. He ran toward the Range
Rover and knew if he looked back to see if Darcy and Maggie were safe it would be a mistake.

He couldn’t spare a second.


He reached the other men on the other side and smacked one across the face. He slashed at the air.

His heartbeat in overdrive, he spied the grenade as it landed beside his foot.

He landed his left hand on it just in time, but there was still a force beneath it.

The blast wasn’t entirely prevented.

He felt the shockwave all the way up his arm, and he fell backwards.

He saw his arm was damaged, or at least a little worn –

He was smacked in the side of the face by the last guy standing, and then the air was sucked out of
his lungs when a sharp pain shot up his side.

The man from the restaurant glared at him with cold eyes, pressing his entire body into the
movement, and Bucky felt for the hilt of his own hunting knife in his stomach.

He coughed, wet with blood.

“Bucky!”

It was Darcy’s scream that stopped him from passing out completely.

She was alone, watching in horror as he crumpled to the ground.

She threw herself at the other man, who hadn’t been expecting her.

“The gun, Darcy.”

He could barely whisper, but she saw the Glock on the ground that he’d abandoned for the grenade.
Somehow in the scuffle, the other man improvised stabbing Bucky out of panic.

Bucky thought he probably would have done the same.

She managed to scramble for it before the other guy could, and she held it up, glaring at him.

“Who sent you?”

The stranger said nothing, looking back at her defiantly, his hand not leaving the hilt of the knife that
settled in Bucky’s side.

Everything felt foggy.
Bucky was aware of the pain but he was detaching again, finally apart from himself and looking down on them from above, where the metal could no longer slice into flesh.

“Cut off one head, two more shall take its place? Is it something like that?” Darcy whispered, her voice like ice.

Her hand shook despite her even tone.

“Something like that,” the stranger said, and he didn’t sound afraid at all.

The crack of the Glock firing rang out.

He man slumped to the ground, and Bucky was suddenly back, lying on the ground and bleeding.

He coughed again.

Darcy fell to the ground, crawling toward him, sobbing.

“Bucky.”

She looked down at his abdomen and winced, anxious to touch the knife.

“Don’t touch it. Don’t.”

She nodded, seeming to understand that if she tried, it would only make things worse.

He sucked in a breath, sure he was about to pass out.

Darcy held him, and he reached her forehead and smeared a bit of blood on her skin by accident as he tried to calm her.

“Baby, you need to get out of here. The cops.”

“No,” Darcy hissed, the tears falling onto Bucky’s face. “I’m not leaving you.”

“If this is where it ends –”

“Stop it!”

“No, listen. If I die, you need to run. You can’t look back. Please, Darcy.”

He fought the urge to cough again. He winced, seeing stars.

He felt so much weaker, like when he lay on the table in Zola’s lab.

“Bucky –”

He didn’t hear the last part.
I've been thinking about this part for months. Having everything finally come to fruition is a funny thing, especially when I've had plenty of moments when I've felt like I couldn't pull this off, that I might have to give up on this story. Don't worry! I'm definitely sticking with this, and I'm so thankful for all of you reading this and cheering me on. Thank you. <3
Chapter 32

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Part 32:

Steve

"I get by with a little help from my friends..." - Lennon/McCartney

A few hours ago, Steve jumped out of the quinjet with his shield strapped to his back in the middle of the night.

It was a pretty standard sting – lure the suspect into an area where they could be surrounded and then taken away, and make sure there was no issue getting the artefact back.

They thought it was a Chitauri spear, one stolen from New York and sold on the black market, making its way to West Africa.

Steve should have known the whole incident stank of Ulysses Klaue. He figured he’d been so distracted with Darcy and Bucky lately that his judgement was impaired, but no-one else predicted an ambush from another group entirely.

Because the artefact was from Earth, from a little place called Wakanda.

Now, his shoulder strapped and with cuts littered all over his chest, Steve was healing and worried. He hadn’t even heard of Wakanda until that day.

And now he was sitting in a hidden palace, wondering what on Earth he was meant to do, knowing Bucky was in trouble half a world away, with Darcy and her cousin Maggie his only help.
Once he landed, with the others not too far behind, there were gunshots.

Their intel told them there may be trouble, but Steve could see easily that they were being shot at, and so he ducked behind his shield, heart racing.

“They were waiting for us,” he hissed through the comms, and was met with a series of curses from everyone else.

“Where even are we?” Tony snapped, as he soared overhead.

Another series of shots rang out and Steve moved forward, shield first.

“We’re just outside Nigeria,” Sam said, before he sank downward into the brush, retaliating.

Steve sighed.

“This is a bust.”

“Months of preparing down the crapper,” Tony muttered, and Steve frowned.

“Maybe not,” he said.

He threw his shield in the dark, and heard it ricochet of some unknown force, and then there was a groan, meaning it probably bounced off some guy’s face.

Steve caught it, and then was immediately smacked on his side.

Something agile in the dark shot by him, and Steve missed it by inches, before he saw Wanda throw some of her energy toward it, also missing.

She was cursing in her foreign tongue.

In the dark, there was no knowing how many were out there.

“Captain!”

The dark figure disappeared into the brush, before a screaming body came hurtling toward Steve and he had to move aside.

“What the hell?” he muttered, not sure if anyone on the comms knew any better than him what was happening.

Steve’s heels dug into the ground as the dark shape moved toward him, pushing against his shield.

Whatever it was, it was incredibly strong.

“Captain!”

It was Wanda again, and then her flash of energy, red and sharp in the dark made the shape glow in front of Steve’s eyes and he gasped.

He was fighting a cat.

He managed to shove it back, not before being swiped a couple of times in the process.

While everyone else was fighting either Klaue’s team or the cat’s team or both, Steve shoved back.
“This is Avengers business,” he insisted.

The silent cat just flipped backwards and away, leaving Steve frowning in confusion.

“Anybody got anything on the – the cat?” Steve tried, and then punched a stranger who came at him.

He spotted Klaue, whose transaction they’d crashed.

The idea was to catch him in the middle of the sale, but jumping into a battlefield absolutely changed that, and Steve knew the South African smuggler would be panicking.

And just like that, he shot at Steve, who bounced the bullet off his shield, sighing.

“Like I said, right down the crapper,” Tony said, and Steve felt tired.

“But the cat?” Steve tried again.

There was a huff over the comms. Natasha was fighting and it was only a matter of time before she broke someone’s neck.

“He’s not one of ours,” she hissed.

“What makes you think he’s a he?” Sam asked.

“I don’t know, but he has female friends.”

Steve looked around and spotted who Nat meant, and stared.

Bald, dark-skinned women in traditional robes were attempting to smack Vision aside with their spears.

“Everyone, find the artefact,” Steve said. “And then we get out.”

One of the women narrowed her eyes at Steve, before diving straight at him.

The loud clang of their spear against his shield sounded wrong, like when Thor hit it with his hammer years ago.

Steve felt clumsy and confused, and it came as no surprise that the woman won, glaring at him once she upended him.

Steve, sprawled on the floor, glared back.

“You working with Klaue? Or HYDRA?”

Momentarily, the woman looked perplexed, before shaking it off.

“What?” she snapped in accented English. “You Americans didn’t have to stick your noses into our business. We were handling this.”

She said something else in a language Steve didn’t know, outright tutting at him.

She moved to stalk off where the black cat went, but stopped, Wanda freezing her spear with her scarlet energy.

“We’re not all Americans,” Wanda said wryly, smirking. “And we’re probably on the same side.”
“I somehow doubt that,” the black woman said, narrowing her eyes at Wanda. “Witch.”

“Alright, enough,” Steve interjected.

He got up quickly.

“You’re not with Klaue?”

The woman shook her head. “He has one of our spears.”

Steve heard Tony let out a frustrated breath.

“Can somebody tell me what the fuck is going on?”

Steve wanted the same thing.

The Hulk let out a roar close by, and then the black cat came flying backwards, landing gracefully in the dirt.

Now that Steve got a better look, the figure was most likely male, with a cat shaped mask covering the entire face. The suit was made out of some kind of jet-black mesh that reflected the moonlight.

A voice came from beneath the mask as the cat straightened up.

“Captain America or not, he’s not with Klaue.”

The voice was low and male, and Steve had to agree with the man. Whoever they said they were, they both weren’t on Klaue’s side.

“That’s good enough for me,” Steve said, and then he decided to charge ahead to Klaue, shield first.

He ducked, threw his shield, and caught it as it bounced off a lackey.

“You never were this fun before!” Klaue laughed, letting out a raucous, wheezy laugh.

“I’ll show you fun,” Steve retorted, and went for him.

He managed a couple punches before Klaue stepped back, and Steve saw his arm open up like a secret compartment.

The blast made the same queer, ringing sound against Steve’s shield as the spear from earlier.

“Vibranium,” Steve whispered, and he saw Klaue’s grin.

He wasn’t fighting alone anymore. Everybody else had managed to work their way through the field, bodies on the ground, all Klaue’s men.

“Give it up, Klaue,” Tony said, and the South African glared menacingly for a split second, losing his temper, before melting back into his joking self.

“Since it’s not Chitauri, why don’t you enlighten the Avengers, Majesty?”

Steve looked over at the masked cat, the person Klaue seemed to be talking to.

There was a brief sigh, from the same woman with a spear Steve met earlier.

She seemed to have as little patience for theatricals as Steve.
The cat raised an arm which held the artefact, which was a dusty, older looking version of the other spears Steve saw.

The cat promptly broke off the encrusted dirt, revealing a shiny, sharp and silver spear with indentations along its side.

“This weapon is from three centuries ago. And you wished to steal from my family again.”

The voice from under the mask was like thunder.

The cat, whose paws were actually black gloves with retractable metal claws, pulled off the mask, revealing a young African man with a hard glower directed at Klaue.

“T’Challa,” Steve heard Natasha whisper.

Next came some of the most outlandish things Steve had ever witnessed, and he’d battled the Red Skull seventy years ago.

T’Challa, who Steve remembered was heir to the small nation of Wakanda, had Klaue taken away, and turned to all the Avengers with sharp eyes.

“My general told me you did not attack her,” he said as he rounded on Steve.

Steve nodded, giving the woman from earlier a sideways glance.

“Your general?”

“Is that really so surprising?” the woman snapped, and Steve shook his head.

A chuckle escaped. “No. I have my own fighters.”

He indicated Nat and Wanda.

“Both are some of the best fighters I’ve ever known.”

He thought of Darcy then, staring down Yurievich in his lab while she blew him away, unblinking.

“Kingsguard?” piped up Nat, and all eyes were on her.

“Yes,” T’Challa looked away, frowning. “My father recently passed away.”

“I’m sorry,” Steve said automatically. “But at least now you have Klaue and the spear.”

T'Challa’s general hissed something under her breath, in the Wakandan language Steve didn’t speak a word of.

“But now, we have a problem,” T’Challa said, and Steve looked his way, wondering if they’d all start fighting again.

“We don’t want the spear. If it’s not Chitauri, we have no need for it,” he said, and looked at the general and back to T’Challa.
“You’ve all seen His Majesty in his – other uniform,” the general interjected. “And it’s not something most visitors see when they come to Wakanda.”

“You mean the catsuit?” Tony said, and everyone stared at him.

The general glared Tony’s way, but T’Challa seemed unperturbed.

The king gave his general the briefest warning glance.

“Okoye,” he murmured. “You will disturb our guests.”

Okoye muttered something else, and Steve would bet anything it was something to do with pushy Americans again –

“Guests?” Steve repeated.

They went through a wall. That was the best way to describe it. They were in the field, and then they weren’t. There was an invisible barrier the team went through, T’Challa’s guards behind them to guide them.

They were met with a wondrous city, one Steve could only think could have come out of a science fiction comic or something like it – the turrets, the gleaming city under the dawn light was a spectacle.

“Pinch me,” Steve heard Bruce say, who’d transformed back from being the Hulk, looking exhausted.

When Tony did actually pinch Bruce, he yelped and Steve saw Okoye watch the foreigners warily before rolling her eyes.

Steve smirked, as he walked beside T’Challa.

People walked the streets, starting their day.

Someone bowed to the king and he waved them off.

Steve decided he really liked the Black Panther.

“You will all need rest. And perhaps a medic?”

T’Challa looked Steve’s chest over.

“I’m sorry about the cuts. The claws are vibranium.”

“Like my shield,” Steve said. He shook his head a little. “I was told all the vibranium in the world was smuggled out of here by Howard Stark. But then, Ulysses Klaue –”

“All our energy is from vibranium,” T’Challa said. “We have hidden with it for thousands of years.”

Steve studied the king’s face.
“So what about us?”

“You’re not FBI, you’re not a smuggler. I figured you need all the help you can get out in the middle of nowhere.”

Nowhere looked a lot like a prosperous city. A paradise, even.

“What will you do when we want to leave?” Steve asked.

T’Challa must have sensed the hesitation in his voice, because he frowned.

“There are many things I have argued against, including opening our borders.”

“Well, then – I guess you’ve got a lot to think about,” Steve murmured, biting his lip.

Steve didn’t check Friday until after he taped up his own shoulder, because his rapid healing meant that within a couple hours the muscles would have returned to normal and the resources were better used elsewhere, like the gashes Wanda had sustained on her palms.

The palace seemed like an endless series of rooms and corridors, and Steve had his own room.

As he turned on his Stark phone, he saw several messages, and ice cold dread washed over him.

It was a combination of his own anxiety and something else, something else he couldn’t name, and then he remembered Wanda telling him Darcy was projecting her feelings from a psychic link she’d managed to establish between Steve, Bucky and herself.

“A psychic link?” Steve had repeated, sounding sceptical, but Wanda smirked back at him.

“I know what it sounds like. But she has it, with you two. I had the same with Peter.”

Wanda went all quiet at the mention of her departed twin, and Steve had squeezed her hand.

Her eyes were glassy when she looked back at him.

“When he died I wasn’t the same.”

Steve figured Darcy wouldn’t be the same without himself or Bucky. She’d indicated as much in her letter when she found out Bucky had fallen from the train in the 1940’s.

He listened to the series of messages, all from Friday themselves.

“Captain, Miss Lewis and Sargent Barnes are currently fleeing a scene in Los Angeles.”

“Captain, Miss Lewis has told me she wishes to find a way to mend a stab wound Sargent Barnes has suffered.”

“Captain, Miss Lewis is telling me repeatedly she wishes to speak with you. I’ve told her you’re busy.”

Busy? He was busy? Too busy to save Bucky, apparently. He wanted to throw up. Whatever had
happened, he was almost certain it was HYDRA related.

Steve pressed the button for Friday.

“Where’s Darcy now?”

“I will patch you through to her.”

After a couple rings, there was a scuffle on the other end of the line, and Steve sucked in a breath.

“Darcy!”

“Heart,” she replied, and the word seemed to hit him in the chest.

Darlene called him that in her letters, and whispered it to him when they were kids together.

“Careful where you go, heart,” he replied, automatic. His voice shook. “Where’s Buck?”

“He’s resting. We’re under someone’s house. Friday intercepted some 911 calls people made. We had to run.”

“What happened?”

“HYDRA happened.”

Steve swallowed. “Okay. I’ll come back right now. I’ll go find T’Challa –”

“Who?”

Darcy’s voice sounded far away.

Steve was struggling to know what to say.

“It’s complicated. I’ll tell you when I see you.”

How was he meant to convince T’Challa and his guards to let him go?

“Fuck,” he hissed.

He pulled his suit over his bare shoulder, dressing himself again, shoving his feet back into his boots.

He got to the door, and shot into the corridor –

He nearly ran straight into the king.
Chapter End Notes

This chapter is dedicated to my boyfriend who five months ago, asked me to please work Black Panther into this story.

Did you see that coming?
Chapter 33

Chapter Notes

It's a filler, dang it all!

Edit: Yikes! This fic just hit 100k words, which is bananas. <3

Part 33:

Darcy/Darlene

"Lancelot and Guinevere – they looked like two flowers, bright enough to turn to each other for sunlight."

- Clara Winter

"The light is coming to get back everything the darkness stole." - Ariana Grande

“Bucky, I’m never gonna leave you!”

Not again, not like Brooklyn and the war, not like when she ran after she found out about Steve and Bucky.
Bucky’s eyes were closed.

Darcy let out a shaky breath.

She whipped her head around when she saw movement in the corner of her eye.

She still cradled Bucky’s head in her lap, but clutched the Glock once more and raised it.

“It’s just me!” Maggie squeaked.

Darcy sighed. “Sorry.”

She dropped the gun by her side, the safety back on. She put her hand in front of Bucky’s mouth and felt his breath on her palm.

She sniffled. “I need to get out of here. There’s more where those guys are from.”

“I told Friday to divert the 911 calls if she could.”

Darcy shot Maggie a look.

“She’s not a she though, is she?” Maggie added. “I guess. They. They’re very real to me.”

Darcy’s own Stark phone buzzed in her bag. She retrieved it, unlocking it.

She put it on speaker.

“Friday, Bucky’s been stabbed.”

“I’ll do a full body scan and analysis.”

“Oh,” Darcy said.

She didn’t know the AI could do that.

“I don’t think they hit an artery.”

She moved a little so that she could carefully place Bucky’s head on the ground.

She shot Maggie another look.

“I’ll need a first aid kit. Duct tape, too.”

All her cousin could do was nod and then quickly walk off back toward the house.

Darcy raised her phone as a beam of blue light shot out of its projection port. She stood, watching as the light travelled across Bucky’s body, flashing as it hit the knife that still stuck in his side.

“No artery damage.”

“What about his stomach? He coughed up blood.”

“His cheek has been cut.”

“Oh, thank God,” Darcy whispered.

There was a slam of someone’s front door in another direction, and Darcy froze.
“Hello?”

It was one of Maggie’s neighbors. Darcy had never met them, she didn’t know what they were like, or how they would act in an emergency situation.

Quick as lightning, she ducked down and grabbed the Glock once more and looked over toward the voice in the dark.

There was an outline of someone at their front door, peering out.

“Please go back inside.”

She looked down at Bucky again and wanted to cry.

(What would Darlene do?)

She huffed. She called out again, more forceful. “I have a gun. Please go back inside.”

She heard the door slam shut a second later.

She ducked again, not before tucking the Glock into the back of her pants.

They needed to leave as soon as possible, and she was running out of options. HYDRA could be just a block away, or even closer.

And then what? They’d just finish the job.

With everything she had in her, she pulled Bucky up from the ground by his arms.

She grunted with the effort, as he weighed so much when he wasn’t trying to help her at all.

She barely managed to get him to sit upright, and then he slumped immediately to the side.

“Fuck,” Darcy hissed, and she caught him.

She tried to move him again, by tucking her arms under his armpits and yanking them both upwards.

She groaned, and knew she was risking falling backwards onto her ass with him on top of her.

She felt hazy with the effort, and wondered what to do.

“Friday, call Steve.”

She barely managed to whisper it, but the AI heard her anyway.

She stumbled, and then let herself fall, landing hard on her knees.

She heard Bucky groan. Darcy swallowed, wondering if she’d imagined it.

“Captain Rogers’ phone is no longer within range, Miss Lewis.”

“Then leave a message. Tell him what happened.”

She moved back to let Bucky fall a little on her, ignoring the pain in her knees.

She also ignored the body that still lay on the ground close by, but she looked toward the side of the car where a blood splatter remained.
She remembered to breathe.

“Dar,” came Maggie’s voice, and Darcy looked her way, seeing her standing by with a duffel bag.

“Thank you,” she murmured.

She moved back a little and awkwardly sat so that her knees no longer supported them both, and Bucky definitely groaned again.


“Stupid,” Bucky coughed, and Maggie’s face brightened.

“He’s okay!”

“We have to go. I can’t carry you,” Darcy said urgently to him. “You’re too goddamn heavy.”

He stirred, and he moved so his face was buried in her neck, and she felt his lips brush her skin.

Was he sniffing her?

Darcy shook his shoulder.

“Come on, Sergeant. Look alive.”

He was unexpectedly fast in his response. He shot up from his position next to her on the floor and Darcy gave a short scream, before covering her mouth.

Maggie had frozen in place, jumping at Bucky’s lightning speed.

Bucky was on his feet, staring down at Darcy with wide eyes.

“I didn’t know where I was. When I was.”

Darcy scrambled to her feet, and took the bag from Maggie’s hand.

They ran, and Darcy was surprised Bucky could walk, let alone move at such a speed, but she knew it was adrenaline kicking in.

“It was you, calling me back,” he said.

He’d grabbed her hand, and she knew he was going at her speed so she could keep up.

They went down a sidestreet, Bucky pulling her along.

“You should have left me.”

“You knew I’d never do that,” Darcy hissed.

Bucky shook his head a little, but didn’t seem as upset as he could be.

“I knew,” he whispered. “And when we get back to the compound, we’re going to bed for a week.”
Darcy smiled a little, despite her anxiety.

“God, I hope so.”

Bucky winced, suddenly gripping her hand harder.

“Baby?”

“Come on, I need to get this thing outta me,” he muttered.

They’d managed to ignore the knife so far during their escape, but looking at it now was like another shock all over again, and Darcy felt a wave of nausea at the site of it.

Bucky didn’t seem to notice her distress, and looked around, listening.

They turned down another side street. They had to be several blocks from Maggie’s house by then. Darcy had a stitch.

She knew it didn’t come close to what Bucky was feeling.

He looked pale and sweaty.

Bucky brought them to a house that was blacked out, with no car in the driveway.

They disappeared around the back. Bucky kept looking around with his nose in the air.

“I can’t hear anyone. It’s a good sign.”

Darcy wanted him to be sure.

Without warning, she ran around to the front, and rang the doorbell.

Bucky was right behind her with wide eyes.

“If anyone’s home I’ll just ask them if they’ve seen my dog.”

They waited, and then Darcy let out her breath.

“Okay, my turn.”

Bucky went for the lock and Darcy watched as he produced the Swiss Army knife Maggie left them in the duffel bag.

“Keep watch.”

Darcy gulped, and looked into the empty street, searching for any movement.

She thought about the Glock in her pants and shuddered, thinking of the HYDRA guy’s brains – She was suddenly yanked inside, and pressed to the wall by Bucky.

“There’s no alarm,” he murmured.
Darcy felt her breath coming in sharp bursts. “Basement?”

They crept along the landing and then down a corridor.

They could only see a shed in the courtyard.

“Not many basements in California,” Bucky whispered.

Right. How had Darcy managed to forget that? She’d lived in California. She swallowed.

She was probably just distracted by the fucking knife still sticking out of Bucky’s side.

Bucky broke off the lock on the shed with his left arm.

It made an odd noise, less quiet than usual when it whirred in movement.

Darcy looked it over.

“What’s wrong with your arm?”

“I landed on a grenade,” Bucky said absently.

Darcy glared at him. “Bucky!”

There wasn’t time for telling him off. She could see he was weaker again, and she wasn’t sure how likely another adrenaline kick would occur if he passed out again.

There was a dusty table she put the duffel bag on, and she zipped it open.

Bucky found the cord for the light, which flickered a little as it came to life.

“That is some creepy bullshit,” Darcy muttered, and then got out the first aid kit.

She turned to Bucky, who was lifting his jacket off, trying to avoid knocking the hilt of the knife.

It seemed to barely be stuck in him after all.

“If you pull that out –”

“It’s gonna hurt like a sonofabitch. But an infection is worse.”

Darcy bit her lip. “There’s nothing else you can do?”

She got out bandages and gauze as Bucky touched the knife gingerly, hissing.

“Not really,” he replied. He hissed when he moved the knife.

“You’re gonna bleed a lot.”

Bucky had the audacity to wink at her, like the old times when he’d had a fight.

“I do that well, doll.”

“Jesus, only you would hit on me right now,” she muttered. “Okay, do it.”

Bucky took both hands and gripped the hilt of the knife and took a deep breath, before beginning to pull it out.
He shook, while Darcy felt the sweat chill all over her body at the sight of the blade remerging, shining red under the light of the tool shed.

“Fuck me,” Bucky growled, and then it was out, with a sticky plucking sound.

The blade was almost as long as Darcy’s forearm, and the seconds felt like forever as Darcy noted the blood bubbling to the surface and beginning to pour down to stain his belt and jeans.

Bucky dropped the knife with a clatter and pulled up his shirt some more.

Darcy covered his side with a clatter of bandage, pressing against him.

“I apply pressure, right?”

“Yeah.”

Bucky grit his teeth. “Okay, I’ll definitely need stitches. I can’t see me doing that right this second, though.”

“Why?”

Darcy looked at his face, and he looked white as a sheet.

“I guess as the Winter Soldier I just worked through the pain.”

“Duct tape,” she said, and guided Bucky to press the bandages himself, and then turned back to the duffel bag and got out the grey roll from within.

She tore off a big section by cutting it with her teeth, and then began wrapping it around Bucky’s midsection as he stood.

She felt his hand on her shoulder.

“Bucky, it’s gonna be fine. I’ll call Steve.”

“I need to sit down,” Bucky whispered, and then he stumbled.

She guided him to the floor, the two of them grunting.

“Friday, call Steve.”

Darcy had her phone in her back pocket unlocked that whole time, in case something like this happened again.

She blew a piece of hair out of her eyes and huffed.

“Still nothing?”

“Captain Rogers is still out of range.”

“What the fuck are we gonna do?”

Darcy was asking no-one in particular, but she felt Bucky squeeze her hand and she looked down.

“Your powers. That’s how I got back so soon.”

Darcy opened her mouth to protest, but he pressed on.
“Don’t discount them, your thoughts or your feelings. You do more than you think.”

She smiled a little, still not convinced.

“I said prove me wrong. Being able to see the future isn’t something I want, Bucky.”

Bucky frowned a little. “What do you want?”

“You safe. You and Steve safe. And me somewhere between you.”

Bucky’s mouth quirked at her remark.

“In whichever sense that means,” she added. She kissed his sweaty forehead.

“I’m not sure what would happen if all my blood rushed to another area, Darce,” he muttered, but he didn’t seem too bothered.

“When we had Steve between us, that was one of my favourite moments,” she finished, and then looked away.

There were a lot of favourite moments despite all the chaos, yet every time they made love there was that urgency.

Would that ever end, considering their line of work?

And why was she only thinking of that just now instead of months ago?

She’d been too in her own feelings, not necessarily being realistic.

“Where’d you go?”

She turned toward Bucky’s voice, and she wasn’t in the shed anymore.

Darcy stared at an empty white wall opposite her.

She was lying on her bed, in California.

She was Darlene.

She felt her hair and knew it was shorter, and styled.

Her nails were manicured and her clothes were neater, and she wore a long skirt and a knit top.

There was a crucifix on the wall above her head.

She got up from her bed, her heart hammering.

What day was it?

There was a light knock on her door.

“Yes?”
“Darlene, you have a visitor.”

Darlene knew who it was. This was the day she’d dreaded for weeks, had sulked over and lost sleep over.

“Oh?”

She kept it to herself, like always. She packed away her terror and only wrote it down in letters to Bucky and Steve, and all she got in return was the attempted assurance that they were trying their hardest to fight and come home safely.

Her door opened, and in came little Maggie, her hair in tight braids and her school dress pressed. She was almost out for the summer. Just a couple more days.

Her little cousin came in and took Darlene’s hand, and led her out into the corridor, and Darlene could feel the hardwood floors beneath her feet as they padded along.

She knew the face that stood in the living room.

The person who stood waiting surrounded by Darlene’s family.

Every eye was on Darlene as she entered.

“Mrs. Barnes,” Darlene breathed.

Her face crumpled. “Bucky, he – They lost him in the snow. A train –”

“Darcy.”

Darcy blinked several times, feeling the floor beneath her, recognising she was back in the shed and under the dim bulb with Bucky at her side.

“Did you black out?”

“Must have,” Darcy murmured. She felt her hair. It was long and past her shoulders, needing a brush. She felt a split end and tugged at it absently.

She looked around again. “How long was I out?”

She reached for Bucky’s bandage and touched the duct tape, seeing it wasn’t wet with blood, and that he was already starting to heal.

“A couple minutes. What happened?”

“I was Darlene for a second. It was when your mama came to my cousin’s house to tell me you died.”

“She went all that way?” Bucky blinked, surprised at the sudden mention of his late mother. “I didn’t know.”

“I don’t talk about that time much.”
“You should.”

“I don’t know.”

Darcy scrubbed at her eyes, sighing. “We should go. And find a basement.”

They crept along streets, making sure they weren’t spotted.

Darcy felt like giving up before Bucky grabbed her by the elbow and spun her toward a house that looked older and abandoned.

“It’s condemned,” Darcy whispered, but figured that was the least of their issues.

The basement was dank and there were rotten cardboard boxes in one corner, but it was secluded enough for them to rest a little while.

Bucky needed all the time he could get to heal before they could afford escaping to Tony’s borrowed plane back at the tiny airport across town.

Darcy ached down to her bones with exhaustion, but still didn’t manage to sleep. Every time she tried to close her eyes, she worried she’d wake up somewhere else.

Bucky lay on his uninjured side, his head in her lap.

“Is it true HYDRA knew about you and Steve being a couple?” Darcy asked, after an hour of silence.

Bucky cleared his throat.

“Who told you that?”

“Yurievich. Or Gregor. Whichever.”

“They were telling the truth.”

Bucky grunted his answer, and Darcy let out a half laugh, not sure what exactly she expected.

“It makes me so angry. Makes me want to hurt people.”

“You killed someone tonight, Darce. You saved my life. Again.”

“Again?” Darcy repeated.

She tried to skip over the fact that she had killed two different people without hesitation.

“When you triggered the Soldier the last time, you saved me.”

Darcy squirmed a little at that.

“No, I didn’t. I was selfish. I wanted to kill Yurievich and get you back because I still loved you. And I wanted to hurt that cunt.”

The sharpness of the last word caught herself off-guard.
A sob bubbled up. Maybe it was shock.

“I’m scared I’m changing too much. Maybe I won’t stop if I get too far.”

Bucky got up from his lying position and Darcy felt him touch her face.

“Too far?”

“*Killing* people,” she whispered, and then dissolved into tears.
Chapter Notes

It's been forever. I don't have real excuses. But thanks for sticking with this. <3

This part is very NSFW! So be discreet if you are at work reading this.

Message me here.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 34:

Steve

"Got everyone watchin' us, so baby, let's keep it secret, a little bit scandalous, but baby, don’t let them see it,
A little less conversation and a little more touch my body
’Cause I’m so into you, into you, into you...” - Ariana Grande

"Well I am just a modern guy. Of course I've had it in the ear before... I got a lust for life.” - Iggy Pop

Steve’s lower half was covered in mud as he carried Bucky on his back.

His oldest friend was in and out of consciousness, and could be heard occasionally saying something about a guardian angel.
It was like Steve’s blood was on fire as his feet pounded the ground, and soon they were out of the range of the burning building – he was aware of Bucky’s lungs and inhalation.

Funny how it used to be Bucky always fretting over Steve’s asthma, and now he was carrying Bucky like he was a sack of potatoes.

Liberating those prisoners was just the first of many steps, and Steve knew it would be a while before he thought Bucky was safe enough, because his shirt was thin and he looked weaker than ever, the dark circles under his eyes.

He didn’t even know the last time he ate. Zola could have been starving him for days, and it didn’t help that Bucky sounded delirious half the time.

Back at the camp, Bucky regained some of his strength and insisted on walking on his own two feet.

“So, it is you,” he murmured, and Steve blinked down at him.

He stood taller than Bucky, then. He wondered how old friends would take his new body, and so far Bucky made it clear that he didn’t care so much about his muscles or new height. He was just concerned that his friend was in Europe at all.

“I told you to stay,” he hissed, and pulled Steve into a brief hug while everyone was watching.

“You know me,” Steve countered, and his chest got tighter with the feel of Bucky against his body again.

Bucky ate and they both showered, and by the time the unit was going to bed, Steve had convinced himself that Brooklyn was too long ago for Bucky to remember what they were to each other.

His friend kept glancing at him, and Steve felt his eyes travel all over, assessing his shape.

He would be turned-on by Bucky’s gaze if he wasn’t afraid.

Steve walked them back to his own tent because Bucky asked him to, and the second the flap was back in place with them inside, Bucky grabbed the front of his shirt and pulled Steve into a kiss.

The hope bloomed in Steve’s chest before he could stop it – and he felt like he was home in their dingy apartment, except when he opened his eyes Bucky looked choked up –

“I missed you so much, Stevie,” he whispered, and their mouths both opened, tongues stroking and hands everywhere. “Everything’s so fucked up now.”

Steve only saw him this sad the week Darlene left, and that lasted three days before he dove back into the dating pool of Brooklyn and tangled himself up in various women, Steve fuming on the sidelines.

But this was different. Bucky was kissing him with a kind of hunger that bordered on violent, teeth nipping and hands falling to Steve’s hips to rock against him –

Steve pushed back with ease, and Bucky’s eyes widened, staring at his arms.

“Incredible.”

Steve ducked his head again, taking Bucky’s head in his hands and kissing him forcefully, the pair of them making soft groans of appreciation, their hard bodies together as they stumbled toward the cot.
Bucky suddenly knelt, hands on Steve’s fly and whipping his dick out, and the cool air making Steve suck in a breath as his cock bobbed at Bucky’s eye level.

“Your prick’s even bigger,” he murmured, and Steve froze.

Bucky’s eyes met his, reading him. “I loved you then and I loved you now, okay?”

Steve nodded. “I’m not going to change back, Buck.”

Their voices were low for privacy’s sake, but Steve knew he sounded shy despite everything Bucky said and did.

“Pretty prick,” Bucky murmured, wrapping a hand around Steve’s shaft. “Pretty face.”

Steve balled his hands into fists at his sides, watching Bucky suckle at the head of his cock, still pumping the shaft, twisting occasionally.

The sound of Bucky’s mouth on him is like an echo in his ears, but soon Steve grabs at Bucky’s shoulders, pulling him back up, his wet cock between them as he kisses Bucky hard enough to bruise.

“How do you want me?” Bucky asked, and Steve draws back, panting.

“Can you – inside me?” he managed to ask, and a grin spread across Bucky’s face.

“You want me to fuck you?” he murmured, and Steve’s cock twitched between them, hopeful.

“Yes,” he breathed, and Bucky pulled him into another kiss, tenderer than before.

They managed to lie back on the cot, the thing being way too small for two men their size, but Steve just wanted to be naked already, feeling their skin pressed together.

Clothes were dangerously close to being ripped, and Steve had no idea how they’d explain that tomorrow, so he was glad their uniforms fell to the floor unharmed.

With Bucky’s arms around him they kissed for a while, their cocks grazing occasionally while they rolled.

“I wish we told Darlene,” Steve admitted, bringing them crashing back to Earth.

Bucky pulled back, eyebrows furrowed.

“Steve. No.”

“I won’t. I swear I won’t tell her,” Steve amended. “I just wish we could.”

Steve was positive he met people since leaving Brooklyn who were just like him, hiding in plain sight. He never dared risking being dishonourably discharged or being thrown in jail for the sake of feeling more accepted. It was something he just had to keep inside at all times, but he knew lying to Darlene for years would always make him feel ashamed deep down.

The only other person he knew for sure that slept with men was Bucky, and he was so happy he was safe in his arms, soon to be making love to him.

Bucky nodded, and then smirked again. “The other night when I was lying in Zola’s lab, I had a half-dream about Darlene, and came so hard in my pants I thought I’d have a heart attack.”
Steve couldn’t help chuckling at that, but soon Bucky’s face turned to stone.

“Zola asked me what happened. He found the photo of Darla Singer in my pocket, and he kept it.”

“He stole it?” Steve asked, wondering why the scientist cared about some random woman he never knew. Maybe he was as lonely as Bucky had been and wanted the photo for his own amusement.

(The idea of a Nazi jerking off over Darlene’s photograph made something rise up in Steve.)

“Hey, I’m here now,” Bucky whispered, stroking Steve’s face. “She’s back home safe.”

Steve had no idea how true that statement was. Darlene’s letters had become increasingly strange over the past few months, her desperation dripping with each page, except she never sounded angry with either of them for leaving America.

Steve just nodded, returning to the task at hand, Bucky’s hips against his.

“You got something I can use? Not just spit?” Bucky murmured, and Steve looked around his tent, spying something on his tiny desk.

He indicated the Vaseline and Bucky nodded, getting up to retrieve it as Steve stared at the long line of his broad back, which was littered with marks just hours ago.

They seemed to have disappeared, at least by what Steve could make out in the lamp light.

He knew he was nervous, by how his stomach flips in anticipation, his eyes falling to Bucky’s round, bare ass and cock as he turns back with the jar, climbing back into the cot.

Bucky drew Steve’s legs up and apart, and Steve shivered as he felt a finger press against his asshole, testing him.

“It won’t be like my finger like last time,” Bucky whispered, and Steve gave his lover a long look.

“Really?”

“Shut up, punk,” Bucky growled, fond and his eyes dark with lust as he pushed his finger inside.

Whatever Steve meant to say back was cut off, his breath hitched and goose bumps breaking out all over his skin.

The last time they were together was the night they went to the expo, Steve begging Bucky to fuck him before he left, and he obliged with a finger, which felt like more than enough at the time.

Maybe war made Steve greedy, but he just grunted as Bucky pumped his finger inside him.

“More.”

“You have to be quiet,” Bucky whispered.

Steve nodded, frantic, and then Bucky’s finger left him, making him gasp.

“Steve, you sure?”

“Yes,” he hissed beneath Bucky.

He watched as Bucky slathered his cock in the Vaseline, a determined glint in his dark eyes, his eyes
falling to Steve lying there open for him.

Bucky pressed the head of his cock against Steve’s hole without much prep, and it takes a second for him to push inside, the moment drawn out for what feels like forever.

Steve closed his eyes, and felt the burn of Bucky stretching him as he registered him inside him, after years of wanting it so badly.

“Fu-uck,” he muttered, and Bucky just kept going – and it’s almost too much, but so good. “Oh, fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck – ”

Bucky hits the perfect spot, making something short circuit in Steve’s brain. He glanced at Bucky, whose own language is enough to make a sailor blush, and Steve’s fingers are like claws on Bucky’s back.

Bucky pulled back, slow and purposeful with his eyes glued to Steve’s.

“You feel so good.”

Steve just nodded, unable to form the words, but Bucky does enough hushed talking for the pair of them.

Bucky slides back in to the hilt, and Steve’s eyes roll back.

“Watching you take my cock is givin’ me all kinds of ideas, Stevie,” he whispered, and Steve opened his eyes.

“You’d let me fuck you?” Steve asked, his whisper strained.

“Yeah,” Bucky choked out, and then his hips buck again.

Each drag is like heaven, and Steve whispered it with each stroke, Bucky chuckling above him.

“I’m gonna come,” Steve warned, and Bucky doesn’t let up, instead quickens his pace.

Steve covered his own mouth with his hand, Bucky pounding into him, the thin, cheap sheets of the cot scratching against Steve’s ass as they rocked together.

Steve felt high when he came, spilling on their stomachs while Bucky kept going, until he collapsed against him, sweat and come sticky and drying on their skin.

Eventually Bucky had to pull out, the sting exquisite, Steve missing him the second they separated.

They lay together, their breaths still shallow pants for some time.

Steve kissed Bucky’s sweaty forehead, and then he checked his watch.

“We should clean up.”

Minutes later when they’re both dressed again, Bucky gave Steve a sidewards glance.

“Don’t know if we should do that again.”

“What?” Steve snapped, and he immediately felt hurt by Bucky, just like old times.

Bucky just shook his head. “I don’t want to get caught.”
“Never stopped you before,” Steve retorted.

He watched as Bucky tied up his shoes again.

He wondered how often he and Darlene had the same conversation, and how she would probably react just as badly. Bucky had a way of turning the whole emotion of the situation around with a few simple sentences.

He was trying to turn what had just happened – the best sex Steve ever had to that date – into a mistake.

“I love you,” Steve said, and Bucky looked him in the eye again, nodding.

“I love you, too, punk. But I don’t want to get killed for this.”

Steve knew then he would die for Bucky if it came to that. And he was certain Bucky was the same, and pushing back against their love was what he thought he had to do to cope with that thought.

Bucky left Steve in his tent, and within a few hours they made up, and the next night and nearly every other night they shared stolen kisses and strokes.

Seventy years later, Steve ran out of his room in the Wakandan palace and almost ran into King T’Challa himself in his haste.

“Steve.”

“I’m sorry, T’Challa,” Steve panted, one hand out to steady himself as the king took his panicked image in. “I need to leave immediately for California.”

The king considered this for a moment. “I’ll need to consult some people first.”

He and Steve stood in one of the grand hallways with Okoye close by, watching the exchange with her spear at the ready.

Another woman, who Steve realized was in fact a teenage girl wearing a band t-shirt stood beside Okoye.

“There are HYDRA operatives out there trying to kill my friends.”

Steve knew he sounded desperate, and for once he didn’t mind it. He got the feeling that he could trust T’Challa despite the fact that Steve was the one trespassing in a foreign land, he and his whole team at the mercy of the kingsguard and God knows what else Wakanda had hidden away.

“Which friends?” Okoye asked.

“My boyfriend. Uh, and my girlfriend.”

Steve thought if he was completely honest T’Challa would see he respected him, and did not wish to take advantage of their situation.

He thought of the others healing peacefully in their guest rooms.

“You have both?” The teenager asked, a surprised smile spreading across her face.
“Yes,” Steve said. “I’m sorry, did we meet earlier?”

“Shuri,” T’Challa said, and Shuri nodded at Steve. “My little sister.”

“We were trying to decide earlier what to do with all of you,” Shuri said, winking at Steve. “I voted we let you go as long as you take me with you.”

“Why’d you do that?” Steve asked, and Shuri gave a shrug.

“I want to see capitalism at its greatest and worst all at the same time. And eat some of the worst food on the planet.”

“Worst as in, worst for you?” Steve clarified, feeling a smirk grow on his own face despite his roiling anxiety.

Shuri nodded.

“Anyway,” T’Challa interjected. “We will need to plan letting you go.”

“Why?” Steve asked. “You have my word that Wakanda’s secrets will stay with me.”

“It’s not as simple as that,” Okoye said, frowning. “We have our own intelligence about HYDRA.”

The whole team were in the throne room, Steve standing amongst them since he was their leader while T’Challa sat and listened.

“With HYDRA watching our every move, I understand that leaving Wakanda would bring them straight to you. But I need to make sure Bucky and Darcy are safe.”

T’Challa nodded, and then he sighed.

“I have a lot to decide on. From what we heard, your friend’s arm is damaged.”

“Bucky?” Sam asked, and T’Challa nodded.

“My sister Shuri and her team would see this as an excellent opportunity to test newer projects,” the king said. “Except we also heard your Bucky is an ex-assassin.”

“I cannot guarantee he won’t be a danger to Wakanda.”

Everyone stared at Steve as he admitted it, but he knew honesty was still the best policy.

“But I will take full responsibility for him if anything does happen.”

T’Challa considered this.

“My father would never let people in like I am about to. But I am not my father, as I keep learning every time something new happens.”

Steve wished the king would elaborate, but instead he shot Steve a sharp look.

“And the young woman with him? She shot a HYDRA operative without blinking, as far as I know. Does she make a habit of killing people?”
“She’s only done it twice, Your Majesty,” Steve said.

“Don’t call me that.”

“Alright,” Steve said, smiling a little. “I swear to you that Darcy Lewis did whatever she had to out of self defense.”

T’Challa nodded.

“Except if you do try and bring her against her will, she will fight dirty,” Steve added, and there were a few knowing laughs from his team behind him.

T’Challa’s eyebrows rose. “I will definitely have to meet this girl, then.”

Chapter End Notes

I missed writing flashbacks, omg. I promise I do miss writing this fic when I’m busy with other things. I hope I can update sooner next time. Things are winding down, so maybe I want to draw this out a little longer. Thanks again for reading my ramblings.

Listen to the full Love Like A Sunset Spotify playlist here.
Welcome back! It's crazy to me that roughly a year ago I started this fic. I know it might come across as a little over the top, but I've enjoyed every little thing that has come from this fic over the last 12 months. I do feel - really - that it has changed my life. ANYWAY. You're not here for me. You're here for this goddamn story that's taken me months to get back into. I will take less time to write the final part of this fic, I promise. We're so close.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 35:

Bucky

"And if everything is temporary, I will bear the unbearable, terrible triteness of being..." - Gang Of Youths

Bucky didn’t mean to fall asleep but he jolted awake with Darcy’s hair in his face, the scent of her a comfort despite the situation that began to settle in once more as he collected himself.

“Baby,” he murmured, shaking her shoulder.

He looked around the basement, seeing it was lighter. They’d slept through the night.

Darcy stirred and then groaned, slowly coming back to him.

“You with me?” he said.

She sat up, blinking and groaning. The cement floor would probably be killing her joints. Bucky knew he’d slept in worse many times before.

“How’s your stomach?” she croaked, and Bucky felt himself smile slightly at her irritability.

Despite everything, he still wanted to kiss her and never stop but it was hardly the time or place for that. The second he got the chance he’d make her a shuddering wreck, and Darcy seemed to get the
memo, raising one eyebrow at him while she inspected his wound.

“Get your head out of the gutter,” she said, peeling back the bandage.

“Get out of my head,” he countered.

Darcy made a non-committal sound as she peered closer, distracted. From what Bucky could see there was no pus, so no infection. It looked clean and it managed to scab over during the night. Thank God for Maggie and her duffel bag of supplies.

She replaced the bandage and gave Bucky a quick kiss on the lips, his hands in her hair to keep her close.

“We gotta go. Any ideas?”

Darcy bit her lip, and up close he could see the flesh turn white beneath the punctures of her teeth.

“Your house?”

“What?” Darcy said, suddenly alarmed. “What do you mean?”

Bucky frowned. She mentioned having a pretty lousy childhood full of confusion and emotional distress, but he was certain she still had parents somewhere in this world.

“Your other mama,” he said, and Darcy frowned back at him.

She still seemed anxious like last night. He figured the shock would wear off eventually and the memory of her shooting the HYDRA agent would be playing over and over in her mind. She was afraid she was slipping further away from herself, and Bucky knew that feeling all too well.

“Baby,” he began, but Darcy shook her head, cutting him off.

“You’re right. We’ll get a bus and then crash with my mom and dad a few days. It’s just – it’s just been a few years.”

Bucky had no idea, and felt ashamed of that instantly. Having every mental blank filled since she remembered her first life and then not adjusting it along with her current second life had to be more than a little straining on her psyche.

He nodded at her. “Just until Steve gets back.”


They caught a Greyhound bus and then trekked several miles down suburban streets.

Technically, Darcy was a southern girl, which Bucky had never detected in her accent. She seemed to mask it until he asked her about it while they sat at the back of the bus with their heads bent and their voices low.

“I had a Brooklyn accent sometimes when I got upset as a kid,” Darcy said, and Bucky felt a flutter in his heart ache at her admission.

Even as a little girl she was like Darlene, and she had no idea why.

“I’d scream and cuss and kids laughed at me, calling me an attention-seeking bitch and all that shit.”
She sighed, and Bucky took his hand in hers and squeezed.

“You know what they used to call me, my family, when I went to college?”

“What?” Bucky asked, dreading it.

“City Girl,” Darcy said, rolling her eyes. “I never fuckin’ fit in.”

*It'll never feel that way again. Not with me,* Bucky thought, and Darcy looked into his eyes and gave a small smile.

He didn’t have to guess if she heard that.

Darcy’s family home was perfectly ordinary with a neat lawn and a white picket fence. The atmosphere was jarring to Bucky, whose only memories of a family home were the tenements in Brooklyn more than half a century ago.

Darcy’s parents had some kind of satellite dish on their roof, which was apparently a normal thing.

Darcy took a deep breath as she knocked on the front door.

She couldn’t keep still, and Bucky was tempted to grab hold of her, but the door swung open and a woman with cropped grey hair was staring at them and Bucky froze.

“Oh, my God. Darcy?”

“Hey, Mom,” Darcy said, her voice higher than usual and awkward. “Sorry to drop in like this.”

“What’s going on?”

Darcy’s mom shot Bucky a glance.

“Oh, no. Not again. Not some new career choice.”

Darcy shook her head. “No, no. We just need to stay here a few days and then we’ll be out of your hair.”

She was talking to this woman like she didn’t know her at all, like she was a waitress or something just as distant.

“I’m James,” Bucky offered, holding out a hand.

“Carol,” Carol Lewis replied, tentative in her grasp as she returned the handshake.

“He a new boyfriend?” she asked Darcy, who attempted a smile.

“Yeah, sure. Can we take this inside?”

Carol obliged, letting them in, with Bucky holding the duffel bag.

The hallway had high ceilings and the air smelt of sandalwood. Carol led them into the living room and then tugged Darcy out by the elbow to the kitchen to fix something to drink.

Bucky sat on the couch with his hands together, listening to Carol’s sharp whispers as he heard the refrigerator opening and closing.

He was thankful for the cool air that came from the AC, the sweat on his brow starting to dry.
“Are you in trouble?”

“Yes. Kind of,” Darcy said, and Bucky noticed she didn’t bother lowering her voice.

“You look terrible. You smell worse. Your friend –”

“My boyfriend.”

“- James looks like someone I’d cross the street to avoid.”

Bucky felt something twist in his stomach but kept still.

“We only need to stay here until work says it safe to go back.”

“Are you on drugs?” Carol asked, and Bucky frowned.

“Is Dad around?” Darcy asked, clearly deflecting the question.

There was sounds of ice being plonked into glasses and then liquid pouring.

“Is he on drugs? James?” Carol asked, and Bucky heard Darcy sigh.

“Mom. I need to stay indoors for a while. Have you seen anyone suspicious here lately? Before I got here?”

Carol was silent, and Darcy sighed again.

“See, this is exactly why I don’t call. Because you’re too afraid to know the answers to questions you don’t ask!”

Carol said nothing, instead Bucky waited as the two women returned, Darcy’s face contorted in barely concealed rage as Carol kept a smile on her face as she handed Bucky a drink.

“Sweet tea for you,” she said, and Bucky took it, avoiding eye contact.

“Mom, where’s Dad?”

“He’s working.” Carol paused to give Bucky a pointed look. “What do you do for a living?”

Bucky could have lied and said he was unemployed which he supposed was more accurate than something simple and vague. Then it occurred to him that Carol probably thought he was some kind of drug dealer, or an addict like she thought Darcy was.

“He used to kill people,” Darcy said, crossing her arms. “But he’s on vacation.”

For a split second, Carol saw the truth, but she instead burst out laughing in a false way that would probably set Bucky’s teeth on edge if he was around her too long.

“Very funny, Darcy,” she said. “So, he’s in between hits, so to speak?”

“Yes,” Bucky said, taking a sip of his drink.

Carol didn’t ask many questions about him after that, instead telling Darcy that she was disappointed that she didn’t attend her cousin’s wedding a few months ago.

From what Bucky understood, Darcy’s own parents were not aware of her kidnapping. They were so in the dark that the idea of them knowing everything must overwhelm Darcy into silence.
Carol finally mentioned Darcy’s old room and said her bed was still there.

“Still a single, though,” she added, glancing Bucky’s way briefly.

“I can sleep on the couch,” Bucky said, trying to make things easier.

Carol looked at his dirty shoes and shook her head.

“We have a guest room.”

Bucky shared a room with five other people for most of his life before living with Steve. The idea of having an extra room for visitors was foreign and strange.

“He’ll sleep with me,” Darcy said. She said it firmly, challenging her mother.

“I don’t think that’s appropriate.”

“I’m nearly twenty-six.”

“I don’t know this man,” Carol said, like Bucky wasn’t even there.

“He’s sleeping in my room,” Darcy said, lifting her chin. “So he can take my bag up there now.”

She gave Bucky’s boot a nudge and he got up, enjoying the look that flashed on Carol’s face before she suppressed it. She looked like she wanted to hurt him.

Bucky walked out of the living room with Darcy and Carol following after him.

He went up the staircase, Carol’s voice calling up after him.

“Really. I think the guest room on the first right would be nicer –”

“My room’s the next right,” Darcy murmured, and Bucky chuckled.

He knew he should be feeling sorry for this woman whose house he was essentially trespassing in, but he was a poor kid from Brooklyn and he couldn’t stop thinking about that whole City Girl thing Darcy told him about on their way there.

The look that flashed across Carol’s face just moments before also sprung back up in his mind, and he knew that if he wasn’t there she’d be making Darcy’s life hell.

He couldn’t believe he’d ever prefer Charlotte Foster over someone else, but Carol Lewis made him want to run his dirty boots along her plush carpets over and over while she screamed.

Darcy steered him into her room and he paused once he walked in, the duffel bag falling to the floor.

The walls were covered in posters, a lot of people Bucky didn’t know. His eyes fell to a poster of Gone with the Wind and he chuckled.

“I was the only one in my class who listened to NWA,” Darcy said beside him.

“What does that stand for?” he asked, as she pointed to a poster of several African American men wearing beanies while they stared down into the camera.

“Google it,” she said, and Carol tutted beside her.
“I really wish you’d stay in the other room.”

“I like this, Mrs. Lewis,” Bucky said, not bothering to turn his head to address her.

Carol opened her mouth to retort when the doorbell suddenly rang.

Darcy glanced at Bucky, eyes widening.

“Not a good feeling?” he asked her, and she shook her head.

“Your friends?” Carol asked, this time her disgust there for Bucky to see.

He walked over to the window and drew back the curtain, glancing at the figures below that stood waiting at the front door.

They were all bald black women holding spears of some kind.

“Not exactly,” he murmured.

The doorbell rang again. And then there was a pounding on the door.

Darcy took her Glock out from the door as Bucky chose another handgun, checking for ammo.

Carol watched with her mouth open in shock as her daughter and Bucky raced out and down the stairs.

“What the plan?” Darcy hissed, and Bucky winked at her, attempting to lighten her mood.

“Maybe I can talk my way outta this,” he whispered back, and he felt a lurch in his stomach of anxiety.

It wasn’t his own feeling, it had to be coming from Darcy, because she could barely hold her gun steady as they crept towards the front door.

“Who are you?” Bucky barked.

“We were sent here by King T’Challa and Captain America,” came a sharp voice from beyond the door, their English accented.

“How do we know you aren’t one of the guys from California?” Bucky snapped, and Darcy squeezed her eyes shut.

“You can’t know that. But we have a message from Captain –”

“Don’t say his name again,” Bucky snarled. “You got a civilian in here. Witnesses.”

There was an incredulous sound from outside.

“Which is precisely why you should let us inside!”


She gave Bucky a nod, and then moved to open the door, her gun poised like Bucky’s.

The door swung open and the three women with spears stood in a fighting stance.

It was like a goddamn Mexican stand-off for a good minute as each group took the other one in,
Darcy’s hand still shaking.

“How’d you find us?” Darcy finally asked.

“Your Stark phone. Ordinary phones are easily trackable, but Tony Stark allowed us to tap into your device’s unique signal,” the middle woman replied, her spear beginning to lower.

The two beside her remained poised to fight like Bucky was beside Darcy.

She let her gun fall to her side.

“He could kill you, you know that?” Darcy said, and Bucky didn’t dare blinking.

The middle woman nodded. “So could you, as I’ve heard.”

“So you are HYDRA,” Darcy said, her gun raised once more. “I shouldn’t have even hesitated.”

“We cannot convince you,” the same woman said again, her voice showing her annoyance once more. “But you have few choices. Since we’ve tracked you, we’ve fought off your foes.”

Darcy’s throat bobbed. “What?”

“You never ran into any trouble once you left California because we beat off every little viper,” the woman concluded, and Bucky grit his teeth.

“I could still kill you,” he snarled, “I would do it gladly.”

“With that arm?”

Bucky’s eyes fell for a second to his shoulder, the whirring louder than usual. The intricate clinking was less succinct since the grenade incident. In fact, he couldn’t quite ball his left fist anymore, but he felt like worrying Darcy about that was tedious.

“I don’t need it.”

“Good,” the middle woman said, sounding less irritated. “Because His Majesty would like to give you another.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for your patience! <3
CAROL

Darcyland Universe Discord
my Tumblr
Love Like A Sunset Spotify playlist
Chapter Notes

This feels really weird. I never thought this story would mean this much to me, but I'm going to miss my OT3. Thank you to everyone who ever stopped by to read, to anyone who left a comment or a kudos... and thank you for sticking with this fic for a whole year. I started this fic on January 7th 2018 and I'm finishing this on the 9th of January 2019.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part 36:

Darla/Darcy/Daye/Darlene

"It comes
A visible horizon
Right where it starts it ends
Oh, and then we start the end

It comes
A visible illusion
Oh, where it starts and ends
Love like a sunset..." - Phoenix
They should be dead. At any given time, Okoye and her companions should have stabbed her in the neck or somewhere equally damaging.

It didn’t make much sense to follow them out into the suburban street with Carol yelling after them.

Darcy didn’t even look back. She thought if she took a second to turn her head, she’d be out cold or worse. She only lowered her Glock because she knew Bucky would kill the three women before Darcy’s own body hit the ground.

She was going to die. That had to be where the bad feeling came from for the last few days; she must have been predicting her own demise. And it would be all her fault.

That had to be it, except Okoye was looking at her like she didn’t despise her, and in fact when she told them her name, Darcy was quick to reply with hers.

“Yes, I know who you are,” Okoye replied, and there was a hint of irony in her tone that Darcy didn’t find entirely unsettling.

Their duffel bag of supplies was left behind, and life was soon left behind as they travelled by foot to the edge of town, to a dry empty field.

The jet revealed itself by switching plates over under the midday sun, and Darcy stopped in her tracks.

“Where are we going, really?”

“Wakanda,” came a reply from one of the other women who weren’t Okoye. She had a fierce expression on her face that hadn’t changed the whole time Darcy was in her presence.

“I don’t know where that is,” Darcy admitted. She didn’t feel like playing along and pretending she was more confident than she was.

Bucky spoke for the first time in a while: “I heard about it through missions over the years. It’s a tiny country in West Africa. But the more I look at this –”

He nodded at the immense jet.

“-the more I figure that’s a ruse.”

“Or they could just be HYDRA,” Darcy added, feeling anxiety coil around her insides once again. “And they have all the resources for a thing like that.”

Darcy still didn’t move as a ramp lowered in front of her.

“If you beat off the HYDRA threats for us, I’m thankful,” she said, giving Okoye a nod. “But I can’t trust you.”

“Your Captain said you fight dirty when threatened.”

Darcy felt herself smirk, because that was true. Given the chance, she’d grab the knife in Bucky’s boot and hold it to someone’s throat.

She thought of the man she shot in California, his brains on the side of that car. She was tired. She wanted to rest, even if it meant an anonymous prison cell.

She was safe with Bucky. She was safe. She needed to remind herself of that.
She took a deep breath and held it as she walked up the ramp, her head high.

Arriving in Wakanda was the closest thing Darcy would ever have to a godly experience.

She stared as they glided past a clump of trees that turned into a wondrous city, surrounded by lush mountains and high golden towers.

A monorail shot past and Darcy gasped. She looked to her side, where Bucky sat transfixed.

“It’s beautiful,” Darcy murmured, as Bucky was speechless.

“Welcome,” Okoye said, as she piloted.

Landing on the tarmac, Darcy could see the Avengers all standing around, and her eyes immediately fell to Steve.

She grabbed Bucky’s flesh hand and squeezed it despite knowing how he felt, so full of love and longing for the man that waited for them both just mere feet away.

It felt like an age since she saw him. Her heart hammered in her chest as the ramp fell again and they climbed out of their seats.

Bucky was first, striding toward Steve with his face like stone.

The air hit Darcy’s face and she smelt jasmine and something spicy like cinnamon and she sighed.

She watched as Bucky brought Steve into a hug, and then kissed him on the lips in front of everybody. Darcy knew he never did that before since he and Steve were still very private about their own relationship around other people than her. She figured his feelings were strong enough for Bucky to throw aside any kind of fear of others judging them.

Darcy knew there would never be any kind of homophobia within their group. Steve and Bucky were just not used to being out.

Darcy followed, her chest aching. The exhaustion was piling up and causing her to stumble a little, and Steve broke away from Bucky to see her nearly fall.

“I’m okay,” she called, and Steve’s chest heaved at her words.

“Hey,” he called back, and she nodded.

God, she loved them both so much. She made a break for it, and with her last push of energy she sprinted toward them both.

Steve picked her up, holding her by the waist with her feet off the ground as his mouth slanted over hers.

“Heart,” he whispered in between kisses, and Darcy could feel her tears spill over.

She laughed, and her eyes caught Bucky’s and she felt her chin wobble with emotion.

“Jesus, what the hell is this place?” Bucky muttered, causing Steve and Darcy to chuckle.

They could have been all alone, except there was an unfamiliar voice that came from the group.
behind them watching.

“We have been waiting for you.”

Steve placed Darcy on the ground and he moved aside for her to see a handsome African man wearing traditional robes and a silver necklace walking closer.

Darcy felt the heat rise in her cheeks, looking at the ground.

“Your… Grace.”

The man laughed out loud, and Darcy’s eyes shot up to meet his, her blush deepening.

Okoye stepped forward with her spear in hand.

“This is T’Challa, son of T’Chaka, King and protector of Wakanda,” she said, and T’Challa’s laughter began to die away, but the mirth remained in his eyes.

There was a brief pause and Darcy shrugged a shoulder.

“I’m Darcy Lewis. I was born as Darlene Foster in 1920, and then I died and was born again in 1988. And not in that Christian born-again way, like…”

Her voice trailed off and she pressed her lips together.

“Darcy,” she said, hand outstretched.

T’Challa smiled, and took her hand in his, squeezing as he gave it a short shake.

- 

They were led to the throne room, where Darcy stood in the centre facing T’Challa as every other visitor remained seated.

“We never have had so many outsiders here at any given time before,” T’Challa said, waving a hand around.

Darcy nodded. “Historically, I would say a group of foreigners coming to Africa hasn’t panned out well.”

He smiled, and Darcy was relieved he appreciated her sense of humor.

“I appreciate the generosity,” she added. “Okoye also mentioned Bucky’s arm.”

T’Challa’s eyes travelled to Bucky, who sat behind Darcy beside Steve and Natasha.

“There are measures to be taken before I can allow you to leave.”

T’Challa’s face had changed to something colder, causing Darcy to take a step, only to see Okoye’s grip tighten around her spear with her eyes narrowing.

Darcy rose a hand, attempting to assure her.

“Allow? Then why let us ever enter Wakanda?”

“Any excuse after the skirmish with the Avengers would have been suspicious,” T’Challa said, his voice level. “And you came voluntarily.”
“Voluntarily?” Darcy exclaimed, and she felt Steve’s warning at the back of her mind. “I came here because your guards threatened my home, and someone I love.”

She knew she was referring to Bucky and not her own mother Carol and there was a brief feeling of shame before it was pushed back aside by the present situation.

“So what’s the plan, then? You fix Bucky’s arm, and then… keep us?”

“I haven’t decided yet,” T’Challa fired back, causing Darcy to bristle. “You are all trespassing, according to our laws.”

The girl who introduced herself as Shuri piped up: “My brother has had a trying year.”

“And we haven’t?” Darcy retorted.

“I don’t doubt it, Miss America,” the teenager threw back. “But this is all new to us.”

Shuri looked at Bucky.

“I would gladly mend your arm, but I know I can make something better.”

“Vibranium,” Steve said, and Shuri nodded.

“Of course.”

Without warning, T’Challa rose from his throne, causing everyone else to rise with him.

“Everyone has had a long day, as well, sister. We should allow our guests to retire to their rooms to eat and rest.”

Darcy huffed. “Are we your hostages?”

T’Challa’s eyes swivelled up and down her form, unblinking.

“For now.”

She walked into the lion’s den. She had just handed her life to a man she knew nothing about, whose good word could mean nothing.

“He might turn around and sell us all out to HYDRA,” she spat, Shuri still within earshot as everyone was leaving the throne room.

Their eyes met and Shuri looked annoyed, crossing her arms as she stalked off out the double doors into the immense corridor.

Steve took Darcy’s hand, forcing her to acknowledge him.

“We are safe together.”

Darcy willed herself to nod despite her anxiety. Bucky glanced at her and nodded as well, and Darcy let out a sigh.

“I need a shower. And a bed.”

They began down the corridor, where Shuri was waiting with her arms still crossed.
“You need to see something, Darcy.”

Having a complete stranger talk to her like that was unnerving, but Darcy just nodded.

“I guess your boyfriends can come, too,” Shuri added, turning her back on them to walk ahead. “If they behave themselves in my lab.”

- 

“Don’t touch anything,” Shuri said, as they exited the elevator.

They were met with walls of glass, a lot like the labs in New York at the old Avengers Tower before they moved upstate.

Darcy could still see the picturesque view of the Wakandan landscape beyond the labs and she felt her mouth drop at the sight of the large statue in the distance.

“Is that a -?”

“Panther,” Shuri said, and Darcy wondered about its significance.

She’d hardly had a chance for anything to be explained to her since they landed.

“Is this where you’d operate on Bucky?”

“Yes. Well, myself and a team,” Shuri said, and Bucky crossed his arms, his metal limb shining as the sun from the windows hit it.

“How old are you?” he grunted at Shuri.

“Seventeen,” she replied, and Darcy’s eyes widened ever so slightly.

“You’re… insanely smart for your age,” she said, which caused Shuri to give a small smile.

“You’re an assistant to Doctor Jane Foster?” Shuri asked, and Darcy nodded.

“She’s my cousin.”

“I like her,” Shuri said, and Darcy smiled back.

Steve looked around at the equipment, the various screens and monitors surrounding the lab and he bit his lip.

“When would you operate?”

“As soon as possible!” Shuri said, her voice bright.

Bucky face changed to something more vulnerable, and Darcy glanced at him, already reading his thoughts.

“We are safe together,” she whispered, echoing Steve’s words from earlier.

“Do you want to think about it?” Shuri asked, and Bucky shot her a look.

“No. Just get rid of it.”

-
Darcy knew Bucky’s arm caused him more misery and torment than any benefit that could come from it, and if what Steve told her was true, he’d have a stronger than ever limb if it was made from vibranium.

The team of scientists came in after Shuri summoned them with her mystifying device on her wrist that Darcy could have just sworn was a beaded bracelet at first glance.

They spoke to the three of them at length about the removal of the Soviet-made arm. They had already rendered a demo arm to show them what it would look like, and Shuri assured them that another vibranium version was already been made elsewhere in the palace.

“And no red star on this one,” she said to Bucky, who was starting to look more relaxed. Darcy sensed his fears dissipating the longer Shuri spoke.

“It’s a little too Cold War for my tastes,” he added, and Shuri smiled.

Darcy forced the fear down, forced it off her face so Bucky could go under without suspecting Darcy was afraid.

- 

Darcy was shaking when they left the lab, Steve’s hand on her trembling shoulder.

She glanced up at him.

“I’m sorry. I always make it about me.”

“That’s not true,” he said, and Darcy frowned. “You’re not just sensing what he’s feeling, you’re sensing me, too.”

“You know about that?”

Steve nodded. The elevator stopped and the doors opened to another corridor with high ceilings and Steve’s hand slipped into hers, guiding her down to his room.

He let her in and she looked around, seeing his four-poster bed was unmade, which meant his nerves were off when he left it; he otherwise never left a bed unmade once he was out of it.

She kicked off her shoes and kept rubbing her hands.

“Wanda told me it’s a psychic link,” Steve continued, watching Darcy pace.

She paused and glanced at him again, unsure.

“She had it with Pietro.”

The dead brother Darcy never met, because that was before her time with Steve.

She couldn’t imagine losing someone like Steve or Bucky when their bond was that strong.

“That poor girl,” she murmured, and Steve nodded, knowing.

“I guess we have to wait. We’ll know straight away if something bad happens.”

“Because of me,” Darcy whispered.
Steve’s voice was smaller. “Yeah.”

Darcy sighed, closing her eyes. She wished Bucky was there with them. She longed for impossible things, like the time they never had together when Steve and Bucky were still secret. She longed for a childhood as Darcy that wasn’t lonely.

“You should sleep.”

She opened her eyes and moved closer to Steve, tilting her head towards his for a kiss.

“I don’t want to sleep. Not yet,” she murmured, and she felt his hands fall to her hips, his fingertips on the small of her back.

She shivered, mouths slanting together. Within seconds, they were desperate, hands everywhere as Darcy longed to be naked and under him.

Steve moved his mouth away, trying to read her expression.

“Are you sure?”

“I missed you,” she whispered, nodding. “I want you. God, I want you both all the time.”

“I know the feeling,” Steve murmured, kissing her temple.

“I want it like… like Bucky would be with me.”

“How we would fuck him?” Steve asked, and she nodded.

One of Steve’s hands fell to her fly and popped the button.

“How would you do it?” she asked, and Steve’s eyes grew darker.

He hesitated, his fingers still.

“We’re not rough with each other like you are with him,” he murmured. “Like he and I are together.”

Darcy had witnessed Steve and Bucky really go at it, with biting and curses while skin slapped together. The memories of them made her wetter, and she felt a neediness between her legs.

She bit her lip. “Fuck me like that?”

Steve turned his head away for a second, like what she said was almost too much to hear, which only made Darcy want him to bruise her.

She was bold and rested her hand on his crotch, feeling how hard he already was.

“Fuck me like you fuck Bucky, come on.”

Steve let out a breath of disbelief, and he seemed to believe her request was real.

He captured her in another kiss, taking her by the throat, and Darcy knew that he kissed Bucky like this often enough. Except he had a tighter grip, which Darcy chose to ignore.

She could maybe pretend Bucky was in the room if Steve was rough enough, and so she moaned when his other hand was down the front of her jeans and rubbing her while he backed them into the bedroom.
The back of Darcy’s knees bumped against the bed and Steve turned her around, shoving her forward so she felt face first into the mattress, Steve on top of her.

Her jeans were pulled down past her knees along with her underwear and Darcy felt the cool air on the bare skin of her ass, Steve’s suit scratching against her.

“I can take it,” Darcy whispered, her voice rough. The air was squashed out of her lungs on impact but Steve moved back to not rest fully on her.

The blunt tip of his cock brushed her entrance and Darcy stilled, waiting.

He sank into her, the pair of them gasping. She clenched around him and Steve’s hand left her throat to rub at her mouth, and Darcy sucked his finger into her mouth.

“You’re so wet and tight,” he breathed in her ear, making her wriggle beneath him.

He began to move and Darcy couldn’t keep still, wanting him so much. He was harder with his thrusts, and soon there was no time for her to gather her thoughts as he sped up, setting a punishing pace.

Though her legs were pinned beneath him, her toes curled, each drag of Steve’s cock like heaven.

Just as she was close to coming, her hand squeezing under to find her clit, Steve pulled back until he slipped out of her, grabbing at her hands so that her lower half was untangled.

He stripped off the rest of his suit and took her by the hips, allowing her to be on all fours on the bedspread, gripping the covers as he shoved inside once more.

Doggy-style was one of Darcy’s all-time favorites. She had several, and she knew there were few ways she didn’t like to be fucked, but she rarely felt as full when she wasn’t taking it from behind.

She moaned, knowing she was close.

“You’re gonna make me come,” she gasped, feeling the heat pool between her legs, the rise of her climax approaching.

With one hand on her hip to keep her in place, Steve’s other hand went to between her legs, causing Darcy to cry out.

He rubbed her expertly, because he knew her. They were in each other’s blood, and Darcy tensed.

She came with her eyes squeezed shut and her mouth smothered by the covers, clenching around him.

For a moment, she couldn’t see, and she supposed the orgasm broke her brain. There was only so much she could take, and Steve was the same.

“Heart,” he gasped, and then he pulled out, moaning as he came on her back.

All Darcy could smell was their sweat and Steve’s come on her skin, and so she stumbled to the bathroom to wash and pee.

She staggered back to bed and threw herself down, and passed out.
She was in the hotel room she remembered from her drugged interrogations at the hands of Gregor and Yurievich.

It looked exactly like how she and Sally left it decades before, except for the two other women that sat opposite Darcy on the other twin bed.

“You made it,” said Darlene, and Darcy felt herself nod.

She was remarkably accepting and calm even though her heart was racing.

She was staring at two other identical versions of her, save a few minor details.

Darlene was always better dressed than Darcy. She styled her hair and her nails were clean. She wore dresses and skirts. Now she had on another knit top with her hair in victory rolls, her skirt past her knees. Her shoes were ugly, though.

The other one looked like a housewife. She was Darcy as the perfect housewife.

“I don’t know you,” Darcy said, and the housewife shook her head.

“You know me.”

Then Darcy knew – she was Darlene if she had lived.

“I’m Daye,” Daye said, and Darcy nodded, because she knew.

She changed her name after a short-lived film career as Darla Singer. She went by Louise Daye and moved back East.

“I never married.”

“We didn’t want to if it wasn’t Steve or Bucky,” Darcy said, and Darlene nodded.

Daye tilted her head. “I bought a house and fostered a lot of kids. They called my house the menagerie. One kid started calling me Daye and then it caught on.”

“Were you sad?”

Daye frowned. “I never… I never got over it. But I had a nice life.”

“You died before I was born.”

“You never existed in my world, Darcy,” Daye replied, not sounding impatient.

Darcy looked at her hands, wondering what to say.

“It’s all still so confusing.”

“You already know the answers,” Darlene said. “You always have.”

Darcy nodded, feeling her throat tighten. “I died because I felt Bucky fall from the train.”

Darlene nodded. “And Steve was the final straw.”

“What is the purpose of this?”

She felt a flare of rage at the unfairness of it all. Steve and Bucky going through unbearable pain,
waking up separate while Darcy had no memory of it.

“You willed it,” Daye said, leaning forward as Darcy blinked back tears. “And you’re here now as you instead of dead like me because this is your path.”

“Daye –”

“I’m not sad that I’m dead,” Daye snapped. “Because the dead are happier dead.”

“It’s the living that have to wrestle with life,” Darlene added, nodding.

Darcy let out a breath. “So now what?”

“Heal, with Bucky,” Darlene said, her voice quieter.

Darcy nodded, and she rose from her bed, looking around the hotel room.

“How do I get out of here?”

“Use the damn door,” the two other women said together.

Darcy stared, and then they turned towards each other and began to talk as if she’d already left.

She couldn’t make out the words as she made her way toward the exit.

She didn’t think it was her conversation to be eavesdropping on, anyway.

- 

She stirred awake, recalling the bed’s four posters that surrounded her.

Steve was not next to her. She turned her head to see the sunlight streaming in and she sat up, naked under the sheets, wrapping her arms around her knees and breathing in the scent of the room.

She slept for close to thirty hours. Her body must have needed the rest, so losing a whole day was frightening at first but she learned Bucky made a full recovery.

She went to T’Challa and pledged her life for Bucky’s new arm, and though it the gesture was appreciated it was also entirely unnecessary.

“You never meant to keep us?” Darcy asked, and T’Challa shook his head.

“We need to take our place in the world,” he replied.

They were sitting on a balcony together, watching Bucky and Steve being chased by some children on the grass below.

“I am so sorry for your loss, T’Challa,” she said, and he glanced at her, his face softening.

She was referring to what she’d learned from Steve; that T’Challa’s cousin had recently infiltrated Wakanda to challenge him for the throne, only to lose in their fight because he wanted an honourable death. And only a fortnight before that, his father passed.

“And I am sorry for everything you have been without, Darcy,” he replied, and Darcy’s eyes filled with tears.

She looked at her lap. “How much do you know?”
“I know that you were alone for a lifetime. And then HYDRA kidnapped you after you were reunited with Steve and Bucky.”

Darcy gave a bitter laugh. “I’m not the same as a year ago.”

“Who is?” T’Challa said, and Darcy met his gaze.

There was a silence, and all they could hear was the children’s laughter beneath them.

“We will be okay,” the king said, and he put his hand on Darcy’s.

-

Months passed, and soon there was a semi-routine among the chaos.

Darcy travelled from Wakanda to the US and back, visiting Maggie and touching base with Jane, and making sure her place in T’Challa’s domain was a useful one.

She owed the king so much, but he didn’t want to take anything from her in return. Wakanda was tentatively lifting its head to the stars, and Darcy was part of the outreach program in California.

Bucky never left Africa. His recovery was a full-time job, and in the beginning he made it harder for people to be around, but Darcy was stubborn. She and Steve held on no matter what.

After four months of almost constant traveling, Darcy found it difficult to keep track of everything, but she still kept a couple days a week open just for Steve and Bucky.

One night after dinner in town, they returned to the palace and retired to Steve’s rooms. Darcy smiled as Bucky and Steve took turns kissing her, clothes coming off as they went.

She placed her hands on their chests and pushed them back for a moment.

“I have an idea,” she said, and Steve glanced at Bucky.

“Don’t look at me, punk,” Bucky rumbled, his eyes traveling from one lover to the other, his eyes already glazed with lust. “She didn’t tell me anythin’.”

“You can understand why I’d find that hard to believe, right?” Steve retorted, and Darcy’s smile widened.

“Fellas,” she said, pulling them closer, her back to Bucky while she face Steve.

Hands fell to her hips and her shoulders, and idea was broadcast without her having to say it aloud.

“Oh,” Steve said, and his cock twitched with interest. “Are you sure?”

“It’s exactly where I belong.”

She wanted a brief tender moment before things turned more base, before she forgot what she meant to say.

“Between you and Bucky,” she said, one hand going to cup Steve’s face.

They ended up with Steve on his back, Darcy on top of him with Bucky behind her kissing her neck.

Steve gave a little grunt as she lowered herself onto his cock, hands on his chest. His eyes grew a
little wider as she rocked back and forth.

“You sure?” Bucky asked, his voice another rumble in his chest.

Darcy turned her head slightly to see him slicking up his cock with lube, and she thought about it enough, but she knew actually having them inside her at the same time was bound to be overwhelming.

“We’ve done it before,” she replied, and she was right in a sense. Bucky had been in her ass before, but this was so much more. “And if I hate it, you’ll know.”

Bucky let out a shaky breath at her confidence, and Darcy could feel the rising arousal of the room, the need to rut against one another.

Steve was distracting, his thumb reaching her clit and rubbing occasionally.

“Heart,” she murmured, her attention on Steve’s strokes.

Bucky’s hand was on her hip, and she felt him against her hole and she hissed in anticipation.

“Please,” she murmured, and she caught Bucky’s eye.

“You’re gonna kill us both,” he said, and then he breached.

Darcy moaned, nails digging into Steve’s skin as Bucky pushed further in.

They were still for several moments, Darcy’s head falling back with her eyes closed.

“Someone start movin’,” she whimpered. “I can’t stand it.”

How was her body able to stand this? Thinking of standing – how was she supposed to do that after this?

She was all smooth all over, and Steve’s thumb was forgotten. All she could think about was how stretched she was.

Mercifully, Steve pumped into her, and her eyes flew open as she gasped.

“Fuck, I feel – I feel –”

“You okay?” Steve asked, his voice strained.

“Yeah,” she replied shakily, her whole body goose pimples and starting to sweat.

Bucky moved out of time with Steve, thrusting forward as Steve pulled back.

Darcy moaned, and so did Bucky.

“Stevie, I can feel you,” he murmured in awe and Steve let out a breathless laugh.

“You both look so beautiful,” he said, his blue eyes wide as he gazed up at them.

The pleasant pain of having them both inside her makes Darcy dissolve into giggles, and she’s light-headed from it all.

Their bodies sway and they moan, Bucky the only one with a vocabulary.
“Come on, baby, come on,” he murmured in her skin, kissing her neck, and Darcy can sense his orgasm building.

“Steve,” Darcy said, and her lover below nods, and his thumb rubbed once again, and just the thought of both of them coming, the pair of them filling her up in both places sends her over the edge.

She clenches on both of them with a shout, and she hears Bucky follow soon after with his teeth on her skin.

Steve is the last to break apart, and Darcy falls forward to kiss him, their mouths not quite closing as he comes with a stuttered moan ripped from him.

She hissed as Bucky pulled out, and she can feel the mess inside her drooling out.

She moved off of Steve and looked down, sighing.

She just needed a second to lie there. She could change the sheets in a second. She fell back down beside Steve, Bucky tugged along with her, arms tangling as sweat cooled.

“If we do that again, I’ll need life insurance,” she murmured, and Bucky kissed her neck, one hand on her right breast and flicking the nipple with his calloused thumb.

Steve rolled onto his side, staring down at them.

“I’m so happy,” he said, and Darcy felt her chest squeeze at his words.

He’d never said it aloud like that before, but she always sensed it the last few months they’d been in Wakanda.

“Happy and dirty,” Darcy said, and she pecked him on the lips. “We all need a shower.”

- 

After washing and drying herself with a fluffy towel, she watched as Bucky kissed Steve once more, Steve’s hands threading through his long hair and tugging.

Bucky nipped at his mouth, and Steve one-upped him by wrapping a hand around his half-hard dick and stroked him a few times with their eyes glued to one another.

Darcy was jealous, in all sense of the word, but she knew Steve and Bucky felt the same way. She would always be sharing them with one another.

She walked out of the bathroom and glanced at herself in the mirror.

For a split second, she saw herself as Darlene, hair pinned with her lips cherry red.

She glanced at the framed photo she had of her little cousin Maggie sitting on Darlene’s lap, the pair of them grinning at the camera.
Chapter End Notes

Yes, it was a reference to Elizabeth Olsen's movie "Martha Marcy May Marlene".

❤❤❤

Love Like A Sunset Spotify playlist
Darcyland Universe Discord
my Tumblr
Epilogue

Chapter Notes

After finishing this fic yesterday, I didn't like how I was feeling so I decided to write more. A real happy ending.

Epilogue:

Darcy

"My insides are shimmering. I am reconfigured." - Elizabeth Wurtzel

Darcy woke with Hayley’s foot in her face.

Having a toddler share her bed while Bucky and Steve slept elsewhere was fun most of the time, when said toddler was willing to cooperate. There were times when Hayley did nothing she didn’t feel like doing, and Darcy’s style of parenting was pretty relaxed anyway.

It was true, that saying about it taking a village to raise a child.

“Hayley,” Darcy grumbled, pushing the diminutive, pudgy limb away from her nose and sitting up. “Where’s Dadda?”

Hayley said something into the covers and Darcy craned her head to hear.

“What, honey?”

“Dadda with Nats!”

She was getting better at consonants, which helped a lot. Darcy threw back the cover and glanced at Hayley’s kicking feet while she rubbed her eyes.

“Bucky?” she called, and she heard a nearby grunt.

“Unca!” Hayley suddenly yelled, scrambling out of bed to Bucky who stood in the doorway.
Staying in Wakanda indefinitely meant Hayley was the first white baby to be born there in centuries, and Darcy was well aware that the child was spoilt.

She flew to her Unca – she hadn’t managed to say "Uncle" yet – and Bucky picked her up and tipped her upside down as Hayley squealed.

“Hey, baby,” he murmured to Darcy, who smiled at him sleepily while Hayley struggled.

Darcy remembered the day she found out she was pregnant with such clarity she attributed to her powers. The day was a tough one to process for all people involved.

She stopped taking her contraceptive pill kind of on a whim, but neither Bucky nor Steve objected. In all likelihood Darcy wouldn’t get pregnant for a while since Steve was the only fertile men of the two, and often enough he didn’t finish inside her.

And then Darcy was pregnant within a few weeks but she wasn’t mad about it, just surprised her body took no time at all.

She remembered feeling so tired and nauseous that she bought three pregnancy tests and did them all, lining them up on the edge of the bathroom sink as she waited. Steve was in the room, but Bucky decided to go for a walk. Darcy felt his sadness, so he wasn’t able to deny it later when she confirmed she was expecting.

He was genuinely happy for her, and she always meant for him to feel as part of the family as Steve was.

Hayley had her mother’s chocolate hair and blue eyes that shined up at Bucky as he turned her right side up. Bucky was her favorite person. She was obsessed with him, always looking for him, always playing with him.

“Nat’s trainin’ with Steve?” Darcy asked, and Bucky nodded.

“You gonna head down?”

“Yeah,” Darcy replied, and she stretched.

She managed to get back to her weight before Hayley was born. It just took her a year to do it, with a lot of swearing and sweat involved.

Natasha was patient enough, and when Darcy went down with Bucky in tow holding Hayley, the redhead greeted her with a knowing look.

“You’re late.”

“Shoes were missing,” Darcy retorted, and Natasha gave Hayley a little wave.

“Hers or yours?”

“Both,” Bucky replied for Darcy, and Natasha chuckled.

“You’re lucky you’re so cute or I’d be mad at your mommy more,” Natasha said to Hayley, who was distracted by the birds flying overhead.

They did some core work, which was Darcy’s least favorite. She wished that by now Natasha would have given up on making planks a thing, but she still insisted on several each session.
“Fucking fuck fuck fuck,” Darcy muttered, ignoring the fact that Hayley would be able to hear her.

The toddler immediately began repeating the word over and over under her breath, which only made Bucky laugh.

Darcy’s whole body was trembling as she remained in her planking position, watching the clock count down from thirty seconds. She finally relented, collapsing on the ground.

Hayley ran past her saying “fuck fuck fuck” and Darcy sighed.

The toddler took off down the hill and Bucky chased after her.

Darcy rolled onto her side and watch them playing in the distance.

She noticed Natasha staring after them as well.

“What’s up?”

“Nothing.”

“What?” Darcy said, a little sharper. “Nat, what is it?”

Natasha hesitated, biting her lip. “You don’t think… Hayley and Bucky are really alike?”

Darcy frowned, looking back at her daughter in the distance and she shrugged.

“I mean… she looks like me. And she acts like him because he’s practically her second d-”

“I think he’s her father.”

Darcy swallowed.

“Her biological father,” Natasha amended, and Darcy let out a short laugh.

“That’s impossible.”

Natasha shrugged, offering Darcy a hand to help her up. She took it, grunting a little as she got to her feet, sweat on her forehead.

“That’s… impossible,” Darcy said again, not so sure the second time.

Bucky had Hayley on his shoulders when they returned, and his face dropped when his eyes met Darcy’s.

“What’s wrong?”

“I think – I think we all need to talk,” Darcy said.

-

Steve and Darcy sat on his double bed while Bucky paced.

“It’s not likely at all. I won’t get my hopes up, because I can’t have kids…”

He kept talking while he paced, hands in his long hair as he pushed it back.

“It doesn’t change anything,” he added, and Steve nodded.
“Probably not. But she should know, if it was the case.”

“You suspect it?” Darcy asked, glancing at Steve.

“She got this look on her face the other day and I could have sworn she was Buck.”

“Don’t, punk,” Bucky said, stopping to point at his lover with a grumpy expression on his face.

“Yep, it was that one,” Steve said, ignoring Bucky. “She didn’t want to wear purple that day and her pink shorts were dirty.”

Darcy let out a breath. She looked at her hands in her lap. “I want to know.”

Bucky let his hand fall to his side and he sighed. “Okay.”

Darcy looked up. “Really?”

“Yeah,” Bucky said, his voice softer. “I just don’t want your expectations high since I’m pretty sure I shoot blanks.”

She looked at Steve and then Bucky, taking each of their hands and squeezing them.

“I love you both no matter what. And I know Hayley feels the same way.”

Steve swallowed. “If she’s mine or not, she’s my kid.”

“Ditto,” Bucky said, and Darcy smiled at his choice of words.

His face changed and Darcy’s smirk remained.

“Don’t look at me like that, Darce. You know that’ll get you fucked.”

- 

Shuri took no time at all, so within hours Darcy, Steve and Bucky were sitting in the lab with their hands entwined, listening.

Shuri held up a piece of paper with black strips running down them, with colored marks across them.

“First column is Darcy,” Shuri indicated. “Second is Hayley.”

The third column did not look like Hayley’s. The fourth one did.

“Who’s the fourth?” Darcy whispered, and Shuri took a deep breath.

“Bucky.”

Darcy felt her stomach drop for Steve, but she felt her heart soar for Bucky.

“Oh, my God,” he murmured, his eyes going wide. “How?”

“You need me to explain human reproduction?” Shuri quipped, and Bucky shook his head, still staring at the paper ahead of them.

Steve let go of Darcy’s hand and stood, going round to pull Bucky into a tight embrace.

“I knew it. I knew it,” he said into his lover’s neck, and Darcy felt her eyes pool with tears.
Bucky’s chest heaved and he began to laugh shakily.

Shuri left them alone as they stood together, Darcy sobbing into Bucky’s chest while arms wrapped all around her.

“Can we go see my kid?” Bucky asked.

They broke apart and Darcy kept sobbing while she smiled.

“Don’t think this had nothing to do with you,” Bucky said, giving her a brief kiss on her forehead.

“I’d bet you made it happen somehow.”

“Sure you don’t need Shuri to give you the talk?” Darcy replied, sniffling. 

- 

They went back to Nat who was reading to Hayley, and Darcy only had to nod so that the spy understood.

She broke out into a smile, and Bucky stepped forward to scoop up Hayley and clutch her to him, breathing in her smell.

Steve took Darcy’s hand as they watched Bucky circle the playroom with the toddler, murmuring into her ear.

“I love you,” Darcy called, to both Hayley and Bucky.

Bucky turned around, mouthing I love you more.

Darcy looked at Steve.

“I love you,” she said, and he nodded with his own eyes filled with happy tears.

“Love you more.”

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